研究ノート

言語使用の観点から見る異文化コミュニケーション

スピーチアクト理論と談話完成タスクに着目して

平松千明

Cross-cultural communication and perspectives on linguistic use:
Focussing on speech acts theory and discourse completion tasks

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Abstract

Globalisation allows us to communicate with people from other cultures more easily. It is no longer a rarity for people to face situations and interact with people from diverse cultures and to experience cross-cultural communication. The communication styles of people from dissimilar cultures may be different from those of people in the same culture (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012). We might face challenges of unfamiliar behaviours or customs and different communication styles when we engage in cross-cultural communication. It is important for us to acknowledge, understand, and embrace cultural differences and the possible influences of our linguistic choices, as this could help us to avoid possible misunderstandings during interactions. In this paper, I will examine cross-cultural communication from the perspective of linguistic use. Specifically, I will focus on speech act theory and discourse completion tasks (DCTs). First, I will introduce cross-cultural communication and the positive effects of studying it. Next, I will explain the theory of speech acts and focus on the speech acts of requests with nine request strategy types. Finally, I will outline the DCT methodology and show examples of DCT that I created myself.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, applied linguistics, cross-cultural pragmatics, speech acts, discourse completions tasks

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1. Introduction

Globalisation has changed the world as people, culture, goods, economies, politics, and other factors intersect. An increasing number of people are moving between countries for travel, study abroad, and immigration. It is no longer rare for people to meet someone from a different country, and there are many opportunities for us to be able to interact with people from different cultures in different languages. Improvements in technology have also allowed us to communicate online through the Internet, so that many people in the world have access not only to face-to-face meetings but also communication through the Internet or social networking services.

According to the Ministry of Justice (2020), there were 2,933,137 foreign residents in Japan at the end of 2019, an increase of 202,044 people from the end of 2018. Thus, there are more possibilities to meet people from different countries in Japan. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) argue that people from diverse cultures tend to have different desires or expectations regarding communication style, such as indirectness or directness. It can also be said that people have their own preferred communication styles within their respective cultures. For this reason, it is important for us to acknowledge, understand, and embrace differences when we meet people from dissimilar cultures, as this could help us to avoid possible misunderstandings during interactions.

According to Bakic-Miric (2012:13), culture can be defined as a "complex whole that includes language, knowledge, belief, arts, clothes, food, dance, music, sports, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Culture can also be defined as: the customs and expectations of a particular group of people, particularly as it affects their language use" (Bowe and Martin 2007:2). It can be seen that culture and languages have a close connection and it seems essential to learn about culture when mastering new languages. Scholars also point out that culture can be transmitted through communication, as culture and communication are highly connected to each other (Baldwin et al. 2013).

When we communicate with people from dissimilar cultures, we might learn about our own culture through communication and how our communication styles might be a reflection of our culture (Bakic-Miric 2012). As mentioned above, culture and communication have a close relationship, and it would be helpful for us to analyse the reciprocal connection so that we can become better communicators in cross-cultural situations.

In this paper, I will examine cross-cultural communication from the perspective of linguistic use. Specifically, I will focus on speech act theory and discourse completion tasks (DCTs). The purpose of this research paper is to organise the theory and methodology used in cross-cultural pragmatics to understand cross-cultural communication. Another purpose is to impart a basic knowledge of speech act theory and DCTs to future readers.

First, I will briefly introduce the term "cross-cultural communication" and its positive effects. I will then explain a theory of speech acts that is valuable when examining linguistic use in cross-cultural pragmatics. For speech acts, I will focus on requests, and I will introduce nine types of request strategies. Next, I will outline the DCT methodology and provide original examples of DCTs. I will close with a brief reflection on the research paper.

1.1 What is cross-cultural communication?

Cross-cultural communication can be defined as "the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities attempt to negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation within an embedded social system" (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012:24).

We could face challenges of unfamiliar behaviours or customs and different communication styles in both verbal and nonverbal communication when we engage in cross-cultural communication. It can be said that in cross-cultural communication, it is important to create an effective shared meaning; in other words, to clearly understand what the interlocutor who comes from a dissimilar culture wants to express (Bakic-Miric 2012).

Studying cross-cultural communication could help us to become better

communicators with people from dissimilar cultures, which means it could create diverse opportunities such as exploring the world, working at an international company, or building a deeper friendship or romantic relationship with people from different cultures. Moreover, when we learn about other cultures, we are able to gain a deeper awareness of ourselves as well as our own culture. It is also expected that we could become more flexible, as knowing and experiencing other cultures helps us broaden our horizons (Baldwin et al. 2013). Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012:5) also point out that flexible intercultural communication means "managing cultural differences adaptively and creatively in a wide variety of situations". Jackson (2014) argues that we continuously experience the flux of globalisation, including increasing cultural, economic, political, social, and linguistic ties. Therefore, it is essential for us to manage cross-cultural communication, and experiencing it is becoming increasingly familiar to many individuals.

2. Speech acts

2.1 What are speech acts?

As mentioned above, as culture and language have a close connection, examining linguistic use in cross-cultural communication is unavoidable. When we speak, we make statements, express gratitude, ask questions, make requests, offer refusals, greet, apologise, complain, compliment, invite, and so on. These are examples of speech acts, which are defined as "verbal messages that, through the very action of being uttered, perform a certain function" (Stadler 2012:3). It has also been argued that speech acts are included in all linguistic communication (Stadler 2012). Thus, it can be said that speech acts are very familiar in our mundane lives.

John L. Austin introduced the idea of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and this classification plays an important role in analysing and understanding direct and indirect speech acts (Shams and Afghari 2011). Locutionary acts can represent "the act of saying something,

that is, the actual words uttered" (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010:7), while illocutionary acts can be understood as "what is done in saying something, or, in other words, the force or intention behind the words" (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010:7). Finally, perlocutionary acts "imply what is done by saying something, that is, the effect of the illocution on the hearer" (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010:7).

These classifications may also imply that the intention of the speaker's utterance is not necessarily straightforward, and the underlying meaning can be hidden. Thus, it is crucial to understand the implied meaning at the illocutionary level in order to engage in smooth communication (Shams and Afghari 2011). How certain cultures express certain speech acts has been attended to in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. It seems that various cultures show preferences for how people perform speech acts based on cultural values (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Stadler 2012). Stadler (2012) stated that we can see people choose which level of directness or indirectness is appropriate depending on the speaker, the interlocutor, the particular situation, and the contextual settings, and that research on speech acts attempts to reveal what is appropriate behaviour when people express a speech act in a specific culture as well as the appropriate way of discovering the expected meaning. Therefore, it is argued that cross-cultural speech act research contributes to explaining these issues. Researchers can compare and identify similarities or differences in a particular speech act in different cultural contexts (Stadler 2012).

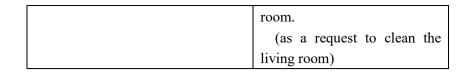## 2.2 Requests of speech acts

Speech acts include a variety of compliments, apologies, and requests, as mentioned above. Here, I focus on requests, "a speech act that expresses the speaker's desire for the hearer to perform an action" (Shams and Afghari 2011:280). The expression of a request tends to show the level of directness or indirectness. Cultural rules and norms require an appropriate level of directness or indirectness (Stadler 2012). Therefore, our communication is

smoother and more comfortable when we make a request in the way that matches the hearer's cultural norms.

Bowe and Martin (2007) illustrate nine strategy types of requests, of which I created examples in Table 1. Here, I use 'cleaning the living room' as the speaker's request.

Table 1

Strategy types	Examples
1. Imperative types	Clean the living room.
2. Performative types	I am asking you to clean the living room.
3. Hedged performative types	I would like to ask you to clean the living room.
4. Obligation statement	You will have to clean the living room.
5. Want statement	I want you to clean the living room. I would like you to clean the living room.
6. Suggestion	How about cleaning the living room? Why don't you clean the living room?
7. Query preparatory	Could you clean the living room? Would you mind cleaning the living room?
8. Strong hints	You have left the living room in a mess.
9. Mild hints	I do not feel comfortable when I am in a dirty living

	room.
	(as a request to clean the living room)

The first strategy types, called *imperative types*, are the most direct way to make a request. When the speaker chooses an imperative type, the speaker says 'clean the living room' to the hearer. The second type is *performative types*, and the speaker could say 'I am asking you to~' as an example. The next is called *hedged performative types*, and the phrase 'I would like to ask you to~' can be used. The fourth is an *obligation statement*, and the speaker might say 'you will have to~'. The fifth is called the *want statement*, and 'I want you to~' or 'I would like you to~' could be used when starting such a sentence. The sixth and seventh types, *suggestions* and *query preparatory types*, take the form of questions, in contrast to other types. When the speaker chooses a suggestion, they ask 'How about~?' or 'Why don't you~?'. The speaker expresses their requests in the form of 'Could you~?' or 'Would you~?' in a query preparatory type. Finally, the eighth and ninth types are *strong* and *mild hints*. These could be the most indirect, and the speaker's intention is to imply without clearly mentioning their requests. For example, the speaker could say, 'You have left the living room a mess' as a strong hint. To make it less direct, this could be expressed as 'I do not feel comfortable when I am in a dirty living room'. The speaker is most likely hoping that the hearer will notice how dirty this living room is so that it should be cleaned.

When we make requests, there are diverse ways to express our desires. Depending on which expression the speaker chooses, the hearer can get different impressions. Our linguistic choices of expressions tend to reflect our own cultural norms. A hearer from a dissimilar culture may find that the speaker's expression is highly implicit or explicit, while it might be normal in the speaker's own culture. These differences might make the conversation rougher or make the hearer feel uncomfortable. Therefore, it would be ideal for the speaker to choose the most suitable expression to match the hearer's cultural background.

3. Discourse Completion Tasks

In this section I introduce the DCT methodology, which can be helpful when analysing speech acts.

3.1 What is a DCT?

DCTs can be defined as:

> questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study. Subjects are asked to fill in a response that they think fits into the given context (Woodfield 2008:45).

It has been stated that DCTs might be the only data collection method that provides "sufficiently large samples of comparable, systematically varied data" (Ogiermann 2009:67). Researchers are able to design DCT scenarios to cover all appropriate contextual factors that are related to the researcher's envisaged study. On the other hand, natural speech tends to include elements that the observer does not explicitly know (Ogiermann 2009). DCTs can be designed for any speech act in diverse situations so that it is easier for researchers to broaden the situational variation beyond that of natural speech (Ogiermann 2009). DCTs can be highly useful when researchers want to focus on a particular speech act. Additionally, DCTs allow researchers to control social factors; thus, it is possible to collect data that are comparable across participants (Taguchi 2015).

However, DCTs have been criticised because of their non-interactive character and lack of authenticity (Taguchi 2015). Taguchi (2015) and Woodfield (2008) also point out that researchers can only identify what participants think they would say in a hypothetical situation using DCTs. Furthermore, turn-taking, which appears in natural conversation, cannot be seen in DCTs (Ogiermann 2009). Therefore, DCTs can be suitable for

analysing off-line pragmatic language use (Taguchi 2015). Moreover, it can be suitable for measuring "sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices operate" (Woodfield 2008:48). It is also argued that responses to the scenarios could reflect the values of the speaker's own culture, thus representing "culture-specific beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behaviour" (Ogiermann 2009:69). When analysing natural conversation, there are more appropriate methodologies than DCTs such as audio recordings and video recordings.

3.2 Examples of DCTs

In this section, I will show what a DCT looks like; to do so, I created an original DCT for this paper. When designing a DCT, the social power balance and the social distance between the speaker and the hearer are considered. Social power balance depends on the relationship between the speaker and the hearer; for instance, we might find that the speaker's social power is higher than the hearer when the speaker is a teacher and the hearer is a student, while the social power between the speaker and the hearer is almost equal when they are friends. The speaker's social power is lower when the speaker is an employee and the hearer is a boss.

Table 2 Social power balance

Social Power
S < H (e.g. employees < bosses)
S = H (e.g. friends)
S > H (e.g. teachers > students)

The S and H in the social power category represent speaker and hearer, respectively, in Table 2.

Table 3 Social distance

Social Distance
Low (e.g. family, intimate relationships such as couples, close friends)
Medium (e.g. acquaintances, friends who do not have close connections)
High (e.g. strangers, shop assistants at a supermarket)

Social distance can be defined as "a measure of the degree of friendship/intimacy between interlocutors" (Boxer 1993:103). Thus, for instance, a lower social distance represents a close or intimate relationship between the speaker and the hearer, while a higher social distance shows distant relationships, such as those between strangers.

Scenarios are developed of brief situational descriptions and a question asking what the speaker would say in the imaginary situation. The speaker fills out their answers in an empty section while imagining what they would say if they were in the situation. Table 4 below presents scenarios that I created as examples. First, instructions were provided and the imaginary situation was explained in detail. Then, the participants were guided to fill out the empty part, and they were expected to write what they thought they would say if they were in that situation.

Table 4 Examples of scenarios

Examples
Instructions: Please read the scenarios below and respond to them as if they would happen in reality. Please use direct speech.

1. You are on the way to the city hall and you took a bus to get there. While you are on the bus, you notice that your destination is not listed in the destination name list. You start to wonder whether the bus is the right one and you decide to ask the bus driver. You would say to him:

2. You and your best friend are going to chat on Skype this Sunday. Your friend asks you whether it would be okay to talk with you at 14:00. However, you have a dentist's appointment at 14:00 so you cannot make it at that time. You want to chat on Skype after you come home, so you want to suggest 17:00. You would say to her:

4. Conclusion

In this research paper, I focussed on speech act theory and a methodology known as DCTs as one way to examine cross-cultural communication from the perspective of linguistic use. I started with the introduction of cross-cultural communication and its possible advantages. I outlined a theory of speech acts and focussed on requests, which have nine strategy types. As mentioned, the linguistic choices of expressions differ depending on culture, and it is helpful to understand these differences so that we can be flexible and prepared to face differences in our communication. It is important for us to be free from ignorance of other cultures, eliminate our stereotypes, and learn about other cultures.

I also explained the DCT methodology and showed some examples for better understanding. As noted, DCT is more suitable when researchers want to focus on a specific speech act in their envisaged study. However, when

researchers want to analyse natural speech, they are likely to use different methodologies such as audio recordings or video recordings.

Becoming fluent in cross-cultural communication allows us to be more flexible and creative. This may be true not only in cross-cultural communication settings but also in diverse situations in everyday life.

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