Pragmatic Difficulties in Academic Discourse:
A Case of Japanese Students of English[*]

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教育における異文化間コミュニケーションの問題点:
日本人留学生のチュートリアルに基づく一考察

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要　旨

　イギリスの大学に留学している日本人学生のチュートリアルに関するデータ（録画、観察記録、面接調査、アンケート）に基づき、大学教育における異文化間コミュニケーションの問題点について分析する。イギリス人教師と日本人学生とのコミュニケーション上の問題は、教育に関する文化的前提の理解の違いに起因していることが多い。イギリス人にとっては暗黙の前提であっても、日本人にとっては未知の場合もある。またこの逆も成り立つ。教育に関する日英の文化的前提の違いは、教師と学生との力関係の把握の仕方、勉学の進歩の測り方に関する価値基準の捉え方に顕著にあらわれている。

　本論では「達成度」「分析力」「問題意識」という価値基準によって動機づけられたチュートリアルのやりとりに焦点をあて、日本人留学生のコミュニケーションの問題点の具体例を報告する。イギリスの大学における教師と学生の会話の仕組を理解し、コミュニケーションを成功させるためには、そこに深く根差している文化的前提や社会的ルールに照らして発話行為の意図を読み取ることが不可欠であることを示し、語用論研究に基づいた外国語教育の重要性を示唆する。

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1. PRAGMATIC DIFFICULTIES

This paper looks at the difficulties of pragmatic understanding faced by Japanese students studying in Great Britain. In illustrating areas of pragmatic difficulty, this study draws on a specific theoretical perspective, relating the performance and uptake of speech acts to their location within a particular genre, i.e., tutorial sessions between Japanese students and British tutors. It is argued that the difficulties stem mainly from two areas of sociopragmatic structuring of the genre: tutor-student interaction and the implicit value system operating differently in the assessment of students' development in British and Japanese academic settings.

Pragmatic difficulties are usually classified into two levels: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. The distinction was first made by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), and Kasper (1994) sums it up as follows: '"pragmalinguistics" concerns the relationship between linguistic forms and their functions as speech acts and expressions of interpersonal meaning, whereas "sociopragmatics" concerns the relationship between linguistic action and social structure'. Differences in mapping of the form and the force in certain speech act manifestations cause pragmalinguistic difficulties. It is particularly true when the mapping in Second Language (L2) is more indirect than in Native Language (L1) and when the students transfer their knowledge of mapping in L1 to that in L2. The pragmalinguistic level and sociopragmatic level interrelate in such indirect speech acts. An awareness of the sociopragmatic factors functioning in the L2 culture in general and the specific L2 genre in particular is germane to the ability to understand the illocutionary force of indirect speech acts and to respond to them appropriately at the pragmalinguistic level.

Most studies in cross-cultural pragmatics have been concerned with single speech acts in a number of different situational settings, such as requests and apologies (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989), or refusals and corrections (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz 1990, Takahashi and Beebe 1993). One problem often voiced in the speech-act oriented approach to cross-cultural pragmatics is the difficulty in eliciting authentic data. Discourse completion tests used extensively in the large-scale cross-cultural pragmatics research fulfil a useful function but a limited one (Kasper and Dahl 1991, Rose 1994). For this reason, we have adopted a genre-analytical approach to our data. Genres are social practices, moulded into a particular shape by habitual patterns of language use. Genre analysis[1] seeks to describe the commu-

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[1]The genre perspective has a multi-disciplinary pedigree. Within the pragmatics literature, this theoretical notion was perhaps most prominently voiced by Levinson (1979), although Levinson himself used the term 'activity type', making reference also to its similarity to the term 'speech event' used by Hymes (1972) and 'episode' used by

nicative acts carried out in these language patterns and by doing so reveal the sociopragmatic rationale behind them. It therefore serves both a descriptive and an explanatory purpose.

In what follows, we will try to explicate the mechanisms of sociopragmatic difficulties for Japanese students studying in Britain by analysing the rationale of the tutorial genre.

2. THE TUTORIAL GENRE

Most of the work done on genre analysis in academic discourse has focused on written materials (Swales 1990, Bhatia 1992). Works done by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993), and by He (1993) on the academic advising session, and by Rudolf (1994) on the interaction between graduate students and their supervisors are one of the few instances of research on interlanguage pragmatics relating to the one-to-one tutorial.

The one-to-one tutorial we have chosen, that of the fine art tutorial, is an optimum vehicle for analysing tutor-student interaction, as it is a central means of the teaching process in that discipline. In a previous paper, Turner (in press) analysed the fine art tutorial as a genre with a three-phase structure, motivated by the assessment of development in the students' work. The emphasis on development was seen as commensurate with a deeply embedded value system operating in British academic culture, which took its cue from the concept of 'educere', drawing out the students' inner resources, to help her/him reach her/his full potential. What we are focusing on in this paper is speech act exchanges motivated by this value system, and relating them to the different value system operating in Japanese tutor-student interaction.

The salient values are: i) achievement processed by quantity and quality; ii) emphasis on critical analysis; and iii) inquiry as a positive impetus to development.

These three values concur with the structural organization of the tutorial on the one hand, and interact with the sociopolitical power structure operating between the tutor and the student, on the other. For example, the extent of achievement since a previous tutorial session is a typical issue discussed in the opening phase of a tutorial; critical analysis of the work and expressions of doubts, questions, worries, etc. concerning the present work are encouraged in the central phase; and the tutorial

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Gumperz (1972). In his use of the term 'activity type', Levinson was concerned to include a variety of activities including those where language played a less prominent role, such as a soccer match or a game of cricket. His point was that the communicative acts linguistically encoded in these contexts were only decipherable in conjunction with an understanding of the rules of the game. More recently, the notion of genre has loomed large in educational linguistics in Australia, e.g., Christie (1984), Martin (1985) and Kress (1989).

often ends with a reformulation of what has been discussed and/or confirmation of what is the best course of future action. These values and structures shape the main communicative purpose of the tutorial, i.e., to encourage and assess development in the work of the individual student.

The main communicative purpose determines the functions assigned to the tutor and the student. The function of the tutor is two-fold: to encourage the student and help him/her develop the work by making suggestions; or to help them clarify analytically what it is they are attempting to do. The principal function of the student is to justify what he/she is working on, in terms of its purpose and anticipated development, and to respond to the tutor's comments and advice. The speech acts appropriate to each of the purposes differ, as do their responses.

These functions are carried out against the backdrop of ideational topics germane to the discipline of the tutorial. These recurrent topics include:

1) the state of development of the work predicated on the amount of it, and the procedures used;
2) reference to other work in the field;
3) the student's own evaluation of his/her work;
4) possible future development of the student's work.
5) confirmation of mutual agreement between tutor and student on what should happen next.

Table 1 summarises the correspondence among the constitutive factors of the tutorial: the structure, guiding principles, values, speech acts, and recurrent topics.

STRUCTURES		ASSUMPTIONS		COMMUNICATION	
T∕S relation	tutorial session	prin-ciple	dominant values	typical speech acts	recurrent topics
institution status	opening	development	achievement	compliment, criticism	1)
T > S	central		analysis	demand, request, suggestion	1), 2), 3)
membership status			inquiry	elicitation, advice, suggestion,	4)
T = S	closing			confirmation	5)

T=Tutor,   S=Student

TABLE 1:   Constitutive Factors of the British Tutorial

All the above is tacit knowledge for the British tutor. However, it is not for the Japanese student, who has in most cases different knowledge about the power structure and values in education in general and in one-to-one tutorials in particular. Tutorials are not very common in the Japanese educational system, in which instruction is more directive than interactive in nature.   There is a larger power distance between teacher and student in Japan, where students expect teacher not only to guide the path to follow but also to initiate communication.   Education is more teacher-centred than student-centred, with structured learning schemes, clear goals, strict schedules, and detailed assignments.   In the British academic context, the tutors hold the power in terms of the institutional or political status, but students are treated as participant members in the discourse community from the beginning of their studies.   This leads to a mismatch of sociopragmatic assumptions about what is going on, as shown in the following examples.

3. EXAMPLES AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Data Collection

Data for the following analysis was gathered primarily by 21 videotaped fine art tutorial sessions between 3 British tutors and 20 Japanese and 1 British students. The length of the tutorial session varies from 15 minutes to 45 minutes. The English proficiency of the Japanese students ranged from intermediate to advanced level. The duration of their stay in England ranged from six months to two years. To substantiate further the analysis and explication, three other data elicitation methods were employed. They were retrospective interviews conducted with the informant students in their native language; separate focus group recordings on their understanding of the nature and purpose of the fine art tutorial made by Japanese and British fine art students; and discourse completion tests contextualising recurrent topics and conversational exchanges, administered to 23 Japanese and 15 British informants in English and 27 Japanese informants in Japanese.

The specific examples of difficulties discussed below were selected on the basis of the values which constitute the sociopragmatic background and which are manifested in the recurrent topics described in Section 2 and summarised in Table 1. Exchanges between the British tutor and the British student will be shown to point up differences where necessary.

3.2 Achievement

The opening phase of the tutorial usually hinges on recapitulation of the previous session (e.g., 'Remind me what we discussed last time', or 'so, let's just

recap; last time we talked about ..., and you were going to ....') and assessment of achievement made since then (e.g., 'Have you done a lot of drawings?'). These conform to the communicative purpose of the tutorial by focusing immediately on development. Achievement is processed by the tutor in terms of quantity and quality of the student's work, and the evaluation of achievement is manifested in such speech acts as compliments and criticisms.

The topic of the amount of work done for example, generates speech acts in bipolar opposition, depending on the quantity of work. On the one hand, there might be occasion for an implicit compliment in the form of a comment, e.g., 'You've done a lot of work'. On the other hand, a paucity of work would lead to disapprobation: 'There's not a lot of work here, is there?'

EXAMPLE 1

T (Tutor):	You've done a lot of work.
JS (Japanese Student):	I think so.
[Advanced; 2 years][2]	(videotaped tutorial)

The tutor's comment on the amount of work displayed on the walls of the studio where the tutorial took place was responded to by the Japanese student at its face value. He[3] did not take up the implicit illocutionary force of compliment. When shown a clip of his performance on the video in a retrospective interview, this student said that he had understood the utterance simply as a statement of fact. This was typical throughout the sample of Japanese informants in the discourse completion test, where a compliment was implicit as in the example above. In this example, the pragmalinguistic failure of compliment take-up is compounded by the non-comprehension of the sociopragmatic importance of quantity of work in the genre concerned. It was this quantity that promoted the compliment in the first place.[4]

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[2]Informant's level of English is advanced, and the duration of stay in Britain is two years at the time of video recording. This applies to all the bracketed information in further examples.

[3]This refers to an actual male student. Where the gender is restricted, it refers to the gender of the actual informant.

[4]Non-comprehension of the sociopragmatic importance of quantity of work in the genre is more prominent in the response to criticism by the Japanese students. Some even challenged this as follows:

Discussing the final exhibition of your work with your art tutor.
T: There's not a great deal of work here, is there?
JS: No, I don't think so, because it's not quantity but quality.
                                                            (discourse completion test)

Quantity in the discipline of fine art is not an end in itself, but a means of furthering the process of development. The inter-relationship between quantity, development, and hence quality forms the sociopragmatic backdrop to the giving of compliments, which as well as referring to the amount of work, also refer to time taken, e.g., 'mmm, that must have taken you a long time'; personal evaluation on the part of the tutor: 'I like this very much'; or probe further the physical process of creating the work: 'I'm interested in this piece. What material did you use?' These utterances are ambiguous as they could just work as simple statements or questions. For this reason, Japanese students tended not to acknowledge the compliments.[5]

The sociopragmatic understanding of this type of question can easily be lost in the cross-cultural situation where it may be interpreted simply in its morpho-syntactic manifestation as an information question as indicated in Example 2a, or it may be interpreted as a criticism of some sort but not as an implicit request forexplanation as shown in Example 2b.

EXAMPLE 2a

Discussing with the tutor the essay you have written about the work of a certain author.

T: When you wrote this [pointing to a particular sentence], were you implying that you agreed with the author or were you criticizing him?

JS: I was criticizing him.   (discourse completion test)

EXAMPLE 2b (with the same question by T)

JS: I'm sorry. I had written to intend to agree with him. (discourse completion test)

The contradiction formed by the alternative options in the either-or question suggests that the meaning of a student's sentence in his/her essay is unclear. Japanese students often make an appropriate linguistic response by saying which of the alternatives they meant, but they tend not to take up the indirect illocutionary force of a criticism (Example 2a), nor the implicit request for analytical explanation about why the sentence sounded ambiguous (Example 2b).

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[5] It became apparent from the discourse completion tests and subsequent discussion with British students that they felt uncomfortable responding to compliments from tutors. They did not wish to appear over-confident if they took up the compliment, and yet had to make response. This was often a simple 'yes', successfully completing the exchange without dwelling on it.

Failure to take up implicit criticism has more far-reaching effects than the failure to take up compliments. Whereas tutors may be content with no further elaboration on the theme of the compliment, possibly in recognition of students' embarrassment (see fn. 5), they do expect criticism to be met with some kind of redress. This is usually a defence, such as the existence of mitigating circumstances; a justification, i.e., some inherently plausible reason why something was not done, done differently, etc.; or an apology, often in combination with mitigating circumstances. One of the most obvious reasons why such expectations are often not met by Japanese students operates at the pragmalinguistic level. They do not take up criticism because they have not understood the illocutionary force of the indirect speech acts promoting it.

This pragmalinguistic difficulty, however, is compounded by wider sociopragmatic ramifications. What makes implicit criticism more difficult to take up by the Japanese students is that in the British academic context, despite holding the power, tutors are unlikely to express it directly or if they do make a matter-of-fact statement, it is softened with a tag, implying shared knowledge, as in the above example.[6] The implicit expression of criticism is ultimately a face-saving device for the student, and may even be put across in a jocular manner. In the terminology of Brown and Levinson (1987: 70), an utterance such as 'you might want to try from a different angle', or 'it seems to me you need to do a lot of drawing' is an 'on-record face-threatening act with positive politeness redressive action'. The student's positive face wants are attended to in so far as their in-group membership of the fine art discourse community is not threatened.

This egalitarian understanding of tutor-student roles whereby the student is treated as a responsible, although inexperienced, member of the discourse community, conflicts with the hierarchical instantiation of tutor-student roles in Japan, an instantiation that Japanese students will be familiar with and therefore schematically expect in their encounters with tutors. Japanese students are likely to be working on the assumption that tutors will give more direct instruction about the development and more explicit evaluation of the product such as, 'you should change here like this', or 'this isn't good enough'. This conforms to the findings of Takahashi and Beebe in their study of the speech act of correction in Japanese speakers (Takahashi and Beebe 1993: 144). Their evidence showed that when a person of higher status (a professor) is correcting someone in a lower position (a student), the Japanese tend to use a direct speech act of correction with less frequent

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[6]Only if the student has shown a cumulative disregard for the academic requirements of a course, is disapprobation likely to be expressed directly, and in such a case it would be done formally and in writing.

use of internal modifiers or positive remarks, and therefore the correction sounds much more authoritarian than the American counterpart.

As well as the mismatch of expectations in terms of how tutors will linguistically express their authority, there is the additional difficulty of sociopragmatic transfer of familiar communication strategies. In this case, Japanese students are unlikely to have the communicative strategy of responding to criticism by giving excuses or analytical explanations because such response strategies themselves are generally not regarded as appropriate in Japanese social interaction. This conforms to the results of the Japanese discourse completion test, in which Japanese students tend not to give reasons, justifications, or analytical elaboration when responding to criticism. Hiraga and Turner (1996), by looking at the responses to criticisms and suggestions in the British and the Japanese academic settings, also showed that while the British students are primarily defenders, dealing with their own face wants by giving justifications based on analytical elaboration, the Japanese students are conciliators, showing more concern for attending the positive face of the tutor by admitting their shortcomings with no strong inclination to self-defence. This tendency of withholding justification or reserving excuses in a response to criticism may be seen as a politeness strategy of maintaining one's position in relation to others in the group. In Japan giving justification is considered too defensive of one's own territory, thereby jeopardising the maintenance of one's relative position with regard to other members of the group.[7]

3.3. Analysis

In the central phase of the tutorial, the tutor persistently attempts to elicit the students' critical analysis of their own work, because it is presupposed that analytical thinking and its verbalisation are required for development in Britain. The grammatical forms of the prompts addressed by the tutor may vary from imperatives, wh-questions, yes/no questions, tag questions, either/or questions, hypothetical questions, to comments, and they realise various speech acts including invitations, requests, compliments, implicit criticisms, suggestions and advice. These speech acts determine to a great extent the kind of pragmalinguistic elaboration that is required. Yet, their main purpose in the tutorial on the sociopragmatic level is to elicit elaboration, what might be broadly termed critical appraisal. This means that

[7]The concept of Japanese face in terms of the discernment of one's relative position in a group is explained in more depth in the politeness literature, e.g., Matsumoto (1988) and Ide (1989), in which they claim that 'acknowledgment and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual's proper territory, governs all social interaction (Matsumoto 1988: 405)' in Japanese culture.

practically every question or comment by the tutor, no matter how simple, is eliciting analysis and evaluation, in the interests of development.

However, as the purpose of elaboration for critical appraisal is mostly implicit rather than explicitly outlined in the prompts, it is an area of particular difficulty for Japanese students, who have been educated under different educational systems. In Japanese academic settings, the focus of learning puts more emphasis on gaining factual knowledge or following the teacher's instruction.[8] Traditionally, the learning process tended to be one of following the master. The follower watched and imitated the master. The point is that careful examination and analysis of the master's way, that is *doh* or 'tao', would accumulate development, and as a result, the 'following' student would gradually become a full member of the particular academic community. This is well characterised in the word 'apprenticeship'. 'Apprentice' in 'apprenticeship' is literally *minarai* in Japanese, which is a compound word of *miru* 'to watch, or to observe' and *narau* 'to learn, or to follow'. This is still a latent undercurrent in many phases of teacher-student interactions (see Rudolph 1994, for example), and we see it break out in a rather extreme form in cross-cultural situations.

The expectation of critical analysis in the British tutorial is at work in exchanges where the tutor is making alternative suggestions for the presentation of the work, or references to work by other artists, as well as when students are evaluating their own work. As with criticism, suggestions and recommendations tend to be made implicitly rather than explicitly. Students also have an inherent right to reject any suggestions made, providing they can give arguments for the approach they wish to follow. The implicit nature of suggestions is often realised in hypothetical scenarios, as in Example 3.

EXAMPLE 3

You are not very happy with the suggestion your tutor makes regarding your work.

T: It might be a good idea to suspend it from the ceiling rather than fix it to the wall. You would then be able to walk all the way round it and see it from different angles.

JS: That sounds good, but I would like to fix my work to the wall.

(discourse completion test)

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[8] For discussion on the relationship between cognitive models and sociopragmatic dynamics, see Turner and Hiraga 1996b. For the underlying cognitive models in Japanese learning, see Hiraga 1995.

What is in effect being suggested is quite a fundamental shift in how the work is being presented, that is three-dimensionally rather than two-dimensionally. However, this shift is not voiced explicitly in linguistic terms, as in for example: 'I think you should try working in three-dimensions, because your work seems to suggest this'. This is because the actual analysis occurs visually. The verbalisation presupposes this visual analysis. Rather than documenting the visual analysis, it demands a response to it. The above student exercises the right to refute the tutor's suggestion, but does not do so in visually analytical terms. S/he therefore appears stubborn rather than receptive to constructive advice. This does not mean that constructive advice or criticism must be accepted, but that a refutation must be reasoned according to visual criteria rather than a personal 'liking'.

Difficulties in understanding the illocutionary force of suggestion can occur at the pragmalinguistic level, but even more important and more difficult cross-culturally is the sociopragmatic understanding of the motivation for the suggestions as the above example shows. It seems that although the students are requested to verbalise the analysis and elaborate the justification, Japanese students are unaware of the tutor's expectation and the different degree of emphasis of the sociopragmatic values in British and Japanese academic settings.

The closed question form in Example 4 entails the demand for elaboration or further analysis relevant to the question.

EXAMPLE 4
In the middle of a tutorial on your art work, the tutor asks about the work of a contemporary artist.
T: Are you familiar with the work of (any artist you know) ?
JS: Yes, I am familiar with the work of X.   (discourse completion test)

Questions relating to the work of other artists are probing students' wider awareness of work in the field and inviting them to comment on aspects of other works that have or could have particular relevance to their own interests. A simple affirmation of knowledge, as in the student's response in the completion test leaves a gap where there should be analysis. Much fuller answers tended to occur in the discourse completion tests done by native speakers, even though they were speaking in the abstract, as the following example shows: 'Yes, I saw her exhibition last week at Y Gallery. Although she is not my favorite, I know she has influenced my work, particularly in respect of Z'. This shows that, in academic settings, the expectation to elaborate is felt even where the elicitation cue is minimal, as with the simple yes/no question form.

Example 5 below illustrates the tutor's probing the student's ability to

critically analyse her work by using a hypothetical question.   Here the tutor is attempting to get the student to pin down which of the twelve painted canvases she thinks are better than the others. She is reluctant to do this, seeing the twelve as one work. However, the tutor's question is not about itemising the canvases, but about the visual processes that are realised in them, for example, their relationship with space and depth. He wants her really to make a judgment on that level, and to this end concocts a rather elaborate scenario about a threat to put all but four of them on a bonfire.

EXAMPLE 5

T: Which is the best one?

JS: Mm, I can't say that because,-

T: Which is the worst one?

        ....

T: Are there any that are not here because they were no good?

        ....

T: Are there any of these which have not been put on the wall because you did
        not think they were very good? Have you done any that failed?

JS: Just .. these...

T: I'm really trying to find out how you can distinguish between something
        which enables you to say, 'I like this more than that; this is the way for
        ward, this is the way to go'.

JS: Mm-m.

T: They're not all of the same value.

JS: Yeah?

T: Understand? ... Mm, if we were to say, I'm going to ask you to choose four...

JS: Mm-m.

T: Let's say. And I've got a big bonfire over here, I've got a big fire, over here,-

JS: Mm, right.

T: And I'm going to put eight of them on the fire. And save four.

JS: Mm-m.

T: Right, and you're going to be very sad.

JS: MM.

T: Because your work is going on the fire. Which four would we keep?

JS: Mm-m.

T: Which four? Show me.

JS: I cannot choose.

T: Yes, you can. You must.

JS: Why do you know, why do you want to know that? Because, ...

T: Because it will tell me something.

JS: ..Mm. It's a universe, they're part of the universe. I like to show, ..eh, construction,-

T: ... But, but if you say, 'because I made it, it therefore is OK,-'

JS: Mm-m.

T: You will never develop any .. critique.

[Intermediate; 6 months]   (videotaped tutorial)

The demand for elaboration comes from the sociopragmatic values of the genre which presuppose the demonstration of process and critique. In the cross-cultural situation with Japanese students, it is a strategy that seldom succeeds. If the student in the above example, although her personality of stubbornness is more or less related to the problem here, was conscious or aware of the values of taking other perspectives and giving a critical analysis and evaluation of her own work, the communication would have been more successful and would have led to the point of the tutor.

After four moves where the tutor prompts elaboration by carefully targeted questions which implicitly leave the student space, to be filled in a way appropriate to the student, that is in terms of her justification for her answer to the question, the fifth move is more direct by a 'bald-on-record' statement about the motivation for the question: 'I'm really trying to find out how you can distinguish....' The importance of distinguishing the 'best' or the 'worst' or the already discarded work is not in the identification of a particular work, although this is the immediate face value of the question, but in the opportunity it affords the student to make a visual analysis and determine how the work should progress. For example, should it be to work more specifically in three dimensions, or to look at different means of treating perspective? The tutor makes a further explicit statement about the work: 'They're not all of the same value.' After making this bald statement, he resumes his quest of getting the student to evaluate the different paintings by setting up the bonfire scenario and inviting her to save four of the twelve paintings. When the student still resists, he eventually reveals the rationale for his questioning, which encapsulates the rationale for the fine art tutorial: The development of a critique. The fact that this 'revelation' works as a kind of dramatic denouement in this extract, bears witness to the extent that the expectation of critique is taken for granted. The tutor does not really expect to have to spell it out. What it also reveals is the importance of the student being able to make the evaluation. It is obvious that the tutor is clear about which ones he thinks are better, but that is not as important as the student being able to see for herself, by understanding the visual criteria at stake.

We have also analysed the ways in which the British and the Japanese students

elaborate in response to their tutor's prompts for elaboration addressed in the form
of comments and questions.   Their results showed that the British students
elaborated differently from the Japanese counterparts in terms of the type, the
frequency and the choice of strategies.   The British students employed analytical
elaboration strategies, such as delimiting, comparative, and evaluative strategies, up
to more than four times as much as the Japanese students, per person, per situation,
whereas the British group used at least 50% fewer non-analytical strategies, such as
technical, personal, informative, reconciling and committing strategies, than the
Japanese groups in most situations.   The notable differences in the choice of
strategies were a wider and a more frequent use of the comparative strategy by the
British informants, and a wider use of technical and personal strategies by the
Japanese informants.   Moreover, the reconciling and the committing strategies were
deployed exclusively by the Japanese informants.   These results suggest that the lack
of analytical elaboration by the Japanese students in the British context is a transfer
from their native sociopragmatic assumptions (for further discussion, see Hiraga and
Turner 1995, Turner and Hiraga 1996a).

3.4 Inquiry

A useful strategy of inquiry is to locate areas of uncertainty and attempt to
voice them.   Voicing uncertainty is consonant with the generally dialectical process
of development.   For example, clarity can result from an awareness of what is not
clear. In verbalising problems, issues become clearer and the tutor can also help this
process of clarification by suggesting other possibilities or reducing a proliferation of
interests by suggesting that the student concentrate on one particular aspect or mode
of presentation.   Unlike the above instances in 3.3, where the speech acts requiring
analysis are usually indirect, the invitation to voice uncertainty may be made explicitly.

Japanese students seldom take the initiative to ask clarification questions of a
developmental or exploratory sort, possibly because they are not accustomed to this
kind of tutor-student interaction.   The tendency to nod, or affirm what the tutor is
saying, conforms to a different patterning of tutor-student exchanges in Japanese,
where the likelihood is that the tutor will be instructing or imparting information
which the student is acknowledging, without a great necessity to say very much.   In
cases where Japanese students do have questions, they tend to be of a technical
nature, inquiries about opening times of the studio, or availability of the workshops
and so on.   More fundamental questions about the future development of their work
such as 'my ideas seem very divided, does that matter?' or 'do you really think I
should continue with my installation project?' seldom occur.   This would seem to
suggest that they are not fully aware of the sociopragmatic value of uncertainty and
the acceptability of voicing it.

The importance of uncertainty in the dialectical process of development in the British context, and the reluctance to voice uncertainty in the Japanese context, seems to correlate with the measure of 'uncertainty avoidance'[9] in different cultures researched in organisational sociology (Hofstede 1986, 1991). Whilst Japan rates as a high 'uncertainty avoidance' culture, Britain rates as a low one. It would seem that behavioural aspects of avoiding uncertainty bear some relationship to the kinds of speech acts expected in negotiating certainty and uncertainty. While the negotiation of uncertainty is prevalent in tutor-student interaction in the British academic context, to the extent that uncertainty itself appears prominently as a topic, Japanese tutor-student interaction appears to be predicated on certainty, the one who knows is 'followed' by the one who wants to know.

This difference in emphasis is reflected also in questions encouraging students to anticipate future developments. This is particularly apparent as the tutorial winds down. At this stage, tutors tend to ask such questions as 'is there anything else that you need to tell me about?' 'do you have anything to ask me?' or simply, 'do you have any questions?' Both cultures use the same closing strategy or a variant thereof as in Example 6 but its function in the Japanese setting is purely formulaic, whereas in the British setting it can be either formulaic, that is functioning as a pre-closing move, or a genuine inquiry, as although the student has had ample opportunity to voice any anxieties during the main part of the tutorial, there may be a residual query.

EXAMPLE 6

T: Is there anything that you want to tell me?
JS: No.
T: Are you sure?
JS: Yes.
[Intermediate; 6 months]   (videotaped tutorial)

The most typical response of the Japanese students is just to say 'no' to the question. This response often gives the tutor the impression that s/he does not understand the implication of the question and leads him to further seek the agreement from the student by saying, 'Are you sure?' Or it may suggest a lack of commitment, even though the students may simply be stating the truth. This, however, depends very much on what has gone on in the tutorial up to this point. The sociopragmatic import of the question is that it is an opportunity, and not just a

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[9]The measure of 'uncertainty avoidance' is defined as 'the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations' (Hofstede 1991: 113).

convention.

As the British tutors tend to treat students as full, though inexperienced members of the discourse community, they have an egalitarian attitude towards them. This makes itself felt in what may be termed a recapitulation exchange which frequently occurs towards the end of a tutorial. Tutors are likely to seek confirmation that everything relevant has been said and to seek agreement on what has been discussed or decided during the course of the tutorial. This is the case in Example 7.

EXAMPLE 7

T: Let me just recap. Perhaps the principle change in your thinking has been a shift from what you call hard shapes to soft shapes.

JS: Yes. First I was drawing with a ruler but now I am drawing without anything.

T: Is there anything that you need to ask me about the next two terms here?

JS: I want to know how to use ...?

[Advanced; 2 years]   (videotaped tutorial)

In the move after the recapitulation exchange, the tutor is in effect leading the student towards a verbalisation of how she perceives further progress. If there is a question, the tutor's expectation is that it will be constructive, based on what they have already discussed, or a rehearsal of future plans. In fact, this student simply asked about something very practical.

This type of scenario expecting confirming, reformulating, or rehearsing moves from the student in the final phase of a tutorial is unlikely to occur in a Japanese academic setting. The Japanese tutor might ask if the student has any more questions, but is unlikely to expect one. The move is seen as signalling the end of the tutor-student interaction, a move with which the student is likely to concur by politely saying nothing.

Such 'confirmation' exchanges reflect the difference between the egalitarian and authoritarian modes of interaction between tutors and students. In the British context, the purpose of seeking confirmation from the student is to afford him or her maximum inquiry space to consolidate any analysis, test the possibility of new ideas, or allay any anxiety in the interests of further development. In the Japanese context, it is to confirm that the students have understood what the tutor has told them.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, we have looked at the pragmatic difficulties deriving from two relevant areas of sociopragmatic structuring: the patterns of interaction generated by

tutor-student power relationship and the differing emphasis placed on achievement, analysis and inquiry in the assessment of students' development.[10]

Firstly, tutor-student interactive patterns in the two cultures reflect the differing power distance between tutor and students. Although tutors have a higher institutional status than students in both cultures, British tutors tend to regard students as full members of the discourse community, whereas their Japanese counterparts treat them as non-members. This leads to an egalitarian interaction in the British context, in which face-threatening acts towards students are addressed implicitly and students are encouraged to exercise their critical appraisal and to voice inquiries, worries, and doubts; on the other hand, an authoritarian interaction is more prevalent in the Japanese context, where students' face is not attended to as much as the tutors' and they are expected to follow instructions rather than to criticise or to explore on their own.

Secondly, the dominant values behind the assessment of students' performance and progress are interpreted differently in Britain and Japan. Three values we have isolated in relation to tutorial interaction -- achievement, analysis, and inquiry -- are differently perceived in the British and the Japanese contexts. Therefore, they tend to manifest themselves with a different focus or emphasis in the sociopragmatic dynamics of tutorial interaction. In Britain, achievement is measured by dialectical development, whereas in Japan by cumulative mastery. Analysis is evaluated through independent evaluation and critique in Britain, and through careful execution of requirements in Japan. Inquiry is encouraged in Britain as uncertainty is a positive process and the students are expected to question, while in Japan on the whole certainty is preferred and the students are expected to concur.

The study has shown that for an understanding of the sociopragmatic assumptions operating in spoken interaction in the British academic context, it is necessary to draw on and interrelate the working of deep-set cultural proclivities with the speech acts used. Where these sociopragmatic assumptions are operating in a situation of cross-cultural communication with Japanese students, a different set of deep-set cultural proclivities are operating for the students, and sometimes, these are diametrically opposed to what is expected. It is claimed that framing the speech acts within structures operating differently in each culture, and in turn framing those structures within a specific genre, with its own communicative rationale, is a valid means of gaining access to explanations at the sociopragmatic level. It is further claimed that the genre analytical approach with its potential for making

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[10]This conforms to what the students described in retrospective interviews and in the focus group recordings on their understanding of the nature and purpose of the fine art tutorial.

clear both the pragmalinguistic demands of recurring speech acts and their sociopragmatic motivation, could be profitably introduced into the mainstream of second language acquisition pedagogy.

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