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Criterial Pragmalinguistic Features of Requestive Speech Acts Produced by Japanese Learners of English

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate how Japanese learners of English develop their pragmalinguistic competence using a cross-sectional method by extracting the criterial pragmalinguistic features of requestive speech acts produced by Japanese learners of English at the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR) A1, A2, and B2 levels. The author identified the linguistic patterns of requests in shopping role-play tasks from the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) Japanese Learner English (JLE) Corpus, revising the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding scheme developed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). While A1 and A2 learners were given a general purchasing task, B1 learners were given a negotiation task. Derived from the chi-square tests, the results reported significant differences in the occurrences of particular features among the proficiency levels. A1 learners produced significantly higher ratios of ellipses, phrases with topic-comment structures (e.g., "Color is brown."), and declarative statements without any use of tense inflections and modal verbs than A2 learners did, where modality, such as *will* and *would like*, and conventionalised patterns, such as "Do you have/Are there…?", started to appear. B1 learners produced the use of *can* and *could* in interrogatives three times more than A2 learners did. Although the criterial features distinguishing proficiency levels were statistically obtained, it was not clear how much the task difference determined the choice of the pragmalinguistic features of requests: B1 learners may have been more concerned with face-threatening acts (FTA) and tended to be more indirect than A2 learners.

Keywords

Interlanguage pragmatics, corpus pragmatics, requestive speech acts, criterial pragmalinguistic features, manual annotation schemes

1. Introduction

Although corpus pragmatics is described as a new discipline by Milá-Garcia (2018), a growing number of corpus-based pragmatic studies have been conducted to date. Romero-Trillo (2008a; 2008b; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016) edited a series of the "Yearbook of corpus linguistics and pragmatics" and a journal of "Corpus pragmatics: international journal of corpus linguistics and pragmatics" and Rühlemann and Aijmer (2015) published an edited handbook, "Corpus pragmatics: handbook." The pioneering work on corpus-based speech acts can also be found in Aijmer (1996), who investigated the conversational routines and realisations of speech acts, such as thanking, apologies, requests, and offers, in the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, and in Adolphs (2008), who examined the speech act verbs of suggestions including *why don't you X* in the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English.

However, there has been minimal work conducted in the area of corpus-based interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), except for the studies on discourse markers (e.g. Aijmer, 2008; Buysse, 2012; 2014, Fung and Carter, 2007; Gilquin, 2008; Müller, 2004; 2005, Romero-Trillo, 2002; Shimada, 2014), where researchers extracted "lexical words or constructions which previous pragmatic analyses have shown to have recurring pragmatic functions" (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015, p. 9).

In the study of corpus pragmatics, the biggest challenge facing researchers is the treatment of form-function mismatches (Adolphs, 2008; Knight & Adolphs, 2008; O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011) since "for most pragmatic phenomena there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function" (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015, p. 10).

In the current study, the author attempted to conduct a "function-to-form" analysis (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015, p. 9), where she first identified requests through careful manual readings and annotated the linguistic forms used to perform the requestive functions in the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) Japanese Learner English (JLE) Corpus. Her aim was to observe the learners' pragmatic development using a cross-sectional method, where learner data with different levels of proficiency were contrasted.

2. Interlanguage Pragmatics and Corpora

In the area of ILP, the most prevalent data collection method has been discourse completion tasks (DCTs), where target speech acts were directly elicited from subjects mostly in written formats (Adolphs, 2008; Archer, Aijmer, & Wichmann, 2012; Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). The ILP studies on requestive

speech acts produced by learners at different proficiency levels based on the DCTs were conducted by Trosborg (1995), Hill (1997), Rose (2000; 2009), and Flores Salgado (2011). Sell, Rentkwitz, Sickinger, and Schneider (2019) noted that "DCT data represents [*sic*] informants' expectations and prototypes for appropriate verbal behaviour" (p. 109). However, the DCT method has been criticised for not providing authentic discourse in real situations (e.g. Archer et al., 2012, p. 15; Leech, 2014), even though there are arguments that DCTs are more suitable for controlling the social parameters involved with participants' roles and situations in given tasks (e.g. relative power and social distance; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006).

Vyatkina and Cunningham (2015) stated that "Increasingly, ILP researchers are able to learn more about how L2 learners develop their abilities to communicate effectively and appropriately in specific social settings by investigating and exploring the various texts housed in learner corpora." Callies (2013) also noted that "learner corpora… can help overcome several problems and limitations posed by the dominance of data elicitation techniques to date," providing "results that may be viewed as more reliable, valid, and generalizable across populations without the lack of authenticity and replicability" (p. 16). The current study aimed to show whether learner corpora can allow the author to supplement or re-examine the findings on learners' pragmatic development derived from the past DCTs studies by providing a quantitative source (Granger, 2002).

2.1 What are pragmalinguistic criterial features?

Criterial features are defined as "properties of learner English that are characteristic and indicative of L2 proficiency at each of the levels and that distinguish higher levels from lower levels" in a project called the English Profile Programme (EPP), which aimed to specify the reference levels in the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR) for English (Hawkins & Filipović, 2012, p. 11). Criterial features can be further distinguished into "transitional features" (p. 20), "positive criterial features" (p. 20), and "negative criterial features" (p. 25). "Transitional features" are either those unique to a certain proficiency level or those appearing at a particular level and persisting to adjacent higher level(s). Positive criterial features are those with "the correct linguistic properties" and negative ones are those with "incorrect properties or errors." Both show "a characteristic frequency" occurring at a certain level and generally persisting across all higher levels (p. 25).

Pragmatic competence is composed of pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence (Chang, 2011; Kasper & Roever, 2015; Leech, 2014). Taguchi

(2012) defined the former as "linguistic resources available for performing language functions" and the latter as "a language user's assessment of the context in which those linguistic resources are implemented" (p. 2). Corpora can allow researchers to retrieve only surface linguistic forms (Archer, Culpeper, & Davies, 2008), so that corpus pragmatics deals with the surface observations of lexico-grammatical patterns (Clancy & O'Keefe, 2015). Therefore, the present study only focused on requestive realisations in surface forms or the pragmalinguistic features of requestive speech acts. Miura (2017) actually suggested the difficulty of applying learner corpora to assessments of learners' sociopragmatic competence.

2.2 The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding scheme

The section on research design describes how the author identified and classified the pragmalinguistic features of requests, revising a framework called the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding scheme by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), which has been the most influential and widely used methodological framework in empirical speech act research to date (e.g. Sell et al., 2019).

According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the core of the request sequence is identified as a *head act* as the minimal unit. Thus, head acts are realised by prototypical forms, such as imperative (e.g. "*Leave* me alone."), modal verbs expressing intention (e.g. "I *must/have to* ask you to clean the kitchen right now."), suggestion, (e.g. "How about cleaning up the kitchen?"), ability (e.g. "*Can* I borrow your notes?"), and strong hints ("You have left the kitchen in a right mess"). The requests can also be divided into three different strategies: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies depending on the lexico-grammatical forms used in the head acts. The first two forms of the aforementioned examples belong to the group of direct strategy, the third and fourth examples are conventionally indirect strategies, and the last request is categorised as non-conventionally indirect. According to Blum-Kulka (1982), "certain forms habitually used to perform certain acts become the conventional ways for performing these acts" (p. 32). For example, the sentences of suggestion and ability are usually recognised as conventionalised requests rather than as literal questions.

The CCSARP coding scheme has also been applied to investigating requestive speech acts in ILP by many researchers (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Sasaki, 1998; Barron, 2005; Lundell & Erman, 2012), including scholars exploring learners' request at different proficiency levels (e.g. Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012; Flores Salgado, 2011; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000; 2009). Many of these studies were based on

DCT methods. On the other hand, critical views of the CCSARP coding scheme in terms of its categorisations and treatment of politeness have also been expressed (e.g. Aijmer, 1996; Culpeper & Haugh, 2014; Leech, 2014; Wierzicka, 1991).

The current study adopted the CCSARP coding scheme. From the perspective of a corpus-based approach, the CCSARP is useful for the identification, categorisation, and retrieval of the formal properties of requestive speech acts. Archer et al. (2008) noted that the CCSARP coding scheme provides "well-established" (p. 634) "manual segmentation of speech act phenomena" for corpus pragmatics (pp. 633–634). In terms of ILP, the CCSARP coding scheme has been predominant in the past studies on learners' requests. Kasper and Rose (2002) proposed five stages of requests based on the longitudinal studies conducted by Achiba (2003), who observed her 7-year-old daughter, and Ellis (1992), who investigated two immigrant boys in a British school. As Table 1 shows, the characteristics that described each stage were mainly syntactic and lexical forms, and the concept of conventionality was included.

Table 1 Five stages of requests (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 140)

Stage	Characteristics	Examples
1. Pre-basic	Highly context-dependent, no syntax, no relational goals	"Me no blue," "Sir."
2. Formulaic	Reliance on unanalysed formulas and imperatives	"Let's eat breakfast."
3. Updating	Formulas incorporated into productive language use, shift to conventional indirectness	"Can you pass the pencil please?"
4. Pragmatic expansion	Addition of new forms to pragmalinguistic repertoire, increased use of mitigation, more complex syntax	"Could I have another chocolate because my children – I have five children."
5. Fine-tuning	Fine-tuning of requestive force to participants, goals and contexts	"You could put some blue tack down there."

Further, in their study comparing speech acts elicited from the role play and the written discourse, Rintell and Mitchell (1989) noted that the CCSARP coding scheme "does

provide a means of differentiating among many types of linguistic choices within each component of the full response" (p. 253). They first created their own coding scheme but eventually decided to adopt the original scheme.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research questions

The present study addresses the following research question: what are the criterial pragmalinguistic features that can be used to distinguish significantly between A1 and A2 learners' requestive speech acts as well as those of A2 and B1 learners? The study excluded learners at the SST Levels 1 and 2 (equivalent to the Pre-A1), and 9 (equivalent to the B2.1 to C2) since the number of subjects in each proficiency level to the total numbers in the target corpus accounted for only 0.23%, 2.73%, and 3.12%, respectively. This made it difficult to obtain sufficient numbers of occurrences of extracted pragmalinguistic features to conduct chi-square tests. Thus, Tono (2013) mentioned that about 80% of Japanese learners of English are assessed as A-level learners in Japan.

3.2 Data: The NICT JLE Corpus

The NICT JLE Corpus contains written transcripts of oral interview data produced by approximately 1,200 Japanese EFL learners who took the Standard Speaking Test (SST). The SST has five stages, the completion of which takes approximately 15 minutes: (1) answering warm-up questions (3–4 minutes), (2) describing a single picture (2–3 minutes), (3) participating in a role play with the interlocutor, who is a trained Japanese-speaking interviewer, (4) narrating picture sequences (2–3 minutes), and (5) answering questions that aim to wind down the test-taker's tension (1–2 minutes). In the current study, only learner production of the role play with the task of shopping at stage 3 was investigated. There are three different difficulties in the task: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. In the Beginner and Intermediate tasks, the interlocutor played the role of a shop assistant while the interviewee was a customer. The former tasks required the learner to purchase a particular item at a shop by asking the price, quantity, method of payment, and so on. On the other hand, the learner was given a negotiation task where they asked for a refund or an exchange of the purchased item.

In the current study, learners at the original SST levels were grouped into the CEFR levels for the future convenience of comparing the results with the ones derived from other studies on learners at different proficiencies. The CEFR is now commonly used worldwide (e.g. Aikawa, 2013; Nakatani, 2013; Negishi, 2013). Thus, categorising the

extracted pragmalinguistic features in a broader range of proficiency levels led to obtaining a sufficient number of occurrences of the particular features for identifying the significant differences (i.e. *criteriality*) between proficiency levels in statistical analyses, such as chi-square tests. The alignment was based on the work of Tschirner and Bärenfänger (2012) and Kaneko and Izumi (2012). Tschirner and Bärenfänger (2012) reported clear correspondences between of the CEFR ratings to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Oral Proficiency Interview by computer (OPIc). The alignment was conducted by six experienced tester trainers and testers of the German language for the European Language Certificates (telc). They also affirmed that the findings were also relevant to English as one of the telc suite of languages because of high inter-rater reliability across languages among the telc tester trainers. The SST was developed for Japanese learners of English in Japan based on the ACTFL OPI. Kaneko and Izumi (2012) asked six SST evaluators to assign SST levels to the CEFR-based framework for ELT in Japan (CEFR-J). See Tono (2013) for the description of CEFR and CEFR-J alignment.

As Table 2 shows, 68 A1 learners and 114 A2 learners with a general purchasing task and 66 B1 learners with a negotiation task were investigated in this study. Which of the tasks to be given from three different difficulties was determined by the interlocutor (i.e. interviewer) by estimating a learner's (i.e. interviewee's) proficiency at the start of the interview. Therefore, the NICT JLE Corpus contains neither A1 and A2 learners given a negotiation task nor B1 learners given a general purchasing task. It was impossible to extract requests from the same tasks among different proficiency levels, although it is highly likely that the functions of the requests produced were influenced by the kinds of tasks given to the learners.

Table 2 The SST and CEFR levels, and the number of learners, tokens, and average tokens per file for the three proficiency groups

CEFR Level	A1	A2	B1
Correspondent SST levels	Level 3	Levels 4 & 5	Levels 6, 7, & 8
Given tasks	Beginner and Intermediate	Intermediate	Advanced
Number of learners (i.e. files)	68	114	66
Tokens (including those	48,421	105,909	115,206

of interlocutors)			
Average tokens per file	712.07	929.03	1745.55

3.3 The annotation schemes in the current study

In the current study, the author revised the CCSARP coding scheme to fit into the target learner data by identifying patterns which were learner-specific and context/situation-dependent features, as Table 3 shows. As Rintell and Mitchell (1989) noted, "the CCSARP coding scheme would not be sensitive to the novel ways in which learners use language" (p. 253). The *novel* utterances were frequently observed in the NICT JLE Corpus since the target learners in the present study contained data from lower-proficiency learners. Thus, the author added new categories, which may have been specific to shopping situations.

The present study adopted the "function-to-form" analysis that starts with the identification of a function followed by an investigation of the forms (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015, p. 9), in contrast with "form-to-function," evident in studies, such as Adolphs (2008), and research on discourse markers previously mentioned in the Introduction section. With the use of the UAM CorpusTool (UAMCT) (O'Donnell, 2012), the author manually annotated requestive speech acts while reading the contexts and identifying the "illocutional force indicating devices" (IFIDs) of the requests (Searle, 1969, p. 30). IFIDs are "the formal devices of an utterance used to signal its illocutionary force" (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014, p. 168). As discussed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), who proposed the CCSARP coding scheme, requests can be classified into (conventionally and non-conventionally) indirect strategies when they are not directly realised as explicit lexical or syntactic forms. The surface forms of the requestive speech acts were unavailable for retrieval from the corpus in concordance lines unless the requestive functions were annotated based on manual readings.

As Table 3 shows, the requests were classified into direct, conventionally indirect, or not-classifiable depending on the choice of pragmalinguistic features. Non-conventionally indirect strategies (e.g. hints) were excluded from the analyses since direct access to the speakers were unavailable for confirming the intentions of their utterances. All examples are shown with the speakers' levels of proficiency, such as A1, A2, and B1. Learner-specific patterns, such as statement, yes, independent politeness marker, and not-classifiable, contained unsuitable lexico-grammatical features. Examples from the statement category had all IFIDs, showing the speakers' desire or request of a particular colour (i.e. explanation) (e.g. "And its color is black"), purchase

(e.g. "I take it"), and testing some item (i.e. trial) (e.g. "Oh I try to uu this one…"). While the first example was syntactically acceptable, it had a topic-comment structure influenced by the learners' mother tongue, Japanese, so that it sounded less fluent in English. The last two syntactic patterns without modal verbs or tense inflections were unsuitable because the present tense exhibits a habitual activity (as in *I buy some bread in a bakery every Thursday*). The categories of yes and independent politeness marker functioned as requestive responses to the offers made by the interlocutor. Not-classifiable patterns were not categorised as either a direct or conventionally indirect strategy due to the lack of lexico-grammatical features to be identified. However, their IFIDs were identified as the following table shows the interpreted intention of the speakers in brackets. In addition, existence and intention are conventionally indirect requests that were specific to shopping situations. Drawing on Leech's critical comment on indirect categorisation in the CCSARP, which actually included some "highly conventionalised" requests (Leech, 2014, p. 143) (e.g. "Got a pen?"), recurrent patterns of existence (e.g. "Do you have..?," "Is there another..?," and "I'm looking for…") and intention (e.g. "I will…," "I like…," "I decided…," and "I come here to…") were identified.

Table 3 Annotation scheme for identifying pragmalinguistic patterns (Miura, 2019)

Request strategy	Pragmalinguistic patterns		
Direct	Categories derived from the CCSARP coding scheme	Obligation	*I **have to** now buy this color shirts* (A2); I think erm you you ***should*** ur take it back (B2).
		Desire	*I **want** to buy it* (A1); *I **wanna** get refund* (B1).
		Wish	***I'd like** to buy uu buy it* (A2); *If you can, I **would like** you **to** give me another size of the same kinds of dress* (B1).
		Imperative	*Please **tell** me three type jacket.*
		Non-sentential phrase	***More large size*** (A1); ***Ah er card** please?* (A1).
	Learner-specific	Statement	***And its color is black*** (A1); ***I take** it* (A1); *Oh **I try** to uu this one this one*

	categories newly devised by the author		(A1)
		Yes	***Yeah*** (A2).
		Independent politeness marker *please*	*Oh* ***please*** (B1).
Conventionally indirect	Categories derived from the CCSARP coding scheme	Ability/ permission	*Um* ***can*** *I* ***can*** *I try it?* (A1); ***May*** *I try it on? (A1); So,* ***could*** *you change to another new products? (B1)*
		Willingness	***Will you*** *exchange it into, ur is it into money?* (B1); ***Do you mind*** *changing this swe sweater more smaller one?* (B1); *So* ***would you*** *change a sweater?* (B1)
		Suggestory	*So,* ***how about*** *er ten percent off?* (A2); *So* ***what about*** *just refund?* (B1); ***Why don't you*** *go to outside and look at the color with with me?* (B1)
		Possibility	***Is it possible*** *to discount? (A2); Oh then ur* ***it's OK*** *to ur exchange into the normal price, not special (B1); So* ***I'm OK*** *if you um if you give me a red sweater with no no extra money (B1).*
		Subjectivizer	*So,* ***I was wondering****, you know, if I can get refund or change to something else (B1); Yeah, if you* ***I do appreciate*** *that if you could talk to your manager or the one who is actually supervise this section (B1); So* ***I hope*** *you can exchange other bigger one (B1).* ***I thought*** *I could exchange this into the other color (B1).*
	Situation-specific	Existence	***Do you have do you have*** *any jacket?* (A1); ***Is there another*** *color?* (A1); *Mm*

	categories newly devised by the author		***I'm looking for*** *ur some shirts* (A1);
		Intention	*So* ***I'll*** *take it* (A2); *Ah umm* ***I like*** *this one* (A1); *Umm* ***I decided*** *that one* (A2); *Today,* ***I I come to here to to*** *see some personal computers* (A2).
Not classifiable	Learner-specific categories newly devised by the author		e.g. *This buy it* (i.e. I want to buy it) (A1); *A collar we choice er something else?* (i.e. Can I have another color? (A1); *So and er the price is uum I bought the price is um clothes and pants and shoes, everything umm under um um er ten thousand yen* (i.e. I want to buy those pants and shoes, which are not more than ten thousand yen) (A1).

4. Results and Discussions

In the current study, to identify criterial pragmalinguistic features, chi-square tests were conducted to determine the significant differences among the learners at different proficiency levels in terms of the occurrences of extracted pragmalinguistic features.

4.1 Overall raw frequencies and ratios of request strategies

Figure 1 shows the raw frequencies and ratios of direct and conventionally indirect strategies and not-classifiable requestive head acts. According to the chi-square tests, a significant difference was observed between A1, A2, and B1 learners at $p < .01$ (x^2= 39.277, $df = 4$, $p < .00001$, Cramer's $V = .11$). Table 4 shows the results of multiple comparisons, showing p-values adjusted with Bonferroni method.

Table 4 The results of multiple comparisons for the frequencies of request strategies

Comparisons	Pearson's chi-squared	p value	Fisher's exact test	Cramer's V
A1 vs. A2	12.439	$p = .006$	$p = .005$	.0622
A1 vs. B1	39.18	$p < .00001$	$p < .00001$	.011
A2 vs. B1	16.781	$p = .0007$	$p = .0006$	.0722

The ratio of the direct strategy of head acts decreased and that of conventionally indirect strategy increased with a growing proficiency level, which confirmed the same tendency proposed by researchers focusing on the requestive speech acts produced by learners of English at different proficiency levels, such as Trosborg (1995), Hill (1997), Rose (2000, 2009), and Flores Salgado (2011). However, as mentioned before, it should be noted that A1 and A2 learners were given a general purchasing task, where they were asked to purchase a particular item by asking for information about the price, quantity, and method of payment, while B1 learners were given a negotiation task, in which they started a negotiation with an interlocutor for a refund or an exchange of the item that they already bought.

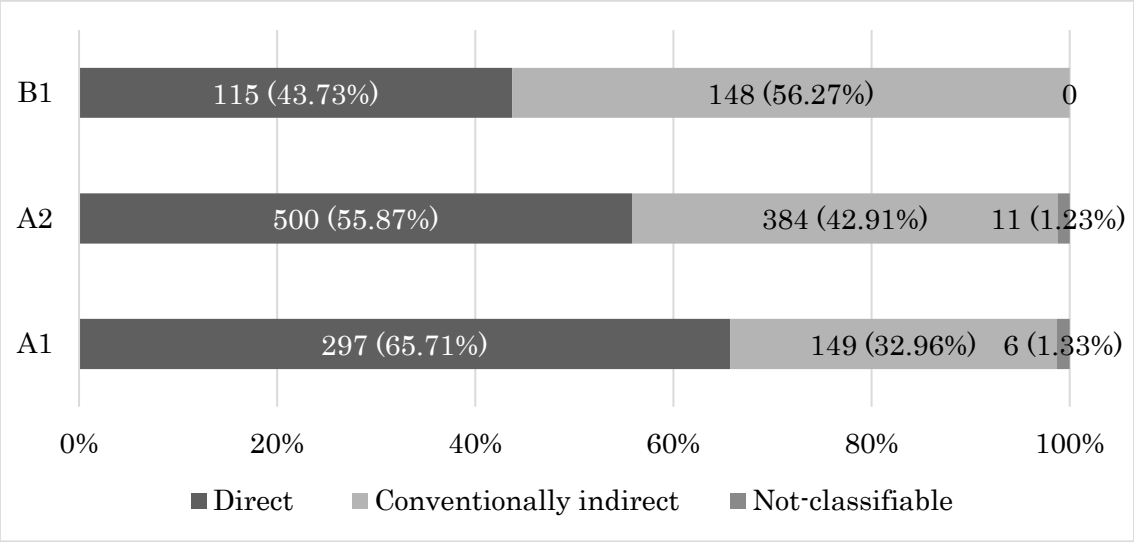

Fig.1 Raw frequencies and ratios of request strategies

4.2 Determining the effect of proficiency difference on the choice of the pragmalinguistic patterns of requests

Table 5 shows the total numbers and ratios of the subcategories of direct and conventionally indirect strategies. Chi-square tests were conducted except for the categories whose expected values were less than five. Significant differences were also found at $p < .01$ between A1 and A2 learners in terms of the occurrences of the categories, such as desire, non-sentential phrase, statement, imperative, wish, yes, existence, intention, and ability/permission ($x^2 = 71.026$, $df = 8$, $p < .00001$, Cramer's $V = .165$), as well as between A2 and B1 learners for desire, non-sentential phrase, statement, imperative, wish, existence, intention, ability/permission, and willingness ($x^2 = 239.644$, $df = 8$, $p < .00001$, Cramer's $V = .3325$).

Table 5 Total numbers and ratios of the categories in the direct and conventionally indirect strategies

	A1		A2		B1	
	Raw Freq. (%)		Raw Freq. (%)		Raw Freq. (%)	
Direct strategies	297 (65.71)		500 (55.87)		115 (43.73)	
Desire	119	(26.33)	256	(28.6)	45	(17.11)
Non-sentential phrase	81	(17.92)	58	(6.48)	4	(1.52)
Statement	51	(11.28)	52	(5.81)	2	(0.76)
Imperative	20	(4.42)	58	(6.48)	16	(6.08)
Wish	13	(2.88)	62	(6.93)	41	(15.59)
Yes	11	(2.43)	10	(1.12)	0	(0)
Independent politeness marker *please*	2	(0.44)	0	(0)	3	(1.14)
Obligation	0	(0)	4	(0.45)	4	(1.52)
Performative	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Conventionally indirect strategies	149 (32.96)		384 (42.91)		148 (56.27)	
Existence	69	(15.27)	160	(17.88)	0	(0)
Intention	42	(9.29)	113	(12.63)	3	(1.14)
Ability/Permission	34	(7.52)	92	(10.28)	99	(37.64)
Willingness	2	(0.44)	11	(1.23)	12	(4.56)
Suggestory	0	(0)	4	(0.45)	8	(3.04)
Subjectivizer	1	(0.22)	3	(0.34)	13	(4.94)
Possibility	1	(0.22)	1	(0.11)	13	(4.94)
Total segments of head acts (including not-classifiable segments)	452	(100)	895	(100)	263	(100)

The criterial features distinguishing A1 from A2 learners were in the categories of non-sentential phrase and statement, showing the tendency of A1's ratios exceeding A2's. Table 5 shows that the ratios of the non-sentential phrase of A1 and A2 learners were 17.92% and 6.48%, respectively. Regarding the statement category, as Table 6 shows, there were six subcategories containing explanation, purchase, and trial, which were in the declarative forms, in addition to the categories in the interrogative forms, such as

recommendation (i.e. asking for recommendation), acceptance (i.e. asking whether a hearer accepts a credit card or not), and discount (i.e. confirming the discount service). Since some of the interrogative forms were error-free (e.g. "Uh eh do you accept credit card?" and "Is that er discount?"), A1 learners' ratios of explanation, purchase, and trial were contrasted with those of A2 learners, accounting for 10.62% and 5.14%, respectively. As pragmalinguistic features in the declarative statement category were unsuitable, they can be regarded as *negative* criterial features.

Table 6 Total numbers and ratios of the subcategories of statements

	A1		A2	
	Raw Freq. (%)		Raw Freq. (%)	
Explanation	26	(5.75)	28	(3.13)
Purchase	17	(3.76)	16	(1.79)
Trial	5	(1.11)	2	(0.22)
Recommendation	3	(0.66)	2	(0.22)
Acceptance	0	(0)	3	(0.34)
Discount	0	(0)	1	(0.11)
Total occurrences of statements	51 (11.28)		52 (5.81)	

Furthermore, the author focused on the requests with the function of expressing an intention of purchase for determining criteriality between A1 and A2 learners. Miura (2018; 2019) developed another multi-layered annotation scheme to identify the functions of the whole utterances produced by learners in the shopping role plays from the NICT JLE Corpus. In addition to the function of expressing an intention of purchase, there were many functions identified in the requests, such as expressing or asking about particular items, requesting an action including negotiating for a discount, and so on. The UAMCT allowed the author to extract requestive speech acts with different functions cross-schematically.

Table 7 shows the total numbers and ratios of requests showing an intention of purchase. The chi-square test confirmed a significant difference between A1 and A2 learners in terms of the occurrences of the categories, such as desire, statement, intention, existence, and wish, the expected values of which were more than five at $p < .01$ ($x^2 = 17.2573$, $df = 4$, $p = .00172$, Cramer's $V = .1801$). A2 learners' decrease in the choice of statement, composed of the purchase requests in Table 6, was evident: A1 and

A2 learners' ratios accounted for 12.63% and 5.26%, respectively. This decreasing tendency was also observed in the ratio of desire, although the desire requests were the most frequent among all of the categories in both A1 and A2 learners. However, Table 7 shows the opposite tendency in terms of intention, existence, and wish, indicating that A2 learners' ratios were higher than A1 learners'. A2 learners tended to show a decrease in the use of an unsuitable pattern, a statement request (e.g. "I take it"). This pattern seemed to be replaced by the use of a suitable pattern, intention with a modal verb *will* (e.g. "I will take it"). In addition, the patterns in the conventionalised categories, such as intention and existence, were more frequently evident in A2 learners than in A1 learners; this was true as well for the patterns in the wish category, which can be contrasted with the decrease of desire in A2 learners. To summarise, in the requests with the function of expressing an intention of purchase, the statement and desire patterns were negative criterial features, characterising A1 learners, while the conventionalised patterns and wish were positive criterial features, characterising A2 learners.

Table 7 Total numbers and ratios of the requests with the function of expressing an intention of purchase

	A1		A2	
Category	Raw Freq.	(%)	Raw Freq.	(%)
Desire	42	(44.21)	62	(32.63)
Statement	12	(12.63)	10	(5.26)
Intention	13	(13.68)	48	(25.26)
Existence	10	(10.53)	33	(17.37)
Wish	6	(6.32)	30	(15.79)
Non-sentential phrase	4	(4.21)	3	(1.58)
Yes	1	(1.05)	3	(1.58)
Independent politeness marker *please*	1	(1.05)	0	(0.00)
Ability/permission	4	(4.21)	1	(0.53)
Total occurrences of requests	95		190	

Regarding the criterial features distinguishing A2 from B1 learners, although it is not ideal to compare the results derived from the different tasks (i.e. a general purchasing task vs. a negotiation task), the overall distributions of each category in Table 5 seems to highlight the task influence, especially in the occurrences of intention and existence. B1 learners produced only three occurrences of intention, accounting for 1.14% of the

total requests. Thus, there were totally no productions of the existence requests. On the other hand, A2 learners' ratios of the existence and intention requests accounted for 17.88% and 12.63%, respectively. The production of these requests was heavily influenced by the task given to each proficiency group. B1 learners, who were given a negotiation task, rarely had a chance to ask whether the particular item was available or to show their intention of purchasing the item, as A2 learners did. In addition, Table 5 shows that the ratios of the categories of ability/permission and wish were higher, but that of desire was lower in B1 learners than in A2 learners. This result may suggest that B1 learners were more concerned with face-threatening acts (FTAs), which are defined as communicative acts performed by the speaker that may threaten the hearer's *face* (Brown & Levinson, 1987), than A2 learners. According to Leech (2014), in English-speaking cultures, conventionalised requests, such as ability/permission or willingness, tend to be treated as more polite than direct ones, so that "the avoidance of direct imposition on the hearer… shows especially elaborate development in English" (pp. 14–15). Therefore, B1 learners may have tried to redress the FTAs by avoiding a desire request that has more impositive force than wish and conventionalised requests. However, it is not certain that this tendency was due to developmental factors or/and the nature of the given task. B1 learners might have been placed in a situation where they were required to be more concerned with FTAs to become successful in negotiating for an exchange or return of the purchased items. In a general purchasing task given to A2 learners, a customer (played by the learners) might have a greater social power than the shop assistant (i.e. interlocutor). The shop assistant in A1 learners' task might have benefited more from the customer's purchase than the shop assistant in B1 learners' task.

5. Conclusion

The current study applied a function-to-form methodology to identify the criterial pragmalinguistic features in the requestive speech acts produced by learners at different proficiency levels in the NICT JLE Corpus by revising the CCSARP coding scheme to fit into the target learner data.

The overall tendency of the requests of direct strategy decreasing and those of conventionally indirect strategy increasing with a growing proficiency level is correspondent with the results of past studies examining requests and proficiency differences, such as those of Trosborg (1995), Hill (1997), Rose (2000; 2009), and Flores Salgado (2011). Negative criterial features characterising A1 learners were the (declarative) statement requests including a request with a topic-comment structure

influenced by their first language (e.g. "And its color is black") and a request without the use of tense inflections (e.g. "I take it"), which was especially evident in the requests with a function of expressing an intention of purchase. On the other hand, A2 learners showed lexico-grammatical development to some degree, since they were characterised by positive criterial features, such as situation-specific conventionalised requests including intention (e.g. "So I will take it") and existence (e.g. "Do you have..?"). The ratio of wish (e.g. "I'd like to…") was higher in A2 learners than in A1 learners, although that of desire (e.g. " I want to…") was lower, which may suggest that A2 learners were more concerned with FTAs. B1 learners were significantly different from A2 learners in terms of the occurrences of intention and existence due to the task influence. In addition, B1 learners produced desire 1.5 times less frequently than A2 learners did. On the other hand, B1 learners' ratios of ability/permission and wish were thrice and twice higher than those of A2, respectively, which should be the criterial features between A2 and B1 learners. As mentioned before, since the learners were given different tasks (i.e. a general purchasing task and a negotiation task), B1 learners tended to be more sensitive to the impositive force of pragmalinguistic patterns in the requests as they may have needed to succeed in negotiating for a refund or an exchange of item, or they may have been more concerned with FTAs due to their pragmatic and linguistic development. However, the degree of task influence was not determined in the present study. Finally, it should be noted that requests in the categories of willingness (e.g. "Will you…?" and "Do you mind…?"), subjectivizer (e.g. "I wonder…." and "I appreciate…"), possibility (e.g. "Is it possible…?"), and suggestory ("How about …. ?) were rarely used by learners at all levels, accounting for less than 5% of the total requests, according to Table 5. It is uncertain whether or not the occurrences of these requested phrases, which tended to be traditionally and deliberately taught as polite requests in English-language teaching (e.g. van Ek & Trim, 1998), were determined by the nature of the tasks. Future work that attempts to overcome the task influences and add higher-proficiency learners, such as B2 and C1 learners, is necessary.

To conclude, the present research into corpus-based ILP suggests that corpora can provide statistically derived evidence to supplement and re-evaluate introspective research findings, such as those regarding the developmental stages of requests proposed by Kasper and Rose (2002), as shown in Table 1. See the discussions of the role of corpora in pragmatics in Adolphs (2008), Clancy and O'Keefe (2015), Vyatkina and Cunningham (2015), and so on. Thus, the first stage of "pre-basic" with the characteristics of "highly context-dependent, no syntax, no relational goals" can be described as A1 learners'

tendency to opt for requests with non-sentential phrase and statement. The second "formulaic" stage, indicating "reliance on unanalysed formulas and imperatives," is characterised by A2 learners' criterial features, such as conventionalised but rather short prefabricated or formulaic requests including intention and existence, with the decrease of an unsuitable category, statement. Thus, A1 learners' ratio of imperative was slightly higher than A2 learners'. B1 learners' positive criterial features, such as ability/permission, can be found in the third "updating" stage, "where formulas incorporated into productive language use, shift to conventional indirectness."

The present study focused on role-play data from the interview test of the NICT JLE Corpus. Although the corpus was not compiled for the aim of pragmatic development, the results indicated that the investigation of carefully and finely annotated pragmalinguistic features of requestive speech acts allowed the author to re-examine pragmatic development of requests based on the non-corpus-based longitudinal studies with a small number of subjects in the early 1990s and 2000s. Thus, the occurrences of particular pragmalinguistic features, such as conventionally indirect requests, seemed to imply the learners' sociopragmatic development, such as an ascertainable awareness of avoiding FTAs.

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