CONVERSATION ANALYSIS OF E-MAIL REQUESTS BY SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKERS

AKI IIMURO

University of Hawai'i

ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the design of *requests* in e-mail messages by Japanese second language (L2) speakers of English. This study draws mainly on studies by Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) on request sequence organization, and Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) on request sequence organization in Internet chats. I use the conversation analysis method (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) to analyze the sequential organization of "accounts" (Antaki, 1994; Heritage, 1988) for requests in e-mail messages within the institutional context of university settings. The findings demonstrate that the participants display their orientation towards "preference organization" (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984), delaying the dispreferred requests by using accounts, "written pauses" (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006), and boundary markers. Furthermore, the participants use "accounts" for requests as (a) pre-requests, (b) accusation avoidance, and (c) to pursue a preferred response of granting the request.

Through this study, I contribute to our understanding of the sequential organization of account for requests in interaction, as well as how participants recruit the "affordances" (Gibson, 1977) of the communication medium of e-mail interaction. Above all, this study contributes to the field of interlanguage pragmatic studies on the speech act of requesting by L2 speakers and suggests an alternative methodological approach to speech act research.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the speech act of requests in e-mail interaction within the university context by Japanese second language (L2) speakers of English. The aim of this study is two fold: (a) to understand the placement and function of "accounts" in requesting e-mail interactions from a conversation analysis (CA) perspective, and (b) to explore how the requesting features of L2 speakers understood from the CA perspective are different from the result found in previous studies.

Request in this study refers to the same concept used in Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) study, that is, "a type of social action in which the interactional goal of the first speaker is

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to get his or her co-participant to perform an action (i.e., transferring something of value, for example an object, service, or information) that is for the benefit of the first speaker or a third party" (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, p. 1).

Speech acts are one of the most frequently studied objects of interlanguage pragmatics. Among the various speech acts, requests have received much attention. Cross-cultural studies in interlanguage pragmatics of requests have attracted many researchers in languages such as English (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Leech, 1983), German (House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981), Hebrew (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), and Japanese (Fukushima, 1996). The majority of these studies in interlanguage pragmatics have focused on requests from the approach proposed by the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

The data in these studies from the CCSARP approach are collected, isolated, or experimentally elicited using methods such as the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), multiple-choice tests, or role-plays. The most frequently used method is the DCT (Jeon & Kaya, 2006), where participants are given a situation designed to elicit a certain speech act and are asked to write what they would say. However, this data collecting method does not capture the naturally occurring use of language. In addition, such data analysis has been limited to the isolated requesting sentence only made by the speaker focusing on the semantic features and the directness of the request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). As a result, the interactional aspect of requests has been neglected in many studies.

Furthermore, many cross-cultural interlanguage pragmatic request studies have compared the language used by nonnative speakers (NNS) to native speaker (NS) intuitions, that is, what the NS would say in the given situation rather than what the natives actually did say. This NS and NNS comparison model is problematic because it privileges the assumptions of the target language community and its language use (Firth, 1996; Firth & Wagner, 1997). These methodological difficulties and shortcomings have hampered research on requests from understanding their natural occurrences and how requests are constructed in the interaction.

In comparison, the methodological approach of CA enables us to examine naturally occurring discourse within the context of social interaction, and does not rely on the intuitions of participants. From the CA perspective, data are analyzed in sequences of turns rather than in single, isolated sentences and utterances (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984), allowing researchers to investigate the ways in which speakers construct their utterances and understand others.

Golato (2003) conducted an empirical study comparing the two different methodological perspectives of DCT and natural occurring conversation through CA on compliment responses. She found 27 appreciation responses, such as *thank you*, out of the 217 responses in the DCTs, while none were found in the naturally occurring talk. Golato mentions how DCTs seem to reflect what the speakers believe they should say as a response to a complement rather than they actually use. She therefore concludes that DCTs are “clearly inappropriate” (p. 110) if the researcher is interested in finding out how speakers react to complements in real-time interactions, or “wished to discern the underlying interactional ‘rules’ and patterns of actual language use” (Golato, 2003, p. 110).

Although researchers have questioned the proposed research method used by the CCSARP in analyzing speech acts (Golato, 2003; Kasper, 2000), and despite the interest in L2 speakers by many researchers, especially L1 Japanese (Fukuya, 2002; Fukuya & Zhang, 2002; Hill, 1997; Rose, 1992a; Shimamura, 1993; S. Takahashi & DuFon, 1989; T. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), only a handful of studies has focused on requests from the conversation analytic perspective (Dersley & Wootton, 2000; Pomerantz, 1978, 1984; Robinson, 2004) and even fewer on L2 speakers. Therefore, there is a need for a better understanding of requesting features by L2 speakers of English using the CA method.

E-mail is chosen as a research focus because, (a) e-mail use has become a frequently used communication medium, especially in the institutional university context and (b) e-mail is in a written format similar to DCTs but within a naturally occurring interaction thus making it feasible to compare previous research on L2 speakers to the present study.

I begin this study by describing the previous speech act research based on the CCSARP coding scheme, CA, and speech act studies of e-mails. The literature review is then followed by the analysis of my data. I conclude my study with a discussion of the findings and the implications for future studies on speech acts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Act Theory

This study is grounded in the speech act theory since it investigates how L2 speakers perform the speech act of requesting. Speech act theory developed from the philosophy of language (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975, 1979, 1992). Austin (1962) proposed a three-fold classification of utterances: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locution is the actual words that are uttered, illocution refers to the force that makes it a particular act, and perlocution is the effect of the illocution on the hearer to carry out the particular act.

Searle (1979) further developed and systematized Austin's (1962) theory on speech acts. According to Searle's speech act theory, speakers perform illocutionary acts to convey communicative intentions, such as requests, apologies, promises, and so on. Searle made a distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, indirect speech acts being utterances that are understood from the context without mentioning the act itself (Searle, 1979). For example, "It's hot in here" could be just a statement of the high temperature, but it also could have a hidden expression of a request for a window to be opened. Searle argues that in order understand indirect speech acts, the speaker and hearer need to have mutually shared factual background information, and the ability of the hearer to make inferences (Searle, 1975). Searle's speech act theory greatly influenced research in the field of pragmatics.

CCSARP Coding Scheme

The best-known research on speech acts may be the study by the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) on the speech acts of requesting and apologizing (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The data for this research were collected using DCTs. Inspired by Brown and Levinson's (1987) "politeness theory," the researchers examined how participants use language to perform these speech acts, together with social distance, imposition, and power situated in the speech acts. Data were collected from a variety of NSs and NNSs of languages such as English, German, and Hebrew.

This large-scale project lead to the development of the coding scheme for requesting strategies.

The CCSARP schematized requesting strategies largely in three categories: directness level, internal modification, and external modification. The directness of requesting strategies were classified on a nine-point scale starting from mood derivables being the most direct, to mild hints being the most indirect (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Internal modifications, such as downgraders and upgraders were found to mitigate or enhance the request act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). External modifications, such as grounders and disarmers, were coded as supportive moves that may be attached externally to the request act to mitigate or aggravate the request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). *Grounders* in the CCSARP are defined as, "The speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her requests, which may either precede or follow it[1]" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 287). This is the same object where in the CA research is referred to as "accounts" (Heritage, 1988), which will be further discussed in the section on CA.

When analyzing data using the CCSARP coding scheme, usually, frequency of the use of each requesting strategy is calculated and compared among different groups of participants. This coding scheme and analysis method greatly influenced the field of speech act research, and to date, it is used in numerous studies.

Requests by Japanese L2 Speakers of English

Grounded in the methodological perspective of the CCSARP on speech acts, much research has been done on interlanguage pragmatics of L2 speakers, especially with L1 Japanese. Many of the early studies focused on learners' comprehension of requests and perception of politeness of requests (Kitao, 1990; Shimamura, 1993; S. Tanaka & Kawade, 1982). Using a Likert-type questionnaire, Kitao (1990) compared Japanese learners of English as a second language (ESL), Japanese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), and American NSs' perceptions of the politeness of requests. Although there were no significant differences among the three groups, Kitao found the ESL

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[1] Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) provide an example of "grounders" as the following written in italics (p. 287): Judith, *I missed class yesterday*. Could I borrow your notes?

learners to have a closer perception of politeness in requests to NSs compared to that of EFL learners.

Other researchers investigated L2 speakers' interlanguage development of requesting (Achiba, 2003; Hill, 1997; Schmidt, 1983; S. Takahashi & DuFon, 1989), cross-cultural politeness of requesting (Rose, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1996; N. Tanaka, 1988), transferability of the L1 to the L2 requesting (S. Takahashi, 1996), and effectiveness of instruction on learners' use of requesting strategies and politeness (Fukuya, 2002; Fukuya & Zhang, 2002).

Summarizing what we have learned from these previous studies on requesting by Japanese L2 speakers of English, requesting behaviors seem to be more direct than that of NSs, despite the stereotype of Japanese being polite and indirect with their utterances (Rose, 1992a, 1996). The L2 speakers were found to lack in the use and development of hints, downtoners, and to overuse want-statements (Hill, 1997; Iwai & Rinnert, 2001; N. Tanaka, 1988). We also find that proficiency and length of residence in the target language environment seem to play a role in the development of interlanguage requesting (Kitao, 1990; S. Takahashi & DuFon, 1989). However, L1 (Japanese) transfer of requesting strategies occurred regardless of proficiency levels (S. Takahashi, 1996).

Although the research method of the speech act of requests proposed by the CCSARP is concise and useful from one particular perspective, limitations in the data collecting and analysis methods (Golato, 2003; Kasper & Dahl, 1991) and weakness in the coding scheme (Hill, 1997; Meier, 1998) have been raised. The CCSARP approach has also caused studies to limit their analysis of requests within this framework rooted in the "politeness theory" (Brown & Levinson, 1987) where the notion of "face" is the central concept. Critics have mentioned how the framework has not been able to capture and analyze the act of requesting in a naturally occurring situation and understand how the language is used to construct requests (Golato, 2003; Kasper, 2000). One of the earliest studies to compare elicited and naturally occurring data was by Beebe and Cummings (1996) originally presented in 1985. The authors found elicited data unable to represent the actual wordings, range of strategies, length, and the depth of emotion that may influence the use of linguistic resources that were found in the telephone conversation. From a conversation analytic perspective, Atkinson and Heritage (1984) have also pointed out the limitations of this research method for speech acts and suggests an alternative research method using CA where the primary unit of analysis "is sequences and turns within sequences, rather than isolated sentences or utterances" (p. 5).

Conversation Analysis

CA (Sacks et al., 1974) emerged from the American sociology, and within that field, diverged from the research method of ethnomethodology. Although there is much which differentiates CA from many central features of ethnomethodology, the determination of action and understanding in CA has ethnomethodology as its core source (Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). The objective of CA is to "describe the procedures by which speakers produce their own behavior and understand and deal with the behavior of others" (Heritage, 1988, p. 128) and does so by studying the sequential organization of interaction and the reasoning that is embedded within it (Heritage, 1988). Heritage (1988) raises the following three assumptions underlying the method of CA (p. 130):

1. Interaction is structurally organized
2. The significance of each turn at talk is doubly contextual in that (a) each turn is shaped by the context of prior talk, and (b) each turn establishes a context to which the next turn will be oriented.
3. No order of detail in interaction can be dismissed a priori as irrelevant to the parties' understandings of what is occurring.

When conducting a research study, CA insists that data should be gathered from naturally occurring interaction since "order must be found in naturally occurring materials of interaction rather than materials fabricated through experimental procedures or role-plays" (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001, p. 52). CA also insists that data analyses should be done case by case since "social interaction is orderly on an individual action-by-action, case by case level" (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 52).

Preference Organization

One of the central concepts in analyzing the sequential organization of requests is the "preference organization" (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984), where the selection of a certain action is shaped by an "institutionalized ranking of alternatives"(Atkinson & Heritage, 1984, p. 53). For example, requests, offers, and invitations occur in "adjacency pairs" (Sacks et al., 1974) where the first speaker produces the first pair part, such as offers, and then the second speaker produces the second pair part, such as acceptance or rejection (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). Heritage (1984) suggests that certain second pair parts, such as acceptances, are preferred over others, such as rejections. The term *preference* refers to the "difference in the simplicity and directness of the language used in preferred and dispreferred" actions (Turnbull, 1992, p. 114-115). These preferences can be observed from usages of linguistic features and turn sequences. For instance, preferred actions are frequently structurally simple and projected immediately after the first pair part sometimes overlapping with the other speaker. Moreover, preferred responses usually do not have any hesitations, delays, or accounts. On the other hand, dispreferred responses are frequently produced with hesitations, delays, and accounts.

Heritage (1988) exemplifies how preferred and dispreferred actions are carried out in second pair parts of invitations. The first case is where the invitation is accepted.

Example 1 (Heritage, 1988, p. 132)

1.		A:	Why don't you come and see me some [times.
2.		B:	[I would like to.

In this case, the invitation "gets a simple unvarnished acceptance" (Heritage, 1988, p. 132). The second pair part overlaps with the end of the first pair part, showing no hesitation or delay. No accounts are provided for the acceptance. In contrast, the second example below shows a case where the invitation is rejected.

Example 2 (Heritage, 1988, p. 132)

1.		A:	Uh if you'd care to over and visit a little while this morning
2.			I'll give you a cup of coffee.
3.	→	B:	hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you,
4.	→		I don't think I can make it this morning.
5.	→		hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and –and uh I have to
6.			stay near the phone.

The rejection includes a hesitation and then an appreciation of the invitation in line 2, delaying the rejection statement. The rejection component in line 3 is "mitigated or cushioned" (Heritage, 1988, p. 132) with "I don't know," and the rejection is accounted for with an explanation in line 4 with several hesitations of “hh” and “uh.” Heritage (1988) explains, these features of appreciation of invitation, mitigated rejection, and accounts, are “highly characteristic of rejection of invitations” (p. 132).

Research also suggests that first pair parts can be preferred or dispreferred over others. For example, it is suggested that requests are dispreferred over offers. Therefore, requests frequently employ strategies related to dispreferred actions such as hesitations, delays, accounts, and pre-requests (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006).

Accounts and Account Placements

As discussed earlier, “accounts” are frequently observed in requests (Antaki, 1994). Explanations as accounts, another name for “grounders” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), are meant to “excuse, justify or otherwise exonerate the speaker from socially sanctionable behaviour” (Antaki, 1994, p. 43). In other words, accounts are reasons for the unexpected, controversial, or problematic actions of the speaker (Antaki, 1994; Firth, 1995; Heritage, 1988; Scott & Lyman, 1968). Antaki (1994) notes that when speakers perform a request that is interactionally unexpected, they frequently provide an account involving some kind of explanation for their unexpected action, and that “a speaker will protect a dispreferred second part with some kind of account” (p. 87). Furthermore, accounts are important features of requests since they display a “careful formulation of why the preferred action cannot be performed or why the dispreferred action is being done” (Levinson, 1983, p. 224).

In terms of where the accounts are placed, there seem largely to be three patterns: before the request turn, after the request turn, and built in the request turn. Schegloff (in press) discusses how studies in English suggest accounts in request turns may occur before the request and therefore defer the production of this dispreferred action. Ford (1993) and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) found accounts only after the requesting action, but in two ways, within the request turn and after the response from the recipient. Accounts after the request turns were made both after preferred and dispreferred responses (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). Antaki (1994) has also shown that accounts may occur in dispreferred first parts, that is, accounts built into the request turns.

Pre-Requests

A *pre-request* is also a central feature in dispreferred turns. Pre-request is a type of "pre-sequence" (Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 1980, 1988, 1990) where sequences "initiated by turn-types built to be specifically preliminary of some other turn-type, whose subsequent occurrence is projected to occur contingent on the response which the interlocutor gives to the presequence's first pair part" (Schegloff, 1990, p. 60). In other words, by placing pre-requests before the first pair part as "preliminaries" (Schegloff, 1980), they provide a way to explore the likelihood of the request will not be responded to in a dispreferred way (Schegloff, 1990). Furthermore, pre-requests "can make possible an offer by interlocutor before the actual request need be spoken" (Schegloff, 1990, p. 61). However, Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) argues that a speaker's turn is not recognized as a pre-request until the interlocutor orients to it as an utterance that projects a request (p. 18). Therefore, I take a similar approach of Taleghani-Nikazm's on pre-request in this study.

Schegloff (1990) also notes there are three main types of responses to pre-requests; (a) "one which forwards the talk to the projected sequence type (a 'go-ahead')" (p. 61), (b) "one which blocks the talk from proceeding to the projected sequence" (p. 61), and (c) "a preemptive response" (p. 61) where the recipient of the pre-request provides an offer. Below in line 2 is a typical example of a pre-request.

Example 3 (Schegloff, 1980, p. 112)

1.	R:	Ya sure.
2.	→	Oh by the way ((sniff)) I have a <u>bi:g</u> favor to ask ya.
3.	L:	Sure, go'head.
4.	R:	'Member the blouse you made couple weeks ago?
5.	L:	Ya.
6.	R:	Well I want to wear it this weekend to Vegas but my mom's buttonholer is broken.
7.	L:	Fred I told ya when I made the blouse I'd do the buttonholes.

In this case, the pre-request alerts an upcoming request (Schegloff, 1990) by using "big favor to ask ya" (line 2). The pre-request is then responded to by the first type of pre-request response of "go'head" (line 3).

Conversation Analysis of Speech Acts

Only a few studies have used CA to analyze speech acts (Kasper, in press; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). However, as discussed in Kasper (in press), CA studies of agreement and disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984), compliment responses (Golato, 2003; Pomerantz, 1978), apologies (Robinson, 2004), complaints (Dersley & Wootton, 2000) have shown that CA enables “value-added” (Kasper, in press) analyses of speech acts.

Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) studied requests in German of a telephone conversation also using a CA approach. She examined how accounts for requests are placed within a conversation and concluded that “their sequential placement, content and grammatical structure are tightly connoted to preference organization and maintenance of social solidarity” (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, p. 79). She showed three types of request account placements: (a) built in the request turns to pursue a preferred response, (b) placed after dispreferred responses, and (c) placed after preferred responses. Account positions of both (b) and (c) were used to save “face” for the recipient and functioned as a “threat-and-conflict avoidance” (Heritage, 1984) strategy.

In terms of pre-sequences, Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) demonstrated how “it is not only the linguistic composition of a turn but also its sequential placement that makes a turn recognizable as a pre-request” (p. 18). She displayed three forms of pre-requests: (a) pre-requests designed as a questions that explores the possibility of a projected request being granted, (b) pre-requests having the shape of an account of an action or lack of access to an object, and (c) pre-requests taking the form of mentioning of likes (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, p. 43). Taleghani-Nikazm (2005; 2006) also found that by inserting conditional *wenn*-clause (if-clause) initial and mid position of the request turn, “speakers delay the delivery of the object or service they wish to request” (p. 44), as a result, requests were found to be done through long stretches of talk.

Accounts by L2 Speakers

Although CA has been used to analyze accounts, few have utilized it to analyze accounts by L2 speakers. However, researchers have found the content of accounts to be culturally specific (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990)[2]. Therefore, I focus on L1 Japanese speakers.

Studies on accounts by L2 speakers have been done using the CCSARP coding scheme, two studies with L1 Japanese participants were found. Shimamura (1993) found that, while American NS only used grounders under high imposition, L2 speakers and Japanese NSs seemed to consider the use of grounders which lengthen the requests to be more appropriate and used in both low and high imposition requests.

Hill (1997) examined Japanese learners' requests at three different proficiency levels and found all three groups showing sensitivity to status by using more grounders to higher-status interlocutors. The advanced proficiency group was found to be especially sensitive to status, and overused grounders compared to Ns in requests to higher-status interlocutors while under using grounders in requests to equal-status interlocutors.

From these studies, we are able to understand that L2 speakers, L1 Japanese in particular, seem to use accounts in their requests frequently, and target language proficiency seems to influence the use of the accounts. However, these studies tend to focus on the frequency of usage of accounts as one category and do analyze the case-by-case accounts depending on their content and placement. Therefore, utilizing the method of CA and the framework of preference organization, where in-dept case-by-case analysis is possible, I examine how L2 speakers design their accounts in the dispreferred activity of requesting in e-mail interactions.

Electronic Mail

The context in which I observe the use of accounts for requests is in e-mail interactions. In e-mail interactions, participants do not always have to be co-present, and interaction can take place as a group or on a one-to-one basis (Yates, 2001). In this study, e-mails were written only from one individual to another.

[2] Beebe et al., (1990) studying refusals by NS and Japanese speakers of English found Japanese participants giving vague reasons (e.g., "I have a previous engagement") for their refusal while the NS were more specific, mentioning their plans and name of places they needed to go.

Research on E-mail Communication

This research focuses on e-mail for two reasons. First, e-mail has become a frequent medium of communication, both personal and institutional, especially in business and university contexts (Angell & Heslop, 1994; Baron, 2000). Chen (2001) found her Taiwanese participant having difficulties communicating through e-mail with her professors at a U.S. university using appropriate and effective language, though she was familiar with writing e-mails. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) also note that by performing actions through e-mail that imposes on university faculties, students “may put themselves in some jeopardy” (p. 55). Therefore, L2 speakers in the university settings would need to be familiar with the use of e-mail and the appropriate language.

Second, despite the fundamental difference between the two, e-mails being natural and real life consequences while DCTs are self-reported and elicited, e-mails provide naturally occurring interaction data in a written text form similar to that of DCTs. The nature of the two data types are similar in the sense that the speakers’ statements are written in one stretch without interruption by the interlocutor, and it is a “hybrid form” (Chen, 2001; Harrison, 2002) of spoken and written discourse. In DCTs, participants are asked to write what they would say in the given situations, and in e-mails, people are found to employ various discourse strategies used in both spoken and written communications (Gains, 1999; Herrings 1996). Therefore, using e-mail interaction data will make comparisons between the two analysis methods of CA and analysis methods rooted in the CCSARP more feasible.

Recently in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, researchers have given attention to L2 speakers and their production of speech acts through the medium of e-mails. Many of these studies examined how L2 speakers’ e-mail discourse differs from their oral discourse (Chapman, 1997) or written text (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2001). Other researchers investigated how e-mail exchanges can facilitate L2 learning (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Li, 2000; Liaw, 1998; Singhal, 1998). Furthermore, much research has investigated L2 speakers’ e-mails in terms of communication strategies, discourse styles, and use of linguistic features (Chen, 2001; González-Bueno, 1998; Liaw, 1996).

One of the first studies on requests through e-mail by L2 speakers was done by Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996). This research also investigates how requesting behavior of L2 speakers differ from NS norms. The study investigated e-mail requests written to the university faculty in English by a mixed group of international students, including L1 Japanese, and a group of NSs. Grounded in "politeness theory" (Brown & Levinson, 1987), Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig compared the negative and positive reactions towards the e-mails by the faculty. Then they examined the linguistic forms that were used in the e-mails that had affected the negative or positive reactions. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig reported four important findings on international students' requesting behavior. International students: (a) used fewer mitigating forms which produced a negative impact, (b) used institutional explanations less frequently, (c) mentioned their personal needs and time frames more often, and (d) acknowledged imposition on the faculty members less often than U.S. students. The researchers concluded that "those requests which had negative affect generally demonstrated a different interpretation of the rights and obligations of the parties involved than the positive affect request: the negative affect requests frequently assumed a greater obligation to comply by the faculty than did the faculty member" (p. 55).

Chen (2006) also found similar results with a Taiwanese student, Ling, writing e-mails to American university professors. Using a critical discourse analysis approach, Chen analyzed e-mails written by Ling over the course of two and a half years, and conducted interviews to understand the reason why she used such linguistic recourses in writing her e-mails. Chen found that before arriving to the U.S. Ling would express the professors' obligation to help students, and overused want-statements. For example, Ling wrote, "This is Ling Wang from Taiwan. Because you are my initial academic advisor, I need you to help me about the questions of my required credits" (p. 47). However, after arriving to the target language context, Ling gradually changed her way of requesting and used less want-statements and more query-preparatory forms in her e-mail requests, which is considered to be less direct (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) and in this case more polite (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Chen also found Ling writing a long explanation before her request, delaying the dispreferred action of requesting.

Chen (2001) did another study with 31 Taiwanese students and found again Taiwanese students tending to delay their request sentences in their e-mails. As for the directness of the requests, query-preparatory were found to be most frequently used, followed by want-statements.

However, again, these studies were analyzed from a CCSARP coding scheme perspective, and analyses focused on the degree of directness and the frequency of the mitigation strategies used in the speakers' utterances. Therefore, the analysis did not include the actual reply to the requests. In addition, the analysis focused on the requesting sentence only and did not analyze how pre-requests or accounts for requests were structured or sequenced in the e-mail requests.

Conversation Analysis of E-mails

This raises the question of whether CA is applicable to analyze e-mails. Yates (2001) studies Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), including Internet chats and e-mails, from the CA perspective. He argues that, although e-mail is a hybrid form of communication of oral and written, it is still an interaction, and therefore CA can be used for analyses.

Harrison (2002) demonstrates how CA is applicable to e-mail interactions by focusing on turn organization and finding e-mail interactions being "locally managed and interactionally managed" (Harrison, 2002, p. 240). This refers to e-mail interaction where the speakers can self-select themselves, hearers can reply whenever they choose to, and more than one speaker can write an e-mail simultaneously.

CA is also applicable to Internet chats. Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) applied the CA approach to Internet chat conversations by German speakers. Similar to Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) research, they found speakers using pre-requests to avoid the production of requests and to promote affiliative actions such as offers.

Unique Features of E-mails

In their research, Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) exemplifies technical features of Internet chats that do not exist in face-to-face interaction that has impact on preference organization. The following three features can be shared with e-mails, and thus may influence the analysis of the sequential organization. First, Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm raise the point that when examining turn-taking, "no participant can actually come in and produce an offer when the pre-request and request are expressed in the same message" (p. 18). Second, participants can use emoticons or smiley faces as a "mitigative strategy" (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, p. 29) to soften the imposition of the request or "express and intensify friendliness towards the co-participant" (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006, p. 29). Third, Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm found participants using "written pauses" in the form of lined dots (e.g., "…") to delay the dispreferred requesting action.

As you can see, CA is applicable to e-mail interactions. However, little research has used CA with e-mails written by L2 speakers.

Research Questions

Therefore, this study aims to (a) to identify the pattern of accounting for requests in the discourse of L2 speakers and (b) to provide a different methodological perspective on requesting from the previous studies in the field of speech acts. The research questions are:

1. What is the placement and function of accounts in requesting e-mail interactions from a CA perspective?
2. How are the requesting features of L2 speakers found in the first research question different from the results found in previous research?

THE STUDY

Method

Participants

E-mails were collected from four Japanese female graduate students enrolled in North American universities. Their ages ranged from 25 to 32 years old. All participants had TOEFL scores over 600 on the paper-based test. Their times of stay in the U.S. ranged from one month to four years. Two of the participants had experienced living in the U.S. for more than five years during their childhood. All participants were comfortable using e-mails for communication in both Japanese and English.

Data Collection

Participants were asked to submit e-mails in which they issued a request to the recipient and the responses that they had received in the university context. They were asked to delete any personal information. A total of 53 e-mail threads with 231 messages were collected and analyzed. The e-mail recipients included professors (including academic advisors), colleagues, peers, and landlords. The recipient design could have played a role in the structure of the e-mails (e.g., e-mail messages to and from a professor might be different from emails to and from a friend).

The study focused on requests for service or action, (i.e., set a meeting, provide information, send a file). Of the 53 e-mail threads, 33 included requests for service or action. Among the 33 e-mail threads, 26 e-mail threads (79%) included accounts for requests. In all, 17 of the accounts were made before the requesting sentence (pre-request account), five accounts were made after the requests (post-request account), and five accounts were placed before and after the request (pre- and post-request account). One of the e-mail threads had two requests that each had accounts, one request with a pre-request account, and another with a pre- and post-request account.

In the collection of requesting e-mails for this study, none of the accounts for requests occurred after the responses from the recipients. Therefore, all of the request accounts were built into the request turn, a ‘turn’ in this case being one request e-mail. Below is a short section from an e-mail written by Yoko to Pat where an account was built into the turn.

Example 4 Yoko/Pat (Syllabus)

1. Pat sensei,
2.
3. Hello. This is Yoko who is taking your Japanese teaching class.
4.
5. →I will be tutoring a 2nd year student, and I would like to have the 2nd
6. year class syllabus for my preparation. Also would it be possible to
7. observe the 2nd year class at some point?

In line 5, Yoko accounts for her request ("I will be tutoring a 2nd year student"), and then states her request of having the syllabus to be sent. The account here is not only in the same sentence but in the same e-mail (or turn) as the request.

Method of Analysis

The analyses in this study will draw on the CA methodological approach (Sacks et al., 1974) and preference organization concepts (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984) to analyzed the sequential organization of requests.

I analyze by first identifying the action that is being accomplished, next noting the resources that are being used to perform the action, and then observing how the accounts orient to preference organization. Finally, I analyze how the uniqueness of the e-mail medium may influence the interaction.

Data Presentation

As for the data presentation, all names of participants and institutions are pseudo names. E-mails are displayed to replicate as much as possible how the e-mail appeared when it was sent and received. Therefore, numbered lines with spaces in the transcription are made intentionally and spelling mistakes are left as they were in the actual e-mails. In addition, quoted e-mails that were referred to in the e-mails are shown by a ">" at the beginning of the line. In cases where Japanese was used, I use a three-line layout, the original sentence on the top, followed by a literal word-by-word translation, and with the English translation in bold face letters. In these translated cases, FP refers to the final particle in Japanese. Finally, arrows are used to highlight the important points in the transcript.

Analysis

Through the analysis, I observed that the participants orient to "preference organization" (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984) in their requests by using accounts and hesitations to delay the dispreferred request act. The participants also used accounts for requests as (a) pre-requests, (b) accusation avoidance, and (c) to pursue a preferred response of granting the request. I begin my analysis by analyzing the entire e-mail to better illustrate the method of analysis as well as to understand how e-mails are constructed. I will then focus on accounts for requests in the three different placement patterns of (a) pre-request, (b) post-request, and (c) pre-and post-request.

E-mail Request

In this section, I analyze one entire e-mail message. Yoshiko, in her e-mail below, writes to her academic advisor early in the summer break. Yoshiko expresses that she is having trouble with her thesis and wants her advisor to read her draft. The account occurs in two places of before and after the request.

(1) Yoshiko/ Marion (Thesis)

1. From: "Yoshiko Morita" yoshiko@e-mail.com
2. To: "Marion White" marion@e-mail.com
3. Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2006 12:29 PM
4. Subject: First draft of my thesis[3]
5. Hi Marion,
6.
7. How are you doing? I hope you are enjoying the summer :) Now I'm back in Japan and having
8. a great time with my family.
9.
10. →I've been working on my thesis and trying to rewrite some part of it, but it seems I'm not making
11. →any progress these few weeks.. And I was wondering if you could read my draft even though it's
12. not close to the final product at all. I'm still not sure especially bout the literature review part
13. and how I organized the results.
14.
15. Thank you so much!
16.
17. Yoshiko

18. From: "Marion White" marion@e-mail.com
19. To: "Yoshiko Morita" yoshiko@e-mail.com
20. Date: Sunday June 25, 2006 8:33 AM
21. Subject: First draft of my thesis

22. Hi Yoshiko,

23. →I just returned from the conference in Montreal. Yes, I will be very happy to read your thesis
24. draft and respond to help you keep making progress. I will get back to you within a week, I
25. hope. Keep enjoying family and friends and resting while you can! Thanks,
26. Marion
27.
28. --
29. Marion White, PhD

[3] This e-mail had a Word file attachment of Yoshiko's thesis draft.

30. Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics
31. University of K

In analyzing the above e-mail interaction, I subdivided the e-mail into three sections: header (lines 1-4, 18-21), body (lines 9-15. 22-26), and signature (lines 17, 26-31). I then analyzed each section in more detail. From the analysis, it was observed that Yoshiko (a) orients toward preference organization by delaying their requests, (b) uses accounts as pre-requests and to avoid any accusation, and (c) formats the e-mail letter-like using lines of space.

Heading. Starting from the e-mail heading in lines 1-4, Yoshiko prompts Marion to read her message using a clear and simple subject line, "First draft of my thesis" .[4] Yoshiko also prompts the reader by not disclosing any issues about her thesis in the subject line.[5]

Body. The body section of the e-mail can be further subdivided into three sections: greeting, main body, and closing.

Yoshiko at the beginning of her message develops a friendly feeling in the message using an informal greeting and the first name of the recipient[6] (line 5). The line of space or a boundary marker in line 6 differentiates the opening function of line 5 and the actual greeting starting in line 7. After the boundary marker, Yoshiko then uses a phatic greeting to upgrade the friendliness and politeness in the message (lines 7-8). By including the smiley mark right after the second sentence in line 7, Yoshiko "intensifies her friendliness" (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006) and her wish for Marion to enjoy the summer.[7] In addition, Yoshiko shows politeness by asking how Marion is doing first and then writing about herself. This format of asking the well being of the recipient first and then writing about themselves is similar to that of letter writing when showing politeness to the recipient.

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[4] A book by Angell and Heslop (1994) on how to write e-mails notes, "A concise and informative subject line can prompt a recipient to read your message" (p. 19).

[5] Subject lines are particularly important in e-mails since recipients will most likely read it first when they receive the e-mail and will determine if they would read the entire message or not based on the content of the subject line (Angell & Heslop, 1994).

[6] Informal greetings and first names are said to give a friendly touch to the message (Angell & Heslop, 1994).

[7] Baron (2000), in a book on the history of writing, also states that these emoticons or smiley marks in e-mails were developed to help compensate for the loss of meaning which in face-to-face conversation is conveyed through "facial expressions, body posture, gestures, physical distance from the interlocutor intonation patterns, and volume" (p. 242).

In the main body part, Yoshiko changes paragraphs again using a boundary marker to indicate the beginning of a new topic or change. By separating the phatic paragraph and the requesting paragraph using an extra line of space, Yoshiko is able to indicate the important section of her e-mail[8].

Examining Yoshiko's request statement, it is delayed by (a) an account and (b) a hesitation marker of two dots (lines 10-11). These features of delayed components, accounting, and hesitation can be analyzed as an example of showing the speaker orienting to the dispreferred action of requesting (Heritage, 1988; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006).

The accounts for Yoshiko's request were used to avoid accusations as well as a pre-request. In line 10, Yoshiko starts her topic introduction ("I've been working on my thesis and trying to rewrite some parts"), followed by an account for her request ("but it seems I'm not making any progress"). Yoshiko shows she is having difficulty despite her efforts at working, and indicates that she will raise some problems that she may have by using "trying." Then Yoshiko notes she is "rewriting" some parts, pointing out that she has discussed or shown the thesis to Marion at least once before this e-mail. Although Yoshiko in her subject line referred to the thesis as "the first draft," it is highly possible that Marion had seen the preliminary version of the thesis before. With this accounting of explaining Yoshiko's effort and hinting of the problem, we can anticipate a statement of the problem to follow the sentence.

Yoshiko then contrasts the preceding phrase with the following statement of the problem by a causal conjunction "but," which holds a contrastive meaning (Schiffrin, 1987). The statement of the problem is also an account here since the reason for the request is the problem Yoshiko is having with her thesis. Right after "but," Yoshiko writes "it seems," making her statement that follows this phrase vague and as a result avoids making any clear judgments on her progress. In addition, by adding "these few weeks" the phrase develops an understanding that there was progress before the few weeks and that Yoshiko has been working on it through several weeks. Using "it seems" and "these few weeks," Yoshiko displays her problem with her thesis in a minimal way.

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[8] Spaces between paragraphs are effective strategies in writing e-mails to indicate important points thus making the message more "inviting" (Angell & Heslop, 1994, p. 115).

At the same time, Yoshiko justifies her position as a requester that has worked on her thesis for several weeks and is having some trouble despite of her effort, as a result avoiding any accusation from the e-mail recipient.

The account here also seems to function as pre-requests. Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) found pre-requests could take the form of accounts, which then elicit an offer by the interlocutor and thereby hinders the projection of requests by the speaker. Here in this sequence of lines 10-11, we can observe a similar situation to what Taleghani-Nikazm found where the presentation of the problem attempted to elicit an offer from the respondent.

Another reason why the account may function as a pre-request is because after the account, Yoshiko expresses some hesitation by using two dots ".." in line 5. This hesitation marker corresponds with the "written pause" that Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) found in their studies, delaying the dispreferred requesting action. In the same way, this marker could be understood in conversational discourse where Japanese speakers are found to leave space for the interlocutor to take over, especially in dispreferred actions, and thus elicits a preferred act such as an offer by the interlocutor (H. Tanaka, 1999). However, due to the technological constraints of e-mails where turns cannot be taken when the pre-requests and requests are shown in the same message (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006), the ".." could be analyzed as a pause or silence showing space for the interlocutor to take over and to provide an offer.

I next analyze the requesting action that starts from the middle of line 11. Headed by the conjunction "and," Yoshiko uses a downgrader of "I was wondering" to foreshadow a request. According to Schiffrin (1987), "and" as a discourse marker indicates connectedness and conveys the speaker's view that the utterance it heads is connected to the preceding discourse. Therefore we understand Yoshiko's explanation of her problem is used to account for the request because it is connected with and comes after the conjunction "and."

The requesting pattern of Yoshiko's e-mail above is similar to what Kirkpatrick (1991) found in English requesting letters and Chen (2001) found in English request e-mails both by L1 Chinese speakers, that is, the "because-therefore" sequence. In the "because-therefore" sequence, sequences started with accounts that begin with "because" and connected with the request that follows the account headed with "therefore." Interestingly, I found not only Yoshiko, but all the other Japanese participants in my data, using the conjunction "and" to express both the "because" and "therefore." However, none of the participants used "because" or "therefore" in their requests or accounts. In her study of Japanese turn-taking, Tanaka (1999) showed how the discourse marker "*kara*" (because) placed between the account and the statement is used to show the "because-therefore" sequence. According to Tanaka, "*kara* meaning 'because' simultaneously embodies the meaning 'therefore'" (p. 192). Below is an example from Tanaka (1999) where this can be observed.

Example 5 (H. Tanaka, 1999, p. 193)

1. →G: Datte sōiu chikara o motte irassharu ***kara***
   after all that sort power ACC have because→therefore
   'After all, because ((she)) has that sort of power, therefore'

2. shigeki ni nariuru wake deshō?=
   stimulation P can become reason COP
   '((it)) provides a source of stimulation, doesn't ((it))?'

3. N: 'N: dakedo…
   yeah but
   'Yeah but…'

The equivalent translation of "and" in Japanese does not have the meaning of "because." Nevertheless, the participants are using "and" similarly to the way "*kara"* is used in the Japanese conversation in order to indicate the "because-therefore" structure in accounting for their requests.

After the conjunction "and," Yoshiko indicates that a request will follow by starting the phrase with "I was wondering." Yoshiko then projects the request by using an if-clause, "if you could read my draft." This frequently used requesting pattern, of "I was wondering" and if-clause in my data, seems to not only present politeness but also demonstrates that the content of the request is non-routine and that the recipient is not obligated to comply with the request. Therefore, Yoshiko creates the request as relatively imposing (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This will be further discussed later when analyzing extract five.

In the request sentence, Yoshiko further upgrades the imposition of the request in order to allow her to pre-empt any conflict (lines 11-12). Using “even though,” which indicates that an excuse will follow, Yoshiko expresses that her draft is not close to the final product. Yoshiko then adds “at all” at the end of her excuse, upgrading the imposition of the request. Contrasting the lack of progress with the effort that she has put into her work, shown in the previous sentence, this phrase seems to avoid accusation from the recipient.

After the request sentence, Yoshiko then provides another account to specify her problem (lines 12-13). Yoshiko uses “still” to emphasize her continuing problem also again suggesting that she had addressed this issue to Marion before this e-mail. This account for request is related to the first account in line 10 where she mentions, “trying to rewrite some parts.” By specifying the issues, Yoshiko is able to steer Marion’s focus and collect feedback that she really needs.

Following another boundary marker, Yoshiko shows anticipatory gratitude for a positive response towards Marion with an upgraded “thank you” by using “so much” and an exclamation mark. Many of the e-mails in my data used the word “thank you” or “thanks” to indicate closure, rather than showing deep appreciation to the recipient as we will see in the response discussed below. In the present data, “thank you” or “thanks” seem to express both gratitude and indicate closure of the message.

Signature. Yoshiko then writes her first name at the end of the message. Yoshiko does not include any pre-made signature that indicates her affiliation or address. This may indicate that the e-mail content is not related to any institution but more of an individual request.

Next, I will examine Marion’s response to Yoshiko’s e-mail.

Heading. Giving attention to the date in line 20, Marion responds 11days after Yoshiko wrote the request e-mail.[9] Compared to other e-mail interactions in my data where responses were made usually within a day or two, the response process in this case was relatively delayed, which may effect the interaction.

---

[9] For e-mails that warrant a response, Baron (2000) suggests that, “Even a week is becoming a long response-time” (p. 237).

Body. Marion opens her e-mail and shows friendliness using an informal greeting of "Hi," just as Yoshiko did (line 22). Marion then accounts for her late response to Yoshiko's e-mail, the reason being that she just returned from a conference (line 23). Marion shows the immediate response she made after the access to Yoshiko's e-mail by using the adverb "just" and referring to a conference which inferences the lack of access to e-mails. Although the response was made 11 days after the original request, Marion does not apologize about the late response. This lack of apology seems to create a reality in which professors are not obligated to reply to student e-mails, especially during their holidays.

Marion then accepts the request with a simple "Yes," and "I will be very happy to," to upgrade her acceptance. The "simple unvarnished acceptance" (Heritage, 1988, p. 132) shows a preferred affiliative response to Yoshiko's dispreferred requesting action in line 11. This example corresponds with Heritage's (1988) statement of how second pair parts of adjacency pairs could be preferred or dispreferred depending on the first pair part.

After complying with Yoshiko's request, Marion explains that her acceptance is for Yoshiko to make progress ("to help you keep making progress" in line 24). This explanation for acceptance is in response to Yoshiko's claim of her lack of progress. By accounting for the acceptance, it reinforces Yoshiko's reason for the request. Marion then notes when she may be able to finish her feedback. By adding, "I hope" at the end of the set time line of one week, it leaves space for Marion to make an excuse if she is not able to finish. It also enables Marion to not have to account for her late reply as she had done with the present e-mail. In my data, e-mail interaction tend to be concerned with time, thanking for quick responses and apologizing or accounting for late responses. Therefore, by indicating when Marion may be able to reply will allow Yoshiko not to worry and wait, and Marion will not have to account for her possibly delayed response.

Marion begins to close her e-mail by using a phatic phrase, mentioning Yoshiko enjoying the time with her family and friends. This again is in response to Yoshiko's e-mail in the beginning where Yoshiko mentions having a great time with her family (lines 7-8). Adding in the entity of friends, Marion seems to construct Yoshiko's social situation in which she has a relatively strong connection with Japan, not only a place where the family lives but also a place where Yoshiko has friends. Furthermore, Marion writes “while you can” with an upgrading explanation mark, again constructing Yoshiko’s situation where her institutional life being other than Japan, away from her family and friends, as well as having a busy student life.

Marion closes her e-mail with a “thanks” in line 25. This thanking, in contrast with Yoshiko’s thanking in line 15, does not carry the semantic content of gratitude but as noted earlier functions as a marker for closure of the e-mail.

Signature. Marion then writes her name along with a pre-written signature indicating her degree, position, and affiliation (lines 26-31). This shows that the e-mail account Marion is using is used for professional work.

Observing the overall formatting of the e-mails, Marion’s e-mail compared to Yoshiko’s is more informal and note-like. Marion minimally changes rows where names were written, with no boundary markers. In contrast, Yoshiko’s e-mail seemed more formal with the usage of boundary markers. The two e-mails are also highly interrelated with each other as in face-to-face conversations.

Pre-request-accounts

In this section, I introduce two typical examples of the 17 e-mail sequences where accounts were placed before the requests, the most common accounting pattern in my data. This placement preference is consistent with the findings for English requests by L1 Chinese participants found in Kirkpatrick (1991) and Chen (2001). In their studies, by bringing the accounts before the requests, the participants tend to delay the dispreferred requesting action. The following is an e-mail exchange between Yoko and Liz regarding a letter that Yoko should have received.

(2) Yoko/ Liz (Letter)

1. From: “Yoko Tanaka” yoko@e-mail.com
2. To: “Liz Brown” liz@e-mail.com
3. Date: Saturday, August 05, 2006 4:36 PM
4. Subject: Your mailing address in Portland

5. Ms Brown,
6.
7. Hello. This is Yoko who will be joining UM as a graduate student
8. as well as a teaching assistant in Languages and
9. Literatures department.
10.
11. →I have received the below note from Dr. Silver, and I sent you my
12. →mailing address on July 20. I have not yet received any document

→via mail, however. If you have already sent one, I assume there had
→been some-mailing problem. Would you be kind enough to let me know when
you have posted the official letter?

Thank you very much for your support
Best regards,
Yoko
yoko@e-mail.com
Mail Box# xx (room #xx) xx Dormitory,
112 SW, Portland OR xxxx

>From: "Jim Silver" jim@e-mail.com
>To: "Yoko Tanaka" yoko@e-mail.com
>Date: Wednesday, July 19 2006 2:00 PM
>Subject: Your mailing address in Portland[10]
>
>Yoko,
>
>Liz Brown is ready to send you the official letter offering you the teaching assistantship in
>Japanese. Please e-mail to her your mailing address there in Portland, Oregon. I have pasted in
>her e-mail address below. Liz also assists our international graduate students. liz@e-mail.com
>
>Once you receive the offer letter, please read it through and follow the instructions on
>notifying us that you accept the offer. There is also a website noted, where you can provide
>some of the basic information needed for us to put you on the payroll after you arrive in late
>August. Fill in what you can.
>
>Dr. Hill will answer questions about your Japanese teaching assignment. I believe she
>also plans to pick you up at the airport here in Lubbock. After you have taken care of visa
> issues here, I will help you get registered for courses.
>
>I hope your workshop at Portland State is going well and you are enjoying your time there.
>
>Best wishes,
>Dr. Silver
>Graduate Advisor

From: "Liz Brown" liz@e-mail.com
To: "Yoko Tanaka" yoko@e-mail.com
Date: Tuesday, 8 Aug 2006 07:50 AM
Subject: Your mailing address in Portland

Hi Yoko

→I understand from Kari, the Administrative Assistant, that your
→letter went to Portland last week. If you have still not received it,
please contact her at: kari@e-mail.com

L

Liz Brown

---

[10] Jim's e-mail to Liz was attached to this e-mail.

63. Senior Advisor
64. Languages & Literatures
65. Box xxxx Lubbock, TX
66. T xxx-xxxx / F xxx-xxxx

Yoko accounts for her request across a stretch of three sentences (middle of lines 11-14) and delays the request, showing Yoko's orientation towards the dispreferred action (Heritage, 1988). In addition, the pre-request account in Yoko's e-mail seems to be used to avoid accusation, and as a pre-request. Below I examine how the account is designed.

Yoko uses a similar pattern of accounting as Yoshiko's in extract one where the introduction of the topic is connected with a contrastive phrase to the statement of the problem. In line 11, Yoko introduces the topic by pointing out Jim's mail, using the present perfect tense emphasizing that the action was completed in the past, in fact over a half a month ago (cf. lines 3 and 25). Yoko then accounts for the request by claiming she has followed Jim's instructions in a timely manner by using the conjunction "and" to show the connection to Jim's e-mail and adding the sending date to make her claim more credible. Yoko, similar to Yoshiko in extract one, justifies her status as a credible requester who has done what is expected on her side, as a result avoiding any accusation from the recipient.

Furthermore, by building an argument, of receiving Jim's e-mail and following his instructions, the recipient can anticipate that a problem is going to be raised. In lines 12 and 13, Yoko states the problem that the expected letter has not arrived yet. Yoko then places the conjunction "however" at the end of the sentence to contrast the problem with the previous sentence. In face-to-face conversations, we can understand a pre-request by the response of the interlocutor. However, since in e-mail interaction the recipient cannot take over the turn until the writer finishes, it is difficult to see if an account is functioning as a pre-request. In this case, using the conditional if-clause, Yoko pre-supposes Liz's answer in line 13. Therefore, by assuming that Yoko is anticipating some kind of response from Liz before the if-clause, we are able to understand that the account is functioning as a pre-request.

The if-clause also softens the possible offence of Yoko to Liz. According to Ford (1997), the if-clause in English occurs in conversations with delicate situations, whenever "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987) is at play. Here, presenting Jim's e-mail that refers to

Liz sending a letter and Yoko claiming that the letter has not arrived may be taken as a prosecution of Liz's responsibility. However, by utilizing the conditional if-clause to show Yoko's assumption of Liz's response that she has sent the letter already and pointing the "assumed" (line 13) responsibility of the mailing system, it avoids offending Liz, thus serving to maintain social solidarity. In addition, this if-clause further delays the request, presenting the request as a dispreferred action. Therefore, corresponding to the findings of Taleghani-Nikazm (2006), pre-requests seem to be able to take the form of accounts.

Yoko then finally requests the sending date of the letter using "Would you let me know," with an inserted internal modifier of "kind enough" to upgrade the politeness the request. Although this request is non-routine as in extract one, Yoko constructs the request as though Liz has the information and therefore has the obligation to reply.

In Liz's response e-mail to Yoko, Liz fully shifts the responsibility for the letter by starting the main body section with "I understand from Kari," giving the reference source name of Kari and her position as an "Administrative Assistant." Using this bureaucratic response style and avoiding taking part in the issue, Liz constructs an institutional context in which the interaction takes place and creates the issue of the unarrived letter as high stakes.

Yoko uses the same accounting pattern in the following e-mail when writing a follow up e-mail to Kari based on Liz's reply to contact Kari (lines 22 and 23 in extract two).

(3) Yoko/ Kari (Letter)

1. From: "Yoko Tanaka" yoko@e-mail.com
2. To: "Kari Black" skari@e-mail.com
3. Date: Tuesday, August 08, 2006 9:43 AM
4. Subject: Your mailing address in Portland[11]

5. Hello.
6. This is Yoko who will be joining UM as a graduate
7. student as well as a teaching assistant in
8. Languages and Literatures department.
9.
10. →I had a mail from Ms Brown that the official letter has been sent to me
11. →last week. However, I have not received one yet. Would you be kind
12. enough to let me know when you have posted the official letter?
13.
14. Thank you.
15.

[11] Yoko had Liz's response e-mail (extract two) attached to this e-mail.

16. Yoko
17. yoko@e-mail.com

18. From: “Kari Black” kari@e-mail.com
19. To: “Yoko Tanaka” yoko@e-mail.com
20. Date: Wednesday, Aug 9 2006 09:58 AM
21. Subject: Your mailing address in Portland[12]

22. Hello Yoko,
23.
24. →I wanted to let you know that the letter was mailed last week, but
25. →unfortunately went out with the wrong address. I'm going to scan the
26. letter and attach the file to this e-mail, before sending it to the
27. correct address by mail.
28.
29. If you experience any problems in opening the file, please let me know.
30.
31. Best regards,
32.
33. Kari
34. Administrative Business Assistant
35. Languages & Literatures
36. Box xxxx
37. Lubbock, TX xxxxx-xxxx
38. xxx-xxxx, Ext. xx
39. kari@e-mail.com

In the same account placement pattern as in extract two, Yoko accounts for her request and delays the request, again showing Yoko’s orientation towards the dispreferred action (Heritage, 1988). The account also seems to play a role of a pre-request in the message.

After referring to Liz’s e-mail (line 10), Yoko refers to the problem of the letter not arriving yet uses the contrastive conjunction “however” at the head of the sentence, accounting for the request that will follow (line 11). In this case, Yoko does not need to avoid any accusations since she knows that the letter has been sent.

Yoko then projects her request, using again “would you let me know” with an upgraded “kind enough” (lines 11-12). This requesting pattern is the same as in extract two making a non-routine request, but Yoko constructing a context where the recipient is more obligated to comply with the request. This requesting phrase is interesting in a way that it could be understood as Yoko asking for the specific sending date of the letter. However, Kari responds by mentioning that the letter was sent last week, and then gives

[12] A copy of the letter was attached as a PDF file to this e-mail.

the reason why it has not arrived to Yoko yet (line 24). From this we can see that Kari understood Yoko's requests as not telling her the specific date, but rather the possible reason for the late arrival of the letter. Furthermore, Kari's response is written in passive, similar to Liz, using a bureaucratic response style and avoiding taking responsibility for the issue.

In addition, again similar to Yoshiko's e-mail, Yoko's e-mail is more formal overall and letter-like than Liz' e-mail, which is short and more note-like, just giving her initials at the end.

This subsection showed that pre-request accounts in e-mails in my data function as pre-requests used to avoid accusations. The first point corresponds with Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) findings for pre-requests in the form of accounts for her German conversation data. The present data also suggest that pre-request accounts can be used to justify the position of the requester, thus avoiding any accusations that may arise from the consequences of making a request.

Post-request account

The second type of account placement found in my data showed placement right after the request sentence. Although many English accounts are found to be placed after the requests (Schegloff, in press), post-request accounts were not a frequent strategy for my participants. Furthermore, although in English accounts are regularly introduced by the conjunction "because" (Ford, 1994; Schleppegrell, 1991), none of the post-request accounts in the data were headed with the conjunction "because." Below, I analyze how the post-request accounts are used in e-mails by the participants.

In the example e-mail below, Mika writes to the campus security department to request that someone in the department come to her class as a guest speaker.

(4) Mika/ Dan (Presentation)

1. From: "Mika Sato" mika@e-mail.com
2. To: "security" security@e-mail.com
3. Date: Tuesday, Jan 24, 2006 at 4:21 PM
4. Subject: Request for Presentation

5. Hello.
6.
7. My name is Mika, and I am a instructor at the Language Institute.
8.
9. I was wondering if it is possible for a member of the campus security

to give a presentation as a guest speaker in one of our classes (75min)
about the services of the campus security and some safety tips on campus.

→This is a class with all international students who are new to the university.
→And we are hoping to have guest speakers in the middle of March.
→It would be a wonderful opportunity for my students to learn how to protect themselves
→and know who they could rely on in times of trouble.

Thank you very much and hope to hear from you soon.
Mika

Mika Sato

Department of Education
University of B
mail: mika@e-mail.com

From: "Dan Green" dan@e-mail.com
To: "Mika Sato" mika@e-mail.com
Date: Wednesday, Jan 25, 2006 at 9:51 AM
Subject: Request for Presentation

→Yes, I'd be more than happy to do a presentation. Let me know the date,
time and location.

Dan

Mika, like the other the participants in my data, orients to preference organization by using an account for the dispreferred action of requesting. However, the post-request account shown here, different from what we have seen in the pre-request accounts, functions to pursue a positive response of agreement. Below I will discuss these aspects of the account in more detail.

After a brief greeting and a self-introduction (line 7), followed by a boundary marker (line 8), Mika goes right to projecting a request (lines 9-10). As seen in the previous e-mails, a boundary marker seems to indicate a change of topic in my data.

Mika then presents her request starting with an internal modifier of "I was wondering" and an if-clause, "if it is possible." Again, as seen in extract one, the content of the request is non-routine and unexpected when using this requesting pattern. The if-clause also allows space for rejection, thus there is less obligation for the recipient to comply with the request. Observing extract one and four, the social relationship between the participants of the interaction may also be a factor in using this form of request. However, as we will see in extract five, this is not necessarily the case. Mika then states her request for having someone from the department come to her class one day as a presenter (lines 9-10), and discusses the content of the presentation (line 11).

Right after the request, Mika places multiple layers of accounts for her request (lines 11-14), indicating Mika's orientation towards the dispreferred action (Heritage, 1984). The first account is about the content of the presentation, connecting with the department's duties and the objective of the presentation. This account then links to the following accounts of the reason for requesting the presentation from the security department. After a boundary marker, suggesting a change of topic, Mika explains having all "new" and "international" students to the university (line 13), having multiple guests to the class (line 14), and that it is in the interest of student safety (lines 15-16). Mika's account in lines 13 and 15-16 is similar to a "no fault" (Heritage, 1984) design where the reason for the request is in the interest of the third party, in this case, the students. Moreover, by using "new" and "international" for an account of the request, Mika constructs the students as those unfamiliar to the North American university environment, therefore in need of guidance.

According to Heritage (1984), accounts for dispreferred responses to requests, offers, and invitations where they express lack of ability rather than unwillingness and do not threaten the accused rights of either party are said to have a "no fault" quality (p. 273). Heritage (1984) therefore mentions that accounts designed in these "no fault" ways function as threat- and conflict-avoidance procedures and generally serve to maintain social solidarity (p. 273). Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) also found accounts with similar "no fault" quality when the requester produces his motive for the request being in the interest of his friend rather than himself. In using this account design, Taleghani-Nikazm argues that, by introducing some background information and a "no fault" explanation, the requester provides information and collects understanding of the situation and reason for his requests. Therefore, the requester makes the request more acceptable to the participants. The account for the request in lines 15-16 also upgrades the "no fault" quality by mentioning how the students will benefit from the presentation. Thus, I agree with Taleghani-Nikazm and understand that the "no fault" design of accounts in this e-mail pursues a preferred response from the recipient.

The reply from the security department was displayed as a preferred response, fast and short. The response from Dan was made the day following the request (line 28), and started off with a short acceptance of “Yes” (line 30). His acceptance of the request continues with an upgraded acceptance of “I’d be more than happy to.” This acceptance pattern is similar to that of Marion’s in extract one and seems to be used often in my data in cases where the requester constructs a request where recipients are not obligated to comply, using the “I was wondering + if-clause” requesting pattern.

Comparing Mika and Dan’s overall e-mail format, Mika’s e-mail is more formal using boundary markers and adding a pre-made signature showing her institutional affiliation. On the other hand, Dan’s e-mail is more note-like, with addressed name at the beginning, and one continued line of message.

In the e-mail below, again we see the post-request account functioning to pursue a preferred response. Sachi and Yoshiko are both Japanese. Sachi writes an e-mail to Yoshiko to set a meeting and talk about Yoshiko’s experience as an intern in the past.

(5) Sachi/ Yoshiko (Intern)

From: “Sachi Ogawa” sachi@e-mail.com
To: “Yoshiko Morita” yoshiko@e-mail.com
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2006 6:24 AM
Subject: favor

Hi Yoshiko,

I was wondering if I could meet with you some time to ask about internship you did
→before with Kristin. I have Ena as an intern for my class right now, and would
→like to know how it was for you when you were an intern. It would be great
if you could spare me some time (like 30 min or so). Let me know if that's possible,
and if so, when would be good time/day for you.

Thank you!
Sachi

From: “Yoshiko Morita” yoshiko@e-mail.com
To: “Sachi Ogawa” sachi@e-mail.com
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2006 7:41 AM
Subject: favor

Hi Sachi-san,

→I'm happy to talk with you about internship I did with Kristin=) I have time on:

I have time on Wednesday. Since I don't have classes and live on campus, anytime is okay with.
Other than that, I'm free next Monday from the morning till 2PM.

26. Let me know when will work for you.
27.
28. →*matane~~*
again+FP
see you
29.
30. Yoshiko

31. From: “Sachi Ogawa” sachi@e-mail.com
32. To: “Yoshiko Morita” yoshiko@e-mail.com
33. Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2006 8:17 AM
34. Subject: favor

35. Yoshiko,
36.
37. Thanks for your quick reply! How about tomorrow (Wed) 1:30-2:00?
38.
39. Sachi

40. From: “Yoshiko Morita” yoshiko@e-mail.com
41. To: “Sachi Ogawa” sachi@e-mail.com
42. Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2006 8:21 AM
43. Subject: favor

44. →Okay:D see you tomorrow!
45.
46. →*ashitane~*
tomorrow+FP
see you tomorrow
47.
48. Yoshiko

Similar to the previous extract, in extract five, the request is followed by an account that displays Sachi’s orientation towards the dispreferred action, and the account functioning to pursue an acceptance of the request. Below I will analyze the e-mail in more detail.

Sachi states her request at the beginning of her e-mail after an opening of “Hi” and a boundary marker. Sachi requests setting a meeting with Yoshiko using an internal modifier of “I was wondering” (line 7) and if-clause “if I could meet with you.” Comparing the above case where the interaction is between two students, and other e-mails (extract one and four) we have seen in this paper using the if-clause request where it was used for a professor or unknown recipients, it seems that social distance or power (Brown & Levinson, 1987) do not play a part. Rather, the “I was wondering + if-clause” requesting pattern seems to be used for non-routine unexpected favors where the requester creates and raises the imposition of the request. In addition, by using the if-clause, space is allowed for the recipient to reject the request thus creating a situation were the recipient is not obligated to comply with nor respond to the request. Sachi then introduces the topic of the meeting, about the internship Yoshiko did with Kristin.

The account for the request follows this in line 8 where Sachi explains she has an intern for her class. Similar to what Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) found, by making the account after the request, Sachi makes her request more understandable and acceptable to Yoshiko, thus pursues a preferred response. Connected with the conjunction “and” (line 8) to show “because-therefore” (H. Tanaka, 1999) structure, Sachi then enforces her request by repeating her interest in learning about Yoshiko’s intern experience, but this time specifies that she is interested in Yoshiko’s intern experience by noting “how it was for you” (lines 8-9). Sachi projecting her desire to know about Yoshiko’s experience by using requesting strategy of “would like to know.” Although polite, Sachi does not use any internal modifiers here as she did in the first request. This corresponds with Kasper’s (2004) argument that in repeated questions, the latter questions omit mitigations and sharpen the question target by slightly altering the content (p. 129).

Yoshiko’s response to Sachi’s request can be seen as a preferred response. In line 21 Yoshiko responds to the e-mail within an hour, and her acceptance is placed at the beginning with a smiley face to upgrade the acceptance (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). Again, in line 44, Yoshiko orients to a preferred response with a fast and short response and with a smiley face to upgrade the acceptance of the proposed meeting date. This acceptance, “I’d be happy to” in line 21 is again similar to the cases in extract one and four, where the request is constructed so that the recipient is not obligated to agree to the request.

What is unique about this extract is that Yoshiko code-switches to Japanese. Yoshiko addresses Sachi’s name with “*san*” for politeness and closes her message with “*matane*” and “*ashitane*” possibly to show more friendliness and construct co-membership with the Japanese language community (Lo, 1999; Ochs, 1993).

In this section, corresponding with Taleghani-Nikazm’s (2006) findings, we observed post-request-accounts providing information and explanations for the co-participants to help understand the situation and thus to receive an acceptance of the request.

Pre- and post-request account

The last pattern of accounting for the request that I found was to place accounts in two positions, before and after the request. A typical pattern of this sort was shown previously in extract one. Below is another case where this pre- and post-request account was used. Kanako writes to her professor regarding a book chapter she is in charge of for a class. Although Kanako opens her e-mail with the recipient's title and last name, it lacks in any kind of greeting, failing to develop any friendliness.

(6) Kanako/ Sarah (Copy)

From: "Kanako Takahashi" kanako@e-mail.com
To: "Sarah Orange" sarah@e-mail.com
Date: N/A
Subject: About Denzin & Lincoln 's Handbook of Qualitative Research

Dear Dr. Orange

→I have the 2nd version of Handbook of Qualitative Research, but
→not the 3rd version. My part is Chapter 31: The methods, politics, and ethics
of representation in online ethnography by Annette, N, Markham p. 793.
→I went to the library and searched the book, and also asked the librarian.
→They said it is now in the process of order. They ordered four books, but
→none of them has arrived in the library yet. I asked them to send me
→e-mail if the books arrived in. However, they cannot guarantee when.
→Since the due of written discussion format of the article is the 14th, I have to
→get the article soon.

Could I make a copy of the chapter?
→I asked several people around me, and checked the reading room,
→but only found the 2nd version. Nobody had the 3rd version yet.
Probably it is because the book is very expensive.

Would you please let me know how I can make a copy?
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kanako

From: "Sarah Orange" sarah@e-mail.com
To: "Kanako Takahashi" kanako@e-mail.com
Date: Thursday, February 23, 2006 3:17 PM
Subject: About Denzin & Lincoln 's Handbook of Qualitative Research

I'll make a copy for you and give it to you next week. S

Kanako delays her request using a variety of accounts, background information, and a boundary marker through lines 7 to16. As mentioned previously, delaying stated components of an action being performed are "partially constitutive of turn/sequence organizations associated with dispreferred actions" (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 75). The accounts in her request, depending on the content and placement functioned as a pre-request, accusation avoidance, and pursuit of a preferred response. Below I examine the accounts in more detail.

Kanako presents three pre-request accounts. Kanako's first account (lines 7-8) brings up the trouble that she is having. Using the contrast conjunction "but," Kanako contrasts the background of her possession of the second edition of the book, and the problem of not having the needed third edition. Kanako changes the topic to her assigned chapter right after this account, suggesting the possibility of a pre-request in the form of an account, where, in face-to-face conversation, co-participants can take the turn and produce an offer.

Her second pre-request account (lines 10-13) functions to avoid accusations. Kanako lists in chronological order what she had done before her request and the consequences in detail. By contrasting the list of actions that she took and the negative consequences of her actions, Kanako shows her lack of access to the book. She also narrows down the possibility of a rejection by eliminating the alternative methods of getting a copy. Furthermore, similar to what Yoshiko did in extract one, by explaining what Kanako had already done she avoids the accusation of not searching for the book and makes herself credible for requesting help. Her third pre-request account again raises the problem she is having. Using a causal conjunction "since," Kanako also expresses the urgency of receiving the copy by indicating the due date and adding "soon" at the end. Similar to what we observed in the cases of post-request accounts and also in extract one. Pre-requests accounts seem to function as a pre-request or an accusation avoidance move.

After her lengthy account and a boundary marker, showing the change of topic, Kanako then in line 17, makes a request using an indirect form of, "Could I make a copy of the chapter?" Although Kanako uses the accounts to eliminate other options (receiving a copy or borrowing the book from Sarah), she avoids using "you" in her request, possibly in order to be polite. However, Kanako leaves limited options open other than borrowing the book from Sarah. Therefore, compared to the if-clause requests we have seen in the previous examples, in this case, the recipient is more obligated to comply with request.

The first request is followed by a post-request account to reinforce the previously stated account and to pursue a preferred response. In lines 18-19, Kanako's introduces additional information about her search for the book, and by using the contrastive conjunction "but," again expresses the unsuccessful result and lack of access to the book. By stating this account, Kanako reinforces the first request by again denying any other options for getting the needed chapter, and thus pursues an acceptance of her request. At the same time, this account functions as a pre-request for the second request in line 22.

Kanako states her second request in a slightly different way from the first request by using "Would you let me know" (line 22) and requesting a method for getting a copy. Again, Kanako creates a context in which Sarah is the only recourse for the solving her problem and by using the "would you" request phrase, Sarah is more obligated to respond to the request. Although receiving a copy from Sarah is the only way to solve Kanako's problem, Kanako never asks Sarah to make the copy. However, Sarah in her response offers to make the copy (line 31), presenting Sarah's understanding of Kanako's request as a request for her to make a copy.

Having this long detailed account for her requests, Kanako seems to upgrade the imposition of the request. Furthermore, Kanako shows some of the power difference between the Kanako and Sarah by addressing Sarah with her title and last name (line 5) and using a formal closing of "sincerely." However, we can also assume Sarah's different perspective on the imposition of the request. In contrast to Kanako's long request message, Sarah's acceptance response is significantly shorter, only with a single line (line 31) signed only with her initial. In addition, comparing Sarah's response to Marion's responses in extract one, Sarah does not refer to the accounts made by the requester Kanako.

Further examining the interaction between Kanako and Sarah, we find the two orienting towards the institutional identities of the university context. The two orient towards one goal of getting the needed readings for a class. In addition, Kanako creates her institutional identity as a student through her long email using many accounts, pre-requests, and avoiding the use of "you" in the requests. This was in despite of her low imposition request compared to other requests we have seen in this study. Sarah also creates her institutional identity as a teacher (or professor) through her very brief response, and emphasizing the granting of the request by including "for you."

Overall, again, the formality is quite different, the participants' e-mails are more letter-like and responses to requests more note-like. Moreover, the pre- and post-request accounts of the participants also performed their orientation to the sequence of preference organization by accounting for and delaying the dispreferred requesting action, and at the same time pursuing a preferred response of granting the request.

Discussion

In this section, I will summarize the findings of this study focusing on preference organization, unique features utilized from the available resources of the e-mail medium, and the overall differences from the research conducted using only the CCSARP coding scheme.

Preference Organization

By analyzing the sequential organization of accounts for requests in e-mails, this study aimed to understand how L2 speakers design their requests from a CA inspired perspective. This investigation of pattern in sequence of accounts for requests demonstrated that the participants of this study orient towards preference organization using accounts and delaying the dispreferred requesting action.

The analysis suggests that L2 speakers place their account largely into three positions of (a) pre-request, (b) post-request, and (c) pre- and post-request, all three placed in the same turn as the request. The analysis showed that pre-request accounts were used as pre-requests to possibly elicit offers, and also to avoid accusation regarding the content of the request. Post-request accounts functioned to reinforce the request statement and to pursue a preferred response. Furthermore, in case (c) where accounts placed both before and after the request, the accounts functioned similar to those in cases (a) and (b), justifying one's position when account was placed before the request, and pursuing a positive response when placed it after the request. As for the content of the accounts, presentation of the problem, lack of access, and showing the interest for the third party with a "no fault" quality, functioned as accounts.

Linguistic resources such as the causal conjunction "because" were not used in the data to indicate the accounts for the requests. This was a different finding from what Ford (1994), Taleghani-Nikazm (2006), and Schleppegrell (1991) found in their data. Rather, "and" was a frequent conjunction used to connect the pre-request account and the requesting sentence. The use of the conjunction "and" reflected the "because-therefore" reasoning structure, an explanation structure that was observed in Kirkpatrick's (1991) study. This is also similar to the reasoning structure in Japanese using the causal conjunction *kara* (H. Tanaka, 1999). I agree with Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) suggestion that more research is needed on these indicators of accounts for request.

Affordances of E-mails

As mentioned in the analyses, the participants were found to be utilizing the "affordances" (Gibson, 1977) of the medium of e-mails in order to display their orientation to the dispreferred action. These included smiley faces, "written pauses" (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006), and boundary markers.

Smiley faces, as Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) point out, were used by the participants to "express and intensify friendliness towards the co-participant" (p. 29). Smiley faces were placed after greetings and after preferred responses of accepting or agreeing to a request. However, none were found embedded in the requesting action as Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm did. Therefore, I believe this study partially supports Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm's suggestions of emoticons and smiley faces being affiliative strategies used to display the participants' orientation towards self-other relationships and social solidarity (p. 30).

The participants were also using "written pauses" such as " …" to delay the dispreferred action. This also corresponds with Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) finding where, in Internet chats, participants "utilize written pauses as a device to slightly delay the production of their dispreferred action of requesting" (p. 17). Therefore, it could be suggested that these "written pauses" are a common strategy in written electronic interaction when speakers orient to preference organization and delay dispreferred actions.

The final feature the participants utilized to display their orientation towards the dispreferred action was the boundary markers. By using a line of space before or after requests or accounts, the participants delayed the dispreferred action and were successful in highlighting the important section of the e-mail. At the same time, the spacing seemed to make the e-mail more letter-like and formal. In comparison, responses for requests by non-L1 Japanese speakers were more note-like, usually with one line of response, and less use of spacing and formatting. Thus, e-mail interaction formatting such as use of spaces may also show the writer's orientation towards the preferred or dispreferred action.

It seems then that, by recruiting the unique features available of the medium, the participants presented their orientation towards the preference organization and thus maintained social solidarity.

Differences from CCSARP Research

Accounting was found to be a frequent requesting strategy for L2 speakers as previous researchers have mentioned (Hill, 1997; Shimamura, 1993). However, in this study, L2 speakers were observed to be utilizing different patterns of account placements and functions in order for their requests to be granted. Furthermore, it was observed that linguistic choices of requests such as "I was wondering + if-clause" creates the context of the request as unexpected and the recipient not obligated to comply. Although more research is needed to make any claims, these features could not have been observed using the CCSARP coding scheme since the method does not allow case-by-case analysis of the position and function of accounts. As mentioned in the literature, while much research has investigated the requesting strategies of L2 speakers with some on accounts for requests, few have observed the various usages of accounts by L2 speakers in detail. Therefore, as Golato (2003) suggested in her study, when we seek to understand the underlying interactional patterns of actual language use, including speech acts, I agree that we would need to utilize research methods such as CA.

CONCLUSION

In previous research grounded in the CCSARP research method, we were unable to observe how L2 speakers actually use requesting features of the language in conversational interaction. By employing Sacks et al.'s (1974) method of CA and Taleghani-Nikazm's (2005, 2006) approach to discourse, this paper focused on the design of requests by L2 speakers in e-mail interactions. In particular, I examined how accounts for requests are used and where they are placed as a component of a request turn, as well as where and how the request turn is placed within an interaction.

The analysis showed that in e-mail correspondence, L2 speakers orient to preference organization as people are said to do in co-present interaction (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984), however they did so recruiting the "affordances" of the medium. By analyzing accounts for requests and their responses to the requests, I demonstrated how L2 speakers orient to preference organization in their requests as they adapt their interaction to the specific environment of e-mail interactions.

However, this study has limitations due to the method of CA evolving based on oral conversation and lack of research of L2 speakers using CA. Therefore for further understanding, more research is needed on how CA can be applied to e-mail interaction. In addition, to have a fruitful discussion of L2 speakers' requesting in e-mail interaction, in this study L1 Japanese participants, I believe there is a need to conduct a CA study on ordinary face-to-face conversation by L2 speakers with L1 Japanese, speakers of different target language proficiency levels, and requesting in Japanese. Moreover, I believe multiple research methods are needed in order to identify and understand the sequence and development patterns of L2 speech act of requesting.

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