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# Topic shift by Japanese and Americans: A cause of misinterpretation in intercultural communication

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## Abstract

In this paper, the differences in communication styles between Japanese and English speakers are analyzed, and the interpersonal function the style conveys is also discussed. The focus is on the style of topic shift in English conversations between these speakers. Conversational data and follow-up interview data were analyzed. The results were as follows: 1. Japanese and Americans prefer different styles of topic shift. 2. Japanese wait for a pause to change the topic. On the other hand, Americans prefer to raise different topics one after another. 3. The interpersonal functions of each topic shift style are also different between the speakers; that is, the Japanese try to be in harmony with the other participants, whereas Americans are collaborative. 4. These differences in topic shift style and its interpersonal function can lead to misinterpretations between Japanese and Americans.

## I . Introduction

When speaking in English with native speakers of English, the Japanese are often said to be not talkative, and too quiet. This quiet attitude of the Japanese sometimes leads to the misinterpretation that they are not cooperative, or are impolite in conversation, although this is not intention. Due to this misinterpretation, they can miss chances to create good relationships with native speakers of English.

The reason why the Japanese are apt to be misinterpreted is attributed to the difference in communication styles between Japanese and native speakers of English. And the communication style used by each speaker implies the interpersonal relationship s/he wants to convey. Brown & Yule (1983) described the main functions of language as referential and transactional. The referential function is to express content, while the transactional function serves to express a social relationship or personal attitude; that is, the interpersonal function. Malinowski (1923) and Jakobson (1960) also pointed out that language or language communication can serve to express the human relationship between participants, although the

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\*Received September 21, 2006. The Professor, College of Liberal Arts

terminologies of the each author are not the same.<sup>1)</sup>

Considering these facts, it is essential to analyze the differences in communication styles between different languages, and also to discuss the interpersonal function the speakers express through these styles. Moreover this will give some indication of why the Japanese are misinterpreted by native speakers of English.

For this purpose, we will focus in this paper on topic shifts in English conversation between Japanese and native speakers of English. The styles of topic shift by both speakers will then be examined by analyzing conversational data, and the interpersonal functions of the topic shift will also be clarified through the follow-up interviews.

## II. Purpose

Although topic shift has received a great deal of attention since the 1980s, most researchers examine it from the perspective of conversation management. For example, they investigate the relevancy of each topic in a conversation (e.g., Sacks 1992, Murakami & Kumatoridani 1995), or the strategies or clues for changing the topic (e.g., Reichman 1978, Maynard 1993).

This paper, however, focuses on the interpersonal function of topic shift. In a conversation, topic shift is an essential strategy for contributing to and encouraging the conversation. Brown & Levinson (1987) mention that raising a safe topic is one of the positive politeness strategies. Thus, considering the fact that there exist complaints about the linguistic behavior of the Japanese from native speakers of English, as mentioned above, it is important to examine the styles of topic shift and the interpersonal functions implied in the styles in both languages to avoid misinterpretation.

This research especially aims to fulfill the following three objectives.

- ① To specify differences in topic shift frequency and clues between a successful and an unsuccessful English conversation between the Japanese and native speakers of English.
- ② To specify the cause that makes it difficult for a Japanese speaker of English to shift a topic in an English conversation with native speakers.
- ③ To discuss the interpersonal functions implied in the topic shift by the Japanese and native speakers of English.

## III. Definition of topic shift

### i. Topic

The word "topic" is probably one of the most pervasive terminologies. In this paper, however, the word is used based on the definition by Brown & Yule (1983).

Brown & Yule employed the term "topic framework." They focused on realistic discursal data, and pointed out that in our daily conversation, topics are not fixed beforehand, but are negotiated in the process of the conversation. Therefore, they insisted that what is important is not to pin down one topic, but to see how people "speak topically." They define "speaking topically" as being relevant to the elements of the conversation. This is a very realistic definition when dealing with real conversational data. When the word "topic" or "topic shift" is used in this paper, it means "topic framework" and "shift of topic framework" after Brown & Yule.

## ii. Topic shift clues

It is not always easy to identify where the preceding topic ends and a new topic starts. The judgment about topic shift can sometimes be intuitive. Reichman (1978) and Maynard (1993), however, found some strategies that can be clues for topic shift.

Reichman shows the following five strategies as clues for topic shift:

### ① Clue word shifts and deictic expressions

"By the way," "but," "yeah," etc., indicate the start of a new topic.

### ② Explicitly labeled shifts

"What I was saying before," "speaking of X," etc., can be markers to indicate topic shift.

### ③ Mode of reference

Reichman focused on pronominalization in discourse. In discourse, a speaker refers to an entity by a pronoun or by a non-pronoun. The shift in pronoun and non-pronoun indicates a shift of his/her attention to the entity, and also a shift of topic.

### ④ Repetition of words

A speaker sometimes repeats what s/he said in the preceding conversation, and it works to show the topic has ended.

### ⑤ Tense shift

Reichman pointed out that a switch in tense also indicates a topic shift. For example, in order to close a topic, a shift from past tense to present tense is effective. And conversely, a shift from present to past tense indicates the beginning of a new topic.

Maynard (1993) also pointed out four strategies that can function as markers of topic shift:

### ① A pause in conversation

A pause indicates that there is nothing more to say about the preceding topic.

### ② An expression to evaluate or summarize the preceding utterances

By evaluating or summarizing the preceding utterances, the speaker can imply an intention to close the topic.

### ③ A minimal response

Nodding, smiling, and repeating the comment of the addressee are examples of this strategy. These strategies can mean that there is nothing new to say about this topic.

④ An adverbial and conjunctive phrase to indicate a topic shift

Similar to Reichman above, a phrase like "by the way" is an example of this strategy.

In order to judge where the topic had shifted in our data, the above clues by Reichman and Maynard were utilized, together with Brown and Yule's definition of "topic framework."

#### IV. Data and procedure

In this study, three intercultural conversations involving four participants are analyzed. Two of them (Conversation 1 and 2) are English conversations between two Japanese and two American native speakers of English.<sup>2)</sup> These are the source of the main data of this study. The other one (Conversation 3) is an English conversation involving two Japanese and two Chinese. As both parties in Conversation 3 are non-native speakers of English, the quality of this data is different from those of the other two conversations held between the Japanese and the Americans. The Japanese participants in Conversation 3, however, are the same as those in Conversation 2. Conversation 3 serves as contrastive data to analyze how differently those two Japanese speak with native and non-native speakers of English. The details of each participant are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Participants in the conversations

Conversation	Participant	Sex and age	Background of the participant	
1	American 1 (A1)	M 20s	} Exchange students at a Japanese university. Both arrived in Japan one or two weeks ago. Cannot speak Japanese.	
	American 2 (A2)	F 20s		
	Japanese 1 (J1)	M 20s	University student in Japan. Majoring in English. Is going to study in the U. S. soon.	
	Japanese 2 (J2)	F 20s	University student in Japan. Majoring in English. Studied in Australia for a year.	
2	Main data	American 3 (A3)	M 40s	Government service employee at the U.S. military base in Japan. Cannot speak Japanese, although his wife is Japanese.*
		American 4 (A4)	M 60s	Professor of a college in the U.S. military base in Japan. Cannot speak Japanese.*
	Japanese 3 (J3)	M 40s	<i>*At the U.S. military base in Japan, they can live the same lifestyle that they live in the U.S. They seldom leave the base, and don't need to use Japanese at all.</i> University professor (science). First grade of STEP ( <i>Eiken</i> = English proficiency test). Makes presentations in English at international conferences. Writes papers in English. Translates English books into Japanese.	

2	Main data	Japanese 4 (J4)	M 40s	University professor (science). Makes presentations in English at international conferences. Writes papers in English.
3	Contrastive data	Chinese 1 (C1)	M 40s	Researcher at a Japanese university (science). Learned English in China. Reads and speaks English for his studies.
		Chinese 2 (C2)	M 20s	Graduate student at a Japanese university (science). Learned English in China. Reads and speaks English for his studies.
		Japanese 3 (J3)	M 40s	} Same as Conversation 2
		Japanese 4 (J4)	M 40s	

As the table shows, neither of the Americans can speak Japanese. On the other hand, all the Japanese have frequent opportunities to speak English, can speak fairly well, and are used to an English-speaking environment. The Chinese also use English often to read and write papers, and speak English at international conferences. That is, although the Japanese and the Chinese are non-native speakers of English, they are accustomed to using English.

The participants met each other for the first time during the conversations. The main themes of the conversations were given beforehand. In Conversation 2 and 3, they were asked to talk about their cross-cultural experiences, and in Conversation 1, about a welcome party for international students. However, they were allowed to change the given theme as the conversation progressed, and they did not have to adhere to the given theme. The duration of each conversation was 30 minutes.

The conversational data, however, are not necessarily enough to understand the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the hearer with regard to an utterance or language behavior. Follow-up interviews were then conducted promptly after the conversations in order to clarify them. The conversations and follow-up interviews were video- and audio-recorded, and were transcribed.

The procedures of the analyses are as follows. First, the styles of topic shift among these conversational data are analyzed quantitatively. Next, the intentions, or the interpretations of topic shift, are analyzed through the follow-up interviews. And finally, the interpersonal functions of topic shift in Japanese and English are discussed.

The amount of data is not necessarily enough to generalize the results. However, we believe that by analyzing the conversational data through follow-up interviews, it is possible to clarify the characteristics and interpersonal functions of topic shift by the Japanese and the Americans, and also the problems the Japanese face in intercultural communication.

## V. Analyses

### i . Impressions made by Japanese speakers

First of all, the impression the Japanese speakers made on the addressees will be analyzed. In

the follow-up interviews after the conversations, each speaker stated his/her impression as follows (Table 2).

Table 2 : Impressions of Japanese speakers (A...Americans J...Japanese C...Chinese)

Conversation	Impression	Comments and others
1	Good	No comments
2	Very bad	A: They (Js) were uncooperative and rude. If I were in the States, I would not talk with them. Their ways (of talking) are a problem. I don't want to talk with them again.
3	Very good	C: We enjoyed the conversation. (Js and Cs kept on talking after the experiment.)

In Conversation 1 and 3, both the Americans and the Chinese had good impressions of the Japanese. The Japanese also had good impressions of the other parties. Especially in Conversation 3, the Cs and Js enjoyed the conversation fully and did not stop the conversation even after the experiment was over. In Conversation 2, however, A3 and A4 had terribly bad impressions of J3 and J4. They said that the Japanese speakers were uncooperative in the conversation, and that their manners would be considered rude in the U.S. They also added that the conversational attitude of the Japanese was a problem and they did not want to talk with J3 and J4 again. From the perspective of interpersonal relationships, Conversation 2 was unsuccessful.

What is interesting about this data is the difference in the impressions the Japanese speakers made on the Americans between Conversation 1 and 2. Both of the conversations were held under almost the same conditions; that is, conversations between two Japanese non-native speakers of English and two American native speakers of English. The impressions that the Japanese speakers made, however, were opposite. What caused the differences between these two conversations?

#### ii. Analyses of English conversations between Japanese and Americans

To clarify the cause of the different impressions between Conversation 1 and 2, we analyzed the number of topics that came up, as well as which speaker shifted the topic in the conversations.

First, the total number of topics in both conversations was compared (Table 3). Nineteen topics in Conversation 1, and 16 topics in Conversation 2 were raised in each 30-minute conversation. Thus, no distinct difference regarding the number was found between the two conversations.

Table 3 : The number of topics and starters of the topics. (A...American J...Japanese)

Conversation	Total number of topics	Topics raised by As	Topics raised by Js	As' impression of Js
1	19	11	8	Good
2	16	13	3	Very bad

Next we analyzed which participants changed the topic. A large difference could then be seen between each conversation. In Conversation 1, the Americans introduced new topics 11 times and the Japanese 8 times. On the other hand, in Conversation 2, the Americans started new topics 13 times and the Japanese only 3 times. It is clear that in Conversation 2, the Japanese introduced extremely few new topics compared to the Americans, and also compared to Conversation 1, when the Japanese made a good impression on the Americans.

Here, it is useful to remember the comment in the follow-up interview made by A3 and A4 in Conversation 2 (Table 2). They complained that the Japanese were not cooperative in the conversation and were impolite. The difference in the frequency of introducing new topics can be inferred as one of the causes of the Americans' bad impressions.

In Conversation 2, why did not or could not the Japanese introduce new topics? In order to answer this question, the clues that caused the topic shift were analyzed, based on Reichman and Maynard, who were quoted earlier. Table 4 shows the clue strategies when a topic was shifted in Conversation 1 and 2.

Table 4 : Clue strategies for topic shift in Conversation 1 and 2. (A...Americans J...Japanese)

Conversation	Speaker	Breaking the ice	Pause	Evaluation	Summary	By body language	Others	Total
1	J	0	6	0	1	0	1	8
	A	1	7	0	1	0	2	11
2	J	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
	A	1	4	4	2	0	2	13

The first clue, "Breaking the ice" is a strategy for opening a conversation. Both conversations were started by the Americans. The next clue "Pause" is a strategy for offering a new topic after a silence. This is the clue used frequently by both the Japanese and the Americans. The third clue is "Evaluation." The Americans in Conversation 2 often started new topics after comments that evaluated the preceding utterances. Look at example 1.

<Example 1> // = topic shift<sup>3)</sup>

1 J4 : I...I...I every Monday morning, I experience many many people in train. I watch

- station, station...officer push, push
- 2 A4: oh, still have pushers?
- 3 J4 : it's very crazy
- 4 A3: // have you both been to the United States? visiting or working?
- 5 J4 : oh I...I had been to the United States, in Santa Barbara

This is part of Conversation 2. J4 is talking about Japanese trains, and explaining that in rush hour in Japan, the trains are so crowded that the station employees have to push passengers into the train cars. And A4 replies, "Oh, still have pushers?" J4 then evaluates the story, saying, "it's very crazy" in line 3. Then A3 recognizes that he can introduce a new topic here after the evaluation. He begins, "Have you both been to the United States? Visiting or working?" in line 4. Through this utterance, a new topic is introduced, and the Japanese start to talk about their stay in the United States after line 5. A3 and A4 utilize this strategy four times in Conversation 2, but the Japanese do not use it at all.

The summary of the preceding utterances can also be a clue for topic shift. In example 2, in line 1, J3 is introducing himself and explaining that he teaches math at a university. Then in line 6, A3 asks if he teaches algebra or not. J3 explains that he teaches both algebra and calculus in line 7 and 9. Finally, A3 sums up the exchange, saying, "OK, calculus" in line 12. Here, A4 understands that this summary by A3 can be a clue to shift the topic, and he starts a new topic about cultural differences, saying, "When we're talking about the culture differences in coming on while..." in line 13. The Americans introduce new topics three times in both Conversation 1 and 2 after the preceding utterances have been summarized. The Japanese, however, do it only once altogether.

<Example 2> // = topic shift

- 1 J3 : um...my name is XXX, XXX, and I'm a teacher here, this university. a...I teach math, the subject everyone dislikes
- 2 A3: no
- 3 J4 : no?
- 4 A3: we love it. yeah
- 5 A4: some people have math phobia ~ ~ @@
- 6 A3: that's an... very deep subject. algebra? you teach?
- 7 J3 : um...here I teach calculus
- 8 A3: cal...oh, calculus
- 9 J3 : and algebra
- 10 A3: algebra
- 11 J3 : yes



- 12 A3: ok calculus  
 13 A4: //when we're talking about the culture differences in coming on while...waiting to come over, we're discussing Japan...I have been here a number of different times as part of American military or now as a professor

In analyzing the clues for topic shift, some regulations can be observed. Although the Americans utilize various strategies in the conversations as clues, the Japanese prefer to change topics just after pauses (Table 4). For the Japanese, a pause seems to be an important signal to change a topic. The example below shows a new topic being introduced by J1 after a short pause.

<Example 3> // = topic shift

- 1 A2 : do we need anything else?  
 2 J1 : mmm  
 3 A2 : think that's enough  
 4 J1/J2: @@  
 5 J1 : not yet, not yet. need more  
 6 A2 : need more?  
 7 J1 : yeah  
 8 A2 : okay  
 9 A2 : maybe some type of noodles  
 10 J1 : okay. Japanese noodles?  
 11 A2 : yeah  
 12 A1 : [yeah]  
 13 J1 : soba, udon  
       (pause)  
 →14 J1 : // what do you usually have? on this campus, or cafeteria usual  
 15 A1 : ...I have, uh, I have uh, I have, I have a soba every day  
 16 J1 : oh, soba  
 17 J2 : oh, really?

From lines 1 through 13, the participants are talking about the food to prepare for the party. After a short pause, J1 introduces a new topic in line 14, about the lunch A1 and A2 have on the campus of the university. Most of the topic shifts by the Japanese in Conversation 1 and 2 are conducted after a pause, as in this example.

Why do the Japanese prefer a pause as a clue for changing the topic, and why don't they change the topic at the other clues? One reason, of course, could be the English ability of the

Japanese participants. For non-native speakers of English, it is not easy to identify and catch the clues promptly in the continuous process of conversation. On the other hand, a pause is cognitively easy for them to identify as a clue to shift a topic, because it clearly causes a silent moment in the conversation. It is not difficult even for non-native speakers, to recognize that there is nothing more to say about the topic, thanks to the silence.

Besides, we also need to take differences in preferred communication styles between the two languages into consideration. In the follow-up interviews, we asked J3 and J4 why they did not change topics in the conversation. Their answers were very interesting. They said, "I thought it was not good to change the topic," "I wanted to change the topic or raise a new topic. But I thought changing the topic would be rude. I was not brave enough to introduce a new topic." These comments clarify that J3 and J4 had the intention of changing the topic and raising a new one. They, however, regarded it as rude, according to their own norms. In other words, the Japanese tried to be polite to the Americans, following their own communication style and cultural standard, even though their intention was not understood by the Americans.

Table 4 and the comments by J3 and J4 show that Japanese try to utilize a pause to change a topic in a conversation so they are not rude to the addressees. As a pause is a very definite indication to show that no one in the group has the intention of talking, they can feel free to bring up a new topic after that. At other clues, however, there is the possibility that a participant in the conversation may continue to talk about the topic, and to prevent it by changing the topic can be rude to him/her. Conversation 1 was fairly slow and had a lot of pauses. This was why in Conversation 1, the Japanese could find a chance to initiate new topics without being rude to A1 and A2. As a result, J1 and J2 gave them a good impression.

But in Conversation 2, the conversational speed was very fast, and the Js could find few pauses in which to change the topic. In example 4, A4 is talking about his experience in China. In line 4, A3 evaluates A4's story, saying "Right." Next, he immediately raises the next topic, saying "Getting back to the cultural theme..." without pausing. As a result, the Japanese could not insert their topic, and they also did not dare to do so, as they regarded it as rude to A3 and A4.

<Example 4> // = topic shift

- 1 A4: the reason I asked is last summer I was in Xian, North Western Art and Technical
  - 2 J4 : yes
  - 3 A4: to teach English, a...I thought that they have...I found it interesting that a lot of Japanese were interested in learn Chinese, a lot of Chinese were interested in learning English. I was looking forward to going back to this summer, because of the SARS, they canceled the program. I'm not worried but other people are, I refused to ~~ fears, but other people are afraid of the SARS
- 4 A3: right. // getting back to the cultural theme, my wife is Japanese. she has two

other sisters and one of them is married to a Thai, and the other one married to a British. none of them married to Japanese. and that is very, kind of strange, I think.

iii. Analyses of the English conversation between the Japanese and the Chinese

It may be possible to surmise that the negative impressions J3 and J4 gave the Americans in Conversation 2 could have been attributed to the Js' personalities; that is, they really were too taciturn or uncooperative. But this supposition cannot be fully supported. Compare Conversation 2 and 3. Both conversations were held by J3 and J4, although the conversation partners were different. In Conversation 3, J3 and J4 spoke with C1 and C2 in English. Table 5 shows the number of topics in Conversation 2 and 3. In Conversation 3, 11 topics were introduced. Of the 11, 9 were offered by J3 and J4. Compared with Conversation 2, it is obvious how actively J3 and J4 raised topics in Conversation 3. And they also made a very good impression on C1 and C2. Of the three conversations, this was the only one in which the participants did not stop talking even after the experiment was over.

Table 5 : The numbers of topics and starters of the topics (A...Americans J...Japanese C...Chinese)

Conversation	Total number of topics	Topic raised by As or Cs	Topic raised by Js	As' or Cs' impression of Js
2	16	13 (by As)	3	Very bad
3	11	2 (by Cs)	9	Very good

Considering the fact that J3 and J4 were very active in Conversation 3, the negative impressions they made in Conversation 2 are not necessarily due to their personality problems. Then what made J3 and J4 so talkative in Conversation 3 ?

Table 6 shows the topic shift clues in Conversation 2 and 3. In Conversation 3, 8 out of the 9 topics that were raised by the Japanese appeared after pauses. This shows again that the Japanese prefer pauses as a clue to shift topics.

Table 6 : Clue strategies for topic shift in Conversation 2 and 3 (A...Americans J...Japanese C...Chinese)

Conversation	Speaker	Breaking the ice	Pause	Evaluation	Summary	By body language	Others	Total
2	J	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
	A	1	4	4	2	0	2	13
3	J	0	8	0	0	0	1	9
	C	1	0	0	0	0	1	2

In this conversation, the participants did not use topic shift clues like summary or evaluation,

which make identifying the end of the topic cognitively difficult for non-native speakers. In light of that, they used pauses a lot to show the end of the topic. Then, even J3 and J4, who felt that changing the topic or raising a new one in conversation would be rude, could raise a new topic rather easily and safely. The following is an example from Conversation 3, in which J3 changes the topic after a pause. J3 and C1 are talking about winter sports from lines 1 through 9. When a pause appears after line 9, J3 introduces a new topic about the Olympic Games in Beijing.

<Example 5> // = topic shift

- 1 J3 : popular sports...skiing in...prefecture  
 2 J4 : @@  
 3 C1 : a-ha  
 4 J3 : or Hokkaido. northern Japan  
 5 C1 : Hokkaido is...u...I think is most famous place  
 6 C2 : @@  
 7 J4 : ah  
 8 C1 : to ski  
 9 J3 : yes  
 (pause)  
 →10 J3 : // mmm by the way [someone : @@] er...how do you think about er...Olympic  
 Game in Pei...Beijing?  
 11 C1 : ah yes yes

#### iv. Results of the analyses

The results of the analyses reveal the following.

1. The Japanese tend to shift topics mainly after a pause in the conversation.
2. If they cannot find enough pauses in the conversation, as in Conversation 2, they do not dare to shift the topic.
3. The Japanese tend to consider that changing the topic in conversation can be rude towards the participants.
4. These attitudes of the Japanese can be misinterpreted by the Americans, who tend to think that it is important to raise a new topic in conversation to be cooperative, and not to be rude to the participants.

As the results clearly show, the styles of topic shift that are desirable differ between the Japanese and the Americans. The Japanese use their own topic shift style when they speak in English, and it can lead to misinterpretation by the Americans.

## VI. Discussion

Lastly, considering the fact that a language is the manifestation of the speaker's culture, it is necessary to examine the cultural differences between Japanese and Americans in terms of the interpersonal function of topic shift.

The above results indicate that the Japanese subjects preferred to let the participants speak and to wait for the agreement that all members have finished talking about the topic. A pause is an important agreement for them that they can go to the next topic. That is why J3 and J4 mentioned that changing the topic would be "impolite" and "rude" after Conversation 2, which went very fast.

On the other hand, for Americans, a conversation is a collaboration, to share a common topic or to find common interests. Thus, they try to offer new topics, one after another. If they are not interested in the preceding topic, they can shift the topic easily. They try to weave the conversation in cooperation with each other. Topic shift is then a way to participating in and contributing to a conversation. If they do not raise a new topic, it means they are not interested in the conversation or they are uncooperative. That is why J3 and J4 were misinterpreted by A3 and A4.

The fact that the desired communication style differs among languages means that each style holds different interpersonal functions. Of course this is the case with topic shift. The Japanese topic shift style has a lot to do with the agreement or harmony among the participants. And it serves to prevent topic conflicts between them. On the other hand, the English topic shift style is collaborative. It is essential for the participants to contribute to the conversation actively, and also to show that they are interested in the conversation and want to participate in it.

Interpersonal function attended by language behavior is not always universal between different languages. Ignorance about the differences can cause misinterpretations as in Conversation 2.

## VI. Conclusion

In this paper we examined whether there are any differences in the frequency and strategies of topic shift between Americans and Japanese. Follow-up interviews were also analyzed to examine their intentions behind topic shift. As a result, we found that Japanese and Americans utilize their own unique styles of topic shift. As a background to these unique behaviors, we could indicate the different interpersonal functions of each style.

There is not sufficient data, and the situations and subjects of the conversations are also limited. The follow-up interview data, however, could compensate for the insufficiency to some extent. It is difficult to generalize the results obtained here, but they indicate some of the typical

topic shift styles utilized by Japanese and Americans and their problems when they speak English.

### Notes

- 1) Malinowski (1923) described the interpersonal function as a "phatic" function, and Jakobson (1960) as an "emotive" or "expressive" function.
- 2) Hereafter in this paper, "English" refers to American English.
- 3) Transcription conventions are as follows:
 

//	Topic shift
(pause)	Pause
→	A notable utterance
[ ]	Overlapped talk
...	Self-interruption
@@@	Laughter
~~	Uncertain transcription
XXX	Proper name

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