

# HOW TO BE INDIRECT IN JAPANESE: A CULTURAL SCRIPT APPROACH

by  
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This paper investigates certain indirectness phenomena observed in sentence-final forms in Japanese from the perspective of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory. Although Japanese and English have a large variety of indirect expressions, they often use them in different proportions, which leads to different communicative styles. Another approach is that of the late Akio Kamio, who proposed the theory of territory of information (1990, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998). He used this theory to specify the relationship between the forms of utterance and the notion of territory of information. As he points out, there are cases where the principle of the theory can be violated; it seems that such violations are more or less culturally determined. This paper particularly focuses on these cases and provides a cross-cultural analysis of Japanese and English, using the framework of NSM theory and combining it with the territory of information approach, making use of contrastive data from both languages.

## *1. Introduction*

Anyone who has command of a foreign language realizes that it is necessary to acquire not only syntactic knowledge, but also communicative skills in order to use the target language appropriately. Without an understanding of the cultural rules encoded in the language, an utterance can sound unnatural or sometimes inappropriate to the hearer, even though one speaks in a way which is grammatically correct. As long as the speaker is only a beginner, communicative mistakes are often overlooked. If the speaker is already proficient in the language, however, such errors can be considered a personality problem. In the present era of multi-cultural communication, it is crucial for speakers of a foreign language to comprehend, and adjust themselves to, different cultural norms embedded in the target language. This paper focuses on the 'indirect' phenomena observed in sentence-final forms in Japanese and English from a cross-cultural point of view. Various examples from translated materials will be provided to highlight the communicative differences, using the 'cultural script approach' of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory.<sup>1</sup>

2. *The analysis of sentence-final forms in Japanese from the perspective of the theory of territory of information*

Among the several researchers working on sentence-final forms in Japanese, the late Akio Kamio stands out as one who has taken significant steps in the direction of a pragmatic explanation. We will, therefore, first concentrate on Kamio's theory of territory of information (1990, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998) and his pragmatic analyses, since they provide very useful clues for understanding Japanese communicative style from a cross-cultural point of view.

The basic idea of the theory is derived from the study of animal territorial behavior. The theory assumes that the territory is similarly reflected in the language use of humans, which it systematically controls. Kamio's conceptual categories are called the speaker's and the hearer's territories of information. The speaker is expected to use a 'direct form' when giving information which falls into his/her territory, and to select an 'indirect form' when conveying information which does not fall within his/her territory.<sup>2</sup> The following examples illustrate the use of each form (Kamio 1994:70):

- (1) Direct form  
 Watashi, atama ga itai.  
 I head NOM<sup>3</sup> ache  
 'I have a headache.'
- (2) Indirect form  
 a. Ano hito, atama ga itai TTE.  
 that person head NOM ache hear  
 'I hear that he has a headache.'
- b. Ano hito, atama ga itai YOODA  
 that person head NOM ache it.appears  
 'It appears that he has a headache.'
- c. Ano hito, atama ga itai RASHII.  
 that person head NOM ache it.seems  
 'It seems that he has a headache.'

The 'zero', direct form in utterance (1) expresses the information in a direct and definite manner. In contrast, indirect sentence-final forms like those in (2) make the assertion weaker and less definite.

Kamio claims that the core of the theory is near-universal; thus, it can be applied to the case of English, where similarly the direct form is selected if information falls within the speaker's territory and the indirect form is chosen if it does not. English indirect forms contain what are generally called 'hedges' such as *I guess*, *I believe*, or *I understand*; 'hedging' adverbs like *maybe* and *apparently* also count as indirect forms.

The reasonable character of Kamio's claims lends considerable credibility to his theory. According to him, there are a few cases where the selection of an indirect form violates the criteria of the territory of information, as when the speaker wants to be 'polite' to the hearer. His meta-conditions (1997) further illustrate cases where not only the principle of the theory is violated, but also Japanese and English choose different sentence forms, and where a different pragmatic rule seems to apply for the choice of the sentence forms in Japanese and in English. Let us consider a few examples of translations from English to Japanese:

- (3) a. 'If it gets too inconvenient, Kay, you can just send her back and we'll reschedule,' she had said sweetly. *Really*. She's so desperately looking forward to it. It's all she talks about these days. She simply adores you. A genuine case of hero worship if I ever saw it.'  
 (Patricia Cornwell 1990:II-18)
- b. 'Moshi amari taihenna yoo nara, suguni okurikaeshite choodai. Soo shitara kochira mo sukejuuru o tatenaosu kara.' to, kanojo wa aisooyoku itta mono da. 'Honto. Ruushii wa sore wa moo tanoshimini shiteru no. Koko no tokoro, hanasu koto to ittara sore dake nan da kara. Ano ko, nee-san o masani netsuai shiteru MITAI. Tenkeetekina eeyuu suuhai da wa ne.'  
 (Translated by Mariko Aihara 1992:269)
- (4) a. 'Me too. What about the kids?'  
 'I haven't told 'em yet. They think John's on another one of his business trips. I'll tell 'em. As soon as I figure out the

best way. Anyway, I've got a lot to tell you when you get here, girl.'  
(Terry McMillan 1992:118)

- b. 'Hayaku aitai ne. Kodomo-tachi wa doo shiteru?'  
'Mada hanashitenai wa. Papa wa mata shuchoo da to omotteru MITAI. Izure iu tsumori. Doo hanasu no ga ichiban ii ka, atama no naka de seeri ga tsuitara ne. Tonikaku, Sabanna, kochi e tsuitara hanasu koto ga yama hodo aru wa.'  
(Translated by Midori Matsui 1993:194)

In (3), a young woman is talking to her sister, saying that her child adores her; and in (4), a woman is mentioning her divorce to her friend, saying that her children think that their father is on a business trip. In both examples, the speaker is talking about a family member who is close to the speaker. In the English original texts, the direct form is selected, while Japanese prefers the indirect form. Obviously, the indirect form was considered more natural or necessary in this context in Japanese; the question is why.

Comparing texts translated from Japanese into English, we find many cases where the indirect form is chosen in Japanese in talking about a matter which is close to the speaker, while the direct form is selected in the English version:

- (5) a. 'Tenisu, tsuzuketeiru?' Kazumi ga kiita.  
'Shuu sankai roon-tenisu de utteru kedo. Oasobi yo. Anata wa?'  
'Isogashisugite.' to kubi o futta. 'Goshujin mo tenisu nasaru no?'  
'Yuiitsu no shumi yo, kare no. Mottomo kono tokoro yappari isogashikute raketto nigittenai MITAIDA kedo.'  
(Yooko Mori 1989:78)
- b. 'Have you kept up with your tennis?' Kazumi asked.  
'I play lawn tennis three times a week. Just for fun. And you?'  
'I'm too busy,' Kazumi said, shaking her head. 'Does your husband play tennis, too?'

'It's his one and only hobby. But he's been so busy lately he hasn't touched a racket in ages.'  
(Translated by Sonya L. Johnson 1993:78)

- (6) a. 'Tsukiai ga isogashii na, nen ni hitori ga ikkai to shite mo.' to Shibukawa ga iu to, Chie ga unazuite,  
'Kai ni sasowaretari, opera ya shibai no kippu o itadaitari, soo iu koto RASHII no.'  
(Saiichi Maruya 1993:60)
- b. 'She must be kept pretty busy anyway, even if she only meets each of them once a year,' said Shibukawa, and Chie agreed.  
'Invitations to parties and so on, tickets to the theatre and opera, things like that.'  
(Translated by Donald Keene 1993:49)

In (5), a woman is talking about her husband, saying that he has not been playing tennis recently; here, the indirect form (*mitai* 'it looks like') is chosen, while the direct form is selected in English. In (6), a young woman is referring to her mother's life style, saying that she receives a lot of invitations; here, *rashii* 'it seems' is selected, whereas the direct form is chosen in English. Again, the question is why a different sentence form is selected by the two languages in the same situation. As illustrated in the examples above, the use of the indirect form is more frequently observed in Japanese than in English. This suggests that there are different pragmatic rules for choosing the respective forms; specifying this rule may give us a key to understanding the different communicative styles in Japanese and English.

### 3. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory

In order to identify and describe the differences in human behaviors and communicative patterns, we need a framework which explains how communicative styles are different in each society. As for the differences between Japanese and English speakers, many terms and labels have been applied so far in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. For example, it is often mentioned that 'individualism' is highly valued in North American society, whereas

'groupism' is a main principle of Japanese society (Reischauer 1977; Condon 1980). English speakers 'verbalize' what they think or feel and Anglo ways of speaking are characterized by a high degree of 'self-assertion', while the Japanese communicate verbally on a more superficial level, while 'self-assertion' is avoided and suppressed (Barnlund 1975; Suzuki 1986). Being 'ambiguous' or 'vague' is a distinctive feature of Japanese, whereas being 'clear' is characteristic of English (Ikegami 1981; Inoue 1993). English speakers are 'direct', whereas Japanese speakers are more 'indirect' (Suzuki 1986; Mizutani & Mizutani 1987).

While such labels may characterize each culture to a certain degree, the polarized framework is itself strongly culture-bound and fails to grasp the differences accurately and objectively. As Hamaguchi and Kumon (1982:24) argue, for example, if Japanese society is not based on 'individualism', it is automatically categorized as its counterpart, 'groupism', by the dualist distinction, even though there are no indigenous words or concepts for 'individualism' or 'groupism' in Japanese. That is to say, terms such as 'individualism' or 'groupism' are culture-specific English concepts, and they cannot form a reliable framework in which to analyze other cultures. In the same way, if it were true that the Japanese do not 'verbalize' what they think or feel, there would be no Japanese discourse. But then, what do the Japanese do at conferences or work-place meetings, or when they write an academic article to introduce a new theory? It is obvious that they do communicate their opinions, not just read each other's minds. The point which needs to be explored is to what extent 'verbalization' is discouraged, or in what kinds of situations the 'indirect' is preferred in Japanese culture. Although numerous attempts have been made to describe cultural differences, most of them fail to grasp a culture's communicative style sufficiently. We need a theoretical framework for cross-cultural comparison which describes the differences in a culture-independent way.

The theory adopted in this paper is the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory (Wierzbicka 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1997, 1999). This theory has been proposed and developed in an attempt to overcome problems in previous studies, which rely on English concepts and terms (such as 'directness' or 'indirectness') when comparing and contrasting cultures. Over many years of cross-linguistic semantic research, Wierzbicka and her colleagues have introduced universal and culture-independent

concepts such as *I, you, want, say, good, and bad*. These basic words are called 'semantic primitives'; their equivalent counterparts (about 60 of which have been discovered so far) are found in all languages.<sup>4</sup>

Semantic primitives have their own, language-independent syntax. For example, mental predicates such as *think* or *know* may combine with substantives *I* and determiners *this*, producing *I think this*, or *I know this*. The resulting sentences have the form of simple clauses which have equivalents in all other languages; the same is not true of language-specific, complex sentences such as participial constructions, relative clauses, or nominalizations. The following are examples of basic sentences (Wierzbicka 1992:10):

I think this  
 I want this  
 you do this  
 this happened  
 this person did something bad  
 something bad happened because of this

Semantic concepts are described by a set of these basic sentences. Based on simple syntactic patterns, it is possible, within the framework of the NSM theory, to suggest hypotheses about cultural norms which prevail in each society and which are encoded in each society's 'cultural scripts'. Cultural scripts describe cultural differences from a neutral perspective which integrates the results of previous studies. For example, Wierzbicka (1991a) points out that in cross-cultural studies, white Anglo-American culture is characterized by some scholars (Barnlund 1975; Suzuki 1986) as being 'self-assertive' or 'direct', compared with Japanese culture, while it is described by other scholars (Blum-Kulka 1985; Kochman 1981) as being weak in 'self-assertion', or 'indirect', compared with Israeli culture or black American culture. In fact, different researchers use these terms in different ways, in what could be called a 'scale of directness' (Wierzbicka 1991a; Goddard 1997). Cultural scripts can solve this contradiction. Let us take an example observed in requestive behavior, described as 'direct' vs. 'indirect'. According to Wierzbicka (1991a, 1996c), the frequent use of so-called 'whimperatives' and other indirect imperatives in English in social interaction shows that a bare imperative is not expected to be used in Anglo society (in contrast to Hebrew; see Blum-Kulka 1985). On a bus, a standard

sentence in giving an order to the driver is something like *Could you open the door, please?*, rather than a bare imperative such as *Open the door (please)*. According to Wierzbicka, this kind of 'indirectness' is based on a core Anglo cultural value which acknowledges the addressee's 'personal autonomy' – a value which can be represented as follows (1996c:316):

when I want someone to do something for me  
it is good to say something like this to this person:  
'I want you to do something for me  
I don't know whether you will do it'

In contrast, the following script demonstrates the cultural norm which allows the use of imperative requests 'do X (for me)' as observed in Israeli culture (Wierzbicka 1996c:315):

when I want someone to do something for me  
I can say something like this to this person:  
'I want you to do something for me  
I think you will do it because of this'  
I don't have to say anything else at the same time

These scripts demonstrate the communicative differences observed in the requestive behaviors of two cultures more precisely than the use of labels such as 'direct' or 'indirect'. That is, one can clearly see how people would generally behave in a particular situation in each culture. Since the scripts are composed of universal concepts, they are accessible to cross-cultural researchers of any languages and therefore, scripts are easily tested and refined. Furthermore, the scripts reflect core cultural values such as 'personal autonomy' for Anglo culture and 'solidarity' for Israeli culture. Thus, the NSM approach is the most reliable framework for contrasting different cultures, as it frees our analysis from ethnocentric bias and facilitates cross-cultural comparison and cross-cultural understanding.<sup>5</sup>

One might argue that it is not possible to generalize cultural norms, including those for speech behavior. It is true that cultural norms can be violated, ignored, or rebelled against; also, there always will be individual differences. One cannot neglect the fact, however, that the cultural norms which people obey or violate actually differ from one cultural system to another. The cultural script approach

acknowledges individual variation, but at the same time it focuses on the reality of certain implicit cultural ideologies which shape not only people's actual behavior but even more their assumptions and expectations.

In the following section, an analysis is presented contrasting Japanese and English. The linguistic evidence of communicative differences comes from Japanese novels translated into English, and English novels rendered into Japanese. The purpose of this comparison is to demonstrate the difference between Japanese and English in the linguistic encoding of certain cultural aspects. The analysis will particularly focus on the cases where the indirect form is chosen regardless of the territory of information. Throughout the analysis, it will be shown how 'directness'/'indirectness' phenomena can be explained more clearly and more precisely based on universal semantic primitives, using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage.

#### 4. Contrastive analysis based on a cultural script approach

##### 4.1. Indirectness phenomena observed in Japanese and in English

In this section, I will first illustrate some common indirectness phenomena observed in Japanese and in English.

Above, in section 2, I referred to Kamio (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998), who points out that indirect forms are preferred in both Japanese and English, regardless of the territory of information, if the speaker wants to be 'polite' to the hearer. With regard to the cultural values discussed in section 3, the emphasis on the value of 'personal autonomy' in Anglo culture also appears in the frequent use of hedging expressions such as *I think* or *I suppose* in saying something negative about the addressee. In these cases, there is no great difference between English and Japanese, as illustrated in the following:

- (7) a. 'Boku ni wa kankee nai na' to watashi wa itta. 'Boku no yoono mattan wa ari no yooni hataraku dake da. Sono hoka niwa nanimo kangaenai. Dakara moshi kimi-tachi ga boku o nakama ni kuwaetai to omotte koko ni kita no nara ...' 'Anta wa wakattenai YOODA na.' to chibi wa shitauchi shite itta.  
(Haruki Murakami 1988a:235)

- b. 'Why me?' I said. 'I'm just a terminal worker ant. I don't think about anything but my own work. So if you're thinking of enlisting me.'

'You don't SEEM to get the picture,' said Junior, with a click of his tongue.

(Translated by Alfred Birnbaum 1988:137)

In (7), if the speaker had said, directly, *Anta wa wakatte nai* 'You don't get the picture', this would sound impolite in the sense that the speaker is directly threatening the hearer's 'face' (Brown and Levinson 1987). As Wierzbicka (1991a:92) mentions, the mainstream Anglo cultural tradition discourages open confrontation in order to maintain social harmony between independent individuals. We may consider this a common cultural rule, manifested in the choice of the sentence form in the two languages. This 'indirectness' can be explicated by the following cultural script:

A common cultural script for selecting the indirect form *Japanese/English*

- (a) when I think: 'I know something (X) about someone'
- (b) when I want to say something about it to this person
- (c) if I know this person will feel something bad because of this
- (d) I can't say what I think (X) like this: 'I say: X'
- (e) it will be good if I say it in another way, not like this

The script listed above manifests a general common rule concerning what is regarded as 'polite' in both languages. Components (a) and (b) represent the information as falling into the speaker's territory. In component (c), the speaker realizes that the utterance may make the hearer feel bad. In component (d), the speaker avoids expressing the information in a direct form. Component (e) states that the indirect form is preferred as a result of speaker's considerations.

With regard to the territory of information, there is another common use of the indirect form, viz. whenever speakers do not have an adequate basis for their assertions (Kamio 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998). Consider:

- (8) a. 'Shikashi senzen no kare no ryakureki ni tsuite wa aru teedo no koto wa wakatte iru. 1913 nen ni Hokkaidoo de

umare, shoogakko o deru to Tookyoo ni dete tentento shoku o kae, uyoku ni natta. Ichido dake keemusho ni haitta TO OMOU. Keemusho o dete Manshuu ni utsuri .....

(Haruki Murakami 1985:95)

- b. 'But we do know something of the man's prewar background. He was born in Hokkaido in 1913, came to Tokyo after graduating from normal school, changed jobs repeatedly, and drifted to the right. He was imprisoned once, I BELIEVE. Upon his release, he was sent to Manchuria,.....'

(Translated by Alfred Birnbaum 1985:57)

In (8), the speaker gives information about a person's background to the hearer who does not have the information. In Japanese, whenever the speaker is unable to verify a fact, the indirect form *to omou* is used; similarly in English, the indirect form *I believe* is selected to convey the speaker's inability to furnish definite information. In accordance with Grice's Cooperative Principle, by the Maxim of Quality (Grice 1975:46), speakers are generally expected to give information of which they are sure. In (8), for instance, since the question whether or not a certain person was imprisoned is relatively significant to the hearer, the speaker cannot convey the information in the direct form unless he is sure. In this respect, there is no great difference between Japanese and English. We can propose the following cultural script to explain the choice of the indirect form in this case in both languages:

A common cultural script for selecting the indirect form *Japanese/English*

- (a) when I want to say to another person that I think something (X) about something
- (b) if I know that I can't say: I know this
- (c) I can't say what I think (X) like this: 'I say: X'
- (d) I have to say it in another way, not like this

Components (a) and (b) deal with the speaker's conveying information for which he/she does not have an adequate basis. Com-

ponent (c) states that the speaker cannot choose the direct form; and component (d) indicates that the indirect form is selected for this case.

#### 4.2. Indirectness phenomena in Japanese

Although English speakers, too, use a number of 'indirect' expressions in giving opinions or suggestions, the Japanese way of speaking is often described as more 'indirect' than English. In terms of territory of information, there is a strong tendency in Japanese to avoid the direct form, even though information is close to the speaker; thus, there seems to be another pragmatic rule governing the choice of the indirect form in Japanese. Observe the following:

- (9) a. 'Shigo kanojo no nikki ga mitsukarimashite ne.' to Kanzaki wa itta. 'Soko niwa mainichi, Nakada e no omoi ga menmento tsuzutte atta SOODESU yo.'  
'Nakada e no omoi?'  
'Ee. Hitomebore doozenni koi shite shimatta RASHIIDESU ne. Demo, sore o doo arawashite ii ka wakaranakatta.'  
(Jiroo Akagawa 1983:52)
- b. 'After she died,' Kanzaki said, 'we found her diary. Every day she had written continuously of her feelings for Nakada.'  
'Her feelings for Nakada?'  
'Yes, she had fallen in love with him at first sight, but she didn't know how to tell him.'  
(Translated by Gavin Few 1983:44)
- (10) a. Gootoo wa sugosugoto kaette itta. Emu-hakase wa chikashitsu kara detekite, hotto tameiki o tsuita. Sorekara, koo tsubuyaita.  
'Yareyare, yatto tasukatta. Shisakuhin ga chikashitsu ni atta to wa, gootoo mo kizukanakatta YOODA. Watashi no kanseeshita kenkyuu to wa, taberu koto no dekiru tsukue ya isu o tsukuru koto datta no da. Okage de sono sayoo o jibun de tashikameru koto ni natteshimatta.....'

(Shinichi Hoshi 1972:14)

- b. The robber left dejected. The doctor came out of the cellar and breathed a sigh of relief.  
'Well, I survived,' he murmured to himself. 'He never noticed my products were in the cellar. My research was on producing edible desks and chairs, and thanks to him I managed to test them on myself.....'  
(Translated by Robert Matthew 1986:12)

In (9), a police detective called Kanzaki is talking about a woman who died by committing suicide; and in (10), a doctor is referring to a robber who broke into his house. In the Japanese original examples, the underlined sentences include indirect forms such as *sooda* 'I heard', *rashii* 'it seems' and *yooda* 'it appears', whereas in the English translation, the direct form is selected. Similar examples are also found in novels translated from English into Japanese:

- (11) a. Bertha picked up on the second ring and sounded drugged with sleep when she hoarsely asked, 'Hello?'  
'Just checking in.'  
'I'm here. Lucy hasn't budged, Dr. Kay. Sleeping like a log, didn't even hear me come in.'  
(Patricia Cornwell 1990:32)
- b. Yobidashion ga nikai natta toki, Baasa ga deta.  
'Moshimoshi' nemusoono shagaregoe da.  
'Chotto kakuninshitai dake.'  
'Daijoobu, koko ni imasu yo. Ruushii wa pikuri tomo shitemasen. Gussuri nemuttemasu yo. Watashi ga kita no nimo ki ga tsukanakatta MITAIDESU.'  
(Translated by Mariko Aihara 1992:34)
- (12) a. 'Was he communicating at all with you?'  
'No, he was just watching.'  
'Was he listening to what I was saying?'  
'Yes,' she whispered. 'But he's gone now. He just wanted to be sure I'm all right.'  
(Brian Weiss 1988:161)

- b. 'Nani ka anata ni tsutaeyoo to shiteimasu ka?'  
 'Iie, tada miteiru dake desu.'  
 'Kare wa boku ga itteiru koto mo kiiteimasu ka?'  
 'Ee' to kanojo wa chiisana koe de itta. 'Demo moo  
 itteshimaimashita. Kare wa tada watashi ga daijoobu ka  
 dooka tashikametakatta MITAIDESU.'  
 (Translated by K. Yamakawa & A. Yamakawa 1996:189)

In (11), a baby-sitter is talking to a woman about a child; here *mitaidesu* 'it looks like' is added in the Japanese version; in (12), a patient under hypnosis is talking to the doctor about a man who she sees; again *mitaidesu* is added. Note that in these examples the speaker has direct experience and therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the speaker is certain about the matter. Contrariwise, the Japanese versions seem to imply that the speaker does not have an adequate basis for asserting it, which is why the indirect form is chosen. The question is then why the Japanese speaker cannot assert the information in a definite way, as English speakers do. In terms of information territory, in these cases there probably are third persons who share the same information, and the speaker does not know what these people think: they may not necessarily understand the facts in the same way as does the speaker. In other words, even though the speaker considers the information reliable, and there is an adequate basis for asserting it, other people's understanding might not be the same as the speaker's. This is why the Japanese speakers have to be so accurate in conveying the information and why they choose the indirect form. By implying 'I might be wrong', they consider the possibility that a third person may think differently.

Let us consider some further examples:

- (13) a. 'Demo are kane, kekkonshiki de, naresome wa, shinroo no  
 chichi no sooshiki de deatte, hitomebore shita n desu, tte  
 iwareru no kane. Nantonaku ikinari engi ga warui ne.'  
 'Hontoo ne. Demo nanimokamo shoojikini iwanakutemo  
 ii mono MITAI yo. Tomodachi no shiki toka deru to, uso  
 tsuiteru no ga ooi mono.'  
 (Banana Yoshimoto 1988:128)
- b. 'But, I've got to tell you, I'm kind of concerned that  
 whoever gives the toast at the reception might stand up

and say, 'It was love at first sight when they met at his  
 father's funeral.' It sounds like an inauspicious beginning,  
 don't you think?'  
 'You're right, it does. But people don't always have to spell  
 things out exactly as they happened. I've heard all sorts of  
 lies at my friends' weddings.'  
 (Translated by Ann Sherif 1988:132)

- (14) a. 'Chikagoro no kodomo wa yoippari da naa.'  
 Emoto wa, moo juuichi-ji ni natte, yatto Rumi ga nemuru  
 to, warai nagara itta.  
 'Minna soo RASHII wa.'  
 Negurije sugata no Yumi ga, chiisana sofaa ni suwatte nobi  
 o shita.  
 'Goshujin no kaeri ga osoi tokoro ja, dooshitemo soo naru  
 MITAI ne.'  
 (Jiroo Akagawa 1983:275)
- b. 'It looks as if we have got ourselves a bit of a night owl  
 there,' Emoto said.  
 It was already after eleven o'clock when Rumi finally went  
 to bed.  
 'Children are all the same these days,' Yumi said,  
 stretching out on the sofa in her negligee. 'It is especially  
 true in families where the father doesn't get home until  
 late.'  
 (Translated by Gavin Frew 1983:137)

In (13), the speaker is talking about what people normally say at a  
 wedding party and *mitai* 'it looks like' is selected in Japanese, while  
 the expression is not rendered in English. In (14), the speaker is  
 referring to what is happening in modern families; here, *rashii* 'it  
 seems' and *mitai* 'it looks like' are chosen in Japanese, whereas no  
 indirect forms are included in the English version. The same thing  
 happens when translating from English into Japanese:

- (15) a. When we left the church I said, 'What *is* a church, Pop?'  
 'It's one of the better rooms in the human home.'  
 (William Saroyan 1958:94)



- b. Kyookai o hanareru toki, boku wa itta. 'Toosan, kyookai tte ittai nan na no?'

'Ningen no ie no, ii heya no hitotsu DAROO ne.'

(Translated by Juzoo Itami 1979:100)

- (16) a. 'We can't curtail the freedom of the press,' I bluntly reminded him. 'We have no control over what reporters print.'

'We do.' Amburgey was gazing out the window. 'They can't print much if we don't give them much. Unfortunately, we've given them a lot.'

(Patricia Cornwell 1990:166)

- b. 'Demo, hoodoo no jiyuu o ubau wake ni wa ikimasen.' watashi wa bukkirabooni itta. 'Kisha-tachi ga nani o kakoo ga, watashi-tachi ni wa sore o seegensuru koto wa dekinai n desu.'

'Iya, dekiru yo.' Anbaajii wa mado no soto o mitsumeteita.

'Kochira ga amari joofoo o ataenakereba, renchuu mo taishita koto wa kakenai DAROO. Zannenna koto ni, ima made zuibun joofoo o nagashiteshimatta.'

(Translated by Mariko Aihara 1992:179)

In (15), a young boy is asking a question of his father regarding a church; and in (16), a coroner is talking to her colleague about the press. In the English versions, we may assume that the direct form was considered more natural or appropriate than the indirect form, since the speakers are certain about the facts, and there are no possibilities of giving false information or making the hearers feel bad. The speakers know this, and therefore they select the direct form.

In the Japanese case, on the other hand, we see that our hypothesis also applies: what matters in selecting a direct vs. indirect form is the hearers' point of view. There may be, among them, people who share the information and the speaker does not know how they consider the topic (which may fall within their territory of information). In (13), for example, the topic is a wedding party; this is a general subject and other people could have a different point of view than does the speaker. Similarly in (14), it is not only the speaker who is familiar with the topic of modern families, but also

other people (first of all the hearer); and even though the speaker is certain of the matter, other people might not necessarily think the same way. If the speaker were to use the direct form in each utterance, this could be seen as if she were neglecting other people's viewpoints. Therefore, taking into account other people's possible disagreement, the speaker uses the indirect form, implying that 'maybe other people don't think the same as I do'. Although the direct form in these examples is grammatically correct, from a pragmatic point of view, taking the interlocutors' territory of information into account, the indirect form is more appropriate in Japanese. Based on these observations, I propose the following cultural script for selecting the indirect form in Japanese:

A cultural script for selecting the indirect form when information is shared with other people:

*Japanese*

- (a) when I think: 'I know something (X) about something /someone'
- (b) when I think that other people can know the same thing about this
- (c) when I want to say something about this to another person
- (d) before I say this, I have to think about it
- (e) if I say what I think (X)
- (f) if other people don't think the same
- (g) these people could feel something bad
- (h) I don't want this
- (i) because of this, it will be good if I don't say what I think (X) like this: 'I say: X'
- (j) it will be good if I say it in another way, not like this

Components (a) and (b) indicate that the information is shared with other people; in other words, there is a common territory of information. In components (c) and (d), the speaker considers how to convey the information before making an utterance. Component (e), 'I say what I think', implies that the speaker conveys the information in a definite way, namely by the direct form. In component (f), the speaker considers the case where persons having access to the same territory of information as the speaker, do not

think the same way. Components (g) – (j) indicate that the speaker, as a result of these considerations, chooses the indirect form in order to avoid possible disagreement with other people.

In contrast, in the case of English, the direct form is chosen basically according to what one has recognized (as long as one does not make the hearer feel bad). Hence, 'what other people may think' is not a main determinant of the choice of the sentence form. A cultural script for selecting the direct form for this case in English could be represented as follows:<sup>6</sup>

A cultural script for selecting the direct form when information is shared with other people:

*English*

- (a) when I think: 'I know something (X) about something /someone'
- (b) when I think that other people can know the same thing about this
- (c) I can say what I think (X) to another person
- (d) if I know this person will not feel something bad because of this
- (e) I don't have to say something else about it

In the script listed above, components (a) and (b) refer to the topic as shared by the speaker and other people who have access to the same territory of information. As shown by components (c) and (d), the English speaker may choose the direct form in conveying the information to another person as long as the utterance does not make the hearer feel bad. Component (e) indicates that the speaker does not have to choose the indirect form in this case.

So far, we have seen that in Japanese, whenever a speaker has a suspicion that the information he/she imparts may also 'belong' to other people (i.e. fall into their territory of information), he/she will use this consideration in choosing an indirect form. Now consider the case where information in principle is equally shared between the speaker and the hearer. Within Kamio's framework, the speaker will choose a direct form in this case (in Japanese, the direct-*ne* form; in English, a straight indicative or imperative). There are, however,

many cases where the indirect-*ne* form is selected in Japanese, as illustrated below:

- (17) a. 'Jooji-san, atashi ikuraka see ga nobita?'  
'Aa, nobita tomo. Moo konogoro ja boku to anmari chigawanai YOO DA ne.'  
(Junichiroo Tanizaki 1974:172)
- b. 'Have I grown some, Joji?'  
'Oh, yes, you have. You're almost as tall as I am, now.'  
(Translated by Anthony H. Chambers 1974:127)
- (18) a. Oto wa juu-byoo ka juugo-byoo tsuzuite kara, suidoo no kokku o yukkurito shimeru toki no yooni dandan chiisaku nari, kiete shimatta. Machigai nai. Kore ga deguchi na no da.  
'Yatto tsuita YOO ne.' to kanojo wa itte watashi no kibusuji ni kisu o shita. 'Donna kimochi?'  
(Haruki Murakami 1988b:170)
- b. The sound kept up for ten, maybe fifteen seconds, then passed, like a tap turning off. Yes, this was the exit.  
'We made it,' she said, planting a peck on my neck. 'How do you feel?'  
(Translated by Alfred Birnbaum 1988:308)

These are situations where the speaker is describing an event being witnessed by himself/herself as well as by the hearer. In (17), the speaker notices that his girlfriend is almost as tall as himself; and in (18), the speaker says to the hearer that they have just arrived at their goal. Thus the information is equally shared between the speaker and the hearer. Similarly:

- (19) a. 'The romantics were passionate experimenters, Charles. They dabbled in many things before settling, if ever,' Meeks said.  
Cameron made a face. 'There aren't too many places to be an experimenter at Welton, Meeks.'  
(N. H. Kleinbaum 1989:68)

- b. 'Romantisuto tte iu no wa, joonetsutekina jikkenka da yo. Hitotokoro ni ochitsuku made ni, ironna koto ni te o dasu n da.'  
Kyameron wa kao o shikameta.  
'Weruton ni wa, jikkenka no hairu yochi wa anmari nasa SOODA kedo na.'  
(Translated by Roo Shiraishi 1990:103)

- (20) a. Will looked at me with a serious expression. 'Finding the Third Insight was easy. All we had to do was visit Vicente. But from now on, running across the other insights may be much more difficult.'  
(James Redfield 1993:67)
- b. Wiru wa shinkenna hyoojoo de watashi o mita.  
'Daisan no chie o mitsukeru no wa, kantan datta YOODESU ne.  
Bishiente ni iku dake de yokatta no desu. De, korekara saki wa, nokori no chie ni deau no wa, zutto muzukashiku naru kamoshiremasen.'  
(Translated by K. Yamakawa & A. Yamakawa 1994:105)

In (19), a student is talking to his classmate about their school, and in (20) a man is referring to their adventure. In both examples, the direct form is rendered by an indirect form in Japanese.

Let us first consider the choice of the direct form in English. In each example, the speaker knows the facts independently, and he/she judges that choosing the direct form will not make the hearer feel bad. As we have seen, generally in English, the speaker may choose the direct form regardless of what the hearer or other people will think, except of course when saying something negative about the hearer.

Japanese, in contrast, despite the fact that the speaker has the same direct access to the facts as does the hearer (with whom he/she shares a territory of information), selects an indirect form such as *sooda* 'it looks like' or *yooda* 'it appears'. This is because the speaker considers what the hearer may think. Although in (17), (18), (19), and (20), the sentence form does not make any significant difference in the strict conveying of information to the hearer, if the speaker were to choose the direct form in Japanese, this could imply that the

speaker assumes that the hearer understood the facts in an identical way as does the speaker. Strictly speaking, the speaker does not know if this is the case. If the hearer does not understand the facts in the same way as does the speaker, the direct form is unsuitable to describe the facts from the hearer's point of view. Therefore, taking account of the possible cognition gap between the speaker and the hearer, the indirect form is selected, implying 'I don't know if you think the same'. The choice of the indirect form in these examples reveals that in Japanese, the speaker always chooses the appropriate sentence form (direct vs. indirect) with the hearer's viewpoint in mind. A cultural script for selecting the indirect form for this case in Japanese is given below:

A cultural script for selecting the indirect form when information falls into the speaker's and the hearer's common territory:

*Japanese*

- (a) when I think: 'I know something (X) about something'
- (b) when I think another person can know the same thing about this
- (c) when I want to say something about it to this person
- (d) before I say this, I have to think about it
- (e) if I say what I think (X)
- (f) if this person doesn't think the same,
- (g) this person could feel something bad
- (h) I don't want this
- (i) because of this, it will be good if I don't say what I think (X) like this: 'I say: X'
- (j) it will be good if I say it in another way, not like this

The script listed above is slightly different from the one which was proposed earlier, inasmuch as that script focused on the speaker's exclusive consideration for the hearer's point of view. In that case, information fell within the speaker's and the hearer's common territory only, and the speaker needed only to consider what the hearer might think, not what other people might think (as in the present case). The same applies to the following cultural script for selecting the direct form in English:

A cultural script for selecting the direct form when information falls into the speaker's and the hearer's common territory:

*English*

- (a) when I think: 'I know something (X) about something'
- (b) when I think another person can know the same thing about this
- (c) when I want to say something about it to this person
- (d) I can say what I think (X) to this person
- (e) if I know this person will not feel something bad because of this
- (f) I don't have to say something else about it

What is consistent throughout the scripts provided for English is that the speaker may choose the sentence form regardless of any third person's (including the hearer's) viewpoint (always with the exclusion of cases where the 'direct form' would make the hearer feel bad). To put it briefly, what is significant in English is whether or not the speaker is sure of the facts: this makes for a communicative difference from Japanese, where considerations of other-reception enter the picture.

5. *Conclusion*

In this paper, I have discussed the phenomena of 'indirectness' vs. 'directness' in Japanese as compared to English. Using Kamio's theory of the territory of information, I have endeavored to show how English speakers, in their choice of direct vs. indirect forms, rely on the knowledge they have of their interlocutors' points of view with regard to the facts mentioned. In Japanese, however, even if the facts are in a common territory of information (which should allow the use of direct forms), speakers often take into consideration the chance of other people being implicitly addressed, and even of the possibility that hearers (despite the fact that they share the informational territory) may be considered to have a different view of the facts, and therefore should be addressed indirectly, so as to leave a way open for them to incorporate their own views.

In addition to this model, I have employed Wierzbicka's NSM and her theory of cultural scripts, which I have found useful to explain in detail how the choice of direct vs. indirect forms is practiced cross-culture wise. To this end, several different cultural scripts were drawn up, incorporating both the way factual information is dealt with (in Kamio's theory) and the way generalized linguistic and cultural behavior can be said to be different from culture to culture (Wierzbicka's universals of culture and language).

The hypotheses set forth in the paper were tested by extensive examination of contrastive texts, in this case, translations of novels, both from Japanese to English and from English to Japanese, in which the contrast between the two languages' (and cultures') approaches to directness are manifested. Implications for the cross-cultural analysis of discourse as well as for the study and teaching of second languages are indicated as possible areas for further study.

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Notes

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2. Kamio (1997:39) provides the definitions of information which falls within the speaker/hearer's territory in Japanese as follows:
  - a. information obtained through the speaker's/hearer's internal direct experience
  - b. information embodying detailed knowledge which falls into the range of the speaker's/hearer's professional or other expertise
  - c. information obtained through the speaker's/hearer's external direct experience

- d. information about persons, objects, events, and facts close to the speaker/hearer, including such information about the speaker/hearer him/herself

The conditions listed above apply to English with the following addition: condition b includes 'information verbally conveyed to the speaker/hearer by others which he/she considers reliable' (1997:18).

3. NOM stands for nominative case. In this paper I will use the Hepburn style for the romanization of Japanese, except in the case of long vowels: *ee* for *ei*, and *oo* for *ou*.
4. The proposed semantic primitives of English are listed in the appendix. For the semantic primitives of other languages including Japanese, see Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994).
5. It is necessary to clarify in what sense one is using the term 'culture'. Those who work in the NSM framework find particularly fruitful the definition proposed by Clifford Geertz (1979:89):  
a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.
6. I do not wish to claim that English speakers never consider what other people or the hearer will think in conveying information. As mentioned in 3, there is always individual preference, and cultural norms can be violated. It is a fact, however, that the cultural norms which people obey or violate actually differ from one cultural system to another. The cultural scripts proposed in this paper focus on the reality of the differences, and thus offer an interpretation which explicates people's shared behaviors and assumptions.

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#### Semantic primes (Wierzbicka 1997)

Substantives	I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING(THING), PEOPLE, BODY
Determiners	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER
Quantifiers	ONE, TWO, SOME, MANY/MUCH, ALL
Attributes	GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL
Mental Predicates	THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
Speech	SAY, WORD, TRUE
Actions, Events, Movements	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE
Existence and Possession	THERE IS, HAVE
Life and Death	LIVE, DIE
Logical Concepts	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF

Time	WHEN (TIME), NOW, AFTER, BEFORE, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME
Space	WHERE (PLACE), HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE
Intensifier, Augmentor	VERY, MORE
Taxonomy, Partonomy	KIND OF, PART OF
Similarity	LIKE