

A Comparative Study of Speech Acts of Japanese and American College Students (2): Responses to Compliments and Criticism

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日米女子大生の会話比較(2)：賞賛と非難に対する反応

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長野市の清泉女学院短期大学の学生と米国、コネチカット州ウエスト・ハートフォードのセント・ジョセフ・カレッジの学生とに実施した会話完成テストの分析結果から、賞賛と非難に対する反応の相違を論じる。

Introduction

This report is a continuation of a study begun last year on the speech acts of Japanese and American college students. The focus this year will be on responses to compliments and criticism.

The data for this study were supplied by students at Seisen Jogakuin College in Nagano City, Japan, and its sister-school, Saint Joseph College, in West Hartford, Connecticut, USA. The students of these two colleges were asked to take a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which consisted of ten common conversational situations, in their native language. The students at Seisen Jogakuin College ranged in age from eighteen to twenty. The students at Saint Joseph College ranged in age from seventeen to fifty-two. Because of the wide range in age, the Saint Joseph College students were divided into two groups, one of which corresponded in age to the Seisen students. All of the students who participated in this survey were female. In this report, the three groups will be referred to as follows:

Group 1 (49 responses)=Seisen students ages 18-20

Group 2 (49 responses)=Saint Joseph College students ages 17-20

Group 3 (39 responses)=Saint Joseph College students ages 21 and over, or no age given.

1.1 Responses to Compliments

How do we react when we are complimented on something? Without a doubt, receiving a compliment is a pleasing experience anywhere in the world, but to what extent and in what ways does our own culture allow us to express this? One situation on the DCT involved responding to a friend's compliment :

You have just gotten your hair cut, and you like the new hair style very much. A friend sees you and says, "Your hair looks nice." How would you respond?

あなたは髪の毛を切ってもらったところです。そしてこの新しい髪型をととても気に入っています。一人の友達が気付いて、あなたの髪型を「いいねえ」とほめました。あなたは何と言いますか。

Receiving a compliment is generally a pleasant surprise. The responses on the DCT were written, but we can imagine that, if spoken, the tone of voice would be light, the atmosphere pleasant, and the facial expression happy and smiling.

1.2 Results

The responses on the DCT were divided into thirteen categories, each of which represents a strategy for responding to a compliment, and the strategies were analyzed for frequency of use. The categories are listed below with sample responses from the data.

Chart 1 : Categories and Sample Responses

Category	Sample responses
1. <i>Appreciation token</i>	ありがとう。 Thanks.
2. <i>Agreement</i>	私も気に入っているの。 I like it, too.
3. <i>Pleased acceptance</i>	うれしい。 I'm glad you like it.
4. <i>Explanation</i>	(no examples in the Japanese data) I just got it cut.
5. <i>Praise upgrade</i>	もう何でも似合うからさー Ya, it's chill, huh?
6. <i>Reassign praise</i>	美容師さんにまかせてよかった。 I got it cut at this great place.
7. <i>Solicit confirmation</i>	この髪型似合う？ You really like it?
8. <i>Return compliment</i>	(no examples in the Japanese data) You look good today, too.
9. <i>Expression of surprise</i>	えっ!? <u>Oh</u> , thank you.
10. <i>Scale down</i>	(no examples in the Japanese data) I'm not too crazy about it.
11. <i>Denial</i>	うっそー (no examples in the English data)
12. <i>Expression of embarrassment</i>	(てれ笑い) (no examples in the English data)
13. <i>Joke</i>	まねしないでね。ふんっ。 (no examples in the English data)

These strategies were found in the data in combinations of one, two, three, or four units, for example,

ありがとう。(Group 1)
(*appreciation token* = 1 unit)

Thanks. I just got it cut. (Group 2)
(*appreciation token* + *explanation* = 2 units)

ほんと。ありがとう。私も気にいってんだ。(Group 1)

(*solicit confirmation + appreciation token + agreement* = 3 units)

Gee, thank you! I just got it cut, and I think it came out good, too.

(Group 3)

(*expression of surprise + appreciation token + explanation + agreement*
= 4 units)

The following chart shows the number of units per response in each group.

Chart 2: Number of strategies (units) used per response per group

Number of strategies (units)	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
1 unit	36.73%	28.57%	25.64%
2 units	44.90%	63.27%	58.98%
3 units	16.33%	8.16%	12.82%
4 units	2.04%	-----	2.56%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

The average was 1.87 units per response. We can see that the majority of the American students made two-unit responses, while the Japanese students made more of the one-unit and three-unit responses.

Now we will take a look at the use of the various strategies in the following chart.

Chart 3 : Distribution of the Use of Strategies

Category	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph 21 & over
1. <i>Appreciation token</i>	77.55%	91.84%	97.44%
2. <i>Agreement</i>	16.33%	36.73%	43.59%
3. <i>Pleased acceptance</i>	18.37%	-----	5.13%
4. <i>Explanation</i>	-----	30.61%	20.51%
5. <i>Praise upgrade</i>	2.04%	2.04%	-----
6. <i>Reassign praise</i>	2.04%	4.08%	2.56%
7. <i>Solicit confirmation</i>	48.98%	8.16%	7.69%
8. <i>Return compliment</i>	-----	2.04%	-----
9. <i>Expression of surprise</i>	6.12%	6.12%	7.69%
10. <i>Scale down</i>	-----	6.12%	7.69%
11. <i>Denial</i>	2.04%	-----	-----
12. <i>Expression of embarrassment</i>	4.08%	-----	-----
13. <i>Joke</i>	2.04%	-----	-----

Note : The percentages represent the number of students in the group who used the strategy. Because of the use of multiple strategies in a single response, these do not add up to 100.00%.

It can be seen in Chart 3 that the students in Group 1 had the most variety in their responses, using ten of the thirteen categories. The students in Groups 2 used nine of the categories, and the students in Group 3 used eight. Most of the students, both Japanese and American, responded with an *appreciation token* (Group 1 - 77.55%, Group 2 - 91.84%, Group 3 - 97.44%), and approximately one quarter of all the responses in Category 1 consisted solely of 「ありがとう」 or “Thanks” (Group 1 - 28.57%, Group 2 - 24.49%, Group 3 - 23.08%). One Japanese student used English in her response, as in

サンキュー。うれしい。切って良かった。(Group 1),
(Thank you)

but none of the Americans responded with a foreign language. A typical response, therefore, could be said to consist of two units, an *appreciation token* plus a question or comment. The differences between the Japanese and American students can be seen in the types of questions or comments they added to their thanks.

After the *appreciation token*, a look at the above chart tells us that the students in Group 1 were most likely to *solicit confirmation* of the compliment (Category 7 - 48.98%), as in

本当？ ありがとう。(Group 1)
 ありがとう。でも変じゃない。大丈夫？ (Group 1)
そう？ (Group 1).

The next most frequently used strategies were *pleased acceptance* (Category 3 - 18.37%), as in

ありがとう。誰も気付かないから気付いてくれてうれしいよ。 (Group 1),

and *agreement* (Category 2 - 16.33%), as in

ありがとう。私も気に入ってるの。 (Group 1).

Three students used *expressions of surprise* (Category 9 - 6.12%), for example,

えーやっぱりー あたしもそう思ったんだあー。(Group 1).

Two of the Japanese students used an *expression of embarrassment* (Category 12 - 4.08%), 「てれる」 (to feel awkward or embarrassed, to become self-conscious), in their responses. One in words

いやー、てれるなー、もう何でも似合うからさー。(Group 1),

the other with the stereotypic embarrassed giggle of the Japanese female

そう？ (てれ笑い) ありがとう。(Group 1).

The following strategies were used by only one student each, *praise upgrade* (Category 5 - 2.04%), as in

いやー、てれるなー もう何でも似合うからさー。(Group 1),

reassign praise (Category 6 - 2.04%)

ありがとう。本当はどんな髪形にしようか迷ってたんだけど。美容師さんにまかせてよかった。〇〇でカットしたんだよ。(Group 1),

denial (Category 11 - 2.04%)

うっそー ほんとー うれしい。(Group 1),

and *joke* (Category 13 - 2.04%)

いいでしょう!? まねしないでね。ふんっ。(Group 1).

Category 4 (*explanation*), Category 8 (*return compliment*), and Category 10 (*scale down*) did not appear at all in the data for Group 1.

After the *appreciation token*, the next most commonly used strategies for the American students were *agreement* (Category 2 - Group 2 - 36.73%, Group 3 - 43.59%), as in

Thanks! I love it like this! (Group 2)

Thank you. I'm very pleased with how it came out. (Group 3),

or *explanation* (Category 4 - Group 2 - 30.61%, Group 3 - 20.51%), as in

Thanks.. I just got my hair cut today. (Group 2)

Thank you. I thought a change would be nice. (Group 3).

A few students each used Category 6 (*reassign praise* - Group 2 - 4.08%, Group 3 - 2.56%), for example,

Thanks. I really like what my hairdresser did with it. (Group 2)

Thanks. I'm glad you like it. I went to ----- to get it done. (Group 3),

Category 7 (*solicit confirmation* - Group 2 - 8.16%, Group 3 - 7.69%), for example,

Do you really like it? I do, but it's nice to have another opinion. (Group 2)
Thanks. I don't know if I like it. Do you really? (Group 3),

Category 9 (*expression of surprise* - Group 2 - 6.12%, Group 3 - 7.69%), as in

Oh, thank you. I just cut it. (Group 2)
Gee, thank you! I just got it cut, and I think it came out good, too.
(Group 3),

and Category 10 (*scale down* - Group 2 - 6.12%, Group 3 - 7.69%), for example,

Thanks, I like it, too. It's just hard to get used to. (Group 2)
Thanks. I hope it's easy to take care of. (Group 3).

Some strategies appeared in the data for only one of the two English-speaking groups.
Category 3 (*pleased acceptance* - Group 3 only - 5.13%), for example,

Thank you very much. I'm glad you like it. (Group 3),

Category 5 (*praise upgrade* - Group 2 only - 2.04%), as in

Ya, it's chill, huh? (Group 2),

and Category 8 (*return compliment* - Group 2 only - 2.04%), as in

Thanks. You look good today, too. (Group 2).

Category 11 (*denial*), Category 12 (*expression of embarrassment*), and Category 13 (*joke*) did not appear at all in the data for Groups 2 and 3.

1.3 Discussion

The strategies in Charts 1 and 3 were divided into two types, Acceptance and Avoidance. Categories 1 - 4 are called Acceptance-type strategies because the person is accepting or agreeing with the compliment, for example,

ありがとう。気に入っているんだー。 (Group 1)

(Category 1 : *appreciation token* + Category 2 : *agreement* = 2 Acceptance-type strategies)

Thanks. I just had it cut today, and I really like how it came out.

(Group 2)

(Category 1 : *appreciation token* + Category 4 : *explanation* + Category 2 : *agreement* = 3 Acceptance-type strategies).

Categories 5 - 13 are Avoidance-type strategies because the person is deflecting or evading the compliment in some way, for example,

そう？ (Group 1)

(Category 7 : *solicit confirmation* = 1 Avoidance-type strategy)

Do you really like it? I'm not sure if I do. (Group 3)

(Category 7 : *solicit confirmation* + Category 10 : *scale down* = 2 Avoidance-type strategies).

Some students used both Acceptance and Avoidance strategies in their responses. These are referred to as Combination responses, for example,

本当に？ありがとう。 (Group 1)

(Avoidance : Category 7 : *solicit confirmation* + Acceptance : Category 1 : *appreciation token* = 2-unit Combination Response)

うっそー ほんとー うれしい (Group 1)

(Avoidance : Category 11 : *denial* + Avoidance : Category 7 : *solicit*

confirmation + Acceptance : Category 3 : *pleased acceptance* = 3-unit Combination response)

Thanks. You look good today, too. (Group 2)

(Acceptance : Category 1 : *appreciation token* + Avoidance : Category 8 : *return compliment* = 2-unit Combination response)

Thanks. I hope it's easy to take care of. (Group 3)

(Acceptance : Category 1 : *appreciation token* + Avoidance : Category 10 : *scale down* = 2-unit Combination response).

The following chart shows the distribution of Acceptance-only, Avoidance-only, and Combination responses in the data.

Chart 4: Distribution of Acceptance, Avoidance, and Combination Responses

Type of Strategy	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Acceptance only	46.94%	75.51%	82.05%
Avoidance only	10.20%	2.04%	2.56%
Combination	42.86%	22.45%	15.39%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

In the above chart, it can be seen that the students in Group 1 used Acceptance-only and Combination responses about equally, while the students in Groups 2 and 3 heavily favored Acceptance-only responses. None of the groups used much of the Avoidance-only strategy.

In the Combination responses, it was noticed that the students did not all follow the same pattern. That is to say, some students began with an Acceptance-type unit and ended with an Avoidance-type unit, and vice versa. Does this change in the order of the strategies have an effect on the response as a whole? Does it matter? . . . Yes, it probably does. The end of the response is more memorable because of "the recency effect" (Stevick, 1976), and thus carries more weight in the total meaning. In the following chart, we will look at the make-up of the Combination responses.

Chart 5 : Order of Acceptance and Avoidance elements in Combination Responses

Type of Strategy	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Acceptance-ending	80.95%	18.18%	33.33%
Avoidance-ending	19.05%	81.82%	66.67%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We see a very clear and obvious difference here between the Japanese students and the American students with respect to the order in which they put the elements of their Combination responses. Most of the Japanese students start out trying to avoid the compliment, but end up accepting it ; most of the Americans use the opposite order. Which strategy, then, Acceptance or Avoidance, did the students in each group prefer ? In the following chart, the Acceptance-only responses were added to the Acceptance-ending responses and the Avoidance-only responses were added to the Avoidance-ending responses.

Chart 6 : Total of Acceptance/Avoidance-only and Acceptance/Avoidance-ending Responses

Type of Strategy	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Acceptance	81.63%	79.59%	87.18%
Avoidance	18.37%	20.41%	12.82%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

In the above chart, it can be seen that the overall trend is very similar for all three groups, with approximately 80% of the students in Groups 1, 2, and 3 using the Acceptance-only or Acceptance-ending strategy, and approximately 20% of the students in Groups 1, 2, and 3 using the Avoidance-only or Avoidance-ending strategy.

2.1 Responses to Criticism

How do we react when we are criticized about something ? This is generally not a pleasant experience, but to what extent does our culture allow us to show our

displeasure? One question on the DCT dealt with parental criticism of study habits :

Your parents let you know that they think you should be spending more time on your studies and less time on your social life. Recently this subject has often come up, and you do not want to talk about it anymore. What would you say?

親が、もっと学習に時間を使うべきで、遊びをへらすべきだといった。最近しばしばそのことを言われる。あなたはこれ以上そのことについて言ってもらいたくない。あなたは何と言いますか。

It can be imagined that there would be great variation in the tone of voice and facial expression used if these responses were spoken, from flippant through neutral to annoyed or angry.

2.2 Results

The data were divided into seventeen categories, which are listed in Chart 7 below with sample responses and the frequency of use. Each category contains multiple variations with the same meaning.

Chart 7: Sample responses and frequency of use in the data

Category	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph 21 & over
1. うるさい。 / ほっといてくれ Leave me alone.	36.73%	16.33%	15.38%
2. もう言わないで。 I don't want to talk/hear about it.	14.29%	46.94%	41.03%
3. きのうもきいた！ I've heard this before.	2.04%	12.24%	10.26%
4. 自分の事は責任を持つ It's my life.	2.04%	22.45%	15.38%
5. やってるよー I'm doing the best I can.	14.29%	32.65%	20.51%

6. 心配しないで。 Don't worry. / Trust me.	2.04%	12.24%	5.13%
7. 気分転換が必要なの! I need a social life, too.	10.20%	4.08%	----
8. そんな あそんでないもん What social life?	2.04%	----	5.13%
9. 勉強しないからね -----	2.04%	-----	-----
10. ----- (silence)	-----	-----	5.13%
11. 分かった。 I know.	57.14%	14.29%	23.08%
12. はい。はい。 Yeah. / OK.	2.04%	10.20%	15.38%
13. やろうとおもってたところ。 I'll try to do better.	2.04%	4.08%	12.82%
14. ----- Thanks for being concerned.	-----	-----	2.56%
15. ----- Why don't we compromise?	-----	2.04%	-----
16. ごめんなさい。 I'm sorry.	2.04%	-----	2.56%

Note: The percentages represent the number of students in the group who used the phrase. Because of multiple use of strategies in a single response, these do not add up to 100.00%.

It can be seen in Chart 7 that the students in Groups 1 and 3 used thirteen of the sixteen categories, while the students in Group 2 used eleven. A look at the data for Group 1 shows us that Category 11 「分かった」, was the most common (57.14%), in fact, it was used often enough to call it a set phrase, or formulaic expression. It appeared in several variations, at various levels of politeness, such as

もう分かってるんだから。 (Group 1)

分かってます。 (Group 1)

分かったよ! (Group 1)

分かったってばー。 (Group 1).

The next most frequently used was Category 1 “leave me alone” expressions, which were used by 36.73% of the students. These also appeared in various forms, such as

うるさいわ。 (Group 1)
うるさいの。 (Group 1)
うるさいなー、ほっといてよ。 (Group 1)
うるせえな、ほっといてくれ。 (Group 1).

Category 2 “I don’t want to talk/hear about it” expressions, such as

何度もくり返し同じ事言わないで。 (Group 1)
言わなくていいよ。 (Group 1)
それは言わないで。 (Group 1),

and Category 5 “I’m doing the best I can” expressions in which the student claimed to be studying hard, such as

うるさいの。ちゃんとやってるから。 (Group 1)
勉強もきちんとしてるよっ。 (Group 1),

were both used by 14.29% of the students. Category 7 “I need a social life, too” expressions, in which the student justified her behavior, were used by 10.20% of the students. This category showed the greatest diversity of expression, for example,

気分転換が必要なの！ (Group 1)
やることやって 遊んでるんだから 大丈夫。 (Group 1)
わかっているけど、遊びはストレス解消の1つなんだよ。 (Group 1)
今じゃなきゃ遊べないでしょ。働くようになったら、あまり遊べないんだから
…。 (Group 1)
じゃあ、月に一度位は一日思いっきり遊んでもいいでしょう。勉強するから。
 (Group 1).

The following were used by only one student each : Category 3, in which the student

reminded her parent that she had heard this before,

しつこい！きのうもきいた！（Group 1），

Category 4, in which the student declared that she would take responsibility for herself,

私は自分の事は責任を持って行うから心配しないで。（Group 1），

Category 8, in which the student disagreed with the idea that she had too much of a social life,

そんな あそんでないもん。（Group 1），

Category 9, in which the student threatened not to study anyway,

最近うるさいよ 勉強しないからね（Group 1），

Category 12, in which the student accepted her parent's criticism,

わかった。わかった。はい。はい。（Group 1），

Category 13, in which the student suggested that she had just been thinking about starting to study,

やろうと思ってたところ。（Group 1），

and Category 16, in which the student apologized for her behavior,

ごめんなさい。心がけます。（Group 1）。

Category 10 (silence), Category 14 “Thanks for being concerned”, and Category 15 “Why don't we compromise” were not used at all by the students in Group 1.

In Group 2, Category 2, in which the student expressed her refusal to discuss the topic, was the most commonly used (46.94%). This category contained a variety of

expressions, for example,

Umm, I have to go now. Can we talk about this later, please. (Group 2)

I don't feel like talking about it right now, maybe some other time.

(Group 2)

OK. Can we move on? Next topic. (Group 2)

You tell me this all the time. Can we please drop the subject? (Group 2)

Enough already! I'm doing good in school, so leave me alone. (Group 2).

Category 5, in which the student claimed to be studying hard and doing well, was the next most commonly used (32.65%). As in Group 1, this category also shows great variety, for example,

I'm doing the best I can. Stop off. (Group 2)

I don't want to hear about it. My grades are fine, and as long as my grades are fine, then I should be able to have the social life that I want to.

(Group 2)

It's my life. I work hard on my homework. I should be able to have fun, too. (Group 2).

Next was Category 4, in which the student claimed that it was her own responsibility, (22.45%), for example,

Listen, I'm old enough to know how to budget my time, and if I mess up I'll learn my lesson. Let's drop it for now, please. (Group 2)

Hey, I know what I'm doing. Who's the one in school? Me or you?

(Group 2)

Let me deal with me. I can take care of myself. (Group 2).

Also included in this group was a student who claimed to be paying her own tuition,

I'm out of high school, and I'm paying for school now - so don't worry about it. It's my business, not yours. (Group 2).

Category 1, in which the student expressed her desire not to be bothered about the subject, for example,

Guys, please, get off my back. I'm just having fun, and my grades are fine.

(Group 2)

Would you please leave me alone. Just leave me alone. (Group 2),

was used by 16.33% of the students. Phrases using "I know", Category 11, such as

I know. Stop telling me. (Group 2)

We've discussed it before, and I know how you feel - I'm trying, but don't expect miracles overnight. (Group 2),

were used by 14.29% of the students. Category 3 expressions, in which the student reminded her parent that she had heard this before, for example,

You know, I've heard this a few times already, and maybe now it's time to put it away. Please don't mention it again. (Group 2)

You tell me this all the time. Can we please just drop the subject?

(Group 2)

Oh no, not again! (Group 2),

and Category 6 expressions, in which she asked her parents to trust her, such as

Don't worry. I'll get my work done. I always have. (Group 2)

Mom & Dad, I am trying to do both. Don't worry! (Group 2),

were used by 12.24% of the students. Category 12, in which the student accepted her parents' criticism without argument, for example,

Fine. Just leave me alone. (Group 2)

O.K. all right, whatever! Yeah ... uh-huh. (Group 2),

was used by 10.20% of the students. Category 7, in which the student declared that she

needed a social life, as in

I know what I'm doing! I need a life, too! (Group 2),

and Category 13, in which the student talked about future action on the subject, as in

I need a social life, too. I will try to balance my work and fun better.

(Group 2),

were both used by 4.08% of the students. Category 15, in which the student took a neutral stand, was used by only one student (2.04%)

Mom & Dad, I know! Why don't we compromise? (Group 2).

Category 8 "What social life?", Category 9, the threat not to study, Category 10, (silence), Category 14 "Thanks for being concerned", and Category 16 "I'm sorry" did not appear at all in the data for Group 2.

For Group 3, as in Group 2, Category 2, "I don't want to talk/hear about it" was the most frequently used strategy (41.03%), as in

I'm really tired of talking about this. It is my life. (Group 3)

I would rather not talk about this now. (Group 3).

Can't we change the subject? (Group 3).

Category 11 "I know", was the next most frequently used (23.08%), for example,

I know what you think. Do you think we could table this issue this time?

(Group 3)

Just leave me alone. I know what I'm doing. (Group 3).

This was followed in popularity by Category 5 "I'm doing the best I can" (20.51%), for example,

I'm so sick of talking about this! I told you - I'm doing the best I can!
(Group 3)

I really think I do a good job of managing my study time - Can you trust
me with this responsibility? OK, then let's close the discussion.
(Group 3).

Next came Category 1 "Leave me alone", for example,

Mom, lay off! I got the message! (Group 3),

Category 4 "It's my life", for example,

Mom/Dad, you have told me how you feel once before. I don't like to be
reminded like a small child. (Group 3)

I'm studying as much as possible, while retaining my sanity. I am paying my
own tuition, and I know how important grades are! (Group 3),

and Category 12 "Yeah", for example,

Okay, Okay, I'll work on it, just - let's not discuss this topic anymore.
(Group 3)

All right. I got your message. (Group 3),

all of which were all used by 15.38% of the students. Two of the students who used
Category 12 wrote the following after their seemingly compliant responses,

OK. I will try. (just to get them not to talk anymore) (Group 3)

Yeah! Yeah! (and ignore them. Probably the repercussion will teach me a
lesson.) (Group 3).

Category 13 "I'll try to do better", as in

I will try to spend more time on my work. Can we finish this discussion
later? (Group 3),

was used by 12.82% of the students. Category 3 “I’ve heard this before”, as in

Give me a break-I’ve heard this a hundred times already! (Group 3),

was used by 10.26% of the students. Category 6, “Don’t worry”, as in

Folks, I have things under control. Trust me on this. (Group 3),

Category 8 “What social life?”, as in

What social life!? Are you crazy!? I don’t have one !! (Group 3),

and Category 10 (silence), which was indicated in the following manner,

Nothing. (Group 3)

----- (Group 3),

were all used by 5.13% of the students. Category 14, an expression of gratitude,

I am prioritizing my life. I can handle it, but thanks for being concerned.

(Group 3)

and Category 16, an apology,

I’m sorry, I do the best I can. (Group 3),

were used by one student each. Category 7 “I need a social life, too”, Category 9, the threat not to study, and Category 15, the suggestion that they compromise, did not appear at all in the data for Group 3.

2.3 Discussion

As in the section on compliments, the various responses, or strategies, listed in Chart 7 were divided into two types, this time called Negative and Positive. Negative

responses (Categories 1-9) were assertive or confrontational, for example,

うるせえな、ほっといてくれ。 (Group 1)

(Category 1)

Leave me alone. I'm doing just fine. I always do. (Group 2)

(Category 1+Category 5)

Could we just drop the subject? (Group 3).

(Category 2)

Positive responses (Categories 12-16) were conciliatory, harmony-producing, or submissive, for example,

ごめんなさい。心がけます。 (Group 1)

(Category 16)

O.K. all right, whatever! Yeah ... uh-huh. (Group 2)

(Category 12)

All right, I got your message. (Group 3).

(Category 12)

Categories 10 and 11 were difficult to classify. Category 10 responses (silence), which can have many meanings, were finally classified as Negative because saying nothing may be less overtly confrontational than the spoken responses in Categories 1-9, but it conveys the meaning of "I don't want to talk/hear about it" nonetheless. As in Takizawa (1996) all of the Category 11 ("I know") responses in Group 1 were classified as Positive (harmony-producing) rather than Negative (assertive) because the response 「分かった」 implies that the person recognizes the point of, the reason for, and the truth behind the speaker's message. Whether or not the person will act on the speaker's suggestion is unclear, however, as the phrase contains no particular promises of future action. The use of "I know" in the English data was more problematic. It was interpreted in the same way as Group 1 (Positive) in phrases such as,

I know, Mom and I'm trying hard. Can we stop talking about this?
(Group 2),

because the unspoken remainder of the sentence after "I know" is likely to be "... that I should study more", or some such phrase in which the speaker acknowledges the basic truth of her parent's words. Responses such as,

Just leave me alone. I know what I am doing. (Group 3),

on the other hand, were classified as Negative because the student was asserting her control over the situation.

As in the section on compliments, some students used both Positive and Negative elements in their responses. These, again, are referred to as Combination responses, for example,

もうわかっているんだから、何度もくり返し同じ事言わないで。 (Group 1)
(Positive : Category 11 + Negative : Category 2)

OK. Can we move on? Next topic. (Group 2)
(Positive : Category 12 + Negative : Category 2)

I really don't feel like talking about it. I know I need to study more.
(Negative : Category 2 + Positive : Category 11) (Group 3).

The following chart shows the distribution of Positive, Negative, and Combination responses in the data :

Chart 8 : Distribution of Positive, Negative, and Combination Responses

Type of Strategy	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Positive only	24.49%	6.12%	15.38%
Negative only	38.78%	75.51%	61.54%
Combination	36.73%	18.37%	23.08%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

It will be noted in Chart 8 that the percentages for the three categories were roughly balanced for Group 1, but very lopsided toward the Negative in Groups 2 and 3. In Chart 9 below, we will take a look at the order of Positive and Negative elements in the Combination responses :

Chart 9 : Order of Positive and Negative elements in Combination Responses

Order of Strategies	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Positive-ending	38.89%	-----	44.44%
Negative-ending	61.11%	100.00%	55.56%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Again, it is assumed that the end of a response carries more weight in the overall effect because it is most memorable. It is interesting to note that the responses of the students in Group 2 (17-20-year-old Americans students) consistently ended with a Negative remark, and in the other two groups, Groups 1 and 3, the majority of the students ended their responses with a Negative remark (Group 1 - 61.11%, Group 3 - 55.56%).

In Chart 10 below, the Positive-only responses were added to the Positive-ending Combination responses, and the Negative-only responses were added to the Negative-ending Combination responses.

Chart 10 : Total of Positive/Negative-only and Positive/Negative-ending Responses

Type of strategy	Group 1 Seisen ages 18-20	Group 2 Saint Joseph ages 17-20	Group 3 Saint Joseph ages 21 & over
Positive	38.78%	6.12%	25.64%
Negative	61.22%	93.88%	74.36%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

In all three groups, the trend was for students to respond in a Negative (assertive or confrontational) manner ; this trend was especially pronounced in Group 2.

3.1 Conclusion

Jandt (1995) describes Japan as a group-oriented, high-context society in which people are more sensitive to nonverbal messages. America is described as a highly individual, low-context society in which verbal messages are elaborate and detailed. It is to be expected, then, that Japan and America will differ with respect to expectations of humility and avoidance of conflict.

In the section on compliments, the American students usually responded frankly, with an *appreciation token* plus *agreement* or an *explanation*. The Japanese students, too, often responded with an *appreciation token*, but the questions or comments they added were more emotional, soliciting confirmation of the compliment or expressing pleasure at the fact that they had been complimented.

As we saw in Chart 1, Americans actually use a variety of strategies when responding to compliments, but they always know that a simple "Thank you" is an adequate and suitable response to a compliment from anyone of any age, from the President of the United States to the child next door. The situation is much more complex for the Japanese. The virtue of modesty is deeply rooted in Japanese culture. In framing a response to a compliment, one must first of all make a calculation of one's relationship to the person who has given the compliment, and be sure to act in a suitably humble manner, not too proud of oneself or one's possessions.

In Chart 6, the last chart in the section on compliment responses, the total numbers of students who gave Acceptance-only or Acceptance-ending responses was fairly similar for all three groups : Group 1 - 81.63%, Group 2 - 79.59%, and Group 3 -

87.18%. It appears that the Japanese students and the American students respond to compliments from friends about their hair in exactly the same way, and to a certain extent, they do. Witness the number of students who used only a one-unit *appreciation token* (Group 1 - 28.57%, Group 2 - 24.49%, and Group 3 - 23.08%). We suspect, however, that there has to be more of a difference.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in the data could be seen in Chart 5, where this difference appears. Americans are not totally devoid of the virtue of modesty, of course, and in this chart, the difference between American-style humility and Japanese-style humility can be seen very clearly in the order of the Acceptance-type and Avoidance-type elements in the Combination responses. Americans are taught to respond with an *appreciation token*, but after that, may show their humility by using one of the Avoidance-type strategies, such as Category 10 - *scale down* - in which a potential flaw in, or some dissatisfaction with, the thing being complimented is pointed out. Japanese are taught that they must at least begin the response in a humble manner, that is, with an Avoidance strategy, even if they intend to end up accepting it.

In discussing the responses to criticism, let us first of all focus on the students in Groups 1 and 2, who are all of about the same age. The Japanese students in Group 1 responded to their parents' criticism using set phrases, such as 「分かった」, which shows that they have heard and understood the speaker's words, but is essentially non-confrontational, and 「うるさい」, which expresses their feelings about being criticized. The American students in Group 2, on the other hand, used a greater variety of expression in their responses, and they did not hesitate either to declare their self-sufficiency or to argue their case using reason and logic.

Chart 10, the last chart in the section on responses to criticism, shows us that the majority of the students in both groups responded negatively to the criticism, but the trend was more pronounced among the Americans. This difference can be seen even more clearly in Chart 9, where 100.00% of the American students in Group 2 ended with a Negative-type strategy in their Combination responses, as opposed to only 61.11% of the Japanese students in Group 1.

This question was not really appropriate for the students in Group 3, especially the mature students in their 30's, 40's, and 50's, whose more elderly parents would not be likely to criticize them about their study habits or social life. The students in this group may even have children of their own, which would give them a much better understanding of the parental side of the argument. It is interesting to note that the

results for this group are much more similar to those of the Japanese students in Group 1 than they are to the younger American students in Group 2, and that even when the students in Group 3 objected to the criticism, they had less confrontational ways of dealing with it, for example, responding with "Yeah. OK", then ignoring the speaker, or not responding at all. It seems that in some ways Americans become more like the Japanese as they mature.

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Other Reading

The following were useful in determining the categories in the compliment section :

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Note : The remaining questions on the Discourse Completion Test will be covered in future reports.