

JAPANESE CULTURAL THOUGHT PATTERNS AS MANIFESTED IN ENGLISH EMAILS

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Abstract.

Cultural thought patterns and their underlying principles as manifested in English email should be understood earlier for both email sender and recipient. The main goal is to prevent from misunderstanding or miscommunication caused of different cultures and linguistic knowledge. This study was conducted to find the Japanese Cultural Thought Patterns as Manifested in English Emails and their underlying principles as well. The primary data were collected from English emails written by native Japanese with different background of works who were able to write English emails.

Keywords: culture, thought patterns, email

Introduction

Communication technologies have been significantly improved over time as means of overcoming the two principal communication barriers: time and distance. In oral cultures, people need to be in the same location at the same time to communicate. By applying communication technologies, meanwhile, they do not require to be in the same location at the same time.

Electronic communications greatly increase our capacity to overcome barriers of time and distance. The Internet and electronic communication does not just mean a new tool for communication but it means a new way to communicate. People believe that electronic communication is fast, accurate and can be used with ease and comfort. It is able to overcome problems due to time and distance. No wonder that electronic communication is relatively popular especially for business people. For that reason, nowadays, electronic communications have a significant impact on the workplace.

As a part of electronic communication, the use of email plays crucial role in practical correspondence in the workplace especially for international business industries. People do not always meet the majority clients, vendors or business partners in person to do their work and managerial business. In the past, formal business letters were mostly

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occupied in doing dealing the business in which language used in a letter was followed by certain rules. Meanwhile, email employs simple language, personal and meaningful message. This symbolizes the essence of email that is simplifying and eliminating most of the inconveniences of previous types of correspondence like letters, memos and faxes.

The ability of email to allow for almost instant communication sounds wonderful, especially for business people who mostly require fast information in a short time. Since we should keep it (email) simple, it is important to convey our message with clarity and also require the recipient to respond.

However, there is something that people often do not realize in sending email to others especially for those who are from other countries. They often use language with their own writing style which could bring and reflect their customary culture, and then they do not realize that the recipients who accept their email have different cultures. Sometimes, it is not easy to achieve successful interactions with the recipients who are from different cultures.

Comprehending language and culture cannot be separated which mean that concepts of culture play important role in understanding a language. Kuang (2007) mentioned that language is a tool for communicating as well as a predominant aspect of anthropological phrase of culture, and the two aspects of language and culture can never be separated.

Language used by the email senders from different cultures obviously influence linguistic knowledge, especially in foreign language expression. The cultural thought patterns behind the language is importantly needed in order to achieve effective communication since these thought patterns will influence how others expect to hear about the information presented. Miscommunication and cross cultural conflict will increase when both email's sender and recipient have different cultural thought patterns. Moreover, cultural misunderstanding or cultural shock may have a greater impact than their linguistic knowledge because they may cause miscommunication.

For the above reason, cultural thought patterns and underlying factors as manifested in email should be understood earlier for both email sender and recipient. The main goal is to prevent from misunderstanding or miscommunication caused of different cultures and linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, by representing the communication style of the email's recipients, we are sustaining their values in this area.

This study analyzed further about cultural thought pattern as manifested in English emails. It is not only being aware of cultural differences between countries, but also to adjust responses to those differences. For the need of this study, English emails written by Japanese were focused more since Japanese primary language is not English. By observing the proper Japanese email etiquette is expected to be able to

prove willingness to understand Japanese cultural thought pattern and so that it can provide beneficial information about the Japanese culture itself.

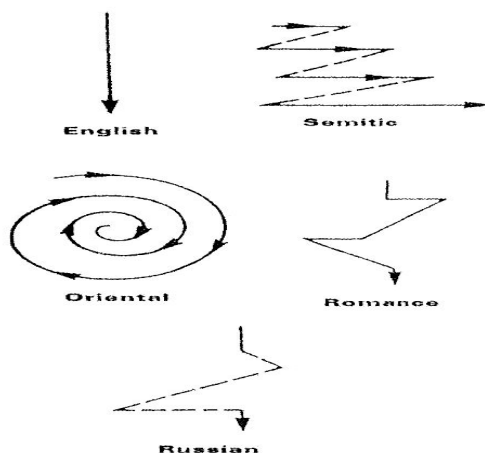
Contrastive Rhetoric's

Contrastive rhetoric is a relatively new discipline in comparative linguistics whose foundations date back to the article 'Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural education' by R. Kaplan (1966), where he uses the method of text analysis, analyzed essays written by students from various speech communities. The main hypothesis of contrastive rhetoric is that written texts exhibit culture-specific discourse patterns. They can be reflections of different thought patterns caused by the internal logic of a particular culture, but also by different writing conventions learnt and acquired in a particular culture (Kaplan 1988). Texts of a similar nature are analyzed in order to examine closely language patterns that exist in a particular speech community.

The term rhetoric here refers to the mode of thinking for the achievement of a certain goal (Kaplan, 1966). Kaplan (1980) states rhetoric is not universal. It varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture. Basically it is concerned with what goes on in the mind rather than what comes out of the mouth. It is, therefore, concerned with factors of analysis, data gathering, interpretation and synthesis.

Contrastive rhetoric is influenced by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Kaplan developed the framework of contrastive rhetoric by emphasizing the close relationship between rhetoric and culture (Vahapassi, 1988). He believes that the linguistic structure of a language is “defined by and defines the culture of the community of its speakers” (1972).

Based on the cultural variations, Kaplan found five types of rhetoric as described in the following pictures:



Robert B. Kaplan,
“Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education,”
Language Learning 16:15.

The first type of rhetoric is the Anglo-Saxon model. The expected sequenced of thought in this type of rhetoric is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence which is descended from the Philosopher of ancient Greece and shaped subsequently by Roman, Medieval, European, and later Western thinkers. The typical characteristic of this rhetoric is that it is dominantly linear.

The second type of rhetoric is the semitic model which is developed in Arabic-Persian languages. In the Arabic language, for example, paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions.

The third type of rhetoric is the oriental model which is commonly found in Asian language, such as Korean, Japanese, Hindi, Indonesian, etc. this model is marked by what may be called approach by indirection. In this kind of rhetoric, the development of the paragraph may be said to be “turning and turning in a widening gyre.” The circles turn around the subject and show it from a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly.

The fourth type of rhetoric is the Franco-Italian Model. This model is commonly found in French, Spanish, and Italian. This type of rhetoric is marked by digression. The fifth type of rhetoric is the Slavic model including Russian. This model of rhetoric has a clear beginning and end, but in the middle there is much material that is irrelevant to the development of the argument.

As stated above, there are five types of rhetoric which described diagram of different cultural thought patterns for different language groups. These types should not be taken as an absolute. However, they can be employed as a guide for developing cultural competence in cross cultural communication, as both a speaker and a listener, a writer and a reader, an email’s sender and recipient.

Japanese Writing Styles

Writing systems are both functional, providing a visual way to represent language and also symbolic in that they represent cultures and people. In *The writing systems of the world*, Florian Coulmas (2003) describes them as follows:

“As the most visible items of a language, scripts and orthographies are 'emotionally loaded', indicating as they do group loyalties and identities. Rather than being mere instruments of a practical nature, they are symbolic systems of great social significance which may, moreover, have profound effect on the social structure of a speech community.”

Japanese writing compositions are characterized by the *ki-shou-ten-ketsu* or four unit patterns. Here is a definition by Hinds (1983) an American scholar of comparative linguistics specializing in Japanese vs. English:

- a. “Ki (First, begin an argument),
- b. Shou (Next, develop the argument),
- c. Ten (At the point where the development is finished, turn the idea to a sub-theme where there is a connection but not directly connected association to the overall theme), and
- d. Ketsu (Last, bring all of this together to reach a conclusion)”.

Research Method

The research approach applied in this study was descriptive - qualitative and the design of the study was text analysis. It described the observed data in the form of words rather than numbers. Since this study aimed at making inferences about cultural thought pattern as manifested in English emails written by Japanese and the principles that underlie, the first step taken in the study was selecting the English emails written by Japanese. The second step was observing the profile of the English email selected by identifying the pattern of development (how ideas are sequenced) in those emails. The third step was making inference about Japanese cultural thought pattern and the principles that underlie. This was done on the basis of the investigator’s knowledge, background of the writers of the selected emails as well as information about cultural thought pattern and philosophy.

The subjects of the study were Japanese native speakers who wrote emails in English. They were able to speak English and write English emails. Their age should be more than 20 years old since people in that age were considered that they were mature enough and already had jobs. The data taken were during 2009 - 2012. The researcher obtained those emails from her friends who are originally Japanese, her colleagues who have English emails from their Japanese friends. In addition, the emails should be categorized as “unrestricted” emails according to them.

There were 14 English emails and the contents were related to various discussion and background of life. The participants were:

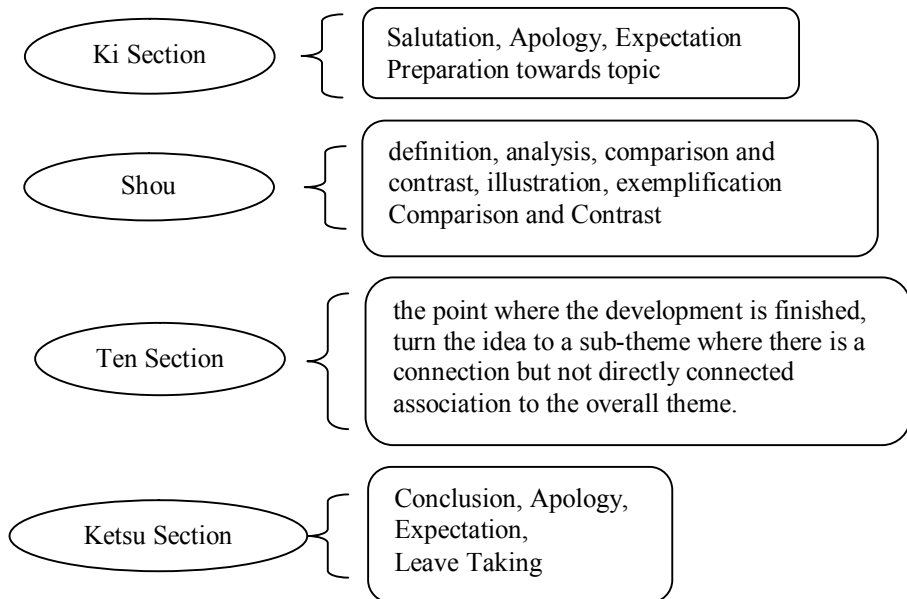
- a. 4 cycling riders/managers who were from international cycling team and frequently had several international cycling competitions every year. Since they travel a lot from one country to other countries to participate in international event and make coordination as well as update their international grade in internet, for that reason they have good competency in speaking and writing English.
- b. 5 civil government employees who were from international affair department. They often engage with people from other countries to conduct coordination and cooperation. Since they are often in charge with international institutions, therefore, they are able to speak and write English well.
- c. 5 aviation experts in which their job were relating to aviation field such as Airline Security Head Officer, Aviation Security Inspectors, Dangerous Goods Handling Personnel in Airline or

Airport, etc. Aviation field is frequently closely related to International coordination because for international flight, people from airline or airport should have permit from other states for their international scheduled flight. For that reason, they are able to speak and write English because they often conduct coordination with other aviation experts from other countries.

The Basic Components

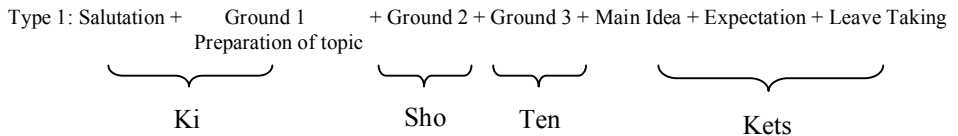
Basically Japanese has four writing components characterized by *ki-shou-ten-ketsu* or four unit patterns. Here is a definition by Hinds (1983) an American scholar of comparative linguistics specializing in Japanese vs English: “Ki (First, begin an argument), Shou (Next, develop the argument), Ten (At the point where the development is finished, turn the idea to a sub-theme where there is a connection but not directly connected association to the overall theme), and Ketsu (Last, bring all of this together to reach a conclusion)”. In summary, the basic components of English emails written by Japanese can be illustrated in the following figure.

Basic Components of English emails written by Japanese



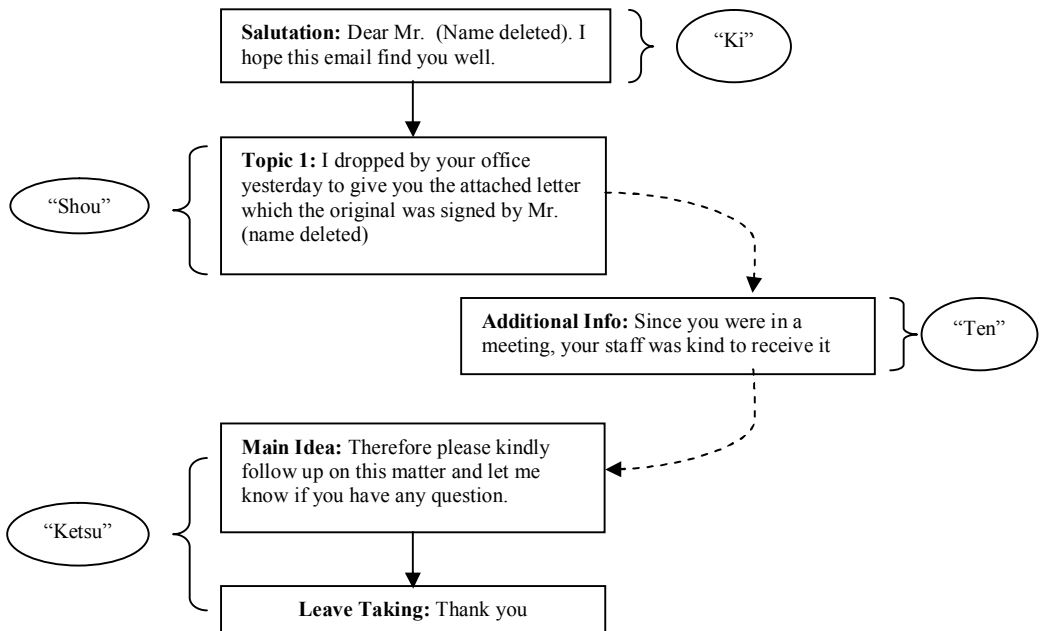
Patterns of Organization

a. Organization Pattern Type I



Pattern of organizational type 1 may be employed in English emails written by Japanese. This pattern completely includes the basic components or four unit patterns as characterized by Ki-Shou-Ten-Ketsu. The example of organizational pattern type 1 can be found the following example. This email consists of four unit components of Japanese writing compositions.

Email Employs Organizational Type 1



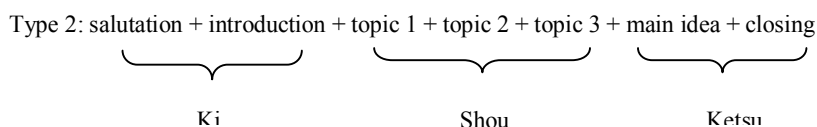
The above email applies four unit writing components completely. First, this email starts with salutation which can be included in Ki section. Second, the email’s sender delivers the topic before going to the main idea. Here, he states that he went to the recipient office to give the letter. This section is categorized as Shou section. Third, he provides a statement “*Since you were in a meeting, your staff was kind to receive it*“. This

statement turns the idea to a sub-theme where there is a connection but not directly connected association to the overall theme. It may be included as the “Ten” sections. Last, in the Ketsu section, he states his main idea almost the end of email before closing. This conclusion indicated with the word “therefore”.

b. Organizational Pattern type 2

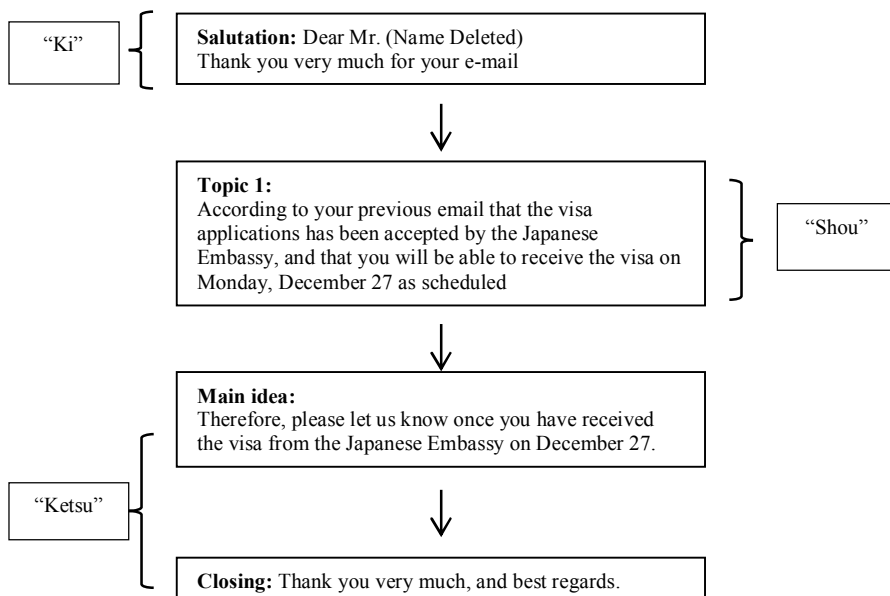
The second type in variation of organization patterns consist of three writing components, Ki- Shou- Ketsu. The “Ki” section covers salutation and introduction. Next, the “Shou” section includes topics expressed related views. The main idea and closing is included in the “Ketsu” section.

As well as in organizational pattern type 1, the main purpose which indicates the main idea of the organizational pattern type 2 comes in the end or when email is about the end. The following figure illustrates the organizational pattern of type 2:



The following email employs organizational pattern type 2. It consists of three unit patterns of Japanese writing composition, ki-shou-ketsu. For further information, the following figure will discuss it further.

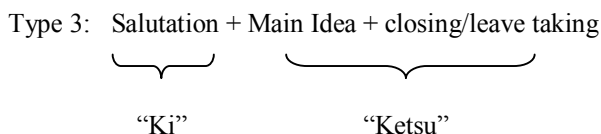
Email Employs Organizational Pattern Type 2



This email shows that it employs organizational pattern type 2 since it consists of three units of Japanese writing compositions. This email was from Japanese person who did coordination with Indonesian relating to the visa application to the Japanese Embassy. Before going to the main idea, he started his email with salutation to the recipient and it could be considered as Ki section. In the Shou section, he reviewed content of previous email sent by recipient. The information of previous email stated that the visa had been accepted by Japanese Embassy and would be finished on 27 December. After informing topic in Shou section, the email's sender stated his main idea that he wanted to be informed about the visa. This section can be categorized as Ki section.

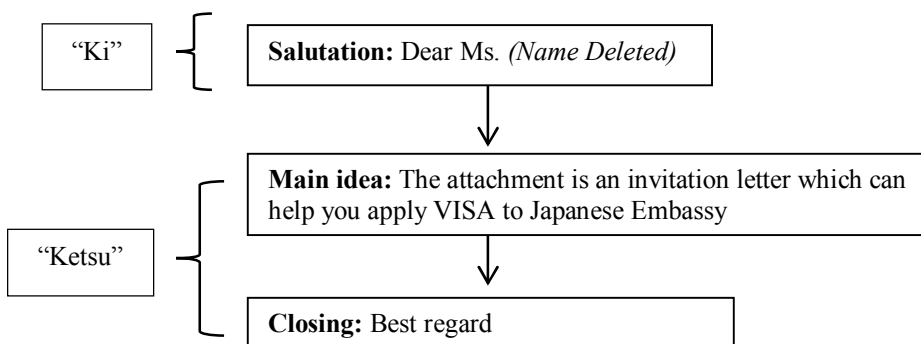
c. Organizational Pattern Type 3

English emails written by Japanese may employ organizational pattern type 3: salutation + main idea + leave taking. The main idea is directly stated in this email. Therefore this pattern may be in straight linear pattern. A special characteristic that differentiate organizational pattern type 3 and type 1 or 2 is that there are not any elaborations of main idea or by giving supporting ideas or background in organizational pattern type 3.



The example of organizational pattern type 3 is found in
The following email.

Email Employs Organizational Pattern Type 3



This email is direct email where the main idea stated directly without any additional information before or after the main idea. It employs organizational pattern type 3 which only consist of two unit writing components. First, in Ki section, the email's sender presents the salutation. Second, before closing, he straightly states his main idea in sending the email "*The attachment is an invitation letter which can help you apply VISA to Japanese Embassy.*" This section can be included as Ketsu section.

Discussions

Organizational Pattern

Based on the discourse features analyzed in the previous section, the thought pattern manifested English emails written by Japanese there are three variations of organizational patterns. They are:

- a. Organizational pattern type 1 consists of four units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Shou-Ten-Ketsu. This pattern employs all compositions in each email. The characteristic of this pattern is that the main idea comes about the end of email, after extended information.
- b. Organizational pattern type 2 consists of three units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Shou-Ketsu. This pattern employs three compositions in each email. Similar to organizational pattern type 1, the characteristic of this pattern is that the main idea comes about the end of email, after extended information. However, this pattern does not employ provides a statement which turns the idea to a sub-theme or usually known as Ten section.
- c. Organizational pattern type 3 consists of two units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Ketsu. Contradictory to organizational pattern type 1 and 2, the main idea in organizational pattern type 3 directly comes after the Ki section. This pattern does not apply additional information or flowering words before stating the main idea. This email is direct and linier which is commonly found in western world. Based on the explanation above, therefore, the email which applies organizational pattern type 3 may be categorized as direct and straightforward email. It proves that deductive style is also possible in Japanese (Kobayashi, 1984).

In summary, the following table explains about the each category of organizational pattern as manifested in English emails written by Japanese:

No	Organizational Pattern	Japanese Writing Components	Numbers of Analysis
1.	Type 1	Four units Ki-Shou-Ten-Ketsu	3
2.	Type 2	Three units Ki-Shou- Ketsu	7
3.	Type 3	Two units Ki-Ketsu	4

Indirect Approach

Based on the analysis shows in previous section that most of emails written by Japanese are signed by an approach of indirection. It is not directly stated but it is approached from indirectly related views. This approach of indirection is indicated by the following findings.

1. First, the opening of emails tends to be lengthy. Before going to the main idea, it may consist of two or three steps such as salutation, opening words and preparation of topic (Ki).
2. Second, main idea tends to be delayed. It may appear in the end of email or when email is about the end since Japanese employs extended topics before going to the main idea.

According to the analysis, the vast majority of English emails are written in approach of indirection. Nevertheless, not all English emails written by Japanese apply indirectly approach. Some of them employ directly approach as well. Japanese, with different backgrounds, state their main idea directly in writing English emails. It shows that Japanese writing has been influenced by western culture which has tendency to use linear pattern.



Japanese Thought Patterns

Based on the analysis of previous section, it is found that most of English emails written by Japanese are non-linear. Japanese tend to approach a subject on a spiral way or indirect since most of English emails written by Japanese employ organizational pattern type 1 and 2 where the main ideas come in the end of email or when the email is about to end.

In contrastive rhetoric proposed by Kaplan (1966) this Japanese organizational thought pattern (non-linear) is the opposite of English thought pattern which tend to linear. Japanese state main ideas indirectly after additional information while Britons state their main ideas directly. Britons express their idea straight to the point while Japanese have tendency to dance around it or discuss the other things first. Japanese tend

to approach a subject on a spiral way while Westerners use more linear straight-line logic (Naotsuka, 1978). The following table illustrates contrastive rhetoric of Japanese thought pattern and English thought pattern.

Contrastive Rhetoric of Japanese and English

No	Contrastive Rhetoric	Japanese	English
1.	Written Discourse	Non-Linear	Linear
2.	Main Idea	Indirectly	Directly
3.	Approach	Circular/Spiral way	Straight to the point
4.	Thought Pattern		

The Underlying Principle

Politeness

In western culture, people tend to try and get right to the point. They use more linear straight-line logic. Basically, hurrying the conversation along, trying to make it simple and save time are their reasons to employ linear thought pattern.

On the other hand, in Japan this would be very impolite. Japanese do not get to the point right away. They have tendency to dance around it or they may discuss the other things first. Those factors may cause Japanese indirectly in expressing their ideas. Politeness in Japan may be indicated by indirection. Therefore, indirection is employed in English email written by Japanese.

The Japanese tend to approach a subject on a spiral way, while Westerners use more linear straight-line logic (Naotsuka, 1978). This can present a problem when, for example, Japanese business people try to explain things to Britons. The Japanese will tend to take into consideration all conceivable facts and ideas, many of which seem irrelevant from a Western view point, before focusing on the subject. Their British counterparts, after reading only the first few sentences, will complain of their irrelevance.

It also happens when Britons business people try to explain things directly without any discussion of the other things first. Their Japanese counterparts, after reading Britons' emails will take into consideration that Britons are impolite since they do not take any attention to all conceivable facts and ideas, many of which seem irrelevant from a Western view point, before focusing on the subject.

Conclusion

The study is concerned with Japanese cultural thought patterns as manifested in English emails as well as their underlying principle. Based on the findings in the above discussions, it can be concluded that there are three variations of organizational patterns. First is organizational pattern type 1 consists of four units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Shou-Ten-Ketsu. Second is Organizational pattern type 2 consists of three units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Shou-Ketsu. Third, Organizational pattern type 3 consists of two units of Japanese writing compositions, Ki-Ketsu. This organizational pattern can be categorized as direct / linear pattern.

Both organizational pattern type 1 and organizational pattern type 2 have similar characteristic that the main idea comes about the end of email, after extended information. Contradictory to organizational pattern type 1 and 2, the main idea in organizational pattern type 3 directly comes after the Ki section. This pattern does not apply additional information or flowering words before stating the main idea.

The cultural thought patterns of Japanese as manifested in English emails are marked by two characteristics. First, an English email written by Japanese is signed by an approach of indirection. Most of emails are characterized as having topic statement or main idea in the final position. It is not directly stated but it is approached from indirectly related views. It is because the opening of English emails written by Japanese tends to be lengthy. Moreover, main idea tends to be delayed since it may appear in the end of email or when email is about the end. Second, the rhetorical structure of Japanese in organizing ideas in English email tends to non-linear pattern. It shows that Japanese cultural thought pattern is in a circle or spiral in developing the ideas.

In contrastive rhetoric proposed by Kaplan (1966) this Japanese organizational thought pattern (non-linear) is the opposite of English thought pattern which tend to linear. Japanese state main ideas indirectly after additional information while Britons state their main ideas directly. Britons express their idea straight to the point while Japanese have tendency to dance around it or discuss the other things first.

However, in organizing the ideas in writing English emails, Japanese thought pattern is not always in non-linear pattern. Several emails show that Japanese employ linear pattern in some way as well. They state their ideas directly. It may be influenced by western culture which has tendency to use linear pattern.

The underlying principles of Japanese cultural thought pattern found in English emails cover a most influenced social aspect that is politeness. The strongest indication utilized by Japanese in expressing their politeness in writing emails when they employed indirection approach in expressing their ideas by discussing the other things first before going to the main ideas. It is done because politeness in Japan might be indicated by indirection.

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