# Comparative DCT Research on the Speech Act of Suggesting Among Native and Non-native Speakers of English and Japanese

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## Abstract

The speech act of suggesting was chosen as a topic for the present research, since compared to other speech acts, the number of studies on suggesting is relatively limited. With the help of the Written Discourse Completion Task method, this study aims to explore what structures native and non-native speakers of English and Japanese use to make suggestions in different situations, comparing whether the most frequently used structures coincide in the two languages. To be able to make this comparison, a written worksheet of three situations were given to the participants both in English and Japanese, and they were asked to give suggestions in those certain situations. The final results showed that the participants tended to use the same corresponding structures in the two languages regardless of their mother tongues, thus implying some parallelism between how suggestions are made in English and Japanese, even though the two languages are linguistically very different from each other.

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to address the speech act of suggesting, which is used almost on a daily basis by everyone, for example when we suggest our friends to do something together, or just simply propose what would be nice to have for dinner at home. Many studies have been carried out concerning other speech acts such as requesting or apologizing (for example, see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Taguchi, 2006; Bełza, 2008), but remarkably less attention has been given to suggesting (for instance, see Martínez-Flor, 2005; Jiang, 2006; Pishghadam & Sharafadini, 2011). Therefore, the main objective of this study is to collect data by using the Discourse Completion Test (or DCT) method to see how native and non-native speakers of

English and Japanese give suggestions in certain situations, and whether their most commonly used suggesting forms in these languages coincide, implying possible universals in how suggestions are made in different languages.

### 1.1 Discourse Completion Test and Speech Acts

Discourse Completion Test, which is also often referred to as 'DCT' or 'Discourse Completion Task', is a method widely used in the field of pragmatics. According to Zuskin (1993), DCT can be defined as a linguistic tool which "elicits responses to problematic, contextually-specific prompts as participants, in writing or orally, roleplay their responses" (p.174). DCT as a method was originally used by Shoshana Blum-Kulka in 1982 (Kampf, 2013), and since then it has become a widely utilized way of collecting and organizing data targeting speech acts.

DCT has multiple types, which Parvaresh and Tavakoli (2009) list as follows: Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task (MDCT), Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), Discourse Role-Play Task (DRPT), Discourse Self-Assessment Task (DSAT) and Role-Play Self-Assessment (RPSA) (p.366-367). Discourse Completion Test can effectively be used to analyze any type of speech act, such as promising, greeting, ordering, warning, apologizing, questioning, advising, suggesting, or making excuses.

In general, a speech act could be defined as an act of communication ("Kent Bach," n.d.), which can consist of only one word, such as "sorry" to convey an apology, or it could also be longer, for example "I'm sorry I forgot your birthday" (The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition [CARLA], n.d.). However, speech acts might be difficult for L2 learners, since they "may not know the idiomatic expressions or cultural norms in the second language or they may transfer their first language rules and conventions into the second language, assuming that such rules are universal" (CARLA, n.d.), which might lead to misunderstandings (CARLA, n.d.).

### 1.2 The Theory of Speech Acts

The origins of studying speech acts root back to John Austin's Theory of Speech Acts, which he outlined in his book titled *How to Do Things With Words,*

which was published in 1962 (Green, 2014). In his book, Austin also introduced his idea of performative language, which means that we say something to do (perform) something (Tortorella, n.d.).

> The theory of speech acts aims to do justice to the fact that even though words (phrases, sentences) encode information, people do more things with words than convey information, and that when people do convey information, they often convey more than their words encode. ("Kent Bach," n.d.)

That is to say, according to Austin, in most of the cases when we say something, our utterances are performative in nature, so they cannot be judged as true or false, they can only be felicitous or infelicitous (as cited in Tortorella, n.d.). Utterances have three characteristics (acts) that must be considered: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts (as cited in Tortorella, n.d.).

Austin's Theory of Speech Acts had influenced many other linguists, for instance John Searle, who grouped illocutionary acts into five categories: (1) representatives (e.g. concluding), (2) directives (e.g. requesting, questioning), (3) commissives (e.g. promising, offering), (4) expressives (e.g. thanking, apologizing), and (5) declarations (e.g. declaring war) (as cited in Álvarez, 2005, p.696). The focus of the current study is the speech act of 'suggesting', which can be categorized as a directive speech act. Based on Searle's original definition of directives, a directive speech act can be interpreted as an attempt of the speaker to get the listener to do something (as cited in Álvarez, 2005, p.696). The intensity of a directive may vary, it can span from being mild to being forceful. 'Suggesting' is a mild way of trying to engage the listener in some sort of activity, but it still counts as a directive.

## 1.3 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

The directive nature of the speech act of suggesting is closely related to the concept of "face", which in the linguistic sense of the word means whether a member of a community can maintain their self-image through social interactions. According to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, there are two different kinds of faces: positive face and negative face. The former means that a person

wishes to gain the approval of the other members of the community, while the latter means that a person does not want to be imposed on by others (as cited in Barouni, 2013). However, depending on the nature of the conversation, there might be some face-threatening acts included, which can be defined as "acts that by nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.65).

According to Banerjee and Carrell, suggestions can be seen as face-threatening acts as well, because "the speaker is in some way intruding into the hearer's world by performing an act that concerns what the latter should do. In this sense, suggestions are regarded as an imposition upon the hearer by affronting his/her negative face" (as cited in Martínez-Flor, 2005, p.169). Therefore, to lessen the possible face-threatening nature of the speech act and in order not to offend the hearer, certain politeness strategies can be used when a suggestion (or any other speech act) is being made.

As outlined in Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, to save the face of the hearer in a certain situation, four main types of politeness strategies can be used: (1) bald on-record, (2) negative politeness, (3) positive politeness, and (4) off-record (indirect) (as cited in Moore, 2001). Moreover, Brown and Levinson also claim that "any rational agent will tend to choose the same genus of strategy under the same conditions" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.71). The comparative nature of the present study also addresses the issue of whether speakers in different languages with different cultural backgrounds tend to use the same ways of suggesting, possibly implying the same underlying politeness strategies in order not to threaten the hearer's face.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

Eight people participated in the study. All of the participants had some knowledge of Japanese and English, however, the level of their expertise varied from person to person. Among the participants there was only one native speaker of English (from Canada), and there were three native speakers of Japanese. The

rest of the participants had various cultural backgrounds: there was a participant from Hong Kong, one from Bulgaria, one from France and one from Iceland. The male-female ratio was 3: 5, and the target age group of my study was between 18 and 26, including university students only.

## 2.2 Data collection

To collect data for the study, the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) type of DCT was used. In this case this meant that the participants were given a worksheet with three situations, written both in English and Japanese. After receiving the worksheet, they were required to make suggestions in those certain situations in about 1-2 sentences, providing six answers altogether. Data collection was carried out on paper and via the Internet. Half of the participants handed in their answers on paper, and half of them presented their answers via the Internet.

The author designed the situations in a way so that they would concern different type of relationships and different social statuses. In the first situation two friends of equal level were included, implying a close relationship. In the second one an unknown person was the target of the suggestion, presupposing a neutral relationship. In the third situation a university professor was chosen, who is socially in a higher status than the person making the suggestion, and therefore the nature of the relationship was distant.

The situations were the following:

|  | **English** | **Japanese** |
|---|---|---|
| **Situation 1** **(friend; close)** | Your best friend tells you that the weather is nice outside and that you should do something together, but s/he does not have any exact ideas. Make a suggestion. | 親友から「外は天気がいいから何か一緒にしよう。」と誘われたんですが、親友ははっきりしたアイデアがありません。何か提案して下さい。 |
| **Situation 2** **(unknown; neutral)** | A tourist stops you in the main street of Morioka and asks you what is worth seeing in this city. Make a suggestion. | 盛岡の中大通りに観光客に止められ、「盛岡に来て絶対見なければならない所は何ですか。」と聞かれています。何か提案して下さい。 |

| Situation 3 (higher status; distant) | Your university professor would like to organize a party for all the people in the English Educational Department, but he does not have any ideas what would be a suitable place for both students and teachers. Make a suggestion. | あなたの大学の先生は英語教育学部のみなさんのためにパーティーを行いたいと思っているが、先生たちや若者にもふさわしい所をよく分かりません。何か提案して下さい。 |

### 2.3 Data analysis

To evaluate the English answers of the participants, the author relied on Jiang's (2006) nine categories of phrases used to make suggestions, which are as follows:

1. Let's
2. Modals and semi-modals (e.g. you should, you shouldn't, you have to, you ought to, you need to, you can, you must, you'd better, you're supposed to, you might want to, maybe you could, passive with modals)
3. *Wh*-questions (e.g. What about..? How about..? Why don't you..? Why not..?)
4. Conditionals (e.g. If I were...; If I...)
5. Performatives (e.g. advise, suggest, recommend, propose)
6. Pseudo clefts (e.g. What I would suggest is..; One thing you could do is...)
7. Extraposed *to*-clauses (e.g. It might be... to...; It is... to...)
8. Yes-no questions (e.g. Have you thought about..?)
9. Imperatives

As for the evaluation of the Japanese answers, since the author could not find a concise list of Japanese phrases used for suggestion, she used the appendix of Tomomatsu et al.'s *Nihongo Hyougen Bunkei Jiten* (2007) for reference. This dictionary lists most of the Japanese phrases used for persuasion, proposal and advice, so the author had chosen the ones which are used for giving advice and making suggestions only. Phrases for giving advice were also included in the

chosen structures, since in the field of pragmatics, suggesting can sometimes be interpreted as an advice act (Martínez-Flor, 2005, p.169).

Thus the Japanese categories were chosen as follows:

1.  ましょう (~Let's)
2.  ませんか　　(勧め)（~Why don't you..?)
3.  ませんか　(誘い)(~Won't you..? ~Don't you want to..?)
4.  でしょう　　(同意求め確認)（~don't you think..?)
5.  ましょうか　　(誘い)　(~Shall we?)
6.  たらいい　　(勧め)（~Why don't you..?)
7.  といい　　(勧め)（~good if)
8.  ばいい　　(勧め)（~would be good if; should)
9.  たほうがいい (~It would be best to)
10. (たら)どうですか (~How about (if you))
11. ようではないか (~Don't you think we should)
12. ことだ　　(助言、忠告)　('must' for advice, admonition)
13. ものだ　　(忠告)（~should)
14. べきだ (~should)

Among these expressions there are some that are used in very formal situations or for making suggestions and giving advice in a strong way, but the author decided to include them as part of the database despite these characteristics. Furthermore, in case of (たら)どうですか, the author modified the original version included in the book by putting (たら) in brackets, thus allowing the second part of the structure to count as an alternative use of the same structure as well. Also, the author added the following structures that had not been included in the *Nihongo Hyougen Bunkei Jiten* but are often used for making suggestions in Japanese:

15. お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは(~my recommendation; I recommend)
16. と思います(~I think)
17. と考えます・と考えられます (~can be thought of as)

Furthermore, in case of the Japanese answers, a category of "Other structures" was created for forms that are suitable for making suggestions but are not part of the original list of structures.

After setting up the categories, the author analyzed the answers of the participants one by one, underlining all the phrases and structures the participants had used to make suggestions. First the English answers were analyzed, followed by the analysis of the Japanese sentences. In case of analyzing the Japanese answers, the author had to take into account that based on the nature of the situation and the relationship between the participants of the conversation, different forms of the phrases and structures could be used in the Japanese language. Therefore, the author counted the formal and informal versions of the structures as instances of the same phrase. For instance, 行きましょう and 行こう, どうですか and いかがですか, or ようではないか and ようじゃないか were considered as different instances of the same structure during the study. Moreover, （たら）どうですか and どうですか were also counted as alternatives of each other.

After underlining all the suggestive forms, the author counted how many times a certain phrase had been used by the participants. In case a participant used multiple structures in an answer, those counted as multiple answers. Based on these results comprehensive tables were created, both for the English results (see Table 1) and the Japanese results (see Table 3). The author also included the option of "Non-applicable answer", when she could not find any relevant structures or the participant misunderstood the task for some reason.

After summarizing the data in the comprehensive tables, another table was created including the total number of instances when a certain structure was used and the total number of participants using that certain structure. This table was made based on the ranking of the total number of instances. The table was created both for the English results (see Table 2) and the Japanese results (see Table 4), and these tables were used to see if there were any differences between how many times a structure was used and how many participants used a certain structure.

In the next step of data analysis, the author compared the top 4 structures of both the English and Japanese rankings to see if there was any correspondence

between the most frequently used structures of the participants' answers in the two languages (see Table 5). The author decided to include the top 4 structures, since in the case of the Japanese results three structures had the same ranking, and it was impossible to exclude any of them. In case of this comparison, only the rankings based on the number of participants using a structure had been used, ignoring the rankings based on the number of instances a structure had been used.

### 2.4 Expectations and research questions

Since there was only one native English speaker among the participants, it was not feasible to make a comparative study between the language use of native and non-native speakers of English. Therefore, the author had decided to explore what structures the participants used the most to communicate their suggestions, also being interested in whether non-native speakers of English would tend to use structures that students usually learn in the early stages of their studies, such as *Let's, Wh*-questions or *should*. The author expected that structures like those would be used by the participants more, while more complicated forms such as pseudo-clefts or extraposed *to*-clauses would be low in number.

As for the Japanese answers of the participants, the number of native speaker participants was higher; however, due to the unexpectedly high number of non-applicable answers, comparison between native speakers of Japanese and non-native speakers of Japanese became a futile thing to do. Therefore, just like with the English data, the author had decided to create a ranking of the structures used by the participants from the most commonly used structure(s) to the less used structures. The author's expectation was that structures such as ましょう, ましょうか, ませんか, どうですか would be used the most frequently, especially by non-native speakers of Japanese.

Another concern of the study was to compare whether the most frequently used structures in English and Japanese coincide, thus implying the possible existence of parallelisms for making suggestions in the different languages. To check this, the results of the previous two questions served as a basis of comparison.

During the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the most common structures used by the participants to make suggestions in English?

2. What are the most common structures used by the participants to make suggestions in Japanese?

3. Do the most frequently used structures in English and Japanese coincide?

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Evaluating the English results for making suggestions

Table 1. Summary of English answer results. ('P' = 'Participant', '*' = instance)

| Type of structure | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | Total number of instances |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Let's | | * | | | | | * | | 2 |
| 2. Modals and semi-modals | | * | * | | * | * | * | *** | 8 |
| 3. Wh-questions | * | | ** | | ** | * | | | 6 |
| 4. Conditionals | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 5. Performatives | * | | | **** | | | * | ** | 8 |
| 6. Pseudo clefts | | | | | | * | | | 1 |
| 7. Extraposed to-clauses | *** | | | | | | | | 3 |
| 8. Yes-no questions | | | | | | * | | | 1 |
| 9. Imperatives | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 10. Non-applicable answer | | * | | | | | | | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 30 |

From this table we can see that except for imperatives and conditionals, all other structures had been used at least once by the participants. It is also visible that there was an answer which did not contain any structures which could have been interpreted as part of data collection.

Table 2. Summary of the total number of instances when a certain English structure was used and the total number of participants using that certain structure, ranked by the total number of instances.

| Type of structure, ranked by the number of instances | Total number of instances when the structure was used | Total number of participants using this structure |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Modals and semi-modals | 8 | 6 |
| 2. Performatives | 8 | 4 |
| 3. Wh-questions | 6 | 4 |
| 4. Extraposed to-clauses | 3 | 1 |
| 5. Let's | 2 | 2 |
| 6. Pseudo clefts | 1 | 1 |
| 7. Yes-no questions | 1 | 1 |
| 8. Conditionals | 0 | 0 |
| 9. Imperatives | 0 | 0 |

Table 2 shows the total number of instances when a structure was used, and the total number of students using the same structure, ordered by the total number of instances. Besides showing the ranking of the structures, this table also makes it easier to see if a structure was used multiple times by the same participant, or many participants preferred to use that structure and it could be interpreted as a commonly used way of making a suggestion.

The ranking of the total number of instances shows that modals and semi-modals and performatives were used equally often (eight times), making them the highest ranked structures of the study. *Wh*-questions were also frequently utilized (in six cases), followed by a lower number of extraposed *to*-clauses, *Let's* instances and pseudo clefts. The total number of participants using a certain structure also shows that the most commonly used structures in the participants' answers were modals and semi-modals, performatives and *Wh*-questions.

However, if we take a look at the table, we can observe that although the number of instances when the participants used performatives and extraposed *to*-clauses was high, they were mostly used by the same people multiple times, while

modals and semi-modals, and *Wh*-questions were used in a more versatile way by a higher percentage of the participants.

## 3.2 Evaluating the Japanese results for making suggestions

Table 3. Summary of Japanese answer results.　('P' = 'Participant', '*' = instance)

| Type of structure | P 1 | P 2 | P 3 | P 4 | P 5 | P 6 | P 7 | P 8 | Total number of instances |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ましょう | | * | | | | * | * | | 3 |
| 2. ませんか（勧め） | | | | | | * | | | 1 |
| 3. ませんか（誘い） | | | * | | | | | | 1 |
| 4. でしょう（同意求め確認） | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 5. ましょうか（誘い） | * | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 6. たらいい（勧め） | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 7. といい（勧め） | | | * | | | | | | 1 |
| 8. ばいい（勧め） | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 9. たほうがいい | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 10. (たら)どうですか | * | | * | | * | | | | 3 |
| 11. ようではないか | * | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 12. ことだ（助言、忠告） | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 13. ものだ（忠告） | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 14. べきだ | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 15. お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは | * | | | | | * | | * | 3 |
| 16. と思います | | * | * | * | | | ** | * | 6 |
| 17. と考えます・と考えられます | * | | | | | | | * | 2 |
| 18. Other structures | | | | | * | | | * | 2 |
| 19. Non-applicable answer | | * | | ** | * | | | * | 5 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 29 |

One striking number of this table is the number of instances when the answer of the participant(s) did not include any structures that the author could use as data. Furthermore, one can also see that some structures such as でしょう（同意求め確認）,たらいい（勧め）,ばいい（勧め）,たほうがいい,ことだ（助言、忠告）,ものだ（忠告）,べきだ had not been used by the participants, which is partly due to the fact that some of these structures are very formal and rarely used in situations such as the ones presented on the worksheet.

Table 4. Summary of the total number of instances when a certain Japanese structure was used and the total number of participants using that certain structure, ranked by the total number of instances.

| Type of structure, ranked by the number of instances | Total number of instances when the structure was used | Total number of participants using this structure |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| 1. と思います | 6 | 5 |
| 2. ましょう | 3 | 3 |
| 3. (たら)どうですか | 3 | 3 |
| 4. お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは | 3 | 3 |
| 5. と考えます・と考えられます | 2 | 2 |
| 6. Other structures | 2 | 2 |
| 7. ませんか（勧め） | 1 | 1 |
| 8. ませんか（誘い） | 1 | 1 |
| 9. ましょうか（誘い） | 1 | 1 |
| 10. といい（勧め） | 1 | 1 |
| 11. ようではないか | 1 | 1 |
| 12. でしょう（同意求め確認）/たらいい（勧め）/ばいい（勧め）/たほうがいい/ことだ（助言、忠告）/ものだ（忠告）/べきだ | 0 | 0 |

Table 4 shows the summarized data of the Japanese answers, ranked by the total number of instances when a certain structure was used. From this table one can see if different people had used the structures multiple times, or it was the

same person utilizing a certain structure extensively. As opposed to the English counterpart, this table does not show a significant difference between the number of instances and the number of participants using a certain structure. Only と思います was used multiple times by one person.

As for the ranking of the structures, it clearly shows that the most commonly used structure used by the participants was と思います, used in a total of six instances by five participants. The next most common structures were ましょう, (たら)どうですか and お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは, all being used in three instances by three of the participants respectively. Furthermore, と考えます・と考えられます and 'Other structures' both had been used by two people, while ませんか (勧め), ませんか (誘い), ましょうか (誘い), といい (勧め) and ようではないか were only used by one person each.

### 3.3 Evaluating the compared data of the top 4 English and Japanese rankings

Table 5. Top 4 rankings of English and Japanese structures used for suggestion based on the number of participants who had used the structure. (See approximate English translation in parentheses.)

| Top 4 most frequently used English structures | | Top 4 most frequently used Japanese structures | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Structure with ranking | Number of instances | Structure with ranking | Number of instances |
| 1. Modals and semi-modals | 6 | 1. と思います (I think) | 5 |
| 2. Performatives | 4 | 2. ましょう (Let's) | 3 |
| 3. Wh-questions | 4 | 3. (たら)どうですか (How about (if you)) | 3 |
| 4. Let's | 2 | 4.お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは (my recommendation; I recommend) | 3 |

The comparative data of Table 5 shows that although the rankings differ, both the English and Japanese most frequently used structures are similar in nature. Grammatically, と思います is a modal expression in the Japanese language, and therefore its functionality is similar to English modals and semi-modals (Maynard, 1998, p.120). Also, English performatives such as 'suggest' or 'recommend' are similar to the Japanese お勧めです・お薦めです・お薦めは and other alternative versions. Furthermore, どうですか in itself can be seen as a type of equivalent to *Wh*-questions, just like *Let's* and ましょう are corresponding structures of the two languages. Furthermore, we can also see that not only the ranking but also the frequency of usage is different in case of the two languages.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Discussing the results of the first research question

The first research question the study posed was concerning what the most common structures used by the participants to make suggestions in English were. The results of the English parts of the answer sheets showed that the participants of the study had used modals and semi-modals, performatives, *Wh*-questions and *Let's* the most often. Based on the results of the English answers, the author could see that her pre-suppositions, namely that due to the non-native status of most of the participants *Let's* structure, *should*, and *Wh*-questions would be the most common, were partially correct. Although *Let's* is usually taught as one of the first structures to make suggestions when one is learning English, it was only used in two instances by two students, which was much lower than what the author had expected. As for modals and semi-modals, they turned out to be the most often used by the participants, they were used in eight instances by six students, mostly including answers with *should.* This result corresponded with the author's expectations, since modals such as *should, could, can* are also taught at an early stage of studying English, and according to the author's personal experience students usually use them with higher confidence than more difficult structures such as pseudo-clefts or extraposed *to*-clauses.

The author also suspected that *Wh*-questions would be extensively used, since structures such as *What about..?* or *How about..?* are very common in everyday conversations. In case of the present study, four students used *Wh*-questions in six instances. However, the high number of instances when performatives had been used was surprising for the author, since according to her personal experience, learners of English tend to avoid using them for the reason that they are unsure about the usage of performative patterns.

## 4.2 Discussing the results of the second research question

The second research question of the present study was concerned with what the most common structures used by the participants to make suggestions in Japanese were. The author's presupposition was that structures such as ましょう, ましょうか, ませんか, どうですか would be used the most frequently, especially in the case of non-native speakers of Japanese. The evaluation of the answers showed that these expectations were only half correct. ましょう and どうですか proved to be extensively used by the participants, however, the most frequently used structure was と思います, which was not part of the author's presuppositions. Another unexpected result was that お勧めです had been used in many instances by many people. The reason for the popularity of these structures might be that they are very versatile, and they can be relatively easily used under any circumstances without having to judge the nature of a situation thoroughly or without having to make too complicated modifications in the form, even if the social status of the hearer is very different from that of the speaker. These are important features, since they can make these structures a priority to turn to for learners, as opposed to other structures which might only be used in formal situations for example and therefore tend to get secondary position in the learner's choice of words, just like the results showed.

## 4.3 Discussing the results of the third research question

As for the third research question, namely whether the frequency of the corresponding structures in English and Japanese coincide, the results showed that the most frequently used structures were similar in nature in both languages.

Therefore, based on the answers of the participants of the study, it seems that although English and Japanese are linguistically different languages, mostly the same corresponding structures are frequent for making suggestions.

### 4.4 Limitations

One limitation of the study was the relatively low number of participants. Also, the language knowledge of the participants was various, which might result in answers that are limited in nature. Another aspect to consider is that the coinciding results of the most frequently used English and Japanese structures might have been due to mirror translation between the two languages.

One more concern of the author is the surprisingly high number of answers that she could not evaluate during the study. The reason behind this might be that the explanation on the worksheet was not thorough enough, or that the way the situations had been designed included unclear elements for the participants.

Also, during the study the different politeness levels of the Japanese language were not taken into consideration, which resulted in a simplified list of the answers.

### 5. Conclusion and Future Investigation

In summary, we can say that the study gave a little insight into how native and non-native speakers of English and Japanese make suggestions. Seeing how university students with different linguistic backgrounds responded using the same structures strengthens the idea of having parallelisms between what ways of suggesting is preferred by speakers of English and Japanese, regardless of their mother tongue.

For future investigation, a study with more participants (preferably with an equal number of native and non-native speakers) is required, taking into consideration that although some structures such as ませんか and たらいい have the same translation in English (namely 'Why don't you?'), they represent different intentions in the Japanese language. This difference might influence the choice of the speaker in Japanese, and therefore in the next study this aspect must be addressed. Another factor that further study should consider is that the Japanese

language has different levels of politeness that the answers could reflect, and therefore when evaluating the answers of the participants, this should also be of concern.

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