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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Emiko Tajikara Nelson for the Master of Arts in Speech Communication presented December 7, 1987.

Title: The Expression of Politeness in Japan: Intercultural Implications for Americans.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

LaRay Barna, Chair

Milton Bennett

Stephen Kosokoff

Alan Kim

This descriptive study focuses on expressions of politeness in the Japanese language and their relevance to social structure and intercultural communication. The study is designed to help students of the Japanese language learn rules of politeness which fall outside the domain of grammatical rules.

Reviews of relevant studies in the field of anthropology, communication, and linguistics provide the framework for the study. The honorific system in Japanese is discussed with regard to factors and functions. Factors for particular choices of honorific forms are analyzed and the significance of the use of honorific forms in interpersonal communication is discussed.

Rules and strategies for politeness expressions are stipulated. These rules are:

1. Avoid embarrassment
2. Utilize empathy
3. Do not impose
4. Be aware of in/out group boundaries
5. Utilize amae in a positive way

The rules, which are followed by examples and explanations, reflect the cultural assumptions and values in the Japanese society. Emphasis on harmony and the avoidance of conflict, group orientation, and dependency are some of the value orientations that have particular bearing on the politeness behavior of Japanese.

Differences in the concept of politeness between the U.S. and Japan are also discussed. It is observed that the high mobility of the U.S. society requires fast and easy establishment of human relationships whereas, in Japan, which is a static society, people tend to make an effort to preserve existing relationships. At the same time, group consciousness affects the way politeness is applied in Japan. It is hoped

that the understanding of these differences in cultural assumptions and their expressive forms will add to the reader's intercultural communication skills. It is important for students of the Japanese language to not only learn the language, but to also be able to successfully participate in communication with the Japanese.

THE EXPRESSION OF POLITENESS IN JAPAN: INTERCULTURAL
IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICANS

by

EMIKO TAJIKARA NELSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
SPEECH COMMUNICATION

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1988

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

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PREFACE

Jane: "What a beautiful child you have!"
Christie (smiles) "Thank you. Isn't she darling?"
.
Hanako: "You have a nice boy. I've heard
very good things about him."
Mariko: "Oh, no. He is such trouble. He is
lazy, rebellious at home, and we
just don't know what to do with
him."

The above dialogue represents the way people respond to compliments by others in different cultures. Although the two dialogues show a sharp contrast, each dialogue is quite acceptable, or a norm, within a given cultural constraint. If Mariko responded to Hanako as Christie did to Jane, or vice versa, the person giving the compliment would be puzzled.

It is not that their sentences are ungrammatical. Nor is it that they are being totally dishonest; they are merely carrying on a conversation prescribed by their culture.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The dialogue in the preface depicts common, daily conversations in the United States and Japan. However, as mentioned previously, if we place them in different settings, these conversations become somewhat out of place. The cross cultural misunderstanding that arises from inappropriate verbal behavior in a given social situation is a common problem. This problem could be avoided to a certain extent by knowing the prescribed norm of each culture.

However, knowing such norms in each situation is limited in application. In order to be able to behave appropriately in a given society and to accomplish particular communication objectives, one has to know the underlying principles that govern the social interaction in each particular society. This approach is consistent with the study of intercultural communication which can be defined as the transactional process which occurs when people of different cultural backgrounds are endeavoring to exchange meanings and feelings in face-to-face situations (Barna, 1982).

Language and Culture

The relationship between language and culture has been a favorite subject in related disciplines, and many scholars and researchers have written about the issue. Porter and Samovar (1976) write, ". . . our language is a product of our culture. At the same time, our culture is very much a product of our language" (p. 18). Conversely, Brown and Levinson (1978) say, "Discovering the principles of language usage may be largely coincident with discovering the principles out of which social relationships . . . are constructed: dimensions by which individuals manage to relate to others in particular ways" (p. 60).

We can find the same theme in the work of Sapir (1921, 1957) and Whorf (1956), which has drawn the attention of the American linguistic and sociological community ever since. Their hypothesis is summarized as, ". . . language functions, not simply as a device for reporting experience, but also, and most significantly, as a way of defining experience for its speakers" (Hoijer, 1982, p. 211). This still-controversial theme remains as speculation at this stage, for we have not found a way to verify this scientifically. Yet, we can at least say that there is a close, intertwining relationship between language and culture: that language reflects the social structure in which the language functions; that language is the expression of social relationships. Gumperz (1968) states, "Just as intelligibility presupposes

underlying grammatical rules, the communication of social information presupposes the existence of regular relationships between language usage and social structure" (p. 381). Our everyday behavioral patterns are closely related to or constrained by the social structure in which we live and verbal behavior is nothing but one form of social behavior.

Historical Perspective

In spite of the interest that the relationship between language and culture has attracted, much of the research dealing with the subject has not been successful in grasping the overall interaction between language and culture. This is because the interaction between language and culture had been treated as a subdivision of disciplines such as psychology or anthropology and developed separately. Giglioli (1972) points out the reciprocal indifference between sociology and linguistics, saying,

Since the beginning of this century, sociology and linguistics have grown in mutual isolation. The sociology of language has long been a rather underdeveloped area of sociology: similarly, linguistics has generally chosen to disregard the analysis of the social aspects of language (p. 7).

Scholars in sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and so forth, walked their own paths without knowing what others with similar interests were doing. The birth of such interdisciplinary study areas as socio-linguistics, communication, intercultural communication, and linguistics pragmatics helped solve the problem. These new disciplines are not only creating new theory and research but draw heavily from and

synthesize already-existing knowledge. Great scholars in the past had insights which could well be applied to these new areas of study. For example, the study of communication can be traced back to the Aristotelian age (Ruben, 1984). What had been lacking before the emergence of these disciplines was a perspective to look at a phenomenon from various angles so that one could grasp phenomena as a whole and as a process. The new disciplines provide such tools. As early as 1937, Malinowski gave a direction to linguistics toward the discipline of socio-linguistics. He stated:

The dilemma of contemporary linguistics has important implications. It really means the decision as to whether the science of language will become primarily an empirical study, carried out on living human beings within the context of their practical activities, or whether it will remain largely confined to deductive arguments, consisting of speculation based on written or printed evidence alone, . . . The present reviewer, like most modern anthropologists, would plead for the empirical approach to linguistics, placing living speech in its actual context of situation as the main object of linguistic study (Hymes, (1964, p. 63).

For these reasons, it is felt that an unconfined standpoint is important and this thesis will be based on studies in various areas.

Politeness Expressions

Interest in the relationship between language and social structure leads to the study of politeness in the present study. When one focuses on the socially conditioned rules which are used in communication, expressions of politeness seem to be one of the essential components. First, politeness behavior is an omnipresent phenomenon in

most human societies, yet each society has its own version of politeness behavior and the maintenance of face and interpersonal relationships requires proper politeness form in each society. Politeness behavior is essential in social life in human society, yet it is not as fundamental a behavior as eating, sleeping, and so on. Secondly, politeness is communicated by linguistic means and by other means. Therefore, politeness expression is a merging point for various kinds of human communicative behavior.

To determine politeness expression, as practiced within a specific culture, therefore, requires the discovering of both linguistic and nonlinguistic communication rules.

Neustupny (1978) divides politeness behavior into three categories. They are

1. Nonverbal expressions.
2. Speech (parole) expressions.
3. Linguistic expressions.

The second category, speech expressions, includes codes regarding paralinguistics, topics, networks, variety (selections of kinds of language), and message (namely, how, when, to whom, in what kind of context one expresses politeness). It should be noted that paralinguistics or paralanguage normally falls in the nonverbal area in the field of communication, while Neustupny classified it under speech expressions. The third category, linguistic expressions, consists of the system of linguistic expression of politeness--usually referred to as "honorifics." These two categories are the

focus of this study. The principles of politeness behavior and their linguistic expression in the Japanese language will be examined. Nonverbal expressions, the first category, including paralanguage will not be dealt with in this study.

JUSTIFICATION

Only twenty years ago, the Japanese language was one of the "exotic" languages which was believed to be very difficult to master. There were a very limited number of scholars of the Japanese language, and there were even fewer of them who acquired a native-like fluency in the language. Now, however, the situation has changed. Mastering the Japanese language is becoming a common thing and many institutions offering Japanese language courses are enjoying record enrollment. According to research done by the Japan Foundation, there were 35,180 students studying Japanese in the United States in 1982 (Hayashi, 1983) and more and more schools are starting to offer Japanese language courses. As an example, Portland State University now offers six courses in eleven sections of the Japanese language as opposed to one class in 1981. Many factors account for this phenomenon.

In 1959, the Japanese language was selected as one of the six languages for the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) scholarship, and many took advantage of the opportunity. Interest in the Orient surged in the 60's when "hippies" and others went there searching for religious "truths." The fashion and food industry followed and in 1984 there were

several U.S. television commercials that had actual Japanese phrases spoken by Japanese. The most plausible reason for this change is Japanese economic progress and advancement into the world. Business and professional people now had good reason to become interested in the Japanese language and its people. Thirty years ago, most of the students of the Japanese language were interested in such areas as linguistics, literature, and history. However, in the 1980's the majority of students in a Japanese class is taking Japanese for career opportunities in business, trading, and so forth. Consequently, expectations and needs of language training have changed. People want a more practical, realistic, and useful command of the language. They also seek general communication skills that will lead to successful business relationships. Better understanding of the Japanese culture, society, and people are required for this. Knowing how Japanese think, react, and behave has become an essential part of their study.

Meanwhile, the field of linguistics, especially the second language teaching area, began to emphasize the importance of communicative competence, a skill that enables the student of a language to communicate effectively and appropriately within a given cultural constraint. This cannot be accomplished by memorization and repetition nor by the knowledge of grammatical rules. The students of a second language have to know the rules that govern the communication pattern of that language and how it is related to linguistic expression. Among these rules, knowing the proper rules for politeness

is an important part of being an effective communicator. As for the Japanese language, it is widely recognized that Japanese is one of the languages that has a complicated system of honorific expressions, and that this is difficult to master.

Although historical and grammatical aspects of the honorific system of the Japanese language have been studied a great deal, the rules of their usage and other means of linguistic politeness expressions and of their relationship to the social system have not been thoroughly explored. It is this area in which most students who learn Japanese have difficulty. The students can resort to the grammatical rules to make a plain sentence into a polite sentence but this is insufficient information for students of Japanese. The problem is not memorizing the grammatical rules, but knowing how and when one uses a particular expression, why one expression is chosen over another, how one judges the situation to behave appropriately linguistically, and so forth. The knowledge of the underlying assumptions and principles in which social structure and relationships are reflected would be of great help to acquire such competence. This study is directed toward finding such assumptions and principles.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The basic questions underlying this study are: "What sort of strategies are needed to behave politely in the

Japanese cultural context and, specifically, how are these strategies carried out linguistically in Japan?" In order to answer these two questions one has to know the patterns of politeness and cultural, social, and psychological reasons behind the patterns. For this purpose, the present study will:

1. Analyze the cultural values and social structure of the Japanese society with regard to politeness behavior;
2. Postulate the rules and strategies of politeness expressions in Japanese;
3. Indicate intercultural implications of the above for American students of the Japanese language.

This is a descriptive study in which information from a variety of fields will be analyzed, synthesized, and categorized. The basic assumptions of this study are as follows:

1. The expression of politeness is closely related to the social structure and communication pattern of a culture.
2. The Japanese language is known to have a developed system of honorific expressions. To find out and show how politeness is conveyed by means of honorifics and other means in the social context would be a useful extension of this knowledge.

CHAPTER II

POLITENESS EXPRESSIONS OVERVIEW

STUDY OF POLITENESS EXPRESSIONS

Interest in politeness expressions is growing rapidly on the American linguistic scene. In the last twenty years a great deal of work has been done on politeness expressions, especially in the socio-linguistics field. The emergence of the "politeness sector" (Neustupny, 1978) is closely related to the development of new sectors in socio-linguistics such as linguistics pragmatics, speech act theory, and the notion of communicative competence. Since politeness expression is so essential and universal in human communication, it became an inevitable topic in the study of the relationship between principles of language use and social relationships. A review of literature in related areas will provide a theoretical background for the present research.

Ethnography of Communication

The notion of communicative competence had a great influence on second language teaching. People in the field needed a theoretical framework to guide their way out of structuralism, where the main focus is on structure. This framework of communicative competence came from the

disciplines of anthropology and speech communication. Hymes (1964) incorporated sociocultural elements of communication to account for complex linguistic interaction. There are rules of human communication which fall outside of grammatical rules. Hymes categorized elements of human communication such as setting, participants, intention, and so forth which play an essential role in communication. In order for people to function appropriately in a given culture, they have to know when to speak, when not, and what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner (Hymes, 1967). Hymes called such knowledge and ability to apply it "communicative competence." In the field of speech communication, Wiemann (1977) developed a model of communicative competence drawing upon various concepts in the field. His model, which includes several dimensions of communicative competence, helps one look at communicative competence in terms of communication style. The dimensions include affiliation/support, social relaxation, empathy, behavioral flexibility, and interaction management skills. Since the focus of this study is on the aspect of politeness expression which falls outside the domain of grammatical rules, the intent of what has been labeled "communicative competence" is what we will be dealing with in the present study. The models mentioned above will serve as a useful framework in the cross-cultural study of social norms and language use.

Linguistics Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of language use whereby a certain message is conveyed without resorting to the semantic or syntactical structure of the sentences. Quite often in our daily life a speaker says one thing and means another. The study of pragmatics is to find out how we are able to infer the true intention or meaning of the utterance.

An utterance, "It's cold here," for example, could be just a statement of a fact or a request for closing a window, or a suggestion for moving to another location. Or the sentence "Could you pass the salt?" is often a request for getting the salt in spite of its syntactical (question) and semantical (inquiry about ability) makeup. Yet there are times when the same utterance could bear a literal meaning, too. It all depends on the context and situation. Are there some systematic rules which make the message intended as predictable as in other spheres of linguistics (syntax, semantics, and phonetics)? This rule finding is the main aim of the study of pragmatics.

Indirect Speech Acts

Searle (1975) developed and elaborated the speech act theory which was originally proposed by Austin (1962). Austin categorized three speech acts which exist in each utterance. They are "locutionary," the act of saying some meaningful utterances, "illocutionary," the act itself performed in saying something, and "perlocutionary," the act of doing something as a result. So the meaning of an utterance

(locutionary) by the speaker is realized in the hearer's action (perlocutionary) by the speaker's intention (illocutionary force). It is said that by means of illocutionary force, such acts as ordering, promising, and threatening are performed. Recognition of the illocutionary force that an utterance has will help one understand the relationship between intended meaning and the surface makeup of the sentence.

Searle (1976) recategorized Austin's work and reorganized it so that the true intention of an utterance becomes predictable by examining appropriate (felicity) conditions. Such intentions underline "Indirect Speech Acts." Indirect Speech Acts are defined as one illocutionary act that is performed indirectly by way of performing another. Without explicit performatives (such as "I request . . . , " "I promise . . . ") a speaker can say one thing and indirectly mean another. According to Searle, the main purpose and function of these indirect speech forms is politeness. It is well known that indirectness is one of the most common strategies of politeness expression. Searle gives the example of "Can you . . . ?" form as in "Can you pass me the salt?" He says that these forms are polite since they show that (1) the speaker does not presume to know about the addressee's ability, and (2) interrogative forms give the addressee a choice (option of refusing) on the surface, thus "compliance can be made to appear a free act rather than obeying a command" (p. 75). Davison (1975) adds another

dimension to the account of Indirect Speech Acts. She argues that indirect expression is often used to signal some particular psychological state between the speaker and the addressee. Specifically, indirect speech is used when the speaker brings up the topic that she or he thinks the addressee might not want to talk about, thus having a distancing function to signal the psychological uneasiness on the part of the speaker. For example, the sentence "I must say that I never want to come back here again," (p. 150) is an indirect speech form used to show the speaker's uneasiness about making a rude statement rather than displaying the speaker's politeness. Davison's account is very interesting since it shows how politeness expressions function as a distance controlling tool between speaker and addressee.

The theory of Indirect Speech Act is a very useful framework to account for how utterances are made. However, for non-native speakers to be able to understand and behave properly in a given culture, additional knowledge beyond Indirect Speech Act is required. Searle (1975) writes:

In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer (p. 61).

Such "mutually shared background information" includes principles of conversation proposed by Grice (1975). The principles, known as the cooperative principle, are the rules observed by participants when they wish to facilitate a successful conversation. Following are Grice's four maxims:

- Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required.
- (1) Don't say less than required.
- (2) Don't say more than required.
- Maxim of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant
- Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous: avoid ambiguity.

According to Grice, when these maxims are flouted in some way, it means that something other than what is said is implied. This is called "implicature." For example, if Speaker A asks, "Do you want to go out tonight?" and Speaker B answers, "My teacher gave us a lot of homework," B is implying something in his answer by flouting the maxims of Relation and Quantity by not giving a relevant answer or not giving enough information to answer the question. While the universality and applicability of this principle to another culture is argued by some researchers (Keenan, 1976; Candlin, 1981), finding how such principles operate in different cultural settings would reveal the communication style peculiar to specific cultures.

Universality of Politeness Expression

As opposed to culture-specific views of politeness expression, Brown and Levinson (1978) claimed the "universality of politeness expression." Here, politeness is seen

as the result of people's desires to maintain each other's face, and on this point, politeness is universal.

. . . while the content of face will differ in different cultures (what the exact limits are to personal territories, and what the publicly relevant content of personality consists in), we are assuming that the mutual knowledge of members' public self-image or face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are universal (p. 67).

According to Brown and Levinson's category, there are two kinds of politeness. Negative politeness is to satisfy "negative face"; that is, "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (p. 67). Positive politeness is to satisfy "positive face"; that is, "the want of every member that his want be desirable to at least some others" (p. 67).

The kind of politeness people choose depends on the weights of the formula below:

$$Wx = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + Rx$$

"D" stands for the social distance of the speaker and hearer. "P" stands for the relative power of speaker and hearer, and "R" represents the absolute ranking of imposition in the particular culture.

Dynamics of these social variables, Brown and Levinson argue, decide the particular politeness device. In other words, if one looks at the particular linguistic expression, one can tell how threatening the situation is to a participant's face (face threatening act--FTA hereafter).

Since positive politeness is used to satisfy the speaker's desire for approval, the strategies for it include

showing intimacy, small talk, optimistic attitude, and so forth. Negative politeness includes strategies such as indirectness and hedging to avoid an imposition on the listener's freedom of action.

Generally, most studies on politeness expression have focused on what Brown and Levinson call "negative politeness." However, if we define politeness as a manifestation of our desire for others to have nice feelings about us, it is obvious that we are constantly managing to use positive and/or negative politeness depending on the seriousness of the situation, as Brown and Levinson say.

CODIFIED POLITENESS EXPRESSIONS IN JAPANESE

One of the contributing factors to the claim that Japanese is one of the most "polite" languages lies in its developed honorific system. This aspect of the language also contributes to the general perception of difficulty of the language. However, from a grammatical point of view, honorifics are fairly systematic and simple. The real difficulty lies in the fact that having mastered all the mechanics of honorifics does not automatically make one able to use them appropriately.

A successful execution of honorifics requires a knowledge of cultural assumptions, social factors, and interpersonal relationships among the participants in a conversation, and the ability to judge a situation. Utilizing such knowledge and making an appropriate decision as to what

honorifics to use requires such a conscious effort that many Japanese, especially the younger generation, express low confidence in the ability to use them (Uno, 1985). Books on usage of honorific speech for the Japanese are abundant.

The Japanese honorific system along with these problems involving the usage of honorifics will be briefly introduced in the following section.

Honorific System in Japanese: Keigo

Honorific speech is a verbal, ready-made expression of deference and/or formality. Japanese grammarians traditionally divide honorifics into three categories. They are:

1. Respect form (sonkeigo)--referent honorifics
2. Polite form (teineigo)--addressee honorifics
3. Humble form (kenjoogo)

Respect forms are used to display deference by elevating the addressee or referent behavior, whereas humble forms are used to the same end but by lowering the speaker's behavior.

Polite forms are used to show the speaker's politeness toward the addressee and the particular occasion as well, regardless of adverse status. Grammatically, honorifics are mostly expressed by the inflexion of verbs. Other methods include extra vocabulary, nouns, prefixes, and so forth. Respect forms and humble forms function in two ways--addressee honorifics and referent honorifics. Depending on the status of the relationship and the intimacy between the speaker and the addressee, or the speaker and the person being talked about,

speech levels are manipulated. When the referent and the addressee are the same person--the speaker talks about the addressee--there is not much problem. However, when the addressee and the third person in the topic (referent) are not the same person, conflict often arises. The speaker has to take into consideration all the relationships between the speaker and the referent, the addressee and the referent, and the speaker and the addressee. Polite forms are used to display politeness and good manners of the speaker, particularly by women, and they are mostly prescribed linguistic behavior in formal settings as opposed to informal or intimate settings.

Neustupny (1978) provided a detailed analysis of the Japanese honorific system to account for the process of generating honorifics. He presented three kinds of rules in order to describe the system more precisely. Coding Rules are used to describe the communicative acts and social background. Other rules include Expression Rules and Surface Rules governing semantic features and the assigning of surface form, respectively.

Neustupny's accounts can explain the problematic area which conventional grammar could not handle. The conventional grammatical account of the honorifics system is too simplistic and lacks the flexibility to incorporate all necessary information.

First of all, Japanese honorifics operate in a two-dimensional way. One axis is the relative vertical relationship between the speaker and the addressee, and the speaker and the referent. The horizontal axis shows the degree of intimacy and the group membership. A speaker might use the respect form to be polite to an addressee with a higher social standing and still could be informal, depending on the intimacy between the two. Japanese usually use the formal form to a stranger (out-group) but the form could be plain (or neutral-informal) when a power relationship is not present or clear. Second, the determining factors in choosing a particular form do not solely depend on the speaker-addressee, or the speaker-referent relationship as traditional grammar seems to indicate. As has been pointed out, not only the relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent, but the whole circumstance plays a part in determining which expression is used (Minami, 1974). Neustupny (1978) notes that the distinction between the "speech event" and the "narrated event" suggested by Jacobson is a useful framework to account for the process. This distinction does help to understand how topic or content of a speech event affects the choice of honorifics.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF HONORIFICS IN JAPANESE

In the examination of honorifics in the previous section, it became clear that grammar by itself cannot account for the process of generation of honorific forms. It seems

that sociological factors play a major role in the choice of honorific forms. Moreover, grammatical knowledge itself is not sufficient for one to appropriately function in such a linguistic environment. One needs to know what the socio-psychological factors are to determine the choice of particular forms. Neustupny (1978) states,

. . . when honorifics are actually used, we must possess detailed rules which tell us who is a "superior" before we can apply the rule "use Y toward a superior" (p. 200).

This statement can be generalized to other languages since it is a prerequisite to know "who is the boss" for smooth social interaction in most cultures, and each society has different meanings in socially ascribed status. Yet, the degree and complexity of interrelationship between honorific forms and social structure in the Japanese language makes this statement really noteworthy. Miller (1967) emphasizes this fact. In the introduction of honorific forms, he says:

Any consideration of this variety of special discourse in Japanese must take as its point of departure the postulate that linguistic forms are ordered in classes or sub-classes corresponding to systems or subsystems within the environment. The environment here, of course, is the very special world of Japanese society, and it is the linguistic reflection of this social organization which results in these elaborate and special types of discourse (p. 269).

He also says,

. . . this system of speech levels is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, and that it provides a rare opportunity to observe language in its role as an essential and closely integrated element of social behavior (p. 269).

Behind these statements are, it seems, the very nature of Japanese society itself that makes up the complexity of usage of honorifics, as well as its interrelationship with the language. In the following sections, the role that honorifics are playing in interpersonal relationships in Japanese society is examined.

Socio-Cultural Factors of Honorifics

In order to more clearly define honorifics, factors that determine a choice of a particular form have to be analyzed. While engaging in conversation, the speaker is constantly making decisions about what politeness form to use based on information available. As with any communicative act, the information is sometimes highly cultural and very difficult to pick up by an outsider. However, after all, unless one knows which factors contribute to the choice of a particular form, one is unlikely to succeed in communicating politeness, or worse yet, insult the other party.

As mentioned earlier, mastering the grammatical application of honorific forms does not guarantee the proper usage of honorifics. One needs to know and be able to select a particular form according to the information the circumstance provides. Analyzing this process is not an easy task since factors are multi-dimensional and intertwined. Sometimes very subtle or seemingly unimportant facts determine the choice. Because of what Barnlund (1975) called "Cultural myopia," an ordinary Japanese person usually is not

very conscious of it and the selection of a particular speech form takes place unconsciously and automatically. For this reason, it is very difficult for them to determine which factor is important. When asked there is often a discrepancy between what people think they do and what they actually do. Even so, most research on this subject is based on introspective questionnaires.

In this paper, factors will be selected which are known to be important in the Japanese culture and analyzed as communication determinants. As Brown and Levinson (1978) said, "Honorifics . . . are perhaps the most obvious and pervasive intrusion of social factors into grammar" (p. 284). A close look at the mechanism of honorifics will reveal the social system of the society in which the honorific system is used.

Variables (Social Factors). The first thing one thinks of in the Japanese language is vertical factors such as age or status differences. Yet, closer observation of interactions reveal that the vertical power relationship is not the sole determinant of the dynamics of honorifics. Horizontal factors such as intimacy between the speaker and addressee are another aspect that govern the use of honorifics. Besides these two factors, there are other factors that affect usage. These are such factors as the setting and situation of the communication. For example, colleagues would speak differently when they were having a lunchtime chat at a company cafeteria from the way they speak in

discussing a project at a meeting in a conference group. Let us call these circumstantial factors. Although these factors are not themselves the determinants of the choice of honorific levels, they condition the application and the use of honorifics. They include the presence of bystanders, since people often change the way of speech depending on whether someone is listening or not, regardless of whom they are talking about.

Vertical Factors. Vertical relationships represent relative position in some form of hierarchy. It is conditioned by factors such as age, social status, vertical role, and sex. These factors assume the relative superiority of one person over another and are mainly related to the level of speech in an honorific system. One uses the respect form to refer to a superior and the humble form to refer to one's in-group.

Age has been considered to be a very important factor. Due to the Confucianism tradition, older people are regarded as people of achievement and are respected because of their possession of accumulated knowledge and wisdom. Although the general rule to use the respect form for older people still holds, seniority in age alone as a source of power and a reason for respect is diminishing with societal change.

Social status can further be categorized into ascribed social status and achieved social status. Ascribed status usually derives from hereditary position such as membership to a particular social class or group, whereas achieved

status is often gained by educational, professional, or experiential accomplishment. In modern Japanese society, achieved status is a stronger factor as a determinant of superiority (Reischauer, 1977).

Unlike social status, which has prestige in itself, superiority in vertical roles is obtained only by reference to relationships in given situations. Relationships such as customer/salesperson, employer/employee, parent/child are examples of vertical role relationships, which are relative and situational (Yamashita, 1983).

The Japanese society is still considered to be a male-oriented society. The majority of higher positions in social hierarchy are occupied by males. Consequently sex is one of the vertical factors to be considered.

Social Stratification and Honorifics. Modern Japanese society does not have clearly defined social ranks and classes as generally believed. Owing much to the emphasis on vertical human relationships in accounting for the Japanese society, there is a mistaken notion that the complex honorific system is due to clear status and class differences. Research in literature reveals otherwise. Nakane (1972) points out that Japanese society has been void of an upper class with power and wealth as one finds in China, India, and the West. Other scholars agree that Japanese society does not have social stratification comparable to Western society (Katoo, 1967; Reischauer, 1977; Honna, 1975). Neustupny (1982) talks of the

tendency for others to perceive Japanese as status conscious, but says,

The fact that the English language does not have very many status related expressions does not mean that there are not status differences, and by the same token, the fact that the Japanese express more about status does not automatically mean that there are great status differences in Japan (p. 71).

Brown and Levinson (1978) also comment on the subject:

The sociological conditions for the emergence of elaborate honorific systems must be very particular. Why, for instance, do Indian languages have much less developed systems than Japanese, despite the much more rigid and elaborate system of social stratification in India? (p. 310)

If the existence of an elaborated honorific system is merely the reflection of a status-oriented social structure, societies with rigorous social stratification should have generated the same sort of characteristics in the language as Neustupny and Brown and Levinson have pointed out. British society is distinctly described as a social-class-oriented society and the United States also has a kind of social stratification by income bracket. Yet the English language presents a sharp contrast with the Japanese language in terms of the varieties of politeness expression.

Of course, even in Japan there were social class distinctions such as Shi Noo Koo Sho (Warriors class, farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen) in the Edo period (1603-1867), or during the Heian period (794-1191), when the aristocracy and priests held special status in society. But modern Japanese society does not have such clearly defined social classes. For instance, residential areas are not clearly divided by

class or income, so that it is possible that a rich household is right next door to a poor household. Also, there is not a particular speech accent that represents a particular class. All of these explain the lack of class consciousness in the Japanese society.

Hierarchy and Power. Are Japanese really status conscious as they are often claimed to be? And if they are, why is it so? One of the reasons for this seems to lie in the "nature of the vertical relationship" in Japan. Condon (1984) describes how Japanese "acknowledge a social hierarchy--in the use of language, in seating arrangements at social gatherings, in bowing to one another and hundreds of others" (p. 20). Nakane (1978) also delineates the hierarchical order in an organization. She contends that Japanese are almost always capable of setting some kind of order in groups. For instance, within a company, there is the obvious order of manager, section chief, and staff, which under the nenkoo-joretsu (seniority) system of promotion, roughly equates to age differences. In addition, there can be ranking based on the year of entering college, or the year of entering the company, etc.

Nakane adds, however, that this hierarchical order is supported by mutual dependency rather than an order/obedience relationship. The relationship is fairly relaxed in actuality and the higher person can be led by the lower person in the hierarchy. Condon (1984) explains this by comparing the

management system in the U.S. and Japan. In the U.S. "management is generally characterized as 'top down' management, with plans and procedures determined at the top and implemented down the line" (p. 21). On the other hand, in Japan the ringi system is common. Under the ringi system, consensus is sought at lower levels before reaching a decision and works its way up to the top. Quite often, only the formal endorsement by the top level is necessary at the actual meeting, if a meeting is even required.

These arguments lead to the "different nature of vertical relationships" in Japan. The hierarchical order does not necessarily represent a power relationship, but rather puts individuals into positions in the group. The individuals of higher rank do not have absolute power as they tend to in the west. The vertical relationship is merely a social lubricant as one needs to stack plates orderly in a box in order to place as many plates in the box as possible. Condon (1984) states:

Being sensitive to one's age or seniority in an organization relative to someone else gives a person a sense of security and guides how one communicates with others (p. 22).

Nakane (1967) ascribes this over-emphasis on rank to a sense of equality of ability and claims that there is a correlation between them. The premise is that since people are equal in ability, there has to be another way of organizing individuals other than by merit. Again, Condon (1984) capsulates:

It is not a matter of who is more famous or powerful. It is a matter of acknowledging one's proper place in a system that helps to maintain reasonably harmonious human relations in a crowded land (p. 22).

The lack of absolute power relationships in Japanese society made the Japanese pay more attention to the little differences within a group, thus the claim that Japanese are status conscious.

How students of the Japanese language might learn from this argument is in the knowledge that:

1. There is almost always some kind of rank order in any Japanese organization or group in every conceivable way.
2. One should not interpret that rank order has the same connotation as in some other societies. The higher rank is not necessarily associated with stronger power. However, the lack of absolute power relationships does not mean the lack of any kind of power relationships.
3. Disruption of the order would result in the destruction of the whole balance and dynamics of the group, not just in interpersonal relationships between individuals, which is the case in an absolute power relationship.

Horizontal Factors. Closeness of human relationship is also pertinent to politeness factors. It is a universal tendency to speak more intimately to one who is intimate than to

someone who is not close (Brown and Gilman, 1960). The same holds in the Japanese language. As vertical relationships were generated by the need for fine distinctions within a group in Japan, horizontal relationships are needed to define group membership.

Utilization of horizontal factors distinguish in-group and out-group membership as well as indicate the degree of solidarity and intimacy. By changing the formality level, one can adjust psychological distance and define group membership. When group cohesion is strong, the distinction of membership becomes very clear. For example, family members and nonfamily members, friends, and acquaintances show sharp contrast. When a person meets a stranger or meets someone for the first time, she or he usually starts from formal forms. As the relationship becomes established and develops, the forms usually shift toward the informal forms unless a vertical relationship clearly exists.

A shift to informal or semi-informal speech occurs at any point of the relationship development depending on personal standards. Therefore, an insistence on using the formal form or the failure to smoothly shift to the informal style would sometimes be interpreted as a sign of distance or coldness.

People expect to be treated nicely and with respect when they are higher in rank or an out-group member. However, once they consider themselves as part of the in-group, they would like to be treated with a display of affection and

solidarity. This is positive politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), people tend to appeal to those whom they want to be close to by claiming common ground. Therefore, emphasis on intimacy and in-group membership can be said to be a form of politeness.

In summary:

1. Horizontal factors include the distinction of in/out group membership as well as solidarity and intimacy.
2. The appropriate and timely shift to the informal style sometimes plays a vital role in developing relationships.

Circumstantial Factors. Along with the previous two groups of factors, the third component, circumstantial factors, also plays an important role in the choice of politeness expression. It is widely recognized that setting, circumstance, or situation affects the way people talk.

Setting, referring mainly to physical or objective circumstances here, controls formality in a speech event. When formality of the setting increases, people tend to be more formal and polite. Lectures, conferences, and ceremonies, as opposed to informal conversations, usually force a speaker to use more formal and polite speech. The channel of communication, which is a form of setting, also influences the politeness level. In the Japanese language it is recognized that people tend to be more polite and formal when communication takes place indirectly and at

a distance (Yamashita, 1983), therefore, a telephone conversation or a letter tends to be more formal in Japanese (Neustupny, 1978).

Situation can be defined psychologically or through subjective factors. For example, whether one is in love with the conversant or not, or whether one hates the other person or not, has some impact on speech. With hatred cases, the formality sometimes increases. Brown and Gilman (1960) mention the change in pronoun style depending on moods and attitudes.

This tendency of situation dependency of speech style is very prominent in Japan. Condon (1984) says, ". . . the occasions, settings, 'contexts' in Japan generally exert much more influence on what is said or not said than is the case for Americans" (p. 26). Yamashita (1983) talks about young Japanese women wearing kimonos as opposed to informal attire. In kimonos they were often found to behave gracefully, including speech patterns. Another example would be an angry Diet member who starts speaking vulgarly in the middle of a Diet meeting. Soon the whole assembly will change its level of speech. These phenomena are often talked about and can be generalized to all phases of Japanese behavior. This is generally called fun'iki or atmosphere or mood. It is a sort of momentum of the situation, or psychological power of the participants, that influences the whole situation. In Kuuki no Kenkyuu (The Study of Air) Yamamoto (1977) explains this power of fun'iki or atmosphere, and claims

that in Japan many major political decisions were made by allowing this power to take over the whole situation. Yamamoto may be overstating the effect of atmosphere or use extreme cases as examples, yet similar effects are easy to find in a smaller scale. In any event, it is noteworthy that such dynamics of atmosphere play some role in the choice of speech level.

Current Trends. As we have seen, each of the factors explained above contributes to the choice of politeness expressions. Yet this knowledge alone does not help students of Japanese choose the appropriate expression in certain conditions of relationship and situation. What, then, is the most prevailing factor that influences the choice of politeness expression?

In Japan it has been considered that vertical relationship factors are stronger than horizontal relationship factors. Martin (1964) listed the factors in the following order: social status, relative age, sex, and solidarity. Recent research indicates otherwise (National Language Institute, 1971; Minami, 1974; Yamashita, 1983). According to Yamashita (1983) age difference is declining as a determining factor and the distinction between in-group and out-group membership is becoming a more crucial factor. Both Yamashita and Minami (1974) oppose Martin by ranking the factors in the order of solidarity, vertical role relationship, status, sex, and age. The empirical research by

Yamashita also indicates a shift of absolute honorifics, which mark status differences, to relative honorifics. She attributes this trend to "reflection of the changing nature of society" (p. 157). If this is true, Japan is no exception to the general developmental shift from dominance of power constraints to solidarity constraints (Brown and Gilman, 1960).

The change in social variables seems inevitable as society gradually shifts from a static to an open society. In the older days there were many status markers which were easily recognizable. For example, during the Edo period in Japan, people dressed differently according to their occupation and status. However, in modern Japanese society such distinction does not exist to the same extent as it once did. When obvious social and psychological power relationships do not exist, people rely on other distinctions and try to locate others in terms of group membership or intimacy. In other words, when a speaker knows the addressee and the nature of their relationship, she or he uses either vertical or horizontal factors as a determinant of speech level and style depending on their relationship. However, when a speaker has not established a relationship with the addressee and the situation poses no psychological threat on the speaker, she or he will likely utilize horizontal factors to be polite.

Socio-Psychological Function of Honorifics

What is the general nature of honorifics or politeness expressions and what is their function in social interaction? By looking into this question, we can see a clearer picture of the politeness expressions in a communication system.

Most languages possess some sort of honorific system in their communication system (Neustupny, 1978, p. 186). It usually is a matter of degree of complexity that makes the difference. For example American English and Japanese reside on the opposite end of the spectrum of honorific use, although American English still has "polite ways of saying things" as you find in the "Would you . . ." routine.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), polite expressions are used to avoid or minimize the damage to the relationship when people have to perform face threatening acts. Depending on the seriousness of the FTA, people use different strategies. For small requests, people tend to use strategies to emphasize social similarity and stress in-group membership, whereas for more serious or bigger requests, people are likely to resort to the strategies of formal politeness, and so forth. Neustupny (1978) talks of the "distancing" function of politeness expressions, both vertical and horizontal (p. 200). Mizuno (1984) capsulates this by defining the function of honorifics as a linguistic means to control socio-psychological distance between the speaker and the hearer (p. 104).

Indeed, the execution of a particular honorific can tell many things and do many things as well. It tells the speaker's perception of, and acknowledgment of, the relationship. It further defines, or determines, the kind of relationship. This fact is noteworthy because it means that the speaker can control the distance and create a relationship which might not have existed, or alter the relationship that has existed. This might not be easy where strong power relationships exist, but as long as the one in power wants to change the relationship and initiates it, the relationship still can be defined differently (Brown and Gilman, 1960).

It is often observed in Japanese conversation that if one of the participants uses the polite form, the other party is psychologically compelled to use the same form even when they would usually do otherwise. In connection with this fact, we can add another function of honorifics: to manipulate in a favorable way the addressee's perception of the speaker when politeness is controlled consciously. The ability to use appropriate polite speech naturally reveals the speaker's upbringing, education, or personality. When the speaker intends to create some image of him or herself and to impress the hearer, she or he can choose to do so to a certain extent. And again, this is a form of distance controlling.

This function of honorifics is not an overt one, yet it is well recognized in the literature. It is considered as a

personal accessory (Yamada, 1931, p. 4), prestige marker (Yamashita, 1982, p. 22), and so forth. Yamashita points out the irony of this aspect of honorifics:

It is paradoxical that the overt act of humbling him/herself and elevating the addressee and/or referent, concomitantly can have the effect of placing the speaker in the desirable social category of refinement and poise (p. 23).

Yamashita further speculates that this reason might be the major motivation for using honorifics rather than deferential usage in Japanese.

What are other psychological effects that can be added to this? As mentioned earlier, the main social function of honorific usage is to maintain good interpersonal or social relationships (by avoiding or minimizing the threat). Most of the time the speaker is afraid of destroying the relationship or afraid of failing to establish a new one by not being polite. The speaker who is compelled to use a certain politeness strategy is usually in a weaker, more vulnerable position. For the speaker, the employment of polite speech is a way to inform his or her interlocutor of no harmful intention, and accordingly the participants can engage in conversation at ease.

To summarize the above discussion, the psychological function of politeness is:

1. To maintain a good relationship.
2. To protect the speaker's vulnerability and secure his or her position by
 - (a) Minimizing or avoiding threatening acts.

- (b) Indicating the speaker's perception of, or acknowledgment of the relationship.
 - (c) Defining or redefining the relationship.
3. To create a refined image of oneself.

Summary

In this chapter, the concept of communicative competence and its development in the fields of communication, anthropology, and linguistics was presented, and the current trend of the politeness sector in linguistics was briefly reviewed. Honorific expressions in Japanese were then examined with regard to their social implications in order to provide background for the following chapters.

Factors for choice of a particular form of honorifics were analyzed and strategies for using honorifics to control social distance were discussed. It was suggested that group membership is a stronger factor in the choice of honorifics as opposed to the generally believed factors such as age and other vertical factors. The difference in nature between Western power relationships and Japanese vertical relationships was also discussed.

CHAPTER III

NONCODIFIED POLITENESS EXPRESSIONS IN JAPANESE

POLITENESS RULES AND STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH

In the previous chapter there was an examination of how politeness was realized in honorifics in the socio-cultural constraint. While the honorific system deals with stylistic choice of politeness expressions, this chapter is mainly concerned with expressive choice of politeness expressions.

Since there are syntactic rules as to what specific honorific expression to use according to the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and/or referencee, there have to be some rules and restrictions as to the content and manner of speech for politeness, namely, WHAT and HOW one should speak when politeness is intended. Neustupny (1978) calls this "speech expressions" as opposed to "linguistic expressions" (honorifics).

As mentioned earlier, the study on such rule finding is becoming one of the mainstream fields of study in American socio-linguistics. Robin Lakoff's work on politeness expressions exemplifies such a trend.

Lakoff (1972) emphasized the need for the same type of pragmatic rules as there are systematic rules for syntax

and phonetics. Based on this contention she proposed Rules of Politeness (1973). These rules are the principles that constitute politeness in communication. The rules are,

R1 - Don't impose

R2 - Give options

R3 - Make addressee feel good--be friendly

These rules explain why a particular expression is preferred over another when people want to be polite. For example,

(a) May I ask how old you are?

is more polite than the direct,

(b) How old are you?

because (a) shows that the speaker is not imposing the question by asking permission or giving the addressee, at least on the surface, an option of saying "No." Moreover, the fact that one usually does not use a sentence such as (a) when asking,

(c) How old is the President?

tells that (a) is used only when politeness is intended.

These Rules of Politeness are comparable to Brown and Levinson's theory on politeness in Questions and Politeness (1978). Lakoff's R1 and R2 roughly correspond to what Brown and Levinson call "Negative Politeness" and R3 to "Positive Politeness." Furthermore, both Lakoff (1972) and Brown and Levinson (1978) maintain the universality of these principles, saying that differences among cultures are a matter of precedence or degree of emphasis. Lakoff states:

What may differ from language to language, or culture to culture--or from subculture to subculture within a language--is the question of when it is polite to be polite, to what extent, and how it is shown in terms of superficial linguistic behavior (p. 911).

Brown and Levinson state:

The essential idea is this: interactional systematics are based largely on universal principles. But the application of the principles differs systematically across cultures, and within cultures across subcultures, categories, and groups (p. 288).

For instance, in an open society, R3 (or positive politeness) tends to play an important role whereas in a more static society R1 (or negative politeness) takes precedence (Lakoff, 1973; Brown and Levinson, 1978). This knowledge would help one understand why, for instance, in a static society like Japan, R1 and R2 are utilized more often and extensively in a situation, whereas R3 would prevail in a culture such as middle-class American culture.

What remains is to determine how the aforementioned rules and theories can be applied to a particular linguistic community, because such principles are intricately related to the cultural values and assumptions of the society. The present author showed elsewhere how the Rules of Politeness can be modified to accommodate the social context of the Japanese society (Nelson, 1984). In the following part of this chapter, this theme is further pursued to find out what kind of cultural principles govern the politeness behavior in Japanese society and how politeness is realized in non-codified linguistic means.

The understanding of cultural values and assumptions is essential in examining such rules, and without it, rules do not make much sense. For an outsider of a culture, knowing the cultural values and assumptions, basic structure of, and rule of human relationships of that particular society becomes essential for participating in polite communicative acts. Based on such knowledge and understanding, the outsider has to nurture a competence for perceiving, judging, and utilizing the information provided by the situation.

What will be explored in this chapter is the importance of cultural impact on linguistic behavior and to determine what kind of, and in what frequencies, strategies for politeness are used within a certain cultural constraint.

POLITENESS RULES AND STRATEGIES IN JAPANESE

With the Rules of Politeness by Lakoff in mind, the formation of more culture-specific rules is attempted. Although many of the features of linguistic realization mentioned can also be found in other languages, what makes the features unique is precedence and importance of each strategy and its relevance to particular characteristics of the social structure in which the language is used.

For example, "avoiding embarrassment" is very important in the Japanese culture because of its emphasis on social harmony, and yet linguistic devices such as negative structure, indirectness, and hedging to achieve this rule are all common ways to realize the negative politeness in many languages.

As the Japanese culture is basically a negative politeness culture, "avoiding embarrassment" takes precedence over such principles as "be friendly" in many situations. What a list of such principles shows is a kind of map that tells where each principle stands and how it is weighted.

Based on a review of the literature, cultural values and assumptions which are pertinent to politeness behavior in the Japanese culture are selected. They are further organized and categorized into five main principles. These principles are followed by the strategies for politeness to achieve each principle.

The five principles are not only dominant characteristics in communication for politeness, but also the very nature of human relationships in Japanese society. Therefore, the principles are intertwined with each other, and there are many overlapping features.

The principles and strategies which will be discussed are:

1. Avoid Embarrassment.

Expect the minimum or rejection when asking a question.

Use conventionalized expressions.

2. Utilize Empathy.

Show that you understand and/or care about the feelings of others by (1) showing concern, (2) showing enryo, (3) showing appreciation, (4) showing interest and, (5) utilizing apologies.

Be explicit in reciprocity of favor.

3. Do Not Impose.

Do not make the addressee feel obligated.

Give addressee an option.

Be indirect and vague.

4. Be Aware of In/Out Group Boundaries.

5. Utilize Amai in a Positive Way.

Use conventionalized expressions.

Be vague and/or show hesitation.

Seek understanding.

Rule 1--Avoid Embarrassment

To be embarrassed is, according to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1972), to be placed "in doubt, perplexity, or difficulties" and to "experience a state of self-conscious distress" (p. 269). People often feel embarrassed in various situations, so embarrassment is a familiar feeling to most people. This feeling occurs in a situation in which one is unprepared and does not know how to react.

What causes such a state of mind differs from culture to culture, however. Not only are there cultural differences to consider but individual differences as well. For some people talking about money is embarrassing while for others it is not.

In Japan, an embarrassing situation very often arises when one faces confrontation or conflict with others. In the Japanese culture, conflict and confrontation are considered negative elements in a relationship with others and

therefore every effort is made to avoid them. Since embarrassment is quite often a mutual feeling, showing the intention to prevent this is polite.

The use of a nakoodo (go-between) in an arranged marriage is a very good example of this avoidance of embarrassment. When one party wants to call off the marriage, they tell the go-between of their intention and it is the go-between who tells the other party the negative answer. Very often the true reasons for the rejection will not be told and in this way both parties are relieved from facing an embarrassing situation.

In Japan compliments are not given as easily as in America because they single out individuals and emphasize individual differences (Barnlund and Araki, 1985). This invites conflict and embarrassment. Another example is the tendency of Japanese students to not ask their teachers as many questions as their Western counterparts. The act of asking a question itself is interpreted as challenging the authority of the teacher, which is not acceptable in Japan. More importantly, when the teacher cannot answer the question the Japanese teacher loses face and both teacher and students encounter an embarrassing situation. Therefore, this is to be avoided.

This tendency to avoid confrontation and consequent embarrassment is preserved by formalism and many prescribed behavioral norms. Following are two main means to prevent embarrassment.

1. Expect the minimum or rejection when asking a question.

"Be pessimistic" is one of the negative politeness features that Brown and Levinson listed (1978, p. 140). Expecting the least or the worst saves one from shock in the face of rejection and prepares one to react properly. At the same time, showing that the speaker is afraid of the rejection of the addressee would indicate the addressee's relative power of influence over the speaker, thus being a form of politeness.

This strategy is realized in frequent use of negative constructions in Japanese. In making a request, the negative question form almost always is considered to be polite. For example, between (a) and (b),

(a) Shio o totte kudasaimasu ka?

salt p. take give Q.p.

(Would you pass me the salt?)

(b) Shio o totte kudasaimasen ka?

salt p. take give - neg. Q.p.

(Wouldn't you pass me the salt?)

(b) is invariably more polite. A somewhat more complicated example is,

(c) Shio o totte itadake nai deshoo ka?

salt p. take have-can neg. probably Q.

(Couldn't I probably have you pass me the salt?)

All three examples are polite because they are questions allowing the addressee to say no, but they are polite in the

order of (a) < (b) < (c) because (c) shows the deepest doubt in the speaker about a positive answer, thus showing his or her fear of rejection or embarrassment.

2. Use conventionalized expressions.

Conventionalized expressions are preferred in many occasions over innovative and impromptu expressions in Japanese. New, idiosyncratic expressions, when improper, lead to embarrassment for both the speaker and the addressee. The more the situation is predictable, the less chance that embarrassment occurs. There is a set phrase for funerals and there is one for weddings and so forth. Quite often even the news media uses worn-out conventionalized expressions.

Mentioning the importance of form, Ramsey and Birk (1983) say,

There are set phrases for apologies, excuses, requests, condolences, greetings and farewells, per situation, which continued to be used, in part, because of their time-tested appropriateness (p. 247).

Of course, Western cultures are not devoid of such conventional expressions, but Condon(1984) says,

There are some parallels in the U.S. when Americans display good manners . . . by saying the appropriate thing when offering condolences or congratulations, but rather than following "the way" one selects from an array of "acceptable ways" that have been learned more often by observation and trial than by explicit instruction (p. 18).

These observations tell that "the right way," "the right thing to say," is very important in Japanese society. This

tendency is probably even stronger in more closed traditional communities, because a small embarrassing situation could easily lead to a disaster in social life.

Another function of conventionalized expression is to disguise the true intention to avoid direct conflict; that is, to say one thing and mean another. There are a number of set phrases which on the surface are neutral or positive in meaning but in actuality the user of the phrase means it in a negative way. A representative example of this is:

Maemuki ni kentoo shimashoo

(We will look into it positively.)

This is very often used by politicians as a reply for some problem that has to be solved, or for some proposal. When you hear this phrase you cannot, in fact, expect very much. Yet this phrase does not connote anything negative on the surface--the immediate confrontation of the situation is saved, therefore embarrassment is avoided.

These social-lubricant devices often invite criticism from foreigners. Japanese formalism and the discrepancy between tatemae (principle) and honne (true feeling) are very often talked about. They say, in order to avoid public disagreement Japanese often do not express their true feelings, or "the Japanese may often prefer to say what will please the hearer" (Seward, 1972, p. 35).

Rule 2--Utilize Empathy

Empathy plays an important role in the way Japanese communicate. Empathy entails the ability to understand and

participate in another's feelings. Very often messages are conveyed by means of empathy either nonverbally or in silence. The homogenous, high-context (Hall, 1976) Japanese culture makes it possible and necessary. Less explicit, subtle speech is only possible by shared, common assumptions and knowledge. One has to know the conventions and be able to read between the lines.

In such a culture, it is important and polite to show that you understand the feelings and intentions of others. One needs empathy to display politeness and also to accept politeness from others. Without consideration of the feelings and intentions of others, many interactions involving politeness cannot be understood. This is why empathy pertains to many politeness rules.

1. Show that you understand and/or care about the feelings of others.

Understanding the feelings of others is important in almost any culture for better communication. However, in a low-context culture such as the U.S. (Hall, 1976), which depends on verbal explicitness rather than information and assumptions previously stored in the brain or present in the environment, one does not usually expect others to do more than what one asks for or know what is on their minds. Conversely, it is not necessary to guess what another person might feel or want or do because one expects to be told. On the other hand, in a high-context culture, such guessing attitudes and skills become essential in addition to having

knowledge of the context, because it is expected that one will "know" without explicit speech--it would be impolite to ask.

Yet another tendency in the Japanese communication style is indicated as "heteronomy" in one Japanese language textbook (Young and Nakajima-Okano, 1984). This book says that many Japanese expressions contain consideration for the second person. One of the typical examples is as follows:

(a) 4-ji ni kaettemo kamaimasen ka?

(Do you mind if I go home at four?)

(b) 4-ju ni kaettemo ii desu ka?

(Is it o.k. if I go home at four?)

The book explains that, when asking permission, (a) is preferred and is supposed to be more polite than (b), whereas in English (b) is perfectly fine (Vol. II, p. 174).

Understanding and considering the feelings of the addressee are appreciated by the addressee, and in this sense this politeness feature is basically the same as Rule 3 of Lakoff's Rules of Politeness--make the addressee feel better. In the Japanese language this rule is realized in many behavioral and linguistic means.

(1) By showing concern: There are several common expressions which are used frequently to ease the feelings of others.

Gokuroosama (Thanks for your work)

Otsukaresama (Thanks for your work--you must be tired)

Itsumo taihen desu nee (You are always in hardship)

Gambatte imasu ne (You are trying hard)

Ojama shimasu (Greetings when entering someone's house--I am going to bother you)

Okagesama de (Reply to a question about health, or a compliment, etc.--Thanks to you and everybody)

(2) By showing enryo (reservation): Enryo is evidenced in patterns of behavior such as declining an offer of food the first time, showing hesitation to become the first person to do things among other people, not telling true wishes clearly, and so forth. It is known that this kind of behavior sometimes becomes the cause of intercultural misunderstanding, especially between two contrasting cultures such as American and Japanese. Ramsey and Birk (1983) explain enryo as follows:

"Enryo" is tied to a wish to consider other's feelings, to a desire to avoid pushing oneself on other's, and to a desire to create a flexible environment for people to work together (p. 243).

Again, this pattern of behavior is derived from "heteronomy," a consideration for others. Enryo is usually expressed linguistically by hesitation and vagueness in expression.

(3) By showing appreciation: People feel good when their kindness is acknowledged and appreciated or when someone admits their wrongdoing and apologizes. It is more important to understand this psychology and to act accordingly than to assert one's right and pride. For this reason, thanking and apologizing are practiced excessively in Japanese. Repeating thanks many times is very common, and so is

apologizing at every opportunity. For example, the Japanese express thanks for a gift or an invitation not only when they receive it but also the next time they see the person who offered the kindness, and sometimes every time they see a person for an extended period of time. These practices at times might appear unnecessary, yet they are important lubricants in relationships.

(4) By showing interest: Greetings in Japanese such as Dochira e? ("Where are you going?") is an indication of interest in others. Many languages contain such greetings. For example, in English "How are you?" or "How are you doing?" also shows an interest in the well-being of the addressee. This kind of question is probably a universal way of showing politeness since others feel good when concern for them is being displayed.

However, there are cultural differences as to what constitutes proper interest. For example, many mid-20's foreigners in Japan are annoyed at frequent questions by Japanese such as "When are you going to get married?" or "Why don't you get married?" To those who consider these matters private, such questions are an intrusion on privacy. On the other hand, many Japanese are reluctant to talk about their income, the price of things they have, and so on even though other people show an interest.

(5) By utilizing apologies: For Western observers, the Japanese seem to apologize excessively or unnecessarily. Moreover, it is felt that they apologize too easily (Haberman,

1986; Green, 1986). Oftentimes apologies are repeated. In Japanese, most apologies are part of greetings or courtesy and are used as an indication of understanding. For example, most letters to superiors contain some kind of apology. Apologies soothe the other person's feelings and thus help keep social harmony. Japanese children are usually taught to apologize immediately for undesirable behavior whatever the reason may be. And giving excuses or reasons is discouraged.

Therefore, in Japan apologies are not always the result of one's admittance of wrongdoing in reference to one's own principles as they are in Western terms, but rather are a display of empathy indicating that you understand the feelings of others and that you want to be polite. A well-quoted example relates to a Japanese in the United States who apologizes at the site of a traffic accident without really judging who is right and who is wrong, and later faces a legal problem. Another important difference is that when one party apologizes in Japan, it is common that the other person also apologizes, emphasizing that it is she or he who should apologize instead of just accepting the apology.

It may be difficult for Americans to behave this way--apologize for the sake of apologizing even when they are not in the wrong. But apologies are not interpreted as a sign of weakness in the Japanese culture, rather as a sign of politeness and good manners. Incidentally, apologizing and thanking are expressed by the same character. Also, the word

sumimasen (What I have done or what I owe you is incomparable) is used for both apologies and thanking.

2. Be explicit in reciprocity of favor.

Reciprocity of favor can be observed in many cultures to varying degrees. The Japanese culture is not an exception. As a matter of fact, the Japanese are very sensitive and rigid about social debts. If one receives a favor, it becomes an obligation to return it and this exchanging of favors can be seemingly endless.

Examples are abundant in everyday life. Exchange of bows and name cards at a first meeting, pouring drinks for each other, and gift giving are all examples of Japanese reciprocity. The return gifts are usually carefully chosen so that they will be equivalent to (the monetary value of) the received gift. Wedding gifts and funeral gifts (usually money, the amount customarily prescribed depending on whether you are a friend, relative, or business associate, etc.) are usually returned in the form of another gift by the family of the wedded couple or of the deceased at the conclusion of the event or at a later date equally to all guests. These are social rules which are at times cumbersome, but necessary for smooth social relationships in Japan.

Nakane (1972) analyzes the concept of giri (Obligation or social duty) in terms of reciprocity between two parties and relates it to the social structure of Japan. According to her, reciprocity in Japan is based on a "give and take" concept and favors have to be returned. However, this

obligation itself becomes the reason for a relationship between the two people and establishes a bond. Finally, the relationship itself becomes the end for having a debt rather than returning the debt.

Giri is represented by this kind of relationship, and it is always between the two parties. Nakane contrasts this kind of relationship in Japan with those in Chinese, Indian, and Western societies where it is often considered to be a duty of the haves to provide for the have-nots, and one should give away things depending on one's means.

In a society such as the Japanese where reciprocity is emphasized, it is essential to acknowledge the reception of a favor expressively and repeatedly to be polite. One's gratitude is expressed whenever one has a chance, and by the same token not thanking properly (i.e., forgetting to write a thank you note) is considered to be very impolite.

The emphasis on reciprocity is also found in linguistic expression. The verbs for giving and receiving (kuremasu, agemasu, etc.) are often used to describe the transaction of favor. They can be attached to ordinary verbs as a kind of auxiliary verb to describe who is giving the favor of doing whatever action the verb denotes.

For example, if a person who is ill asks another whether he or she will come to see them again, they would ask,

(a) Mata, kite kuremasu ka?

again come-give me Q.p.

(Will you come again, for me?)

instead of,

(b) Mata, kimasu ka?

again come Q.p.

(Will you come again?)

By the attachment of giving-receiving verbs, one can tell that the addressee is doing a favor by coming and that the asker appreciates it. If the asker does not use giving-receiving verbs, he or she would appear to be impolite because the utterance sounds as if the addressee's coming has nothing to do with the asker.

The use of verbs that denote the receiving of a favor by the speaker is invariably more polite. Therefore, these verbs can be used solely for politeness purposes in situations where a giving-receiving relationship does not exist. For example, when offering food (politeness decreases in descending order):

(a) Meshiagatte itadakemasen ka?

eat (polite) can-receive (polite) Neg. Q.p.

(Would you like to have some?)

(b) Meshiagarimasen ka?

eat (polite) Neg. Q.p.

(Wouldn't you have some?)

(c) Meshiagarimasu ka?

eat (polite) Q.p.

(Would you have some?)

These sentences with giving-receiving verbs are sometimes difficult to translate into English because there is not

any equivalent structure in English (except expressing them with politeness words such as "would you," or adding "for me," etc.).

Therefore, the mastery of giving-receiving verbs as politeness expressions has to be made with conscious effort by English-speaking students of Japanese. Also, improper use of giving verbs (to denote that the speaker gives a favor) has to be avoided.

In summary, the function of giving-receiving verbs is: (1) to describe the transaction of favor, (2) to express the perception of transaction of favor by the speaker, and (3) to express politeness--the addressee or the referent's action are perceived as a favor by the speaker.

It seems that frequent use of giving-receiving verbs are not irrelevant to the reciprocity consciousness of the Japanese society and they help signal the speaker's intention of understanding other's feelings. For these reasons, these verbs are effective as politeness expressions.

Rule 3--Do Not Impose

People feel uneasy and offended when they are imposed upon. Therefore, when the speaker intends to be polite, she or he tries to minimize or avoid an imposition. This is done in various ways. Asking permission, using impersonal terms, using the passive voice (Lakoff, 1972) are just a few ways. Again, this is a typical politeness feature in many cultures and languages (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

Since the Japanese culture is primarily a negative politeness culture, formality is very strong and the avoidance of imposition is very much emphasized. Assertiveness is often suppressed and discouraged and nonassertiveness such as enryo is praised. Moreover, assertiveness is sometimes associated with insecurity and shallowness of personality instead of confidence and superior knowledge.

Following are strategies for avoiding imposition. The main principle is to leave room for the addressees to interpret and react freely as much as possible.

1. Do not make the addressee feel obligated.

Lessening the burden of obligation for the addressee is one way to minimize imposition. If the speaker makes the addressee feel obligated to thank or apologize by clearly stating the debt that the addressee owes, the addressee would feel uncomfortable. In many languages, devices such as the use of the passive voice and avoidance of pronouns to impersonalize the speaker and the addressee are common (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

In Japanese, intransitive verbs are often utilized for this purpose as well as the passive voice. When the speaker does something for the addressee, the action is described as a result of a natural change rather than "who did what" description. Good examples are:

- (a) Heya ga kiree ni narimashita
 room clean become (past)
 (The room became clean)

(b) Koshoo ga naorimashita

Out of order fixed by itself

(The repair is done)

These sentences conceal the actor of the verb and overt action by the speaker. This expression of subtlety is polite because the addressee would feel less pressured by the debt and feel more comfortable than by being told by the speaker, "I cleaned up the room" or "I fixed the telephone."

The use of intransitive verbs is very prevalent in Japanese. Expressions such as,

Kekkon suru koto ni narimashita

get married thing p. become (past)

(Things turned out that [I] will get married)

are preferred even when the speaker him or herself decided to get married since these expressions do not indicate the existence of a strong will or assertiveness, and somehow suggest the vulnerability of the speaker in the circumstances.

Since assertiveness is not encouraged in Japanese society, sentences are carefully worded when people have to give an opinion. The use of the verb omou (think), negative construction, and uncertainty expressions are among other softening devices for nonassertiveness.

(a) Ashita no hoo ga ii n ja nai deshoo ka

tomorrow alternative good not probably Q.p.

(Tomorrow would probably be better, wouldn't it?)

- (b) Ashita no hoo ga ii n ja nai ka to omoimasu ga
 tomorrow alternative good not Q. think but
 (I think that tomorrow would be better [or not]
 I wonder but . . .)

These sentences are frequently observed when opinions are being given.

Furthermore, expressions of opinion, anger, advice, and so forth, especially criticism of others, are sometimes abstained from entirely. A person will wait until the other party realizes that there is a problem or other methods (such as nonverbal expressions) are used instead to convey these feelings. Ramsey and Birk (1983) write:

Rather than pass on a judgment or opinion, the Japanese preference is often to give the other person space to react and draw his or her own conclusions (p. 252).

In this way, direct confrontation and consequent conflict are also avoided, and necessary apologies are made by free will rather than by being forced.

2. Give addressee an option.

Giving the addressee an option is to give him or her a chance to say "no," thus it is less imposing than a simple, straight request. Therefore, even if it is only a formality it is polite.

The most common strategy is to use the question form when making a request (Searle, 1975; Lakoff, 1972; Brown and Levinson, 1978). For instance, (a) is more polite than (b):

- (a) Would you pass the salt?
 (b) Pass me the salt, please.

As mentioned earlier, question forms are often combined with negative structure and giving-receiving verbs in Japanese. Thus, the degree of politeness is in descending order below:

- (a) Shio o totte itadake masen ka
 salt get can-receive polite Neg. Q.
 (Couldn't I have you pass the salt?)
- (b) Shio o totte itadake masu ka
 salt get can-receive polite Q.
 (Could I have you pass the salt?)
- (c) Shio o totte kudasai
 salt get give
 (Pass me the salt, please)

Another thing that should be mentioned is that silence and reticence would sometimes have the same kind of effect as giving an option in Japanese. Verbosity is usually discouraged because it pressures other people. On the other hand, silence gives the addressee time and room to feel, think, and react freely and voluntarily. Therefore, silence is not just silence, but rather one of the effective ways to avoid imposition in Japanese.

3. Be indirect and vague.

Many Japanese language textbooks point out the relationship between vagueness and politeness in Japanese. In Japanese: The Spoken Language Jordan and Noda (1987) mention that,

In Japanese, nonspecificity is closely associated with politeness (p. 130).

.

. . . vagueness and lack of precision are frequent as a sign of politeness in Japanese (p. 198).

Also, referring to the sentence in a dialogue Chotto sono hen de ocha o nomimasen ka ("Won't we stop for a while and have some tea around there?") in volume I of Learn Japanese Young and Nakajima-Okano (1984) explain:

For example, "sono hen de" is used by the speaker so as not to constrain the listener, so as not to appear to be imposing the speaker's suggestion on the listener. The vague "somewhere" implied by sono hen de is much less specific than the English expression, which in fact emphasizes place. Rather, sono hen de does not indicate place: in fact, out of context, its content is insignificant, allowing the speaker's suggestion to be nonbinding on the other (p. 109).

Baxter (1983) capsules the reason for this, saying:

To the Japanese, vagueness is a virtue. To be exact is to be impertinent and arrogant, in that it assumes superior knowledge. To be vague is to be courteous and humble (p. 170).

Actually, according to Brown and Levinson (1978) indirectness and ambiguity are major principles in many languages as an indication of formal politeness. Giving hints, giving association clues, being ambiguous and vague, and being incomplete are some of the strategies Brown and Levinson listed. They say that by leaving interpretation to the hearer, the speaker can avoid responsibility and at the same time be less imposing. We should note that the main purpose of Indirect Speech Acts as suggested by Searle (1975) is also politeness.

Although indirectness and vagueness are universal strategies for politeness, it seems that they are utilized

very widely and frequently in Japanese and are considered to be among one of the characteristics of the Japanese language. Directness, preciseness, and exactness are to be avoided and indirectness, vagueness, and subtlety are fully utilized for politeness purposes. This, of course, includes the maximum use of nonverbal communication as well. Getting a message across sometimes has to give way to keeping harmony because maintaining good human relationships generally precedes all other purposes of communication in Japan.

The assertion of an opinion is carefully camouflaged so that it does not appear as an assertion. Overuse of sentence particles such as yo (which adds a nuance "I am telling you" to the utterance, thus implying possession of knowledge or superior knowledge) can be offending at times, especially to a superior, and should be avoided (Lakoff, 1972). On the other hand, devices such as the sentence particle nee (which adds a nuance that the speaker is seeking agreement) are fully utilized. The speaker will strategically make his or her point through seeking agreement and gaining consensus, making the addressee feel like he or she has reached a conclusion alone. This also applies when criticism is given, since direct criticism is not welcome by either the speaker or the addressee (Ramsey and Birk, 1983). Giving compliments is more suppressed in Japan. It is considered to be presumptuous of the speaker to assume that she or he is in a position to give compliments. Compliments are

imposing in a way--therefore, when a compliment is given, it is usually subtle and indirect.

Other examples of indirectness and vagueness are pronoun avoidance, unfinished sentences, and softening words. The first and second person pronouns are often absent. The absence of pronouns contribute to vagueness, obscuring the connection between the actor and the action on the surface.

Unfinished sentences or conversational ellipses are also very common in everyday conversation. By not completing the sentence, the speaker implies the rest of the sentence, leaving the interpretation to the addressee. In this way the speaker can avoid imposition as well as adding softness to speech. The following examples point this out:

- (a) Moshi, moshi, kochira wa Yoshida desu ga
(Hello, this is Yoshida calling but . . .)
- (b) Moshi, moshi, kochira wa Yoshida desu
(Hello, this is Yoshida calling)

(b) sounds abrupt and cold, whereas (a) sounds soft and makes it easy for the addressee to take over the conversation. In offering food,

- (a) Nani mo gozaimasen ga doozo
(There is nothing [worthwhile] to offer, but please . . .)
- (b) Nani mo gozaimasen ga doozo meshiagatte kudasai
(There is nothing [worthwhile] to offer, but please eat [have some])

Again, (a) sounds more humble and less imposing. Such examples are abundant in Japanese and they usually facilitate politeness.

A group of words such as maa (well), amari (not so), chotto (a little), and betsu ni (not particularly) are frequently used in sentences to soften the tone of the statement. The speaker may appear less assertive and imposing by using them, although these words or phrases are sometimes meaningless.

As seen above, indirectness in communication is a very important factor for politeness in Japanese. Indirectness can be observed in many other areas of Japanese society. The use of an intermediary or go-between is quite common in various kinds of transactions and is preferred as a means of avoiding abruptness and imposition as well as confrontation. On the other hand, there is a tendency to believe that things clear and direct are considered to be rude and in bad taste.

Rule 4--Be Aware of In/Out Group Boundaries

Positive Politeness and In-Group Markers. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), when people make small requests they tend to utilize positive politeness, and this is especially characterized as "normal linguistic behavior between intimates" (p. 106). Positive politeness is usually exercised by claiming a common ground between the speaker and the addressee. An emphasis on social similarity and in-group membership are common strategies of positive politeness.

Although the Japanese culture is categorized as a dominantly negative politeness culture, positive politeness also constitutes an essential part of the communication of politeness. A proper use of and a smooth shift to positive politeness enhances relationships.

As mentioned above, in order to accomplish the effect of positive politeness, in-group identity markers are often utilized. In-group identity markers in Japanese include the use of informal form, tag and negative questions, contracted forms, sentence final particles, fragmental or elliptical speech, and so forth. The Japanese language has a set of elements which are mainly used in informal settings and between intimates. Besides the grammatical difference between formal and informal forms, the features mentioned above are an integral part of informal speech. Sentence final particles such as nee (I agree), and tag and negative questions are usually used to emphasize agreeability and congeniality. The contracted form such as tabechatta (I have eaten) instead of tabeteshimaimashita (I have eaten) and short, fragmental speech, in which dropped particles are frequent, are characteristic of relaxed, context-dependent speech.

The use of all these features by the speaker indicates that the speaker considers the addressee an in-group member and is possible when a common background is shared. In regard to negative questions, Brown and Levinson (1978) observe:

Negative questions, which presume "yes" as an answer, are widely used as a way to indicate that S knows H's wants, tastes, habits, etc., and thus partially to redress the imposition of FTA's (p. 127).

These in-group markers can be learned in a fairly systematic way, and the difficulty foreigners face does not lie in learning them. The most difficult aspect is to know when to use them and to know what constitutes an in-group since the constituents of social boundaries are different depending on the culture.

Group Orientation in Japanese Society. The group orientation of the Japanese society has been a topic of discussion in many scholarly works (Nakane, 1967, 1978; Lebra, 1976; Reischauer, 1977; Cathcart and Cathcart, 1982). It is said that the Japanese identify themselves as members of a group which is a holistic entity rather than a collective of individuals as in Western societies. Their identities are established and confirmed through participation in the group. The self cannot be clearly defined, for self is found only in identification with the group. The self and the group are often equivalent and their distinction is diffused. However, the relationship between the self and the group is not a fixed one. The boundary of self shifts depending upon the particular reference group the person is identifying with at a particular given moment and situation. In other words, the self constantly extends or shrinks in concentric circles.

The family is a primary group and is a model structure of other groups. The secondary group has a structure pretty much the same as the primary group. To an office worker, for

example, the company she or he works for forms a secondary group and the structure of the group is very similar to a family structure. The strong cohesiveness of these groups are such that the attitude and communication styles are usually affected by whether the addressee is an in-group member or not--this is distinguished by the term uchi (in, inside) and soto (out, or outside). The often claimed criticism of the Japanese that they are rude and impolite in public can be explained by this. It also explains the claim that communication between two people is the communication between two groups, not two individuals because an individual is always conscious of the fact that she or he is a member of the group with which she or he identifies (Nakane, 1978).

Self and Group Boundary. The social boundary in Japanese society is somewhat different in nature from the Western counterpart. The boundary is situational and constantly shifting (Yamashita, 1983) and depending on the speaker's position in a network at a particular moment, the perception of group boundary differs (Neustupny, 1978).

Moreover, with the shift, the boundary of self can be extended to the limit of the boundary of the group with which the person identifies. In other words, the in-group becomes the self itself. A good example of the situational, shifting nature of the boundary can be observed in the speech of a company secretary. When the secretary speaks to her boss,

the speech style is usually polite. However, when the same secretary speaks to someone outside of the company regarding her boss, she uses the humble form because the in-group border was extended to the whole company against the out-group.

Another example is the situation described in the preface. Since the Japanese consider family as a part of the self, they seldom boast of their family. That would be something similar to boasting about themselves. On the other hand, in a culture where a family is considered to be a collection of individuals, saying nice things about one's own family members is perfectly all right since each member of the family is a separate individual. Both Suzuki (1973) and Doi (1975) point out that saying "thank you" is often neglected within a Japanese family because of reasons stated above. In American families, on the other hand, it is often observed that a mother uses "thank you" to her children.

This tendency of extending the boundary of self can be carried over to situations other than the family scene in Japan. When one gets close to another person and intimacy develops, the bond gets so strong that the boundary between two people becomes diffuse. Consequently, the procedures and courtesy required for interaction between two people are often ignored. This kind of situation is very difficult for outsiders to understand or enter. When the boundary between two parties becomes diffused and merges into one, they are no longer two separate individuals. This explains the lack

of the concept of "privacy" in traditional Japanese society. When people are inside of the in-group, there is no room for privacy because the group and the self overlap.

To foreigners, the Japanese seem too polite at times and insensitive and rude at other times. Understanding the difference in social boundaries makes this Japanese behavior easier to interpret. Moreover, switching the code smoothly according to the shift of group boundary is essential for maintaining the relationship and being "properly" polite.

Although the actual defining of in-group and out-group at a given situation is still considered to be something of an intuitive skill, and the high context society makes it difficult for information to be readily available, such skill and knowledge could be the subject of explicit learning. Wetzel (1984) showed how in-group and out-group boundaries are encoded in the language, specifically in honorifics (polite predicate) and giving and receiving verbs (donatory predicates), by analyzing discourse. This kind of study will help students of Japanese immensely.

Along with such knowledge, careful observation and practice in actual situations will also help one acquire such skill. The following are a few points to be noted:

1. When you meet a person for the first time, observe the person's way of speech, clothing, mannerisms, and try to guess his or her age, relative social rank, personality, and so forth.

2. When you are with a group of people, observe how they interact with each other and what kind of speech forms they use. Also observe how they interact with you and how they speak to you.

Besides the information and cues obtained from observation, one needs to pay careful attention to the dynamics of the situation--funiki. One must be aware of any change of atmosphere, and most importantly, one needs the flexibility to conform to and go along with the situation. Failure to do so sometimes is interpreted as improper politeness and jeopardizes the relationship.

Rule 5--Utilize Amae in a Positive Way

Although this rule seems odd, a close observation of interpersonal relationships in Japan will reveal that amae or dependency is very often utilized to smooth out human relationships. That means that it is sometimes polite to show amae or dependence on others and it is flattering to be shown such expectations by others.

Doi (1971) explains amae as psychological dependence on and expectation of acceptance and love by others. One often finds it in a child's yearning for indulgence by parents. Doi points out that amae permeates all the interpersonal relationships in Japan and greatly affects the social structure. Amae is not a unique feeling among Japanese, but the way it is nurtured and utilized in interpersonal communication is remarkably different from American

society. Cathcart and Cathcart (1982) contrast how dependency is viewed in these two societies saying,

Dependency, in Japan, is considered a natural and desirable trait capable of producing warm human relationships. In America, on the other hand, dependency is considered a limitation on individual growth and fulfillment, and so the family and school teach the child to become self-reliant (p. 123).

Although amae might be a natural feeling in childhood, a child will grow up to perceive it quite differently depending on whether it is suppressed and taken negatively or encouraged in various ways. This is one of the points that American students feel uneasy with in interpersonal relationships in Japan. Showing amae as a form of politeness would be strange for such students, and displaying (or pretending) helplessness can be degrading for them.

However, amae is an integral part of the Japanese social structure, closely related to empathy, vagueness of expression, Giri-On relationships, and so forth. In interpersonal relationships, amae is, consciously or unconsciously, utilized as a tool of positive politeness which emphasizes in-group membership. Therefore, in Japanese society, amae is a social lubricant that is sometimes necessary for smooth interactions with other people.

1. Use conventionalized expressions.

In order to utilize the amae element in a relationship, complimentary or flattering expressions are often used. These expressions usually imply the speaker's helplessness and expectations for the addressee who is capable of accepting

and indulging the speaker. Following are some words and phrases so used:

Sasuga/Yappari--Both words can be translated as "as I expected; as reputation tells . . ." in the right context. When these words are used it means that the speaker has a high opinion of the addressee and his or her particular actions or attributes did not fail to meet the speaker's expectations.

Because of this implication, these words can be used for politeness purposes even when the fact does not exist.

Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu/Okagesama de--Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu is used as a kind of greeting when one first meets with someone for some particular purpose. It means "Please take care of me well; I don't know well or I can't do well, but please teach me or guide me well." Okagesamade is a phrase used when the speaker tells the addressee something good about the speaker him or herself or a reply to a compliment, meaning "Thanks to you; thanks to God; thanks to everybody," etc.

Both expressions are commonly used without real meaning, just to be polite by emphasizing one's humbleness and helplessness. At the same time, the addressee's relative power and status to allow the speaker to depend on him or her is implied.

2. Be vague and/or show hesitation.

Vagueness and hesitation have been discussed earlier as a strategy for negative politeness. These strategies are

used as a display of fear and respect for the addressee's power (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

However, the vagueness and hesitation discussed here entails more. They are often used to urge understanding of true feelings (emotion, opinion, wishes, and so forth) of the speaker by the addressee. By being vague and hesitating, the speaker is actually saying "Please understand me." The addressee who is in the position to be depended on usually tries to meet the speaker's expectation in a way of empathy. This interaction, which is analogous to mother/child interaction, involves the feeling of amae or dependency.

3. Seek understanding.

Within the framework of the Japanese social structure, seeking understanding nurtures interdependence and fulfills the desire for identification with others. The use of the extended predicate, which has a nuance of emotional appeal for understanding, often serves to express this feeling.

The underlying premise is "Because I try to understand you, you should try to understand me, too, so that we become one." When a relationship is based on such a premise, an aggressive, nonagreeable attitude is taken as impolite.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, the rules and strategies of politeness expressions were presented. First, politeness rules in the English language were briefly reviewed, including the Rules of Politeness by Lakoff (1973), which served as a framework for

the present study. Then, five rules and strategies of politeness expressions in Japanese were introduced. Along with rules and strategies, cultural assumptions and values and relevance to the social structure in Japan were discussed. The five rules are:

1. Avoid embarrassment.
2. Utilize empathy.
3. Do not impose.
4. Be aware of in/out group boundaries.
5. Utilize amae in a positive way.

Most of the rules are not exclusively unique to the Japanese language, but the way they are realized and utilized reveals the difference in communication patterns and values between the Japanese culture and other cultures.

CHAPTER IV

POLITENESS CONCEIVED IN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

It is evident that the rules and strategies discussed in Chapter III are all interrelated and are the products of the cultural makeup of the Japanese society. In this chapter, why these rules are different from the rules of the U.S. culture and how the differences may lead to a communication breakdown between individuals from the two cultures will be analyzed.

CONCEPT OF POLITENESS

Development of the Politeness Concept

Many of the politeness expressions and behavior, including honorifics in Japanese are prescribed, and yet cues for applications are encoded in the context. These aspects of Japanese politeness expressions, which are in stark contrast with American English, often present difficulty in learning for students of the Japanese language. Understanding the reasons behind the politeness expressions, however, might make the learning process a little easier. An explanation can be found as to why and how such prescriptions are developed in Japanese. It seems that there are two main reasons which explain the basic differences from the U.S.

First, the Japanese language, especially politeness expressions, contains many prescriptions because of the homogeneity of the society. It seems that class consciousness plays less a part as compared to what is generally believed.

Individuals in a homogeneous society are more sensitive to maintaining harmony so they develop prescriptions for politeness for controlling human relationships. Moreover, homogeneity makes the speech act context dependent and requires a great deal of shared assumptions and knowledge among speakers. Such assumptions and knowledge are utilized when distinguishing how and in what situation something is said or not said. Thus it is difficult for the foreign speaker of the Japanese language to fully participate in the speech act.

Another obvious obstacle is the exclusiveness of a homogeneous society. Hall (1976) mentions, "High-context cultures make greater distinctions between insiders and outsiders than low-context cultures do" (p. 113). Because of the homogeneity, insiders notice outsiders more and react exclusively.

The second reason is that honesty and clarity are a major value in the U.S. culture, whereas in Japan maintaining harmony in a relationship sometimes takes precedence over honesty. In the Japanese culture, what is right and wrong is not judged by the absolute principle each person holds but rather depends on the situation and relationship. And

under such a condition, politeness becomes one of the most important means of avoiding embarrassment and conflict.

Seward (1972) points out that politeness and kindness in the American culture carry different meanings. To Americans, politeness and kindness derive from the "concern for the welfare of others" and "the courtesy must be extended to all" (p. 29). On the other hand, the Japanese selectively change attitudes depending on the other's position in one's social circle and utilize "shame rather than guilt as a moral sanction" (p. 35). An article in The Oregonian by Haberman (1986) also explains that "Japanese understand that apologies are designed to ensure social harmony, and have little to do with questions of right and wrong" (sec. A, p. 7) in regard to the Japanese Prime Minister's repeated public apologies. These differences may lead Americans to feel politeness behavior of Japanese to be improper and hypocritical or unnecessary at times and hard to comprehend.

Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness

Politeness is an indispensable component in social life in Japan as well as in the U.S. However, the choice of politeness seems to be different between these two cultures. As introduced before, Brown and Levinson (1978) categorized features of politeness into two groups--positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness is used to satisfy the desire to be liked and approved by the hearer. It includes the use of in-group language, the claiming of

common ground, expressing interest and agreement, and so forth. On the other hand, negative politeness is used to show deference by means of features such as hedging, indirectness, impersonalization, and polite pessimism. In the U.S., positive politeness is utilized more often while in Japan negative politeness appears to be more prevalent. Why is this so?

It seems that assumptions of politeness are different. Neustupny (1982) observes that treating people equally is polite in English. In her "Logic of Politeness" Lakoff (1973) also makes the same point. She explains that producing "a sense of equality between speaker and addressee" (p. 301) is polite because it makes the addressee feel good. Thus communication is aimed at shortening the distance between the speaker and the addressee. A good example is the tendency to prefer using first names instead of surnames in America.

While Americans get comfortable by trying to be equal, the Japanese feel secure and assured by confirming everybody's "right" position and finding one's own place in a situation to keep harmony and balance of the relationships. Negative politeness promotes distancing between people but it is safer when avoiding conflict is the first priority because it does not risk offending others. It is understandable that positive politeness is used in less risky occasions, which is usually between in-group members.

This difference in preference for politeness can be problematic and often becomes the cause for misunderstanding. Brown and Levinson (1978) write,

. . . when a speaker from a basically positive-politeness culture interacts with one from a negative-politeness culture, the latter may well be offended by the over familiarity of the former (p. 234).

On the other hand, individuals from negative politeness cultures are likely to be interpreted as stiff and unfriendly and to be perceived as emphasizing "foreignness" in positive politeness cultures.

Since the U.S. culture and the Japanese culture reside on opposite ends of the spectrum, understanding the difference in the kind of politeness would save much "awkward" behavior which often is misinterpreted.

SOCIOLOGICAL REASONS

In the previous section, the differences in the nature of politeness between the U.S. and Japan, and how those differences may lead to communication problems, were discussed. In this section, the reasons for and the background of such differences in terms of social structure will be examined.

Mobility of the Society

The United States is a nation that is a collective of many different kinds of people and is also a fast-moving society. Some Americans would move many thousands of miles

from the East coast to the West coast just for a job. It is said that an average American moves every seven years.

In a heterogeneous, mobile society such as in the United States, establishing human relationships as quickly and easily as possible becomes a priority. Being good at making friends becomes a beneficial quality when one has to survive in a new environment. Under such circumstances, it is only natural that positive politeness plays an important role in social life.

Now let us look at Japan. Compared to the U.S., Japan is a static society. Spending one's entire life in one place is not unusual, and changing jobs is not very common. Being a vertical society, the Japanese society is inherently stationary (Nakane, 1972). In a stable, homogeneous society like Japan, maintaining already existing relationships becomes the most important priority. In such a society one cannot risk losing a relationship since it sometimes means risking one's own identity and existence. Therefore, every effort is made to preserve existing relationships and negative politeness is more often utilized. The use of positive politeness is generally limited to informal settings. For the same reasons, the closed, static society also requires more detailed prescriptions for politeness behavior.

Differences in Social Boundaries

As discussed previously, Japanese form quite different kinds of boundaries around the self compared to their American

counterpart, and those boundaries change depending on the way one perceives the situation (Martin, 1964).

Nakane (1974) describes the boundaries around the individual in concentric circles. The first circle includes the permanent in-group such as family and very close friends. The second circle consists of acquaintances, people at the work place, business partners, and guests--anyone who has some kind of influence on the speaker in some way--and these people can be either in-group or out-group depending on the situation. The third circle is made up of complete strangers, on the street, on the bus, at a movie theater, and so forth--those whom the speaker has nothing to do with.

Politeness is applied selectively, depending upon which circle the speaker finds others in. Usually people in the second circle are treated most politely and with, in great part, negative politeness. At times politeness is offered lavishly and excessively with careful preparedness to individuals in this category. They either have influence on the speaker or are known to the speaker for a certain period of time. However, this same speaker can be very indifferent or even rude to those who are outside of this circle.

The speaker can also be polite to the individuals in the center circle, but quite often they get so close to each other that the boundary between the speaker and these individuals gets diffused. When this happens, politeness is often ignored or only limited to positive politeness.

The preceding is a rough description of how Japanese define boundaries in terms of politeness. Obviously there are exceptions to the rules. There are people who are very polite and extend that politeness to everybody, or those who cannot find any reason to be polite to anybody. Nevertheless, it at least gives basic guidelines to puzzled foreigners who have lived in Japan long enough to realize that Japanese seem to differentiate their politeness. Seward (1983) depicts how Japanese can be insensitive and impolite in public. According to Seward, Japanese appear to be either very polite or rude to Americans depending on "the degree of exposure and the angle of vision" of that person (p. 172). In other words, it depends on who and why that person is in Japan. Seward concludes that, "To Westerners, kindness and sincere concern for the welfare of others--including, importantly, persons with whom we have no particular relationship--are integral parts of politeness" while for the Japanese it is "a matter of demarcation" (p. 171-72).

It is likely that the Japanese behavior caused by this difference in boundaries may lead to misunderstanding by foreign visitors. To prepare oneself with the knowledge of cultural difference may reduce probable intercultural friction.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The act of politeness is universal, yet the way it is conveyed varies from culture to culture. Sometimes people are not aware of how it is conveyed. Foreigners can be too formal when they need not be, or be overly friendly when a little formality is required, thus failing to communicate their intent. Learning socio-linguistic aspects of a language as an aid in intercultural communication will help overcome such difficulties.

This study has focused on politeness expressions in the Japanese language, including honorifics and other uncodified rules to help foreigners interacting with Japanese. It is hoped that acquiring such knowledge and applying it to the study of the Japanese language will benefit students in their future communication activity as well as deepening the understanding of the Japanese culture and its people.

What a student of the Japanese language usually has as a goal is the ability to successfully interact with Japanese people. Thus what is needed is the mastery of the skill of intercultural communication, not just the language itself.

Underlying this process is the ability to shift one's frame of reference and to "suspend the rules, logic, and assumptions that usually govern his own state of consciousness" (Sarai, 1977, p. 393). Only by engaging in the new reality, having internalized the different way of thinking and doing things, can one truly obtain an understanding of the other culture.

Without the realization of this need, one may be able to speak a second language but never really understand the meaning of it and fail to fully participate in communication because things just do not "make sense." For example, just following the rule of apologizing for politeness sake would seem like degrading behavior to an American, and showing dependence and helplessness means nothing but a sign of weakness for someone outside of the Japanese culture. Conversely, a Japanese would perceive a person who would not apologize as being very rude and immature. By the same token, being independent could be interpreted as being aggressive and nonconforming to the group in the Japanese society.

The above examples point out the fact that Japanese, themselves, may well gain from being aware of their own politeness behavior in an encounter with foreigners, for intercultural communication breakdowns occur from the carry-over of one's own cultural rules to different cultural settings. Unless one is aware of his or her own pattern of behavior and understands that his or her behavior is

conditioned by the culture, he or she will not know what contrasts to look for in an encounter with other cultures. Then the person will end up interpreting and judging others' cultural patterns of behavior by their own cultural assumptions without realizing it.

By knowing the cultural assumptions and values of the other culture as well as one's own, one can then see how the new patterns would "make sense" from the perspective of the other. The internalization of both the "why" and the "how" of the different communication forms is what leads to effective intercultural communication.

In the process of reaching this end, the study of another language will help obtain a true understanding of the culture. Thus, a goal of the study of intercultural communication should also be the goal of the study of a second language.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The main focus of the study is on linguistic expressions of politeness in the Japanese language. Several areas have been omitted and need attention by researchers. One area is the nonverbal expression of politeness. While there is a great deal of literature written on nonverbal communication in general, the specific studies on the nonverbal aspects of politeness are, if any, still very limited. Questions to be answered are: How is politeness conveyed through nonverbal accompaniments to the verbal language? What are the rules

for this? What are the differences in nonverbal expressions of politeness between the United States and Japan? Only extensive, systematic studies will bring answers.

Another extension of the present research would be an experimental study utilizing the information in this thesis on communication of politeness. There have been several studies done on politeness in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) (Scarcella, 1980; Walters, 1980; Carrell and Konneker, 1981; Cohen and Olshtain, 1981), but such attempts are very scarce in the area of Japanese-language teaching.

Another direction future research could take would be toward pedagogical application. With the introduction of the idea of communicative competence to the field of linguistics, it has been realized that grammatical knowledge alone would not make a student of foreign language a fluent speaker. Or even if a person speaks a foreign language fluently, it does not mean that a person can communicate well in that particular language.

With the realization of these facts, many Japanese language textbooks began incorporating socio-linguistic information in their cultural notes. For example, Learn Japanese by Young and Nakajima-Okano (1984) gives detailed explanations of cultural background; Japanese: The Spoken Language by Jorden and Noda (1987) provides context and settings of conversations as well as notes. The conversations are designed to be context dependent to simulate reality.

Nevertheless, most of the cultural education in the Japanese language class curriculum has been limited to mere factual information giving. The future direction of Japanese language education should include several innovations. One is training for actual participation in the communicative act in the target language. Training such as offered in various intercultural communication workshops would give students an internalized awareness of cultural differences that goes beyond factual knowledge. Training should also include such activity as discussion on and role play in particular settings selected according to the situation rather than by grammatical choice. Making the right judgment and interpretation of context, becoming aware of the effect of silence etc., are a few of many areas that need to be covered and are essential for politeness purpose.

Ramsey and Birk (1983) talk about such skill:

Japanese have a highly developed "sense of presence" of actors and their relationship to each other and of the unarticulated, unsymbolized, basic sensory data available in a situation. Meaning is taken from, and communicated through, context; if a visitor to Japan truly wishes to "get involved," such a sense must be developed (p. 249).

Only a combination of such training along with language lessons would cultivate communicative competence.

This study could be useful for preparing such a training program as well as providing information for students.

Therefore, the next step this study should take is to develop

a teaching curriculum for Japanese-language teaching utilizing socio-linguistic findings and theories of intercultural communication.

IN CLOSING

No society is exempt from change. In Japan, Westernization is progressing and the mobility of the society is getting higher. Young people have different ideas and expectations towards life. Such change eventually affects the social structure, and as a result peoples' linguistic behavior. For example, if the seniority system in a company is replaced by the merit system, how does a person speak to a boss who is much younger than he or she is? These are areas of Western influence which will cause problems in Japan in the future. Honorifics are probably here to stay, partly because of grammatical reasons, but will probably take on a more simplified, less differentiated form. In any event, the meaning of politeness may take different meanings in the coming years and the effects of a changing society have to be continually monitored.

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