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Introduction

Recent sociolinguistic inquiries into sex difference and politeness have yielded results mostly in support of the universal hypothesis that women are politer than men in their use of language.

In English, the works of Labov (1972), Trudgill (1972), and many others show empirical evidence of women's use of a higher proportion of prestige phonological variants. Lakoff (1975, 1977) describes, based on her intuitive judgment, lexical, phonological, and syntactic-pragmatic characteristics of women's speech and argues that these contribute to making the style of women's language politer. In Japanese, there are several types of empirical evidence supporting this hypothesis. Let us refer among them to Ogino (this issue pp. 37-58), in which women's higher degree of politeness is most clearly shown in the height of the blocks in Figures 6 and 7.

This phenomenon of women's politer speech has been attributed without explicit evidence to women's lower or marginal position in society (Lakoff), or women's insecure status and their desire to compensate for it by gaining apparent status through their appearance in speech (Trudgill). On the other hand, Brown (1980) sought, with evidence from Tzeltal, explicit accounts of the correlation between women's politer speech and women's social position and claimed that linguistic features characteristic of women were the reflection of their vulnerable or inferior position and their multiplex social network.

We understand that women's politer speech is a phenomenon which reflects women's social position. However, we doubt whether the correlation between women's speech and their status could be so simple and straightforward as has been claimed in the works cited above.

Therefore, in this paper, we will attempt to investigate the correlation of linguistic phenomena and social phenomena and seek the mechanism responsible for women's politer speech. We first established a theory of politeness and devised a method based on this theory to investigate the politeness levels of linguistic facts separately from those of social facts and then to correlate

them, so that we could find the mechanism of the language use. Our investigation used quantitative data elicited in a controlled format. The result has led us to propose a new way to look at sex difference in language use: i.e. not to regard it as a direct consequence of speaker sex per se, but to look at it as a phenomenon determined by complex factors.

Method

The method of investigation was devised based on the following two working hypotheses:
(1) The choice of language according to politeness involves two kinds of rules: linguistic rules of politeness and social rules of politeness. These two rules work autonomously.
(2) Politeness is recognized as perceived distance between interactants. 'Distance' functions in our mind as an underlying concept to control our behavior according to politeness. It is a variable involving the choice of linguistic forms according to politeness. The distance between interactants is created by (a) social distance owing to social class, status, age, and power, (b) formality owing to lack of aquaintance of interactants, formality of occasion or topic, and (c) psychological distance owing to deference, avoidance, intimacy, solidarity, etc. (Ide 1982: 366–377). Distance is perceived as greatest when a person is being most careful toward the interactant and shortest when being most uninhibited. It is recognized as a continuum. We divided the continuum into five points, making a scale of politeness as illustrated in Figure 1.
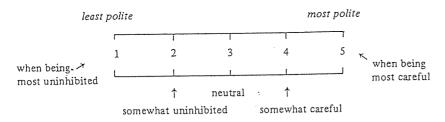

Figure 1. *Perceived distance as a parameter of politeness*

Subjects were 256 men and 271 women in Tokyo, parents of students at Japan Women's University. The ages ranged from 40 to 70, with the majority of the men being businessmen and the women housewives. They were chosen as a sample representing typical middle-class men and women in contemporary Japanese society.

Three questions were presented to subjects, and research assistants asked questions and wrote down subjects' responses.

Question 1: linguistic rules of politeness

By linguistic rules of politeness, we mean the knowledge of the degree of politeness applied to speech. Politeness is expressed in speech through two kinds of devices (cf. Miller 1980: 201): formalized style where overtly marked forms are used, and nonformalized style where an utterance with no overt formal marking is considered polite in context (e.g. 'Got a pen I can borrow?' as a polite request). In this survey, we focused on formalized style, because Japanese has an elaborate linguistic system of honorific morphemes which constitute a major portion of formal forms.

We dealt with the verb *iku* 'to go' and its variants (including synonyms). There are several dozen of different linguistic forms for the verb 'to go' in the context of the sentence 'When do you go?'. The differences are due to various choices of honorific morphemes, suppletive forms, and sentence-final particles. The examples below are some representative variations of 'When do you go?'

(1) *Itsu   iku   no. (↗)* (plain, i.e. no honorifics)
     when   go   SENTENCE-FINAL PARTICLE (rising intonation)
(2) *Itsu iki masu   ka*   (+ honorific)
             HONORIFIC S.F.P.
(3) *Itsu ik-are masu ka.*   (++ honorific)
             HONORIFIC
(4) *Itsu irassyai masu ka.*   (++ honorific)
             SUPPLETIVE HONORIFIC
(5) *Itsu o-ide-ni-nari masu ka.*   (++ honorific)
             SUPPLETIVE HONORIFIC
(6) *Itsu o-ide-ni-nar-are masu ka.*   (+++ honorific)

Subjects were asked to list different forms of *iku* they use in the context of 'when do you go' according to a scale of politeness from 5 (most polite) to 1 (least polite). They were given a list of 50 different forms as a reference, but they were free to supply forms in addition to those on the list. The question asked was, 'Out of various linguistic forms you see in the list, which one do you think you would use when you are most careful (level 5), . . . most uninhibited (level 1), . . . neutral (level 3), . . . somewhat careful (level 4), and . . . somewhat uninhibited (level 2)? Eighty-five different verb forms of 'to go', each of which was assigned a level of politeness, were obtained from the subjects.

Question 2: social rules of politeness

By social rules of politeness, we mean the rules concerning our proper behavior according to norms of politeness. Polite behavior is determined by various factors such as interactant, setting, and topic. Among these, we focused on interactants as the major variable that influences one's polite behavior. Interactants are understood here as types of people such as a neighbor, a same-status colleague, a sister, etc. The degree of politeness is determined by the distance one perceives toward interactants.

Subjects were asked to assess the level of politeness of the types of people they deal with in their daily lives according to the scale of politeness of 5 to 1. The question asked was, 'Out of people you deal with in daily life, to whom would you behave most carefully (level 5) ... most uninhibitedly (level 1), ... neutrally (level 3), ... somewhat carefully (level 4), ... somewhat uninhibitedly (level 2)?'

Question 3: choice of linguistic forms

Subjects were asked their choices of linguistic forms they use toward the people they mentioned in question 2. The question was, 'Suppose you are to address "when do you go?" to each type of person you mentioned in question 2. Which expression would you use?'

Results

Responses to the three questions and background information of the subjects were coded and analyzed by computer, using Ogino's package program which enables us to compute quantitative data and do statistic analysis (Ogino, this issue).

Results of Q1

The average politeness levels of individual linguistic forms were computed according to the sex of subjects. The sex differences in assigned politeness level of individual linguistic forms are shown in Table 1. Out of 83 linguistic forms mentioned by subjects, we have taken the 15 most frequent ones into consideration. The criterion for selection was a frequency of more than 2% of the total use.

Table 1.   Degree of politeness level of linguistic form

Linguistic forms	Men	Women	Linguistic forms	Men	Women
iku (↗)	1.23	1.03	irassyaru n desu ka	4.06	4.20
iku no (↗)	1.37	1.13	irassyai masu ka (↗)	4.49	4.41
irassyaru	2.70	2.64	o-ide-ni-nari masu ka (↗)	4.50	4.29
iki masu (↗)	2.86	2.33	o-dekake-ni-nari masu ka	4.78	4.64
iku n desu ka	2.95	2.53			
iki masu ka	3.08	2.78	o-dekake-ni-nar-are masu ka	4.95	4.89
ik-are-ru n desu ka	3.94	3.72			
ik-are masu ka	3.94	3.51	o-dekake de irassyai masu ka	4.98	4.96
irassyaru no (↗)	3.34	2.85			

Results of Q2

One hundred and eighty types of people mentioned by subjects were grouped into larger categories of people (e.g. 'close friend' and 'classmate' were grouped into 'friend'). Then the average politeness levels of types of people were computed according to the sex of the subjects. The result shows politeness levels associated with the types of people. Twelve types of people were selected and shown in Table 2. The criterion for selection was more than 100 occurences taking both sexes together and more than 10 occurences for each sex. (The total occurrence for all responses was 4006.)

Table 2.   Degree of politeness level of types of people

Types of people	Men	Women
a. Child	1.08	1.06
b. Spouse	1.11	1.37
c. Delivery person	1.89	1.96
d. Friend	2.00	2.12
e. Workplace inferior	2.15	3.07
f. Same-status colleague	2.41	2.73
g. Neighbor	3.03	2.54
h. Spouse's friend	3.38	3.44
i. Parent at P.T.A. meeting	3.58	2.84
j. Instructor of hobby group	3.89	3.84
k. Daughter's or son's professor	4.14	4.35
l. Workplace superior	4.66	4.74

Results of Q3

In question 3, we asked which linguistic form subjects would use for each type of addressee mentioned in question 2. For each linguistic form, we have the average score of politeness level computed from the result of question 1. By applying this score to each linguistic form obtained in question 3, the score of politeness level of linguistic form used for each type of addressee was obtained; see Table 3. Average scores were computed according to the sex of the subjects. Here again, we show the 12 most frequent types of addressees.

Table 3. *Degree of politeness level of linguistic forms used for types of addressee*

Types of addressee	Men	Women
a. Child	1.39	1.15
b. Spouse	1.41	1.85
c. Delivery person	2.19	2.39
d. Friend	2.15	2.55
e. Workplace inferior	1.91	2.39
f. Same-status colleague	2.41	2.45
g. Neighbor	3.72	3.25
h. Spouse's friend	3.53	3.99
i. Parent at P.T.A. meeting	3.83	3.50
j. Instructor of hobby group	3.99	4.31
k. Daughter's or son's professor	4.19	4.40
l. Workplace superior	4.31	4.39

Discussion

The results show that women assess individual linguistic forms as less polite, and use politer linguistic forms, than do men. These findings will be further analyzed and discussed to discover the mechanism by which women appear to be using politer speech.

The result of Q1 gives one explanation of how women appear to be using politer linguistic forms. In Table 1 we find that the same linguistic forms are given different politeness levels by men and women; men generally assigned higher politeness value than women. As a consequence, in dealing with a person of the same politeness level, women would use a form higher in relative politeness value compared to men. Let us explain this with examples. Men's score for *o-dekake-ni-nar-are masu ka* is 4.95, while the form women assessed closest to 4.95 is *o-dekake de irassyai masu ka*. These two forms would be used by our men and women subjects respectively when the politeness level

of 4.95 was to be expressed. Since *o-dekake de irassyai masu ka* is a politer form than *o-dekake-ni-nar-are masu ka* on the linguistic scales of both sexes, women appear to be speaking more politely. From this result we may assume that men and women have different scales for the assessment of politeness level of linguistic forms. Then, we argue that women's use of politer forms appears to be politer only when observed from the hearer's point of view, but from a female speaker's point of view she is simply using forms with her own politeness level.

· Let us discuss this in the light of folk linguistics. We often hear sayings such as 'He speaks politely for a man'; She doesn't speak politely for a woman'; or 'Don't speak like that. Girls should speak more politely'. The second saying reflects how boys and girls are trained to speak on a different level. It suggests that the level of politeness sufficient for boys is not sufficient for girls. These sayings, which represent widely held social beliefs, might well acccount for our finding different scales used by men and women.
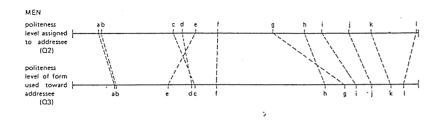
The present study does not provide direct evidence for women's lower assessment of politeness value for individual linguistic forms. However, we find in the result of Q1 that women have higher frequency and more variety of higher ranked linguistic forms (around 4.00 on the politeness scale). This crowding at the upper level, we suppose, makes the value of politeness of individual forms used by women relatively lower, since more forms must be fitted into the same 'space' compared to men's use.
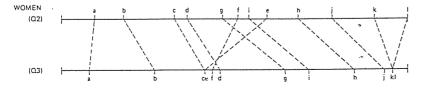
The result of Q2 shows how the politeness level of treating people varies according to their type. We find 'workplace superior' is assigned the highest score and 'child' the lowest. The determining factor for the level of politeness is the distance each subject perceives toward each type of person. The greater the distance a subject perceives toward a particular type, the higher the level of politeness s/he associates with that type. We find that women assessed higher politeness for more types of people (8 out of 12).

The result of Q3 shows how the politeness levels of linguistic forms used for different types of addressee vary according to types of addressees. For the type of people associated with high scores of politeness such as 'workplace superior', linguistic forms of high politeness scores were used. Comparing men and women, we find that the majority of women's scores are higher than men's (9 out of 12). Taken by itself this shows that women tend to speak more politely than men.

The most interesting and surprising result of our study was to discover that the scores of Q2 and Q3 do not always parallel. For example, the average politeness level of linguistic forms which men report they would use toward a neighbor (3.72) was higher than what they would use toward a spouse's friend (3.53) (Table 3), despite their having assessed the politeness level of

the two addressees in reverse ranking, i.e., neighbor as lower (3.03) than spouse's friend (3.38) (Table 2).

In the previous studies, the politeness level of the language used has been taken as the politeness level of the speaker's attitude toward the addressee; it had never been attempted to view separately the politeness level of attitude and of linguistic forms used. Since the results of Q2 and Q3 do not fully show the expected parallelism, we must begin to wonder how the use of linguistic forms according to politeness really works. To investigate the mechanism, let us compare the results of Q2 and Q3 more closely. Since the types of addressee are identical in Q2 and Q3, we can draw the diagram in Figure 2 to see the patterns of language use.

a. Child
b. Spouse
c. Delivery person
d. Friend
e. Workplace inferior
f. Same-status colleague
g. Neighbor
h. Spouse's friend
i. Parent at P.T.A. meeting
j. Instructor of hobby group
k. Daughter's or son's professor
l. Workplace superior

Figure 2. *Interactional patterns*

The horizontal lines represent scales of politeness, with politeness increasing toward the right. On the upper lines, normalized scores of politeness levels associated with types of addressees are plotted (from the result of Q2). On the lower lines, normalized scores of politeness level of linguistic forms used for types of addressees are plotted (from the result of Q3). Finally, plotted points of corresponding types of addressee on the upper and lower

lines are connected with dotted lines, so that we may compare the results of Q2 and Q3.

Let us pay attention to the direction of the connected lines in the two diagrams. We observe that for certain types of addressees (group 1), speakers of both sexes use linguistic forms at a politeness level higher than the politeness level which they claimed to associate with those same addressees. (This phenomenon is shown diagrammatically by the connecting lines angling from the upper line downward toward the right on the lower line). For all the other types of addressees (group 2), the politeness level of the linguistic form used is equal to, or lower than, the associated politeness level of the addressee (this is shown by the lines which are vertical or left-angling.)

How do these discrepancies arise? Figure 2 leads us to hypothesize that when interaction takes place, the speaker first assesses the politeness level associated with the specific type of addressee and then chooses a linguistic form appropriate for the politeness level for the interaction with the addressee. As is shown in the diagrams, the appropriate forms are not chosen to exactly match the assessed politeness level of the addressee. The speaker chooses linguistic forms which may or may not be more polite than the politeness level s/he associates with the addressee. It is the speaker's strategy to make this choice.

Referring to Brown and Levinson's (1978) framework of politeness, we could call the use of politer forms a kind of negative politeness (expressing politeness through respectful distance), and the use of less or equally polite forms a kind of positive politeness (expressing politeness by empathetic inclusion). Here, we extend the interpretation of Brown and Levinson's framework to make it more comprehensive. First, though they did not explicitly designate the use of more/less polite forms as the means for strategies of negative/positive politeness, it is evident in the present study that the choices of the politeness level of linguistic forms are the means by which politeness strategies are carried out. Second, our inclusion of the use of equally polite forms into positive politeness looks beyond their framework of positive politeness. We do this on the assumption that any interaction is potentially a face-threatening act; therefore politeness strategies must be involved at some level, conscious or subconscious. Thus, since the majority pattern in our data is to use negative politeness (politer forms), the forms which do not conform to this general pattern are grouped under positive politeness.

Now let us return to the question of the speaker's strategy. What is the variable for this kind of choice? In order to find the variable, let us group the types of addressee according to the direction of the dotted lines in the diagrams.

Group 1. More polite = negative politeness

Men and women: b. spouse,
                c. delivery person,
                d. friend,
                g. neighbor,
                h. spouse's friend,
                i. parent at P.T.A. meeting,
                j. instructor of hobby group,
                k. daughter's or son's professor,

Men only: a. child

Group 2. Less (or equally) polite = positive politeness

Men and women: e. workplace inferior,
                f. same status colleague,
                l. workplace superior,

Women only: a. child

As far as our present data are concerned, we find in the first group those types of people with whom it is required to be sociable/civil, and in the second group, people encountered in the workplace where rapport/solidarity are sought. (The different grouping of 'child' is explained as the reflection of the different relations between father–child and mother–child, generally observed in Japanese families. Mothers have closer contact with children than fathers.) The difference between the two groups lies in the kinds of inter-actional pattern: the first being sociable/civil interaction, and the second, interaction seeking rapport/solidarity. The variable involving the speaker's choice of negative or positive politeness is assumed to be these kinds of interaction. In other words, the strategy of negative politeness is associated with values of sociability and civility and interactions characteristic of such private domains as neighborhood, friendship, hobbies, etc. On the other hand, the strategy of positive politeness is associated with the values of rapport and solidarity which foster smooth and efficient work; it is used in interactions typical of the domain of employment.

We have found another variable in addition to the one we first hypothesized. We now have two levels of variables as controlling factors for the choice of politeness level of linguistic forms: (1) the distance between interactants and (2) kinds of interactional pattern. The first-level variable determines the distance on the continuum of politeness scale, while the second-level variable determines the speaker's choice of sociable (negative politeness) or rapport-seeking (positive politeness) language according to kinds of interaction.

When we examine the effects of the first-level variable alone (i.e. distance between interactants), the result of our Q3 provides evidence for women's general trend to speak in politer forms. However, when the second-level

variable (kinds of interactional pattern) is separately examined, we find no significant difference between speakers by sex. What we have found in Figure 2 is the amazing similarity between men and women in their patterns of interaction. Women do use positive politeness (rapport-seeking language) when engaged in employment; up to now this has been considered typical of men (cf. Trudgill's 'covert prestige'). Conversely, when engaged in sociable interaction, men do use negative politeness (sociable language) which has been considered as women's typical language behavior. Thus, we find both men and women use language according to the same patterns of interaction. What makes them appear to speak differently is, in fact, their different frequencies of interaction. Among subjects who are representative of the Japanese middle class, men most frequently engaged in interactions in the domains of employment, while women most often engaged in sociable interactions in private domains. We could predict, then, as women increase their participation in the employment domain and men increase theirs in the private domain, men's and women's speech will grow correspondingly more similar.

Conclusion

We have found in this study that complex factors are involved in the different choices made by speaker's sex. They are (1) different values for the politeness levels of individual linguistic forms, (2) different assessment of the distance between interactants (first-level variable), and (3) different frequencies of the kinds of interactional pattern (second-level variable).

When we consider the implications of the present study for previous findings on sex difference and politeness, we see that whether empirical or not, Trudgill, Lakoff, Brown, etc., all treated politeness features of language use as associated with speaker's sex. In particular, Robin Lakoff's use of the term 'women's language' reinforced this view. As we have discovered in the present study, the mechanism for the choice of polite linguistic forms is not so direct and straightforward as had been assumed in previous works. Speakers make linguistic choices not because of their sex, but because of the function linguistic features express: e.g. the function of keeping distance or the function of creating rapport. Moreover the ample supporting evidence for women's apparently politer speech must be set over against the counterevidence in the empirical studies of Dubois and Crouch (1975) and Zimin (1981). We have seen no meaningful discussion on the difference of evidence. This is because both pro- and counterevidence for women's politer speech are the outcome of the misleading approach which correlates linguistic phenomena directly with speaker's sex.

In conclusion, we wish to claim that sex differences in language should not be looked at only as a direct consequence of speaker sex per se, but rather as a phenomenon determined by complex factors among which are speaker-addressee distance or speaker-addressee interaction and its frequencies. By positing hypotheses to look into linguistic phenomena and social phenomena separately, and to measure the separate levels of politeness, and further, by connecting them through the parameter of perceived distance, we have been able to obtain data which reveal at least part of the complex mechanism of language use. Even though the detailed mechanism of the correlation of those three factors is yet to be investigated, we believe that this study is a distinct step forward from the prevailing approach to the inquiries into sex difference and politeness in language.

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Note

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