

Formal forms and discernment: two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness¹

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Abstract

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) proposed principles of language usage according to politeness, which they claim to be universal. Their principles are supported by evidence from three languages of different origins. However, the universality of the principles is questionable from the perspective of languages with honorifics, in particular Japanese. Their framework neglects two aspects of language and usage which are distinctly relevant to linguistic politeness in Japanese. The neglected linguistic aspect is the choice of 'formal linguistic forms' among varieties with different degrees of formality. The neglected aspect of usage is 'discernment': the speaker's use of polite expressions according to social conventions rather than interactional strategy. This paper claims that a comprehensive framework for universals of linguistic politeness will have to incorporate these aspects and shows how Brown and Levinson's framework puts these aspects outside of their scope. Finally, the justification of the comprehensive framework is discussed in terms of Weber's typology of actions and Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Introduction

In the past fifteen years, universal principles of linguistic politeness have been presented, notably by Lakoff (1973, 1975), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983).

In discussing the problems of judging the grammaticality of a sentence, Lakoff argues the need to consider the context of a sentence. The context has to be analyzed, she claims, in terms of rules people follow in speaking,

i.e. rules of pragmatic competence, which consist of the rule of clarity and the rule of politeness. The rule of politeness, in turn, is elaborated into three further 'rules'. They are 'keep aloof', 'give options' and 'show sympathy'.

Basing their claims on 'face' and 'rationality', common properties of human beings, Brown and Levinson posit the universals for one aspect of language use, i.e. linguistic politeness, and they present a framework of strategies for politeness. This consists of five major clusters of strategies with which most polite, deferential or tactful verbal expressions in different cultures and languages can be explained. These clusters are 'without redressive action, baldly', 'positive politeness', 'negative politeness', 'off record', and 'don't do the Face Threatening Act'.²

Leech, in attempting to present the overall principles of pragmatics, treated the politeness principle as one of the three principles in interpersonal rhetoric. This politeness principle consists of six maxims: 'tact', 'generosity', 'approbation', 'modesty', 'agreement' and 'sympathy'.

What is common among these pioneering works is that they claim, whether explicitly or not, the universal applicability of their principles of linguistic politeness. However, when examined in the light of languages with honorifics, such as Japanese, none of these frameworks appears adequate enough. The major linguistic devices for politeness in Japanese either fall outside of these frameworks or play a minor part in them. The frameworks thus appear to be the product of the Western academic tradition, since even Brown and Levinson, who dealt with Tzeltal and Tamil besides English, could not avoid an ethnocentric bias toward Western languages and the Western perspective.

In this paper, neglected aspects in the so-called universal principles of linguistic politeness are presented and explained with illustration, focusing on Brown and Levinson's framework, which is the most comprehensive of the three, I will point out the deficiencies of their framework. I will then attempt to incorporate a Western and a non-Western perspective in terms of the sociological typology of actions.

The definition of linguistic politeness

While copious discussion on linguistic politeness has been carried on, we find little discussion of what linguistic politeness or politeness itself is.

Lakoff states that politeness is something 'developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction' (1975: 64). Brown and Levinson state 'politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol, presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties' (1987: 1). Leech states that politeness is an important missing link between the Gricean cooperative principle and the problem of how to relate sense to force (1983: 104).

None of these works presents a definition which gives us a specific notion of linguistic politeness. Therefore, it seems necessary to clarify here what we mean by linguistic politeness. I define linguistic politeness as the language usage associated with smooth communication, realized 1) through the speaker's use of intentional strategies to allow his or her message to be received favorably by the addressee, and 2) through the speaker's choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities.

Here, mention must be made of the difference between the terms 'polite' and 'politeness'. The term 'polite' is an adjective like 'deferential' and 'respectful'. It has a positive meaning: 'having or showing good manners, consideration for others, and/or correct social behavior'.³ Politeness, on the other hand, is the neutral term. Just as 'height' does not refer to the state of being 'high', 'politeness' is not the state of being 'polite'. Therefore, when we talk about linguistic politeness, we refer to a continuum stretching from polite to non-polite (i.e. zero polite, that is, unmarked for politeness) speech.

Neglected aspects

Heretofore neglected aspects will be discussed from two perspectives: language and use.

Language: Formal forms

The point concerning language arises from the fact that Brown and Levinson's framework fails to give a proper account of formal linguistic forms such as honorifics, which are among the major means of expressing

linguistic politeness in some languages. In Japanese, polite requests can be expressed even in imperative forms, if honorific verb forms are used.

- (1) #*Kore-o yome.* (The # marks a non-polite sentence.)
 this-ACC read
 #‘Read this.’
- (2) *Kore-o o-yomi-nasai mase.*
 read-REF. HONO. AD. HONO.
 ‘Read this.’
- (3) *Kore-o yoma nai ka.*
 NEG. QUES.
 ‘Won’t you read this?’
- (4) *Kore-o o-yomi-ni-nari mase n ka.*
 read-REF. HONO. AD. HONO. NEG.
 ‘Won’t you read this?’

(1) is a simple imperative without honorifics, and thus is not polite. (2) is imperative but referent and addressee honorifics are used. Therefore, it is polite. (3) is made polite by the use of specific strategies: it has been made less imposing by the strategy of its transformation into a negative and interrogative form. (4) is the combination of (2) and (3), and therefore the most polite of these examples.

We have seen in the example sentences that there are two types of device to make an utterance polite: one is the choice of formal forms as in (2), and the other is the use of strategies, as in (3). It is the former device, the choice of formal forms, that is neglected in the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson.

The use of formal forms is not unique to honorific languages. Well known examples would be the choice of the pronoun V (Vous) in contrast to T (Tu) and the choice of the address term TLN (Title plus Last Name) in contrast to FN (First Name) to mark politeness. The contrast of formal vs. non-formal forms is observed in the forms such as ‘hello’ vs. ‘hi’, and ‘purchase’ vs. ‘buy’ and ‘dine’ vs. ‘eat’. Besides the lexical level, we have formal forms on the discourse levels. Examples are found in courteous speech formulas such as ‘thank you’, ‘excuse me’, and ‘it’s my pleasure’. Using or not using such formal formulas is another example of the contrast of formal vs. non-formal.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) treat some of those formal forms as expressions of negative politeness strategies. However, they should not be categorized as strategies, since there are some fundamental differences

between the choice of formal forms and the use of strategies. Formal forms are 1) limited in choice, 2) socio-pragmatically obligatory, 3) grammatically obligatory, and 4) made in accordance with a person who is not necessarily the addressee, the referent or the speaker him/herself.

First, while the use of strategies allows a potentially unlimited number of linguistic expressions, the use of formal forms is a matter of choices among a limited set of forms. It is very often the case that the choice is made between two alternatives.

Choosing a formal form or expression out of limited varieties of formality makes an utterance polite for the following reasons. According to Levinson, formal forms should be explained as conventional implicature (1983: 129ff). Implicature makes an utterance polite by its indirectness. Ide states, ‘When formal forms are used, they create a formal atmosphere where participants are kept away from each other, avoiding imposition. Non-imposition is the essence of polite behavior. Thus, to create a formal atmosphere by the use of formal forms is to be polite’ (1982: 382).

Second, the choice of formal linguistic forms is obligatory in the light of social conventions.

- (5) #*Sensei-wa kore-o yonda*
 prof.-TOP read
 #‘The professor read this.’
- (6) *Sensei-wa kore-o oyomi-ni-natta.*
 REF.HONO. PAST
 ‘The professor read this.’

In (6), an honorific form is used in referring to the action of a person of higher status, in this case a professor. This is because the social rules of Japanese society require one to be polite to a high status person like a professor. This use of an honorific verb form is the socio-pragmatic equivalent of grammatical concord, and may thus be termed socio-pragmatic concord. Subject-predicate concord is determined by the social rule of the society in which the language is used. In Japanese society (6) is appropriate, but (5) is not. Thus, the concord of honorifics is socio-pragmatically obligatory.

Levinson, in discussing honorifics as the linguistic form in which socially deictic information is encoded, distinguishes two honorifics, i.e. relational and absolute (1983: 90–91). He further states that the relational variety is the most important. However, it must be remembered that this

can only be said with reference to egalitarian societies. In societies where an honorific system is elaborately developed, it is the absolute variety that is basic. One finds evidence for the absolute variety in a diachronic study (Brown and Gilman 1960) and in the description of honorific systems in stratified societies (Geertz 1960, Koshal 1987). In Japan, too, the absolute variety of honorific can still be found. For example, in the Syuri area of Okinawa Prefecture, the address terms for parents and grandparents and the response forms are determined according to the speakers' social class, i.e. *sizoku* (a family of the samurai class) or *heimin* (a commoner) (Sibata 1988: 6). Levinson makes the general claim that the absolute variety is used either by 'authorized speakers' or toward 'authorized recipients' (1983:91). Figure 1 illustrates forms of response in Syuri dialect used by authorized speakers speaking to authorized recipients.

RECIPIENT \ SPEAKER		SPEAKER	
		SAMURAI CLASS	COMMONER
SAMURAI CLASS	superior		[u:]
	inferior	[o:]	
COMMONER	superior	[ə]	[o:]
	inferior		

Figure 1. *The absolute honorifics in Shuri dialect (response forms)*

The speaker of the Syuri dialect chooses out of the possible repertoire given to the social standing of the speaker's family, a form appropriate for the recipient's family as well as for the relative status (superior or non-superior) of the interactants. This choice is absolute as the determining factor depends on ascribed social standing. In the same way, the socio-pragmatic concord illustrated in (6) is of the absolute variety. In other words, the use of honorific, i.e. formal forms, determined by the social rules of politeness represents the absolute variety, because the recipient of the honorific in (6), the professor, is authorized to receive formal forms as the token of deference according to the social conventions of the society. On the contrary, the use of honorifics and other formal forms which the speaker can manipulatively choose, according to his or her judgment of his or her relation to the addressee or the referent, shows the relational

variety. Thus, the absolute variety is obligatory whereas the relational variety is optional.

Third, there are no neutral forms. Levinson states, 'In general, in such languages (South East Asian), it is almost impossible to say anything at all which is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate for certain kinds of addressees only' (1983: 90). Therefore, the choice of honorific or plain forms is grammatically obligatory. The choices of pronouns (V or T) and address terms (TLN or FN) in some Western languages can be explained in the same way as the choice of honorifics. The speaker is bound to make an obligatory choice between a formal form V or TLN, and a non-formal form T or FN.⁴

Matsumoto (1987) discusses the obligatory choice of honorifics or plain forms of copulas in Japanese, illustrating three variants of 'Today is Saturday', non-FTA utterances. One is expressed in a plain form (*da*), the second is in the addressee honorific (*desu*), and the third is in the super polite addressee honorific (*de gozaimasu*). She states that even in such cases of non-FTA utterances the speaker is required to make an obligatory choice among the variants, with or without honorifics, according to the formality of the setting and the relationship among the participants.

Fourth, the choice of formal forms is made in accordance with the referent and/or the speaker, which makes the use of formal forms distinct from verbal strategies oriented only toward the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1978: 185ff) and Levinson (1983: 90ff) acknowledge the referent honorific in the case of V/T pronoun alternation. (6) is an example of a referent honorific. The humble variety of honorifics, used to humble the speaker, is illustrated in (9) below:

- (7) #*Watasi-* ga iku.
I SUBJ go
#'I (will) go.'
- (8) *Watasi-ga* iki- *masu*.
ADD.HONO.
- (9) *Watasi-ga mairi-* *masu*.
go HUM.HONO.

(8) is a polite utterance compared to (7), but (9) is even more polite. In (9) both a humble form and an addressee honorific are used for a non-FTA utterance.

It is because of these fundamental differences between verbal strategies and formal linguistic forms that we claim here the need to

categorize the devices of linguistic politeness into two basic types. The use of formal linguistic forms is controlled by a different behavioral principle from that underlying the verbal strategies treated by Brown and Levinson.

Usage: discernment

The use of formal forms is inherently dependent upon the speaker's observation of the social conventions of the society of which he or she is a member. In a society we behave according to social conventions, one set of which we may call the social rules of politeness. Ide states the social rules of politeness for Japanese: 1) be polite to a person of a higher social position, 2) be polite to a person with power, 3) be polite to an older person, and 4) be polite in a formal setting determined by the factors of participants, occasions, or topics (1982: 366–377). Except for 2) and 4), which could be relative, these social rules are essentially absolute in quality. Honorifics and other formal linguistic forms, in which the relative rank of the speaker, the referent and the addressee are morphologically or lexically encoded, are used so as to comply with such rules of politeness.

The practice of polite behavior according to social conventions is known as *wakimae* in Japanese. To behave according to *wakimae* is to show verbally and non-verbally one's sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions. In a stable society, an individual is expected to behave according to the status and the role of various levels ascribed to or acquired by that individual. To acknowledge the delicate status and/or the role differences of the speaker, the addressee and the referent in communication is essential to keep communication smooth and without friction. Thus, to observe *wakimae* by means of language use is an integral part of linguistic politeness.

The closest equivalent term for *wakimae* in English is 'discernment' (Hill et al. 1986: 347–348). The choice of linguistic forms or expressions in which the distinction between the ranks or the roles of the speaker, the referent and the addressee are systematically encoded will be called the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness, which I claim to be one of the neglected aspects in Brown and Levinson's framework.

In contrast to the discernment aspect, 'the aspect of politeness which allows the speaker a considerably active choice, according to the speaker's

intention from a relatively wider range of possibilities' is called the 'volitional' aspect (Hill et al. 1986: 348). Both aspects aim to achieve smooth communication, but they are different in that the speaker's focus is placed on the socially prescribed norm in the former and on his/her own intention in the latter.

Whereas Brown and Levinson dealt with face wants, the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness is distinguished by its orientation toward the wants of roles and settings: discernment is oriented mainly toward the wants to acknowledge the ascribed positions or roles of the participants as well as to accommodate to the prescribed norms of the formality of particular settings. The speaker regulates his or her choice of linguistic forms so as to show his or her sense of place. The sense of proper place is determined by what Brown and Levinson termed the weight of power (P), distance (D), and rank (R). The weight is perceived by the speaker against the background of the social norm.

Thus, honorifics are not used to raise the addressee as Brown and Levinson state, but to acknowledge the status difference between the speaker and the referent, who is very often the addressee. Unlike Brown and Levinson, who assumed the equal status of the speaker and the hearer, the speaker of honorifics assumes a status difference. For example, in (6), the subject of the sentence, the professor, takes an honorific form for the predicate which is appropriate for his or her social standing. The speaker thus accommodates to the social conventions, showing the speaker's sense of the referent's status, by using a referent honorific to mark the subject's deferential position. In the case of (9), the speaker accommodates to the formal situation by using both the morphologically encoded form of self-humbling (a humble honorific) and an addressee honorific.⁵

The speakers of honorific languages are bound to make choices among linguistic forms of honorifics or plain forms. Since the choices cover such parts of speech as copulas, verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness is a matter of constant concern in the use of language. Since there is no neutral form, the speaker of an honorific language has to be sensitive to levels of formality in verbalizing actions or things, just as a native speaker of English, for example, must be sensitive to the countable and non-countable property of things because of a grammatical distinction of property of the singular and plural in English. Hence, the more elaborated the linguistic system of formality, the greater the part the discernment aspect of language use plays in the

language. It follows that languages with honorific systems have a strong concern for the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness.⁶

Typology of Linguistic Politeness

Two Types

Figure 2 summarizes the system of two types of linguistic politeness: one is that of discernment, realized mainly by the use of formal linguistic forms, and the other is that of volition, realized mainly by verbal strategies. It is the latter — volition realized through verbal strategies — that Brown and Levinson treat, and the former — discernment realized through formality of linguistic forms — that they neglect, as discussed above.

Discernment and volition are points on a continuum and in most actual language usage one finds that most utterances are neither purely one nor the other, but to some extent a mixture of the two. In example (4), both aspects are used: the honorifics represent formal linguistic forms, and the negation and interrogative markers show verbal strategies.

USE (Speaker's Mode of Speaking)	LANGUAGE (Kinds of Linguistic Device Mainly Used)	EXAMPLE SENTENCES
DISCERNMENT	FORMAL FORMS honorifics pronouns address terms speech levels speech formulas etc.	(2) (6) (8) (9)
		(4)
VOLITION	VERBAL STRATEGIES Seek agreement Joke Question Be pessimistic Minimize the imposition etc.	(3)

Figure 2. Two Types of Linguistic Politeness

Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Discernment Aspect

Each language and society is presumed to have at least these two types of linguistic politeness. Further, we assume that each culture is different in the relative weight it assigns to them. As an example, the relative weight of the discernment aspect in Japanese and in American English will be shown using the figures of the previous empirical study (Hill et al. 1986: 357–358).

These figures are based on empirical data collected by means of questionnaires given to about 1000 students in Japan and the United States. In the questionnaires, both Japanese and American students were asked to choose from a list of expressions those they would use to request a pen from various categories of people. The figures show a correlation between the expressions and people categories. The survey was conducted on the assumption that we choose expressions of different degrees of politeness according to social variables attributed to the people categories of the addressees. The expressions given to the subjects were distributed from polite to non-polite expressions, although the order was scrambled. The people categories were chosen to be as similar as possible in both countries and to represent a range of difference in terms of power and distance between the interactants. In this way, the survey was designed to show quantitatively the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness. In other words, it was designed to show how linguistic politeness operates in the two cultures if examined from the point of view of linguistic politeness in Japan.

The figures are drawn based on the computation of the degree of politeness obtained from the quantitative data⁷ so that the expressions are vertically arranged from the most polite to the least polite ones, and people categories are arranged horizontally from the left to the right according to the decreasing degree of politeness required in interactions with them.

Figure 3 shows how Japanese students use different expressions when asking for a pen from addressees of various people categories. The size of the dots indicates the frequency of response for a particular form used for the particular person category. We see the clear correlation between the expressions and people categories.

Expressions above the horizontal dotted line include honorific morphemes (*desu, masu, desyoo*), while the ones below the dotted line have no honorifics. People categories to the left of the dotted line are a professor in

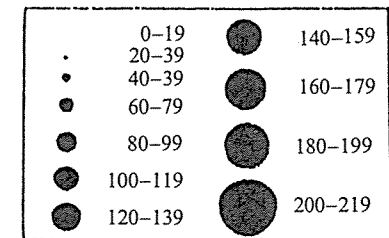
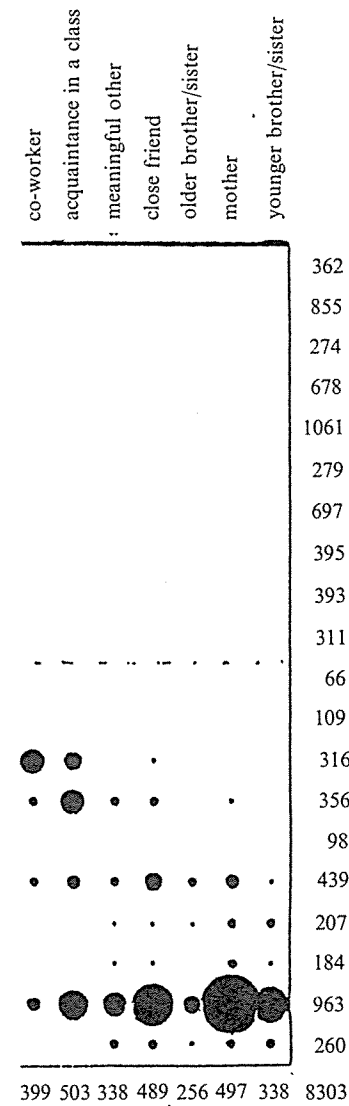
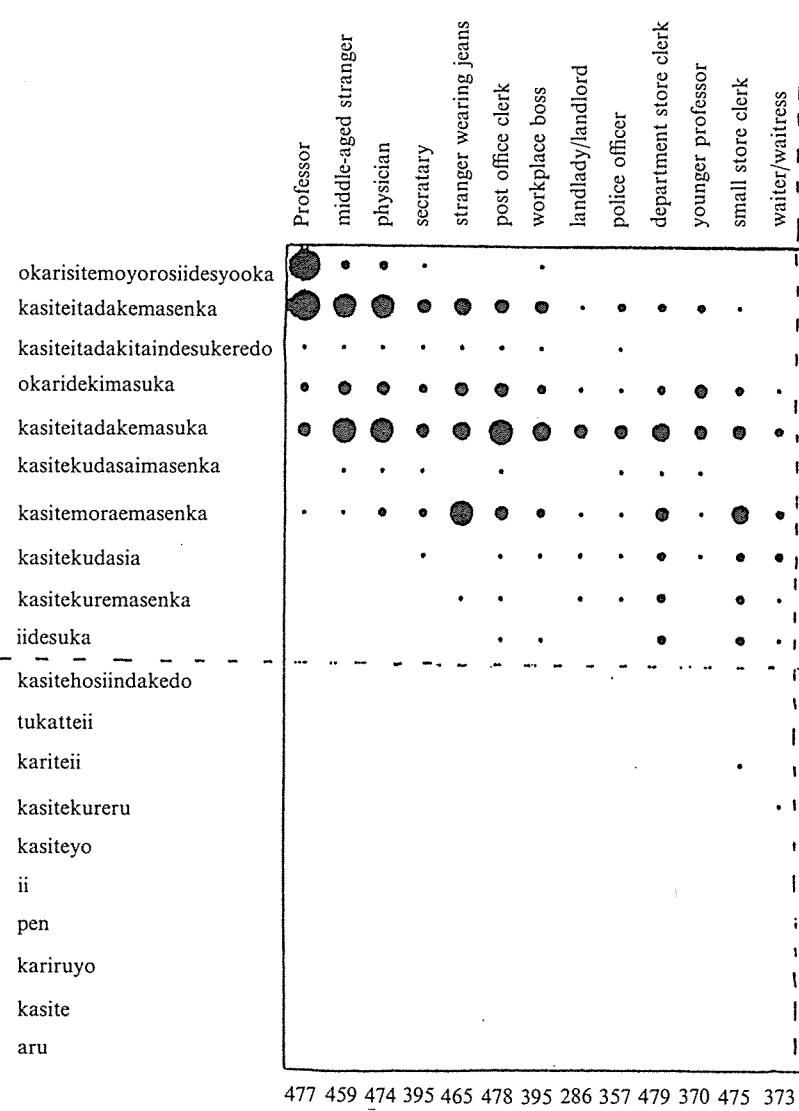


Figure 3 Correlation of request forms and people categories-Japanese

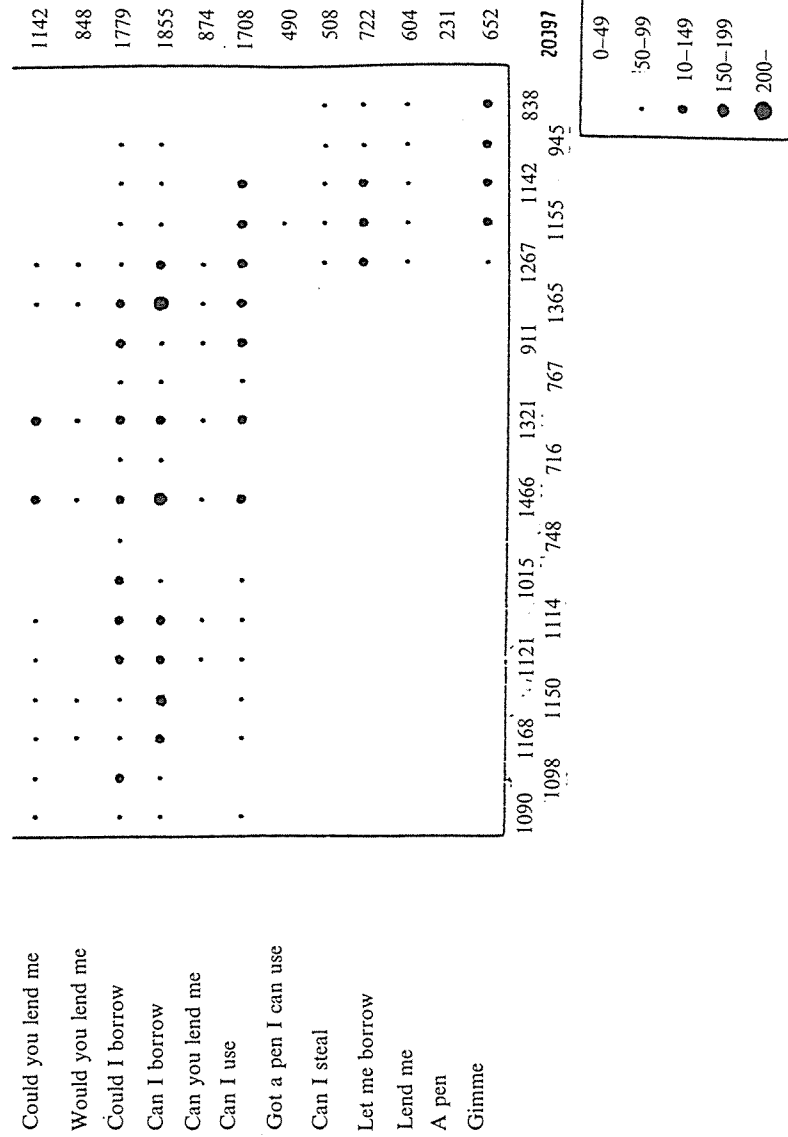
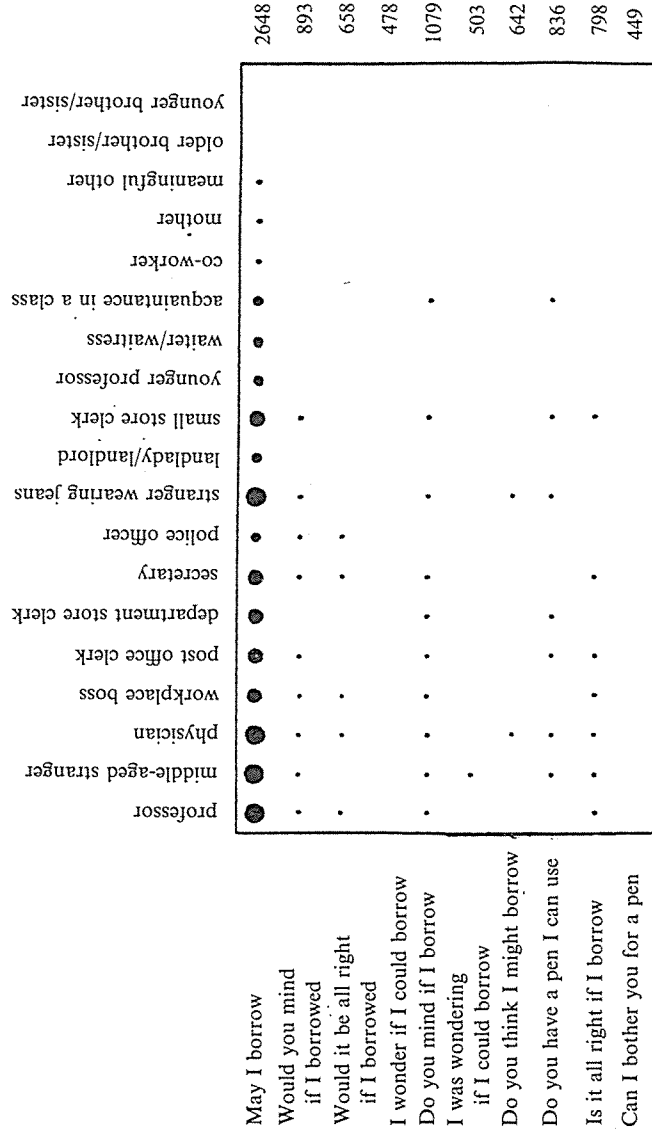


Figure 4. Correlation of Request Forms and People Categories — American.

his office, a middle aged stranger wearing a suit standing behind you in a post office, a physician in his/her office, a secretary of a university department, etc. They are those who have higher social status or more power, who are older than the subjects, or who are unfamiliar people. In other words, they are the people who have power or who are distant from the subjects. On the other hand, people categories to the right of the vertical dotted line are brother/sister, mother, close friend, etc. They are the people who have little power over the subjects or who are not distant from the subjects. In other words, people categories left of the dotted line all fall into what we call 'outgroup' (*soto*) category, whereas those right of the dotted line fall into the 'ingroup' (*uchi*) category.⁸

We see how clear-cut the distinction is in the choice of expressions; formal expressions, realized by various degrees of honorifics, are used in addressing people categories in the outgroup, whereas non-formal expressions are used to people categories in the ingroup. In other words, formal expressions are used for addressees with high power and distance, while non-formal expressions are used for addressees with little power and distance. Thus, the choice of expression is made according to the variable of power and distance of the addressees. (In this study, the weight of the imposition, termed by Brown and Levinson as rank, was kept constant by making it the request for a pen.) This choice of expressions is exactly what we mean by the choice of linguistic forms according to discernment. The compartmentalization of the dotted and white areas seen in Figure 3 shows the visual representation of the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness in Japanese.

Let us now examine the American responses in Figure 4. It can be said that the clearer the distinction between the white area and the dotted area, the higher the relative weight of discernment. However, we see some expressions, such as 'Can I use', used for almost all the people categories. The distribution of responses is very broad, with little compartmentalization. This shows the low degree of relevance of the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness for American English speakers.

Problems of Brown and Levinson's Framework

Categories of Strategies

Let us examine Brown and Levinson's framework and discuss the problems in the light of the neglected aspects.

First, their list of four specific strategies shows a mixture of categories. The crucial error is mixing behavior strategies and linguistic strategies. They put behavior strategies such as 'Notice attend to H', 'Seek agreement', 'Offer, promise', 'Be pessimistic', 'Minimize the imposition', and 'Give deference' in parallel with linguistic strategies such as 'Use in-group identity markers', 'Question, hedge', 'Impersonalize S and H', or 'Nominalize'. The result is confusion in the categorization of expressions. Some linguistic expressions, like plural personal pronouns 'we' and 'vous', are categorized under the linguistic strategy 'Impersonalize S and H', while they could also be examples for the behavior strategy 'Give deference'.

The confusion could be resolved if they distinguished consistently between behavioral and linguistic strategies and if they allowed some strategies to be categorized under the aspects of formal forms and discernment. For example, 'nominalize' is a linguistic strategy which makes an expression formal. The nominalized expression 'It is my pleasure ...' is chosen instead of 'It is pleasing ...', according to Brown and Levinson, as a strategy of negative politeness to maintain the negative faces of the speaker and the hearer. But it yields a more coherent theory if one regards the use of 'It is my pleasure ...' as the choice of conventional implicature to accommodate to a formal setting. Just like the use of TLN in a formal setting, it is a way of showing discernment.

Using the concepts of formal forms and discernment will allow us room to locate more properly some of the expressions in Brown and Levinson's strategies. For example, honorifics are found under the strategy 'Give deference': the speaker humbles and abases him/herself, or the speaker raises the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1978: 183). However, as mentioned above, the choice of honorifics or non-honorifics is obligatory even for a non-FTA utterance in Japanese. Thus, the primary use is for showing discernment. Brown and Levinson also categorize the use of 'sir' by a lower status person as an instance of the strategy of 'give deference'. However, this is better explained not as the speaker's volitional choice to raise the hearer, which is the manipulative use, but rather as the speaker's observation of conventional rules of politeness to show discernment. Similarly, the choices of second person pronouns and address terms, which are listed as realizations of 'Give deference', and/or 'impersonalize S and H' would be better explained as realizations of discernment through formal forms as argued above.

The use of polite formulas as discussed in etiquette books was outside the scope of Brown and Levinson's work. There is also no mention of

speech levels. In defining linguistic politeness, Brown and Levinson state that they are concerned with the perspective 'beyond table manners and etiquette books' (1987: 1). However, we may argue that nobody can deny that to offer greetings, or to use conventional speech formulas in introducing a friend is a matter of politeness. It is equally a matter of politeness to choose a formal speech level suitable to a formal situational context. These examples are not subject to volitional choice but are to be selected according to discernment. Expanding Brown and Levinson's framework to include the category of formal forms and discernment will open a place for these expressions.

Social Variables

Brown and Levinson extensively discuss social variables for the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA (1978: 78–89). These are power (P), distance (D) and rank (R). However, it is not clear how these variables can help a speaker choose an expression or a strategy. It is difficult, for example, to apply these variables to the positive politeness strategy 'Notice, attend to H'. For this kind of strategy of positive politeness, such psychological variables as affinity, affect or intimacy, which are determined by the speaker's psychological attitude rather than social variables, may be relevant. It is mainly in assessing the degree of politeness within the discernment aspect of linguistic politeness that those social variables of power, distance and rank are relevant, because they are themselves conventionally determined by social rules of politeness.

Assumptions

Brown and Levinson's assumption of the universality of face and rationality provides the basis of their framework. Let us examine the concepts from a non-Western perspective.

Face

Brown and Levinson explain face as follows:

Central to our model is a highly abstract notion of 'face' which consists of two specific kinds of desires ('face-wants') attributed by interactants to one another:

the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face). This is the bare bones of a notion of face which (we argue) is universal, but which in any particular society we would expect to be the subject of much cultural elaboration (1987:13).

This notion of face is derived from that of Goffman, which is the key to account for the phenomena of human interaction. Brown and Levinson treat it as though it were the sole notion to account for politeness phenomena: '... while the content of face will differ in different cultures, 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' (1978: 66–67).

To the mind of a non-Westerner, however, what is crucially different is not the content of face but rather the weight of face itself. In a Western society where individualism is assumed to be the basis of all interaction, it is easy to regard face as the key to interaction. On the other hand, in a society where group membership is regarded as the basis for interaction, the role or status defined in a particular situation rather than face is the basis of interaction.

In fact, Brown and Levinson cite Rosaldo (1982) in which speech act theory, the product of the Western perspective, is criticized on the basis of an ethnographical study among the Philippine Illongot.

Rosaldo (1982) ... argues that the Illongot do not interpret each others' speech in terms of the expression of sincere feelings and intention, but stress the expectations due to group membership, role structures, and situational constraints (1987: 14–15).

What Rosaldo aptly describes speech as — 'the expressions of group membership, role structures, and situational constraints' — characterizes the content of the discernment aspect.

Though the details of language use among the Illongot must be assumed to be different from those of Japanese, it is surprising to find that Rosaldo's explanation applies to the use of honorifics in Japanese. For a Japanese speaker, to speak with the proper use of honorifics where it is required is to express that the speaker knows his or her expected place in terms of group membership (in-group or out-group), role structures (relative status, power relationship, specific role relationship such as selling and buying), and situational constraints (formal or non-formal settings).

The use of honorifics, thus, is not just the speaker's strategy to humble the speaker and to raise the hearer's status to minimize threat to the hearer, as maintained by Brown and Levinson. Moreover, honorifics are used even for a non-FTA utterance, as evidenced by the use of honorifics as pragmatic concord in example sentence (6). In other words, honorifics are used even where neither the speaker's nor the addressee's 'face' has anything to do with the utterance.

Rationality

Brown and Levinson elaborate their framework by assuming a Model Person (MP), a willful speaker of a native language, who is endowed with two special properties — rationality and face. By rationality they mean 'the availability to our MP of a precisely definable mode of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends' (1978: 63). It is this rationality, they believe, that makes it possible for the speaker to make an utterance systematically according to his or her intention. They further state, 'It is our belief that only a rational or logical use of strategies provides a unitary explanation of such diverse kinesic, prosodic, and linguistic usages' (1978: 61).

However, we have seen above that the use of honorifics can be simply socio-pragmatic concord, which operates just as automatically as grammatical concord, independent of the speaker's rational intention. If the framework of linguistic politeness is to restrict its scope to a rational or logical use of the strategies, we will have to exclude not only the use of honorifics but also greetings, speech formulas used for rituals, and many other formal speech elements which are used according to social conventions.

Brown and Levinson are aware of this limitation. 'Note that we shall be attempting here a reduction of some good, solid, Durkheimian social facts — some norms of language usage — to the outcome of the rational choices of individuals' (1978: 64). They justify their assumption of language use based on rationality over language use according to convention thus: 'conventions can themselves be overwhelming reasons for doing things ... and there can be, and perhaps often are rational bases for conventions' (1978: 64). However, they fail to explain how rationality operates actively in conventional use. As Brown and Levinson state, there can be rational bases for convention, which must work on a different level from the individual rational action. The logical reasoning must work on

the level of the function of society as well as on the level of the individual. For elaborated explanation, further investigation is needed.

To a native speaker of one of the non-Western languages, this framework based on face and rationality makes its authors appear to be looking at supposed universal phenomena of linguistic politeness with only one eye — that is, a Western eye biased by individualism and the Western academic tradition of emphasizing rationality. Linguistic politeness seen through a non-Western eye is the phenomenon associated mainly with proper behavior in a social organization by complying with the social conventions. This, of course, is looking with another single eye.

Toward an incorporated framework

We have been asserting that Brown and Levinson's framework of universals of linguistic politeness has neglected certain aspects. Now we would like to discover how we can incorporate the aspects of volition and discernment into a united framework.

Brown and Levinson state the relevance of their model to Max Weber's theory of social actions. According to Weber, there are four ways actions may be determined. These are (1) instrumental rational action, which is determined by consciously calculating attempts to attain desired ends with the choice of appropriate means, (2) value-rational action, which is determined by a conscious belief in the intrinsic value of acting in a certain way, (3) affectual action, which is determined by specific affects and feeling status, and (4) traditional/conventional action, which is determined by ingrained habituation (Weber 1972). Of these four types of social action, Brown and Levinson's model concern the type of (1) instrumental rational action:

we take in Weberian terms the more strongly rational *zweckrational* model of individual action, because the *wertrational* model (which would treat face respect as an unquestionable value or norm) fails to account for the fact that face respect is not an unequivocal right (1978: 67).

They discuss the value-rational type and argue for its exclusion from their perspective. But the other two types, affectual and traditional/conventional types of actions, are not mentioned. These non-rational types lie outside their view, because their concern is only rational action.

It should be evident that Brown and Levinson do not take as their point

of departure the overall scope of social actions, but focus on only one aspect, i.e. instrumental rational action. This stance may be justified because they base their theory on the assumption that interactions are carried out by rational face bearing agents. However, if their aim is to postulate universals of language usage, they might better start from an overall perspective of human actions rather than only one type. As illustrated above, linguistic politeness is also established according to traditional/conventional actions. It is for this reason that incorporating the discernment aspect into the framework of linguistic politeness is essential.

In order to incorporate discernment into the same framework with volition, Weber's typology of social actions and its reformulation by Habermas, which is supposed to account for all human actions, is introduced here. The relative positions of volition and discernment in the context of Weber's and Habermas' theories of social actions are presented in Figure 5. This is based on Miyahara's figure 'Weber's Typology of Action: Two Dimensional Reconstruction' (Miyahara 1986).

MODE OF ACTION DEGREE OF RATIONALITY	STRATEGIC (oriented to success)	COMMUNICATIVE (oriented to understanding)
RATIONAL	<i>VOLITION</i> (1) instrumental-rational (interest)	(2) value-rational (value)
NON-RATIONAL	(3) affective (drive/feeling)	<i>DISCERNMENT</i> (4) traditional (convention)

Figure 5. Framework Incorporating Volition and Discernment in terms of Weber's Typology of Actions and its Reformulation by Habermas

If we look at these types of action in terms of the degree of rationality, the volitional aspect is the most rational and the discernment aspect is the least rational. Thus, volition and discernment represent the two extreme ends of the continuum of rationality in the Weberian typology of action.

In reformulating Weber's typology of actions, Habermas proposed a two-dimensional mode of action and distinguished between 'action

oriented to success and 'action oriented to understanding'. The mode of action oriented to 'success' is called 'strategic' or 'instrumental' action when the action can be understood as following rules of rational choices and can be evaluated in terms of efficiency. Action oriented to 'understanding' is called 'communicative' action.

Communicative action occurs when social interaction is coordinated through the mutual and cooperative achievement of understanding among participants. On the other hand, a strategic action is made through the strictly personal calculations of the success of the actor as an individual (Roderick 1986: 109). Miyahara (1986) states that a strategic action is 'fairly close to Weber's instrumentally rational action. In contrast, communicative action is oriented to the pursuit of individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions'.

Examining two types of linguistic politeness in the light of this typology of modes of action, we see that the volitional aspect is the realization of strategic action and the discernment aspect is the realization of communicative action.⁹ Thus, in providing a model which can incorporate volition and discernment, the Weber/Habermas typology of social action supports our claim that discernment must be included in a truly universal framework of linguistic politeness.

Concluding Remarks

For the speaker of an honorific language, linguistic politeness is above all a matter of showing discernment in choosing specific linguistic forms, while the speaker of a non-honorific language, it is mainly a matter of the volitional use of verbal strategies to maintain the faces of participants. These look like entirely distinct systems of language use working in different languages and societies. However, the two aspects are integral to the universals of linguistic politeness, working potentially in almost all languages; the discernment aspect is actually observed in the use of non-honorific languages as much as the volitional aspect is observed in speaking honorific languages.

Given the facts that discernment and volition are both relevant in the universals of linguistic politeness, we have sought a way to incorporate them into a comprehensive framework. The four dimensional analysis of universal social actions by Weber and the two dimensional analysis by

Habermas aptly explain the complementary relationship between the volitional and the discernment aspects of linguistic politeness.

Finally, we must remind ourselves that what we have discussed here are but two aspects out of four potential types of social actions. There may be a society where a value-rational type of action or an affectual type of action dominates. If so, we would expect there to be different systems of linguistic politeness. We will have to wait to posit a true universal until we have examined many more languages and societies.

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Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1987 International Pragmatics Conference at Antwerp, Belgium, 17–23 August 1987. I am grateful for my co-researchers, Tsunao Ogino, Akiko Kawasaki, Shoko Ikuta and Beverly Hill, whose partnership in pursuing the project of the comparison of Japan–U.S. linguistic politeness has been the source of my present work. My thanks also go to Kojiro Miyahara who assisted me in understanding preliminary sociological theories. Beverly Hill, Marie-Louise Liebe-Harkort, Richard Watts and Virginia LoCastro read the earlier versions and gave valuable comments on style and content, for which I am grateful. All the shortcomings, however, are my own responsibility.
2. Brown and Levinson presume that some acts intrinsically threaten face. Assuming that all human beings have 'face wants' which consist of two specific kinds of desires, negative face wants and positive face wants, they set up a model of strategies for minimizing the face threatening acts, i.e. FTA (1978: 65).
3. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 1978.
4. This is the primary use of pronouns and address terms. It is only in manipulative use of this primary usage that a speaker has the liberty of choosing FN instead of TLN. Brown and Levinson (1978: 88–99) deal only with this manipulative use of address terms and pronouns as examples of a verbal strategy of negative politeness, failing to acknowledge the underlying formal requirement of primary usage.
5. The language use according to discernment is observed in the use of expressions at the discourse level as well. An utterance such as *Gokurousama desita* [Thank you for your trouble. FORMULA] is impolite (markedly minus polite), if used by the inferior to the superior, whereas it is expected for the superior to employ it in speaking to the inferior. The rule underlying this usage is the paternal social convention in Japanese society where the role of the superior is to care for the inferior, not vice versa. The inferior's use of the utterance is impolite because the use of the utterance violates discernment of roles of the society. Similarly, if a listener who is not acquainted with the lecturer says *Senseino ohanasi wa omosirokatta desu* [Your (Professor's) lecture was interesting], he or she is condemned as being impolite. Such an utterance is allowed only by those who are of equal or superior status or on familiar terms with the lecturer. Such a usage is taken as impolite because an audience member who is supposed to be in the role of listening and learning should not assume an equal position by making comments to the lecturer. It is a violation of discernment.
6. Honorific systems seem to be related to the degrees of discernment of polite behavior.

In Japan, the end of World War II marked a drastic change from a hierarchical to an egalitarian society. It was expected that the new egalitarian social system would stop the use of honorifics. However, contrary to that expectation, honorifics continue to be used extensively even today. It is presumed that the existence of an honorific system affects the people's behavior or discernment. However, we see that the content of discernment has been gradually changing, even though the essential nature is unchanged. The change is seen in the determining factor for the choice of honorifics. The use of honorifics to mark horizontal distances between the speaker and the addressee (and the referent) is increasing.

7. The degree of politeness is obtained by Ogino's method of quantification of politeness (Ogino 1986: 39). It is computed from the frequencies of the correlation of expressions and people categories. The idea underlying this computation is that the degree of politeness of expressions is determined by the frequency of their use toward the addressee (people categories), and the degree of politeness with which addressees are treated is determined by the frequency of each expression used toward the addressee.
8. As is often mentioned by cultural anthropologists, one of the determining factors of Japanese people's behavior is the distinction between ingroup and outgroup.
9. When Jürgen Habermas came to visit Japan for a few weeks in 1981, he gave his observation of Japanese people's behavior in an interview. 'I was very much impressed by the communicative interactions among the Japanese people ... My question is how this is going to be in future. In the West, for centuries, capitalism has eroded the cushion of traditions and conventions. Now we have worn them out. Here in Japan, it seems to me, the process of modernization has affected its cultural situation in a different way. Since there is no inherent relation between the cushion of traditions/conventions and modernization, it is my interest to observe how these traditions/conventions in Japan are going to develop in the future [author's translation]' (Habermas 1982). This tells us that the basis for social interaction, different from that of the West, predominates in Japan. The explanation for how modernization by means of capitalism has been successful in Japan while maintaining the traditional/conventional pattern of social interactions will have to wait for future study. We must stress again that the use of honorifics has not decreased in accordance with modernization. The existence of honorifics and the discernment aspect of language use may be playing a role in keeping the Japanese interactional style in its present form.

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