

# How and Why Do Women Speak More Politely in Japanese?\*

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## 1. Introduction

During the past decade, sociolinguistic inquiry into sex differences in language has become increasingly sophisticated and subtle, as we have become aware of the complexities of the issue. We now have a number of putative features as well as some empirical evidence of sex differences and similarities, and with these we should pursue the general question of pragmatics: the explanation of how and why people use language as they do.

The purpose of this paper is to explain how and why women speak differently from men in Japan. Among various features which make women's speech sound feminine, politeness in speech stands out in Japanese.<sup>1</sup> We will discuss this feature of women's speech with quantitative and qualitative evidence.

In discussing women's politer speech, we will be concerned with two theoretical aspects of pragmatics and sociolinguistics: a universal theory of linguistic politeness and complex variables affecting language use.

## 2. Background Notions

### 2.1. Theories of Linguistic Politeness

Linguistic politeness is defined, according to Hill et al. (1986: 349), as language use according to a constraint of human interaction—politeness—whose purpose is to establish distance of mutual comfort, and to promote rapport by considering others' feelings.

In the past decade we have seen some claims on the theories of linguistic

politeness. Lakoff (1974, 1975) claims rules of politeness to be one of the two rules of pragmatic competence, i.e. rules of clarity and rules of politeness, which are the rules people observe when using language. She extends the concept of linguistic rules/constraints to pragmatic domain, and assumes the pragmatic rules of politeness as indispensable in understanding language. Leech (1983) claims the principles of politeness belong to one of his pragmatic principles. Like Lakoff, Leech deals with the issue of linguistic politeness as an extension of linguistics. Brown and Levinson (1978), on the other hand, deal with the issue as interactional strategies: they consider humans to be rational actors oriented toward communicative goals which are achieved by communicative strategies. In their framework, linguistic expressions are the major but not the only strategies for interaction according to politeness. While Lakoff's and Leech's provide rules/principles for use of linguistic systems, Brown and Levinson's offers dynamic strategies for communication.

## 2.2. 'Discernment'

The theories of linguistic politeness discussed above claim universal application. If any of these theories were applicable to the situation of Japanese linguistic politeness, we would use it as a base concept for the explanation of women's politer speech. However, those theories are not relevant to the major concept of linguistic politeness held by the Japanese people. For the Japanese people, linguistic politeness is mainly a matter of conforming to social conventions for a choice of linguistic forms. Hill et al. (1986: 348) call this 'discernment' (*wakimae*, in Japanese). It is one of two general strategies, the other being called 'volition'. 'Discernment' is observed according to the speaker's reading of socially agreed-upon relative social distance toward the addressee in the situation, while 'volition' is the speaker's strategy according to his/her intention, examples of which are found in Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978). The linguistic choice of pronouns between V (Vous) and T (Tu) and of address terms between TLN (Title plus Last Name) and FN (First Name) is a good instance of a strategy according to 'discernment'.

Observation of linguistic politeness according to 'discernment' can be realized by keeping proper distance among interactants. In verbal behavior the distance is created by the choice of higher/formal linguistic forms. The factors determining the distance between interactants are differences of social status, age, power, the formality of participants (created by the lack of familiarity or solidarity), and the formality of occasion and topic (Ide 1982:

366-77). The choice of formal linguistic forms in pronouns, address terms, honorifics and other lexical items according to these factors is essential for achieving linguistic politeness in Japanese.

'Discernment' is not in conflict with the above-mentioned universal theories of linguistic politeness, but is complementary. It also constitutes a part of their frameworks. 'Discernment' is partially realized by obeying the rules of 'formality' and 'deference' in Lakoff's framework, and is passive use of the strategy of 'giving deference' in Brown and Levinson's framework. It has no place in Leech's framework.

Focusing on this specific concept, 'discernment', a survey on linguistic politeness was conducted and quantitative data on sex differences of language use were obtained. It is with these quantitative data that we will try to clarify complex variables involving differences of language use.

## 2.3. Complex Variables

Sociolinguists are realizing more and more that linguistic variations are the product of multiplex variables. And researchers of sex difference claim the complex aspect of the sex variable. McConnell-Ginet (1983: 384) states, "In short, gender is not a personal trait, not a role, not a class or caste. Rather, it is a complex system that involves relating all these, and more, to what seems the straightforward sorting of people into sexes." Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley (1983: 15-16) state that initial approaches to treat "gender as an unproblematic independent variable" have shifted to the treatment of sophisticated and complex variables.

It is the purpose of this study to clarify with empirical data how complex variables are working to make women's speech more polite. In explaining the nature of these complex variables involving women's politer speech, we will introduce Goffman's idea on rules of conduct, i.e. complementary concept of deference and demeanor (Goffman 1968).

The following discussion of the phenomenon of women's politer speech will follow quantitative as well as qualitative approaches: the first based on our survey and the second on observation and introspection.

## 3. Quantitative Evidence

### 3.1. Three Reasons: Survey Results

Ide et al.(1986) conducted the survey on sex differences of the use of linguistic forms and found three factors involved in the women's politer speech: (1) women's lower assessment of the politeness level of linguistic forms

(2) women's higher assessment of appropriate politeness level due to types of addressee, and (3) women's higher frequencies of the kind of interactional pattern which calls for higher linguistic forms. We will review these findings and discuss why these factors work to make women's speech polite.<sup>2</sup>

The survey was conducted asking 256 men and 271 women (parents of students of a college in Tokyo) about their use of polite linguistic forms. The subjects represent the typical middle-class middle-aged population in contemporary Japanese society, men being mostly businessmen and women mostly housewives, a situation where sex differences are markedly observed.

Three questions were asked of the subjects.

Question 1: subjects' assessment of the politeness level of linguistic forms according to the scale of 1 to 5.<sup>3</sup> The linguistic forms in question were variants of 'go' in the context of 'when do you go?'

Question 2: subjects' assessment of appropriate politeness level due to types of addressee. The types of addressee were such people as subjects interact in everyday lives.

Question 3: choice of linguistic forms subjects would use for types of addressees mentioned in Q2.

The data obtained in the form of numbers showing politeness levels and frequencies were analyzed according to sex.

Table 1 Degree of politeness level of linguistic forms used for types of addressee (Numbers indicate average scores of politeness, 1 being least polite and 5 being most polite.)

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

First, let us look at Table 1 which shows the degree of politeness level of linguistic forms used for types of addressees. This is the result of Q3. In this table the politeness levels of linguistic forms which subjects reported that they would use for various types of addressee are shown according to sex. When comparing them, we find that for 9 types of addressee out of 12, women would use politer linguistic forms than men. This is a numerical evidence to show the women's use of politer linguistic forms.

Three factors are found to contribute to the women's politer speech.

(1) *Women's lower assessment of politeness level of linguistic forms.* We often hear, "He speaks politely for a man." "She should have talked more politely because she is a woman." Folk linguistics suggests that there is a belief of different norms of proper politeness levels for the use of language between men and women.

Table 2 is the result of Q1 showing the average scores for the politeness levels of linguistic forms as assessed by men and women. Comparing the numbers of politeness levels, we find that women have a lower assessment of politeness levels for 14 out of 15 linguistic forms. Thus, to express the same level of politeness, a woman has to use a politer linguistic form than a man would. Conversely, if a woman and a man use identical linguistic forms, the woman will sound less polite. The cause for this phenomenon will be discussed along with the data in Table 4.

Table 2 Degree of politeness level of linguistic forms

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

Linguistic forms are variations of 'When do you go?'.  
Underlines mark honorific forms.

(2) *Women's higher assessment of appropriate politeness level toward the addressee.*

Table 3 result from Q2, showing the men's and women's average assessments of politeness levels to be used toward the types of addressee they deal with in their everyday lives. Comparing the differences in numbers, we find that, for 8 types of addressee out of 12, women assign a higher level of politeness than do men. This tells us that women deal with interactants more politely than men do. Thus, women's speech to the same interactants will be politer than men's by two factors : 1) women assess individual expressions as being lower on the politeness scale than do men, and must therefore choose an expression higher up in the scale in order to achieve the same politeness effect, and 2) women assign a higher politeness level to the same interactants; therefore, they must go still further up the scale to be perceived as sufficiently polite users of the language.

(3) *Women's higher frequencies of the kinds of interactional pattern which calls for higher linguistic forms.* The third reason for women's politer speech is not as straightforward as the previous two. This reason was revealed in the process of examining a discrepancy between the politeness levels of Q2 and Q3×Q1.

Previous studies of the use of linguistic politeness (Kokuritu Kokugo Kenkyuuzyo 1982, 1983, Ogino 1981, 1983) have not attempted to view the politeness level assigned to the addressee's status separately from the polite-

Table 3 Degree of politeness level of types of addressee

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

ness level of language actually used toward the addressee. Therefore, the politeness level used toward the addressee was taken to be identical with the politeness level assigned to the addressee. However, this survey obtained not only politeness levels assigned to the addressee's status (Q2) but also the politeness levels of language actually used toward the addressee (Q3×Q1), and we found an unexpected lack of parallelism between the two politeness levels. At this point we begin to wonder about the mechanism for this lack of parallelism. To investigate this mechanism, we should compare the results of Q2 and Q3×Q1 more closely, and we have therefore drawn Figure 1.

The horizontal lines represent scales of politeness, with politeness increasing toward the right. On the upper lines politeness levels assigned to types of addressee are plotted and on the lower lines politeness levels of linguistic forms used for types of addressee are plotted. Since the types of addressees are the same, it was useful to combine and compare the two politeness levels to

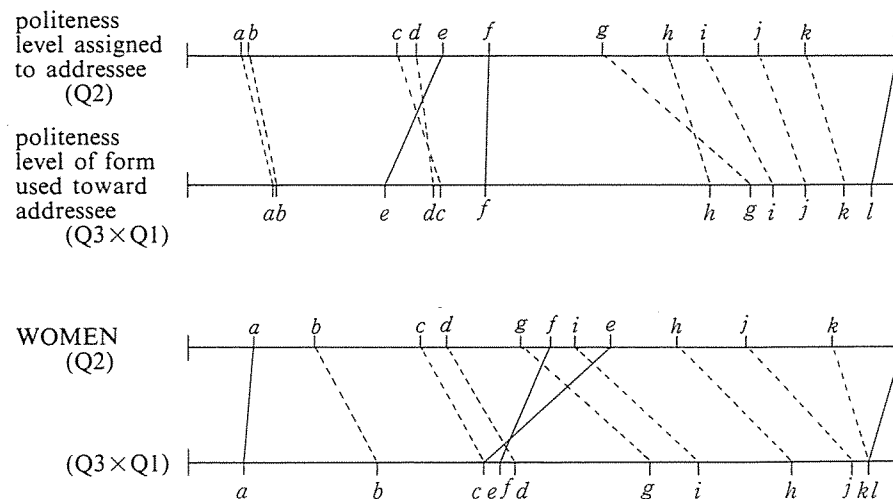


Figure 1 Comparison of politeness level associated with addressees and politeness level of linguistic forms used toward addressees

- 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

see patterns of language use. The right angled lines show the use of linguistic forms more formal than the politeness level associated with types of addressee. We group this right-angled pattern of language use as group 1. In this group (indicated by dotted lines) we find the types of addressee in the domain of neighborhood, hobbies and home with whom it is required to be sociable/civil. The rest, i.e. the left angled or vertical lines show the use of linguistic forms with a politeness level equal to or lower than the associated politeness level of the types of addressee. We group this pattern of language use as group 2. In group 2 (indicated by solid lines) we find types of people in the domain of the workplace with whom rapport/solidarity are sought.

Figure 2 shows the grouping of the patterns of language use. What strikes us in this grouping is the amazing similarity between men and women. With the exception of language use toward child, both men and women use language according to the same pattern.

How does this difference in the patterns of language use arise? With Figure 1 we may hypothesize on the mechanism of the choice of the linguistic forms as follows: when interaction takes place, the speaker first assesses the politeness level associated with the specific type of addressee. And secondly, he chooses a linguistic form appropriate for the politeness level for the kinds of interaction with the addressee. As is shown in the diagram, the appropriate forms are not chosen to exactly match the assessed politeness level of the

Figure 2 Grouping of types of addressee according to patterns of language use  
Group 1. More polite

- 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
- Men and women : e. workplace inferior  
f. same-status colleague  
l. workplace superior
- Women only : a. child

addressee. It is the kinds of interaction, i.e. sociable/civil or rapport/solidarity seeking interaction, that decide the second stage politeness level. Thus, the quantitative analysis of the survey results led us to find two levels of variables as controlling factors for the choice of politeness level of linguistic forms: (1) politeness level associated to the addressee; (2) kinds of interactional patterns.

How does this phenomenon lead to women's politer speech? To discuss this, let us see frequencies of interaction in Table 4.

We find men's higher frequencies of interaction with those people in group 2, where rapport/solidarity is required (i.e. workplace inferior, same-status colleague and workplace superior). Women in our study have higher frequencies of interaction with people in group 1. In other words, women are more frequently engaged in interaction which calls for linguistic forms higher than politeness level toward interactants. Therefore, women end up using politer linguistic forms even though the kind of interactional pattern, the second level variable, is the same cross sexually. This is another reason why women appear to speak more politely in Japanese.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2. Two Stages of Variable: Deference and Demeanor

We may explain the differences in the nature of two variables, using Goffman's idea concerning rules of conduct which bind the speaker and the addressee together. In his essay "The nature of deference and demeanor" he proposed two complementary concepts, deference and demeanor, in explain-

Table 4 Frequencies of interaction with types of addressee

Types of addressee	Men	Women
a. Child	13.5	14.5
b. Spouse	9.4	8.1
c. Delivery person	1.6	4.1
d. Friend	7.2	9.2
e. Workplace inferior	11.7	0.6
f. Same-status colleague	7.7	1.1
g. Neighbor	3.4	6.5
h. Spouse's friend	2.6	2.8
i. Parent at P.T.A. meeting	0.8	5.4
j. Instructor of hobby group	0.9	5.7
k. Daughter's or son's professor	3.6	9.0
l. Workplace superior	14.0	1.4

ing the rule of conduct, which are kernel elements of politeness.

According to Goffman (Goffman 1968: 56-77), the ceremonial component of concrete behavior has two basic elements: deference and demeanor. Deference is defined as the appreciation a person shows of the recipient through avoidance rituals or presentational rituals. Avoidance rituals refer to forms of deference which lead the actor to keep distance from the recipient. And presentational rituals take forms such as salutations, invitations, compliments and minor such services. Demeanor, on the other hand, is the element of a person's ceremonial behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress and bearing which serves to express his/her personal quality of desirability. Deference concerns the sentiment of regard toward the recipient, while demeanor concerns the sentiment of regard toward the actor him/herself to show how well-demeaned a person he/she is.

The first stage variable, determined by the distance between the speaker and the type of addressee, is regulated according to the degree of deference. The second stage variable, determined by the speaker's choice to use linguistic forms higher or lower than or equal to the levels with the addressee, is regulated not according to the regard associated with the addressee, but for the display of the speaker's good demeanor. In the former, the sentiment of regard is directed toward the addressee and in the latter it is directed toward the speaker.

As was mentioned in the previous part of this paper, politeness in Japanese is a matter of using high/formal linguistic forms according to the addressee and situation. Then, we may wonder why higher/more formal linguistic forms function as deference and demeanor.

Two interpretations are possible for deference. The more formal the linguistic forms, the more elaborated they are. First, the use of elaborated forms is assumed to function to obscure the core part of meaning of words. By obscuring core meaning of words, we can express things indirectly. Indirectness creates distance the speaker has toward the addressee. Thus, the speaker's deference toward the addressee is expressed by keeping distance which works as an avoidance ritual. Second, to use elaborated forms requires more attention on the part of the speaker. The cost the speaker pays to the addressee by speaking elaborated forms is an expression of deference, because it makes the speaker do a service to the addressee. This works as presentational rituals.

As for demeanor, just as elaborated forms function to keep distance for deference's sake, they also function to protect the speaker's self by keeping

distance. Let's look at the case of (c) delivery person in Figure 1, for example. We observe the use of higher linguistic forms than the assessed politeness levels toward delivery person. We see that low levels of politeness are assigned toward delivery persons, but the second level variable calls for the linguistic forms higher than those levels, which is taken as the use of negative politeness strategy. This strategy of negative politeness should be interpreted not as deference expressed toward the addressee but as a display of the speaker's demeanor to express how well demeaned a person he/she is.

#### 4. Qualitative Evidence

We have seen above the statistical evidence and reasons for women's politer speech. Women's politer speech is also characterized by some features of a categorical nature. Ide (1982: 378-85) discusses four linguistic features contributing to women's politer speech. We will re-examine these features in terms of Goffman's deference and demeanor.

##### 4.1 Personal Pronouns

The repertoires of personal pronouns of men and women are different as follows:

	men's speech	women's speech
First person		
formal	<i>watakusi</i>	<i>watakusi</i>
	<i>watasi</i>	<i>atakusi*</i>
plain	<i>boku</i>	<i>watasi</i>
		<i>atasi*</i>
deprecatory	<i>ore</i>	$\phi$
Second person		
formal	<i>anata</i>	<i>anata</i>
plain	<i>kimi</i>	<i>anata</i>
	<i>anta*</i>	<i>anta*</i>
deprecatory	<i>omae</i>	$\phi$
	<i>kisama</i>	

\*marks variants of a social dialect.

Two kinds of differences are noted here. First, a difference in levels of formality can be observed. The levels of formality of *watasi* is formal for men but plain for women and that of *anata* is formal for men but plain or formal for women. This means that women are required to use more formal

forms. This reminds us of (1) of the three factors for women's politer speech shown in the quantitative data: 'women's lower assessment of the politeness levels of individual linguistic forms.' Second, we notice pronouns of deprecatory level, *ore*, *omae* and *kisama*, in men's speech but none in women's speech. There is no deprecatory word in women's speech.

The use of more formal forms is a display of deferent attitude, as mentioned above. The avoidance of deprecatory level is a display of good demeanor. Thus, categorical differences in the repertoire of personal pronouns lead to women's automatic expression of deference and demeanor. This makes women's speech sound politer.

#### 4.2. Avoidance of Vulgar Expressions

Women's speech lacks expressions of profanity or obscenity. The deprecatory suffix *yagaru* (e.g. *utai-yagaru* 'sing') is used only by men. Sentence final particles, *zo* and *ze*, and phonological reduction forms, such as *dekee* (< *dekai* 'big'), having a derogatory connotation, are also men's vocabulary. They have the value of 'covert prestige' (Trudgill 1975: 102) among male speakers, as these vulgar forms are the display of masculinity because of their uninhibited quality. It is with this positive value that these vulgar expressions are favorably used by men. On the other hand, vulgar expressions are not allowed in women's repertoire of morphemes and lexical items. Therefore, women, having no access to those vulgar expressions automatically sound like persons with better demeanor. We suggest that this display of the desirable quality, demeanor, makes women's speech sound politer.

#### 4.3. Beautification/Hypercorrected Honorifics

Besides ordinary honorifics, women tend to use honorifics illegitimately; that is, they are not used for deference, the legitimate function of honorifics. There are two kinds: one is what may be called beautification honorifics, and the other is the hypercorrected use of honorifics.

The prefix *o-* is used for goods or actions of referents that are to be treated with deference. But when it is used indiscriminately, for example *o-kane* 'money' and *o-yasai* 'vegetable', it functions to beautify them: thus, we call it beautification honorifics. Women's speech is characterized by abundance of such beautification honorifics.

Honorifics, which are to be used for the addressee and the referent due deference is expected to express, are sometimes used indiscriminately. For example, we find *Haha ga o-kaeri-ni-narimasita*. ('My mother returned.' Bold letters mark honorifics.) In this sentence the deference is expressed for

the speaker's mother against the rule of use of honorifics in Japanese society, as it is incorrect to use referent honorifics to one's mother, who is one's in-group member. Therefore, this use is considered a hypercorrected use of honorifics. Women tend to use them in order to show a high level of formality of linguistic forms.

Both beautification and hypercorrected honorifics used by women must be intended to be the display of good demeanor because of the formal quality of these forms. Thus, women's speech appears to sound polite.

How can we explain this phenomenon of women's display of demeanor? Women, especially housewives, whose activities are mainly in the domain of home and sociable settings, live outside of the stratified structure of institutionalized human relationship. In institutions, men's society, speakers are expected to make distinctions of status as well as of in-group/out-group. Thus, it is in women's society, where less distinction of status and in-group/out-group is required, that indiscriminate use of hypercorrected honorifics is likely to be observed. Besides, women have no label to mark their social position. High and prestigious linguistic forms are generally associated with high social class. Thus, women tend to be interested in the use of higher forms expressed by beautification or hypercorrected honorifics in order to show higher social class than they actually belong.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.4. Feminine Sentence Final Particles

There are sentence final particles exclusively used by women. Ide (1982) discusses *wa* and *kasira*, and McGloin (1986) discusses *wa* and *no*. The former argues that they make women's speech polite because of the 'softening' function of these particles, resulting from the tone of uncertainty created by them. The latter argues "By using *wa* and *no*, the speaker—women—seek to establish an atmosphere of sharedness. . . The strategy of creating an empathic atmosphere/space of conversation, which *wa* and *no* certainly contribute, is a very important aspect of women's language in Japanese." (McGloin 1986)

To make the argument clear, let's focus on *wa* and discuss the seemingly contradictory arguments. Ide's interpretation of *wa* is 'option giving' or 'don't impose' strategy, which functions to create distance of the sense of deference.<sup>6</sup> In Lakoff's framework of rules of politeness, it falls in the 'rule of optionality' and in Brown and Levinson's framework it falls in 'don't presume/assume' strategy of negative politeness. McGloin, on the other hand, interprets *wa* as an 'empathy creating strategy', which functions to shorten distance between interactants by engendering common ground. It is

close to Lakoff's 'rule of equality, showing camaraderie/rapport' and it is a strategy of 'claim common ground' of positive politeness in Brown and Levinson's framework.

How can a sentence particle *wa* be a strategy of both negative and positive politeness? In spite of McGloin's argument in favor of the interpretation of *wa* as positive politeness, there are some cases of *wa* which show negative politeness by a softening function like the following:

- (1) Watasi wa natu ga suki desu.  
I TOP summer NOM like COPULA-HONORIFIC  
'I like summer.'
- (2) Watasi wa natu ga suki da.  
COPULA-PLAIN
- (3) Watasi wa natu ga suki da wa.  
SEN. FIN. PAR.

(1) is a formal sentence because of the honorific form of the copula *desu*, but (2) is informal because of the plain form *da*. (1) is used in a formal setting, while (2) is allowed only in an informal setting. The blunt ending of an utterance with *da* sounds assertive, and it is by the addition of *wa* that the utterance becomes less assertive and therefore becomes a soft statement. Thus, *wa* in (3) functions as a 'minimize the imposition' strategy, a negative politeness.

The solution to this seemingly opposing interpretation of *wa* should be found in the double nature of the meaning and function of the morpheme *wa*. We may look at it as follows: it is the softening function of the particle *wa* (a negative politeness strategy) that makes it possible to create an atmosphere of sharedness (the effect of positive politeness strategy). Then these opposing strategies can be interpreted as two sides of the same coin.<sup>7</sup>

## 5. Summary

In this paper we have investigated the features of women's politer speech and described it with quantitative as well as qualitative data. Along with these features some theoretical questions on pragmatics and/or sociolinguistics have been discussed: the general questions of theories of linguistic politeness and complex variables involving the speaker's sex difference in the choice of linguistic forms.

Japanese linguistic politeness has been uniquely conceptualized and termed as 'discernment.' And 'discernment' has been located in relation to major theories of linguistic politeness in the western literatures. Since linguistic politeness according to 'discernment' concerns the proper choice of politeness level of the linguistic form, we were able to devise a research method to collect quantitative data on politeness from a large number of subjects, and to show the politeness levels of men's and women's speech quantitatively. It is in the process of analyzing quantitative data that we were able to find and explain the mechanism of two stages of variables involving the choice of politeness levels of linguistic forms.

In conclusion, let us summarize the features of quantitative and qualitative evidence of women's politer speech in terms of some concepts useful for the analysis of politeness: Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness and Goffman's deference and demeanor.

### Features of women's politer speech

#### Negative Politeness

##### Deference

- (1) Use of higher linguistic forms owing to higher assessment of politeness level toward the addressee (first stage variable)
- (2) Repertoire of pronouns of more formal forms
- (3) Use of sentence final particles *wa* and *kasira*

##### Demeanor

- (4) Use of linguistic forms of politeness level higher than the associated politeness level of the addressee in the interactional domain of sociable/civil activity (second stage variable)
- (5) Absence of deprecatory level of first and second person pronouns
- (6) Avoidance of vulgar expressions
- (7) Beautification/hypercorrected honorifics

#### Positive Politeness

- (8) Use of feminine sentence particles *wa* and *no*

### NOTES

- \* Reprinted from *Studies in English and American Literature*. Tokyo: Japan Women's University, 24, 1989. 1-19. This paper was originally presented at the



XI World Congress of Sociology at New Delhi, India, 18-22, 1986. This work owes a lot to my co-research work, Ide et al. (1986). I am grateful for my colleagues. My thanks also go to Beverly Hill who gave me a sophisticated editorial hand. I am also grateful for Naomi H. McGloin for her comments.

1. Brown (1980: 112) states, "If we turn from English to Japanese, a language spoken in a culture where women's subordinate status is more overtly institutionalized, we do indeed find evidence that women are more polite in many situations." She refers to S. Martin (1964), R. Miller (1967), T. Uyeno (1971) and E. Jorden (1973).
2. According to Brown and Levinson, (a major part of) politeness consists of two kinds of strategies: negative politeness and positive politeness. In this paper, politeness refers to negative politeness unless the term positive politeness is referred.
3. In Japanese we can easily list up a few dozens of variants of a word, say 'go', which show some difference of politeness level.
4. In Table 2 we have seen women's lower assessment of the politeness level of linguistic forms. We may speculate a cause for this discrepancy in the frequencies of interaction. Women's more frequent engagement with people which call for high linguistic forms (with the exception of workplace superiors) lowered their relative assessment of the politeness level of linguistic forms.
5. We find a similar phenomenon in the use of phonological variants in urban British English. Trudgill (1975: 91) speculates and explains women's preference for of high and prestigious phonological variants as the results of (1) women's status-consciousness owing to their insecure status and lack of occupation, and (2) women's preference for refinement and sophistication.
6. Kitagawa (1977) also argues that *wa* with rising intonation is an 'option-giving strategy' like the English tag-question.
7. Full discussion of the interpretation of *wa* should account for the varieties of *wa* used by various speakers in various context. We will have to have empirical data for further discussion.

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