Japanese Women Language Politeness in Communication Interview: Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate and define Japanese women's language politeness in communication interviews. This study is descriptive, using a content analysis approach. This study collected Japanese women's words, phrases, and clauses from YouTube videos and used free-conversation listening and note-taking techniques to acquire data. The results showed three main types of Japanese woman's polite language in communication interviews: teineigo, kenjougo, and sonkeigo. Sonkeigo is used when the speaker wishes to show respect for the other person and the person being discussed. In contrast, the phrase kenjyogo puts the speaker on a lesser level with the recipient. Teineigo is best described as a form of polite or formal speech. It is found that *keigo* is a method of Japanese women to express their politeness, etiquette and also emotional in the same time This finding also contributes to a greater understanding of social position and social status in Japanese society, as well as how Japanese women communicate to maintain their image in the eyes of others.

Keywords: *Japanese Woman, Politeness Language, Communication Interview, Sociolinguistic*

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INTRODUCTION

Politeness is essential in daily communication encounters. Politeness refers to treating other people with consideration, care, and consideration. According to Lakoff (1990) and Leech (1983), politeness is "the forms of behavior which facilities personal and social interaction to obtain an atmosphere of harmony between interlocutors by minimizing the inherent inner conflict in all human interactions." Leech adds that politeness is a pragmatic aspect that regulates people's behavior, including their communication (Obidovna, 2022).

According to sociolinguists, politeness in the language is a sociolinguistic phenomenon worth studying since it sheds light on the connection between language and culture (Fauziah, 2018). That is why there is a thing called "language politeness"—a set of norms and practices adopted by speakers of a specific language to ensure that their shared language is polite.

Japan is known as a very polite country with numerous customs and etiquette, ranging from the proper way to stand in line for a crowded train to the proper way to bow. Interaction in Japanese society requires understanding the concepts of above '*me ue*'; below '*me shita*' and of an outside group '*soto*' and inside group '*uchi*.' The Japanese social hierarchy begins at home and extends through formal education, the job, and into the larger community. Politeness is formed in Japanese in various social and professional contexts (Okamoto, 2011; Hasegawa, 2015; Kyono, 2017; Haugh, 2018).

According to Ponfei (2004) in Prativi et al. (2019), politeness in Japanese is always considerate of the image, emotions, or situation of the speech partner. Japanese culture tends to suppress the psychological burden of the discourse partner as little as possible. The practice of using language politely, wherein one acknowledges and creates a space between themselves and their addressee by elevating the interlocutor and degrading one's status (Liu et al., 2014). In Japanese culture, polite language is seen as a communication system and an instrument whose usage is intrinsically related to the users' social relationships, making it impossible to study in a vacuum. That is why studying how people use language in everyday life is crucial to linguists (Rahayu, 2013; Jendra, 2010; Hudson, 1996).

Keigo is a type of polite language that people in Japan use to show respect or be nice to each other. According to Supriatnaningsih et al. (2020); Nurjaleka et al. (2022), *Keigo* is employed based on personal proximity, social position, and role in society (age, status, experience, etc.). There are three main types of polite language in Japan. There are three main types of polite language in Japan. These are *teineigo*, *kenjyougo*, and *sonkeigo*. *Teineigo* means 'neutral-polite langugae, while *kenjyougo* means 'humble-polite language', and *sonkeigo* means 'honorofic-polite language' (Hasegawa, 2012; Liu, 2023)

Over the past few decades, studies of the intersection of gender and language have expanded to include disciplines as diverse as the humanities and the social sciences (Litosseliti, 2013). In linguistic research, women are no longer associated with politeness (Goodwin, 2002a, 2002b). Language can be used to exclude and bully women and girls (Goodwin, 2002a).

According to Makarova, V., & Pourmohammadi, E. (2020), there is a statistically substantial gender gap in how people feel about ta'aroff, with men generally having more positive feelings than women. Women used fewer ta'aroff terms than men in the talks prompted by the shopping themes. Some ta'aroff expressions were also discovered to be used differently by men and women. Gender appears to play a role in the usage of ta'aroff in speech production and attitudes about ta'aroff, as evidenced by the findings. Thus, From the several studies above, that gender is closely related to the use of politeness language.

Polite language studies must continue because we live in a fast rising millennial era. Polite ethics can also help to establish a harmonious and prosperous environment. In this scenario, it can also help to create a positive and pleasant workplace in which everyone is recognized and cherished equally. Impoliteness, on the other hand, readily causes problems with others. Of course, this might lead to strained social relationships and jeopardize his own well-being.

This study focused on Japanese women's language politeness in communication interviews with sociolinguistic investigations through recorded video on Youtube to describe the usage of *keigo* in terms of *sonkeigo* 'honorofic-polite language', *kenjyougo* 'humble-polite language' and teineigo 'neutral-polite language'. Maintaining the cultural norms and respectful demeanor shared by the two groups of Japanese people is crucial. This study aims to investigate and define Japanese women's language politeness in communication interviews.

The significance of this research is twofold: theoretically, it is expected to contribute to the advancement of sociolinguistics, particularly in terms of politeness language; and practically, it can be helpful for young Indonesians who wish to study Japanese in Japan and for international students who wish to do the same research. Howefer, this finding contributes to a greater understanding of social position and social status in Japanese society, as well as how Japanese women communicate to maintain their image in the eyes of others.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is descriptive, using a content analysis approach. Content analysis is predicated on the premise that texts are a rich source of data with the potential to disclose valuable information about specific phenomena (Kondracki et al., 2002) .It is the process of contemplating both the participant and context when sorting text into groups of related categories to identify similarities and differences, patterns and associations, both on the surface and within the text (Graneheim et al., 2017). According to Hsieh (2005), researchers can use content analysis to measure and examine the presence, meanings, and connections between particular words, themes, or concepts.

The researchers employed a qualitative content analysis strategy to examine to investigate and define Japanese women's language politeness in communication interviews. In this study, the Interactive Models theory was used to analyze data in four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019). Data identification uses performance parameters: the audience; time; place; script, and role(s) (Lea, 2013).

This study collected Japanese women politeness language in words, phrases, and clauses from YouTube videos (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BxlPvJH7Tw). This video depicts the interactions of Japanese women while browsing for fashion. This video has accumulated 45,010 views. Observations were conducted for three days to collect data. This study used free-conversation listening and note-taking techniques to acquire data. According to Mahsun (2005), the free-of-conversation listening technique collects data that removes the researcher from the research dialogue or conversation. The free-of-conversation listening technique is implemented by observing the use of language in YouTube videos containing elements of politeness language as research data.

Data reduction was done after data collection to identify meaningful data. After data reduction, data display follows. In qualitative research, tables, graphs, the chard, pictograms, and other visualizations can convey this information. Qualitative data study's fourth stage is discovering and drawing verification conclusions, according to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019). When researchers collect data in the field, valid and consistent evidence makes their findings more trustworthy. Written information is used to draw conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study obtained video data from a YouTube channel containing discussions between a Japanese adult lady and a shop assistant from a well-known beauty store in Japan. There are two types of conversations: speakers with the audience and speakers (customers) with store assistants. The two were talking about the beauty products available at the shop. *Keigo*, as was previously said, is a form of polite language used by Japanese people to express respect or kindness to one another. "*Keigo*" on the objects "*teineigo, sonkeigo, and kenjyogo*" dominates the conversation's content. Speakers and interlocutors employ polite forms of language for purposes other than "politeness," specifically to demonstrate the two's relationship and place in social society. It may be inferred that speakers and interlocutors are conscious of and fully utilize polite language forms as a social strategy to achieve the most desirable effects.

Sonkeigo 'honorofic-polite'

The *sonkeigo* expression is used by speakers to show respect for the interlocutor, in this case, the shop assistant as a service provider to clients who come to visit the shop. Here are some examples of discussions in which sonkeigo is used. In this scenario, shop assistants use (SA), and consumers utilize (CU).

(1). CU: *Watashi no daisukina **o mise** de shoppingu shitai to omoimasu*
        I would like to shop at my favorite **store**.

(2). SA: *Sōiu **o mizu** dattari oyu ni toke dzurai to omou ndesu*
         I think it is hard to dissolve in that kind of **water** or hot water.

Sonkeigo is found in the term *o mise,* which means 'store' in a sentence (1). *Mise* is the standard formal form of sonkeigo, *o mise* 'store'. The word *o mise* is classified as sonkeigo by adding *"o"* before the word expressing a nominal (*mise*). This also applies to the term *o mizu* 'water' in sentence (2); when o is inserted before the nominal, the traditional formal form of the nominal *mizu* 'water' transforms to sonkeigo. In situations (1) and (2), sonkeigo is formed by adding o to the word.

CU created the phrases *omise* 'store'. CU delivered Sentence (1) to the audience (who were watching the video). The CU proposes that when a person creating video content (service provider) addresses the audience (video watchers), he utilizes honorific language (sonkeigo). On the other hand, SA is the person who delivered sentence (2). In this case, SA (as a service provider) proposed this sentence to CU (as a customer).

Nevertheless, there is a subtle distinction between this form and the sonkeigo form used in the following sentences:

(3). CU: *Sokka kō ano* **_go shussan o iwai_** *ni*
　　　　In **celebration of the birth.**

(4). SA: **_Go jishin_** *ga dono shanpū ga atteru ka tte iu no wa mazu tsukatte minaito*
　　　　So you must use it first to determine which shampoo is right for **you.**

The sonkeigo form can be seen in the words *go shussan,* which means 'birth', *o iwai,* which means 'celebrate' and *go jisshin,* which means 'yourself'. The formal form of the word *go shussan* is *shussan,* while the traditional form of *o iwai* is *iwai,* and the formal form of *go jisshin* is *jisshin*. Adding *"o"* and *"go"* to the three names is now considered *sonkeigo*. In line (3), CU uses *go shussan* and *o iwai,* which mean 'celebration of birth', to show respect to the public (audience) who is waiting for the birth of their child. Then, SA made the *sonkeigo* of *go jisshin* to show respect for their users and clients (CU in particular).

(5). SA: *Urikirete ite* **_suimasen_**
　　　　I am sorry it is sold out

(6). SA: *Sōdesune sukina* **_kata irassharu_** *to omoimasu*
　　　　I think **some people like** it

(7). SA: *Moisuchāoirunan* _desu_ **_keredomo_** *jitsuwa onsen mizu ga haigō sa retemashite*
　　　　It is a moisturizing oil, **but** it contains hot spring water.

Sentences (5), (6), and (7), on the other hand, are produced by SA in its capacity as a service provider to clients. All sonkeigo: *suimasen* 'I am sorry,' *kata* 'people,' *irassharu* 'there is/are', *keredomo* 'but' are used to express respect to their clients (CU) and customers. The usual official form of *suimasen* is *sumimasen,* which means 'I am sorry'. The usual official form of *Kata* is *hito* means 'people', *irassharu* is *iru*

means 'there is/are', and *keredomo* is *kedo* means 'but'. This shows a particular word for sonkeigo to replace the ordinary formal words *sumimasen, kata, irassharu,* and *keredomo.*

Kenjyogo 'humble-polite.'

According to *Sonkeigo*, the amount of *kenjyogo* 'humble-polite' statements is restricted, and words containing kenjyogo are intended to respect others by not displaying superiority. *Kenjyogo* is a vocabulary term used by the speaker to lower his position about the other person to respect the other person or someone who is the subject of the conversation.

The use of *kenjyogo* is expressed in the following sentences:

(8). CU: Kosumekitchinbyūtī-san ni **o ukagai shimashita.**
I **visited** Cosme Kitchen Beauty.

(9). CU: Tsugi no dōga de **omenikakaritai** to omoimasu
Hope **to see you** in the next video

Sentence (8) and (9) shows the usage of *kenjyogo, o ukagai shimashita* 'visited', and *omenikakaritai* 'to see (you)'. *O ukagai shimashita* and *omenikakaritai* adalah *kenjyogo* dari bentuk formal biasa verba *kuru* 'come/visit' and *au* 'see'. This shows that there is a particular phrase for kenjougo to replace the formal words *kuru* and *au*. In these sentences produced by CU after entering the store, CU addresses the viewers of the video directly with the phrases *o ukagai shimashita* (instead of *kuru*) and *omenikakaritai (instead of au).* As she was about to terminate the video, she hoped they would see him again through her channel's content (*omenikakaritai*). This demonstrates that *kenjyogo* is employed when the speaker is talking or imparting information about the speakers

(10). SA: Tsunai deru byūtī wa hontōni 7-nen gurai no mono ni kodawatte
orimashite
The beauty that connects is sticking to about seven years.

(11). SA: Tsukete **itadakuto** suggoi karoyakana tsuke-gokochina ndesu yo.
It feels very light when you put it on.

(12). SA: Basu taimu ga tanoshinde **itadakeru** yō ni natte **orimasu** sōna ndesu
chotto
You can now enjoy your bath time.

(13). SA: **O erabi itadakeru** burando ni natte **orimasu**
We have a brand of your choice

Sentences (10), (11), (12), (13) produced by SA which is exemplify the use of *kenjyogo* to show her humble politeness to CU. The *kenjyogo* in (10) *orimashite, (11)*

itadakuto, (12) itadakeru, and (13) orimasu cannot be lexically translated. But, by using these *kenjyogo*'s verb shows that those sentences are humble-polite. The customary formal form of *orimashite* is *imashite*; *itadakuto* is *morau*; *itadakeru* is *moraeru*; *o erabi itadakeru* is *o erabi moraeru*; and *orimasu* is *imasu*. The definition of the word comes after the verb it was used with (10) *kodawatte* 'sticking'; (11) *tsukete* 'put it on'; (12) *tanoshinde* 'enjoy'; *natte* 'be come'; (13) *o erabi* 'choose'.

Teineigo 'neutral polite'

Although *teineigo* is the more common style of polite address at business meetings, formal gatherings, and other professional settings, *sonkeigo* and *kenjyougo* are equally appropriate ways to express respect for the other person or entity being discussed.

Sentences (14), (15), (16), and (17) all feature instances of the data-oriented *teineigo*. In sentences (14), (15), and (16), as well as in *-de gozaimasu* (17), the use of distal-style *-desu* shows an established social distance between the speaker (SA) and the addressee (CU). Distal-*desu* is used repeatedly during the dialogue to emphasize the social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor, in this case, the CU as the guest being served and the SA as the service provider.

Distal-style-*desu* functions as the copula form in predicate nominal phrases and as a marker on non-copula forms in predicate adjective phrases, such as:

(14). SA: *Bebi-oiru* (N) **desu**.

　　　　 Baby oil

(15). CU: *Daisuki* (A) **desu**.

　　　　 Really like

(16).   CU: *Ii* (A) **desu**

　　　　 Good

(17). SA: Jūjitsu shitemasu ne takusan **gozaimasu**
　　　　　 It is fulfilling. There are a lot of them.

The *-desu copula* and the *-de gozaimasu* ending reveal that the phrases above include *teineigo*. Both the *copula-desu* and *copula-masu* are used for nonverbal sentences in *teineigo*. The copula *-de gozaimasu* at the end of a sentence (17) indicates that the sentence is intended for a formal setting. The polite form of address, copula *-de gozaimasu*, is more formal than its less formal counterparts, copula *-desu* and copula *-masu*.

We can only make sense of the data above by establishing the social setting. When using *Keigo*, both speakers, and listeners adhere to a common set of social and cultural norms that are widely acknowledged among Japanese speakers.

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Discussion

This study has discussed the form of linguistic modesty in Japanese women in social society. Communicating in the social life of the people in Japan is paying keen attention to the relationship between speakers and interlocutors (Brown & Levinson,1987). Honorific are mostly used to argue that etic theories of politeness, such as Brown & Levinson's are unsuitable for analyzing Japanese respect and deference. Japanese politeness folk words and honorific terms are closely related reflecting the confusion between honorific with politeness.

Particularly, the degree of intimacy, or in-group/outside-group (*uchi*/*soto*) distinction, and the hierarchical relationship between the conversational participants have been identified as the most important factors (Wetzel, 2004; Supriatnaningsih et al. 2020). In other words, addressee honorifics are employed by those of lesser status toward those of higher rank and by those who are not close to their interlocutors.

Soto, which has been the subject of much research into Japanese culture for decades, has multiple layers of meaning (Quinn, Bachnik, 1994 in Hakalisto, 2021) *Soto* can be described using terms like 'foreign, formal, public, outsider, secondary, external,' and so on. *Soto* means 'outside', and it encompasses everyone from total strangers to regular customers to the boss. This is significant because your communication style should adapt to the social status.

Regarding the results of the analysis, the relationship between shop assistants use (SA), and consumers utilize (CU) is an 'outside group' soto until it requires SA to always use the polite language, *keigo,* against CU. Because of this *soto* connection, SA realized their position as a service provider that should show respect—appreciation, for CU using *keigo*. When speaking and asking about topics related to CU and general customers, SA uses *sonkeigo* and *teineigo*. And when explaining and promoting the product, SA should have used *kenjyogo*. Wetzel (2004), found that politeness or etiquette in Japanese is mostly used to describe politeness or honor depending on one's position associated with 'in-group' *uchi* and 'outside-group', *soto,* which is related to rank or status, such as superiors and subordinates, social attachment, that is service providers and customers. However, although as a customer, CU also used *kenjyogo* several times against SA. This is related to the assumption of norms in Japanese society, when meeting and speaking particularly for the first time with an outside group soto, and talking about personal matters, the use of *kenjyogo* is the right thing to use as mentioned by (Hasegawa, 2012; Hakalisto, 2022).

Later, CU was also found using keigo when greeting and talking to audiences who he presume were watching the video footage. The hierarchy of relationships between CU and audiences which are also outside group soto and as a video recording provider for audience led to the use of kenjyogo. Politeness in Japanese Women is seen not only in her language but also in her attitude, behavior and manner of speaking.

This research is supported by Anugrah (2022); sonkeigo, kenjougo, and teineigo is used by the characters in Prince of Legend in formal and casual contexts. The speaker uses kenjougo to respect the interlocutor by lowering himself, sonkeigo to raise them, and teineigo to show mutual regard (Anugrah, 2022; Rashifussalam; 2020). Sonkeigo and teineigo are regularly employed in the same contexts and with new or unfamiliar persons, according to Prince of Legend statistics. Additionally, the results show that keigo is significant in Japan and can be employed in any context, regardless of the speaker-interlocutor connection, familiarity, social standing, or need.

The other thing that happens is that the results of Rizki (2022) showed that Keigo is utilized for a variety of purposes, including maintaining dignity, making satire, and paying homage. According to Somantri (2016), explained that in film kenchou omotenashi ka, there is found 4 means of using keigo: express a feeling of tribute, express a feeling of formal, express a felling of respect,and express a feeling of dignity. Also, there found 9 functions of using Japanese honorific: for apology, submit information, ask for permission, ask a question, receive calls, introduce ourselves, end the conversation, to invite someone, for petition, and to express gratitude. If we compared the using keigo when talking face to face and when calling someone in this film, there is often found Keigo when calling someone.

We can only make sense of the data above by establishing the social setting. When using *Keigo*, both speakers, and listeners adhere to a common set of social and cultural norms that are widely acknowledged among Japanese speakers.

CONCLUSION

There are three main types of polite language that found in this study. Those are *teineigo, kenjyougo,* and *sonkeigo*. Sonkeigo is used when the speaker wishes to show respect for the customer also the person being discussed in the conversation. The phrase *kenjyogo* puts the speaker on a lesser level with the recipient when talked about themselves. *Kenjyougo* is scarce in the same way that *Sonkeigo* is. The only copula words Teineigo uses are *-masu* and *-desu*. *Teineigo* is best described as a form of polite or formal speech.

It is found that *keigo* is a method of Japanese women to express their politeness, etiquette and also emotional in the same time as well as how Japanese women communicate to maintain their image in the eyes of others. No matter how strictly they adhere to the standard or how radically they deviate from it, all speakers have the goal of achieving some desired result that they consider ideal. *Keigo* is a social approach used in Japanese culture to demonstrate the connection between the speaker and the addressed.

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