

The Use of Address Terms between Japanese Spouses

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Key words: **honorific, address term, pronoun, spouse, reciprocity**

Despite their relative shortness, address terms clearly designate the degrees of politeness in the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the addressee. It is generally accepted that the second person pronouns T and V of major European languages have come to be used on a reciprocal basis. In other words, those languages have become egalitarian languages.

In discussing Japanese honorifics, we tend to focus on factors such as status, differences in age and sex, and out-groupness, and in fact those are the factors which govern people's verbal behavior in the public domain. However, it is doubtful whether those prescriptive factors impose the same degree of constraint on the individual's verbal behavior in the private domain. Rather than the factors mentioned above, I am more interested in the underlying consciousness which works to determine the individual's linguistic behavior. In order to clarify the possibility of the egalitarian use of Japanese honorifics, I took, as a barometer, address terms exchanged between Japanese spouses.

The data required for this study, collected from questionnaires completed by 150 Japanese couples, are analyzed and discussed. The honorifics and the address system of Japanese based on Japanese social traditions are also described.

INTRODUCTION

Almost every society is hierarchically structured, and that is reflected in the use of language in one way or the other. However, the degree to which the Japanese language articulates vertical orientation is close to unique. It is almost impossible for an adult to speak neutrally. The honorific system is realized both lexically and grammatically. Almost all grammatical categories actualize honorifics: prefixes, suffixes, nouns, pronouns, auxiliaries, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

The social origin of the refined honorific system is often attributed to the self-imposed isolation period (1615–1853). During the long Tokugawa shogunate (1600–1867),

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people were rigidly divided into four major hierarchical classes: warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants. Farmers were given the second highest ranking but practically no substantial status, whereas, despite considerable financial power, merchants ranked lowest. Clearly, samurai ethics disfavored occupations that dealt with money, which was considered "impure" for not engaging in actual production. Furthermore, the aristocracy, the imperial family, and those associated with them were given nominal authority and came at the top, and the outcast class at the bottom. Confucianism, which articulated self-discipline, respect for superiors, low status for women, and harmonious social order, etc., flourished, and was officially encouraged by the Tokugawa shogunate.

In 1639, out of fear of Catholic influence and potential foreign colonization, the Tokugawa government closed the country off from the rest of the world. Thus, Japan, surrounded by the sea, was miraculously free from foreign invasion and did not have access to other cultures for over two hundred years. During this self-imposed seclusion period, rigid class stratification together with Confucian doctrines pervaded the country. The vertical organizational principle and the elaborate honorific system are believed to have become fully developed in this period.

After the Meiji Restoration (1868), the class system was abolished, and Japan is supposed to have become a democratic society. But this did not seem to bring any fundamental change in hierarchical language use. The change took place only in terms of the power structure. The military, landowners, politicians, and prosperous merchants were the ones who gained power.

Martin (1974: 277) maintains that four factors, in the following order, determine speech levels in Japanese: status, age difference, sex difference, and out-groupness. Admittedly, all of them are recognized as general criteria for prescribing people's behavior. In an organization, those are exactly the factors which govern not only the verbal but also the overall behavior of an individual; for instance, the degree and duration of bowing or walking a few steps behind a superior. Or an elaborate etiquette in treating an important out-group member. However, from a different point of view, it can be pointed out that those factors are heavily loaded with situational values. It is doubtful whether those prescriptive factors impose the same degree of constraint on the individual's behavior in his private domain.

Like other scholars (Lebra, Nakane), Reischauer (1977: 138) describes Japanese ethics as more "relativistic" or "situational" than "universal." "In a society in which people see themselves primarily as members of groups, specific intragroup and also intergroup relationships may reasonably take precedence over universal principles." Furthermore, he maintains, "The emphasis on particularistic relations rather than universal principles naturally leads to a great number of specific rules of conduct rather than a few clear ethical signposts. Ethics blends off into politeness and good manners" (142-43). He seems to insinuate that without prescriptions Japanese behavioral patterns are unpredictable. In fact, within an organization, there is not much freedom of choice for the individual other than the prescribed behavior or speech style.

Rather than these situational variables, I am more interested in the underlying consciousness which is presumably social by nature and determines the individual's behavior in private life.

I am particularly concerned with verbal exchanges taking place in the family with husband and wife as the main figures. The family is worth examining as a minimum social unit of society. If any change takes place in vertically oriented language use, it is most likely to be discerned in the familial relationship first, that is, whether the family functions as a prototype of the hierarchical social structure or as a precursor to lead to egalitarianism, for the family has a crucial commitment to socialize or mold the next generation. In order to investigate familial interpersonal relationships, I have chosen as a barometer the address terms exchanged between Japanese spouses.

A foreigner would be impressed by the richness of Japanese address terms, especially first and second person pronouns. Since address terms are primarily references, what does the diversity mean? What functions do they have other than reference? Do Japanese people actually utilize all the possible address forms? Definitely not. In fact, address terms are part of the honorific system and thus are governed by the same constraints. It is not an exaggeration to say that address terms, in spite of their relative shortness, are the essence of the interpersonal relationship between a speaker and an addressee.

Twenty sets of questionnaires were filled in by Japanese couples living outside of Aichi Prefecture. The rest of the data in the present study was collected in Aichi Prefecture, which is situated between Tokyo and Osaka as is the borderline area dividing the two major dialect groups. In keeping with the geographical location, the Aichi dialect is roughly something between the Tokyo dialect and the Kansai and is not very different from the Tokyo variety, which is regarded as standard. In fact, because of the centralized educational system, the whole nation has been standardized—to the extent that the survival of some local dialects is at stake. In a word, the Japanese situation is very different from other societies with persistent or unique dialects. Nonetheless, the connotations or associations people have about address terms tend to differ slightly from region to region or from individual to individual. For that matter, even age or individual experience could be a factor. After experiencing various social interactions, a person might have developed different opinions or interpretations about address terms, or he might have found himself applying a different variety of reference terms. Therefore, the following discussion is based on my own interpretation of Japanese reference forms which, I believe, does not radically differ from that of the majority. In the following section, I will introduce the Japanese address system.

Address Terms

The First Person Pronouns

Major first person pronouns in Japanese are shown in Figs. 1 and 2.

In addition to reference functions, the first, the second, and the third person pronouns all convey the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent, that is, the interpersonal relationship in terms of the speaker's point of view. Therefore, there is a possibility of a conflict when the addressee does not agree with the speaker's choice of a particular pronoun. For example, a blunt first person pronoun, just like a blunt second person pronoun, could offend the hearer as rude even when he

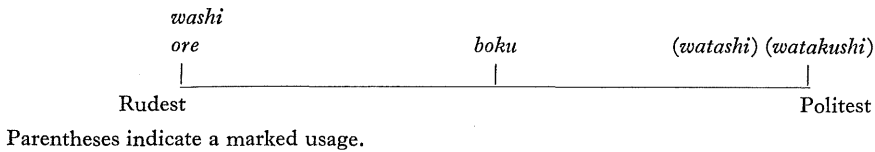


Fig. 1 Male I-words



Fig. 2 Female I-words

is not the referent. By the same token, a too-polite first or second person pronoun makes the addressee uncomfortable. The addressee might feel that the speaker is attempting to keep a distance.

Despite the similarity, the first and the second person pronouns differ from each other in that the first person pronoun system is functionally self-contained in terms of politeness. Polite first person pronouns such as *watashi* and *watakushi* convey deference without adding any suffix, while none of the second person pronouns by themselves is prescribed as deferential. Rather symbolically, when men humble themselves in formal speech, they use the first person pronouns *watashi* or more polite *watakushi*, which are usually associated with women's references. None of the typical male I-words such as *washi*, *ore*, or even *boku* is appropriate in formal speech. It should be noted that *boku* has expanded its territory recently. It is more often accepted on formal occasions than before. Nonetheless, the reference is not prescribed as adequate in formal speech.

Males have a wider repertory of I-words. About one-third of 150 husbands employ two I-words even within the private domain. Three husbands use as many as three. The combinations found are *ore* and *boku*, *ore* and *washi*, or *ore* and *watashi*. Compared with males, women have limited I-words. Even among the possible three, very few females utilize the rude reference *washi*. The majority use *watashi* whatever the situation, so when used by females, the reference is taken as neutral and unmarked. Other women who usually use *watashi* switch to *watakushi* in formal speech. Nonetheless, *watashi* is considered polite enough for formal occasions. Or rather, from a different viewpoint, whatever the situation, only polite first person references are available for women in practice.

Another difference between first and second person pronouns is that, as far as casual speech is concerned, male and female I-words are roughly complementary. But this is not the case with second person pronouns. In casual speech, males mainly use *washi*, *ore*, or *boku*, while females mainly use *watashi* or much less often *watakushi*. Nevertheless, some deviations from the standard are found among both males and females. This will be further discussed later.

The Second Person Pronouns

Four main kinds of second person pronouns are commonly used by males and females, although the distribution differs drastically between the two. The scale of the second person pronouns in terms of relative politeness are shown in Fig. 3.

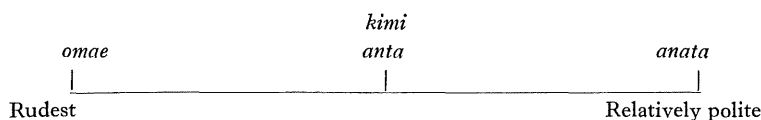


Fig. 3 Male and Female You-words

Some people may not agree that *kimi* and *anta* are at the same position. *Anta* itself is not a polite word, although not as rude as *omae*. Nevertheless, it is more favorably accepted in the Kansai area than in Tokyo or its vicinity, probably due to the mild Kansai accent. Also it is convenient to put them together for the sake of comparison. Although in theory all the four references are shared by males and females, very few females actually use *kimi*. A rare but typical exception I can think of is a female schoolteacher calling a pupil *kimi*. *Kimi* is almost exclusively used by males while *anta* is shared by both. The nuances of the two terms may differ, but both are used to refer to an equal or a junior. Thus, their functions in terms of politeness can be regarded as identical.

Omae is definitely a rude second person reference. It can never be used in polite discourse. Yet men use the expression relatively frequently while women simply do not use it. This is the most common pronoun the husband applies to his wife and children. Also, boys or men of the same age often use this pronoun among themselves or to their juniors. Male schoolteachers often use the expression with their students.

On the other hand, in a rare but legitimate case women use this pronoun when they call their children. And even in that case, women are expected to be old. Otherwise, the usage is marked. In my data, 3 women out of 150 use the pronoun to their husbands only when they quarrel. Their use of this term is not on a regular basis. Apparently they aim at the special emotional effect this rude pronoun can bring about in their husbands. It is effective because the usage is a deviation from the well-established norm—women usually do not use *omae*, least of all to their husbands.

It is rather significant that, in spite of the diversity, none of the second person pronouns has a deferential function. Even the politest *anata* is not adequate in formal speech. *Anata* is only polite between equals or when referring to a junior. One way to modify this is to add a suffix or to apply a quasi-pronoun *taku* (household) with a prefix or both a prefix and suffix to derive a polite version: *anata-sama* (sec. per. pron., def. suffix), *o-taku* (def. pref., quasi-pron.), and *o-taku-sama* (def. pref., def. suffix).

Fortunately, the Japanese language allows ellipsis to a great extent, including the omission of the subject, the object, and the possessive. People can usually avoid situations where choosing a particular pronoun is awkward. More commonly, people depend on other means as second person references, like surname-*san* (def. suffix) or

position or professional name-*san* (def. suffix); for example, caretaker-*san*, student-*san*, or section chief-*san*.

These are neutral or unmarked but more polite than names only. Also, a quasi-pronoun *o-taku* (your household) prevails among grown-ups. *Sensei* (“master” or “teacher”) is a convenient reference extensively covering all the professionals and even politicians.

The Third Person Pronouns

The third person pronoun system does exist in Japanese. The third person pronoun system, though, lacks the diversity of the first and second person pronoun systems. There are only two: *kare* (“he”) and *kanojo* (“she”), and plural forms like those of the first and second person pronouns are derived by adding a suffix such as *kare-ra* (“he”-plural suffix) or *kare-tachi* (“he”-plural suffix). The third person pronoun system is least used among the three systems and is not in the vocabulary of children. Part of the reason at least is the functional limitation; the referent should be an equal or a junior. On the other hand, the two third person pronouns have developed special connotative meanings and are used in a possessive sense. For instance, “A-*san no kare*” (A’s he, A’s boyfriend) or “B-*san no kanojo*” (B’s she, B’s girlfriend). The plural forms do not have this connotation.

Except for this usage, many people seem to avoid using third person pronouns, probably because the user sounds somehow presumptuous or conceited. Although certain people use them relatively freely, the majority use them seldom, if at all. Generally speaking, people use *ano-hito* (“that person”) or a more polite *ano kata* (deferential “that side, that person”) or a blunt *a-itsu* (“that person”). Furthermore, second person references except for pronouns all function as third person references. For instance, surname or first name-*san*, occupational title-*san*, *sensei*, or kinship terms are all used as second and third person references.

Kinship Terms

In addition to pronouns, kinship terms are commonly used among the family as first, second, and third person references. Kinship terms are all derived from the viewpoint of the child, or more exactly speaking, that of the youngest child. For instance, after the young child starts speaking, the wife comes to call the husband “father” and is called “mother” by him. Initially, they call their parents and parents-in-law “father” and “mother” but may gradually switch to “grandfather” and “grandmother.” These reference terms may easily become new address terms between grandparents who were likely to call each other “father” and “mother” a generation ago. In turn, it is not uncommon for grandparents to start calling the son and his wife “father” and “mother,” from the viewpoint of the grandchild.

Elder children are likely to be called *o-nii-san* (or *chan*) (def. pref., elder brother, def. suff.) or *o-nei-san* (or *chan*) (def. pref., elder sister, def. suff.) not only by their younger siblings but also by parents and the grandparents fictively. Here the viewpoint of the youngest is applied. Those kinship terms are all used by the referents themselves

as first person references in interacting with children or in the case of older siblings with younger siblings, especially when children are young.

In spite of the frequent use of kinship terms, usage is limited on a non-reciprocal basis except when fictively used by other family members. That is, from the younger to the older generation, not vice versa. There are no kinship terms parents can address their children or grandchildren with. For example, "son," "daughter," or "grandchild" cannot be used as address forms. In parallel, within the same generation, there are kinship address terms to refer to older siblings but not to younger siblings, like "younger brother" or "younger sister." Also, it cannot be overlooked that kinship terms as address forms are used almost always with a deferential suffix *san* or *chan*.

Kinship terms are extended in use ubiquitously outside the family. For example, a woman with a child is likely to be called "mother" even by a stranger. Schoolteachers regularly call the parents of pupils "father" or "mother." To their regret, elderly people are likely to bear "grandfather" or "grandmother" as regular references.

It should be mentioned that not all Japanese people are concerned or obsessed with their speech style. At the advanced level of schooling, boys and girls come to be aware of the significance of vertical human relationships, such as teacher and student or senior and junior. Accordingly, they start to differentiate their speech style depending on the occasion. The process might be accelerated by parents or grandparents. After graduation, males and females acquire honorifics more readily. Unlike language acquisition, it is a conscious attempt to be admitted into the "real world." In a way, it is socialization that takes place at a relatively late stage. Mastering honorifics is associated with good upbringing, high education, femaleness, or sensibility. Moreover, in contrast to language acquisition, learning honorifics is additional or optional. People can be entirely or relatively free from using honorifics. Some foreign learners of Japanese cannot agree to the idea of exalting a social superior and thus refuse to use them. After all, honorifics are not essentially important to those who do not belong to an organization or are not involved in complicated interpersonal interactions.

As a result, some people may have a limited speech styles and use them exhaustively. By the same token, they may have a very few blunt pronouns and apply them all the time to whomever they speak to. In a word, there are no polite pronouns in their functional repertory.

Social Groups

Social stratification does exist in Japan, but it is very different from the British class system or the Indian caste system. Japanese stratification lacks the rigidity which is a common characteristic of these two systems, and it does not have any distinctive features such as a particular social dialect. The social anthropologist Nakane (1970: 87) denies the existence of social classes in Japanese society even if something vaguely resembling those in Europe can be detected. She argues that "the point is in actual society, this stratification is unlikely to function and that it does not really reflect the

social structure. In Japanese society it is really not a matter of workers struggling against capitalists or managers but of Company A ranged against Company B. The protagonists do not stand in vertical relationship to each other but instead rub elbows from parallel positions.” Japanese people simply do not categorize themselves in terms of class. Instead, Nakane (1970: 93) maintains that “the order of rank serves a function similar to a classification by caste or class.” She thinks that this is “the reason why the Japanese care so little about class difference. They are more interested in their relative rank and so attention is focused upon the self and those in the immediate surroundings.” Thus, people are more likely to identify themselves with educational achievement (or the rank of the university they graduated from) or with the organization they belong to (or the rank of the organization) or with their profession when it is highly regarded. Achievements rather than attribution are regarded as important. From that point, to group people according to their occupations parallels the way people are classified in Japanese society.

Address terms used by spouses of four major social groups will be examined. The distinction is made according to the occupation of the husband because not so many married women have jobs, especially full-time jobs. The four social groups are the white-collar, the blue-collar, the professionals, and the self-employed, such as owners of shops or relatively small-scale factories or companies.

Method

Unlike contemporary European counterparts, address terms exchanged by Japanese spouses are on a non-reciprocal basis. That is, the husband is addressed by a more polite pronoun than the one he applies to the wife. In the case of the name, the wife uses the name with a deferential suffix but she is addressed only by name by the husband. In addition to second person references, politeness can be measured in I-words. But in the case of I-words, a comparison does not seem appropriate because of their loosely complementary distribution. On the other hand, it is possible to note change in the use of I-words as well as you-words before and after marriage. In their use of reference terms, women tend to be stable while men are likely to switch to blunt expressions after marriage as a matter of course. Initially, I intended to check to what extent a husband and a wife switch from formal to informal terms of reference on the assumption that a couple speak more formally to each other before marriage. This idea has some problems which I had not initially noticed. Couples in arranged marriages are usually formal until marriage, but very close or intimate couples tend to switch to informal speech long before marriage. So I am going to examine the relative change in the use of references after marriage for comparison. Address forms and deviations, as well as other significant phenomena, will be discussed in the following section.

Findings

Asymmetry of Address Exchanges between Spouses

In the questionnaire, the informant is asked which pronoun(s) he/she applies in calling

his/her spouse and also the proportion(s) of the usage of the pronoun(s)—20, 40, 60, or 100 percent. For instance, if a husband employs *omae* 60 percent and *anta* 40 percent, this is counted as 0.6 under *omae* and as 0.4 under *anta*. Regardless of the format, if the informant is certain about the exact proportions of the usage, the proportions he/she claims are counted. The four varieties of how the name are used is dealt with in the same way. Minor reference forms such as quasi pronouns *o-taku* (“ your household ”) or *sochira* (“ your side ”) are few and therefore are disregarded. The fictive use of kinship terms will be discussed later.

Rather amazingly, many spouses among the 150 couples do not make use of second person pronouns (44 husbands; 49 wives) or names (30 husbands; 62 wives) at all (see Table 1 and 2). Some (12 husbands; 25 wives) do not employ either of them. Those spouses apply fictive kinship terms exclusively or in the case of two husbands resort to other means, the interjection *oi*. Those non-users are excluded in the calculation of the proportion.

The average frequency of the usage of pronouns and names is asymmetrical and conforms to the general assumption. The politest pronoun *anata* scores as high as 67.2 percent on the part of the wives. *Anta* may not be as polite as *anata*, but the reference has no derogative connotation and therefore is good enough among equals. The proportion of wives who use the rude pronoun *omae* is only 0.4 percent and almost insignificant. On the whole, wives do not use rude pronouns. The variation is within a permissible category.

On the other hand, *omae* is the one most frequently used by the husbands (52.2 per-

Table 1 The Average Frequency of the Pronouns Used by Spouses

| Wives | | | Husbands | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| 101/150 (49 non-users) | | | 106/150 (44 non-users) | | |
| <i>omae</i> | <i>anta</i> <i>kimi</i> | <i>anata</i> | <i>omae</i> | <i>anta</i> <i>kimi</i> | <i>anata</i> |
| 0.4% (3) | 32.35% (39) | 67.2% (73) | 52.2% (61) | 41.2% (51) | 6.6% (8) |

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of users.

Table 2 The Average Proportion of How Names Are Used by Spouses

| Wives | | | | Husbands | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 88/150 (62 non-users) | | | | 120/150 (30 non-users) | | | |
| name | nickname | nickname & <i>san</i> | name & <i>san</i> | name | nickname | nickname & <i>san</i> | name & <i>san</i> |
| 7.2% (8) | 7.72% (7) | 1.1% (7) | 83.4% (75) | 69.5% (89) | 5.3% (7) | 1.8% (3) | 23.25% (33) |
| 14.9% | | 84.5% | | 74.8% | | 25.1% | |

cent) (see Table 1). But the statistics do not describe the situation entirely. My questionnaire is intended to elicit such concrete address terms as pronouns, kinship terms, or names. But many wives mention *oi* (an interjection similar to the English "hey") as one of the regular forms they hear from their husbands. Two wives mention they are called nothing other than *oi*. Admittedly, women use interjections *nee* and *chotto* as references as well, but they do not have the rude connotation which *oi* has. *Omae* is a rude pronoun, but *oi* does not seem to be any better.

As for the name, there are four varieties in usage (see Table 2). Granted, the addressee might feel that the nickname sounds more affectionate than the name, but for the moment I group them together for the sake of convenience. The main focus is on whether a deferential suffix (mainly *san* but sometimes *chan* or *kun*) is reciprocated or not between spouses. The wives add a deferential suffix to the names of their husbands as frequently as 85 percent of the time. But the husbands apply it with much less frequency—25 percent. Asymmetry in the address system is discerned in the use of the names as well.

As for the comparison among the four groups, in usage of the name, blue-collar wives add a deferential suffix least of all, while all self-employed wives conform to the standard. Only about one-third (12/31) of self-employed wives use the names of their spouses, whereas over 80 percent of their husbands make use of the name. In addition to their relative preference for kinship terms, it turns out that at least some of the self-employed wives have additional references to call their spouses which are not included in the questionnaire. They are *shachō* ("president, chief"), *tenchō* ("owner"), and *taishō* ("master" or "head")—all references indicating the head of an organization. The viewpoint of employees or people having interactions in their business is extended in use by the wives. Nevertheless, the names are always used with a deferential suffix by the self-employed wives. For that matter, none of them apply a non-standard reference form such as a nickname. Their husbands show a similar linguistic behavior; nicknames are used least frequently in all the groups. The self-employed couples seem to be the most standardized.

My questionnaire asks about the use of address terms at present and before marriage. But it turns out there are in-between references in several cases. The wife of a doll shop owner remembers that she and her husband used to call each other by nicknames, until some customers criticized it as strange. Since then they have employed fictive kinship terms exclusively. Another case is that of one white-collar husband who kept applying a deferential suffix to his wife until a relative commented on it. Since then the husband has not employed a deferential suffix. Also, it is found that in-laws of a husband are sensitive about how he is called by his wife. They do not like the husband to be addressed by his wife without a deferential suffix. From that viewpoint blue-collar wives are relatively least inhibited in using the names of their husbands. Compared to the blue-collar and the self-employed husbands, those of the white collar and the professionals use a deferential suffix more frequently.

As for the use of pronouns, the white-collar and the professional wives use a polite *anata* much more frequently than a neutral *anta*. The blue-collar wives use *anata* slightly more frequently than *anta* while it is the other way around among the self-

employed wives. It seems that the use of the rude pronoun *omae* is a key variable to measure men's chauvinism as women cannot reciprocate that pronoun. From that standpoint, the blue-collar husbands are most conservative, immediately followed by self-employed husbands. Also, no blue-collar husband applies the polite pronoun *anata*. *Omae* is least frequently used by the professional husbands.

In spite of relative reciprocity found among the white-collar and the professional groups and relative uniqueness in the wives of the blue-collar, among the white-collar and the professionals, address terms between spouses are on the whole asymmetrical and standardized. Social pressure seems to work on standardization explicitly or implicitly.

Some wives became upset while filling in the questionnaire, as if they had noticed the asymmetrical nature of the exchange for the first time. Others mention the drastic change their husbands have made in the way they refer to them after marriage—the most polite *anata* to the rudest *omae*. Several wives point out that their husbands try to look authoritative or to be a master-figure in front of relatives or friends and thus tend to use a blunt reference, which they do not apply when they are alone. At least several husbands employ polite address terms as a strategy. When asking for a special favor from their wives, they use politer pronouns as well as names with a deferential suffix. Wives' reactions to the way their husbands call them are varied. Some are resentful of the non-reciprocal orientation, while others are quite happy about a similar situation. The reason, according to a few wives, is that they feel they have established a solid bond with their husbands. Although men tend to use *omae* relatively freely, they cannot address every woman with a rude pronoun. The reference *omae* is, in a way, a sign of closeness or intimacy between them. Nevertheless, the majority of wives do not seem to be particularly concerned with how they are called. After all, the husband's use of *omae* or even *oi* does not deviate from the social standard and is widely heard in popular culture such as television dramas or songs. Obviously, they are too busy with their daily activities to reflect on how they are called.

Changes in References after Marriage

A considerable number of spouses did not use second person pronouns as address forms before marriage (see Table 3). Many comment that they felt too embarrassed to use pronouns. Apparently, interpersonal relationships articulated in second person pronouns hinder the actual interaction. After marriage, more spouses in all the groups make use of second person pronouns relatively more frequently.

For wives, the change in the use of second person pronouns is from *anata* to *anta*. *Anata* used to be the common pronoun most frequently used by the females of all four groups, but now, *anta* is slightly more frequently used by the wives of the self-employed. Although less frequently, *anata* is still the pronoun most used by the wives of the other three groups. The professional wives are stable in that the change after marriage is least remarkable. Three wives (one blue-collar and two self-employed) have acquired a rude *omae* after marriage. As for the names, the wives of all the groups except for the self-employed come to use nicknames as well as names without a deferential suffix relatively more frequently than before. Among the self-employed, the decrease in the number of wives using the name is significant.

Table 3 The Distributional Frequency of the Use of Second Person Pronouns before and after Marriage

| | | Wives | | | Husbands | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| | | Non-users | <i>omae</i> | <i>kimi anta</i> | <i>anata</i> | Non-users | <i>omae</i> | <i>kimi anta</i> | <i>anata</i> |
| Blue-collar 34 couples | Before | 20 | | 39% | 61% | 18 | 39% | 50% | 11% |
| | Present | 12 | 0.4% | 47.2% | 52.3% | 9 | 84% | 16% | |
| | | 100% | | | 61% | | | | |
| | | 99.5% | | | 16% | | | | |
| Self-employed 31 couples | Before | 17 | | 43% | 57% | 14 | 42% | 37% | 21% |
| | Present | 12 | 1.5% | 56.3% | 42.1% | 8 | 64.3% | 31.3% | 4.3% |
| | | 100% | | | 58% | | | | |
| | | 98.4% | | | 35.6% | | | | |
| White-collar 48 couples | Before | 18 | | 3% | 97% | 20 | | 60% | 40% |
| | Present | 13 | | 19.7% | 80.3% | 16 | 36.2% | 52.3% | 11.4% |
| | | 100% | | | 100% | | | | |
| | | 100% | | | 63.7% | | | | |
| Professionals 37 couples | Before | 16 | | 14% | 86% | 12 | 6% | 70% | 24% |
| | Present | 11 | | 19.2% | 80.8% | 11 | 28.8% | 61.5% | 9.2% |
| | | 100% | | | 94% | | | | |
| | | 100% | | | 70.7% | | | | |

The change after marriage is more remarkable on the part of the husbands. Before marriage, neutral or polite pronouns were more often used but were replaced by *omae* among the blue-collar and the self-employed husbands. *Omae* was not used at all by the white-collar males and was insignificantly used by the professional males but now is used with considerable frequency among those two groups. As for the use of the names, the men in all the groups applied a deferential suffix more frequently before marriage (see Table 4). A deferential suffix is used much less frequently by the husbands in all the groups now. The men's change in linguistic behavior is discerned in their usage of I-words as well (see Table 5). Except for the professional males, blunt pronouns are now more frequently used than a neutral one in all the groups. In the professional group, a polite *boku* is more frequently used than blunt pronouns but the proportion is much less than before marriage.

The wives' change in I-words is insignificant (see Table 6). It seems that men feel entitled to apply blunt pronouns after marriage. The characteristic of the address exchange between Japanese spouses is that familiarity or closeness does not lead to reciprocity.

Table 4 The Ways Names Are Used before and after Marriage

| | | Wives | | | | Husbands | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------------|------------------|
| | | non-user | name only | nick-name only | nick-name & suf. | name & suf. | non-user | name only | nick-name only | nick-name & suf. |
| Blue-collar 34 couples | Before | 6 | 7% | 4% | 89% | 4 | 49% | 7% | 6% | 38% |
| | Present | 14 | 11% | 10% | 89% | 8 | 56% | 10% | 44% | 13% |
| | | | 29% | 71% | 71% | | 83% | | 17% | |
| Self-employed 31 couples | Before | 8 | | | 100% | 6 | 36% | | 1% | 62% |
| | Present | 19 | | | 100% | 5 | 36% | | 63% | 16.5% |
| | | | | | 100% | | 82.7% | | 0.7% | 17.2% |
| White-collar 48 couples | Before | 13 | 3% | 3% | 94% | 5 | 14% | 3% | 2% | 81% |
| | Present | 16 | 6% | 6% | 94% | 8 | 17% | | 83% | |
| | | | 9% | 91% | 91% | | 66.2% | | 33.8% | |
| Professionals 37 couples | Before | 8 | 0.7% | 9.6% | 89.6% | 5 | 16% | 6% | 3% | 75% |
| | Present | 13 | 10.3% | 11% | 89.6% | 9 | 22% | | 78% | |
| | | | 20% | 80% | 80% | | 73% | | 27% | |

Table 5 The Usage of First Person Pronouns by the Husbands before and after Marriage

| | | Number of non-users | Blunt pronouns | | Polite pronouns | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | | | <i>washi</i> | <i>ore</i> | <i>boku</i> | <i>watashi</i> |
| Blue-Collar (34) | Before | | 5.9% | 55.9% | 38.2% | |
| | Present | | 6.4% | 81.5% | 12% | |
| Self-Employed (31) | Before | 2 | 1.3% | 38.6% | 59% | 0.7% |
| | Present | | 7.4% | 73.2% | 17.7% | 1.2% |
| White-Collar (48) | Before | 2 | 2% | 20% | 75.4% | 3.3% |
| | Present | 2 | 8.4% | 47.0% | 40.4% | 4.3% |
| Professionals (37) | Before | 4 | 0.9% | 15% | 75.8% | 7.9% |
| | Present | 2 | 5.1% | 33.7% | 50% | 11% |

The Kinship Terms

Foreign observers are amazed at the degree to which Japanese parents assimilate themselves to their children. The fictive kinship terms used between spouses are often quoted as an example of the extent of their devotion. In my data, as expected, the child's point of view is extended in use by many parents. Thirty-five spouses employ no reference other than the fictive kinship term to address their spouses (Tables 7 and 8).

One tendency found in the use of the kinship term is that spouses use the fictive kinship term reciprocally. That is, if one spouse uses the kinship term, the other spouse is likely to use it as well. In my data, 226 spouses out of 300 use the kinship term and among them 87.5 percent on a reciprocal basis. Thus, "father" and "mother," or a generation later "grandfather" and "grandmother," are exchanged like a set by many spouses.

Table 6 The Usage of First Person Pronouns by the Wives Before and After Marriage

| | | Blunt | Polite | |
|-----------------------|---------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | <i>washi</i> | <i>watashi</i> | <i>watakushi</i> |
| Blue-Collar (34) | Before | | 96.5% | 3.5% |
| | Present | | 98.8% | 1.2% |
| Self-Employed (31) | Before | 2% (?) | 94% | 4% |
| | Present | 7% | 93% | |
| White-Collar (48) | Before | | 94.6% | 5.4% |
| | Present | | 97% | 3% |
| Professionals (37) | Before | | 99.4% | 0.5% |
| | Present | | 98.1% | 1.9% |

Table 7 The Proportion of Spouses Using Fictive Kinship Terms

| | Blue-collar | Self-employed | White-collar | Professionals |
|----------|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Wives | 94%(6) | 87%(6) | 81.3%(7) | 64.9%(6) |
| Husbands | 76.5%(3) | 80.6%(1) | 68.8%(3) | 54.1%(3) |

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of exclusive users.

Table 8 The Proportional Frequency of the Usage of Fictive Kinship Terms in Relation to Other References

| | Blue-collar | Self-employed | White-collar | Professionals |
|----------|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Wives | 63% | 58.7% | 51% | 32.6% |
| Husbands | 45% | 43.8% | 40.4% | 29.5% |

The kinship terms (except for the borrowed words "papa" and "mama") are always used with a deferential suffix, which husbands usually ignore when using the name of the wives. Unlike other references, the kinship terms are exchanged on a symmetrical basis. The words "father" and "mother" are strictly equal to each other. Yet, it cannot be overlooked that the perfect symmetry is derived only when the child's point of view is extended in use as the address term.

In each group, wives more frequently use the kinship term than their husbands. In comparison to the blue-collar group, the proportions of the professionals are rather remarkable. As mentioned previously, kinship terms are prevalent in Japanese society, so not to use them takes a certain resolution on the part of the spouses. In that sense, more spouses among professionals decide not to use kinship terms fictively. They might disagree with this type of self or addressee identification. If there is any correlation between the degree of assimilation to children and the frequency of the use of the kinship terms, the professional couples are relatively the most detached of all the groups.

Deviations from the Norm (I-words)

Suzuki (1974: 148) makes an interesting observation on the first person references in Japanese. According to him, the first person pronouns of European languages and of the Semitic languages, the Turkic languages, or for that matter Chinese, are functionally the same, indicating that the self is the speaker. "It is a characteristic of this type of linguistic behavior that the speaker's linguistic self-identification is conducted autonomously and independently without reference to the addressee or to surrounding circumstances." Then he contends that there is self-recognition prior to the recognition of the addressee. "The order of consciousness, then, is ego → tu." He points out that the structure of Japanese personal pronouns is in the reverse order. "... in Japanese, unlike the European languages, definition of the addressee precedes self-identification." Moreover, he argues that "linguistic identification in Japanese is, on the whole, object-dependent."

Indeed, his argument explains the Japanese situation well. Men usually have a repertory of a few I-words which they alternate in given situations with polite references used when with superiors and blunt ones when with intimates. Similarly, but much less frequently, women code switch from *watashi* to the more polite pronoun *watakushi* in interacting with those with whom they feel social distance (Figs. 4 and 5). However, nine deviant cases are found in the male usage of I-words, which are a potential counterexample to Suzuki's argument. As mentioned previously, in casual speech male and female I-words are roughly in complementary distribution. However, nine husbands (three white-collar, two self-employed and four professionals) employ the polite first person pronoun *watashi* in talking with their wives. Three of them exclusively use *watashi* and the other six use it together with a rude pronoun *ore*. It is not unusual for men to use *watashi* or *watakushi* on a formal occasion because none of the typical male I-words is prescribed as polite enough. After work, they switch to informal speech and apply blunt *ore*, *washi*, or the politer reference *boku*. Contrary to this general tendency, nine men keep using *watashi* even in the private domain. The

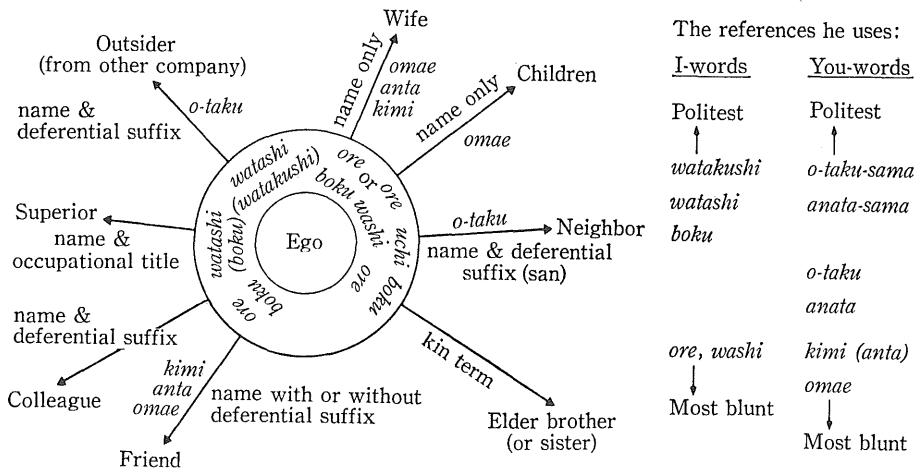


Fig. 4 Examples of the Usage of First and Second Person References: Male (Company Employee)
Source: The format follows Suzuki (1974).

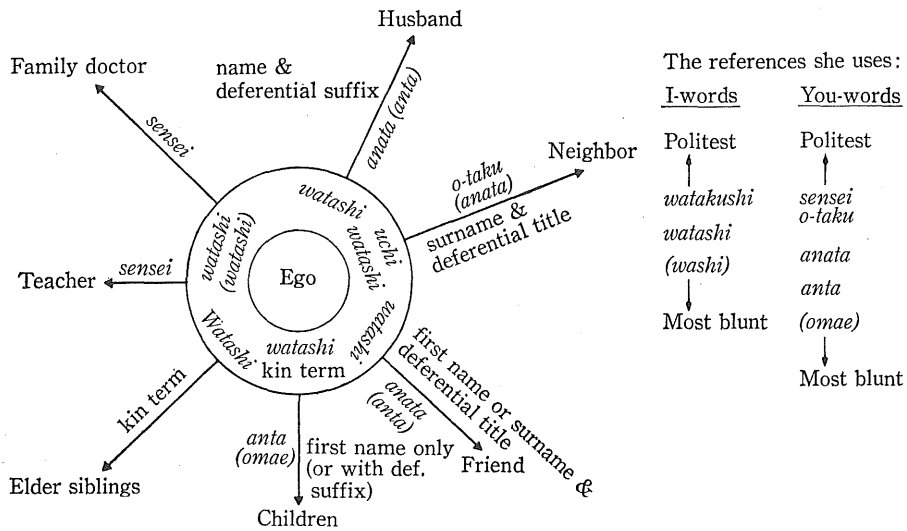


Fig. 5 Examples of the Usage of First and Second Person References: Female (Housewife)
Source: The format follows Suzuki (1974).

phenomenon becomes more significant in that the choice of a polite I-word is not necessarily correlated to the rest of the speech style. The six alternate *watashi* with a blunt pronoun *ore*. Some use *omae* and *oi* to call their wives. Evidently, male use of *wa-*

tashi in the private domain is exceptional in the whole pronoun system and thus Suzuki's argument cannot be applied satisfactorily.

Unlike females, males tend to have two or three I-words even within the private domain. In the data, forty-one husbands use two I-words in interacting with their wives. The combination, in most cases, is *ore* and *boku* but in some cases *ore* and *washi*. A significant thing about these nine men using *watashi* is that none of them use *boku*. From this, it is speculated that their preference for *watashi* or their avoidance of *boku* has something to do with their self-identification or aesthetic sense. Small boys use *boku* as the only I-word until they acquire the blunt reference *ore* in the process of seeking solidarity relationships with other boys. Definitely, *watashi* is not in their repertory when they are in school. Possibly, some mature men feel that they cannot identify themselves with *boku* anymore. The polite reference *boku* has a youngish and therefore somewhat immature connotation. As a consequence, they rely upon the reference with a mature connotation, *watashi*, entirely or occasionally. Probably, it is not appropriate to look at male use of *watashi* only in terms of politeness. In the private domain, *watashi* is more likely to be used as a means to express or impress the maturity of the speaker—not for the sake of politeness. Then clearly men's use of *watashi* has two functions. In any case, a certain degree of self-identification cannot be denied.

Women also deviate from the norm in the use of I-words. Three women (all self-employed) use a rough pronoun *washi* in addition to the standard *watashi*. Women's deviations are more straightforward in that the rest of the speech style of these three women is blunt as well, and therefore conforms to Suzuki's observation. Clearly, at least sometimes, they feel *washi* is appropriate or good enough in talking with their husbands. The three deviants are women over sixty-five and all are running shops with their husbands. Since the instances are so few, I am not certain whether this is solely because of age or partly due to their equal economic contribution. Two of them are not sure whether they used *washi* before marriage or not. It is often the case with elderly couples that they hardly saw each other before marriage. Everything, including their meeting, was arranged by parents or relatives. Also, it is hard to elicit references used then, that is, if they were used at all, almost half a century ago. However, one thing that is certain is that *washi* is not in the vocabulary of young women. The significance of this phenomenon is that only old women deviate from the standard.

CONCLUSION

Politeness probably is a universal concept and ubiquitous in every society. Yet the expression or the emphasis may differ from culture to culture. What, then, is characteristic of Japanese politeness?

Ogasawara (1972) contrasts Japanese and Western politeness. He argues, "Whereas the Japanese axis is vertical and based on status/age inferiority versus superiority, the Western politeness axis is horizontal." Then Japanese politeness is essentially what Brown and Levinson (1978) call "negative politeness" mainly used as a means to

articulate "social distance" rather than enhancing solidarity relationship. Loveday (1986: 104) points out the lack of the middle level of politeness in the Japanese language, that is, the speech level tends to be either formal or informal and intimate. Usually politeness is not felt to be necessary at the speech level among equals or close acquaintances. Still questions remain: Why do wives speak much more politely than husbands? How can asymmetrical address term exchanges be explained between supposedly equal spouses? One reason might be that because modernization of the country has been relatively recent, egalitarian language has not been developed yet; another might be a strong sense of role-fulfillment obligation on the part of females as pointed out by Loveday (1986: 12). In his research on the phonetic level of the pitch correlates of politeness, he finds that "Japanese female subjects adopted a falsetto mode while males took a low profile." He contrasts the results with the performance of English informants of both sexes, whose pitch levels were less differentiated. He concludes, "The Japanese sex-role expectations are more rigid than those prescribed by English norms" (1986: 13).

In a way, Japanese women are trapped by their own femaleness, which has been imposed upon them and then meticulously cultivated over a long period of time. Doubtless, people find aesthetic value in female politeness. It is very unlikely that wives start reciprocating *omae* to their husbands, however highly liberated they become. Then, it is the task of husbands to modify their speech, that is, if wives seek change for egalitarian language.

Will there be any change towards more egalitarianism at all? A certain amount of egalitarianism is found among the white-collar and the professional groups. Yet, it is difficult to predict now whether the movement will remain an ad hoc phenomenon among particular groups. Or is there any possibility of the movement to develop more fully and eventually influence other social groups? If similar research is conducted five or ten years later, the direction will be clear then. Hopefully, the society will come to be more mature and release people from the rigidly hierarchical prescriptions. Rigid prescriptions hinder people from expressing various forms of politeness of their own accord.

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