

## **SITUATED POLITENESS: MANIPULATING HONORIFIC AND NON-HONORIFIC EXPRESSIONS IN JAPANESE CONVERSATIONS**

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### **1. Introduction\***

While the theories of linguistic politeness advanced by Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987) have been influential and spurred great interest in ensuing research on this topic, limitations of their theories have also been pointed out by many scholars: These theories do not consider cultural and situational variability in the meanings of politeness; politeness rules and maxims are proposed without detailed descriptions of when and how to use them; certain speech acts or linguistic expressions are assumed to be inherently polite/impolite (or face-threatening); and politeness of individual utterances rather than connected discourse has been the focus of study (Hymes 1986; Blum-Kulka 1987; Fraser 1990; Gu 1990; Watts et al. 1992; Agha 1994, etc.). In this study, I maintain that expressions of politeness are relative to specific social contexts as well as to the speakers' ideas about politeness. An adequate account of linguistic politeness thus requires a close examination of the relationship among linguistic expressions in discourse, speakers' ideas about politeness, and social contexts. As a case in point, the present study examines Japanese conversations with regard to the use of honorifics--one of the most important means of expressing politeness in Japanese.

Brown and Levinson (1987) treat honorifics as outputs of a negative politeness strategy -- *Give deference* -- for redressing face-threatening acts. However, it has been pointed out that every utterance in Japanese requires a choice between honorific and non-honorific expressions, which, therefore, cannot be regarded as a matter of politeness strategies applicable only to certain potentially face-threatening speech acts (Matsumoto 1988). Further, while politeness in languages like English is mostly thought to concern speakers' volitional strategies, the use of honorifics and other formal expressions in Japanese is often said to be governed by rigorous situation-based rules, or conventions. Given certain social situations, it is argued, honorifics are obligatory or expected; honorifics grammatically encode certain social relations recognized in the context, such as status difference and degree of intimacy (e.g. Ide 1989; Tokunaga 1992). Hill et al. (1986) and Ide (1989) treat this kind of linguistic politeness as a matter of Discernment rather than Volition. While Volition "allows the speaker a considerably more active choice" in linguistic expressions of politeness, Discernment refers to "the almost automatic observation of socially-agreed-upon rules"; that is, in the Discernment aspect of politeness, "the speaker can be considered to submit passively to the requirement of the system. That is, once certain factors of addressee and situation are noted, the selection of an appropriate

linguistic form and/or appropriate behavior is essentially automatic" (Hill et al. 1986: 348). As pointed out by Watts et al. (1992: 4), politeness characterized by the notion of Discernment corresponds to what Fraser calls the "social-norm" view of politeness. To what extent social norms coincide with actual behaviors is an empirical question. As I will discuss in this paper, a close examination of this question reveals that the nature of "socially-agreed-upon rules" is unclear, and that it is highly questionable whether the use of such linguistic forms as honorifics is an automatic, or passive, response to the contextual features stipulated by the normative rules.

## 2. Relating Honorifics Directly to Social Context

The scope of Japanese honorifics is broad, but in this paper I will focus on two major categories: the so-called referent honorifics (*sozai keego*) and the addressee honorifics (*taisha-keego*, or *teenee-go* 'polite form'). I will also analyze only verbal expressions, and not nominal expressions. Referent honorifics are usually subdivided into two types: subject honorifics (*sonkee-go* 'respectful form') and object honorifics (*kenjoo-go* 'humble form').<sup>1</sup> For example, in example (1) *o-V-ni nari* is regarded as a subject honorific used to refer to the subject-referent's action, and the form *-mash(ita)* an addressee honorific used for the addressee. In (2), the form *o-V-shi* is an object honorific, while the form *-mash(ita)* is an addressee honorific. In (3) neither a referent nor an addressee honorific is used.

- (1) *Tanaka-sensee ga kore o o- kaki- ni nari- mash- ita.*<sup>2</sup>  
 Prof. SM this OM write SH AH Pst  
 'Professor Tanaka wrote this.'
- (2) *Watashi ga sensei no nimotsu o o- mochi-shi- mash- ita.*  
 I SM Prof. GM luggage OM carry OH AH Pst  
 'I carried the professor's luggage (for him).'
- (3) *Tanaka-kun ga kore o ka- ita.*  
 Mr. (informal) SM this OM write N-SH N-AH Pst  
 'Tanaka wrote this.'

In examples (1) and (3) the subject-referent and the addressee are different persons, but the two may be the same person, as in (4).

- (4) *Sensee ga kore o o- kaki- ni nat- ta n desu ka.*  
 Prof. SM this OM write SH Pst AH Q  
 'Did you (Professor) write this?'

In (4) the subject honorific *o-V-ni nat(ta)* is used to refer to the addressee's action and the addressee honorific *desu* is also used for the addressee. Note that the subject honorific form *o-V-ni naru* and the object honorific form *o-V-suru* are both productive and can be used for many verbs (e.g. *o-yomi-ni naru* 'read'; *o-machi-suru* 'wait'). The form *V-(r)areru* is another productive subject honorific form. Some verbs, however, do not take these

productive forms, but instead have suppletive forms (e.g. *meshiagaru*, a subject honorific, and *itadaku*, an object honorific, for *taberu* 'eat').

One prevailing position views the use of honorifics as determined by features of the context, in particular interpersonal distance. Both referent and addressee honorifics are commonly said to be used in reference to the relevant individual who is perceived as distant from the speaker. Interpersonal distance is usually characterized in terms of a status difference and/or the degree of intimacy, or a *uchi-soto* (in-group/out-group) distinction (e.g. Harada 1976; Hinds 1978; Ikuta 1983; Makino & Tsutsui 1986; Jorden & Noda 1987; Shibatani 1990; Tokunaga 1992; Sukle 1994; Wetzel 1994). While interpersonal distance is considered the major determining factor for the use of honorifics, other factors (e.g. formality of the setting, type of genre, means of communication, topic) have also been noted (Neustupny 1978; Ide 1982, 1989; Makino & Tsutsui 1986; Minami 1987; Matsumoto 1988). For example, Makino and Tsutsui (1986) point out that honorific expressions are "used at such occasions as ceremonies, public speeches and public announcements" (44). Indirect means of communication, such as use of telephone and letter, are said to increase the use of honorifics (e.g. Neustupny 1978; Minami 1987). Gender has also been noted as an influential variable in that women are believed to use more polite or formal expressions (e.g. honorifics) than men (Jorden and Noda 1987; Ide 1990; Niyekawa 1991). Further, it has been pointed out that the choice of honorifics may require a simultaneous consideration of two or more social factors (Ide 1982; Minami 1987; Matsumoto 1988; Shibatani 1990).

These previous studies are insightful and help us begin to understand the true complexity of honorific usage in Japanese. It merits attention, however, that the majority of these studies rely either on the researchers' own introspection or on self-report questionnaires. Both methodologies lack sufficient empirical basis in actual speech data. The data obtained by means of self-report surveys may reflect social desirability--or how the subjects think they should speak rather than how they actually speak. Further, most previous studies offer essentially static accounts that link honorific forms straightforwardly to a certain social attribute (or attributes) of the context. Thus, a single honorific form (e.g. the referent honorific form *o-V-ni naru*) is commonly regarded as a marker, or direct index, of a contextual feature (or features), in particular a social relation. In other words, a feature like [+social distance] (or [+higher status], [-intimate], [+*soto*/out-group], etc.) associated with a particular NP or individual in the context is considered to trigger the use of an honorific form. This process is sometimes compared to the subject-verb agreement in European languages. Wetzel (1994), for instance, states that "Japanese verbs obligatorily 'conjugate' for *uchi/soto* in much the same way that Indo-European languages conjugate for person" (83). Similarly, Ide (1989) claims that "the concord of honorifics [with the subject NPs] is socio-pragmatically obligatory" (227). According to this view of honorifics, the speaker passively responds to a certain contextual cue specified by the canonical rule.

However, a number of recent studies based on actual conversational data demonstrate substantial situational and individual diversity in the use of honorifics (Miller 1989; Okamoto 1997a, b, 1998; Cook 1996, in press). The view of honorifics as direct indexes of contextual features seems unable to adequately account for the complexity and diversity of actual uses of honorifics. For example, the treatment of honorifics as markers of status differences cannot explain their reciprocal use, especially the fact that honorifics are commonly used by a higher-status person to a lower-status person; this treatment must

also assume that in the non-reciprocal use of honorifics not only honorifics but also non-honorific forms are markers of status differences. On the other hand, the treatment of honorifics as markers of non-intimate/*soto* relationships cannot account for the non-reciprocal use of honorifics, because it must assume that two persons perceive the same relationship differently, as non-intimate/*soto* vs. intimate/*uchi*. That is, depending on whether or not (non-)honorific expressions are used reciprocally, the meanings conveyed (e.g. a status difference, intimacy) may differ, which casts doubt on the assumption that an honorific form in and by itself encodes a particular contextual feature. Further, it is quite common for the same speaker to mix honorific and non-honorific expressions vis-à-vis the same individual within the same conversation. It is also the case that due to attitudinal differences, not everyone uses honorifics in the same context. These facts also indicate that contextual features do not directly govern the use of honorifics. I support these statements with examples in section 5. First, however, I discuss native speakers' attitudes toward honorific use, because they are not as uniform as they may appear to be, and also because their variation offers helpful clues for understanding the use of honorifics in real social situations.

### 3. Native Speakers' Attitudes towards the Use of Honorifics

The view that the use of honorifics is a matter of strictly observing social norms is often promoted by the producers of popular culture materials on honorifics. Numerous books and magazine articles offer guidance on how to use honorifics "correctly" (Miller 1989; Coulmas 1992), as illustrated by the titles of the following how-to-books on honorifics:

*Keego de haji o kakanai hon* 'A book on how to avoid embarrassment by the (incorrect) use of honorifics' (Gendai-Nihongo-Kenkyukai 1994)

*Doko ka okashii keego: Anata no keego-ryoku ni choosen suru* 'Somewhat awkward honorific uses: Testing your competence in honorifics use' (Yoshizawa 1985)

*Tadashii yoo de tadashikunai keego: Kihon-yooree to machigai yasui yooree* 'Incorrect honorific (uses) that appear to be correct: Examples of basic uses and those that are easy to misuse' (Okuyama 1994)

These popular culture materials on honorific usage usually include explanations of the three categories of honorifics (i.e. *sonkee-go* 'respectful form', *kenjoo-go* 'humble' form, and *teenee-go* 'polite form') and then provide numerous examples of "incorrect" and "embarrassing" honorific uses. The abundance of such how-to books on honorifics indicates that there are many Japanese who do not use honorifics "correctly" and are therefore insecure about their use. This fact also suggests that the use of honorifics requires the speaker's active involvement, even conscious effort. Miller (1989) argues that this emphasis on "correct" honorifics, indicates that the knowledge of honorifics is not equally distributed in the society, and that it is seen as linguistic capital for improving one's social identity. The argument that one should use "correct" honorifics, or be socially sanctioned then contributes to forming and sustaining a class-based ideology of honorifics.

Further, not only is the knowledge of honorifics unequally distributed, but attitudes toward honorific use also tend to vary among individuals. The idea of correct honorific usage assumes the existence of agreed-upon rules; it usually emphasizes the use of honorifics for showing respect, or politeness, toward social superiors (e.g. Yoshizawa 1985; Gendai-Nihongo-Kenkyukai 1994). This view, however, constitutes an ideology of honorifics. Native speakers' metapragmatic concerns about honorifics are more complex and diverse than such canonical usage. For example, Minami (1987) and Nomoto (1987) refer to (self-report) surveys conducted by the National Language Research Institute. These surveys indicate wide variation in the use of honorifics, depending on age, gender, social class, etc. This variation seems to derive from the differences in both attitude and knowledge with regard to honorific use. Kikuchi (1996) also discusses individual differences in the perception of honorifics. He states, for example, that while there are people who use polite expressions to familiar persons, there are also those who use informal expressions to persons that are not close to them. The former tend to be perceived as "unfriendly", while the latter tend to be considered "too friendly" (179).

Readers' columns in newspapers and magazines occasionally include letters expressing differing views about honorific uses. A 68-year old man wrote to the *Asashi Shimbun* newspaper (March 3, 1996), criticizing school teachers who address students by name without the honorific suffix *-san*: These teachers, he says, are self-conceited or ignorant (*muchika unubore*), hierarchical, and disrespectful of children (*kodomo yori jooi to yuu kyooshi no unubore to kodomo besshi*). In response, a 20-year old female student wrote to the same column (March 10, 1996), expressing disagreement, saying that she felt closer (*mijika ni kanji-rareru*) to the teachers who addressed her by name without *-san*, while she felt a barrier (*kyookai-sen*) between her and those who used *-san*. She also noted that classes where lectures were given without using the (honorific)-*desu* and *-masu* styles were more relaxed (*kachi to shita katai kanji ga naku, rirakkusu-shite*) and made it easier for her to ask questions. The two writers thus express virtually opposite attitudes toward the use of honorifics. The older writer views the nonuse of honorifics by teachers negatively, as an expression of their power, and asserts that the teachers should use honorifics to their students to show respect. In other words, he thinks that honorifics may be used from a higher-status person to a lower-status person in order to reduce the (vertical) distance between the two individuals. The younger writer, on the other hand, perceived the teachers' nonuse of honorifics positively, as a sign of friendliness, but not power.

In a column called "Tensee-jingo" in *Asashi Shimbun* (September 4, 1996), one writer criticizes politicians' excessive uses of honorifics, especially humble forms, or object honorifics (e.g. ... *sasete itadakimasu* 'I will do it. (lit. I will humbly receive the favor of you letting me do it)'), saying that such uses make them sound like they are talking about someone else's intention rather than their own (*shutaiteki na ishi ga usure, nani ka tanin no koto o hanashite iru yoo*), and that he feels mocked (*baka ni sarete iru yoo na kibun*). But he also notes that his colleague disagrees with him, saying that they make expressions sound gentle (*yasashii ii-mawashi*) and indicate the speaker's good up-bringing (*sodachi no yosa o kanji-saseru*). Here, again, the same honorific uses are interpreted very differently by different persons. The column writer perceives the politicians' use of humble forms toward the public negatively, as excessive, too deferent, and insincere. For him, it is an attempt to unnaturally lower their status vis-à-vis the public. However, his friend perceives the same use of honorifics positively, as gentle and as a sign of the speaker's class

status.

One article in *Asahi Shimbun* (March 7, 1998) discussed the speech patterns of then-Prime Minister Hashimoto when talking to reporters: When unpleasant questions are asked, he uses polite language, including (honorific) *-desu* and *-masu* styles even to very young reporters; in such cases, his language is polite but his facial expressions are cold as if he were glaring at them (*kotoba wa teenee da ga, hyoojoo wa nirami-tsukeru yoo ni hiyayaka*); in contrast, when he receives pleasant questions, he uses informal (i.e. non-honorific) expressions such as the sentence-final forms *da ze* and *da zo*. This example indicates that the same speaker may or may not use honorifics to the same persons, depending on his feelings toward them at the moment. It also suggests that honorifics are not necessarily used to mark a status difference, or show respect for a higher-status person. Another article in *Asahi Shimbun* (April 11, 1996) that discussed contemporary young people's use of honorifics, or *shin-teenee-go* 'new polite language', claims that it is not an expression of respect, but rather a signal of having no intention to become a friend with the addressee.

Variations in the attitudes toward honorific uses have also been recognized in relation to the change in honorific uses over time. The National Language Council (*Kokugo-shingikai*) lists in their 1996 report the following four characteristics of contemporary honorific usage:

- (i) Among the many honorific forms that have been used differentially depending on the hierarchical relations, in general, simpler forms have come to be used.
- (ii) The use of honorifics based on various hierarchical relationships has decreased; instead, the use of honorifics based on the degree of intimacy has come to be considered important, although the former still exists.
- (iii) In the use of honorifics, the addressee rather than the referent has come to be considered more important.
- (iv) Honorifics, which are not accompanied by "respect" and "deference," are used for adjusting the interpersonal relationship (e.g. salespersons' extremely polite honorific uses toward customers).

(translated from the Japanese original in *Kokugo Shingikai Hokuoku* 20, Bunkachoo, 1996)

The first characteristic indicates that Japanese have come to prefer less formal speech styles (see also Nomoto (1987)). The same report also notes that excessive uses of honorifics are generally considered problematic. Most how-to-books on honorifics also instruct the reader to avoid excessive uses of honorifics. The second characteristic is related to the first in that both note the decreasing use of honorifics as indexes of status differences (see also Tsujimura (1971) and Minami (1987)). This change may reflect the fact that Japan is becoming a less hierarchical society. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987) point out that "[t]here is a great difference between *keigo* [honorifics] before and after World War II, as postwar Japanese society has become highly democratized in language as well as other areas" (1). We saw earlier that a reader's letter to *Asahi Shimbun* asserted that teachers should use

honorifics toward their students. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987) note that the use of honorifics by higher-status persons to lower-status persons has increased, and that "the Japanese people have today reached a high degree of equality in language usage" (2) (see also Ide (1982)). That is, many Japanese today seem to feel uncomfortable with the non-reciprocal use of honorifics based on a hierarchical relationship, in particular, the nonuse of honorifics by a higher-status person to a lower-status person, although this does not mean that the non-reciprocal use of honorifics has disappeared (see section 5). The third characteristic mentioned in the report implies that even if the referent is a person of higher status, that does not automatically trigger honorific uses (see section 4). The fourth characteristic points out that the use of honorifics may not necessarily be based on sincere feelings of respect or deference. This was also noted earlier in relation to such examples as the use of honorifics by politicians and young people.

These comments about honorific uses in public discourses reveal that native Japanese speakers' attitudes toward the use of honorifics vary widely among individuals and across time. Thus, the identical honorific (or non-honorific) expression may be interpreted quite differently by different individuals. Honorific expressions may be perceived positively, as polite, refined, gentle, egalitarian, non-authoritative, a sign of good up-bringing, etc., yet the same expressions may be viewed negatively, as distant, unfriendly, insincere, stiff, rude by being too formal, etc. Likewise, non-honorific expressions may be perceived positively, as friendly, sincere, warm, relaxed, etc., but they may also be viewed negatively, as rude, authoritative, too friendly, unrefined, etc. Thus, even in the same kind of situation, some speakers may use honorific expressions, while others may prefer non-honorific expressions. In other words, the use of honorifics cannot be regarded as an automatic response to a certain contextual feature. Rather, it requires the speaker's active involvement. Moreover, speakers may use honorific and non-honorific expressions to create a desired speech context, as seen earlier in such examples as the politicians' use of humble expressions toward the public and Prime Minister Hashimoto's use of honorifics to young reporters.

#### 4. Honorifics, Ideology, and Context

I have argued above that honorifics in Japanese cannot be directly linked to particular contextual features, such as a status difference or the lack of intimacy. The question then is how honorifics are related to the social context. I would like to examine this question, taking into consideration the role of linguistic ideology. Silverstein (1979:193) defines linguistic ideologies as "any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use." Woolard (1992: 235) characterizes language ideology as "a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk." Similarly, Irvine (1992: 252) points out that forms of talk and forms of social structure cannot be correlated straightforwardly (see also Irvine 1985). Rather, the relationship between the two "is more productively sought in cultural ideologies of language--those complex systems of ideas and interests through which people interpret linguistic behaviors." Further, Kulick (1992:295) notes that "language ideologies seem never to be solely about language--they are always about entangled clusters of phenomena, and they encompass and comment on aspects of culture like gender and expressions and

being civilized." As discussed by Silverstein (1979) and Irvine (1992), ideology affects speakers' strategies of language use, but it is important to distinguish particular beliefs about language use from actual distribution of uses (see also Agha 1993). Linguistic ideology may function regulatively, but it does not constitute language practice. Moreover, ideologies are subject to change over time (Silverstein 1985; Irvine 1992), as illustrated by the change in the second person singular pronoun (T/V) usage in European languages (Silverstein 1979).

With regard to honorifics, Agha (1993), examining *šesa*, or Lhasa Tibetan honorifics, argues that "*šesa* items do not encode social status but index deference entitlements" (133). Ochs (1990; 1993) also argues against a direct relationship between language and certain contextual information; she claims that the relationship between the two is mediated through the pragmatic meanings of linguistic features, such as affective stances, social acts, and social activities. For example, honorifics are said to directly index "affective dispositions of the speaker (e.g. humility, admiration, love)," which in turn relate, as indirect indexes, to contextual information, such as the social positions of participants in a conversation (Ochs 1990: 297). Unlike the notion of direct indexicality, the view of indirect indexicality allows flexible relationships between honorifics (or other indexical expressions)<sup>3</sup> and social relations. In order to understand how and why honorifics, or their pragmatic meanings, are related to a particular social relation (e.g. a status difference, lack of intimacy), the role of linguistic ideology needs to be considered.

I argue that honorific forms in Japanese express deference and/or formality toward a relevant individual (i.e. the referent or addressee), and non-honorific forms express the lack of such deference/formality.<sup>4</sup> (By formality, I mean one's restrained and ritualistic attitude toward another person.) These meanings of honorific and non-honorific expressions may in turn implicate, or indirectly index, certain social meanings (e.g. the nature of relations and identities) as features of the context. Honorifics, then, may be related to different kinds of social meanings, depending on beliefs about who should speak deferentially and formally to whom, and under what circumstances. (Note that my characterization of honorifics as expressions of deference and/or formality is similar to the definitions provided by scholars of traditional Japanese grammar/linguistics (*kokugo-gaku*): i.e. honorifics as expressions of *keei* 'deference or respect', *uyamai* 'respect', *aratamari* 'formality', etc. (e.g. Miyaji 1971; Oishi 1975; Nomoto 1987; Kindaichi 1988).)

As mentioned earlier, it is commonly said that in Japanese one should use honorifics to show respect/deference toward social superiors. This view can be considered the most salient canonical usage of Japanese honorifics--a belief that relates honorifics, as expressions of deference, to hierarchical social structure. In this usage, the non-reciprocal use of honorifics, or the nonuse of honorifics by higher-status persons to lower-status persons, is deemed appropriate, because it is thought that higher-status persons need not show deference toward lower-status persons. However, as discussed earlier, many contemporary Japanese seem to deemphasize hierarchy, especially on the part of higher-status persons, who may then use honorifics to lower-status persons. Such use of honorifics can be interpreted as an attempt to reduce the hierarchically defined distance by reciprocating respect. This phenomenon suggests a change in the ideology of honorifics that reflects ongoing social change in Japan.

In addition to hierarchical relationship, honorifics are commonly linked to another dimension of social structure: non-intimate/*soto* 'out-group' relation (sections 2 and 3).



Recall, for example, that teachers' nonuse of honorifics is not necessarily perceived as an index of their higher status, but as a sign of friendliness. This interpretation is based on the view that one should use honorifics to show deference and/or formality toward those one does not know well. This seems to be another salient canonical usage of honorifics--a belief quite different from that based on hierarchical relationship. In this usage, honorifics are used regardless of the presence or absence of a hierarchical relationship as long as the lack of intimacy between the two individuals is recognized. As mentioned earlier, it has been reported that the use of honorifics based on the degree of intimacy rather than hierarchy has been increasing in modern Japan. This observation also indicates a change in the ideology of Japanese honorifics.

Thus, while the two canonical usages of honorifics mentioned above seem to co-exist and interactively influence the choice of honorifics in actual conversations, the extent of their applications may vary among individuals, depending on how each usage is appraised. Some speakers may consider the first usage more important than the second, while others may think to the contrary. Further, in light of the observation that the use of very formal speech styles is decreasing in Japan, some speakers may evaluate neither usage as highly as others do. The two kinds of social relations--status difference and the degree of intimacy--have been widely recognized as important factors in determining the use of honorifics. Nevertheless, how they influence the use and interpretation of honorifics in actual conversations needs to be more closely examined, taking into consideration both variation and change in the beliefs about honorific usage. As Irvine (1992) points out, to explore the contemporary dynamics of honorific systems "would require recognizing that language ideologies are also subject to change" (261).

In addition to the relational aspects of the context, honorifics may also be linked to the speaker's own identity; that is, speaking formally and/or deferentially may be used to implicate certain attributes of the speaker's identity. It was noted in section 2 that women are said to use more polite or formal expressions (e.g. honorifics) than men. But the link between honorifics and gender is not straightforward. Rather, it seems to reflect the belief that women should speak more deferentially and formally than men. Women who do not use "women's speech register," including honorifics, are often criticized as unfeminine, rough, etc. (Okamoto 1995, 1997b). As discussed earlier, the use of honorifics is also often related to the speaker's class status. Again, this relation is not natural or automatic, but promoted by the belief that the ability to use honorifics is a sign of good up-bringing, high education, etc. Further, class and gender are sometimes jointly linked with the use of honorifics: for example, women are said to use honorifics to indicate that they are members of a prestigious group (Ide 1982, 1990; Renolds 1985). These beliefs about honorifics are based on the hegemonic ideology of class and gender; they may influence the use and interpretation of honorifics to a greater or lesser extent. However, it is important to recognize that these beliefs are not shared by all Japanese to the same extent.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, there are also a variety of situation-specific concerns that play important roles in the choice of honorifics. For example, as is well known, in talking about a non-intimate, higher-status person, speakers often do not use referent honorifics in the absence of that person. Okamoto (1997a) provides examples from actual conversations in which students, talking to their close friends, do not use referent honorifics in talking about their professors in their absence. The nonuse of referent honorifics in such situations does not mean the lack of social distance between the speaker and the referent. It may be

motivated by the speaker's concern that showing deference toward the referent is not only unnecessary in his/her absence, but may also be taken as a sign of formality and distance vis-a-vis the addressee. Similarly, even when talking to a higher-status person, honorifics may not be used when the setting is very informal (e.g. marketplace), or when the utterance involves a certain speech act (e.g. exclamation, warning of a danger), or when a certain emotion (e.g. anger) needs to be conveyed, etc. (see section 5 for examples). This is because in these situations speaking formally and deferentially is considered inappropriate. Cook (in press) gives an interesting example in which persons in a non-intimate relationship used non-honorific forms in quarreling. Here, non-honorific forms can implicate distance, whereas they can implicate intimacy in a friendly relationship, and the speaker's higher status in a hierarchical relationship. In all three situations, it is considered unnecessary to speak deferentially/formally using honorifics. On the other hand, as has been noted (Neustupny 1978; Ide 1982; Minami 1987), honorifics may sometimes be used between intimate persons, for example, when the setting or genre is formal (e.g. lecture, public speech, letter), or when the utterance involves a certain speech act (e.g. serious request, sarcasm) (see Sule (1994) and Cook (1996) for examples from actual conversations).

It is to be emphasized, however, that these situation-specific concerns may vary among individuals, and that particular situational features (e.g. setting, genre) do not directly determine the use of honorifics. For example, some speakers may consider it appropriate to use referent honorifics for a social superior even in his/her absence; others may disagree (see Okamoto (1997a) for examples); some school teachers may deliver lectures mainly in formal style, but others may not (see Cook (1996)); intimate persons may or may not use honorifics for a serious request. Such differences arise, because some speakers consider it appropriate to express formality/deference by honorifics in a certain situation, while others do not.

Thus, the choice of honorific and non-honorific expressions cannot be regarded as directly governed by contextual features. Social attributes of the context are only implicated, or indirectly indexed, through the pragmatic meanings of honorific or non-honorific expressions--i.e. the presence or absence of deference/formality. Exactly what kinds of social meanings are (indirectly) indexed are context-dependent; they depend on how the speaker relates his deferential and/or formal attitude to the context. Further, the social meanings indirectly indexed by honorific or non-honorific expressions may be multiple (e.g. a status difference, lack of intimacy, formal setting) and at times ambiguous, causing misunderstandings. In sum, the choice of honorific and non-honorific expressions is to be seen as a speech-style strategy based on a speaker's consideration of multiple social aspects of a given context (e.g. status difference, intimacy, gender, genre, setting, speech-act type) as well as on the speaker's beliefs and attitudes concerning honorific uses. Based on their perception of multiple social aspects of the context, actors employ the linguistic expressions they consider most appropriate for a given situation.

## **5. Manipulating Honorific and Non-Honorific Expressions in Conversations**

Based on the discussion advanced in the previous sections, I will now examine examples of actual uses of honorific and non-honorific expressions in Japanese conversations.

Analyzing audio-taped dyadic conversations carried out in diverse social contexts, in this study, I will discuss one particular phenomenon, namely, the mixing of honorific and non-honorific forms by the same speakers for the same individuals in the same conversations. The data include two types of mixings of honorific and non-honorific expressions: inter-sentential mixings and intra-sentential mixings. The former can be divided into two subtypes: (1) the mixing of addressee honorifics and so-called plain (i.e. non-honorific) forms for the same addressee and (2) the mixings of honorific and non-honorific forms for the same referent. The latter also has two subtypes: (1) using an addressee honorific, but not a referent honorific and (2) using a referent honorific, but not an addressee honorific. Although the canonical rules of honorifics based on the view of direct indexicality would not allow these mixings, they are nonetheless very common. Below, I will examine both addressee and referent honorifics, but in the case of referent honorifics, only those that concern the addressee will be analyzed.

In the first example, (5) below, P is a male professor of a Japanese university, and S is his former female student, who is now a graduate student at an American university. This conversation was recorded when the student visited the professor while she was in Japan during a vacation. The relationship between the two speakers in (5) is not close; there is also a status difference between the two. According to the canonical usages, the student, but not the professor, would use honorifics due to the status difference between the two. Or both speakers would use honorifics because of the lack of intimacy between the two. However, neither was the case in (5). I will first discuss inter-sentential mixings, in particular, mixings of addressee honorifics and plain forms.

- (5) <At P's office in Yamaguchi; P is a 38-year old male professor, and S a 23-year old female graduate student.>

- |   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | P: | A, <u>honto</u> , n, n. Anoo, mae ni mo <u>ki- ita ka naa</u> . GT tte <u>shitte-</u> ru? N.<br>N-AH N-OH N-AH N-SH N-AH        |
|   |    | 'Oh, really, yeah. Uh, I wonder if I asked you this before. Do you know GT?'  |
| 2 | S: | A, i- <u>masu</u> . Irassha- <u>imasu</u> . [laughter]<br>AH AH   |
|   |    | 'Oh, he is there. He is there. [laughter]'  |
| 3 | P: | Boku ga Furezuno ni ita toki, moo ni-juu-nen, ni-juu-nen wa <u>oogesa ka</u> ,<br>N-AH N-AH                                     |
| 4 |    | E, AE, Amerikan English /?/ ka nan ka no heddo o yatte ta n <u>desu</u> yo.<br>AH   |
|   |    | 'When I was in Fresno, already 20 years (ago), 20 years may be an exaggeration, he was the head of E, AE, American English /?/' |
| 5 | S: | Aa, a, ima mo yatte-rassha- <u>imasu</u> yo.<br>AH  |
|   |    | 'Yes, he is the head (of the institute) now, too.'  |
| 6 | P: | Yatte- <u>masu</u> ka. A, <u>honto</u> .<br>AH N-AH   |
|   |    | 'He is. Oh, really?'  |
| 7 | S: | Aa, sonna mae kara irasshar-u n <u>desu</u> ka.<br>AH   |
|   |    | 'He's been there for such a long time?'   |
| 8 | P: | Sonna mae kara <u>desu</u> ne.<br>AH  |
|   |    | '(Yes) for such a long time.'   |

- 9 S: *Ee!*  
'Wow!'
- 10 P: *Are wa ne, 1979-nen boku ga Amerika ni itta toshi desu kara.*  
AH  
'That was 1979, the year when I went to America.'
- 11 S: *Haa.*  
'I see.'
- 12 P: *N, son toki ni yatte-ta n desu yo.*  
AH  
'Yeah, he was (the head of the institute) at that time.'
- 13 S: *Maa.*  
'Oh, my!'
- 14 P: *Sono ato ne, ikkai boku ga Oregon ni ita toki ni, Oregon de gakkai ga atta*  
N-AH N-AH  
*toki ni kare ga kite-te, chotto anoo aisatsu-shita koto aru n desu kedo nee.*  
AH  
*Kare no hoo wa mochiron boku no koto zenzen oboete-nai kedo.* [laughter]  
N-AH  
'After that, once, when I was in Oregon, when there was a conference in Oregon, he was there, and I greeted him. He, of course, didn't remember me at all. [laughter]'
- 17 S: *Hee. Nan ka ima mo A, AEI de ...*  
'Hum. Well, he is still, at AEI ...'
- 18 P: *Un.*  
'Yeah.'
- 19 S: *Nan ka ichi-ban ...*  
'Somewhat, the most ...'
- 20 P: *Ue no hoo?*  
N-AH  
'(Is he in) the highest (position)?'
- 21 S: *Ue no hito nan ja nai ka naa.*  
N-AH  
'I wonder if (I guess) he is the highest.'
- 22 P: *Aa, honto. Un, soo desu ka.*  
N-AH AH  
'Oh, really. Yeah, is that so?'

In the entire conversation, which lasted 20 minutes, the student used addressee honorifics in most of her utterances, although the professor did not fully reciprocate addressee honorifics. This fact can be interpreted (in reference to the canonical usages discussed earlier) as the student's attempt to show deference and formality vis-à-vis the professor, a higher-status, non-intimate person. (It could also be interpreted as a sign of the speaker's good up-bringing, femininity, etc., but I will focus on the relational aspects in this discussion.) However, occasionally, the student did not use addressee honorifics. This does not mean that she is treating the professor as a lower-status person or a close friend. Rather, it reflects her situational concerns; she used plain forms mostly for exclamatory expressions (e.g. *Aa, sugoi* in line 4 in (6); *A, honto da* in line 7 in (6)) or for soliloquy-like remarks (e.g. *Ue no hito nan ja nai ka naa* in line 21 in (5)). That is, for certain types of speech acts, eliminating formality is considered appropriate. The professor also used plain forms for such expressions (e.g. *Mae ni mo kiita ka naa* in line 1; *A, honto?* in lines 1 and 6 in (5)). However, his uses of plain forms were not restricted to this type. As seen in (5), he often simply switched back and forth between the honorific and plain forms. It seems

that he mixed the two forms constantly in order to avoid sounding too formal or too informal by using either honorific or plain forms exclusively. If he used only plain forms, he might appear too hierarchical or too friendly, but if he used only honorifics, he might sound too deferential or too unfriendly--possible interpretations through the usages of honorifics based on hierarchy and intimacy. By mixing the two forms, he achieves the right degree of formality and deference, which can implicate complex social meanings. The use of honorifics by the professor does not mean that he is treating the student as a higher-status person. Rather, it can be interpreted not only as his acknowledgment of the non-intimate nature of their relationship, but also as his attempt to reduce the status difference. On the other hand, his use of plain forms in combination with honorifics can be construed as an indication that he is not fully deferential, that he is a higher-status person; this mixing may also implicate that he is trying to show some friendliness. That is, the professor's use of plain forms does not simply mean friendliness, as in a conversation between close friends. The fact that plain forms are not reciprocated by the student (except for a few cases mentioned above) is most likely to be construed as an indication of his higher status.

Example (6), taken from the same conversation between the professor and the student, includes an instance of intra-sentential mixing--i.e. using an addressee honorific, but not a referent honorific.

## (6)

- 1 P: *Datte moo ni-juu-nen mo mae da mon.* [laughter]  
N-AH  
'Of course, that's now 20 years ago.'
- 2 S: *Konna kichoo na shashin o misete itadai-te ii n desu kaa.*  
OH AH  
'Is it all right for me to see such precious photos?'
- 3 P: *Uun, betsu ni.*  
N-AH  
'No, no problem.'
- 4 S: *Aa, sugoi. E, kore tte sensee ga ano tiin-ee, tiin-eejaa no toki desu ka.*  
N-AH AH  
'Oh, wow! Oh, is this when you were a teen-ager?'
- 5 P: *Moo hatachi o sugite i-mashita kedo nee. Un, koo natte kuru to moo daitai*  
AH  
6 *ima no kao ni natte ki-masu ne.*  
AH  
'I was already over 20. Yeah, when it comes to this (photo), it starts to look like my present face.'
- 7 S: *A, honto da.*  
N-AH  
'Oh, that's true.'  
.  
.
- 8 P: *Choodo soshitara kyonen, kyonen no natsu, ototoshi no natsu kaa.*  
N-AH  
'It was then just last year, last year's summer, or the summer of the year before last?'
- 9 S: *Hai.*  
'Yes.'

- 10 P: *Ni watat- ta n desu nee. Mukoo ni it- ta no wa. E?*  
           N-SH       AH                               N-SH  
           'when you went over there, when you went there, right?'
- 11 S: *Motto mae kamo shire-masen.*  
   AH  
           'It might have been even before that.'
- 12 P: *Ootoshi no san-gatsu ni sotsugyoo-shi- ta no?*  
   N-SH       N-AH  
           'Did you graduate in March of the year before last?'
- 13 P: *Boku ga mukoo ni ita toki ni nee, yappari anoo konna n de ii n daroo ka to*  
 14 *omotte sugoku nayande ita toki, kore anata ni o-hanashi-shi-ta koto aru kamo*  
   OH  
 15 *shinnai desu keredomo, aru sensee toko ni, sugoku sonkee-shite ita sensee*  
   AH  
           *no tokoro ni soodan-shi ni itte. ...*  
           'When I was there, when I was very worried about how I was doing, I may have told you  
           this, but I went to consult with a professor, a professor whom I respected very much ...'

In (6) the professor and student both used addressee honorifics and plain forms in the same way as in example (5). With regard to referent honorifics, the student mostly used referent honorifics to refer to the actions that concerned the professor, as illustrated in line 2. However, except for one instance (e.g. line 14 in (6)), the professor did not use referent honorifics to refer to the actions that concerned the student, as illustrated in line 1 in (5) and lines 10 and 12 in (6). Again, the asymmetry in the use of referent honorifics can be construed (in reference to the usage of honorifics based on hierarchical relationship) as the status difference between the two. But, at the same time, the professor is showing some degree of deference/formality by using addressee honorifics, as discussed above. In particular, as illustrated in line 10, he sometimes used in the same sentence an addressee honorific, but not a referent honorific for the same person. Such intra-sentential mixings clearly demonstrate the speaker's attempt to express the right degree of formality/deference.

The next example is a conversation between a male supervisor (B) and his female subordinate (K). The two speakers are in a hierarchical, non-intimate relationship.

- (7) <At a private educational institute in Kyoto; B is a 60-year old male supervisor, and K his newly hired 47-year old female subordinate.>

- 1 B: *Ee tto, C-sensei ga maa o-kaki-ni natta desu ne, ee, Internet Language*  
   AH  
 2 *Education ni kan-shite, ee ttoo, dono yoo na kansoo o mot- are- ta ka sono*  
   SH  
 3 *ten de chotto, anoo, go-iken o nobe-te morai-tai n desu kedo.*  
   N-SH   N-OH       AH  
           'Uh, regarding Internet Language Education which Professor C wrote about,  
           uh, I want you to tell me what you think of it.'
- 4 K: *Hai, anoo saki hodo mo mooshi-mashita kedo anoo yappari ii-meeru dake*  
   OH       AH  
 5 *no riyoo to iwayuru internet, ii-meeru igai no internet no riyoo tte no wa*

- 6            *yappari waketa hoo ga, wakete maa, mochiron wakete kangaete rassharu to*  
SH
- 7            *omou n desu kedo ...*  
AH  
'Yes, as I said before, uh, (I think it's better) to separate the exclusive use of e-mail and the use of internet, internet other than e-mail. Of course, I think you are considering them separately, but ...'  
.
- 8        B:    *... Maa Nihon dewa sono Nihon no kyooiku-jijoo o kaeri-miru to hatashite*  
9            *kore ga sono mama desu nee, uke-irerareru ka doo ka to yuu tokoro ga hijoo*  
AH  
10           *ni ooki na mondai dewa nai ka na to omotte ru n desu keredomo, sono ten ni*  
AH  
11           *K-sensee, nani ka kizui-ta koto ari- masu ka.*  
N-SH        N-SH    AH  
'... Well, in Japan, when we think about the Japanese educational situation, I think it may be a very big question whether this can be accepted as it is, but regarding this point, do you have anything that you noticed?'
- 12       K:    *... Anoo, dotchi, dotchi no article ni kaite atta ka moo wasure, wasurete*  
'Uh, I forgot in which article, article it was written ...'
- 13       B:    *Hai, hai, hai,*  
'Yes, yes, yes.'
- 14       K:    *gotcha ni natte*  
'confused'
- 15       B:    *Hai, hai, hai,*  
'Yes, yes, yes.'
- 16       K:    *gotch ni natte wasure mashita keredomo*  
AH  
'I'm confused and forgot, but ...'  
.
- 17       B:    *Soo desu nee, dakara ossha- ta yoo ni kompyuutaa o atsukau*  
AH                            SH  
18           *senmon-kyooshi no yoosee to yuu koto desu nee.*  
AH  
'So, as you (K-teacher) were saying, (we need) to train expert teachers who deal with computers.'

In (7), K, B's subordinate, uses both referent and addressee honorifics (lines 4, 6, 7, 16). Except for a few cases, K spoke in this very formal way throughout the whole conversation, which lasted for about 20 minutes. Being K's older, male supervisor, B may be expected to speak much less formally than K. However, his speech is very formal, although it is not as formal as K's. Like K, B used addressee honorifics all the time (lines 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 18) except for a few cases that involved certain speech acts. His speech is thus more formal than the professor's speech in (5) and (6). But B mixed referent honorifics (i.e. SH and OH) and non-honorific forms inter-sententially for referring to the actions that concerned the addressee (i.e. referent honorifics in lines 2 and 17; non-honorific forms in lines 3 and 11). He also mixed honorific and non-honorific forms intra-sententially, using an addressee honorific, but not a referent honorific for the same individual, as in lines 3 and 11. Again, this mixture of two forms indicates his attempt to attain the desired degree of formality/deference. B's quite formal style, consisting of both addressee and referent

honorifics, does not mean that he is treating K as his superior. In contrast, it can be interpreted as his attempt to reciprocate deference to the middle-aged, professional woman as well as his acknowledgment of the non-intimate nature of their relationship. But at the same time, B's higher status does not seem to be completely ignored, because he often did not use referent honorifics for K who, in contrast, frequently used them for B. This non-reciprocity (not the use of non-honorific forms per se) can be construed as a sign of B's higher status.

Example (8) is a conversation between two female colleagues. T and H are teachers in a kindergarten. T is three years older than H. They have daily contacts, but they are not close friends.

(8) <At a kindergarten in Tokyo; T and H are female teachers and colleagues; T is 55-year old, and H 52-year old.>

- 1 T: *Anoo, yakyuu no battingu-shita koto ari- masu?*  
N-SH N-SH AH  
'Uh, have you ever done a baseball batting (practice)?'
- 2 H: *Nai.*  
N-AH  
'I've never (done it).'
- 3 T: *Tama ga pon to dete koo yatte utsu no.*  
N-AH  
'A ball pops out, and you hit it like this.'
- 4 H: *Sohuto-booru gurai shika nai. Yakyuu ...*  
N-AH  
'I've played only softball. Baseball ...'
- 5 T: *Un?*  
'Huh?'
- 6 H: *Sohuto-booru de wa batto are shi- ta kedo mo.*  
N-AH  
'I've (used) a bat in softball but ...'
- 7 T: *Un, sohuto-booru dame yo. Un, nan-shiki wa shir- anai kedo.*  
N-AH N-AH  
'Well, softball is not good. Yeah, I don't know softball.'
- 8 H: *Un.*  
'Yeah.'
- 9 T: *Kikai ga dete, pon to yaru no, yatta koto nai?*  
N-SH N-AH  
'(A ball) pops out of a machine, you've never done it?'
- 10 H: *Yatta koto nai desu.*  
AH  
'I've never done it.'
- 11 T: *Watashi uchi ni itte yatta koto aru n desu yo.*  
AH  
'I've gone to do (a) batting (practice) and tried it.'
- 12 H: *Aa, soo desu ka.*  
AH  
'Oh, is that so?'
- 13 T: */?!/ no toko toori-kakatte utte minai toka iw-are-te ne.*  
N-AH  
'I passed by /?!/ and was asked if I wanted to try it.'



- 14 H: *Un, un, un, un.*  
'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.'
- 15 T: *Tara mukoo kara ne, watashi-tachi da kara nee, 100-kiro, uun, are desu yo.*  
N-AH AH
- 16 *100-kiro aru no nai desu yo. 70 ka 80 demo ne kowai yoo, sensee.*  
AH N-AH  
'Then, from the other side, it's us, so, it's 100 km, it's that, there's none with 100km. Even with 70 or 80, it's scary.'
- 17 H: */?/ desu yo nee.*  
AH  
'That's /?/, isn't it?'
- 18 T: *Suki nara yatte mitara doo desuu. Ano Meeji-kooen no /?/*  
N-SH N-SH AH  
'If you like (baseball), why don't you try it? Uh, Meiji Park's /?/'
- 19 H: */?/ aru n desu ka.*  
AH  
'There's one in /?/'

Example (8) also includes both inter- and intra-sentential mixings of honorific and non-honorific forms. Unlike the previous examples, in which the higher-status persons mainly mixed the two forms, here both speakers mixed addressee honorifics and plain forms constantly throughout the whole conversation, which lasted for about 40 minutes. Again, plain forms were often used for exclamatory, emotional, or soliloquy-like expressions (e.g. *kowai yoo* in line 16), but there were also many cases where the speakers simply switched between the two forms, as seen in (8). Further, neither speaker used referent honorifics for the actions that concerned the addressee. But they sometimes mixed honorific and non-honorific forms intra-sententially, using an addressee honorific, but not a referent honorific, as illustrated in lines 1 and 18. The speech styles of T and H are much less formal, as compared to that of the supervisor in example (7). Although T is slightly older than H, the fact that honorific and non-honorific forms are equally reciprocated suggests that these forms do not implicate a status difference. Both T and H seem to be trying to show some degree of formality/deference suitable for a person of equal status who is familiar, but not intimate.

Example (9) below is a conversation between a female vendor in a marketplace and a female customer. In Okamoto (1997a, 1998), I examined speech styles of salespersons at two major department stores and two large marketplaces, each of which houses more than 150 small shops. Although salespersons are expected to use honorifics for the customers, it was not always the case. Compared to the speech of salespersons at the department stores, that of vendors at the marketplaces was much less formal. Many vendors, especially those at fish markets, did not use honorifics at all (see Okamoto (1997a, 1998) for examples). One of the factors for the nonuse of honorifics by vendors seemed to be their situational concern that formality does not fit the setting, or their attempt to create a lively, casual atmosphere of the marketplace. There were also many vendors who mixed honorific and non-honorific forms, as illustrated in (9):

- (9) <At a dry goods shop in a large marketplace in Kyoto; V is a middle-aged female vendor, and C1 a middle-aged female customer.>

1 V: Chotto yoko ni ne, oka-hattara kiree ya shi ne.  
SH N-AH

'If you put them a little bit by the side, it's pretty.'  
2 C1: A, soo ka. Kore to kore to, nan ka kiree ne.  
N-AH

'Oh, I see. This and this, it's kinda pretty, isn't it?'  
3 V: Soo ya nee, hai.  
N-AH

'That's right, yes.'

4 C1: /?/

5 V: /?/ Dotchi demo yoroshii desu ka.  
AH

'/?/ Will either one do?'

In (9), the customer spoke in plain forms. But the vendor mixed honorific and non-honorific forms. She mixed an addressee honorific and plain forms inter-sententially (lines 1, 3, 5). She also used an intra-sentential mixing; in line 1 a referent honorific, but not an addressee honorific, was used for the same individual. The style mixing by the vendor can be interpreted as her attempt to show some deference to the customer, while at the same time trying to create a casual atmosphere by the use of non-honorific forms. The use of non-honorific forms by the vendor does not mean that she is treating her customer as a lower-status person; nor does it necessarily mean that they are in an intimate relationship.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned, the speech style of salespersons at the department stores were generally much more formal than the vendors in the marketplaces.<sup>6</sup> They used addressee honorifics almost always, but they sometimes did not use referent honorifics. This is illustrated in example (10):

(10) <At a women's clothes section of a department store in Kyoto; S is a middle-aged saleswoman, and C2 a middle-aged female customer.>

1 S: Ima, chotto ue kara kotoo ki- te-morai- masu kedo, moo sukoshi tattara  
N-SH N-OH AH

2 kotoo-gawari ni ki- te morat- te mo attakai desu shi ne.  
N-SH N-OH AH

'Right now, you (need to) wear a coat on top of this but soon, you could wear this as a coat, and it would be warm.'

3 C2: Kore wa wooru desu ka.  
AH

'Is this wool?'

.

4 S: Paatto ake- te ne, kooyuu taatoru toka o-mochi no de, awash- ite ki- te  
N-SH SH N-SH N-SH

5 morat-tari-shite mo ii desu shi.  
N-OH AH

'You open it wide, and if you match it with something you have, like this turtleneck, it would be good, too.'

.

- 6 S: *Kore kara ki- rare- ru n deshitara, kore kurai shikkari-shita /?/ hoo ga /?/*  
SH AH
- 7 *Ma, o-uchi no naka hair- ahat- te mo, betsu ni ki- te- morat- te mo ii desu*  
SH N-SH N-OH AH
- 8 *shi. /?/te itada- ite mo /?/*  
OH
- 'If you are going to wear it from now, it's better to have a strong one like this /?/ And it would be fine if you go inside a house (wearing it), or if you wear it separately. If you /?/'

The saleswoman in (10) mixed referent honorifics (i.e. SH and OH) and non-honorific forms to refer to the actions that concerned the addressee. In fact, she used non-honorific forms quite frequently. But unlike the vendor in (10) she used addressee honorifics consistently, hence keeping general formality for the customer. In this conversation the saleswoman is trying to persuade her customer to buy a sweater. Many of her sentences are very long, including many verbs and auxiliaries that could be marked by honorifics. If all the verbs and auxiliaries were accompanied by honorifics, however, the speech would sound too formal and almost awkward; it may also sound insincere. The salesperson thus seems to be avoiding excessive uses of honorifics which would make her speech too impersonal for her current goal--that is, to persuade the customer. Her use of non-honorific forms does not mean that she is treating her customer as a lower-status person or an intimate acquaintance.

In sum, these examples indicate that the speakers are actively involved in the use of honorific and non-honorific expressions. It is to be underscored that the speech styles used by the participants in these conversations are not uniquely associated with the given situation. Different speakers may choose different styles in the same situation. For example, some customers may use addressee honorifics to salespersons (e.g. (10)), others may not (e.g. (9)); some supervisors may speak more informally to their subordinates than the supervisor in (7); some professors may speak less formally to their students than the professor in (5). In fact, the student in (5) informed me that some professors at the same university spoke to her more authoritatively (*motto erasoo ni*) without using honorifics.

## 6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the complex and dynamic relation between Japanese honorific/non-honorific expressions and speech context. I have argued that honorific and non-honorific forms cannot be linked directly to contextual features, such as status difference and intimacy. Rather, Japanese honorifics express formality and/or deference, which is in turn linked to specific social meanings (e.g. relationships and identities). That is, social attributes of the context are indexed indirectly through the pragmatic meaning of honorifics (deference/formality). Two ways of linking deference/formality and social relations have been identified as the most salient canonical usages that constitute an important part of the ideology of honorifics in contemporary Japan: one of them relates deference/formality to status difference, and the other to lack of intimacy. It was noted that many contemporary Japanese have reservations about the former, particularly with regard to the non-reciprocal use of honorifics. Through an examination of native speakers' attitudes toward honorifics and actual uses of honorifics in conversations, I have

demonstrated how speakers evaluate and negotiate these canonical usages in deciding their strategies for deploying honorific and non-honorific expressions in discourse. Further, in addition to (indirectly) indexing social relations, the use of honorifics, I have argued, may also be taken as an (indirect) index of the speaker's identity. That is, honorifics may be linked to class and gender based on the belief that formal and/or deferential speech constitutes high-class status and/or femininity. This belief is another significant aspect of the ideology of Japanese honorifics, but not universally shared. I have also pointed out that a variety of situation-specific concerns (e.g. setting, speech-act types, genre) may play an important role in determining whether or not to use honorifics, or to show formality/deference, is appropriate at a given moment. In other words, the use of honorific and non-honorific expressions is a speech-style strategy based on a speaker's consideration of multiple contextual features as well as on his/her beliefs and attitudes concerning honorific uses.

In particular, the mixing of honorific and non-honorific expressions discussed in section 5 clearly shows that speakers actively create speech styles they consider appropriate for a given context. That is, speakers carefully manipulate honorific and non-honorific forms, using a variety of combinations, to engender different degrees of deference/formality, which, in turn, can implicate complex social meanings. My analysis of the data shows that an adequate understanding of the social meanings conveyed by honorific and non-honorific expressions cannot be obtained by simply focusing on individual linguistic forms and establishing an abstract relationship between them and particular social meanings. Rather, it requires an examination of the overall uses of these expressions in a specific conversation, because different social meanings may be implicated, depending on (a) what degree of formality/deference is being expressed, (b) whether or not honorific and non-honorific forms are used reciprocally, (c) what kind of setting or speech act is involved, and (d) what kinds of attitudes the speaker has toward honorific uses. The mixing of honorific and non-honorific forms indicates that these expressions are used not only to indirectly index contextual features, but also to actively construct the context itself. That is, speakers may adjust the use of two kinds of forms in order to create a desired context, in particular, preferred interpersonal relations and identities. Thus, this study illustrates both indirect and creative aspects of linguistic indexicality (Silverstein 1976, 1979; Duranti 1992).

Finally, with regard to politeness, the present study demonstrates that politeness, as it concerns honorifics, not only involves all utterances in discourse rather than merely certain types of acts (e.g. face-threatening acts), but also requires monitoring them carefully and coordinating them with each other. This study also illustrates the need for a theory of politeness to take into consideration the fact that rules of politeness, or preferred modes of expressing politeness, in a language are not universally agreed upon; their understandings vary both among individuals and across time. Moreover, the application of abstract rules/modes is always subject to context-specific evaluations. A rule like *Use honorifics to show deference, or politeness, to social superiors* may be emphasized as a social norm and influence one's linguistic practice in a significant way. However, politeness, as it concerns honorifics, cannot be considered simply a matter of observing social norms based on discernment of the contextual features. Rather, it is a speaker's speech-style strategy used in a specific social and historical context. Linguistic expressions, like honorifics, are not inherently polite. As I discussed above, depending on the situation and the speaker, the

use of honorifics may be perceived as inappropriate or rude (e.g. insincere, too distant, too deferential). Thus, identifying the contextual attributes may be important, but it does not directly translate into the use or non-use of honorifics. It is ultimately the speaker who determines how to relate the discerned context to linguistic expressions. In short, linguistic politeness, as exemplified by the use of honorifics, is relative to the speaker's understanding of what kinds of expressions constitute politeness in specific social and historical contexts.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Matsumoto (1997) claims that the term *non-subject* honorific is more appropriate than *object* honorific. Although the issue is interesting, here I use the commonly used term object honorific for simplicity.

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations used in the examples are as follows:

TM: topic marker	SM: subject marker	OM: object marker
GM: genitive marker	Q: question marker	Pst: past tense
SH: subject honorific	N-SH: non-honorific form for the subject-referent	
OH: object honorific	N-OH: non-honorific form for the object-referent	
AH: addressee honorific	N-AH: non-honorific form for the addressee, or plain form	

<sup>3</sup> Okamoto (1997a, b) discusses the indirect indexicality concerning "gendered" linguistic forms in Japanese.

<sup>4</sup> See Okamoto (1997b) for discussion of variations on the use of honorifics by women (and men).

<sup>5</sup> It is most likely that vendors do not know their customers well, especially because their shops are in a huge marketplace where many customers go only once in a while.

<sup>6</sup> Note that in department stores salespersons are normally trained how to talk to customers. In this respect, their speech styles may also be considered the stores' strategies.

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