

Politeness Strategies in Japanese Honorifics

—Contrasts between English and Japanese in strategic planning—

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I . Introduction

The present paper attempts to clarify the fundamental interior of politeness strategies in the Japanese honorific world (hereafter 'honorific strategies'), focussing on errors English speakers tend to make in learning Japanese.

Learners' errors occur mainly because they transfer their L1 (mother or first language) strategies into L2 (second or foreign language); that is, they apply pragmatic features of their L1 to L2, which often results in causing fatal errors in communication in L2 society. This is called 'pragmatic transfer' which is one of the most discussed areas in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies. Another reason for learners' errors is that honorific strategies are different from non-honorific strategies learners have already learnt.

This paper argues that a variety of errors can be ascribed to the following socio-psychological factors which play the pivotal role of generating differing strategies on the surface. I call these factors 'strategic planning', and English and Japanese differ tremendously in strategic planning. Note that there may be other kinds of strategic planning in both English and Japanese, however, in this paper the only factors that are closely related to learners' errors are listed to make our discussion more simple and clear.

1. English strategic planning is distinct with the two factors: positive strategies¹⁾ (appreciation, recognition) and avoidance of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)²⁾.
2. Strategic planning in Japanese honorifics is based on how the speaker perceives his/her *tachiba* in a given situation.

The paper will analyse error examples which are derived from the above differing strategic plannings, and clarify basic socio-psychological principles which determine the direction of honorific strategies in Japanese.

II . Background of Learners' Errors

Learners' difficulty in learning honorific strategies occurs for two reasons. One is due to language-transfer and the other reason is that strategies employed in the honorific world

1) The term is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987: 101) as 'redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants should be thought of as desirable'.

2) FTAs are acts by which the other is humiliated or embarrassed, or losing 'face' (the public image of self) (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

are different from those in the non-honorific world.

The term 'language transfer' in SLA studies is often referred to as 'the influence of linguistic or extra-linguistic features of one language upon another.' The latter is particularly called 'pragmatic transfer', and politeness is one of the most discussed topics in clarifying the concept of 'pragmatic transfer' (e.g. García, 1989; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Tanaka and Kawade, 1982, to mention a few). Although there are controversies concerning 'language transfer', such as its definition, its application ranges to learners' errors and its prediction, there is one point relevant to the present discussion.

As Bulm-Kulka (1982) and Olshtain (1983) demonstrate, learners may not transfer pragmatic features of their L1 to L2 if they perceive them as language-specific. For example, set phrases such as '*Otsukaresama*,' (= 'thank you' or 'good-bye' to seniors) and '*Yoroshiku onegai shimasu*,' (the greeting when strangers meet, or when one has asked a favour) are seldom erred, and in spite of their complex socio-logical interpretation, learners can safely handle them in a given situation.

Language transfer more often occurs when learners perceive L1 pragmatic features as universal. Learners may perfectly construct sentences, and yet their L1 socio-cultural background may affect the way in which such sentences are built up. In the case of learning politeness, learners may mean well to be polite in using politeness strategies from their L1, but may cause intercultural miscommunication. For example, learners often say, '**Sensei, kotae o kokuban ni kaite itadaki-tai desu ka*' (Sensei, would you like me to write the answer on the blackboard?), which is a typical example of language transfer as its English translation is considered perfectly polite. In English, asking directly what the other wants is a strategy to avoid a FTA. In Japanese, on the other hand, such an enquiry sounds as though the speaker were implying his/her reluctance to fulfil the task. Both languages aim at the same target, i.e. the speaker wants to confirm whether he/she has correctly understood the teacher's instruction. However, in Japanese this should be expressed as whether what the speaker is going to do can be approved by the teacher. It should never aim to extract the teacher's wants. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say, for example, '*Sensei, kotae o kokuban ni kakeba yoroshii desu ka*.' (Sensei, is it all right if I write the answer on the blackboard?) (This will be further discussed below.)

Another reason for learners' strategic errors in politeness is that strategies in Japanese politeness used in the world of honorifics are often different from those in the non-honorific world. Learners were safely using their L1 strategies when they started learning Japanese, because showing kindness, indirect request, tentative offer and many other diplomatic approaches are commonly shared between the two languages.

However, learners become baffled when they advance to the learning of the honorific world because while many strategies they learned at the earlier stage still apply in the honorific world, many others do not function as appropriate, and new approaches must be acquired. This is quite confusing because given a situation learners hesitate to choose between the two kinds of strategy.

For example, praising seems to be a common polite strategy in both English and Japanese. However, praising in Japanese honorifics needs extra care especially when praising a senior's professional performance³⁾. ‘*Sensei no oshie-kata wa totemo joozu desu.’ (Sensei, your teaching is very good.) is a common error by English speakers. Learners mean well, however, this utterance sounds condescending because *joozu* (good) is a judgemental word. (This will be further discussed below.)

It is clear that language transfer is the cause of the above errors, and that the errors are derived from different socio-cultural principles in strategic planning in English and Japanese. The next section will clarify where strategic differences on the surface come from.

III. Fundamental differences in strategic planning in English and Japanese

1. FTA-basis in English and *tachiba*-basis in Japanese

Takei (1985) refers to a common error which Japanese people make in requesting in English. She says that Japanese people tend to think that saying ‘please’ is simply polite, and gives an example that a meeting was held with mixed nationalities in Japan, and the chairperson was Japanese. When the meeting needed to announce a lunch break,

‘... the chairperson said to the audience in English, ‘Please come back here by one o'clock. Be punctual, please.’ Neither the chairperson nor the other Japanese seemed to notice any rudeness in what was said, even though the chairperson and the other Japanese were rather fluent in English...’ (Takei 1985: 3)

Takei suggests a different strategy: ‘I'm afraid we must come back here by one o'clock. Let's all try to be punctual.’ However, her analysis does not go deeper than giving the reason for the use of ‘we’ rather than ‘you’. She simply says that because the people in the meeting are not necessarily very close friends, they cannot be ordered around.

Questions arise. Does this mean that ‘an imperative form with “please”’ can be used toward people you are close to? Does Takei imply that degrees of closeness serve as a main factor to change from an imperative form to a ‘we-attitude’ strategy? Why did those distinguished Japanese apparently fluent in English make such an error? What, then, is a fundamental difference between English and Japanese, say, in making a request?

The difference in the above examples lies in different directions of strategic planning. In Japanese, since the chairperson is given a task to organise the meeting, he/she is authorised to instruct, advise and suggest. Thus, while using honorifics continuously, the chairperson can safely say:

(1) 休みのあと会議を続行いたしますので、みなさま一時までにお戻りください。

Yasumi no ato kaigi o zokkoo itashimasu node, minasama ichiji madeni omodori kudasai.

3) Praising the senior's belongings, performances in hobbies (e.g. golf) and entertainment (e.g. singing a song at a party) is a mere compliment, and can freely be expressed.

(As (we) continue (our) meeting after a break, everyone, please come back by one.)

(1) is perfectly natural and considered polite. First, the speaker shows deference to the audience by using appropriate honorifics. Second, the polite imperative form, *omodori kudasai*, shows that the speaker is fulfilling his/her task as a chairperson. This task is called *tachiba*.

Tachiba here is often translated as ‘one’s position or place’. In Japanese social settings, *tachiba* may be one’s job position, role or responsibility in a given situation. *Tachiba* is realised as, for example, teacher in relation to student, employer facing employee, stranger to stranger, chairperson’s role toward the audience, customer served by shop assistant. Wherever honorifics occur, strategies should conform to one’s *tachiba* in relation to the hearer. Just as honorifics are the linguistic evidence of how one recognises one’s social relationship with the other, honorific strategies are that of how one perceives one’s *tachiba* in a given situation. Therefore, given a (temporary) *tachiba* (= acting as a chairperson) in the situation of (1), the speaker uses the imperative form in request, which implies his/her confidence in fulfilling his/her role.

From the viewpoint of English speakers, however, the polite imperative, *omodori kudasai* (please come back), may not be acceptable. This is because in English, requests are solely in the interest of the speaker and normally at the cost of the hearer, therefore, indicate quite a high level of FTA. Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that politeness arises from face-saving strategies, i.e. strategies not to humiliate or embarrass the hearer. Thus, directive speech acts such as request, negotiation, offer, refusal, advice and suggestion are basically all potential face-threatening acts⁴⁾ and therefore, the speaker employs varied strategies to avoid FTAs.

In other words, English politeness strategies are based on the measurement of degrees of FTAs, which determines how the speaker linguistically approaches the other person. Therefore, the more FTAs are potentially predicted in approaching the hearer, the more cautious strategies are employed. This often precedes the speaker’s social position. On the other hand, Japanese strategies, particularly in the world of honorifics, are the result of how the speaker perceives his/her *tachiba* (立場) in a given situation.

The fundamental difference in strategic planning in English and Japanese creates quite contrastive approaches to the hearer. In English, for instance, a request is basically a benefit to the speaker, at the cost of the hearer, thus, is potentially a FTA. Therefore, it is often witnessed that strategies which show mutual respect serve to mitigate potential threats to face. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) provide instances in workplace which show that while power may license the use of relatively over coercive discourse strategies, ‘most workplace

4) Kallia (2005: 218) argues that degrees of FT differ among directive speech acts; for example, request is more FT than suggestion. However, in this paper different degrees are not our concern. It is more focussed that the acts listed here which are all directed toward the hearer are potentially FT unless appropriate strategies are adopted.

interactions provide evidence of mutual respect and concern for the feelings or face needs of others, that is, of politeness,' (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 5), and collegial strategies are more often employed.

However, this does not mean that juniors can use collegial strategies for egalitarian reasons. In English speaking societies just like any other society, social power is not avoidable and strategies showing the awareness of social power can occur. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) provide examples in which negotiating with the boss inevitably invites the linguistic politeness devices of hedging and attenuation. Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 146) say that '...another important resource for participants (= boss and junior) in handling confrontational interactions which threaten their face needs, is to emphasise their own status and competence...'

In the Japanese honorific world, on the other hand, each person's *tachiba* predominantly determines what strategies are used. For example, seniors are expected to teach, advise and look after juniors, who receive these cares, then repaying seniors with honorifics. In this relationship, seniors' *tachiba* makes it hard to accept juniors' advice or teaching. This is the reason why strategies for advice or suggestion require special attention in the honorific world. On the other hand, approaches which ignore someone's *tachiba* may cause FTAs.

It should be noted that we are dealing with how linguistic politeness is formed, not how society is run. It is not denied that English speaking countries do function according to the social position or role each member of the community has. Therefore, *tachiba* itself is not a unique term to Japanese society; it exists in every society. However, the term is worth employing in Japanese because *tachiba* is by priority exercised, and linguistically reflected as a recurring pattern. In a similar way, FTAs do exist and should carefully be handled in Japanese society, too. However, when one's *tachiba* is strongly recognised, it holds priority to the consideration of FTAs.

Another word of caution is that *tachiba* is not a clear trade-off between seniors and juniors. It is not a power-based setting, either. It is a role a person in any relation or situation inevitably plays as a responsible member in a given context. Although the violation of *tachiba* in honorific strategies may make seniors lose face, or *tachiba* can be abused and juniors may socially be suppressed, it is basically the speaker's consideration of, or his/her responsibility for the other(s).

What's more, it should not naively be understood that FTAs always serve toward seniors, just because degrading their *tachiba* readily cause FTAs. In areas which go beyond one's *tachiba*, both interactants potentially cause a FTA. Asking a big favour, say, borrowing a large sum of money, would be a potential threat to the hearer. In this case, the speaker's request may be hedged and attenuated, even when the speaker is senior in social position to the hearer. Therefore, when the nature of a request goes beyond the consideration of *tachiba*, FTAs surface in strategic planning in Japanese.

2. Praising and appreciation in English and Japanese – the case of ‘positive strategies’

Prior to the analysis of learners’ errors, there is one more factor to be noted which differs in the two languages and more likely causes learners’ errors. Praising is one of the positive strategies claimed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The purpose of positive strategies is to address the hearer’s need for approval. They serve to satisfy the hearer’s self image (face), thus to save his/her positive-face wants. Praising and appreciation are a powerful strategy to conform to politeness in English.

The same applies in Japanese in many situations, however, honorific strategies have to be handled with great care because the direct praising of a senior’s professional performance results in reverse effect. The reason is that in Japanese society seniors are supposed to look after, instruct, advise and lead juniors. In this *tachiba* role-play, commenting on a senior’s professional performance, no matter how appreciative a junior is, puts senior at the same level as junior. This will result in causing a condescending or judgemental tone. This is because praising is a kind of evaluation, the action of which does not agree with the junior’s *tachiba* role. The junior’s *tachiba* should linguistically be implemented as him/her receiving whatever comes from the senior. For example, as briefly discussed above, (2) is a common error by learners.

(2) *先生の教え方はとてもじょうずです。

*Sensei no oshie-kata wa totemo joozu desu.

(Sensei, your teaching is very good.)

This should be changed to:

(3) 先生の授業は楽しく、たくさんのことを学ばせていただきました。

Sensei no jogyoo wa tanoshiku, takusan no koto o manabasete itadaki mashita.

(Your teaching was enjoyable, and (I) learned a lot (from it).)

By avoiding the direct assessment to the other’s performance, (3) approaches the speaker’s inner feelings, implying what he/she received from the other’s teaching; the speaker takes a roundabout approach to praise the other’s professional performance.

To sum up, in English wherever no potential FTA is predicted, direct assessment to the hearer’s performance is allowed; in fact its recognition following its appropriate appraisal is highly regarded. In Japanese, on the other hand, *tachiba* prevails in every approach to seniors’ professional performance.

III. Learners’ errors in honorific strategies

Learners’ errors in honorific strategies are based on the direct application of English strategies, particularly certain positive strategies and strategies to avoid FTAs. Their most common errors can be classified as the following three categories.

- ① Learners have difficulties in grasping that certain statements, though having ‘positive’ meanings (e.g. favourable, appreciative and encouraging), may deliver judgemental implications, which will be considered impolite to seniors.

- ② Due to the English strategy that one is obliged to ask what is on the other's mind and then acts accordingly, learners tend to elaborate in Japanese what they can offer and ask whether the other wants to accept it or not.
- ③ Learners often apply the English strategy that requests are the most FTAs in every situation, and use the most polite forms in Japanese even when they are authorised or entitled to request because of their *tachiba*. In Japanese honorific strategy, juniors can use dependence⁵⁾ to request seniors directly, and fulfil their *tachiba* by using polite imperative forms to the public.

In the following learners' errors in each category are analysed. Throughout the discussion, the terms 'junior' and 'senior' are used to refer to status or age differences which most likely evoke of honorific strategies.

1. Praising and appreciation – Avoid judgemental statements in Japanese

As a rule of thumb juniors need great care when handling 'the praising of seniors', 'appreciation of seniors' effort', 'enquiry of seniors' ability' and 'permission'. This is because words used in such statements imply that they are the result of judgements; therefore, they sound as though juniors have measured seniors' professional performance by their own yardstick and state their evaluation. Juniors' face-to-face evaluation of seniors' professional performance is not socially accepted because seniors are generally expected to guide juniors and therefore, the latter's evaluation interferes with the former in pursuing their social task.

Learners' errors occur when they assume that the system of politeness fosters the values of positive attitudes such as praise and admiration, which is quite faithfully manifested in English speaking communities. For example,

(4) *社長の今日のスピーチはりっぱでした。

*Shachoo no kyoo no supiichi wa rippa deshita.

((to the company president) Sir, your speech today was excellent.)

(5) *今度の企画ですが、社長の案が一番よろしかったと思います。

*Kondo no kikaku desu ga, shachoo no an ga ichiban yokatta to omoimasu.

((to the company president) Concerning the next project, sir, I think your idea is the best.)

The examples (4)–(5) are not acceptable because the words underlined contain evaluations as a result of juniors' judgement. *Rippana* (splendid) in (4) normally delivers an open praise; for example, *rippana hito* (an outstanding person), *rippana seiseki* (one's excellent school record), when one is talking about a third person. However, facing the senior, the junior cannot use this adjective especially when intending to praise the senior's professional performance. In fact, the example here would not remain a simple error but could yield some sarcasm.

5) See the definition in III-3.

A simple solution is to replace *rippana* with *subarashii* (wonderful), which does not have any condescending tones. Otherwise, the statement should imply the junior's *tachiba* role that he/she is a recipient of the senior's performance; in appreciation, the speaker should imply benefits from the senior's performance. For example,

(4) 社長、今日のスピーチですが、感動しました。

Shachoo, kyoo no supiiichi desu ga, kandoo shimashita.

((to the company president) Sir, I was impressed by your speech today.)

(5) sounds as though the speaker were in a higher status than the president and had chosen the latter's idea as the best. A learner used *yorosikatta*, the honorific term of *yokatta* (was good), intending to be polite. However, the honorific-marked term turns out to sound more condescending than the unmarked one because when *yoroshii* concerns the listener's performance and is directed to him/her, it contains authoritative and permitting tones⁶. (5) should be changed, for example, to:

(6) 将来性を考えますと社長の案が私が一番だと思います。

Shooraisei o kangaemasu to shachoo no an ga watashi wa ichibanda to omoimasu.

((to the company president) The future being considered, your idea, sir, is the best, I suppose.)

In (6) the speaker praises the president's idea from a different perspective, adding that it is only the speaker's personal opinion. It is an indirect praise with a more focus on the future merit of the idea than its straight judgement. Moreover, because the opinion is more personalised than an open judgement, the statement safely avoids an explicit evaluation.

As mentioned earlier, because seniors are expected to look after and guide juniors, they do not presume juniors verbally appreciate their effort. Juniors may say 'thank you', or 'I've been looked after well' (*Osewa ni narimashita.*), however, they are almost hindered to express their appreciation of seniors' effort. This is because *negirai* (appreciation of someone's effort – 'You've done well.') is the term which betokens seniors' undertaking toward juniors, and there is no equivalent term that typifies the other way round. It is then only natural that very few set phrases of *negirai* directed toward seniors exist except *otsukaresama* (lit. You must be tired. –when a senior is leaving work or has come back from outside, or when he/she has completed a certain job).

However, it does not mean that juniors cannot say anything appreciative to seniors. Just like praising, different avenues of strategic planning are needed. In English it is the first step in politeness to specify what job and how much of it the other has achieved; in other words, the recognition of the other's work is a due process to the implementation of politeness. In Japanese, on the other hand, this kind of strategy produces an opposite effect because it indicates the evaluation of the senior's job⁷. Japanese strategies avoid the measurement of the senior's jobs; instead, they aim at expressing how much benefit the

6) This is the reason why *yoroshii* is very polite when it is used in an interrogative form, asking the listener's permission because it leaves authority to the listener.

7) Seniors' recognition of juniors' jobs is an inevitable feature for leadership.

speaker has received or how much the speaker is concerned with the senior's well-being (because of his/her hard work). For example,

(7) *部長はよくお働きになります。

*Buchoo wa yoku ohataraki ni narimasu.

((to the division manager) You work very hard, sir.)

(7) is not acceptable if it is uttered in front of the division manager (but is plausible if the speaker is talking with a third person). Especially if the speaker intends to appreciate his/her senior's hard work, this utterance sounds as though the speaker were appraising it by looking down from a higher position⁸). This should be corrected as (8).

(8) 部長、遅くまでお仕事のようですが、大変ですね。

Buchoo, osokumade oshigoto no yoo desu ga, taihen desu ne.

(Sir, it seems that the work is keeping you long. That's pretty hard (on you).)

This utterance contains two strategies. One is the strategy implying that the work has kept him long, which does not infer the speaker's judgement. *Osokumade oshigoto no yoo* (It seems that the work is keeping you long.) does not elaborate who is working hard, and *yoo* (seem) is a hear-say term which avoids the disclosure of (the speaker's knowledge of) how hard the listener has been working. The other strategy is that by saying *taihen desu ne* (That's a hardship and I feel for you.), the speaker shows more concern for his/her senior's well-being (rather than directly appraising his/her hard work), which further mitigates the speaker's judgement if there is any in the preceding utterance.

The above examples show that appreciation differs between English and Japanese in strategic planning. In English, appreciation is a positive strategy that the speaker directly specifies, elaborates and clarifies the listener's job because it is a social custom that good deeds should be declared and recognised. In Japanese, on the other hand, appreciation in honorific strategies has to be the speaker's receptive outlook as a result of the listener's performance rather than a direct approach to assess the latter's accomplishment.

2. Offer—Avoid asking what the other wants. Avoid verbalising what is on the other's mind.

In English, asking what the other wants is an essential prologue to an offer. Particularly great care is needed when offering help because it may curtail or impede the other's independence, anticipating potential FTAs. Therefore, one way of avoiding them is to ask the other whether he/she would accept the offer or what he/she wants. In Japanese, on the other hand, one approaches the other with a serving attitude; that is, the honorific world does not assume the linguistic evidence of the analysis of the other's psychology. Because offer is considered to be basically beneficial for the hearer, it should directly be presented without any preambles. Asking whether the other wants help or not, for instance, implies that the speaker is reluctant to offer help. Especially, in the relationship between senior and junior, asking seniors what they want is almost a taboo.

8) It could be uttered if speaker and listener were more close to each other.

For example,

(9) *パンフレットをお受け取りになりたいですか。

*Panfuretto o ouketori ni naritai desu ka?

(Would you like to have a pamphlet?)

A similar error to (9) is:

(10) *パンフレットをお送りしていただきたいですか。

*Panfuretto o ookurishite itadakitai desu ka.

(Would you like me to send you a pamphlet?)

Both are grammatically wrong as well as pragmatically inappropriate. First, *~tai* (want to~) cannot coexist with a polite interrogative form because it solely belongs to the speaker and his/her absolute *uchi* members⁹⁾ (Obana 2000: 194). That is, *~tai* can be used only when the speaker is talking about his/her wish, or when a question of the wish is made between absolute *uchi* members. Second, as mentioned above, asking what the other wants is not an honorific strategy; offer should directly be expressed to show the speaker's willingness.

As offer is a direct gesture in Japanese, preambles which refer to the other's actions are not necessary. Therefore, the underlined part in (11) is verbose and the latter part, '*Watashi ga mukae ni mairimasu.*' (I will pick you up.) is sufficient to be polite in making an offer.

(11) *タクシーでいらっしゃらなくてよろしいですよ。私が迎えにまいります。

*Takushii de irassharanakute yoroshii desu yo. Watashi ga mukae ni mairimasu.

(You don't have to pick up a taxi. I will come (to the airport) to pick you up.)

3. Request – Use a polite imperative form when playing your role in profession.

Use dependence to request your senior to do a certain job.

Perhaps the area of request is the most contrastive between English and Japanese. In English, request is basically a FTA, and the awareness of its potential FTA makes approaches to it tentative in all respects without presuming that it will be fulfilled by the hearer. Because of this, polite strategies often place preambles (excuses, explanations, lengthy greetings, for instance) before actual request¹⁰⁾. Requests are also downright indirect, which is quite regularly sustained irrespective of the interactants' social relationship or of any given situation.

In Japanese honorifics, however, requests can directly be made, considering the interactants' social relationship and the nature of request in a given context. The interactants' *tachiba* roles enable them to use polite imperatives or to use dependence (the term explained below) to request others to do a certain job. However, in Japanese, too, requests can be potentially FTAs if their nature goes beyond the domain of the interactants'

9) Absolute *uchi* members are members to whom honorifics are basically never used; for example, family members, close friends within the same age group as the speaker.

10) Conlan (2005) analyses Australian English in which small talks will eventually establish an acceptable discourse that request can safely be made.

tachiba, in which case indirect and cautious approaches should be employed.

Tachiba roles are either social positions or temporary tasks given as duties. For example, chairperson, guide, receptionist, instructor, police and shop assistant, given a situation where they are fulfilling their task, use imperative polite forms, which gives a good impression to the hearer that the speaker is confident as a professional. Senior and junior relationship is linguistically reflected in honorific terms whereas imperative forms are the evidence of the job entitlement.

Learners' errors occur because English FTA principles are applied to all situations in Japanese.

(12) *スーツケースをお開けになってお見せになってくださいませんか。

*Suutsukeesu o oake ni natte omiseni natte kudasai masen ka.

(Could you please open your suitcase to show it to me?)

(13) ???田中はすぐまいりますので、そちらの部屋でお待ちになってくださいませんか。

???Tanaka wa sugu mairi masu node, sochira no heya de omachini natte kudasai masen ka.

(Tanaka will be here in a minute, so could you please wait in that room?)

(12) is uttered when a customs officer is going to inspect a passenger's suitcase. The officer is entitled to do the job, therefore, should use a polite imperative form. However, learners tend to use the underlined phrase, which is indirect and tentative, indicating that the hearer (the passenger) has the right to refuse the request. Strictly speaking even *oake ni natte* ('to open' with the honorific marker, *o...ni nat*) may sound almost sarcastic due to too much decoration of exaltation. (12) should be changed to a simple official request as in (12)'.

(12)' スーツケースを開けてください。

Suutsukeesu o akete kudasai. (Please open your suitcase.)

In a similar way, in (13) the receptionist plays her/his role to ask the visitor to wait for Tanaka who belongs to the same company as the receptionist. Her/His job entitlement enables her/him to utter an imperative form as in (13)'.

(13)' 田中はすぐまいりますので、そちらの部屋でお待ちください。

Tanaka wa sugu mairi masu node, sochira no heya de omachi kudasai.

(Tanaka will be here in a minute, so please wait in that room.)

When asking the other to do a certain thing beneficial for the speaker, the speaker usually takes the most cautious and tentative approach to the hearer because such a request should be acted on by the hearer, which impedes the hearer's negative face¹¹⁾. It is also granted advantageous solely for the speaker at the cost of the hearer's effort. Potential FTAs are predicted in both English and Japanese. However, there are exceptions in Japanese which can directly be conducted without causing FTAs. That is, they occur when

11) The term defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as 'the desire to be free from imposition'.

speaker and hearer mutually understand that the former can use dependence in requesting.

'Dependence' (the translation of *amae*) is the term first introduced by Doi (1981); it is a socio-psychological feature apparently prevalent as a Japanese mentality. Doi claims that *amae* originates in a child's dependence on her/his mother, which prevails in Japanese collectivist society as the extension of *ego* to one's group. This is alleged to be due to weak ego boundaries in the psychology of Japanese people (Inetomi 1963; Kogi 1967).

However, in this paper 'dependence' is used only for the convenience of explaining certain linguistic phenomena which are implemented as 'counting on seniors' *tachiba*, i.e. 'trusting that seniors will play a role of looking after juniors'. 'Dependence' is observed when juniors request their seniors in professional contexts to fulfil duties as seniors, which is linguistically realised as direct requests, assuming that juniors are entitled to request. This is quite contrastive with English in which the nature of request is primarily considered and degrees of FTAs are weighed. Therefore, the speaker takes the most tentative approach to the hearer even when the speaker is given an eligible position to request (e.g. a student asks his/her teacher to write a recommendation letter). Learners' errors occur because of this English strategic planning adopted to Japanese; therefore, their tactics are too tentative and/or carry preambles to temper an FTA. For example,

- (14) ??課長、頼まれた書類ができたんですが、お忙しいところを申し訳ありません
がご覧になっていただけませんか。

??Kachoo, tanomareta shorui ga dekitan desu ga, oisogashii tokoro o mooshiwake
arimasen ga, goran-ni natte itadakenai deshoo ka.

((to the section manager) Sir, the requested document has been completed.
I understand you are busy. I'm sorry, but couldn't you please have a look at
it?)

- (15) *部長、もしお時間がおありでしたら、来週提出する企画をご覧になっていただ
けないでしょうか。

*Buchoo, moshi ojikan ga oari deshi-tara, raishuu teishutsu suru kikaku o goran-
ni natte itadake naideshooka.

((to the division manager) Sir, if you happen to have time to spare, couldn't
you please have a look at the project plan which is to be submitted next
week?)

Both (14) and (15) have the underlined preambles which are not necessary (unless a junior is talking to a terrifying senior) because the content of the request is the senior's responsibility. Even *goran ni natte itadakenai deshoo ka* (I'm wondering if you could have a look by any chance.) could be too hesitant although it is not wrong. (14) and (15) can be changed to (16) and (17) respectively.

- (16) 課長、書類が出来上がりましたので、ちょっと見ていただけますか。

Kachoo, shorui ga shiagari mashita node, chotto mite itadake masu ka?

(Sir, the document has been completed. Could you please have a look at it?)

- (17) 部長、来週提出する企画なんですが、ちょっと目を通していただけますか。

Buchoo, raishuu teishutsu suru kikaku nandesu ga, chotto me o tooshite itadake masu ka?

(Sir, this is a project plan I will submit next week. Could you please check it for me?)

We have looked at learners' errors and clarified differing directions of strategic planning between English and Japanese. Strategic planning is a socio-psychological motivation which affects how linguistically interactants approach each other for successful communication. English strategic planning places its centre on the measurement of FTAs whereas in the Japanese honorific world one's *tachiba* takes precedence over FTAs.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has examined differences in strategic planning in English politeness and Japanese honorifics, particularly focusing on English speaker's errors in learning Japanese honorific strategies. What are considered polite and what are not are culture-laden, deriving from differing socio-cultural values and evaluations. In this study, it has been found that contrasts between the two languages are the most distinctive when the consideration of potential FTAs is highlighted in one language while in the other language regarding one's *tachiba* precedes anything else. Contrasts are also enhanced when the least potential FTA is predicted in one language while in the other *tachiba* is violated to cause FTAs. Such contrasts are formed in the case of offer, request in professional situation, praising professional performance. There may be further contrasts between English and Japanese. However, the present paper is limited to these three areas as learners' errors in honorific strategies are the most conspicuous in them.

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Politeness Strategies in Japanese Honorifics

—Contrasts between English and Japanese in strategic planning—

Yasuko OBANA

The present paper examines differences in English politeness strategies and Japanese strategies in the honorific world. Differences are derived from differing socio-cultural values and evaluations which determine how the speaker linguistically approaches the hearer.

The data used in this study are based on English speakers' errors in learning Japanese. The errors are the result of language transfer from English into Japanese, i.e. learners adopt English politeness strategies to honorific strategies. The most distinctive errors are in fact the most distinctive contrasts between English and Japanese in strategic planning.

Contrasts are found in that when the consideration of potential Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) is highlighted in English, regarding one's *tachiba* (position, role, responsibility) precedes anything else in Japanese. Contrasts are also exhibited in that when the least potential FTA is predicted in English, FTAs are more likely invited in Japanese because one's *tachiba* is violated. Such contrasts are brought in the case of 'offer', 'request in professional situation' and 'praising professional performance'.