

論文

From deference to solidarity: Linguistic reflections of Japanese social changes¹⁾

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要 旨

1980年代のバブル経済渦中あった日本は自己に対する自信に満ち溢れ、経済では最早アメリカ合衆国にも追い付いたと言われる状況にあった。日本式経営方法を始めとしてさまざまな面で日本式を是とする考え方が主流となっていた。しかしその自信は1990年のバブル崩壊により崩れ去る。その後の日本は急速に進むグローバルゼーションの中で、日本の伝統的経営方式とは異なる成果主義、能力主義を柱にして経済の立て直しを迫られることになった。政治、行政、教育と、社会のあらゆるところで効率を求めての改革が叫ばれるようになる。本論文では、このような社会変化が日本の人間関係の基盤である上下関係にどのような変化をもたらしたかを言語使用の観点から明らかにする。とくに、社会の変化に敏感だと思われる若者世代の言葉に注目し、若者向けテレビ番組に現れた動詞の丁寧体と常体の量変化を見ることによってその変化を捉えようと試みた。結果は、年齢による上下意識は敬意表現として残っているものの、1980年代初頭と比較して1996年では常体のほうが丁寧体を上回り、使用量の逆転が観察されることが判った。これは日本社会が基盤としてきた上下関係が崩れ始め、より横の関係に比重を置く、ポジティブポライトネス（相手との距離を縮めたいという欲求）への移行と解釈することが可能であるとする。

(キーワード: solidarity 親しみ deference 敬意 plain form 常体 polite form 丁寧体 language change ことばの変化 TV language テレビのことば social change 社会の変化 positive politeness ポジティブポライトネス)

Background

After rapid economic growth throughout the 1970's, the 1980's revealed Japan as an economic super power with an ever stronger *yen* threatening even to overtake the then staggering US economy. Economists, sociologists, political scientists and the like, both overseas and in Japan, made many attempts to analyze and identify the cause of Japan's economic success (Kahn 1971; Vogel 1980; Sakakibara 1993, inter alia). Due to the economic success and the consequent attention Japan received worldwide, there was an air of confidence amongst the people. They felt assured that the Japanese way, including traditional values such as group harmony and seniority, was as good if not better than other alternatives, notably those of U.S where strong leadership, confrontation and meritocracy, all of which were nontraditional to the Japanese, prevailed.

The economic bubble burst suddenly in 1990 when shares started to fall rapidly. Since then the Japanese economy has been in slow decline as evidenced by an ever-decreasing GDP (Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2003). The atmosphere in the country has changed drastically. As the awaited economic recovery has been long coming, there has been increasing pressure for business and other sectors to adapt to global standards meaning that companies had to place greater value on efficiency and meritocracy instead of old business conventions and seniority, in order to better compete in the world market (*Japan Economic Almanac* 2000). Carlos Ghosn of Nissan Motor Corporation, after becoming COO in 1999 eliminated huge company deficits and announced a profit for the first time in years in 2001 (Itagaki 2001). He achieved this by restructuring the entire company radically such as by making English mandatory as the language within the company. Ghosn has demonstrated clearly that Japanese companies which adapt globally can achieve great success.

Pressure for globalization or to go 'international' has permeated into other parts of the society as well. Primary schools (the six years of education for children between the ages of 7 to 12) for example, now have a course called *Sogotekina gakushu no jikan* [comprehensive studies] which under the one grand objective of teaching children the active skill of problem solving, also proposes to enhance international understanding in children (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2003). For *Sogotekina gakushu* classes many schools have opted to teach English, which in the former standard curriculum has not been introduced until junior high

school. Similarly, tertiary education, including colleges and universities, is also under pressure from the government to raise the standard of research and education to global levels, meaning to veer away from the practices which have been customary in Japan but are perhaps not beneficial from the perspective of overall improvement of institutions of higher learning. One example of this is provided by the employment situation of university faculty members. Japanese nationals formerly received tenure automatically upon assuming a university teaching position without any probational period whatsoever, but tenureship can no longer be taken for granted. Although it still holds to be true in most cases of faculty employment, there is now a trend towards more fixed term, contract-based employment.

Study purpose: assessing change in language use

Such tumultuous changes in society and attitudes towards more adopting global values seem to be influencing the use of the Japanese language. In recent years the speech of young people (those in their middle teens to early twenties) has attracted much attention from the public for its seemingly strange characteristics. Their non-standard intonation, accent patterns, and new vocabulary have sometimes been humorously and/or sensationally depicted in magazines and newspapers. More serious treatment has been accorded in the monthly journal dealing with language matters in non-academic terms, *Gekkan Gengo*, which ran a column on the young generation's vocabulary in 1991 and also in a book titled *Wakamono kotoba jiten* [Dictionary of Young People's Vocabulary] published in 1993.

The most significant characteristic of the young's speech from a pragmatic or sociolinguistic viewpoint lies in their selection of verb forms. Young people appear to be using less and less polite forms, the consequence of which is their speech often sounds more casual than it ought to be to those in older generations.

Recent annual surveys on language use conducted by the Cultural Agency within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (1997, 1999 and 2000) present statistics that strongly imply young people are becoming less sensitive to the hierarchy of relationships and also to the notion of humbleness (placing oneself lower than others), both of which underlie the traditional Japanese honorific speech system. For example, asked if they use the expression "*Tsumaranai mono desu ga*" (a

fixed expression literally meaning “It is a boring thing” often said when one is giving a gift to someone), only 21.4% of 16–19 year-old males and 31.3% of 16–19 year-old females answered positively compared to over 50% of those of both sexes above 30 years of age (*Heisei 9-nendo Kokugo ni Kansuru Seronchosa* [1997 National survey on the use of Japanese], p.14.)

In this paper I will examine the extent to which casual speech is used in the Japanese of the young. There are two objectives for this investigation; firstly, to quantify the use of verb forms in the speech of the young and secondly, to ascertain whether or not the use of verb forms has shown any change from the time before compared with after the economic bubble burst.

Conversant relationship and Japanese verb formation

Japanese verb morphology is complex as verbs inflect for different grammatical categories such as tense, voice and modality. Japanese verbs also have a rigid morphological system that indicates the speech level deemed appropriate by interlocutors at the time of speaking. Moeran, in the work that analyzed the Japanese through the language in modern popular culture, stated “As anyone who has tried to master Japanese will know, one of the more difficult aspects of communication centres on which of a variety of verbs and verb forms one should use when addressing or referring to other people.” (1989: 6) Which verb form will be chosen depends principally on the speaker’s attitude towards the subject of the expression, which may follow the established social convention of relative position/status, age and sex in that order (Nakane 1970: 32).

Bloch (1946), an American linguist who left a pioneering work on the Japanese language, divides Japanese predicates into two states with one being polite and the other plain. He based this distinction on the use or non-use of *-des-* and *-mas-*, the honorific suffixes. A verb form with one of these suffixes makes the whole sentence polite and more formal, which he calls ‘the polite state’ and without it the sentence becomes ‘the plain state’. Therefore two sentences having exactly the same propositional content, may only differ in ‘stylistic and social connotations’ (p.163).

Martin (1964) and Miller (1964 and 1967) describe Japanese verb forms as being determined by the relative status differences, i.e., deference, and also by the familiarity

of the interlocutors. The two axes of deference and familiarity are evident in the verb base and the verb ending respectively. Taking the verb base *ik-* ‘to go’ as an example, it changes to *irasshar-* to indicate deference to the undertaker of the action of going; in this case it would be the subject of the sentence. The base may take an ending of *-(i)mas-* rendering two verb forms of *ik-(i)mas-* or *irassha-(i)mas-*. The ending of *-mas-* is to show politeness and formality to the addressee rather than to the subject of the verb. The speaker politeness ending of *-mas-*, therefore is not used in conversations amongst close friends and family members where familiarity and friendliness override formality.

The bifurcation of verb forms according to who you are speaking about (i.e., the topic or the subject of the sentence) and who you are speaking to (i.e., the addressee) is very much in line with the traditional Japanese grammarians’ analyses of verb forms. Hori (1986: 376) designated a four-way system symbols of <+H> to the deferential base, <-H> to the non-deferential base, and <+h> to the formal ending, <-h> to the familiar ending and tabulated the verb formation variants of *iku-* to show how the polite morphemes manifest in the two axes of deference and formality.²⁾ Table 1 is a much simplified (and modified for some morphophonemic analysis) version of Hori’s table exhibiting verb form variants of *ik-u* ‘to go’.

A verb form that has at least one positive element, that is either <+H> or <+h>, and those with both <+H> and <+h> may be considered as polite in Japanese. In this study I will examine the production statistics of such polite verb forms in order to determine the extent of change in the use of verb forms between the early 1980’s and the late 1990’s in Japan.

Table 1. *Verb formation of ik-u ‘to go’ and its variants*

	Variants	Base stem	Ending	
			Auxiliary root	Inflectional suffix
<-H, -h>	<i>iku</i>	<i>ik-</i>		<i>-u</i>
<-H, +h>	<i>ikimasu</i>	<i>ik-</i>	<i>-(i)mas-</i>	<i>-u</i>
<+H, -h>	<i>irassharu</i>	<i>irasshar-</i>		<i>-u</i>
<+H, +h>	<i>irasshaimasu</i>	<i>irasshar-</i>	<i>-(i)mas-</i>	<i>-u</i>

Adapted from Hori (1986: 376)

(Note: The morpheme *-i* does not have semantic content, but is added as a phonological filler, as the Japanese language does not allow the two-consonant combination of /r/ followed by /m/ or /k/. The consonant /r/ in the base stem of *irasshar-* drops in the realization.)

Survey

I compared five TV talk shows, randomly selected, that are considered to appeal to a young audience of those in their late teens and twenties. TV talk shows were analyzed for two reasons: Firstly, TV talk shows offer good samples of natural speech as participants do not rigidly follow a written script but are encouraged to speak spontaneously. Secondly, as Bell's theory of referee design (1984: 191) describes, a TV talk show as a form of mass communication has the characteristic of converging more with its audience (i.e., those not physically present with the speaker, but those watching the show on TV) and therefore would reflect whatever the language trend considered most appealing to the targeted audience. For the same reason NHK [*Nippon Hoso Kyokai* (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation)] programs were avoided, since being the sole public broadcasting network, the speech therein is typically conservative in its resistance to the non-standard use of language, and as such are less likely to reflect the modern speech style of the young.

Approximately 15 minutes of each talk show segment were randomly recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analyzing politeness. The verb forms that are syntactically permissible for polite and plain variations were counted for each category of <+H, +h>, <+H, -h>, <-H, +h> (all considered to be polite), and <-H, -h> (not polite).

Details of talk shows

All the shows were set in a TV studio. The 1981 show consisted of only two parties of hosts and a guest, while all other four (1982 and 1996) consisted of three parties of host, guest and a live studio audience. In all five shows both hosts and guests came from the Japanese entertainment world meaning they were either actors, comedians or singers. In the 1996 shows the host and guests were standing next to each other behind a podium and were facing the studio audience. In the 1981 and 1982 shows both hosts and guests were seated on lounge chairs that were facing each other but the chairs were arranged diagonally so that the faces of the hosts and guests appear unobstructed on camera.

The tone of the shows is light and all are full of laughter. The conversation topics are often composed of humorous episodes in guests' personal history or their recent

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experiences; if not humorous, the hosts provided amusing comments. Some sample conversations are partially quoted below to exemplify the atmosphere of the talk shows. (A Japanese transcription of the programs is available in complete form in Y. Murata 2002.)

1982

guest: ...auto ne, dou katatte iuto, nnn mada koru no nante souiu hanashi wo shiteimasu, gakuya de, itsumo sou desu.

‘...when we meet (in the studio back room), we ask how each other’s neck is. We all talk about how stiff our necks are.’

host: Hata, 20, 3, 4 no musume ga gakuya de au tabini “kata koruuu”

‘Young ladies around 20, 23, 24 saying “stiff neck” every time they meet.’

guest: So desu. (laughter)

‘That’s right. (laughter)’

host: (laughter) Oban no serihu de gozaimasu ne.

‘(laughter) It’s an old woman’s favorite phrase.’

1996B

(The guest, who is an actor and also owns a noodle shop, has brought a bowl of noodles to the studio for the host to try. The conversation is taking place as the host tries the noodles.)

host: Kore nee, teeru nee. Konna okki no ga haitteru. (The host lifts up the ox tail;
‘This ..., an ox tail ... Look, it’s a huge piece.’ laughter of studio audience)

guest: Sugoi desho.

‘Really big, isn’t it?’

host: Kore ikura nan desu ka.

‘How much is this?’

guest: Kore 1200 en, futatsu mo haitteru.

‘This is 1200 yen, you get as many as two pieces (of ox tail).’

The ages and sexes of the show participants are given in Table 2. The 1981 and 1982 programs were different shows, but all 1996 programs were of the same show recorded over three different days. The data from 1981 and 1982 are restricted to the two shows due to availability of recorded programs at the time of analysis.

Table 2. *Sex and age details of the talk show participants*

	Host	Guest
1981	Two females : late 30's	A male : 70's
1982	A male : 30's	A female : mid-20's
1996A	A male : early 50's	A female : early 20's
1996B	A male : early 50's	A male : early 50's but slightly younger
1996C	A male : early 50's	A male : mid-60's

Data and discussion

Frequency of polite and non-polite (plain) forms used: an overview

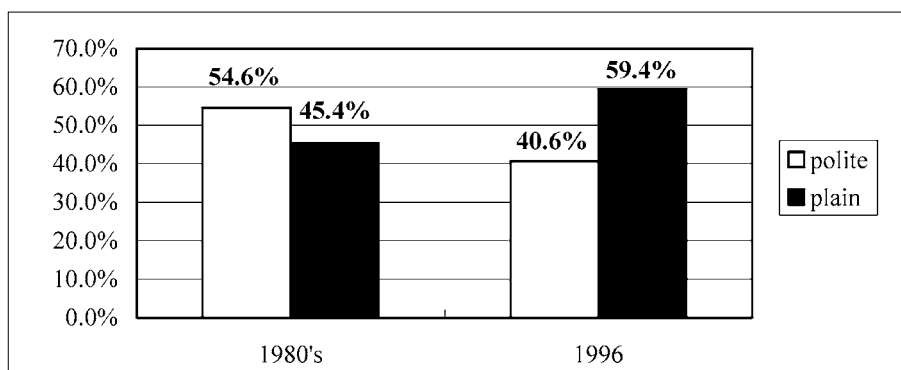
There were a total of 1682 verb forms counted in the five talk shows. Table 3 presents the distribution of these verb forms in the four categories of <+H, +h>, <+H, -h>, <-H, +h> and <-H, -h>. It is noticeable that the figures for polite forms (subtotals in the table) are significantly higher than those for non-polite forms in 1981 and 1982, but the pattern is reversed for two of the programs in 1996 (96A and 96B). 96C had more polite forms (118) than non-polite forms (111), but the difference is still less than the polite/plain figures for 1981 and 1982. More polite verb forms in 96C may be the result of the age difference of the host and the guest, which as will be discussed later is a working criteria for using polite verbs. Another factor was that the host and the guest hardly knew each other—a fact that can easily be inferred from the taped conversation.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of polite and non-polite forms used in the 1980's and in 1996, indicating the shift towards non-polite verb forms more clearly; the use of polite forms decreased to 40.6% in 1996 compared with 54.6% in the 1980's.

Table 3. *Distribution of verb forms: frequency and percentage*

Verb Forms		81	82	96A	96B	96C
Polite	<+H, +h>	20 (8.1%)	27 (4.6%)	9 (3.3%)	8 (2.3%)	2 (0.9%)
	<+H, -h>	14 (5.7%)	3 (0.5%)	4 (1.5%)	1 (0.3%)	5 (2.2%)
	<-H, +h>	110 (44.7%)	280 (47.8%)	81 (29.7%)	124 (35.6%)	111 (48.5%)
	Subtotal	144 (58.5%)	310 (52.9%)	94 (34.4%)	133 (38.2%)	118 (51.5%)
Plain	<-H, -h>	102 (41.5%)	276 (47.1%)	179 (65.6%)	215 (61.8%)	111 (48.5%)
Total		246	586	273	348	229

Figure 1. *Percentages of polite and plain forms in the 1980's and 1996*



Formality

Formality is a type of politeness which manifests in talk on specialized occasions such as public speech, TV/radio news reading, university lecturing and also in talk between two strangers (Mizutani and Mizutani 1987). It is marked in the verb ending by the presence of *-mas-* or *-des-* and in my analysis given the symbol <+h>.

Table 4 shows the frequency and the percentage of formal <+h> and informal<-h> verb forms in each show. Here we can see that talk shows of the 1980's are very similar in terms of the use of formal verb forms, 52.8% for 1981 and 52.4% for 1982. In contrast the interlocutors in 1996 used less formal forms (33.0%, 37.9% and 49.3%), but more casual forms (67.0%, 62.1% and 50.7%). It is clear from the statistics that there is a definite increase of informal verb forms in 1996 shows in comparison with those of the 1980's.

Table 4. *Distribution of formality morphemes of -mas- and -des-: frequency and percentage*

		81	82	96A	96B	96C
Formal	<+h>	130 (52.8%)	307 (52.4%)	90 (33.0%)	132 (37.9%)	113 (49.3%)
Informal	<-h>	116 (47.2%)	279 (47.6%)	183 (67.0%)	216 (62.1%)	116 (50.7%)

In the 1996C show, which had slightly more polite verb forms (118) than non-polite (111) in the overview count in Table 3, the number of informal verb forms actually slightly exceeded that of formal verb forms. This means that in the case of 1996C, it was the <+H> forms (i.e., honorific verbs) that boosted up the overall figure of polite verb forms. The host, not knowing the guest well who was also about ten years older presumably used honorific verbs to show deference to the addressee.

Polite/non-polite (plain) forms and senior/junior relationship

In this section I will consider verb forms from the senior/junior perspective. This is necessary in order to assess whether this traditional, culturally-bound parameter in Japanese society is undergoing any change. Senior/junior here refers to the relative age difference between the interlocutors. Nakane (1970: 32) states that polite language is employed by the speaker according to the criteria of status, age and sex in descending order of importance. This study examines the data by the age parameter, since the first criterion of status could not be validly established in a situation in which everybody in the shows is from the entertainment world where there are no clear-cut rankings of position. In such circumstances the number of years one has worked as an entertainer, which usually accords with one's age, would be the distinguishing factor for producing polite language.

Table 5 shows the actual numbers of polite forms used by each individual in the talk shows and tabulates them along senior/junior axes. Figure 2 shows the percentage of polite verb forms in each participant's speech making comparison easier along the two axes. Figure 2 indicates that the percentages of polite forms used by juniors is consistently higher than for their senior counterparts, which clearly signifies that juniors always talked more politely to seniors than seniors talked to juniors both in the 1980's and in 1996 shows.

Another point to note from Figure 2 is the decrease in the use of polite forms by seniors in 1996. Polite forms composed more than half of seniors' speech in 1981 and 1982 (specifically 51.6% in 1981 and 50.4% in 1982), but every senior in 1996 used

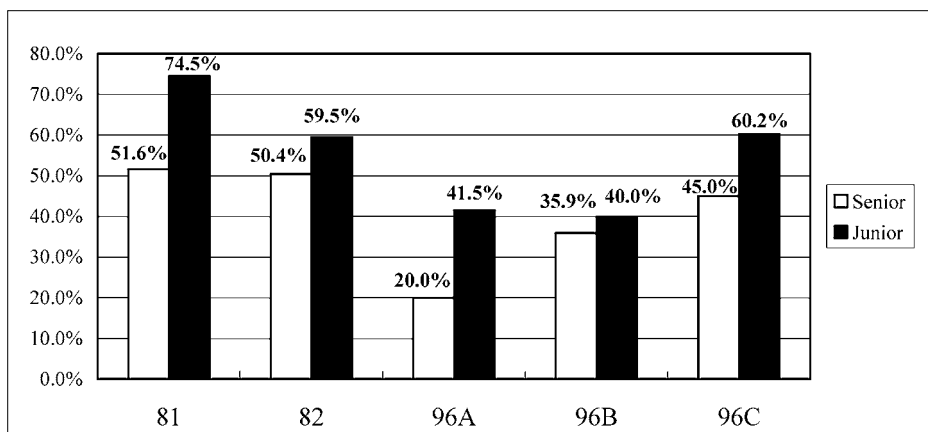
more plain forms than polite forms, as the polite form percentages of 20%, 35.9% and 45% indicate. This is consistent with the general decline in the usage of polite forms as observed before, however, it also suggests that the decline is not restricted to young people's speech alone. The decline in the use of polite forms by seniors is particularly striking when we compare 1982 and 1996A. For both talk shows, there was a common situation whereby a much older (and therefore senior) male host talked with a female guest in her 20's. The polite forms used by the 1982 senior male composed 50.3% of his speech, whilst merely 20% of the senior male's speech in 1996A was in polite forms.

Table 5. *Polite forms in senior/junior relationship: frequency and percentage*

	+H, +h	+H, -h	-H, +h	Polite Forms in Individual Speech
81 Senior	0	45	3	48/93 (51.6%)
Junior	19	54	9	82/110 (74.5%)
82 Senior	12	90	28	130/258 (50.4%)
Junior	4	110	30	144/242 (59.5%)
96A Senior	4	6	8	18/90 (20.0%)
Junior	5	44	27	76/183 (41.5%)
96B Senior	2	39	14	55/153 (35.9%)
Junior	6	52	20	78/195 (40.0%)
96C Senior	0	42	17	59/131 (45.0%)
Junior	2	46	11	59/98 (60.2%)

(Note: The number of polite verb forms for 1981 and 1982 shows in Table 5 does not correspond to that in Table 3. This is because in Table 5, the polite forms used in the host's introductory monologue are excluded from calculation in an attempt to obtain a more accurate picture of the nature of polite forms in the senior/junior relationship.)

Figure 2. *Percentages of polite forms in senior/junior's speech*



In 1996B where the difference in age between the host and the guest is minimal, the percentages of polite forms resulted in similar figures at 35.9% and 40%, with both below 50%.

The above findings demonstrate that Japanese people are generally still very sensitive, consciously or unconsciously, to age differences when talking to others despite the decreasing use of polite forms in general.

Honorifics (+H) in junior's speech

As explained earlier I use the term honorifics to refer to the verb stem that changes according to the deference given to the subject of the verb. Unless one talks about a third party, the subject of the verb usually coincides with the addressee or addresser. Honorifics in Japanese are reflected in main verbs for which the stems are changed either to raise the actor (other than oneself) or to lower the actor (oneself). By using honorifics the relative position of oneself and others is fixed with oneself always being lower than others. Most honorific verbs (including humble forms) are produced by attaching the prefix *o-* and suffix *-ninar-* (in the case of humble form the suffix is *-sur-*) to the verb stem. Some verbs change to an entirely different word for its honorific form such as *ik-u* 'to go' which becomes *irasshar-u*, although such verbs are few. It must be noted that some standard greetings or expressions contain honorifics such as *doitashimashite* 'you are welcome', a reply to "thank you", or *itadakimasu* 'I am to humbly receive this food', a fixed phrase Japanese people habitually say before eating. I distinguish such honorifics as fixed honorifics which are unlike regular or productive honorifics for which speakers are required to know the rules for changing the verb forms.

All the (fixed and non-fixed/productive) honorific verbs were counted and their percentages in each participant's speech are listed in Table 6. Due to the nature of honorifics only those produced by junior speakers are considered here. The speech of the junior person in 1996B was not included as the age difference between the interlocutors is minimal and thus honorifics are not likely to be employed.

Table 6 shows that with the exception of 1981, the use of honorifics is not so prevalent in these talk shows. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that in 1982 and 1996A, almost all honorifics were fixed honorifics and the use of productive honorifics was negligible at 0.7% and 0.1% respectively. The fact that productive honorifics were

hardly used by the juniors in the two talk shows may well have something to do the age of the juniors, as the juniors in both shows were in their early twenties. Taking into account that the junior speakers in 1981 were in their late thirties and in 1996C was a man in his early fifties, it is possible to interpret the findings as support for the view that honorifics in Japanese are learned at a much later age than one's early to mid-twenties. Inoue (1999) argues that the complex Japanese system of honorifics is acquired not as much in school as it is in the course of working.

Table 6. *Percentages of honorifics(+H) used in junior's speech*

	81	82	96A	96C
All honorifics	66.4%	47.1%	26.8%	49.0%
Productive honorifics	33.7%	0.7%	0.1%	10.2%

As far as any chronological trend in the use of honorifics from the 1980's to 1990's is concerned, it is difficult to make any conclusive statement about any change in use of honorifics over the period, as there is no consistent decrease of honorifics detectable in the ratios of 66.4%, 47.1%, 26.8% and 49% for each show respectively. The only significant difference between the 1980's and 1990's shows noticeable from the table seems to be the decrease in productive honorifics from 33.7% in 1981 to 10.2% in 1996C. Here, however, one could argue that the gender factor may also be at work as the 96C junior was male whilst those in 1981 were female. We need to examine more data to draw any firmer conclusion in terms of honorific use in Japanese. From the current data one could only surmise that productive honorifics seem to be used less frequently than previously.

Conclusion

The impression that the speech one encounters watching Japanese television in recent times sounds more casual than before was quantitatively verified in this study. Within the limitations of the data presented, the speakers in the more recent 1996 shows clearly favored the use of non-polite forms more than polite forms. Change in the use of verb forms however, was not found in the speech of the young only. In the programs studied, out of five people aged over thirty years, four used more non-polite

forms than polite forms in 1996 compared to 1981 and 1982 when all such people (as well as the one under 30 years of age) used more polite forms (Table 5). K. Murata (2000) surveyed the speech characteristics of TV commercials appearing in 1999 that were obviously targeted at the young (in their 20's) and compared them with the commercials targeted at older age audiences. She found that commercials for products targeting young people contained only plain forms, i.e., informal verb endings.

It is apparent much of the mass media language that is aimed at young people in Japan now shows a preference for positive politeness strategies of speaking which function to shorten the distance between interlocutors (Brown and Levinson 1987). The comparison of formal and informal (casual) endings of verbs used in the talk shows confirmed this preference; the formal verb endings, once dominant in early 1980's, were found to be overtaken by the casual/familiar endings in 1996 (Table 4). Mizutani & Mizutani (1987: 4) explain that "... one uses the polite form [meaning the formal endings of *-des-* and *-mas-*] when speaking to the general public. [Therefore] A television or radio announcer always uses the polite form ...". Although once true, this rule did not always hold true in 1996, at least for the TV programs for the younger generation. The young wish to avoid creating distance between themselves and the addressee, which the polite or honorific forms of verbs necessarily entail.

The seemingly reduced use of honorifics in 1996 may be the result of this solidarity-seeking way of interaction (Table 6), as the non-use of productive honorifics could logically be explained if it is considered as part of solidarity-seeking behavior. Fixed honorifics were relatively frequent in 1996, however, because they were fixed and as such have lost their original meaning, they cannot be considered as being honorific for the purpose of this study. Such expressions have become lexicalized items such as when one uses "How do you do?" in English; nobody really considers the original meaning of the sentence.

A comment by a seventeen-year-old female in a magazine article which investigated the speech of *joshikosei* 'high school girls' (*Josei Seibun* [Women Seven]1999: 191) clearly illustrates this trend away from polite speech. Asked about her casual way of speaking, she rationalizes that she uses casual speech with those she wants to make friends with, but that she would create a metaphoric wall by using polite verbs with those she does not care about.

The traditional value of seniority in age still remains as an important working

principle for Japanese interaction. The value underlying seniority however, is incompatible with the value that encourages a more egalitarian style of speech, and therefore it may be said that we are currently witnessing a clash of opposing philosophies regarding the use of Japanese language. Older people know when to speak casually or politely according to traditional criteria, whereas the younger generation appears to be caught between the desire that drives them to speak in a friendlier manner by using plain forms and traditional culture-bound intuition that otherwise pushes them to speak more politely.

These forces are most likely to originate from the changes that the Japanese society has been undergoing. The 1990's in Japan could indeed be characterized by constant collisions between old and new values. The language change as seen in this paper is a reflection of the unequivocal changes in Japanese society itself; if not a reflection, one could still not deny the reality that the society has changed so far as to allow or accept such a nontraditional way of speaking in a public domain of the mass media.

Notes

- 1) The research contained in this paper was originally initiated in research undertaken for the Politeness Study Group in The Japan Association of College English Teachers. The results were presented at 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, AILA '99 Tokyo.
- 2) Linguists use different terms for deference and formality morphemes. Bloch calls *-mas-* honorific while Morean calls it polite. I use 'honorific' to refer to base morphemes and 'formal' to ending morphemes and reserve the term 'polite' as the general term for any verb forms that have either honorific or formal elements, or both.

Appendix: Details of surveyed TV talk show programs

1981 *Mie to Ryoko no oshaberi dorobo*. [Mie and Ryoko's chatter thief] Tokyo: Tokyo Television Network.

1982 *Sanshi no bakusho bijo taidan*. [Sanshi's interview with a beauty] Tokyo: Fuji Television Network.

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