

Analysis of Japanese Refusal Speech Acts to an Invitation as a *Tatemaie*

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Abstract—This study examines the use of refusal speech acts as *tatemaie* in Japanese language. One culture that is representative of describing the behavior of Japanese society is *honne* (one's true feeling) and *tatemaie* (behavior that hides the true feelings) culture. Japanese society tends to respect the harmony of the relationship between each other so that there is a tendency of using *tatemaie*. Refusal in spoken invitation has a high possibility in ruin human relations, and using *tatemaie* can avoid a possibility of bringing negative impacts on the relationships between the interlocutors. This research used a descriptive method and collected data from three different variety shows that contain refusal situations in an invitation. The results showed that Japanese native speakers have the tendency to express indirect refusal type for *tatemaie*. Moreover, in direct refusal situations, additional refusal such as saying a thank or an apology used as *tatemaie* and said before and after expressing a direct refusal.

Keywords: *invitation, refusal, speech act, tatemaie*

I. INTRODUCTION

One culture that is representative of describing the behavior of Japanese society is *honne* and *tatemaie* culture. Ishii (2011) explain that *honne* is the true feeling of a person, while *tatemaie* is a general behavior that hides the true feelings it has. Yoshida (2015) revealed that when two people from different cultural backgrounds make a communication, both communicate with attention to the speech partner's social and cultural context. But, if there was a difference in expectations caused by each speaker's different cultures, there is a possibility of misunderstanding. To reduce the misunderstanding caused by cultural background differences, Canale (1980) said that there were four communication skills needed including grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Japanese language learners who have a different cultural background from Japanese native speakers have a possibility of misunderstanding when communicating due to differences habits in each culture, so it considered that one of the important abilities for Japanese language learners when communicating with Japanese native speakers is sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to communicate where the speakers can assess the context of the existing conversation socially and use expressions that are appropriate to the context contained in the conversation

(Yoshida, 2015). If the speaker had sociolinguistic competence (of course supported by other abilities too), the misunderstanding which is caused by the difference of cultural background between the speaker and the speech partner assumed can be reduced. Especially the misunderstanding in communicating between non-native Japanese speakers, such as speakers with Indonesian cultural backgrounds as example, with Japanese native speakers.

According to Meguro (1994), it is known that foreign residents living in Japan often find it difficult to understand indirect speech acts that are often spoken by Japanese native speakers. Nakai (2002) has shown that there are three types of things that are difficult for foreign students when communicating in Japanese, especially the ambiguity which is called *aimai hyougen* in the Japanese language. The difficulties that Nakai (2002) has explained are a variety of intent which is contained in a speech, unclear interpretation to the purpose of a speech and lack of information. From the difficulties experienced by foreign speakers of the expressions spoken by Japanese native speakers mostly caused by the use of indirect speech acts that contain multiple meanings so that foreign speakers will not completely understand the information spoken by Japanese native speakers.

Searle (Abdullah, 2013) provides an example of the use of indirect speech acts in refusal situation such as:

A: "Let's watch a movie tonight!"

B: "I have to study for the math exam tomorrow"

From the conversation example above, literally B's utterance seems to be unrelated to A's. But, if the utterance situation is considered, if B goes to the movie, there will be no study time for tomorrow's math exam, so there is a possibility that he will not get a passing score on tomorrow's exam. For this reason, it can be inferred that he is trying to tell that he can't go to the movie tonight because he needs studying time to get a passing score on the math exam. In this way, it is possible to convey the refusal indirectly by stating the reason without expressing the direct and clear word like "I cannot go".

However, as a cultural convention, it is important to have a math exam to graduate from school, and it is necessary for speakers to share information that a certain amount of study time is required to pass the exam. But this inference may not be possible if the information is not shared between speakers. If

Japanese learners do not share cultural backgrounds such as customary thinking that is considered common among Japanese native speakers, there is a possibility of misjudging the intent of a certain expression. In that sense, it is considered important for Japanese language learners with different cultural backgrounds to analyze expressions and their contextual information that is typically used in situations where there is a refusal in Japanese society.

Literature Review

There has been some research which examines a refusal in Japanese and English by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) which is more focused on the refusal strategies carried out by Japanese and Americans against an invitation, solicitation, and offers. In this research, they found a very striking difference from the refusal strategies used by Japanese and Americans. Japanese people refused based on the social status of the communication actors, for example, when a speaker with a higher status refuses a lower-status partner, the speaker does not apologize or feel remorse. On the other hand, Americans really see social distance when they resist. Japanese tend to give nonspecific and vague reasons, where Americans give a clear reason.

When responding to speech partners, Japanese people generally prevent saying “no”. They tend to say “*dame dayo*”, “*iya da*” and “*chigatteru yo*” which gives a lighter impression to people who are familiar like friends and family. But, when dealing with respected speech partners, words such as “*dame dayo*”, “*iya da*” and “*chigatteru yo*” must not be used (Mizutani, 1993).

A. Uchi and Soto Concept

The concept of *uchi* and *soto* is a part of the pattern of Japanese public relations. This concept stems from a basic concept called “*ie*” (Nakane, 1970). The word “*ie*” can be mean ‘household’ or ‘family’. Nakane (1970) said that *ie* is a social group that is constructed based on a frame of residence and often a management organization. Based on this view, in *ie* there are members who compile each unit in it so that it becomes a social group that can be distinguished from one group to another group. In addition, this concept of *ie* builds a strong bond among its members so that it influences the behavior of its members in dealing with people who are in a group and people who are outside the group. The relationship pattern is reflected through the concepts of *uchi* and *soto*.

Uchi means “inside, internal and personal” while *soto* means “outside, external and general” (Lebra, 1976). The *uchi* concept refers to family, school or company where a person resides in it. Furthermore, the concept of *soto* which is contrary to the *uchi* concept refers to the external environment of a person.

B. Honne and Tatemaie Concept

Honne is the true feeling of a person, while *tatemaie* is a general behavior that hides the true feelings it has (Ishii, 2011). In the Japanese dictionary, *honne* is also interpreted as the utterance that the speaker really wants to convey. Then *tatemaie* is interpreted as the speech revealed has been adjusted

to the other person so that the speech is different from what the speaker really wants to convey.

This concept is related to the behavior of Japanese people who usually do not show their real feelings to people who are outside their environment which is called “*soto*”. For the examples of this concept can be observed in the corporate environment. People who work in the same company consider themselves to be the same group, even their ties are very strong like a family. If they interact with people from different companies, they will hide their honor and display their patterns to people from different companies. This is because they consider that people who come from different companies as *soto*.

In addition, this concept is also manifested in the way Japanese people speak, Japanese will use subtle and polite speech to *soto*. In Japanese language there are levels or degrees of politeness. The choice of the use of this language is adjusted to the situation and of course the relationship that is owned by the user of the language. Aside from being a form of politeness, the use of subtle and polite language also serves to protect one’s true feelings or someone’s honor from *soto*.

II. METHOD

This study using three of Japanese variety shows to retrieve research data in the form of expressions that contain cultural elements in the situation or refusing an invitation. The data used are all variety shows whose dialogues are considered not made up like a drama, because the speakers consider that the situation they are dealing with is a real situation that is actually created and recorded by someone, so the speech is spoken naturally by the speaker himself. These are the variety shows which is used as a source for this study:

A. Data Resources

1) Kisumai Busaiku

From all *Kisumai Busaiku* episodes, the episode that is used as a data in this study is the episode entitled “*Barentain Dee no Kokuhaku e no Kotowarikata*” which means “How to Reject the Expression of Love in Valentine Day”. This episode lasts 18:07 minutes. In this episode, the seven members of Kisumai are confronted by a woman (named Maiko) who expresses her feelings on Valentine’s day and asks each member of the Kisumai to become her boyfriend. Each member of Kisumai must refuse the woman in their own way and later the manner of rejection expressed by each member of the Kisumai will be assessed by one hundred appraisers who are the general public and not the fans of the idol group Kisumai. The way of refusal that gets the most votes will occupy the top level and is considered a good way of refusal to be revealed in the situation, while the method of unfavorable refusal will get a low vote as well as bad comments from the assessors.

2) Joshi Ana Supesharu

On the variety show *Joshi Ana Supesharu*, the episode that is used as a source of this research data is the episode entitled “*Takashima, Fuji Ana ni Furi ni Naranaika? to Gachi de Sasotta Kekka*” which means “The Result of Takashima’s Invitation to Fuji TV News Readers to Quit His Current Job”.

In those episodes, Takashima who is Fuji TV's senior newsreader who is no longer working as a newsreader invited two Fuji TV newsreaders named Katou and Shono to quit their jobs and join in working under the auspices of the current Takashima agency. From the situation of invitation like this, it was very difficult for Katou and Shono to leave Fuji TV so that they both expressed refusal.

3) *Ningen Kansatsu Baraeti Monitaringu*

The episodes that is used as a source of data for this research is "*Kansatsu Baraeti Monitaringu*" entitled "*Moshimo Shousetsuka ni Narimasenka to Iwaretara*" which means "How if You Invited to Become a Novelist?". This episode contains the agency that offers an artist to become a novelist. The artist who became the object of this episode is an American-Japanese artist named Joy. Joy has been in the Japanese modeling world for a long time, but lately the artist is currently lacking in many offers to appear on television, so Joy was offered to become a novelist. However, with the agreement that the person who wrote the novel was not actually Joy, but another novel writer and Joy only used his name to be included as the author of the novel. This situation makes Joy not easy to accept this offer.

B. Analysis Procedure

The following are the procedures taken in carrying out this research, including downloading research data sources which are three videos of variety shows entitled *Kisumai Busaiku* (Ep. *Barentain Dee no Kokuhaku e no Kotowarikata*), *Fuji Ana Supesharu* (Ep. *Takashima no Fuji Ana ni Furi ni Naranaika? to Gachi de Sasotta Kekka*), *Ningen Kansatsu Monitaringu Baraeti* (Ep. *Moshimo "Shousetsuka ni Narimasenka?" to Iwaretara*) from internet sources. Write the transcript of the dialogue contained in each variety show that is the source of research data. Classifying expressions of refusal that contain functions as a *tatemaie* of each variety show. Analyzing expressions of rejection that have been classified. Interpret the result of the analysis. Make conclusions.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Use of Indirect Refusal as *Tatemaie*

The following is a pattern of refusal expression which is considered as the best expression in refusing the invitation. From 14 different types of refusal expressions, 11 expressions are indicated as indirect refusal. The refusal arrangements expressed are as mentioned below:

[J] *Arigatou (Kansha) → Sugoku ureshii (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Arigatou ne (Kansha) → Isshoukenmei tsukutte kureta koto toka, omoi o tsutaete kureta koto, sugoku ureshii (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Arigatou (Kansha) → Demo, ore aite no koto o takusan shitte kara tsukiaitai taipu dakara (Shinnen) → Ima sugu ni tsukiau tte iu no wa chotto muzukashii kana (Fuka) → Gomen ne (Shazai) → Maiko ni wa shigoto demo sugoku o sewa ni natteru shi (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Ima wa kanojo tte iu yori wa nanka, taisetsu na shigoto nakama toshite nanka, soba ni ite hoshii kana tte omou (Ganbou) → Nanka ima sugu wa chotto tsukiaenai kana (Fuka) → Gomen ne (Shazai) →*

Demo, sugoku ureshii (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Arigatou (Kansha).

[E] Thank you (gratitude) → I'm very happy (positive expression) → thank you (gratitude) → thank you very much for your hard work and conveyed your thoughts, I'm very happy (positive expression) → thank you (gratitude) → but, I want to get acquainted after knowing a lot (belief) → isn't it a little difficult to get involved right now (impossible) → sorry (apology) → I'm really taking care of Maiko even at work (positive expression) → but rather than a girlfriend, Maiko is an important work colleague for me so I want you to be nearby (wish) I can't get along with you right now (impossible) I'm sorry (apology) → but I'm very happy (positive expression) → thank you (gratitude).

Before arriving to the direct refusal (above called *fuka*), the persons use expressions of thanks (*kansha*) and positive expressions (*koutei teki hyougen*) many times. From speakers with expressions of refusal who get the top three positions, there is a common pattern where before the speaker expresses his direct refusal intention, most are preceded by expressions which are the excuses with a principle held firmly by oneself (*shinnen*). This is considered the best expression in expressing reasons in a situation like this. After *iiwake*, then the speaker reveals a direct refusal. In expressing a direct refusal, speakers use the -kana suffix. The -kana suffix is used to refine the existing refusal. Finally, speakers express an apology (*shazai*) as a method that serves to maintain human relations. Besides using an apology as *tatemaie*, Japanese native speakers also often express *tatemaie* by saying positive expressions. From many types of patterns expressed by speakers, the positive expression is an expression that always appears in every situation of refusal.

The use of *tatemaie* is also seen in the following conversation:

[J] ...(*Chinmoku*)(*Kaihi*) → *Demo, Aya san yappari yamete, yameru mae mo mochiron sugoi kirei deshita kedo ..yamete mou yori desu yo ne (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Komaasharu toka deteru no mite, aa maa nanka anaunsaa datta to omoenai. Joyuu san ppoi (Koutei teki Hyougen).*

[E] ... (silence) (avoid) → but, Aya after all, of course you were beautiful before quitting the job, but it's better after you quit (positive expression) → seeing you appeared in commercials, I don't even think you was an announcer, you look like an actress (positive expression).

In *Joshi Ana Supesharu* variety show, speakers use *koutei teki hyougen* to praise their seniors first as *tatemaie* before rejecting it indirectly. The use of *tatemaie* here is influenced by social level differences, where speakers must refuse someone who is higher in social position (here as *senpai*). Refusal can damage the opponent's face, then the *tatemaie* is used to maintain harmony.

B. Direct Refusal that Damages the "Face"

The following is an expression of refusal which is considered as the worst refusal speech:

[J] E`? (Odoroki) → (Tame iki) (Kaihi) → Iya (Hitei) → Gomen (Shazai) → Sou iu fuu ni mitenakatta kara sa (Iiwake) → Iya (Hitei) → Ima made wa douryou toka nakama de shika mitenakatta kara sa (Iiwake) → Ima sugu ni tte iu wake ni wa ikana kedo sa (Fuka) → Kore kara wa onna tomodachi tte iu ka, shinyuu toshite nanka ironna koto shabette iketara na tte omou shi (Ganbou) → Maiko no koto daiji da shi (Koutei teki Hyougen) → Jibun no soudan mo notte moraitai shi, Maiko no soudan ni mo noritai kara sa (Ganbou) → Saisho wa sou iu kankei ja dame kana (Ganbou).

[E] Eh?! (surprised) → (sigh)(avoid) → no (denial) → sorry (apology) → because I didn't look that way (excuse) → no (denial) → until now, I just saw you as my colleagues and friends (impossible) → from now on, I want to talk about various things with you as a female friend or as a best friend (desired) → Maiko is important (positive expression) → I want to consult with Maiko and I want to hear Maiko's worry too (desire) → how if we make that relation as a start (desire).

Although this level of use of the expression phrase in conversation is comparable to the emergence of the use of *tatemaie* in the first refusal situation, this does not make the expression of rejection in this situation looks good. This is due to the emergence of many expressions that are felt to damage the pride (face) of the invitee with many direct refusals such as *kaihi* and *hitei*. *Iiwake* here is used not for admits the wrongful nature of an act but denies responsibility for it (Kotani, 2002). From the above conditions, where the best refusal expressions contain the *tatemaie*, and on the other hand, the expression of refusal that is considered bad also contains a *tatemaie*, so that the use of *tatemaie* can be considered good and bad depending on the type of refusal as the method used.

IV. CONCLUSION

Japanese native speakers will adjust his speech, when facing situation where he must refuse an invitation. Direct and indirect refusal will be based on the relationship between the interlocutor seen from the existence of the concept of *uchi* and *soto* so that there arises *honne* and *tatemaie* which are reflected in the rejection expressions used.

The closer the relationship between inviter and the repellent, the refusal expressed will tend to be in the form of direct refusal in accordance with the content of his heart, so that it is *honne*. When it has to refuse an opponent who is not too close in the relationship, then it will tend to use speech that has been adjusted, so that it is natural.

The expression of refusal in the form of *tatemaie*, often will be a positive expression that does not directly mention that the interlocutor refused. But it will be accompanied by a method of thanking, asking to be invited back or giving a pause at the end of the sentence by not giving long winded excuses or giving a commonly used reason such as there is a need or another promise.

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