

Analysis of Consideration Expressions as Social Etiquette in Japanese Refusal

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out and analyze the types of *hairyo hyougen* (consideration expressions) used as *shakoujirei* (social etiquette) in Japanese refusal situation. The use of *shakoujirei* is then analyzed from politeness strategies by Brown & Levinson (1987) and contrasted with the expressions that are not used as *shakoujirei*. Thus, there are differences between expressions that are used as *shakoujirei* with non-*shakoujirei* expressions. This study is a descriptive qualitative study. The data were collected using a note-taking technique from Japanese dramas entitled *Tonari no Kaibutsu-kun* and *Watashi ga Renai Dekinai Riyuu*. The results of the study show that there are 33 consideration expressions used as *shakoujirei*. Meanwhile, there are 9 consideration expressions that are not used as *shakoujirei*. Although *shakoujirei* were found using negative politeness strategies, the most widely used strategy was the positive politeness strategy for the hearer (H-PF). In the non-*shakoujirei* consideration expressions, there were found used as sarcasm and flattery for the interlocutor, so there are no politeness strategies found in it which is named as Bald on Record (BOR). Therefore, the differences can be seen from the presence and absence of consideration for maintaining good relations with interlocutor, both when refusing and after refusal.

Keywords: Consideration expressions, politeness strategy, refusal, *shakoujirei*, social etiquette

1. INTRODUCTION

When two people from different cultural backgrounds communicate, both will communicate by paying attention to the socio-cultural context of the interlocutor. However, when there are differences in expectations from the two speakers that arise due to cultural differences between the two speakers, it cannot be denied that this can lead to misunderstandings between the two (Gumperz, 1982). Thus, this means that good communication skills by considering the socio-cultural context are needed in a communication that is carried out between speakers who have different cultural backgrounds. This also applies to the ongoing communication between Japanese language learners and native Japanese speakers. Japanese language learners with a mother tongue outside of Japanese, seems apparent to have a different cultural background from native Japanese speakers. So from this difference, both of them may experience misunderstandings when understanding or speaking expressions in one of the speakers' languages, so it is necessary to have the ability to adjust the social context contained in the conversation and use appropriate expressions according to the context.

The misunderstanding between Japanese language learners and native Japanese speakers is also expressed by Meguro (1994), where most foreigners living in Japan have difficulty understanding indirect speech acts expressed by native Japanese speakers. With the information gap from one party, it is possible for a misunderstanding between the two of them. Especially, if this misunderstanding occurs in a rejection situation. According to Narita (2012), refusal is an action that is against the wishes of the interlocutor, so that refusal can hurt the honour of the interlocutor. Therefore, it is necessary to have a strategy that is carried out in a rejection situation, so that the relationship between the inviter and the refusal can continue to run smoothly in the future.

Tanaka (2000) describes that from the results of his research survey on foreign students living in Japan, many find it difficult to when establishing interpersonal relationships, including when telling indirect expressions which are carried out in an effort to keep the mood and feelings of the interlocutor away, especially in avoiding indirect expressions that have negative meanings, hiding the emphasis in expressing something, distinguishing

between spoken expressions with the facts that occur behind these expressions, and in polite behaviour as well as behaviour that is in accordance with the norms prevailing in Japanese society such as *aisatsu* (greetings), *shakoujirei* (social etiquette), vertical relationships in society, regulations that apply in society, as well as behaviour that need to be done when doing public relations.

Although Rahayu (2017) has analysed expressions used as *shakoujirei*, but it was not specific in looking at *shakoujirei* used at refusal situations. Huang (2009) also analysed expressions used as *shakoujirei* but in various situations. Therefore, in this study, an analysis of *shakoujirei* was carried out which was seen in the rejection situation, and did not only refer to the situation of the *shakoujirei* expression that had been done by Huang (2009), but divided it into *aisatsu*, *hairyo hyougen*, and other expressions related to *aisatsu* in rejection situations. So that it can be seen the level of determination of the form of expression used as *shakoujirei*. In addition, although until now there have been a lot of research on refusal as previously described in Nakai (2002) those are not see the relationship whether the refusal is used as *shakoujirei* or not and not to explore the expressions that accompany the expression of rejection so that even though they have expressed their rejection, the speaker can still maintain good relations with the other person.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of what are the typical consideration expressions that are commonly spoken to maintain good relations with the interlocutor, especially in situations of rejection in Japanese society, along with information on the context of the conversation when the expression is spoken. So that it can be a reference in learning Japanese, especially for Japanese language learners who have different cultural backgrounds in understanding expressions of rejection that are commonly used in Japanese society. Thus, Japanese language learners are expected to be able to apply appropriate expressions based on the context of their use.

2. METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative research method to answer the research problems by classifying the data and describing the data analysis in detail, then interpreting it with the translation of words. In this study there are numbers that are used to indicate the frequency of occurrence of greetings (*aisatsu*) originating from research data sources, however, these numbers do not reduce the meaning of greetings (*aisatsu*) which are used as *shakoujirei* in rejection situations seen from the context of their use.

2.1. Data Sources

The data used in this study were in the form of dialogue from the drama entitled *Tonari no Kaibutsu kun* and *Watashi ga Renai Dekinai Riyuu*. After considering, compared to other dramas, the dramas entitled *Tonari no Kaibutsu kun* and *Watashi ga Renai Dekinai Riyuu* contain many rejection situations in them, so that these two dramas were used as research data sources and were considered to be able to fulfil the data collection in this study.

The first drama entitled *Tonari no Kaibutsu kun* is a drama with one episode and has a duration of 1 hour 54 minutes released in 2018. This drama tells the story of a boy who often changes schools from one school to another, because when he goes to school he always fights with other boys, and always after the incident, this boy will not go back to school. The second drama entitled *Watashi ga Renai Dekinai Riyuu* has ten episodes with the same duration from episodes 2 to 9 which is 46 minutes 30 seconds, and 57 minutes 30 seconds for episode 1 as well as a longer duration for episode 10 which is the last episode of 1 hour 10 minutes, released in 2011. This drama tells the story of 3 women in their 30s, already working and all of them do not have a partner.

Therefore, the data source of this research is taken from the refusal situation in each episode of the drama *Watashi ga Renai Dekinai Riyuu* and *Tonari no Kaibutsu kun*. Not only are situations of refusal present in each episode, but from these two dramas it can be seen that there are differences in expressions of rejection of intimate relationships, including expressions of refusal expressed to fellow schoolmates, fellow workmates, and even to family members. In addition, it can also be seen expressions of refusal of the vertical relationship between seniors and juniors from the school period, as well as senior and junior relationships that occur in the workplace.

2.2. Data Analysis

After the dialogue on the refusal situation of the object in this research were collected, then the data classified into expressions of consideration which is used as social etiquette. After the classification, then these expressions were analyzed from the threat level by Brown & Levinson (1987), with according formula:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x.$$

W_x : threat level.

D : stand for distance, is the distance of social closeness between the speaker and the interlocutor.

- P : stand for power which means the strength of the interlocutor compared to the speaker.
R : is the burden of an action in a culture.

D, P and R will use R (low), S (medium), T (high) as a marker whether the speaker and the interlocutor have a distance (D) that is far or not close at all, namely T, not too close, namely S and very close. Close, namely R. Then, does the interlocutor have higher power (P) such as superiors means T, peers means S, and subordinates means R. Then, the burden of rejection felt by the speaker and interlocutor in the context of the conversation, if high with T, moderate with S and low with R.

Then, D, P and R will then add up with the highest value 6, with R=1, S=1.5 and T=2. So, then 5 categories of threat levels will be obtained according to these as a result:

- Wx = R (low threat level with a value of 3)
Wx = SR (low to medium threat level with a value of 3.5 – 4)
Wx = S (moderate threat level with a value of 4.5)
Wx = ST (medium to high threat level with a value of 5 – 5.5)
Wx = T (high threat level with a value of 6)

Each expression in the form of *shakoujirei* in a rejection situation will be analyzed from a politeness strategy, whether to use a negative politeness strategy for the speaker (S-NF) or a negative politeness strategy for the listener (H-NF), and whether to use a positive politeness strategy for the speaker (S-PF) or positive politeness for listeners (H-PF), also allows the use of expressions that do not use politeness strategies/no consideration in it (BOR).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that there were 5 types of consideration expressions used in refusal situation; namely, expressions of praise by praising the other person/positive assessment for the interlocutor, positive expressions in the form of wishes or giving other positive alternatives as rejection, expressions as a sign that the speaker does not want to burden the other person, consideration to the invitation in the form of delaying the refusal by delaying the refusal, and sympathy or the same opinion on what the refusal feels or the reason for the refusal of the interlocutor.

3.1. Praise

The expression of praise used at data (1) RD67 as *shakoujirei* using word *sugoi* which means ‘great’ or has the meaning of ‘very’ in the word *sugoi suteki* ‘very beautiful’. Both of these expressions are used against the interlocutor who has no previous close relationship (D) and are equally used in situations of rejection with a large

burden (R). Thus, the expression *sugoi* in this situation is used as a consideration for the interlocutor. In addition, from the level of social position, there is no interlocutor who has a lower social position than the speaker in the use of this expression of praise. Therefore, the expression of praise in the data above is used when both have equal or higher social power (P). So it can be concluded that the expression of praise as *shakoujirei* is used in situations where the threat level of rejection of the interlocutor is fairly high, and high.

Seen expressions that express praise as an expression used because of the consideration of the interlocutor. The following is an analysis of expressions that express praise to the interlocutor which shows that the speaker is very careful in treating the interlocutor.

(1) RD67, minute 13:51

IG : *Toukyou korekushon.*

‘Tokyo collection’

KG : *Sugoi.*

‘Great’

The conversation in the data above was done by Yamamoto as the applicant (IG) and Fuji as the refusal (KG). Yamamoto is a Fuji client who comes from another company that is bigger than the company he works for, so in this situation the applicant has higher power than the refusal, and between the applicant and the refusal in this situation there is a long social distance. In this conversational situation, the applicant requests that Fuji can work as an employee at the applicant’s place of work, so this application is considered to have a big burden because the other person needs to think about it well before being able to answer the request.

In order for Fuji to think about the offer well, Yamamoto then offered him a job that Fuji would do if Fuji were willing to work at the company where Yamamoto worked, namely the job of managing the lighting at the Tokyo collection. Even though actually getting an offer to organize the event, it didn’t make Fuji want to work at Yamamoto’s company and still feel doubtful about the offer, but when Yamamoto made this offer Fuji said an expression of praise with the word *sugoi* which means great. Thus, the expression of praise in this situation is not an original assessment of the program it offers, but an assessment called “*keishiki home*”, namely a compliment expressed with the intention of maintaining good relations with the other person (Mitsuo, 2018).

The use of expressions of praise in this situation is intended to protect the other person’s positive face as explained by Okada (2003) which states that praising the other person is an effective positive politeness to satisfy the other person’s positive face where basically, the other person has a desire to acceptable to others.

3.2. Positive expressions

Consideration expressions in the form of positive expressions found as many as 6 data including using the word *hontou ni tassukatta* 'very helpful', *kimochi wa totemo ureshii* 'very happy', *ishhoni ikitai* 'want to go together', *ore mo ikitai* 'I also want to go', *jibun no chikara wo tameshitai* 'want to try my own strength', *mata otsukiai suru no wa dou* 'how about we date again (on another time)'. Among the positive expressions, there is 1 data that states another alternative as a rejection, namely the expression of *mata otsukiai suru no wa dou*.

Judging from its use, positive expressions are used a lot to the interlocutor who has a very close relationship (D) but it is also seen that 1 data is used to the interlocutor who is not close at all. In terms of strength, this expression is used for the interlocutor who has an equal or higher position than the speaker so that the other person has a power equal to or greater than the speaker (P). As for the rejection load, it is mostly used for large rejection loads (R). Thus, the level of threat to the interlocutor is classified as medium.

Therefore, positive expressions are usually used when the burden of rejection is large, but against a superior or an equal and close relationship. In the speech acts of refusal contained in the researched data, it was found positive expressions spoken by the refusal to the inviter, the following are positive expressions towards the beliefs of the interlocutor, positive expressions that show an attitude of wanting to fulfil the request of the applicant, as well as providing other positive alternatives as a substitute for the refusal spoken at the time. The following is an analysis of the forms of positive expressions in rejection found in the data studied.

(2) RD75, minute 53:34

KG : ...Yuu no koto hontou ni suki dakedo, hontou wa ishhoni ikitai to omotta kedo, demo ima no kimochi no mama yuu ni tsuite ittara, atashi no jinsei janakute, yuu no jinsei wo ikiru koto ni naru...
'I really like Yuu, and actually I want to go together too, but if I go with Yuu feeling like this, it's not my life, but I'm like living Yuu's life'

The conversation above was carried out by Fuji as the refusal (KG) and Hasegawa as the inviter (IG). The refusal and the inviter have the same power because they are friends in the same office and have social distance. The burden of refusal in this situation is quite heavy, because the applicant is eager to live together in America with the refusal, moreover the invitee has accepted the refusal to marry another ex-girlfriend, Hikari, and so the applicant has high hopes that his invitation can be accepted by the refusal. However, the repellent feels that by following the wishes of the inviter, the repellent does not become himself but instead lives in the dream or

desire of the inviter. So the refusal refused the invitation. Before actually refusing, the refusal expresses a positive expression stating that he actually wants to go together, but because he wants to be himself so he can't fulfil the request of the applicant.

According to Ouyang, Gao, and Koh, (2009), when the speaker is carrying out a speech act of consideration for others such as expressing a positive desire and then providing a logical explanation afterwards, the refusal sounds reasonable and the refusal does not make the other person feel uncomfortable.

Kwon (2008) explains that positive wishes expressed by the refusal are a considered as positive wishes of the interlocutor. The positive wishes in this situation are positive politeness that works to protect the positive face of the interlocutor who basically wants the refusal to come with him to America where means that the inviter wants his invitation to be accepted by the other person.

3.3. Expression to not burden the interlocutor

There were found as many as 18 data on the use of consideration expressions to not burden the interlocutor by using the *daijoubu* expression as much as 7 data, the expression *ii* as much as 8 data, the *kocchi koso* expression as much as 1 data and the *chotto* expression as much as 2 data.

The expression *daijoubu* seems to be used a lot for people who do not have a close relationship (D) but have equal power (P), and are widely used in medium rejection loads (R). So that the level of threat to the face of the interlocutor is fairly medium to high (Wx).

The expression *ii* actually has the same function as *daijoubu*, which is to reject the interlocutor but is used because of consideration for the interlocutor. However, slightly different from *daijoubu*, the expression *ii* is used more for the interlocutor who has a close relationship (D) and is more diverse in position because it can be used for the interlocutor who has an equal position, lower or even higher but by adding the suffix *-desu* (P). In terms of rejection load, unlike *daijoubu*, the expression *ii* is mostly used for rejections with light loads (R). So the expression *ii* is used when the level of threat to the interlocutor is small to medium.

In addition to *daijoubu* and *ii*, the expressions *kocchi koso* and *chotto* were also found as considerations so as not to burden the interlocutor. These two expressions are used for the interlocutor who has a close relationship (D), but differs in terms of position, *kocchi koso* seems to be used for the interlocutor who has an equal position with the speaker, but *chotto* in this situation seems to be used for the interlocutor who has a higher position. (P). from the rejection load, *kocchi koso* is used for rejection with high load, *chotto* is used for rejection with medium load

(R). So that both are used when the level of threat to the interlocutor is moderate (Wx).

The expression used as a consideration so as not to burden the other person can be seen in the use of the *daijoubu* expression. In the data studied, it was found that the expression *daijoubu* is used in conversational situations, where the speaker offers help to the other person, but the other person does not want to bother others so he refuses the offer with the expression *daijoubu*. The following is an analysis of the conversation that occurred in this situation.

(3) RD13, minute 33:30

IG : *A, ie doko dakke? okutte ku yo.*

‘Oh yeah, where’s your house? let me send you to home’

KG : *Iie, daijoubu desu. Hitori de kaeremasu kara.*

‘No, you don’t have to. I can go home alone.’

The conversation above was carried out by Kizaki as someone who offered help (IG) to Mako who refused the offer (KG). The person who offers to help in this situation has a higher social standing than the refusal because he is the boss of the refusal in the office. In this conversation the two of them did not have social distance, because this was the first time Kizaki and Mako had dinner together outside. The burden of the offer in this situation is fairly common because it occurs in everyday situations, and even if there is a rejection, it is not a big thing that will cause damage to the relationship between the person who offers and the person who refuses. In this conversation Kizaki offers to take Mako to his house, but Mako refuses the offer using the word *daijoubu*.

According to Kawaguchi (2016) in his research on the expression *daijoubu* as rejection, it is used as an expression that considers the feelings of the other person to avoid direct rejection such as *kekko desu*, so the expression *daijoubu* is used as an indirect rejection. Seeing the situation of the *daijoubu* expression in this conversation, according to Endo (2020), the *daijoubu* expression is used as a courtesy to consider his actions so as not to threaten the face of the other person. In this situation Kizaki offers to take Mako, but then Mako refuses the offer. Mako’s refusal in this situation could mean that Mako has wasted the goodwill of Kizaki who had offered to drive her home. It can be seen from the conversation that followed which stated that 90% of men who offered to take a woman home meant they had a crush on the woman. Thus, this saying implies that Mako’s refusal has wasted the offer. Therefore, Mako means that he has threatened Kizaki’s positive face, as well as threatened Kizaki’s negative face by preventing Kizaki from taking him home.

3.4. Consideration of the invitation

The expression of consideration for the interlocutor’s invitation was used for 3 data, using the expression *kangaesasete morattemo ii desuka* ‘can I think about it first’ 2 times and by using the expression *ketsudan matte itadakereba* ‘can you wait for my decision’ 1 time. These three expressions are spoken by the same speaker and interlocutor, so that there seems to be a long delay until finally there is a rejection by the speaker. The speaker does not have a close relationship with the other person (D) so that he has a long distance in terms of proximity, and the other person has a higher position (P) so that he has greater power than the speaker, also has a large rejection burden (R). . Thus, the level of threat to the face of the interlocutor is fairly large (Wx). Therefore, the delay in refusal occurs many times so that it takes a long time to arrive at a rejection due to consideration of the relationship with the other person.

In some situations of refusal, there is a refusal that uses expressions with consideration for the interlocutor. The consideration in question can be seen from the use of refusal by delaying the refusal, namely using questions by saying *kangaesasete morattemo ii* in 2 conversational situations. The following is an analysis of the conversation data.

(4) RD62, minute 31:09

IG : *Sore de, rei no ken nan desu kedo, maemuki ni kangaete moraemasuka.*

‘So, regarding the previous matter, can you think about it properly?’

KG : *A, hai sono ... sono ken nan desu ga, mou chotto kangaesasete morattemo ii desuka. Sumimasen, waza waza arigatou gozaimashita. Dewa, shitsureishimasu.*

‘Ah, yes, it is... regarding that, may I ask for a little more time to think about it. Sorry, thank you for being on purpose. I’ll excuse myself.’

The conversation in the data above occurs between Fuji as the refusal (KG) and Yamamoto as the inviter (IG). The inviter in this situation has higher power than the refusal, because the inviter is a client of another company, so the refusal needs to be careful in his attitude. What’s more, in terms of proximity, the two of them have a long social distance. Therefore, in this situation when the inviter asks about his invitation to work at the inviting company, the refusal uses the expression of refusal by delaying the refusal which is called *enki gata*. According to Moriama (1990), expressions such as *kangaete okimasu* or *chotto kangaesasete moraeru*, are a strategy of refusal by responding to an invitation without rejecting the other person directly and this strategy has an ethical effect. Thus, it can be said that this expression is *shakoujirei*. This expression can be expressed as an expression that has an ethical effect because it has the principle of rules for prioritizing the interlocutor and as an action to improve relations, avoiding direct

expressions, and is carried out so that the reason for his rejection of the interlocutor's will is a will that does not come from himself, so it is considered is a strategy with the principle of putting others first.

3.5. Sympathy

There were found as many as 4 data expressions that express sympathy for the condition of the interlocutor who is forced to cause the other person to reject. From the four data found 2 data using the expression *taihen da ne*, and 2 others using the expression *yappa kyuu ni wa muri desu yo ne* 'I thought it would be impossible if suddenly yes' which is used in telephone conversations, and with the expression *zannen* which means 'too bad'.

This expression of sympathy is widely used for the interlocutor who has a close relationship (D), and is widely used on the interlocutor with a higher position so that it has greater power than the speaker (P), and is used in refusal that has a medium load. So the expression of sympathy is used when the level of threat to the face of the interlocutor is low to medium.

After the rejection occurs, in some situations the use of expressions that show that the inviter has the same opinion or in this case serves to show sympathy for the reasons expressed by the refusal. The following is an analysis of conversational data in which there are expressions that show the sympathy shown by the inviter for the reasons expressed by the refusal.

(5) RD05, minute 11:00

KG 2 : *Uun, uchi mo oya ni kodomo mite moratteru kara sa.*

'Hmm... I'm also entrusting my child to my parents.'

IG : *Sokka. Taihen da ne.*

'Oh, like that. It's hard.'

The conversation above was carried out by Fuji as an inviter (IG) and his classmate as a refusal (KG) at a school reunion. Fuji invited his other friends to drink elsewhere, but because his friends were already married, they couldn't come to drink together. Fuji is indeed good friends with his friends, but currently the two do not have closeness because they only meet at a reunion, so from a social distance the two are no longer close. Then in position both are friends of the same generation so that neither has greater power than the other. When his friend refused by saying that his child was entrusted to his parents as an indirect rejection of Fuji's invitation to drink. Fuji as the invitee expressed his sympathy for this condition by saying *taihen da ne*.

Chen (2006), states that by showing the same feelings as the other person, it shows that the speaker is trying to put himself in the position of the other person. Furthermore, according to Ishihara (2010) with sympathy it will be connected to understanding and trust. When the speaker shows action on the problems experienced by the

interlocutor, then the presence or absence of sympathy shows the way the speaker accepts the other person. In interpersonal relationships, having the ability to share feelings or emotions with people other than ourselves has become a natural human instinct, and when faced with it means that sympathy will be conveyed through expression. However, when not face to face as on the telephone, the expression should be able to better describe that the other person is accepted.

4. CONCLUSION

The type of consideration expressions that is used as social etiquette in a refusal situation, is an expression that arises because of consideration and the intention to maintain good relations with the other person. There were found expressions of praise, positive/other alternative expressions, expressions not to burden the other person, postponement of invitations and sympathy used as a consideration expression in a Japanese refusal situation. The use of expressions which functions not to burden the other person occupies the highest number of occurrences as social etiquette. Then, from the perspective of politeness theory praise used as H-PF, other alternatives/positive expressions as H-PF, then *daijoubu* as both H-PF and H-NF, postponement of invitation as S-NF, sympathy as H-PF. Thus, although there are some that are S-NF and H-NF, most of the social etiquette are used as H-PF.

Social etiquette were found to have meanings that matched what was said, and some had meanings that didn't match what was said. However, both are done because there are considerations from the speaker to maintain good relations with the other person. In expressions that are not social etiquette they are found to have the opposite meaning to what is said, so that many of them are used to insinuate the interlocutor or to avoid the interlocutor. Therefore, expressions that are not social etiquette are used when there is no consideration from the speaker to maintain good relations with the interlocutor both at the time of rejection and afterward.

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