



How Do the Japanese Criticize?

The Analysis of Criticizing Speech Act Based on Uchi-Soto Concept

Afiana Qanita*, Nuria Haristiani

Japanese Language Education of Postgraduate Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: afiana.qanita@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how criticism based on sociocultural value of *Uchi-Soto*. The data come from the anime and manga called *3-gatsu no Lion*, which depicted the protagonist's complex relationship with people around him and how the sociocultural relationship could influence the features of criticism which were represented in the manga. Criticizing Speech Acts are based on Nguyen's (2013b) categories for criticizing speech act strategies and modifiers. The method used is descriptive qualitative method involving a note-taking technique. The results show that there are total of 118 lines that contain criticism and 111 lines which contain criticizing modifiers. The most frequent strategies used in *Uchi* group are direct criticisms and requests for changes, while *Soto* group more often uses hint strategies especially sarcasm. Supportive move is frequently used in *Uchi* group, indicating closeness; while internal modifier is frequently used in *Soto* group to maintain one's mutual common ground and respect for the hearers.

Keywords: *Speech act, Criticizing, Modifier, Relationship, Strategies, Uchi-Soto.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the center of science like philosophy, psychology, linguistic, and cognitive which deal with language, thought, and action. It might look ordinary, but any study of communication must consider the nature of speech act that the agents perform in discourse as well as the structure of the language itself (Vanderveken & Kubo, 2001). Various types of sentence are produced to distinguish an expression, but many of their real intention differ from their syntactical meanings. Thus, a pragmatically understanding of language is necessary to perform a discourse.

Griffiths (2006) claimed that pragmatics is also the science of using speech in context, and about how successful conversations go beyond conveying them in literal sense, but how message can be encoded into semantics. In pragmatics, there is a field of science that studies expressions known as speech acts. Based on Austin (in Bach, 2008) pragmatically, there are at least three types of actions that can be realized by a speaker in carrying out speech acts, namely locutionary acts (communication activities), illocutionary acts (having a specific purpose), and perlocutionary acts (to give effect to the speaker). Searle (1987) and Yule (1996) classified illocutionary speech acts into five types: declaration, representative or assertive, expressive, directives, and

commissive. Both agree that expressive speech acts function to express what the speakers feels. Speech acts that include expressive speech are as thanking, congratulating, forgiving, blaming, praising, condoling, and so on. Fahmi and Rustono (2018) mentions expressive speech acts could be considered in evaluative terms such as an act of praising, thanking, criticizing, complaining, blaming, congratulating, flattering, and many other.

According to Osamu (in Wulandary, 2016) there are several factors that could determine how a speech is delivered, such as age, gender, familiarity, social status, social relationship, age membership, and situation. Based on Nurjaleka (2019) Japanese native speakers tend to give different reasons when refusing an invitation depending on the other persons. Then, they will be more direct when refusing to the interlocutors who are familiar. But the Japanese native speakers excused themselves by having another schedule or plan often used to the interlocutors who are not familiar. Although in a different context, we can see there are differences upon who and how Japanese conveyed their thoughts. This influence can be found in Japanese sociocultural term that are called *Uchi-Soto*.

Nguyen (2005) said that criticism can be interpreted as an illocutionary act where the point of the action is to

provide a negative evaluation of the actions, choices, words, of a listener so that they can be held accountable. Min (in Kartika & Aziz 2021) argued that criticism is an important and inseparable speech act in our daily communication life, which is as important as praise, apologies, and requests. Criticism may come as a rather harsh, as criticizing itself is considered threatening to someone's face or the person's image the most. If speakers may feel compelled to force listeners to do something, then they must choose the best way to convey what they want in order to avoid conflicts (Leech, 2005).

Based on that mindset, criticism will heavily rely on the speakers' pragmatic knowledge to produce the speech. Based on previous research, many Second Language learners (L2) lagged in their speech act knowledge, especially for low proficiency learners as well as some advanced learners; they are most likely to exhibit problems on varying speech act strategies according to context. (Scarcella, 1979; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986).

Nguyen (2013b) suggested that L2's pragmatic competence would likely fall behind in comparison to their grammatical competence. This hypothesis echoes with Edmondson and House (1991), arguing that learners tend to be overly sensitive to politeness to compensate their lack of understanding of socio-pragmatic knowledge, leaving their utterance feel awkward even if their grammar is correct.

Perceiving a highly offensive speech act such as criticizing, chastising, and complaining comes with habit and culture of each respective language. Nguyen (2005, 2008) compared Vietnamese English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in the context of commenting on their peers written work. Nguyen argued that learners' behavior is connected with how they speak in their native language causing difficulties to interact with NS. Their preferences for demand might be seen as 'dictating' for NS and advice could have been considered as 'imposing'.

In the study of criticism response, Hiraga and Turner (In Nyugen, 2013a) noted that Japanese ESL (English as Second Language) tends to acknowledge tutor's criticism more frequently than British students, that, in his study, seems to be very wary of their 'face'. While (in Nguyen, 2005) Vietnamese students did not respond well to criticism from their peers, in contrast to Australian English NS who were likely to accept constructive criticism from their peers.

With this background, perhaps we can see why the Vietnamese students tend to resist criticism from their peers. From that perspective, we can conclude that accepting criticism among learners was influenced by their sociocultural background (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This sociocultural system leads to learners' perspectives on how they should construct a speech act and how they perceive them.

2. METHOD

The method used a descriptive qualitative method involving a note-taking technique to analyze the differences between criticizing that occurred in *Uchi* and *Soto* respective groups. Data were taken from the anime and manga with the same title: *3-Gatsu no Lion* by Umino Chika. There is a total of 125 lines that consist of criticism, but because this research focuses on criticism used in *Uchi* and *Soto* group only, criticism in the form of monologue or that is not spoken to other people was not used in this research. The data were collected from both anime and manga to further confirm who and how the criticism was delivered. The dialogue from manga served as the written data, while in the anime, we can further confirm how the dialogues were delivered based on their intonation.

The data were transcribed and categorized according to a classification of criticism realization strategies and modifiers adapted from Nguyen (2013b). The data's description came from an episode (movie), scene, or *Uchi-soto* classification, for example, the first data was coded as (U1/E4/SC11). The first code means *Uchi-family* (U1), *Uchi-Friend* (U2), *Uchi-coworker* (U3), and *Uchi-Teacher* (U4); or *Soto-Family* (S1), *Soto-Friend* (S2), *Soto-Coworker* (U3), *Soto-Outsider* (S4). Then, the code was followed by episode (E) and scene (SC) which appeared from the criticism.

The classification was further divided into categories based on the character's relationship. There were several dialogues that were spoken to criticize a third party, in which *Uchi-Soto* relationship effected how they criticized that person. Data cards were used to record all the lines by listening and reading the anime and manga's dialogue.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Criticizing Strategies

Based on the analysis, 118 data of criticism speech acts can be found from 10 episodes equal to two volumes of manga's chapter. Based on the criticism strategies and modifiers from Nguyen (2013b), the highest strategies found in this study were Hint (52 lines) including Teasing/Sarcasm (27 lines) and Presupposing (25 lines) followed by Direct criticizing (40 lines) that include explicit disapproval (25 lines) and consequences (15 lines); Request of change (25 lines) including giving advice (14 lines) and insisting change (11 lines). Pointing out strategies could only be found on line (1 line) throughout this research.

The study found that those 74 lines (62, 71%) are criticism intended from the *Uchi* group and 44 lines (37, 28%) from *Soto*. Strategies that are used in each group are described in the Table 1.

Table 1. Criticizing strategies used by *Uchi-Soto*

Criticizing Strategies		<i>Uchi</i>	<i>Soto</i>
Hint	Teasing/Sarcasm	11	16
	Presupposing	12	13
Direct criticizing	Explicit Disapproval	23	2
	Warning of Consequences	9	6
Request of Change	Advice of Change	12	2
	Insisting of Change	7	4
Opting Out		0	1
Total		118	

Based on the finding, the relationships were in the form of teasing or sarcasm. If people have a good relationship with the people from either *Uchi* or *Soto* group, they will likely tease each other rather than sarcasm. But a strained relationship, even among families can be used to burden the hearers to act or follow as the speaker said, whether it be in the form of expectation or berating some aspects of hearers' acts or choice. This correlates with Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory when threatening the listener (H) "*positive-face-want*" the act of criticism implies that the speaker does not care about the wishes or feelings of the listener. And according to Adachi (1996) Sarcasm is often to alienate oneself as far as possible from the hearers, which means the mockery represents a bridge in a relationship.

Presupposing both expressions used in *Uchi* and *Soto* group as giving the hearers an option to rethink their choice, acts and letting the hearers decide how to interpret the speaker's utterance formed in a rhetorical question, rather than to gain an answer. The question was used to make a point as echoed by Adachi (1996) emphasizing that the fact the hearer made was a bad choice to raise the awareness.

Direct Criticizing were rarely used to criticize people that were not close to each other. Meanwhile, people with familiarity had a leniency to do the opposite as they had already established the trust and known what the speakers said to them is for the betterment of their relations. This finding is similar to Septiana and Haristiani (2021) research that bald-on record politeness is usually used for an effective communication rather than saving face.

3.1.1. Hint Strategy

Hints according to Nguyen (2013b) consisted of presupposing or asking H's opinion of his/her own choice, actions, work, products to raise H's awareness of the inappropriateness, for example, '*Do you reckon it goes well with those pants?*'; and other kinds of hints of light teasing or sarcasm, for example, '*Well, you are certainly attracting attention*' (criticized her friend's way of dressing), '*Excuse me, what is the time?*' (Criticized her subordinate's being late for work), '*Ah, yeah, that's been quite a good excuse for the last three times*'

(criticized his subordinate's being consistently late for work).

Hint strategies are often included in indirect way of criticism and used a lot more prominent in *Soto* group. This suggests that people unfamiliar with each other does not personally know the person that their criticism is intended to would likely to use a hint of something that they do not agree. The Japanese people will likely do it as they do not want to impose the Hearers' choice or action. Teasing or sarcasm is used to put S expectation and berated H act/behavior. Teasing or Sarcasm found in this anime sometimes came from *Uchi* group as well, although usually H and S are hinted that they have a difficult relationship.

Hint strategies from *Uchi* group can be seen in (1), where two journalists are discussing the outcome of the match between MC (Main Character) and his adopted father:

- (1) *Anta dondake suru tsumori? Tteiuka ikura kakeru ki?*
How much do you want to make? More like, how much money that you're going to spend?!
(U1/E4/SC19)
- (2) *Hetana iiwake baka jyanai. 'Nani mo nai' nara, 'chirakatte' mo nai deshou.*
You're always bad at making excuse. If there is 'nothing', then how come your room is 'messy'?
(S1/E10/SC51)

In (1) we can see that the speaker made a rhetorical question supposing that she did not agree to spend a lot of money which the hearer planned to. The addition of the second question indicates that she wanted to make a point to raise the hearer's awareness of the inappropriateness as said by Nguyen (2013). In this case, the speaker is the older sister, telling her younger sister that it is not appropriate for her to spend so much money for her crush's meal since their family spent little as possible for themselves.

In (2) the S is stepsister of MC. MC (H) kept making excuses to not let in his stepsister to his apartment. But S noticed it and use criticism to deflect MC's excuses. This results a sarcasm from S as she hinted the word that MC used contradicted each other. Sarcasm according to Adachi (1996) can be expressed by quoting the hearer's statement again to make a point.

- (3) *Tensai toka iwarete, iiki ni nacchatterun jyanai no?*
Did you get full of yourself after people called you a genius?
(S4/E6/SC38)

Sentence (3) is an example how sarcasm was told by an outsider, in this case a journalist. This time, the journalist criticized MC because of his continued defeat in the tournament. The journalist questioned MC to

indirectly criticize him. This sarcasm was used to MC as he was a person of *Soto* in the journalist's eye. It is hinted by the journalist as people call MC a genius; he wondered if that label makes the MC fail to achieve wins in the tournament. This type of sarcasm according to Adachi (1996) serves as an alienation of the utterance, which means the sarcasm also conveys a metamessage of 'I don't really mean it', hinting that the hearer shouldn't feel pressured as they're only teasing the hearer.

3.1.2. Direct Criticizing Strategy

Direct Criticizing as Nguyen (2013b) said is an explicit statement of a problem, or an explicit expression of disapproval of, disagreement with, and dislike of H's choice/actions/work/products, such as 'I think it's a bit salty for me, the soup.'

Direct criticizing is more likely to be used in *Uchi* group; this is also consistency with Septiana and Haristiani (2021) research as there are many close relationships between S and H, and they do not hesitate to cast a negative evaluation on the other person. The sentences that consisted of direct criticizing from *Uchi* group can be seen in the following sentence:

- (4) *Chotto Yamete yo, icchan. Bikkuri suru kara sa. Hey cut it out, icchan. You're making me startled.* (U2/E1/SC-11)

In sentence (4) the speaker and Hearer are both very good friends. During a *shougi* (Japanese chess) match, Icchan (H) slammed his *shougi* piece into the board during his moves, resulting in a loud sound in a very quiet room. The speaker sat next to him, surprised by the sudden sound and criticized the hearer by explicitly disapproving his friend behavior by saying 'stop'. According to Nguyen (2013) speaker can explicitly and straightforwardly indicate the problem that they have with hearer in accordance with the power such as a leader to their coworkers.

Direct criticizing from *Soto* group could be seen from this scene:

- (5) *Ikura chuugakusei debyuu demo ikinari C1 de konna ashitoekuratterya imi ga nai. Ore wa kou ichi de debyuu daga, koitsu no sai ni wa B2 ni natteita. Nani ga iitai no kato iu to 'oreno hou ga erai' to iu koto da!*
Whether if he debuted in junior high school or not, there is no point if he shot up to C1 but hasn't moved to since then. I made my debut during my first year of high school, but when I was his age, I was already in rank B2. If you're wondering what I'm about to say is that "I'm better than him". (S3/E19/SC112)

- (6) *Shimada hachidan setsuryouda. Taisa dayo, taisa. Itta doori darou ga.*

Shimada 8-Dan gave up. The difference is too great, didn't I tell you?

(S3/E19/SC116)

Direct criticizing as displayed in (5) and (6) is delivered from Senior to his Junior (MC) who are not close to each other. The senior is depicted as a very straightforward person, first meeting with the MC and already criticizing him in front of journalists during a live TV stream.

Warning of Consequences from *Uchi* group can be seen in (7) while Soto in sentence (8) as the following:

- (7) *Kiriyama, hora Hina-kun wa yappari muzukashiikamo de hyoujou ni natteiru darou! Aiu fuu ni naruto kinchoushite, atama ga hairi nikuku natte shimaunda!*

Kiriyama, look! Hina-chan's face becomes "maybe its too hard". If this continues, she'll be nervous, it will be hard for her to understand what you taught!

(U2/E7/SC41)

- (8) *Oma wa mukashi kara ishoku dekinee no kana? Kono mama ja, omae isshou taitoru torenai zo. I've been wondering since a long time ago if you can get a transplant. If this keeps up, you won't be able to win the title for the rest of your life!*

(S3/E19/SC106)

Warning of consequences according to Nguyen (2013) occurred during H's choice. Actions might bring unfavorable consequence to H or to the public rather than S themselves. This can be seen in both (7) and (8) where the consequences were stated to the hearer or to the third party. In sentence (7) the S reminded H to change his explanation so that Hina (3rd party) can understand better and would not give up on learning shogi. While in a sentence (8) we can see that S reminded H that his health was important if he ever wanted to win a *shougi* championship.

3.1.3. Request for Change Strategy

A request of Change in Nguyen (2013b) is described as giving advice or suggestions for changes and improvements or changes and improvement in H's choice, actions, work. For example, 'I think it's nice but I think it may go well with other trousers', 'I'm sure you'll do your best to be punctual next time'; Insisting that changes be made, or indicating standard and expectations, for example: 'You should try to go (come) to work on time because we cannot go to work late everyday'.

Request of change can be included also in Direct criticizing, although insisting change perhaps can be uttered as an order/command if the H and S are inside the *Uchi* group.

- (9) *Kono you no naka ni wa, kono ko mitai ni chuugakusei de bajitto jibun ga michi kimete puro ni nacchatta yatsu mo chanto irunda! Puro ni naritakereba chanto jibun de yuuki wo dasutte erabe!*

In this world, there is also this type of person that chooses his own way to be a professional from junior high school! If you want to be a professional, have the courage and choose!

(U1/E7/SC42)

In (5) sentence, the S and H relationship is between father and son, the son wanting to be a professional baseball player but still unsure of what to do. His father (S) then showed him a newspaper that shows how MC made his debut as a professional *shougi* player at the time he was in junior high school. As the father gave him advice, he also stated that the son needs to change and have the courage to choose if he wants to be a professional athlete. These sentences indicate that the father did genuinely want his son to do his best, as Nguyen (2013b) said as advice could be present as encouraging change to be made. In this case, the father encourages his son to change and make his own path.

3.2 Criticizing Modifier

Based on Nguyen (2013b) there are 106 modifiers that were found in the data. 61 supportive move modifiers (57.54%) and 45 internal modifiers (42, 46%) were found. The founding is described in Table 2.

As we can see in Table 2, Uchi group tends to use a lot more supportive modifiers, while Soto group uses internal modifier more than the counterpart. This echoed Nadoushan and Allami (2011) and Ishihara and Cohen's (2021) research as a supportive move indicates closeness while an internal modifier is used to maintain one's mutual common ground and respect.

Table 2. Criticizing modifier

Criticizing Modifier		<i>Uchi</i>	<i>Soto</i>	Lines
Supportive Moves Modifier	Grounder	18	13	31
	Steer	10	3	13
	Sweetener	7	1	8
	Disarmer	1	2	3
Internal Modifier	Hedge	8	10	18
	Cajoler	9	5	14
	Downtoner	1	7	8
	Understater	3	3	6
	Subjectivier	4	1	5
Total				106

Some of the examples for Supportive move which frequently uses both in Uchi and Soto is grounder. Grounder according to Nguyen (2013b) is used for reasoning by S to justify his or her intent. This can be seen in sentence (10).

- (10) *Suman, Kiriyaama. Kenkyuukai dakara, Gengoka ni shite kureru? Imamade hitori de kenkyuudattaraka, sono hen zutto bashitekittann darouga... hai, gambatte, douzo.* Sorry Kiriyaama. Since it's a group study, can you put your thoughts into words? You've been researching alone so far, so I guess it's hard since you've been doing that all the time. So yes, please do your best.

(S3/E18/SC-103)

Grounder is usually used to elaborate before or after making a criticism strategy, Nguyen (2013) said that Japanese grounder tends to give piece of vague and less specific information, which can be seen in sentence (10).

Steerer in Nguyen (2013b) explained which utterances that S used to lead H onto the issue he or she was going to raise. This can be seen in sentences (11)

- (11) *Oma wa mukashi kara ishoku dekinee no kana? Kono mama jya, omae isshou taitoru torenai zo.* I've been wondering since a long time ago if you can get a transplant. If this keeps up, you won't be able to win the title for the rest of your life!

(S3/E19/SC106)

Internal modifier that was frequently used include cajoler, hedge, and downtoner. Nguyen (2013) described that cajoler is grammatical marker intended to persuade or convince the hearer, such as 'you know' or 'you see' or use to point out something. In Japanese, this is represented as a conjunction 'deshou' or a final particle as 'ne' that has a similar meaning to the English example. Cajoler can be seen in sentence (12).

- (12) *Shiitte Juuji kara deshou? Kujihan ni ie wo deru toshite, hajimete tsukuru mono wa kiken dato omou naa.*

You know that the game starts at 10:00, right? If you leave the house at 9:30, I think it's dangerous to make something for the first time.

(U2/E4/SC-17)

4. CONCLUSION

In this research there is a total of 118 lines that contain criticism. The most frequent strategies that are used in Uchi group are direct criticizing and request for changes, while Soto group more often uses Hint strategies especially sarcasm. 111 Modifiers were found both in Uchi and Soto groups frequently used as supportive moves in the forms of a grounder modifiers as most of the utterances were delivered with the reasoning given by the speakers to justify their intent. For internal modifiers, Uchi group used Cajoler to convince changes to be made,

while Soto uses Hedge to lessen the force of opinion. A supportive move indicates closeness while an internal modifier uses to maintain one's mutual common ground and respect for the hearers.

From this study, the data from the *Soto* group are sparsely limited. Therefore, for future research, it is advised to search for more data to see how criticism also works for *Soto* group for more in-depth analysis. A modifier that had been stated by Nguyen (2013) also needs to be further discussed inside Japanese criticism speech act as the Japanese language differs from the English way of criticizing from a grammatical perspective (adverb, particle, conjunction).

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