Choice of Japanese Address Terms in Cross-cultural Setting

Kiri Lee
Lehigh University
15th IPra Conference, Belfast, UK
July 18, 2017
Introduction:

- This study examines the use of Japanese nominal address terms in cross-cultural setting, namely, how native Japanese speakers choose an address term when communicating in Japanese with Japanese-as-Second language (JSL) speakers, and vice versa.
Organization of this presentation

1. Theories used and their relevancy
2. Japanese nominal address terms
3. Case studies
4. Discussions
5. Conclusion
Relevant Theories

- Power & Solidarity
  Brown & Gilman (1960)
- Indexical-order
  Silverstein (2003)
- Communication Accommodation Theory
  Gallois & Giles (1998), among others
In T/V languages, the use of T or V pronoun reveals the relationship between speakers in terms of “Power & Solidarity” semantics.

It has been extended to nominal address terms in Korean and Japanese (e.g., Hijirida & Sohn, 1983; Sohn 2006).

However, it does not account for how speakers choose one term over the other among the whole array of address terms in each dyad.

(Lee & Cho 2013)
“Indexical-Order” Silverstein 2003

• “When we think of the ‘context’ of the linguistics signals macro-sociolinguistically, …we think of things that perdure in one or another intuitive sense beyond any particular token interactional moment” (2003:201)

• Micro-sociological contexts are in a sense created dynamically within a macro-sociological context. A micro-sociological order happens in order to create finer grains of meanings against a given macro-sociological order.
“Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)”
Gallois & Giles (1998)

- **Accommodation**: Behavior in which one or both of the individuals enact (or are perceived to enact) positive-oriented or conversationally appropriate behavior towards the other person.

- CAT predicts and explains that people may modify communication based on personal, idiosyncratic characteristics of a conversational partner. (Soliz & Giles 2014)
Relevant concepts in CAT

- Convergence:
  Adjusting communication behaviors to be similar to another’s

- Divergence:
  Adjusting communication behaviors to accentuates verbal and nonverbal differences with others, to appear more dissimilar.

(Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles 2016)
In this study of Japanese address terms:

- “Power & Solidarity” semantics dictates at the Macro-Indexical level.
- How a speaker chooses one address term over the other, which incurs a specific social meaning, is done at the Micro-Indexical level.
- In the [-power, +solidarity] relationship at Micro-level under discussion, CAT is at work.
# Japanese nominal address terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>[-power]</th>
<th>[+power]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| [-solidarity] | You and another student, living in the same dorm, whom you have met only a few times. You and a classmate who greet each other but do not engage in any further conversation. Give/Receive: LN+sàn/kun | You and the Dean of Student Affairs at your university. You and the office manager who is interviewing you for a part-time job. Give: LN+Title, LN+sàn  
Receive: LN+sàn |

| [+solidarity] | You and a student in your department with whom you have taken several classes. You and your friends from elementary school.  
Give/Receive: LN+sàn, FN+sàn, LN+kun, FN+kun, LN+chan, FN+chan, Nickname, LN only, FN only | You and your favorite high school teacher, who wrote many letters of recommendation for you. You and your parents’ close friends.  
Give: LN+Title, LN+sàn,, FN+sàn  
Receive: LN+sàn/kun, FN+sàn/kun, LN+chan, FN+chan, Nickname, LN only, FN only |
[Power, Solidarity] dyad

- Give/Receive:
  LN+san, FN+san,
  LN+kun, FN+kun,
  LN+chan, FN+chan,
  Nickname,
  LN only,
  FN only
DATA

  Among 37 students:
  16 native Japanese speakers
  21 JSL students.

- All of the JSL students had studied Japanese at least for three years, and they had at least “advanced-low” proficiency in ACTFL guideline.

- All undergraduate students (except one) and their age differences are minimum → [-power, +solidarity]

LN+san, FN+san, LN+kun, FN+kun, LN+chan, FN+chan, Nickname, LN-only, FN-only, Other

K. Lee
Findings: Accommodations

Age/Rank differences

Japanese Student #1:

- Most of his JSL friends are from Malaysia, and they all have nicknames given at birth. He uses their nicknames.
- When he addresses their upperclassman, he uses this upperclassman’s nickname with *senpai*, “someone who enters a school before me” to acknowledge this person is older than the rest. This was the case among the Malaysian friends.

- In order to be sensitive to age difference among Malaysian students, he applies the Japanese rule, and uses a term *senpai* from [+Power, +Solidarity] for his JSL friends’ friend who is a bit older than them.
Japanese Student #6:

- She uses *onni*, which means "big sister" in Korean towards a slightly older Korean JSL friend.

- Korean speakers are more sensitive to a slight age difference than Japanese speakers. Student #6 makes an adjustment and uses an address term in Korean in [+Power, +Solidarity].
Japanese Student #32

- He has a JSL friend from England. They speak mostly in Japanese. He addresses him by FN+kun.

- He feels disrespectful addressing him with FN-only because his friend is one year older whereas FN+san feels a bit distant. Both he and his friend like using FN+kun towards him.
JSL Student #35 (female):

- Her Japanese tutor told her to address her by FN-only, but she was not comfortable because this tutor was one year older than her → FN+san.
- She is sensitive to any age difference because that is the case in Vietnamese, her native language.
JSL Student #36 (Male)

- He specifically addresses an RA by FN+san to show his respect.

- In Taiwan, one has to be sensitive to speaker’s rank, age, etc.
Unfamiliar Names/Pronunciations

JSL Student #27

- In introducing himself, he specifically tells everyone to address him by LN+kun, not to use FN because his last name is easier to pronounce.

He usually uses LN+kun towards Japanese male students, and LN+san towards Japanese female students.

When their relationship becomes closer, he usually moves to their Nicknames.
Japanese Student #4 and #11:

- If JSL speakers’ names are difficult, they modify them for easy pronunciations, or give nicknames/Japanese names.
Japanese Student #24 (female)

- She introduces herself just by FN-only, and wants the others to address her by FN-only.
- Correct them if they use some other terms.
- She is very comfortable using FN-only.
Japanese Student #3:
- Calling Chinese students’ names in Japanese pronunciations of Chinese characters.

Testimonial from a JSL speaker:
JSL Student #14:
- His last name is 黄.

In Chinese → Oh
In Japanese → Koh

Japanese speakers usually address him “Koh.”
JSL student #15 (from China)

- Japanese students address him **Kobayashi** (小林), which is a common Japanese last name.
- His last name is **林**. There is a prefix to show affection in Chinese, which is **小**. In Chinese, his friends call him **小林**, **Xio Lin** in Chinese pronunciation.
- These two characters make a very common Japanese name **Kobayashi**, his Japanese friends started calling him by that, in Japanese pronunciation, not in Chinese pronunciation.

More Hybrid terms:

JSL Student #17 (from Thailand):
- His Thai nickname is “Don”, but he was given a nickname Gyū-don by Japanese students, a type of Japanese beef dish.
- When he is addressed by it, he is happy because he can feel their affection.

JSL student #13 (from China):
- Her last name is “Jo.”
- Since the meaning of Jo in Japanese is “daughter” or “Miss/ Mademoiselle,” Japanese students gave her nicknames such as o-Jo and Jo-chan.
Japanese Student #2:
• When he lived abroad, he was addressed by non-Japanese speakers as “Ash” from Pokémon --- someone from the country with Pokémon.

Japanese Student #9:
• He is addressed by JSL students from Taiwan as “A+FN”. “A” 阿 in Taiwanese is a prefix to show affection towards male speakers.
Accommodation by recipients

JSL students receives modified address terms and accept them positively to accommodate Japanese speakers.

Similarly, Japanese students receives modified address terms and accept them positively to accommodate JSL speakers.
Following the norms:
JSL Student #33 from Thailand:

- She does not use FN-only, but FN+san towards male Japanese student, and FN+chan towards female Japanese students.
JSL Student #29 (England)
He belongs to a dance group

Speaking in English → FN only
Speaking in Japanese → FN+san
Overaccommodation

Japanese Student #25:

- He is a chief resident advisor for a dormitory for international students.
- In the first meeting with other RAs, they agreed to use FN-only towards JSL students.
- He asks JSL students to use his FN (Kazuya), but their responses vary --- FN-only (Kazuya), FN+san (Kazuya+san), and Shorten Version of FN (Kazu). He does not feel any difference in personal distance among them.
- Generally, JSL students from English (European language) speaking countries → FN-only
However...

Some JSL speakers were bit puzzled in the beginning in this accommodation. JSL Student # 27, #29 and #37:

- When they were studying the Japanese language in their home country, they learned to address Japanese people by LN+san.
- Student #29 thought FN-only was only used among family members and lovers. #27 and 37 are from China. #29 are from India.
Accommodation based on student’s language background

Japanese student #10 and #11 (both female)
- Use FN-only towards JSL students from Europe
- Add san or chan to names of Asian JSL students

Japanese Student #11 (female)
- does not feel comfortable using FN-only towards Asian JSL Students in general.

JSL student #14 (from China)
- One of her Japanese professors makes a distinction between students from Europe and those from China in addressing them. She uses FN-only towards Europeans and LN+san towards Chinese.
JSL student #18, #19, #20 and #21 (from Europe)

- Both JSL and Japanese students almost always address them by “FN-only.”

JSL student #18 (female) and #19 (male)

- Sometimes Japanese female students and Asian JSL students use FN+chan.

JSL student #17 (from Thailand)

- His Chinese friends use either his Nickname only or Nickname+chan/kun towards him, while JSL students from Europe only use his Nickname.
Discussion:

All the accommodation is Convergence.

- Both Japanese students and JSL students from Asia make accommodation to be sensitive to difference in age, rank, etc.

Exception Japanese student #32 towards his English friend. → may be related to his Japanese language proficiency ??
JSL students from Asian countries:

- Tend to avoid FN-only, especially when they observe age/rank differences.

- Also accommodate Japanese students’ modification in their address terms by accepting them positively → Recipients’ accommodation
When Overaccommodation occurs, recipients are bit puzzled.

EX: RAs’ decision to address all the JSL students with FN-only.

It may be their assumption based on English or other European languages’ custom. ??
Conclusion:

• The choice of address terms in [-Power, +Solidarity] in cross-cultural communication is very much influenced by Japanese and JSL speaker’s native language.
Conclusion (continued)

In [-Power, +Solidarity] of JSL student’s language:

✓ If FN-only is generally the norm, both Japanese and JSL students tend to keep that.

✓ If there are more choices than FN-only, both Japanese and JSL students consider behavior of both languages.
Conclusion (Continued)

- They all accommodate other speakers’ language background for smooth communication --- *Conversion*
- Sometimes, **Hybrid** terms are created.
- When *conversion* efforts are made, recipients react positively.
Selected Bibliography:

Thank you!

Comments/Questions?

kj102 @ Lehigh.edu