
Linguistic Politeness in Intercultural Communication in Japanese

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Introduction

Politeness is said to be the essence of Japanese communication and is deeply rooted in its culture. Linguistic politeness is necessary for smooth communication in other cultures too. Ide (1989) defines linguistic politeness as “ the language associated with smooth communication realized through (1) the speaker’s use of intentional strategy to allow his or her message to be received favorably by the addressee, (2) the speaker’s choice of expressions to conform to the expected and or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities” (ibid:225).

In other words, the observance of linguistic politeness in Japanese communication is said to entail smooth communication, i.e. when the speaker uses appropriate linguistic forms and strategies vis-à-vis the hearer and social speech rules. However, linguistic manifestations of politeness for smooth communication differ in different culture. In Malay polite discourse, the tone of voice is as important as the choice of lexical items. On the other hand, in

Japanese polite discourse, honorific usage assumes a central place. This paper is an attempt at analyzing intercultural communication between Malays and Japanese in Japanese, in terms of how politeness is communicated, without recourse to such linguistic and cultural differences. In the analysis, linguistic politeness is approached not only from the western tradition of 'volition' or politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987,) but also from the viewpoint of 'discernment' as proposed by Hill et al (1986) and Ide (1989).

Objective

In this paper two levels of analysis are proposed with the following aims:

- (1) to look at the production of linguistic politeness in terms of *discernment* (politeness forms) and *volition* (politeness strategies) (Hill et al, 1986 and Ide, 1989) in conversational interactions;
- (2) to show that politeness strategies are more significant than politeness forms in determining smooth communication in a face-to-face intercultural communication.

Significance of Study

The significance of this intercultural study lies in its approach. Previous cross-cultural studies on linguistic politeness and strategies tend to converge on contrastive or comparative analysis. For example, Hill's et al (1986) empirical investigation of linguistic politeness in Japanese and American English to obtain quantitative evidence as a basis for comparing sociolinguistic politeness in making requests in the two languages. Sifianou (1992) presented a comparative case study of the politeness phenomena in Greece and England, arguing that the Greeks prefer the friendly, informal, in-group marking of positive politeness while the English emphasize formality and distancing.

Horie (1990) attempted to find similar use of the Japanese formulaic phrase *ganbatte kudasai* (all the best, literally: please try hard) in Thai, and to compare socio-cultural reflection of its use in both languages. Miyake (1993) conducted a sociolinguistic survey on 122 Japanese and 101 English university students to investigate the situated use of the expressions of apology and gratitude and their socio-cultural reflections in both languages. Miyake's study quantifies Coulmas's (1981) contrastive pragmatic analysis of

routine speech acts of thanking and apologizing with examples drawn from some European languages and Japanese.

Previous cross-cultural studies on conversational analysis have also focused on a method of analysis that was based on a model of mismatch, i.e. different linguistic signals that were assumed to be culturally determined and the cause of misunderstandings in intercultural communication. These studies were spurred by Gumperz's (1982) work on contextualization cues (Chick in Carbaugh, 1990). For example, Clyne et al (1991) conducted studies on the speech acts of complaining and apologising as well as the turn-taking behavior in English between immigrants from different non-English speaking backgrounds in the work place in multicultural Australia. Morais (1994), on the other hand, conducted a study on the patterns of conflict and non-conflict in verbal interactions among the employees of a Malaysian car assembly plant using Allwood's (1978, 1986) pragmatic framework.

The significance of this study, thus, lies in its different analytical approach which aims to move away from an approach which, to borrow from Meeuwis and Sarangi (1994) "plays too much upon cultural differences at the expense of other factors in accounting for (mis)communication phenomena" and a situation "where analysts themselves come to stereotype intercultural communication as more intercultural than communicative in nature".

Data Sampling

This study utilizes qualitative research procedures carried out over a four-month period in Tokyo. The nine (9) non-native speaker (NNS) informants were Malays who were either studying or working in Tokyo, while the thirteen (13) native speaker (NS) informants were Japanese of different backgrounds ranging from NNS's friends and acquaintances, to lecturers and a university professor, a company editor and his wife, a laundry owner, a greengrocer, and a man on the street. The different types of informants among the NSs naturally created a variety of contact situations for the NNSs, thus providing a wide empirical base for this qualitative study. Together they made up 10 situational conversations. The informants interacted in contemporary standard Japanese. The approximate duration of the sampled conversations in transcripts 1 - 6 ranged from 15 to 25 minutes while that in transcripts 7 - 10 was between 3 to 5 minutes. Table 1 shows the role relations, gender and age of the native and non-native participants in the study.

Table 1: Settings, role relations and age of NSs and NNSs

Interaction	Setting	NS role (gender) age	NNS role (gender) age
1	Classroom	Lecturer (F) 30s	Teacher trainee (F) 20s
2	Classroom	Lecturer (M) 30s	Teacher trainee (F) 20s
3	Car	Friend (M) 60s, wife 56	Friend (F) 29
4	Sports club	Two friends (F) both 30s	Friend (F) 29
5	Social visit	Company editor (M) 59 wife 50s	Technical staff (M) 29 Visitor (F) 40s
6	Restaurant	Professor (F) 60s	two students (F) both 30s, visitor (F) 40s
7	Campus	Colleague (M) 30s	Colleague (M) 30s
8	Laundry	Laundry owner	Customer (M) 30s
9	Greengrocer's	Greengrocer (M) late 50s	Customers (M & F) 20s
10	The street	stranger (M) 40s	Stranger (M) 20s

M = Male

F = Female

Limitations

The communication process in this study is explained from the Japanese socio-cultural context, as Japanese is the language of communication of the participants which is spoken in a native environment. Although the samples comprise both male and female participants, the study does not take up the analysis of male and female language separately, as gender issue is not the focus of this study.

On the definition of linguistic politeness, the one proposed by Ide (1989) is adopted (see Introduction). It is also noted that Ide's reference to politeness

is “not as a state of being polite” but rather “as a continuum stretching from polite to non-polite speech” (ibid:225).

Theoretical Consideration

Various pragmatic theories like Searle's Speech Acts (1965) and Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), and other theories of politeness like Lakoff's Politeness Rules (1975), Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness (1978,1987) and Leech's Maxims of Politeness (1983) all did not seem to be adequate in explaining linguistic politeness in Japanese. What Ide (1989) described as *wakimae* and which Ide (ibid) and Hill et al (1986) equated with 'discernment' in English is relevant to this investigation. *Discernment*, according to Ide, was the neglected aspect of linguistic politeness in Brown and Levinson's theory (1978) which could provide an adequate explanation for the use of honorifics in Japanese.

Discernment

“Discernment is observed according to the speaker's reading of socially agreed-upon relative social distance toward the addressee in the situation” (Ide,1990:64). Therefore, Ide explains: “To behave according to *wakimae* is to show verbally and non-verbally one's sense of place in a given situation according to social conventions To acknowledge the delicate status and/ or the role differences of the the speaker, the addressee and the referent in communication is essential to keep communication smooth and without friction. Thus, to observe *wakimae* by means of language use is an integral part of linguistic politeness” (ibid: 1989· 230)

Hill et al (1986) also proposed a complementary factor – *volition* – which allows a more active choice of strategies according to speakers intention which are found in Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978). Thus, defining politeness as “one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider other's feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and promote rapport”, Hill et al stress that “a system for polite use of a particular language will exhibit two major aspects: the necessity for speaker *discernment* and the opportunity for speaker *volition*” (ibid 349). They viewed this approach as complementary to Brown and Levinson (1978). This study has adopted this framework of *Discernment* and *Volition* in its linguistic analysis. Figure 1 shows the two types of Linguistic Politeness adapted from Ide (1989).

Figure 1 Two types of Linguistic Politeness (adapted from Ide, 1989:232)

Mode of Speaking	Linguistic Devices
Discernment	Formal Forms honorifics, pronouns, address terms, speech levels, speech formulas, etc.
Volition	Verbal Strategies seeking agreement, agreeing, joking, asking questions, being pessimistic, minimizing imposition

The speakers' mode of speaking making up the discernment aspect includes formal linguistic forms such as (1) expressions of respect which include: term of address, pronouns, honorific prefixes and suffixes, honorific verbs and honorific verb formulas; (2) expressions of humility which include: terms of humility, verbs expressing humility and verb formulas expressing humility; (3) courteous expressions, i.e. the *-desu / -masu* endings (copula); (4) familiar expressions, i.e. plain style endings such *-da* (copula) as well as familiar terms, and (5) beautification honorifics such as adding the prefix *-o* to words that do not belong to anybody in particular but frequently used in daily life (Mizutani, 1987).

In this analysis, *volition*, which includes verbal strategies such as seeking agreement and asking questions as well as agreeing, is equated with Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness strategies while *discernment* is equated with the formal linguistic forms.

Findings: Linguistic Politeness in Terms of Discernment

The evidence of a mixture of honorific, courteous and familiar expressions by both NSs and NNSs in their utterances whether they were in courteous or familiar situations or whether they were younger or older, superior or subordinate, male or female, points to the fact that the participants' language was not made up of a neat pattern of one style or another. This means that the three styles of speech are not mutually exclusive nor completely isolated in use.

For example, a female NNS trainee in her 20s used the honorific, courteous and familiar style with a male NS lecturer in his 30s in this classroom interaction (Interaction 2) which is classified as a formal setting (all translations into English are not necessarily politeness equivalents):

Interaction 2:

NNS: *u-sensei-wa gaidai-no sensei-janakute waseda-no-da*
 Prof. U Top. Gaidai Gen. lecturer not Waseda Gen. Cop.Pl.
tashika-ni, oshiete irassharu -n -desu -kedo
 surely teaching Vb.Hon. Emp. Cop.Court. but
 Professor U isn't Gaidai's lecturer, he's Waseda's surely
 but he teaches (at Gaidai, i.e.)

In the same interaction the teacher trainee was also found to have used the familiar style vis-à-vis the male lecturer.

NNS: *anoo nihongo-mo zenzen zero-datta-noni anoo*
 well Japanese even completely zero was despite well
ukatta -to iu koto dake-de sugoku ureshikatta
 passed Vb. Pl. the fact that mere very happy Adj.Pl.
 Well I was just very happy that I passed despite the fact
 that my knowledge of Japanese was completely zero.

The closeness of age between the trainee and the lecturer may have contributed to her employment of familiar language. However, on the whole, she was discerning towards her superior interlocutor by using mostly courteous language. For example, when she was asked where she came from, she answered courteously:

NNS: *watashi-wa anoo mareeshia-no higashi kaigan no*
 I Top. well Malaysia Gen. east coast Gen.
kurantan shuu -to iu tokoro-kara kimashita
 Kelantan state called place from came Court.
 Well, I came from a place called Kelantan
 on the East Coast of Malaysia.

The male NS lecturer mixed his styles as well. In the examples below, he continued in the familiar style vis-à-vis the female teacher trainee using a plain verb ending despite his rather formal attitude at the beginning when he used

honorific verbs (expressions of respect) towards the female NNS addressee as well when referring to someone else who was not there.

Interaction 4:
(honorific style)

NS: *no-san-wa mareeshia-no dochira-kara irasshaimasu-ka*
Miss No Top. Malaysia Gen. where from come Vb. Hon. Int.
Which part of Malaysia is Miss No from?

NS: *ni-sensei-wa toki-doki sentaa-ni kite kudasaimasu-kedo*
Prof. Ni Top. sometimes centre Loc. come Vb. Hon. but
Professor Ni comes to the centre sometimes.

(familiar style)

NS: *jaa sono machi-no hoo-de-wa daibu yuume i-ni natte-iru*
.well that town -Gen. side Loc.Top. quite famous has become
Vb.Pl.
well you must have been quite famous in that side of town.

The formality of the setting could have triggered the lecturer to use honorific expressions in the beginning.

In Interaction 5, a male NS host who employed considerable honorifics (expressions of respect and humility) at the beginning, even when speaking to his wife when welcoming the guests, also mixed his style of language suggesting that he became more familiar with his visitors as the conversation continued. However, his attitude, was generally courteous and respectful towards his visitors throughout the interaction.

Interaction 5:
(honorific style)

NS: *yo-san o-kyaku-sama-ga o-mie*
Yo Mrs Suff.Hon. Pref.Hon.guest Suff.Hon.Sub.Pref.Hon. are seen
Vb.Hon.
Mrs Yo our guests are here.

NS: *koko-de kutsu-wo nuide itadaite*
 here Loc. shoes Obj. take off Vb.Hon (humble).
 You may take off your shoes here.

NS: *o-hana motte kudasatte arigatoo gozaimasu*
 prefix.Hon. flowers bringing for me Vb.Hon. thank you very much
 Thank you very much for the flowers.

NS's wife: *o-hairi kudasai*
 Pref.Hon. enter please Vb.Hon.
 Please come in.

(courteous style)

NS: *kyoo-no shoppinggu-wa anoo taberu mono-wa*
 today Gen. shopping Top. well eat thing Top.
zenbu watashi-ga katta -n desu
 all I Sub. bought Emp. Cop.Court.
 As for today's shopping, well I'm the one who bought the food.

NS's wife: *samu-kunai -desu-ka*
 cold not Cop.Court. Int.
 Are you not cold?

(familiar and courteous style)

NS: *koko-ni koto-wo nuide oite kudasai,*
 here Loc. coat Obj. take off please Vb.Court.
koko daremo haira-nai-kara rokku shite-aru
 here nobody enter not because is locked Vb.Pl.
 Please take off your coat here as nobody enters here. It's locked.

NS: *kore-wa warutsu-desu-ne boku =kore=wa daisuki*
 this Top. waltz Cop. Court. I Pron.Pl. this Top. much like Adj.
 Pl.
 This is a waltz you know. I like this very much.

As for the two NNS visitors, they were discerning to their host but mostly by employing the courteous style. Honorifics were observed only in the use of formulaic expressions at the beginning of the interaction, for example:

(honorific style)

NNS 1: *kyoo-mo rokuon sasete (itadakimasu).*
today too record allow me Vb.Hon.(humble)
Please allow me to make a recording again today

NNS2: *o-jama-shimasu*
Pref.Hon. disturb Vb.Hon. (humble)
Please spare us your time.

(courteous style)

NNS1: *suki-na hana-ka doo-ka wakari-masen -keredo*
like flowers or not know not Vb.Court. though
I don't know whether these flowers are what you like or not,
though.

NNS2: *yappari nihon-no o-kome-wa oishii-desu-ne*
as expected Japan Gen. Pref.Hon. rice Top. delicious Adj. Court.
As I thought, Japanese rice is delicious, isn't it?

The employment of honorific expressions in the social call situation by the host and the hostess reflects a deference politeness for the guests as much as it is an index for distance and unfamiliarity between the NSs and the NNSs. The same may be said of the male NS lecturer- female NNS trainee situation.

Meanwhile, the gradual employment of familiar expressions may be said to reflect a decreasing sense of distance and an increasing sense of familiarity between them. This implies that one does not have to hold a long conversation in the honorific style even in a formal situation. The familiar style may be used as the interlocutors became more familiar with one another.

On the other hand, in a formal situation such as that of Interaction 1, both the female NS lecturer and the female NNS trainee were observed to have carried out their conversations comfortably by simply employing the

courteous *-desu / -masu* forms. This may be attributed to the fact there is not much difference in age between the female lecturer and the female trainee. A strategy of friendliness and solidarity was seen to have been adopted in this interaction between the teacher and the trainee when the trainee did not use honorifics but still managed to remain courteous to her teacher.

Interaction 1:
(courteous style)

NS: *doko-made junbi shimashita-ka*
where until prepared Vb.Court. Int.
How much have you prepared?

NNS: *tatoeba anoo kadai-kenkyuu-no*
for example well research theme Gen.
anoo watashi ankeeto yamemashita
well I questionnaire stopped Vb. Court.
For example, research theme ...well I stopped doing questionnaires.

The courteous style is also expected in interactions between strangers and this was observed in Interaction 10, an encounter on the street between a 22 year-old male NNS and a male NS passerby in his 40s.

Interaction 10:

NNS: *mayotte -tan-desu -kedo*
lost Emp. Cop. Court. though
eeto kami-meguro 3-no 21-no 30 doko-desu-ka
um.. Kami-meguro 3-21-30 where Cop. Court. Int.
I am lost, by the way where is Kami Meguro 3-21-30?

NS: *watashi-wa 3-choo-me-no 7 ban-no hoo desu -kedo*
I Top. 3 street Gen. 7 no. Gen.side Cop.Court. but
But I am heading towards street number 3-7.

Nevertheless, in more familiar conversations among friends and when the setting is not formal such as that of Interaction 3, evidence has revealed that the NNSs used proper terms of address as well as courteous endings in their utterances to their older interlocutors suggesting that NNSs were also discerning when their NS interlocutors were older or superior. This is shown

by a 29 year-old female NNS in the interaction with her older NS friends in their 50s. However, she was also observed to have used mainly familiar language with them. It should be mentioned, however, the NNS was not skilful in using honorific language as she herself had acknowledged to the researcher, and this fact must have limited her style of language in the interaction. Furthermore, she had less experience in terms of her Japanese language education compared to the other NNS informants.

Interaction 3:
(courteous style)

- NNS: *doko-no jinja ikimasu-ka*
Where Gen. shrine go Vb.Court. Int
Which shrine are we going to?
- NNS: *na-san-wa doko-no daigaku deta -n -desu -ka*
Na Suff. Hon.Top. where Gen. university came out Emp.
Cop.Court.Int.
Mrs Na which university did you graduate from?
- NS's husband: *anoo shigoto-wa kuruma-deshita-kedo*
well work Top. cars Cop.Court. but. ...
Well my work had to do with cars but.....

(familiar style)

- NS: *anone mazu-ne waseda-no -ne mizunari-jinja -e mazu iku-no*
listen first Part. Waseda Gen. Part. Mizunari shrine to first go
Vb.Pl. Emp.
Listen, first it's Waseda's you know. First we'll go to Mizunari shrine.
- NNS: *mukoo o-mochi aberu*
there Pref.Hon. rice cakes eat Vb.Pl. Rising Intonation
Do we eat rice cakes there?

The female NS in Interaction 3 also used mostly familiar language while her husband mostly used courteous language with the young female NNS. The different styles shown by the NSs may be attributed to the fact that the wife was a friend of the NNS and she had known the NNS longer than her husband suggesting the wife's ease in using familiar language with her young

friend. In addition, from their conversation, it was noted that the female NS mentioned that she made her own dresses like a 'lady' while saying she did not, though, look like a lady. This fact does give a clue to the personality and the kind of attitude the older female NS's had towards speech styles.

NNS: *na-san-wa doo-iu benkyoo o shita -n -desu-ka*
Na Suff. Hon. Top. what sort study Obj. did Emp. Cop. Court.
Int.
Mrs Na, what did you study?

NS: *watashi-wa onnarashiku honto yo mikake ni yoranai*
I Top. ladylike really Emp. though I look different Adj.Pl.
watashi yoofuku-demo nan-demo jibun de tsukuru-janai
I dress even anything myself by make do not Vb.Pl.
I, like a lady, really, although I don't look like it , I make
dresses, anything by myself, don't I?

The same speech style was repeated by this NNS in Interaction 4 with a female NS friend in her 30s. The use of familiar language in this conversation is a typical conversational style between friends of the same age in an informal situation.

Interaction 4:

NS: *nani-ka nomu ↑*
Something drink Vb.Pl. Rising Intonation
You want to drink something?

NNS: *watashi kafee ore -de ii -kanaa*
I cafe au lait Lim. good Adj. Pl. think
I think I'll have café au lait.

NNS: *soshitara tegami kaita-n -desu-ka*
and then letter wrote Emp. Cop. Court. Int.
So did you write a letter?

However, an interesting piece of evidence on the style of language was noted in the conversation at the vegetable store (Interaction 9). While the young NNSs employed the honorific style, the NS greengrocer in his 50s mainly spoke in the familiar style of speech :

Interaction 9:

NNS: *moo nan-nen-kan anoo mise yatte irassharu -n-desu-ka*
 already how many years well store running Vb.Hon. Emp. Cop.
 Court. Int.
 Well how many years have you been running the store?

NS: *kono mise-wa motto furui-n-da-yo. . gan-nen-kara yatte-ru*
 this store Top. older Adj. Pl. Emp. early Meiji since running
 Vb.Pl.
 This store is older you see. I've been running it since early Meiji
 time.

The non-reciprocal speech style of the older male NS (the greengrocer) in this interaction as he interacted with a younger NNS male may be attributed to the age factor. It may also be due to the attitude/personality and educational background of the NS. An elderly greengrocer speaking in the familiar style is not something unusual, however. At the same time, the familiar style that the older NS had adopted may also be regarded as a solidarity strategy indicating informality with the NNS. In contrast, the 'upward' discerning behavior of the NNS may be described as a deference strategy which appears as a case of an avoidance of a face-threatening act vis-à-vis an older or superior participant.

Honorific prefixes and suffixes were mainly observed in common words like beard, flowers, rice cakes, rice and shop etc. Both the NS and the NNS males in the formal interactions were also found to have made use of beautification honorifics, a finding that is interesting in view of the analogy made of the use of beautification honorifics to that of women applying make-up to their faces in order to look beautiful. It may be said that women and not men tend to use more beautification honorifics (Ide, 1983:182). Beautification honorifics were used by women, for example, for words like *o-mochi* (rice cakes) and *o-kane* (money) as in Interaction 3, and *o-mise* (shop) as in interactions 1 and 6. However, male NSs and NNSs were found to have used beautification honorifics mainly in the formal situations such as Interactions 2 and 5:

male NS: *anoo o-hige -wo hayashita-deshoo*
 well Pref.Hon. beard Obj. kept Cop. Court. Rising Intonation
 Well he kept a beard, didn't he?

male NS: *o-hana motte-kite kudasatte arigatoo gozaimasu*
 Pref.Hon. flowers bring for me thank you very much
 Thank you very much for the flowers.

male NNS: *nihon-no o-kome-wa oishii-desu-ne*
 japanese Gen. Pref.Hon. rice Top. delicious Adj. Court. Part.
 Japanese rice is delicious, isn't it?

Terms of address such as *No-san* (Miss No), *go-shujin* (your husband) and *sensei* (professor, teacher) were usually discerningly and appropriately employed by both the NSs and NNSs but evidence also revealed that the NS in Interaction 9 employed a respect term to refer to his own family member suggesting a rule deviation. The NS greengrocer was responding to the NNS's inquiry about his store. The use of *ojiisan*, an address term one usually uses to refer to someone else's grandfather, however, may be understood as the NS's strategy of making the NNS understand him better or of agreeing with the NNS, and thus suggesting a strategy of friendliness and solidarity.

NNS *kono mise-wa ojiisan-no*
 this store Top. your grandfather Gen. Rising Intonation
 Is this store your grandfather's?

NS: *soo soo soo otoosan ojiisan ojiisan-kara yatte-iru*
 yes yes yes father grandfather grandfather from doing Vb.Pl.
 Yes, yes, yes its been since my father's and my grandfather's time.

The use of a respect term on one's own family member was also observed in the utterance of a female NNS to her female NS friend (Interaction 4).

NNS: *taihen desu-yo okaasan otoosan*
 tough Cop.Court. Emp. mother father
 It's tough for my mother and father, you know.

It appears that older female NS with authority, for example the university professor, used pronouns like *anatagata* (all of you) on her young students

blending familiarity as well as respect. The term *anata* (you) indexes familiarity while *gata* (originating from *kata* which is a plural term) indexes respect.

NS. *dakedo o-mise-ga anata-gata wakaru*
 but Pref.Hon. shop Sub. you Plural understand Vb. Pl. Rising Intonation
 But do you all know the shop?

Not much evidence of expressions of humility was observed in either the NSs's or NNSs's utterances suggesting mutual avoidance in most of the Interactions. As was noted, expressions of respect were used by the NS host and hostess as they welcomed their visitors (see Interaction 5). The NNSs also reciprocated with equal respect but mainly adhering to formulaic expressions of politeness. On the whole, expressions indicating humility, mostly formulaic expressions of politeness, were found to be used by both the NS and NNS interlocutors at the beginning of Interaction 5, suggesting that when expressions of respect are used in a very polite discourse, expressions of humility are likely to be used too.

Generally, both the NSs and NNSs in the various interactional contexts in the present study have been observed to be discerning, that is, they have employed the various forms and styles of language categorized under *discernment*. This aspect of politeness has been analyzed in relation to their role, status, age, formality or non-formality of contexts of communication, and where it is possible to make deduction about their attitude and personality as well. It can be concluded that both the NSs and the NNSs in this intercultural communication have communicated politeness in terms of *discernment*.

Following the conceptual framework incorporated in this paper and its objective, i.e. analyzing linguistic politeness in terms of the aspects of *discernment* and *volition* (Ide, 1989), findings in terms of *volition* will be discussed in the next section. This aspect of politeness is equated with Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness strategies.

Findings: Linguistic Politeness in Terms of Volition

Most striking was the employment of positive politeness strategies such as those seen in the expressions of friendliness and solidarity and expressions that emphasize togetherness and intimacy. They were found in both courteous as well as familiar situations. Although it was stated earlier that conformity to the social rules of speaking (by using the appropriate linguistic form) makes communication in Japanese smooth (see Introduction), the employment of positive politeness strategies, like the use of particle *-ne* in these conversations also seems to have contributed significantly to smooth communication. Particle *-ne* is a kind of hedging in the Brown and Levinson's sense, used as a verbal strategy to seek and show agreement and is found in all the interactions. This is illustrated, for example, in the following formal conversation between a female NNS trainee and a female NS lecturer in

Interaction 1:

- NNS: *jaa shuu ikkai-dake desu-ne* ↑
 well week once only Cop.Court. right Rising Intonation
 Well only once a week, isn't it?
- NS *mm soo-desu -ne tsugi-no shuu-wa minna*
 mm, yes Cop.Court. right.....next week Top. everybody
ryokoo-ni iku-node anoo dekimasen-ne
 trip Mot. go because well cannot Adj.Vb.Court. right
 Hm yes, it is....we cannot have it the week after you know
 Because everybody's going on a trip.

An informal situation such as Interaction 3 between two female friends:

- NNS: *aa sono toki-da yo-ne* ↑
 ah that time Cop.Pl. Emp. right Rising Intonation
 Oh that time, right?
- NS. *ima-demo aru keredomo-ne*
 now even Vb.Pl. although right
 Even now though, you know

In addition, *motte-kimashoo-ka* (shall I bring to you?) is used to emphasize togetherness and intimacy or friendliness in the same interaction:

NNS: *aa kadai ...motte kimashoo-ka sensei*
 aa assignment.. bring Vb.Court. Int. professor
 Shall I bring the assignment, Professor?

NS: *mm motte-kuru jikan-ga....demo motte-kita hoo-ga ii-kashira*
 hm bring time Sub...but bring had better may be
 hm if you bring itmay be you had better bring it.

There were also compliments, for example in Interaction 4 when the NS told the NNS how fluent her Japanese was;

NS: *sugoi-da-mon datte moo pera-pera-deshoo*
 great Cop.Pl. Emp. well already fluent Adj. Court.
 She's great well don't you see she's already fluent.

and in Interaction 5 when the male NS complimented the host on his house;

NNS. *ima kireei subarashii dezain to-iu-ka*
 now beautiful wonderful design say or
 Now it's beautiful or shall I say a wonderful design?

NS. *Dezain-wa watashi-ga shita*
 design Top. I Sub. did Vb.Pl.
 As for the design, I did it.

as well sympathies, for example in Interaction 3 when the NNS talked about having to pay the school fees on her own, the male NS showed his sympathy;

NNS. *sore-wa jibun-de dasu sore-ga taihen*
 that Top. self by put out Vb.Pl. that Sub.tough Adj.Pl.
 I pay that on my own. ..that is tough.

NS: *taihen-desu-ne nihon-mo endaka -desu-kara*
 Tough Adj. Court. Japan also yen appreciation Cop.Court.
 because

It's tough isn't it? What more with the high rate of Yen in Japan.

and reassurances, for example in Interaction 6 when the university professor indicated her concern by making her students feel at ease with her offer to treat everyone. She reassured the NNS in a jovial manner to order anything she liked even if it was a little expensive:

NNS: *watashi kore de-ii yasukute . . .*
I this Lim. good
This is just fine with me...it's cheap.

NS: *sukoshi yasukunakute-mo ii-wa yo ogoritai-kara*
A little not cheap even if okay Emp. Emp give a treat want
because
It's alright even if it's a little expensive because I want to give
you a treat.

The employment of the negative politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), i.e. using expressions indicating reserve and minimising imposition, such as *anoo* (well), *eeto* (I say), *chotto* (a little, quite), *keredomo/ kedo* (although) and *-to omou* (I think) in Japanese, was found in most of the interactional data. It was also found that both the female NSs who spoke in the familiar style minimized their assertiveness by employing negative politeness strategies. However, not all the NNSs used expressions indicating negative politeness strategies such as the above suggesting that the employment of these strategies is not easy and requires a pragmatic skill on the part of the NNSs.

In the formal situation of Interaction 2, negative politeness strategies were found to be used by both the NS and the NNS:

Female NNS: *anoo okinawa shusshin* ↑
well, okinawa hometown N.Pl. Rising Intonation
Well is he from Okinawa?

Male NS: *okinawa shusshin-datta iya shusshin-made*
Okinawa hometown Cop.Pl. no hometown as much as
chotto wakarimasen-kedo
quite don't know though
I don't quite know whether he is from Okinawa.

In the informal situation of Interaction 3, the female NNS did not use expressions indicating a negative politeness strategy but the male NS did as indicated below .

NNS: *a mashin a kuruma-no mashin*
oh machine oh car Gen.machine N Pl. Rising Intonation
Oh machine, is it a car machine?

NS: *soo-desu-ne kuruma maa shigoto-wa kuruma-deshita-kedo*
well, it is car well job Top. car Cop. Court. although
Well, my job had to do with cars, though.

The findings as seen above reveal that both the NSs and the NNSs in this intercultural communication study have also communicated politeness by employing verbal strategies or volition.

Linguistic Politeness in Intercultural Communication

In this analysis of intercultural communication between the Malays and Japanese in Japanese, it was observed how politeness is communicated through the employment of polite linguistic forms and strategies. By Ide's (1989) definition, the employment of polite linguistic forms and strategies in a communication entails smooth communication. The findings mostly reveal the employment of such polite linguistic forms and strategies by both the NSs and NNSs in the interactional data. The findings also reveal evidence in which the same speaker mixed honorific and familiar expressions vis-à-vis the same hearer within the same conversation. This, however, is expected because expressions of politeness are not only relative to specific social contexts but also to the interlocutors' attitude and personality. Nonetheless, the interactional samples generally indicated various speech styles appropriate to Japanese communication where variables like age, the formality and informality of the situation, status, familiarity, attitude and personality and the educational background of the interlocutors may be said to have influenced their production. There were also rule deviations but on a closer study these deviations suggest strategies of solidarity and friendliness. The samples have also indicated the interlocutors' use of intentional strategies such as the ones categorized as positive and negative politeness strategies. These findings suggest that politeness is

communicated in the interactional conversations between the Malays and the Japanese in this intercultural communication study.

However, at this stage it is not empirically possible to determine whether an intercultural discourse is smooth and without friction solely on the account of whether appropriate politeness forms of discernment, especially honorifics, are used. On one hand, there is the question of the complexity and diversity of the actual uses of honorific and non-honorifics by the native speakers themselves, as was observed in the data. This may be due to the fact that the knowledge of 'correct' honorifics is unequally distributed in the Japanese society and attitudes toward honorific use also tend to vary among individuals. It seems that politeness rules are proposed without detailed descriptions of when and how to use them (Okamoto, 1999). On the other hand, the non-native speakers are handicapped in terms of not having at their disposal all the culturally specific discourse conventions and linguistic repertoire required for communication within the native social environment. The use of honorifics must be complex and difficult for the Malay speakers whose own language, i.e. Malay, does not have such polite linguistic markers other than those observed in the forms of terms of address, pronouns and lexical items. The proficiency of Japanese and the knowledge of honorific use also vary among the non-native speakers in this study. The lack of use of the honorifics and the common observance of the relatively easier courteous expressions among the non-native speakers in the formal situations is clearly an indication of an avoidance strategy. They have tried to communicate politeness in a much easier manner, that is, by using the courteous expressions.

Nonetheless, the interactional data did not suggest any notable friction that one might say would be the outcome of a communication that was not smooth solely because the interlocutors' speech did not conform to the social rules of speaking in Japanese. For example, even the mixture of language styles by both NSs and NNSs was not something uncommon. Speech styles in Japanese are relative to social context and attitudinal differences among the interlocutors which will result in them being not mutually exclusive nor completely isolated in usage. Thus, it is not possible to determine the 'smoothness' of any communication only on the criteria of polite linguistic markers such those categorized under *discernment*.

Nevertheless, it is possible to discover 'smoothness' in terms of the volitional strategies of interactive collaboration employed by the participants

in the data. The following section shows how smooth communication does not only depend on the use of appropriate formal forms such as those described under discernment, but also on the quality of participation, co-operation, and negotiation which are realized through the use of politeness strategies which are described as volition in this study.

Politeness Strategies and Smooth Communication

The employment of positive politeness strategies by both NSs and NNSs has contributed significantly to the smoothness of the interactions in the data in the form of expressions that indicate friendliness and solidarity, togetherness and intimacy which in turn contribute towards conversational participation and co-operation. As an example, let us look at this selection of data from an interaction at a sports club between a 29 year-old female NNS and a female NS1 with a speech impediment and another female NS2 (Interaction 4) in their 30s. This is a typical, informal type of conversation conducted in the familiar style one expects between friends:

Interaction 4:

- 1 NS2: *kondo uchi asobi-ni kite-yo itsu hima* ↑
Why don't you come around to my place next. When are you free?
- 2 NS1. *hima-tte soo-nee kongetsu-wa ji=zu*
Talk about free time this month I'm == =/ a little busy you know.
- 3 NNS: *isogashii-naa*
How busy you are.
- 4 NS2: *geinoojin-dakara*
Because she's an artiste.
- 5 NNS: *geinoojin-janai*
Isn't she?
- 6 NS: *demo hontoo jikan-ga hoshii watashi-ne jikan-ga hoshii*
But really I need time you know I need time

- 7 NS2: *soo* ↑
Really?
- 8 NNS: *jaa issho-ni mareeshia ikeba watashi raigetsu kaeru-kara*
Well how about coming with me to Malaysia. I'm going home
next month.
- 9 NS1: *demo...*
But...
- 10 NNS: *san-man hassen-en*
Thirty eight thousand yen.
- 11 NS1: *nani-ga* ↑
What?
- 12 NNS: *oofuku-de*
Two-way.
- 13 NS1: *e doko* ↑ *doko-made* ↑
Eh where? As far as where?
- 14 NNS: *singapooru-made*
As far as Singapore.
- 15 NS1: *heeh singapooru-made dake-de ii*
Really? As far as Singapore is good enough.

The female NS1 (with speech impediment) did not sound so keen, as illustrated in her response (line 2), when the other female NS2 persuaded her to go over to her house (line 1). The intersubjectivity of the interaction began to build up as NS1 showed interest at NNS's suggestion that NS1 go to Malaysia with her (line 8). NS1 started asking (line 11, 13) while NNS clarified and provided her with the information spontaneously (line 12, 14). NS1 seemed pleased with the idea (line 15) suggesting further rapport between the NS and NNS.

Conclusion

I have discussed some of the evidence in my data to show how an inquiry into one type of intercultural communication, i.e. conversational interactions focusing on linguistic politeness, can be done without being rule or culture biased. In sum, as much as discernment is claimed to be the realization of communicative action in Japanese, volition has appeared to play a significant role in structuring and building up interactions which may be determined as smooth and without friction in this type of intercultural communication. In other words, the use of positive politeness strategies indicating volition for solidarity and friendliness, for togetherness and intimacy or for concern was the aspect of politeness that had enabled the participants in this study to engage in the skilful work of communicating.

Appendix

Abbreviation and symbols used in the transcriptions.

Top.	Topic marker
Sub.	Subject marker
Obj.	Object marker
Loc.	Locative marker
Gen.	Genitive marker
Emp.	Emphatic marker
Lim.	Limitative marker
Int.	Interrogative marker
Vb.	Verb
Adj.	Adjective
Pron.	Pronoun
Pref.	Prefix
Suf	Suffix
Hon.	Honorific form
Court.	Courteous form
Pl.	Plain form
↑	Rising Intonation
=	A false start
/	Repair

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