



Learners' Noticing of Japanese Speech Styles: Pedagogical Issues and Possibilities

Izumi Walker

(clsiw@nus.edu.sg)

National University of Singapore, Singapore

Abstract

The role of consciousness in the learning of a second or foreign language has received increased emphasis over the last decade. Particularly, the 'noticing' of relevant features in the speech of authentic native speakers can promote learning. However, little has been studied about the learning of Japanese speech styles, which are recognized as one of the most difficult linguistic features to acquire because there is no neutral style in Japanese. The most appropriate style must be selected according to the interlocutor's age, social status, intimacy, formality of situation, etc. and the style selected can constantly change depending on various contextual and psychological factors. Prompted by these issues, the author has conducted a study to investigate if elementary level learners of Japanese noticed anything about speech styles and, if they did, what they noticed when they communicated with Japanese native speakers. The present paper reports on the initial part of the 9 month-longitudinal study that explores what learners noticed during their first Japanese native contact situation. The data was collected from 65 student journal reports and was analyzed by the Modified Grounded Theory Approach. Results indicate that the learners' noticing varied greatly and that the variations are not only due to individual differences between the learners but also due to differences between the individual native speakers they encountered. Based on such findings, this paper discusses potential learning difficulties, related pedagogical issues and the possibilities for teaching speech styles from an elementary level.

1 Introduction

The role of consciousness in second/foreign language learning has received increased attention over the last decade. Particularly, Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schmidt, 1990, 1993, 1995) gave a strong impact of cognitive psychology on SLA. According to the theory, attention to input is seen as essential for storage and a necessary precursor to hypothesis formation and testing. Furthermore, it is said that in order for input to become intake and thus available for further processing, it has to be 'noticed' under 'awareness' (Schmidt 1995). It has also been claimed that attention is what allows speakers to become aware of a mismatch or gap between what they can produce and what they need to produce, as well as between what they produce and what proficient target language speakers produce (Ellis, 1994; Gass, 1988; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schmidt, 2001). Since noticing such gaps enables learners' language to get closer to the target language, learners must attend to and notice any source of variegation that matters; whatever makes a difference in meaning in every domain of language learning (phonology, grammar, semantics, pragmatics, vocabulary, discourse structuring) (Peters, 1998, as cited in Schmidt, 2001). On the other hand, it is also accepted that there is a limited capacity for attention, especially for beginner learners who are already cognitively overloaded attending to form.

These theoretical discussions have posed a number of questions for SLA research, but this paper is particularly interested to explore if beginner learners can notice anything about the stylistic features of the Japanese language when they pay attention to them. This is because Japanese speech styles are complex linguistic phenomena and thus, they are generally not taught at an early stage, but due to easier access to natural language through new media technologies, this educational practice has created an enormous gap between classroom language and what learners can access outside the classroom. Having seen this as a serious pedagogical issue, this paper examines if beginner learners can notice stylistic features or not, and if they can, what they can notice and what they can't notice, and also whether their noticing is appropriate or not. Through exploring these points, the possibilities and problems with teaching Japanese speech styles at the beginner level are discussed.

2 Focus of the study: Japanese speech styles

Any language has stylistic varieties such as regional dialects, occupation-based jargon, formality and/or politeness related expressions, gender-based differences, and so on, and the case of the Japanese language is the same. However, it is considerably different in the sense that it is a compelling task for Japanese speakers to select one of the two verb-ending forms, *desu/masu* form or *da/dearu* form, in any utterance because there is no neutral form like in English, as Jorden (1987) states:

It requires constant attention, for there is no neutral style in the Japanese language. While for a given situation one style may be more appropriate, expected, normal, and unmarked, that same style will be most inappropriate and surprising if used in some other situations. Of course every language reflects stylistic differences (consider English "How do you do?" versus "Hi!" which are certainly not interchangeable) but the pervasiveness of the differences in Japanese is overwhelming. (Jorden, 1987, p. 32)

Consider, for example, the expression in English, "I will go"; this can be used by an English speaker in almost all situations: to professors, bosses, customers, close friends, and babies, to a large audience and even to royalty. This is not the case in Japanese. The following are some of the most frequent versions of "I will go" in Japanese.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|------|------------------------------------|
| (1) a. | Watashi | ga | iku. |
| | I (female/general) | SUBJ | will go (plain form) |
| b. | Watashi | ga | ikimasu. |
| | I (female/general) | SUBJ | will go (polite form) |
| c. | Watashi | ga | mairimasu. |
| | I (female/general) | SUBJ | will go (humble polite expression) |

The plain form or the *da/dearu* form used in (1a) is used among social equals and in close relationships in casual situations – for example, family talk, chatting between friends, small vendors like grocery and fish shop clerks interacting with customers, and so on. This cannot be used to a boss or by a student to a professor. On the other hand, the polite form or *desu/masu* form in (1b) is normally used in more formal, institutional, and official situations – for example, speeches and lectures in an academic context, business meetings, bank tellers or department store clerks interacting with customers, and so on. There is also a highly polite version as shown in (1c). This would be used in formal occasions and indicates the speaker's respect towards the referents or the interlocutors by using humble expression. Thus, this would be used by junior employees talking to their supervisors, hotel staff interacting with their customers, etc.

Furthermore, the Japanese language offers not only such verb-ending choices but also more varieties that are explicitly differentiated in their linguistic forms, and Japanese speakers need to se-

lect the most appropriate expression depending on genre, speech situation, speakers' social status, intimacy, gender, age etc.

To illustrate this further with the example above, "I" can be "watakushi" (very feminine), "washi" (male/old age), "boku" (male/general), "ore" (male/masculine), "uchi" (female/young), "papa" (father addressing himself to his children), "mama" (mother addressing herself to her children), "ojisan" (uncle addressing himself to younger people or young relatives) etc. and many further patterns, if we include the variety of sentence final particles which mark the speaker's gender, perception about self, the listeners and referent, feelings and intentions etc., such as "ikimasu wa", "ikimasu yo", "iku wa", "iku yo", "iku ze", "iku zo" and so on. Although there are some fixed patterns between the words to express "I" and "go", the possible combinations are numerous.

As be seen from the example above, Japanese speech styles are related to social and situational factors such that they have traditionally been studied by directly and primarily linking keigo or Japanese polite expressions (Matsumoto, 1989), uchi (in-group) and soto (out-group), wakimae or 'discernment' (Ide, 1989) – sets of social norms of appropriate behavior that people must observe to be considered polite in society.

Since the 1980s, the focus of academic studies has shifted to the fact that styles are mixed not only within one genre, but within a single discourse segment as well. Such a phenomenon is called 'level shift', 'style shift' or 'mixed forms' (this paper calls them 'speech level shift'), and many studies have been conducted (Ikuta & Ide, 1983; Mimaki, 1993; Usami, 1995 etc.) to explore the function, meaning, and related factors. For example, it is said that a switch from the polite to the plain style can occur when speakers wish to communicate empathy, when they abruptly remember something, or when they present background information which is semantically subordinate within the discourse structure (Ikuta & Ide, 1983; Marriot, 1995). Conversely, switches from the plain to the polite style can occur when speakers want to emphasize, or when they want to express assertion and strong negation or sarcasm, or they want to change or return to the previous topic (Mimaki, 2007). Through these studies, it has been pointed out that the functions of speech level shift in the same discourse are 1) to control the psychological distance between the speaker and the listener, and 2) to act as a boundary marker of the discourse. These studies claim that social and situational elements alone cannot explain the stylistic variability observed today.

Let me illustrate such a speech level shift with a short conversation in a Japanese TV drama, *Meguriai* (1998). The following conversation is between a female taxi driver, Eri, and her customer, Shuji, who used to date Eri until she left him to be a dancer in New York two years earlier. Shuji happened to get in the taxi Eri drives and was shocked to find her working as a taxi driver. At that time, he was not able to speak to her, but after a few days he found her taxi in the taxi company car park, and made her drive him. In the taxi, they keep their speech in polite style, which is the norm between a taxi driver and his customer. However, they occasionally switch their styles as below:

- (2) a. Shuji: Hidoi yatsu ga imashite ne. Ninenmae ni gaikoku ni ittakiri nanno renrakumo yokosana ni desu yo. (polite style)
I have a terrible friend who went abroad two years ago, and has never contacted me again.
- b. Eri: Iija nai desu ka. Sonna hakujo na yatsu hootte okeba. (polite style)
Why do you care about such a person with a cold heart, you'd better just leave such a person alone?
- c. Shuji: Soo iu wake ni wa ikanai n desu. (polite style)
I really can't do that.
- d. Eri: Dooshite? (plain style)
Why not?
- e. Shuji: Soitsu ni dake wa shiawase ni natte hosii kara. Soo omotte ninen mae ni wakareta kara. (plain style)
Because I want at least this friend to be happy, that's why I separated from her two years ago.

- f. (After a while) Untenshu san, umi e itte kudasai. (polite style)
Driver, to the seaside please.

In (2a), Shuji indirectly criticises or complains about Eri who had not contacted him since she left. His use of polite style indicates distance, coldness or even sarcasm toward Eri. Eri also replies in the polite style (2b), keeping her distance from him, making her response as if she is talking about someone else despite knowing exactly that Shuji was talking about her. However, Eri suddenly switches to plain style in (2d), having heard Shuji's "I really can't do it (leave her alone)" in (2c). This abrupt switch indicates her emotional movement; empathy, keenness and eagerness to know his reply, etc. Shuji also switches his style to plain style and quietly says (2e) as if to himself while looking out of the window. Such a swift style shift makes his utterance seem as if he is confessing his unchanged affection toward Eri, although he had married someone else introduced by his boss. These are very instant and short utterances but bring such a great effect because the use of plain style indicates directness, close psychological distance, empathy and affection toward the listener. However, Shuji switches back to the polite style after a silence (2f) and gives directions to Eri just like a normal customer toward his taxi driver. This switch also expresses the speaker's emotions; Shuji is trying to calm himself, through being more impersonal.

Although a dramatic scene in a TV drama, this kind of style shift is common in daily conversation in Japanese. Maynard emphasizes in her series of studies (2004, 2007 etc.) that stylistic choices are motivated not only by social factors but also by personal emotions and desires. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the phenomenon of mixing styles is ubiquitous in contemporary Japanese discourse, and that the varieties and degrees of mixing seem to have intensified in recent years. The same person may mix styles when addressing the same partner depending on the situation, emotion and his/her desires, and many other linguistic and interactional strategies can be manipulated for self-expression for the realization of personalized expressive meaning.

3 Pedagogical trend and issues

In contrast to the great number of studies exploring general stylistic phenomena, few concrete studies have been conducted. Many studies focus on learners' problematic use of styles. For example, Yamashita (1989) claims that the current situation where elementary education is conducted only in *desu/masu* (polite) style does not work for teaching socio-culturally appropriate use of language. It cannot foster consciousness about politeness (Okano, 1999). Sakamoto (2006) argues that young learners' perceptions about the 'plain style', which they tend to think as appropriate because it expresses friendliness, can be problematic once they graduate from college and enter the workplace. Mimaki (2007) warns that learners' inappropriate use of speech styles can harm good human relationships. As an empirical study, Cook (2001) who studied 120 JFL learners through listening tests found that 80% of the learners focused only on the referential content and were unable to recognize the impolite speech style indexed by co-occurring linguistic features. Cook suggests that it is necessary to teach a range of co-occurring linguistic features that constitute a particular speech style, especially the relationship between a linguistic form and its social meaning, and that this be brought to the learners' attention so that they become more noticeable.

These problems basically arise from the current educational practices, where only the 'polite style' is taught and the reality of the stylistic features tends to be largely ignored at the elementary level. For example, few textbooks introduce the stylistic variations and the socio-cultural background related to the styles at an early stage¹, and many textbooks do not introduce them until the upper beginner level; some textbooks start to use the plain form without sufficient explanation about how different styles are used and what the social meaning of them are. Thus, needless to say but speech level shift is hardly taught (Fukushima, 2007) to learners.

Such a simplified approach may be alright if learners only access classroom Japanese. However, in this borderless era where people freely travel around the world and can readily access authentic language through the internet, it has become more difficult to ignore. This rapid environmental change has created a gap between the Japanese language that learners are taught in the

classroom and what they are accessing outside, and such a situation not only restricts learners from the benefit of such outside resources but also creates a false understanding of the language reality and the rationale behind the education. This gap affects not only learners' perception but also their actual use, i.e. lack of understanding of the social meaning underlying Japanese speech styles might lead to a communication breakdown, as they interact with NSs. It is thus time to consider changing this educational practice and introduce speech styles from an earlier stage. However, learners can be overloaded since learning of speech styles involves phonological, grammatical, semantic, pragmatic and sociological domains, and they may become confused or de-motivated by the amount they have to learn in order to master them. Therefore, it is essential to discover effective ways to introduce them at an earlier stage, and in order to do that, we must understand more about how learners acquire speech styles and what problems learners may encounter if they are introduced earlier.

4 Study

4.1 Research questions

This study is based on the premise that encouraging learners' 'noticing' is particularly important for teaching Japanese 'speech styles' for the following reasons:

Firstly, 'noticing' of relevant pragmatic features, which is the main focus of learning speech styles, in authentic native speaker speech can promote learning (Kasper, 2001). Secondly, it is difficult to teach all the necessary stylistic features explicitly because many features are unconsciously acquired by native speakers. Thirdly, little has been studied about contact situations where native speakers of Japanese interact with learners, in terms of speech styles as well as what kind of style use by learners is expected to be appropriate. Fourthly, discovering the gaps learners notice between what they can produce and what they need to produce, as well as between what they produce and what proficient target language speakers produce, is important in understanding their learning process, and such gaps will provide insights into what is missing from current educational practice.

With the rationale above, the present study asks three questions: Firstly, do beginner learners notice any style phenomena when they are instructed to pay attention to them? Secondly, if so, what can they notice? Thirdly, what do they misunderstand or not notice at all? The primary focus of this study is to explore learners' noticing of the stylistic differences between polite form and plain form, that is verb-ending forms but also including all co-occurring features so that the whole picture of learners' noticing can be captured.

4.2 Setting and participants

65 learners from a 2nd year university course in Singapore, who had had no or little interaction with native speakers apart from their Japanese language teachers, were studied. The learners had received approximately 150 hours of formal instruction in Japanese language over a year, and had already completed the chapter of the textbook about speech styles in the previous semester. All of the students were asked at the beginning of the study to fill in 'background sheets' describing their previous Japanese language learning experiences and their purpose in studying Japanese, as well as their access to Japanese language media outside the classroom. From this, it was found that all the students, except two who had had short home stays in Japan, had no or minimum experience interacting with native speakers apart from their language teachers, but that all the students were frequently accessing authentic Japanese by watching Japanese anime, drama, playing Japanese games, or listening to Japanese pop songs etc.

4.3 *Research design and data analyses methodology*

'Observation tasks' suggested by Kasper (1997) were used as the framework for this study, which consisted of the following four steps.

Stage 1. Pre-activity test

Stage 2. Awareness Raising Activity

Stage 3. Post-activity test

Stage 4. Observation Task through interaction with native speakers

The first three stages led to the preparation for Stage 4. Stage 1 was designed to discover what the learners knew about speech styles at the beginning of the study. Stage 2 was to provide basic knowledge about speech styles on the premise that new learning would be impossible unless it could be related to existing knowledge and experience (Van Lier, 1996). The 12-hour TV drama "Meguriai" was selected and edited down to 15 minutes segmented into 4 short clips so that students could still follow and enjoy the story while paying attention to the speech styles². Students filled in the task sheets (see Appendix 1) while viewing the video. Stage 3 was designed to ascertain if learners had enough knowledge to be able to pay attention to relevant stylistic features during Stage 4, the main focus of this study.

Throughout these stages, it was revealed that the students had little existing knowledge of speech styles, but that the majority of them gained basic knowledge through the awareness raising activity. Figure 1 shows a comparison between the pre-activity and post-activity tests, and three main differences. Each category was labelled based on the following student comments:

Existence of different styles:

- I know that there is a polite style, and plain style, and I have heard there is also a super polite variant, and an even more informal version.

Selection factors:

- When talking to people of higher ranking and status, formal and polite style is used. When speaking to close friends and family, plain style will be used.
- I learnt to notice the different speech styles people use due to their relationship differences and status differences.
- I understood that 2 people can use different speech styles when they are in different position / situations.

Speech level shift:

- I noticed how the speech styles change with the change in the roles of character.
- Small changes in speech style can indicate attitude towards another person.
- Speech styles between two persons can change halfway as their roles change or become closer.

First, there were no students who described speech level shifts before the activity, but 26.2% described them in the post-activity test. Second, while the percentage of the students who mentioned the existence of speech styles decreased, that of the students who described selection factors increased from 24.6% to 43.1%. Third, the descriptions became more concrete and detailed. Based on these results, it was ascertained that learners should be able to pay attention to some relevant stylistic features when they interacted with native speakers.

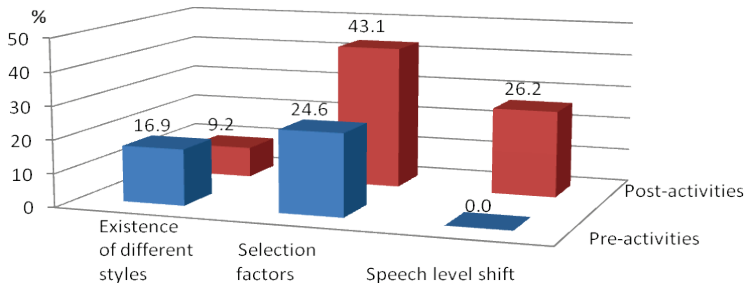


Fig. 1: Knowledge difference before and after awareness-raising activity

In Stage 4, the students participated in field trips where half of them guided Japanese primary students (Grade 6) around the war museum, while the other half guided other primary students around the university campus. Prior to the trip, the following instructions were given on what to include in the report.

- What did you find about Japanese speech styles? For example what styles were used between students, you and students, teachers and students, and so forth.
- How did you communicate with the school children and/or teachers in terms of speech styles and other aspects of the language?

4.4 Data analysis procedure

To provide a rich picture of the learners' noticing, the qualitative data was analyzed based on the Grounded Theory Approach or GTA (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (Kinoshita, 2003). GTA is a systematic qualitative research methodology, whose basic procedures are naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text. The data analysis in this study proceeded as follows:

Step 1: Generation of basic concepts

The first step was to generalize basic concepts in accordance with the method of 'constant comparison'. This means, everything related to speech styles was read in search of the answer to the repeated questions, "What is this about? What is being referenced here?" Going through this initial stage, it was soon noticed that many learners commented as follows:

- O:40³ The students spoke to their teachers using polite form all the time. This is because the teacher's social position is higher than them so it is a must to use polite form.
- O:06 The style children were using was quite obviously the informal style. Since they are social peers and are very familiar with each other.

These are descriptions of the same phenomenon where a speaker selects his/her speech style according to whom they speak. It is particularly concerned with the social status between the speaker and the listener. Similar comments were gathered from the other worksheets, and from these comments, the first concept, [Seniority and social status] was generalized. At the same time, it was noticed that there were comments which were also related to the relationship between speech style and people, but which differed from the above:

- O:29 Somehow it felt as if the students were good friends with the teachers and they talked and gave their opinions freely.
- O:01 It was interesting to note that although technically, teachers of the primary school and teachers from the university would be on the same social status, formal speech styles were used

during conversations as the degree of closeness between the teachers was much less than that of the students who were classmates.

Unlike the first two students, I-O:29 and I-O:01 describe the use of speech style related to intimacy between the speaker and the listener, thus, these were removed from the initial worksheet, and became the second concept [Intimacy]. This process is called 'Open coding' and the flow of the process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Step 2: Re-organization of worksheets depending on 'self' or 'others'

During the process of analysis, it emerged that the noticing differed depending on the observation target: 'self' or 'others'. In addition, it appeared that the number of noticing on 'others' is more than noticing on self and what is noticed is different between them. Since 'self' means the use of speech styles by non-native speakers and 'others' means the use of speech styles by native speakers, they should be naturally different from each other. Thus, in order to clarify the differences as well as to discover the characteristics of the noticing, it was decided to separate worksheets depending on the observant.

Step 3: Re-organization of worksheets according to the addressee of 'others'

From further analysis, it was observed that among the noticing about 'others', there were differences depending on who was the interlocutor of the 'others'; learners or other pupils. In other words, it depends whether the 'others' were speaking as 'interlocutors' of the learners or to 'others' who were not learners. Let us compare the four cases above with the following two cases.

- I:43 Although it wasn't a formal situation, we still converse with a majority of polite form... This may be perhaps I am much senior than them, and also that was our first meeting so we are not close to each other yet.
- I:04 I wonder if the reason behind using polite form with us is because they are not familiar with us, or if they respected us as older students, the way they respected their teacher.

In the previous four cases, only one factor was determined, either [Seniority and social status] or [Intimacy], but in the above two cases, more than two factors were mentioned. Furthermore, these responses appear less confident than the previous four cases. This may be since the learners were involved in the conversation and they were more sensitive to the feeling of their interlocutors and selective factors, rather than just observing 'others'. Thus, the former cases were labeled as 'interlocutors' and the latter cases as 'others' and all the worksheets were re-organized into three categories; 'self', 'others', and 'interlocutors'. It should be also noted that as for the categorization, learners' comments which are related to more than one concept were categorized into both concepts. For example, I:43 and I:04 were categorized into both [Seniority and social status] and [Intimacy].

Step 4: Generation of core concepts

Under each category, similar concepts were grouped into core concepts as Figure 3 illustrates. For example, from the concepts of [Seniority and social status], [Intimacy] and [Base level shift], a core concept of <Human Relationships> was generated because all the concepts are related to the noticing about the link between speech styles and human relationships.

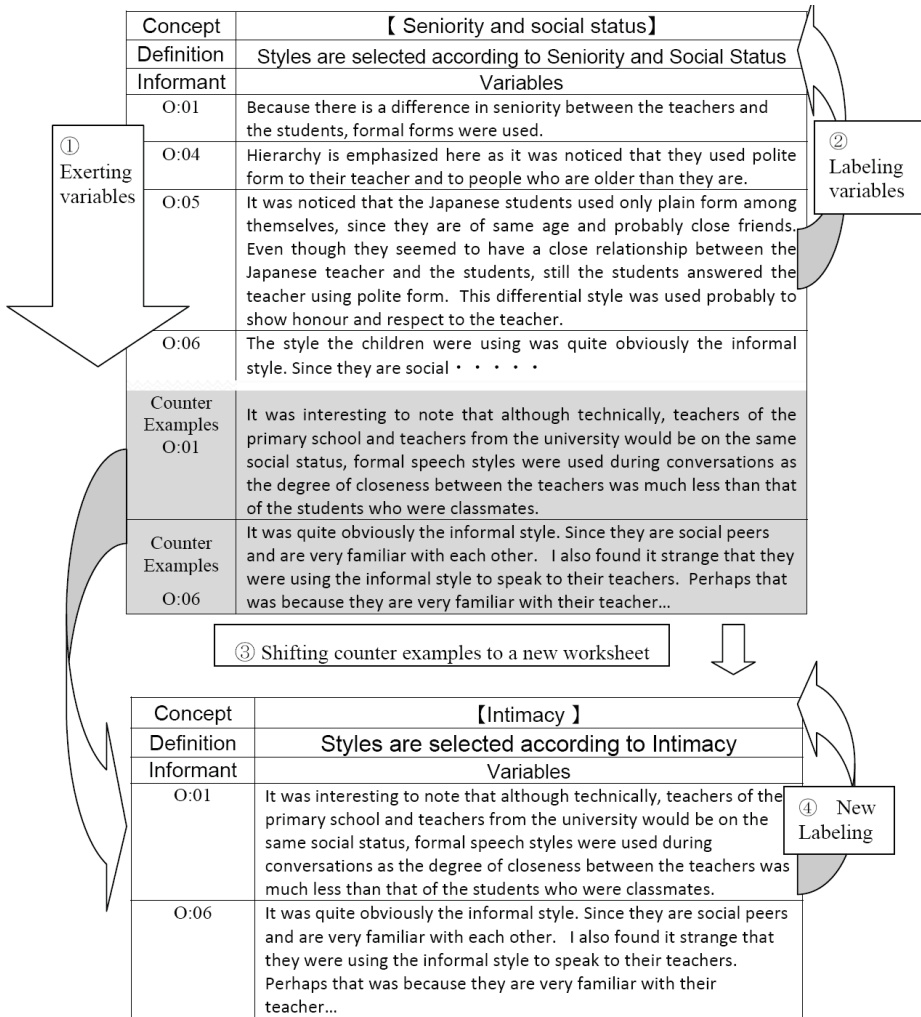


Fig. 2: Open coding

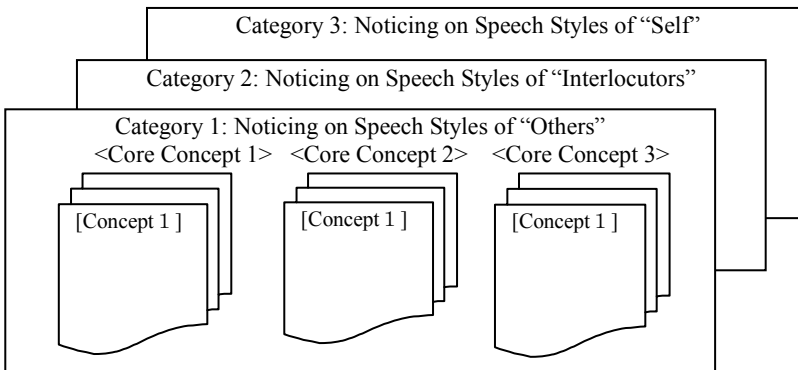


Fig. 3: Three stages of analysis: Concepts, core concepts, and categories

5 Major findings

The comments relating to speech styles varied to a great extent depending on the learners. For example, some learners gave a very simple description whereas others included more detail. Some concentrated on the speech styles used between native speakers (NS), some commented on their own style. However, after analysis eight core concepts and fifteen concepts were generated as shown in Table 1. It should be noted that this is neither an exhaustive list nor does it cover the right contextual factors. It is the list of concepts generated from the students in this study, and there may be items missing or new to what has been explored by linguists and academics in previous studies.

Core Concept	Concept	Definition	A Sample of Variables
<Human Relationship>	[Seniority and social status]	Styles are selected according to seniority and social status	Japanese students spoke in polite form to someone older or of a higher status than them, whereas the plain form is used when they spoke among themselves.
	[Intimacy]	Styles are selected according to intimacy	I think student could use plain style to their teacher if they are close enough even though they are from different social status.
	[Base level shift]	Speech levels are shifted according to psychological distance	After 'breaking the ice', we started to use plain style with each other.
<Situation>	[Situation]	Styles are selected depending on situation	During the campus tour, we used the plain style of speech but for the show-and-tell, we followed our scripts and used the polite style.
<Intention or Content>	[Temporal level shift]	Styles are selected or shifted according to intention or content	When speaking to us, they would usually only use polite forms when they were asking us for favors or asking us questions.
<Consciousness>	[Social role]	Styles are used to emphasize social status and roles	Even the teacher would use polite form. I think that this is the teachers' way of conferring some respect or professionalism to their jobs and the students.
	[Linguistic adjustment]	Styles are linguistically adjusted for interlocutors	The students were very accommodating and they tried to talk slowly and refrain from using casual forms of the verbs when talking to us.
	[Mitigation of social status]	Polite style is used to mitigate the social status	We used the polite form as it would seem impolite to answer them with the plain form because it would imply that we were of a higher social status than them.
	[Unintended mixture]	Styles are mixed up without intention	I used mixing of both plain form and polite form to primary students. We were used to use polite form in class and seldom had the chance to use plain form.
	[Following others]	Styles are selected following interlocutors	I was initially wondering what forms of speech to use, but after a while I just decided unconsciously to go with the flow. When the students used plain form, I would do the same.
	[Plain style use without reasons]	Plain style is used without reasons	I communicated with the primary school students in plain form.

<Characteristics of Colloquial style>	[Final particles, Gender, Slang, Incomplete sentence, Polite expressions], etc	Colloquial style has various characteristics	They also used a lot of particles such as 'ne' or 'yo' at the end of their sentences to emphasize certain points. / a lot of slang when talking to their fellow students.
<(non) Verbal Behavior>	[(Non) verbal behavior]	Styles are linked with (non) verbal behavior	They stood in a line; bowed and introduced themselves and said 'Yoroshiku onegaishimasu', looking very Japanese.
<Communicative Competence>	[Strategic use of polite style]	Polite style is selected according to speaker's communicative competence	Communicating with them was, of course, through the use of the formal style of speech, since that was what I was more familiar with in anyway.
<Unexpected Style Use>	[Unexpected style use]	The usage of style was unexpected and the factors cannot be understood	The primary school students used plain form among themselves and also to their teachers. This was quite surprising as we expected students to use polite form to their teacher, who was at higher rank.

Table 1: Noticing on 'speech styles' by Japanese language beginners

5.1 Human relationships

This core concept was generated by the most frequent comments and consisted of three concepts: [Seniority and social status], [Intimacy] and [Base level shift].

[Seniority and social status]

Among the three concepts, this was conceptualized by the most frequently occurring comments, where speakers use polite style according to their social status. Most learners reported that pupils were using polite style to their teachers and considered that the reason for this was that juniors must use polite style to their seniors as shown in the comments below.

- O:15 The students never did answer the teacher in the plain form as it is considered rude to use the plain form to their teacher whose rank is socially higher than them.
- O:35 However, even though the children are close to their teachers, polite form was still used. This implies that even though they have a good relationship with each other, the difference in status still dictates the type of speech styles used in conversations.

Similarly, some learners noticed that the pupils were using polite style to the university students due to [Seniority and social status].

- I:31 It was a very clear demonstration that the differing forms can be used to create distances between the speakers and listeners, which we did not really desire in that context, but we understood that it was a form of recognition that we were their seniors and they had to show respect to us.

These comments revealed that learners had a strong belief that juniors must use polite style to their seniors. Central to this was the belief that seniors must use plain style to their juniors. Therefore, when they encountered counter examples like that below, they were surprised and tried to find other reasons behind it.

- I:24 I listened to the announcement their teacher made before we set out, in formal Japanese. This surprised me a bit because I had always thought that any communication between a teacher and his students always had the teacher speaking plain form and the students speaking formal form. Apparently this is not the case. However, the teacher's using formal form may be because it was an announcement, meaning that not only the children could hear it, but the university teacher and students as well, and that knowledge made him use formal style. In any case when the teacher talked to the students in little groups, he was already using plain style.

I:24 was categorized under another core concept, [Situation], which means that learners noticed that speech styles are selected according to situation. It is interesting to see that quite a few students wrote that they had thought that teachers always have to use plain style to their students (as underlined above) despite the fact that whether speakers with a higher status use plain style or not at all depends on various factors that will be discussed throughout this study.

Furthermore, comments like the example below imply that some learners believed that people in the same social status were to use plain style.

- O:01 It was interesting to note that although technically, teachers of the primary school and teachers from the university would be on the same social status, formal speech styles were used during conversations as the degree of closeness between the teachers was much less than that of the students who were classmates.

As the actual speaker in this situation, I had no intention to use plain style to the primary school teachers probably because we were not close to each other, and we were in an educational setting. In a slightly different case another student thought that pupils used plain style to the learners because they were in the same social level. There was another case where the use of plain style was understood as a social marker which indicates equality.

- O:06 When they spoke to us, they also used the informal style, since I think we are seen as social equals as well.

Similarly, some learners thought that the reason for the school teachers to use polite style toward them is that the learners were regarded as at the same social level:

- I:42 When the teachers spoke to us, they used the polite style. Again, this was possibly because they regarded us as on the same social level, since we were not really under their authority, and were not children either.

These comments indicate that learners hypothesized the following rules:

- (1) Juniors are to use polite style to seniors
- (2) Speakers with equal status are to use plain style to each other.
- (3) Seniors are to use plain style to juniors.

Rule (1) is appropriate in many situations although there are exceptions, for example when juniors and seniors are very well-known to each other. On the other hand, rules (2) and (3) are not correct. It depends on the speaker's intimacy toward the listener, personality, formality of the situation, etc. For example, it is common that teachers continue using the polite style to their students, in the same way that business people do so in business Situation. Without considering such factors, if learners use the plain style simply due to social status, it can be seen as too friendly, childish or showing a lack of respect to others, etc, or even as a face threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Above all, it was revealed that learners had the above misunderstanding about Human Relationship.

[Intimacy]

This is when speakers select a style according to how intimate they feel towards the listener. Most typical comments related to this concept concerned the use of plain style among pupils due

to psychological closeness or intimacy, and the use of polite style from pupils to university students due to psychological distance.

- O:30 I noticed that they had been using plain style. This shows that they are close with each other, or they are of similar age (which is for sure, as they are from same class).
- I:30 While communication with students, although we had been constantly using plain style, some of the students had been replying using polite style throughout the trip. This may indicate that they felt the distance between us as we had just known each other and not close with each other.
- I:12 But when they were conversing with us, they reverted to polite form. I believe that this was due to the fact that they were not very familiar with us, and so to convey the sense of unfamiliarity towards us they had to use polite form.
- I:31 It was a very clear demonstration that the differing forms can be used to create distances between the speakers and distances, which we did not really desire in that context, but we understood that it was a form of recognition that we were their seniors and they had to show request to us.

As indicated, some learners felt a distance between the pupils and themselves by their use of polite style. Through this experience, they were able to realize that style is determined by not only social distance but also psychological distance, which is valuable. Some of them even noticed that pupils were using plain style to their teachers.

- O:27 However, I realized that some of them used plain form when communicating with their teacher, which was quite a surprise. It could be because they are very close to their teacher.

This kind of discourse made some learners think that juniors are allowed to use plain style to their seniors as far as they are psychologically close to each other. This is a risky way to think because use of plain form in this way can be seen as a sign of immaturity or lack of courtesy.

[Base-level shift]

This means that the base style is switched generally from polite style to plain style, according to a speaker's feeling of intimacy. In this study, quite a few learners reported:

- S:15 As conversation progressed, we started using the plain form.
- S:35 Polite form was used when conversing to the school children at the beginning. However, as the tour went on, plain form became dominant. The sentences were shorter than what was used during tutorials.

S:15 and S:35 noticed that both learners and the pupils started to use more plain style during their conversations. Speech level shift is such a fluid and complex phenomenon that it is positive that learners noticed such shifts. However, comments like S:14 implies that some learners tend to rush to switch their styles too early when the other party was not yet ready to change as found in previous studies (Ijuin, 2004).

- S:14 Initially, polite style was used during self-introduction. Subsequently, there was a switch to the use in plain style as I get to know the children better.

It also revealed that most of the learners did not notice the gap. Exceptionally, I:42 noticed the gap and even analyzed the reasons as follows:

- I:42 I had expected the children to speak to us using the plain style, but they actually conversed with us in polite style. I think it could have been because we were still strangers, and were older than them, and hence they felt it necessary to talk in a more formal way.

A few more learners noticed the gap and reported that they found such situations awkward and switched back to the polite style. For them, this became a valuable experience as they could understand that a change of style by only one party cannot close the psychological distance between the speakers.

5.2 *Situation*

[Situation]

This means that the speaker selects a style according to the situation or where he/she is. The most typical notice regarding this was the relationship between the style and the formality of the situation. Learners analyzed that the use of plain style by teachers was due to the informality of the situation:

- O:01 I think there were occasions where the teacher used informal speech modes to communicate with the school children... I suppose it is because it was not really a formal setting as in a classroom.
- O:15 However, there were a few times, such as when we were on the bus or when we were inside the building, the teacher used the plain style to help us explain some facts to the students.

Another frequently occurring comment was the use of polite style by teachers in the opening speech where all the participants in this tour got together.

- O:16 When the teachers were talking to the primary school students as a whole, they reverted to polite form. I presume this to be because of the presence of unfamiliar guests.

These comments indicate that there were quite a few learners who were surprised at the use of polite style by school teachers when they were addressing their pupils. However, having seen such use of polite styles, they tried to explore the reasons behind it, and reached the conclusion that it was because there were not only pupils but also university students and their teachers there. This is very important to understand the variables inherent in the situation. In this case, not only the 'situation' as a physical location but also the 'listeners' whom the speakers addressed, as well as the 'audience' affected the choice of style. The noticing of the 'audience' is worthy of attention because it has hardly been mentioned in recent studies or teaching materials. However, if we imagine a situation where we speak to our close colleagues in the office, our style can be slightly different if there is someone else there too. It would certainly be affected if our boss was there, but even with just another close colleague present, who should not care about our conversation, there could still be an effect if we are aware of their presence. It is noteworthy that the learners noticed such subtle differences.

5.3 *Intention or content*

This core concept means that speakers temporarily shift styles according to their communicative intentions or contents of utterance. This core concept was generated by one concept: [Temporal level shift].

[Temporal level shift]

This means that the style is temporarily shifted from one to another according to speakers' communicative intention or contents of utterance, such as scolding, request and gratitude. The most representative example of this in the study was as follows:

- O:50 Sometime into the class, as the children got naughtier and noisier, she switched to plain form completely scolding her students as well as when giving general instructions.
- O:40 Sometimes they did use polite form as well. This is when they want to give instruction to their peers or intend to ask for their peers' help. A for example, when they instructed their

friends to put on safety belt, they use polite form.

O:50 is a notice about a speech act of ‘scolding’ someone. In this situation, the school teacher who was speaking in polite style switched to plain style when he scolded his/her students. O:40 is a speech act of ‘ordering’. In this case, the students who were speaking in plain style switched to polite style. This kind of act by teachers and students are demonstrated by Okamoto’s (1997) analysis of classroom discourse. Okamoto claims that the teacher seems to try to emphasize his social role by creating a distance from his students by using the polite style, while he tries to show his empathy towards the students by switching his style to plain style. Similar phenomena can be seen in the use of styles by students. Based on the findings, Okamoto concludes that speech style has a referential function and how speakers treat the situation from moment to moment by using various styles creates the social norm. This study supports her findings and also revealed that even beginner learners can intentionally switch their styles although it is not evident whether this was successful or not. There were also learners like S:11 who even attempted to switch their own styles.

S:11 I used plain forms with the children as well, but a couple of times I used polite styles to give some stern warnings to the children who were playful, for I felt that polite styles gave them a distant feel so it could be more effective than using plain style.

As be seen, these are the cases where the base level is the same but somewhere through the discourse the style is temporarily switched due to speakers’ intention or shift of contents. I call them [Temporal level shift] under <Intention or Content> and distinguish them from [Base-level shift] discussed earlier because the cause for this is not necessarily a feeling of intimacy or psychological distance.

5.4 *Consciousness*

This core concept relates to speakers’ consciousness toward the selection of a certain style and it was generated by [Social role], [Linguistic adjustment], [Mitigation of social status], [Unintended mixture], [Following others] and [Plain style without reasons].

[Social role]

This means that styles are used to put emphasis on social status and roles. A few learners see that this comes from the speakers’ professionalism.

I:02 The teachers spoke standard formal Japanese to both us as well as their students. Perhaps this is their habit to impress the importance of speaking proper Japanese on their own students, the same way an English teacher would tend to be careful to speak proper English to her students at all times.

O:25 He managed to sound friendly yet authoritative to the children, which I think was his intended effect. In some ways he used the language to talk down to them, who are his inferiors, but also used polite language to teach them by example how to, for example, make requests.

It is interesting that O:25 observed that the teacher talked down to his students. This recalls the point made earlier that the learners had the belief that “seniors are to use plain style to juniors”. The next example clearly indicates that the student had such a belief.

O:18 However, when the teacher speaks, he usually uses formal-masu form Japanese, even when speaking to students. Perhaps, it has to do with being polite and professional about their work, I noticed this even amongst the Japanese primary school teachers.

O:18 states that the teacher uses polite style even when speaking to students. This implies that this learner thinks that generally speaking, teachers are to use plain style to their students. It should be also noted that [Social role] could be categorized under <Human Relationship> since it is an

element related to 'human relations' as well, but it was placed under <Consciousness> because the speakers' intentions, such as how they want to behave or to be seen by others, seem to be more emphasized than the relationship between social status and style.

[Linguistic adjustment]

This means that speakers try to adjust their styles by considering their interlocutors and is conceptualized as follows.

- 1:21 They were also very understanding in speaking to us by making an extra effort to rephrase some more difficult vocabulary with simpler words and speaking slower whenever we could not catch what they were trying to say.
- 1:05 Although it was quite embarrassing, I realized that the Japanese students did put a lot of effort in trying to communicate with us and I am very thankful for that.

This revealed that native speakers (NS) differentiate the style depending on whom they speak to, whether NNS (non-native speakers) or NS. Such a phenomenon was pointed out by previous studies (Ijuin, 2004; Mimaki, 2007) based on their discourse analysis between NS and NS as well as NNS and NS. Ijuin (2004) examined the mechanism of the speech style shift by applying the Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and found that NS adopt substantially different language behavior to NNS and that the politeness level dropped or became more casual as soon as NS realized that his/her interlocutor was a NNS. On the contrary, the result from this study was opposite in terms of the shift of politeness level because NS, the Japanese primary school students, switched their style from plain to polite and spoke more formally when they spoke to the learners. We can think of a number of reasons for the difference; 'Seniority', psychological distance and foreigner talk in which NSs tend to use correct forms to NNs. Furthermore, it is assumed that the opposite result might be attributed to the JFL and JSL and also their proficiency level differences. Thus, we cannot simply assume how the polite level shifts without considering such various factors. However, it seems to be feasible to generalize that the speech style chosen by NS is different between native situations and contact situations.

[Mitigation of social status]

This means that speakers with higher social status use polite style to their juniors to mitigate their social hierarchy and power, and is conceptualized through the following comment by a few learners.

- S:12 We also used the polite form to respond to them as it would seem impolite to answer them with the plain form. Using the plain form would imply that we were of a higher social status than them.

This concept seems to go against the learners' belief that seniors are to use plain style to juniors in order to deny and mitigate social distance. As a result, this also implies that although learners had such a belief, they don't necessarily behave as they believe they should do so.

[Unintended mixture]

This means that learners unintentionally mixed up different styles:

- S:03 Honestly, I used mixing of both plain form and polite form to primary students. We were used to use polite form in class and seldom had the chance to use plain form.
- S:23 We almost used the plain form to communicate with the pupils all the time. Since we don't use plain form in class quite often, it is a little more difficult for us to express ourselves fluently and clearly. I was always thinking how to change what I wanted to say from 'polite form' to 'plain form.'

There were many more negative comments regarding their own use of style, reporting that they ended up mixing up both styles unintentionally. This explicitly indicates how difficult it is for learners to select and use the right style. It was also revealed from the students' reflections that it was because they think in English first, and then translate into polite style, and then change to plain style. This whole process required time and effort but they wanted to respond in a timely way to their interlocutors and thus, they ended up mixing styles despite their best intentions otherwise. In order to improve this as well as their fluency, it is necessary to automatize their plain style. Nevertheless, it can be noted as a positive indication that they were able to notice their style mixing because they cannot improve if they do not even notice what they are doing.

[Following others]

This means that learners shift their style by following the interlocutors.

S:42 When I had thought that the children would be using the plain style to speak to us, I used the plain style to converse with them too. However, once I realized that they were speaking to us in the polite style, I started to use the polite style as well.

S:01 We bring much older than the Japanese school children would technically make us more 'senior' than they are. However the lack of closeness, this being our first meeting, makes the usage of informal forms of speech rather awkward even though they were children. In the end, I took my cues from them and used formal speech style.

In most cases, learners seem to follow the same style as the primary school students when they were not sure which style they should use. This can be regarded as 'Convergence' of Accommodation Theory (Giles, Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991), that is, the processes through which individuals shift their speech styles so that they become more like that of those with whom they are interacting. The learners in this study probably wanted to close up their social and psychological distance with their guests, and therefore, they behaved in such a way. However, interestingly, one learner reported that he noticed that primary school students were following the style used by learners as well:

I:03 They used plain form to us but sometimes they used polite form. This might be because we were inconsistent in our speech styles as we tried to use plain form but most of the time we accidentally used polite form.

[Plain style without reason]

This means that learners just reported that they used plain style. It is not clear why they did so from the data, but since the whole report from such learners tends to be simple, and hardly includes use of styles by their interlocutors, so it may be because they were not so aware of the style, and they did not pay much attention to it. There is also a small possibility that they did not explain the reason for using plain style because they did not explicitly state that they used plain style because they were senior than the primary school students.

S:36 We had initiated conversation in plain style and maintained this form throughout the tour.

S:44 I was trying to talk to the children in plain style even though not fluently. I feel that the main obstacle of speaking fluent Japanese is the transfer of differ forms of the verbs.

5.5 Characteristics of colloquial style

This core concept consists of a number of sub concepts which express characteristics of colloquial styles, but in this study, each concept was not labeled. Over 70% of learners commented on some of the features of plain styles. It is noteworthy that most of the comments were about 'others', and few were about 'interlocutors' and 'self'.

O:49 However, particles such as 'yo' were also often added possibly to emphasize, to soften the

tone or to bring close the distance between the teachers and the children.

- O:41 It was really enjoyable to listening to the conversations between the students because the intonations were soft and a lot of particles like 'yo' and 'ne' were used at the end of sentences.

Like these, many learners commented on the variety and frequency of sentence final particles. This implies that although sentence final particles are frequently used to convey the speakers' attitude and feelings toward the content of the statement or the feelings toward the listener, they have not been taught them in enough detail. This may be because it is not a main grammatical component and also that they are not employed in polite style as much as in plain style where speakers express their attitude or feelings more openly. Because of this, learners were surprised by the use of sentence particles, and they tried to analyze their functions. The typical view was about the gender expressed by the particles.

- O:15 I also realized the female students used the plain style that was very feminine, with a lot of 'wayo' and 'no' in their sentences.

Like O:15, some learners noticed the function of particles as a marker of gender. However, some students noticed deviation from use of typical gender markers.

- O:27 I also notice that sometimes the girls used speech styles that are more masculine and are used mostly by boys. Some of the boys also used speech styles that sounded more feminine and are mostly used by girls. Perhaps as it was said in the lecture, more and more boys are beginning to use the feminine style.

- O:31 The last thing we observed was that even with all these different forms that we have learnt, none of the forms were static. My group mate commented to me that one of the girls in the group actually used 'da' as a final particle, which was something that had been told to us was too rough for girls. I felt that it was probable that the girl wanted to exert authority over her male classmates that she was speaking to, and to reaffirm that they could not push her around and that they should listen to her i.e. she had the same position of strength that they had.

Another typical feature learners noticed was about the expressive intonation of students:

- O:16 Furthermore, the students talked in a very fast manner that was also very hard to keep up with. Taking among them was also very animated with variations in pitch and tone to emphasize the context of what they were saying. Whenever they were excited about something, their comments tended to be exaggerated and dragged like ①Hee? Suggo-i!①Hence, emotion was very clearly expressed with what they wanted to say - a trait I am still trying to learn.

Some learners noticed the incomplete sentences. Among them, the following comments are interesting because the learners are trying to compare them with Singlish, or Singapore Colloquial English, which is a mixture of local languages such as English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil etc.

- O:02 I found that the students did not speak exactly the plain form that we NUS students had learnt in the classroom. Much of the spoken Japanese was in fragments, similar perhaps to native Singaporeans speaking Singlish or English in incomplete sentences.

Some learners noticed verb-ending contractions. It is significant that learners were able to pick up and discover the structure of such expressions despite the fact that they were not introduced in the class.

- O:24 They added some suffixes to the end of their sentences that had not been taught in LAJ2202, like a '-tte' sound, and often used 'chatta'.

Some learners captured the plain style as 'street style' or 'slang'.

- O:17 Seemingly, the plain speech style is a complicated ‘street-style’ form of the language and can be likened to the ‘Singlish’ style of speaking in Singapore, whereby each of their usages can only be truly comprehended by the natives of the country.
- O:38 Their informal speech style was layered with a heavy ‘slang’, a lot of ‘slurring’ and I did not really understand them every time they either ‘slanged’ or ‘sluttered’.

There are a variety of characteristics in colloquial language, such as ellipsis, inversion, ending without verbs, echo-questions, tag questions, repetition, and so on. This study demonstrated that even beginner learners can notice such a variety of linguistic features if they pay attention to them. It is particularly noteworthy that there was a student who linked speech style and context by himself as follows:

- O:19 They used during their own conversations, I noticed that, similar to other languages, their sentence constructions left out much of the particles and other unnecessary words, while depending heavily on the context (the ability to understand the context also depends on how much you know each other)

This student noticed very important nature of the language. Singapore is a multilingual nation where people usually speak more than two languages, and thus, this learner may have an analytical ability toward languages.

5.6 *(Non) Verbal behavior*

This was generated by only one concept in this study, which is [(non) verbal behavior], meaning that polite style is linked with (non) verbal behavior. Quite a few students expressed that they were impressed by the pupils’ polite behavior together with the use of polite style in various occasions as follows:

- O:12 The school children used the phrase “Ittakimasu” before eating their meal, and later I learned that this was to give thanks for the meal that they were eating. Also, at the end of the tour, the entire group of students thanked us and bowed deeply, which is also the traditional Japanese way of expressing gratitude.
- O:17 The impressive mannerism of the students was also something that struck me. The students were extremely polite and respectful in their behaviour, bowing to express thanks or apology. This impression of courtesy is something that I will always keep in mind about the Japanese. In addition, the students were very kind and nice in making sure that we got what they were trying to convey when we seemed very confused and blur.

It seems to be quite striking for them to actually witness such behavior in real life. This may be more so since that was their image of Japan.

5.7 *Communicative competence*

This was generated by only one concept in this study, which is [Strategic use of polite style], meaning that polite style is strategically selected in order to communicate smoothly.

- S:13 Communicating with them was, of course, through the use of the formal style of speech, since that was what I was more familiar with in anyway
- S:48 I communicate with the school children in the formal speech style is because firstly, I was afraid that using plain form might be rather rude as it was the first time I met the students and secondly, I was less familiar with the plain form and therefore decided to use the formal form.

Both S:13 and S:48 explicitly state that they used polite style because they were more used to it and can speak it better than the plain style. In other words, they placed priority on smooth communication rather than the appropriate use of style. Since many students who tried to use plain form experienced difficulty, or had even a communication breakdown, such strategic use of style may be useful for beginner learners.

5.8 *Unexpected style use*

This concept means that the usage of style was unexpected and the selective factors are also not clear.

- O:03 The primary school students used plain form among themselves and also to their teachers. This was quite surprising as we expected students to use polite form to their teacher, who was at higher rank.
- O:26 The style used by the teacher to the students most of the time was polite form. This surprised me a little since although they were entitled to use plain form, they continued using polite form to the students.

There were quite a few situations where learners could not understand a certain choice of speech style and the reason for the selection, and of these three cases formed the majority. 1) Primary students using plain style to their teachers. 2) School teachers using polite style to primary students. 3) Pupils using polite style to university students. These comments may not be considered as 'noticing', but they can be useful to understand what is difficult to understand, thus they were generated as a Concept.

6 **Concluding discussion**

This study explored beginner learners' noting about Japanese speech style in the first contact situation. Let us summarize the findings by returning to the three research questions posted at the beginning.

- ***Do beginner learners notice any style phenomena when they were instructed to pay attention to them?***

All learners commented extensively in their report on speech styles; various stylistic features as well as their co-occurrence with elements of context such as social distance, speaker's intention, formality of situation, etc. From this, we can conclude that even beginner learners whose linguistic knowledge is limited can notice various stylistic phenomena if they pay attention to speech styles.

- ***If they notice any style phenomena, what can they notice?***

Learners' noticing was varied to a great extent, but having analyzed the variables using the Grounded Theory Approach, they were generated into 8 core concepts and 15 concepts. Based on them, the following theory about learner's noticing can be drawn.

Through the interaction with native speakers, the Japanese elementary learners soon noticed that native speakers were using various speech styles mainly by the <Human relationship>. This was an eye opening experience for them even though they frequently access authentic Japanese such as TV drama, anime, manga and J-pop. They were so excited to witness how native speakers are selecting various styles and skilfully shifting them, their monitoring was activated and they were able to notice a number of stylistic features. They were particularly caught by <Characteristic of colloquial style>, and many learners noticed the frequency and variety of final sentence particles, addressors, slangs etc. It is noteworthy that over 20% of the learners even noticed [Temporal level shift] which is difficult to notice because it happens very swiftly within an utterance or a dis-

course. Some learners also noticed <(Non) Verbal behavior> such as greetings, bowing, expressions of gratitude and reserved attitude, etc., many of which tend to be neglected in Japanese language education.

These are the favourable outcomes. Yet, one important finding, which can be problematic, also emerged from the analysis. Many of them realized how difficult it is to use appropriate speech style in communication. They particularly found that they are not able to use plain style smoothly due to lack of practice and ended up [Unintended mixture]. Some also noticed that it is due to their overloading, which is attending to both meaning and forms, speaking and thinking as well as listening and thinking simultaneously. In fact, some students reported that they could not speak fluently because they think in English first, and then translate into polite style, and then change to plain style. Above all, various problems were also noticed but the fact that they were able to notice such problems can be seen as a positive outcome.

- ***What do they misunderstand or not notice at all?***

It is obviously difficult to determine what learners did not notice because it could be something they did not report, but it is not necessarily the case. Thus, what they seem not to have realized or what they seem to have misanalyses will be discussed instead. There are two points to make.

Firstly, it was revealed that many learners had a strong belief that [Seniority and social status] determines the style. Therefore, they were shocked to see that primary school students were using plain style to their teachers, and tried to find the reasons. Some also noticed that primary school students as well as the teachers were using plain style to the university teachers, and thought that it is 'social equality'. If that is true, are university students socially equal to the primary students, or their teachers? The most problematic hypothesis was that school teachers are to use plain style to their students because they are in the higher social status, which is not true. Then why did the learners have such a hypothesis? Further studies are necessary to answer these questions, but there is a possible reason for this. The learners did not receive any instruction about the co-occurrence factors except [Seniority and social status] from their teachers, and thus, they guessed from their own experiences because the social status and power of teachers are quite strong in Singapore. In other words, this happened as a result of socio-pragmatic transfer. And many of them seem not to have noticed that it was a false hypothesis.

Secondly, they tend to over-generalize what they noticed. For example, some students noticed that primary school students spoke to their teachers in plain style, and they concluded that there is no such strict rule about speech styles and juniors are allowed to use polite style to their seniors if their close to each other. Similarly, many students reported on the courtesy of the primary students as due to Japanese culture and concluded that Japanese people are polite. These may be true to some degree, but they should understand that they cannot simply generalize from their limited experience. In addition, many students expressed that they understood how to select plain or polite styles. This could be due to overconfidence as speech styles are not as simple as they think as discussed throughout this paper. For example, there were extensive individual differences among the primary school students. Some of them quickly shifted from polite to plain style when they spoke to learners probably as they soon relaxed, but some kept using polite style probably trying to show their respect or by simply following their teachers' instructions. On the hand, their attitudes were also varied. Some were so polite that learners were very impressed and concluded that Japanese people are polite, while others were so impatient that they ran away from the learners. It is difficult for learners to notice such individual differences since they interacted with only small individual groups of primary students, but it should be pointed out that they should not simply generalize something based on their limited experience.

7 Pedagogical implications and implications for further research

There are many findings from this study, but there are three major areas which will be covered in the following.

Firstly, it can be proposed that it is possible to teach speech styles from the elementary level. It is even possible right at the beginning, and advisable if the learners' first language can be used for the instruction. However, care is necessary so that learners won't be overloaded as they confront many tasks especially because there is an immense gap between classroom Japanese and that outside.

One feasible way to avoid overloading is to use a 'Declarative Knowledge First Policy'. This means that declarative knowledge or factual information is given to the learners first, followed by the procedural knowledge or how to perform or operate, according to their proficiency level. Adopting this policy, the existence of the variety of speech styles, contextual factors which determine the style, and its social meanings, are introduced from the beginning of the Japanese language program. The reasons for teaching polite style before plain style are also explained; the polite style is socio-culturally safer and can be linguistically simpler than the plain style, and so forth. Giving such basic knowledge is important because it helps learners to obtain an overview of the reality of the Japanese language, and also enables learners to pay attention or invite 'noticing' of the relevant stylistic features both in and outside the classroom along the way to learning Japanese. It also prevents learners from having false conceptions about the reality of the Japanese language from limited access to the language, either through lessons or through media resources.

After building up such basic knowledge, simple examples should be illustrated and used in context. For example, "ohayoo" (plain style) and "ohayoo gozaimasu" (polite style), "arigato" (plain style) and "arigato gozaimasu" can be practiced using different contexts, such as conversation between teachers and students or between close friends, between family members or between non-family members, and so forth. This does not mean that the plain forms should be taught at an earlier stage than when it is introduced in the textbook because that could increase the workload and confuse the students. What is important is that teachers should be aware that whenever a new style or mixed styles are seen in the textbooks without detailed information, which is a common situation, supplementary explanations should be provided to raise learners' awareness about the speech style and the contextual factors. It is also important that teachers should not provide contexts where learners need to produce or practice conversations between family members and close friends using plain styles at this stage, as Kawaguchi (2003) suggests. Once learners reach the stage where the plain form is formally introduced, ample practice should be given in a variety of contexts. Above all, such 'Declarative Knowledge First Policy' enables learners to learn speech styles smoothly from the beginning.

Secondly, it is important to provide opportunities to invite learners' noticing particularly about the relationship between a variety of speech styles and the contextual factors. Kabaya (2006) calls the relationship 'Rendo' (連動) in Japanese and suggests 'Raising awareness' of the 'Rendo' between 5 contextual factors, 'Human relationship', 'Situation', 'Intention/Feeling', 'Content' and 'Forms', should be the aim of education of 'Taigu Communication' which fosters communication ability that takes into account the socio-cultural meaningful and appropriate use of the language. Since speech styles are the foundation of 'Taigu Communication', this suggestion can be applied to teaching speech styles as well. In fact, it was shown through this study that learners can notice such contextual factors; over 20% of the learners even noticed speech level shift and its contextual factors and more than 60% noticed characteristics of colloquial language such as ellipsis, inversion, ending without verbs and so on. On the other hand, in general, textbooks still lack a systematic explanation of these linguistic forms, although they are gradually receiving more attention in language education. Nonetheless, learning through explicit instruction would not necessarily become their 'intake'; thus, raising learners' awareness and inviting learners' noticing is important.

As for the method to invite 'noticing', 'observation tasks' can be a useful activity to invite 'noticing' about speech styles. It was seen that even beginner learners whose linguistic knowledge is limited can notice crucial phenomena if they pay attention to them. This supports previous studies which claim that learners do construct a theory of language through conscious learning. This also supports Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, that is, the instruction that serves to draw a learner's attention to the target features proves to be more beneficial than simple exposure to the target language.

Nevertheless, it is important to create and conduct the tasks in such a way that learners can discover something important and enhance analytical skills about what they have discovered.

Even if learners cannot notice important points at first, 'observation tasks' can be at least one of the motivational factors. It can be seen from the comments vividly expressing how much they were impressed by interacting with 'real' Japanese, how shocked students were to realize the gap between the Japanese used in the classroom and that in the real world, how much they could see their lack of knowledge and ability, and finally how strongly they were motivated to learn further.

Thirdly, although the above point is true, there are limitations to how far learners can notice, and explicit instruction or feedback after 'observation tasks' is essential. It is because they may misunderstand or mis-analyse certain features or may overgeneralise based on their limited observation. Individual differences can also cause substantial difficulties for learning speech styles appropriately.

For example, some learners noticed that NS adjusted their style for NNS by slowing down their speech, choosing simpler words and grammar, and so forth, for the following two reasons. However, it is risky for learners to think that NS always adjust their style for NNS. In fact, some other learners reported that not only the primary school students did not adjust their language but also did not want to communicate with them due to their lack of fluency, as the following shows:

O:18 There was actually not as much opportunity to speak with the children as they were very engrossed with their friends and were seemingly reluctant to speak to us as the conversation would have been too slow for them.

This may be caused by the fact that the NS in this study were school children and not mature enough to be patient to speak to NNS, but this can also apply to adult NS. They may be happy to adjust at the initial stage, but they may feel uncomfortable continuing with such adjustment after a while, which may harm the relationship in the long run. Furthermore, their fluency can't be improved, if they continue to interact with such adapted Japanese, including teachers' talk. In particular, if learners want to understand authentic media material, which is in fact the major motivation for most of the learners, they need to get used to natural conversation speed. Therefore, it is important to get learners to be aware of their purpose for learning Japanese and what kind of Japanese they wish to learn.

After all, learning itself is an individual mental activity and what teachers can do to support such activities is to provide opportunities so that learners can notice whatever is relevant for their learning and to correct their misunderstandings or misconceptions, if there are any. In order to do that, it is also important to carefully examine what learners notice and what they cannot notice.

Above all, while the current study has demonstrated that 'attention' is a useful construct for understanding individual differences in SLA (Schmidt, 2001), it is the first and only study which has studied learners' noticing of speech styles. Furthermore, this was restricted to just one institution, and consequently, more studies are necessary in and beyond Singapore to see if the results are applicable to other educational contexts. Furthermore, since it focused on the first contact situation, more research is necessary to investigate if noticing of speech styles changes according to the progress of learning Japanese; if it changes, how does it change, and what kind of pedagogies can help to improve the use of appropriate speech styles in the classroom?

Notes

¹ 20th lesson out of 50 lessons in *Minna no nihongo*, none in *Shokyu Nihongo*, and 13th lesson out of 22 lessons in *Nakama. Japanese the Spoken Language* and Situational *Functional Japanese* are exceptions and introduce the variations of the speech styles and their social meanings at the beginning of the textbook National University of Singapore Extension.

² The reason for selecting this drama was that it includes various speech styles which shift depending on the relationship of the same characters, their emotions and formality of the situation, etc. It was also suitable for the students because it contains Chinese subtitles which allowed them to concentrate more on the language use, or how the language is used, while enjoying the story.

³ O stands for 'others' which means that the notice is about speech styles used between other people, or 3rd parties. S stands for 'self' which means that the notice is about the learner him-/herself. I stands for 'interlocutors' which means that the notice is about the interlocutor of the learner. The number after these marks is the informant number.

References

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, H.M. (2001). Why can't learners of JFL distinguish polite from impolite speech styles? In K.R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 80–102). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fukushima, E. (2007). Desu/masu kei to hi-desu/masu kei to no "kongotai" ni kansuru kousatsu - Nihonjin bijinesu kankeisyu no Taigu communication kara [A Study on "Kongo-tai" which is mixed by desumasu-kei and hi-desumasu-kei: An analysis on Taigu-Communication of Japanese business people]. *Waseda nihongo kyouiku gaku*, 1, 39–52.
- Gass, S. (1988). Integrating research areas: A framework for second language studies. *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 198–217.
- Giles, H., Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation Theory: Communication, context, and consequence. In H. Giles, N. Coupland & J. Coupland (Eds.), *Contexts of accommodation. developments in applied linguistics* (pp. 1–68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: two neglected aspect of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua*, 8(2/3), 223–248.
- Ikuta, S., & Ide, S. (1983). Shakai gengogaku ni okeru danwakenkyu [Discourse studies in sociolinguistics]. *Gengo*, 12, 77–84.
- Ijuin, I. (2004). Bogowasha ni yoru bamen ni oujita speech style no tsukaiwake - bogobamen to sesshokubamen no soui [Use of speech styles by native speakers according to situations: Differences between native contact situation and native and non-native situation]. *Shakaigengogaku*, 6(2), 12–26.
- Jorden, E. with Noda, M. (1987). *Japanese the spoken language*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Kabaya, H. (2006). Taigu-Communication ni okeru "bamen", "ishiki", "naiyou", "keishiki" no rendou ni tsuite [Linking of "place", "intentions", "contents" and "forms" in Taigu-Communication]. *Waseda nihongo kenkyu kyouiku sentaa Kiyou*, 19, 1–12.
- Kasper, G. (1997). Can pragmatic competence be taught? *NetWork*, 6. Retrieved from: <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/NetWorks/NW06/>
- Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(4), 502–530.
- Kawaguchi, Y. (2003). Kaigai ni okeru taiguhyogen kyouiku no mondaiten - Taiwan deno kensyukai ni okeru jizenkaidaibunseki (3) [Issues in teaching Taigu expressions abroad: Analyses of "case studies" (3) in seminars in Taiwan]. *Waseda daigaku nihongo kenkyu kyouiku sentaa Kiyou*, 16, 37–50.
- Kinoshita, Y. (2003). *Grounded Theory Approach no jissen* [Modified Grounded Theory Approach]. Tokyo: Kobundo.
- Marriott, H. (1995). The acquisition of politeness patterns by exchange students in Japan. In B.F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 197–224). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1989). Politeness and conversational universals: Observations from Japanese. *Multilingua*, 8(2/3), 207–221
- Maynard, S. (2004). *Danwagengogaku* [Discourse linguistics]. Tokyo: Kuroshio syuppan
- Maynard, S. (2007). *Linguistic creativity in Japanese discourse: Exploring the multiplicity of self, perspective, and voice*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.
- Mimaki, Y. (1993). Danwa no tenkaihyoshiki tositeno taigu level shift [Taigu level shift as a discourse development marker]. *Osaka kyouiku daigaku kiyoo*, 42(1), 39–51.
- Mimaki, Y. (2007). Buntaisa to nihongo kyouiku [Differences in style and Japanese language education]. *Nihongokyoiku*, 134, 58–67.
- Okamoto, N. (1997). Kyoshitsudanwa ni okeru buntai shift no sihyotekikino - Teineitai to futsutai no tsukaiwake [Speech level shift in classroom discourse as referential function: Different use of polite style and plain style]. *Nihongaku*, 16(3), 39–51.

- Okano, K. (1999). Shokyu oyobi chujyokyu ni okeru taiguhyougen kyōiku - Total Japanese o chushin ni shite [Teaching Taigu expression in elementary, intermediate and advanced level: Focus on Total Japanese]. *Kouza Nihongo kyōiku*, 35, 1–18.
- Sakamoto, M. (2006). “Keigohyōgenkyōiku” ni okeru “gokai” o donoyou ni kangaeruka [How to consider “misunderstanding” in teaching “polite expressions”]. In H. Kabaya, Y. Kawaguchi, M. Sakamoto, R. Sei & M. Utsumi (Eds.), *Keigohyōgen kyōiku no houhou* (pp. 147–177). Tokyo: Taishukan-shoten.
- Schmidt, R., & Frota, S. (1986). Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese. In R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition* (pp. 237–326). MA: Newbury House.
- Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 129–158.
- Schmidt, R. (1993). Consciousness, learning and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21–42). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Schmidt, R. (1995). Consciousness and foreign language learning: A tutorial on the role of attention and awareness in learning. In Schmidt, R. (Ed.), *Attention and awareness in foreign language learning* (pp. 1–63). Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- Schmidt, R. (2001). Attention. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 3–32). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Usami, M. (1995). Danwareberu kara mita keigosiyō - Speech level shift seiki no jyōken to kinō [Use of polite expressions viewed from discourse level: conditions and functions of speech level shift occurrence]. *Gakuen*, 662, 27–42.
- Van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, and authenticity*. London: Longman.
- Yamashita, H. (1989). Nihongo kyōiku ni okeru shokyu to taiguhyōgen [Teaching Taigu expressions in elementary level of Japanese language education]. *Nihongokyōiku*, 69, 11–23.

Textbooks

- Japanese: The Spoken Language Part I* (1987). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nakama Volume 2* (2000). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Situational Functional Japanese Volume 1* (1991). Tokyo: Tsukuba Language Group, Bonjinsha
- Syōkyū Nihongo: Zhōo* (2010). Japanese Language Center for International Studies, Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Television Drama Series

- Hashimoto, T. (Producer). (1998). *Meguriai*. Tokyo: TBS

Appendix 1

Task Sheet – Awareness-Raising Activity

Speech Styles in a Japanese TV Drama「Meguriai」

Scene 1: 成田空港(Narita Airport)		
(Plain) Style しゅうじ → えり 修二 ← 絵里 () Style	(Polite) Style Counter → Lady ← 絵里 () Style	修二: じゃあ、ここで…。先生 のことは、大切にしろよ。 絵里: _____。さよなら。 修二: さよなら。
Scene 2: タクシーの中		
() Style 修二 ↔ 社員 () Style	修二: 今日が勝負だから_____。絶対にひきさがる_____。 社員: わかって_____。	
() Style 絵里 ↔ 社員 () Style	社員: あ、運転手さん、そこでけっこうです。 おつり、いい_____。 絵里: ありがとうございます。 社員: (修二に向かって)社長!	
Scene 3: 絵里のアパート近く		
(1) () Style 修二 ↔ 社員 () Style	修二: 西本、ちょっと先にもどっていきな。くれ。 何かあったら携帯(けいたい)に電話_____。 社員: わかりました。	
(2) () Style 修二 → 絵里 ← Style	絵里: 行って_____。 友人: え?! でも… 絵里: _____から。 修二: _____? 絵里: うん……	
() Style 絵里 ↔ 友だち () Style	修二: どういうことなんだよ。先生と一緒だったんじゃないのか。 絵里: 先生とは、別れた。もう終わったの。いろいろあったけど、 もうだいじょうぶだから、何も_____。	
	友人: _____? 絵里: あきひこ、ごめん。今日は_____。 友人: 何で… 絵里: 本当にごめん。_____。	
Scene 4: (1) タクシーの中 (2) 海で		
(1) () Style 修二 ← 絵里 () Style	修二: じゃあ、早稲田(わせだ)まで。 絵里: この時間だと電車で行くほうが早い_____。 修二: いいんです。行ってください。	
	絵里: いいじゃないんですか。そんな薄情なやつ、放っておけば 修二: そういわけにはいかないんです。 絵里: どうして? 修二: そいつにだけは、しあわせになってほしいから。そう思って 2年前に別れたから。	
(2)		

(continued in the original sheet)