Notes on Japanese Child's Acquisition of Register Variation

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I. Introduction

The language which we use in our communication automatically displays many aspects of social information such as the speaker's socio—economic position in a society, his educational background, sex and birthplace; besides, each adult in a speech community is supposed to communicate with other members in and out of the community in accordance with some socio—linguistic rules, and he is considered to be making utterances appropriate to the situation where he is speaking. The former aspect of language is assumed to be inherent in the language user and the latter is related to the circumstances of the language use. The latter variation referred to as 'register', 'code', or 'speech style' and how it shifts or changes in a discourse will be dealt with in the present study.

The main purpose of this paper is to deliberate one aspect of child's acquisition of communicative competence from the viewpoint of achieving the ability to speak appropriately to a situation, by reviewing previous works of literature on the concept of 'register variation' and the acquisition of it, while providing some actual speech samples by a Japanese preschool child which were collected in natural settings. A few points to be argumented regarding acquiring 'register variation' in Japanese will be presented with reference to child's socio—linguistic development in the final section of this paper.

II. Components of Communicative Competence

As many researchers have pointed out, children acquire not only

vocabulary and grammatical rules of a language but also socio—cultural appropriateness of language use in the course of their language acquisition. The socio—cultural aspect of language which is to be obtained in the process will be made clear before considering children's ability to speak appropriately to a certain situation, based on several researcher's viewpoints regarding communicative competence.

Dell Hymes presents a prevalent view on communicative competence in terms of children's language acquisition as follows:

> ...a child acquires a system of its (language) use, regarding persons, places, purposes, other modes of communication, etc. In such acquisition resides the child's sociolinguistic competence (or, more broadly, communicative competence), its ability to participate in its society as not only a speaking, but also a communicating member (75).

As far as the above description is concerned, what he refers to as communicative competence does not seem to include grammatical competence in Chomsky's sense but indicates something related only to socio-cultural features of language, although some other researchers argue that grammatical competence is also one component of communicative competence.

Elaine Andersen, one of the pioneers in the field of 'developmental sociolinguistics' describes the socio—cultural features of language which children have to obtain in the process of acquiring communicative competence as follows:

> In achieving communicative competence, children must learn the dialect or set of dialects that will mark different aspects of their social identity, including their region of origin, as well as their social class, age, and gender. They must also acquire a repertoire of registers and social interactional (or pragmatic) rules that will allow them to express a wide range of social meanings relevant to the particular contexts in which they speak, including, for example, how they view the

relationship between themselves and their addressees in terms of power (status and control) and solidarity (familiarity, intimacy), as well as how they interpret such factors as the purpose and the formality of the situation (32).

She roughly divides the sociolinguistic aspects of language into two parts; that is, dialectal variation which is inherent in a speaker as a regional or social dialect, and register variation which is closely related to speaker's situational use of language. Therefore, it is understood that any adult speaker is supposed to have acquired both features mentioned above in his linguistic socialization until he reaches his adulthood. In other words, a native adult speaker of a certain language with full communicative competence is assumed to be able to speak with dialectal features that correspond to his birthplace, sex, age, occupation, etc., while consciously or subconsciouly manipulating his ability to make appropriate utterances to certain situations.

In the following section, the notion of 'register' will be discussed in detail because the focus of the present paper is on child's acquisition of 'register variation'.

II. Register Variation in a Social — Semiotic Perspective

Substantial works of literature on the concept of 'register', 'code', or 'style' have been written so far, but the concept represented by each word above is different in its definition from one author to another. Therefore, a brief introduction to some major works is attempted here, and the rationale regarding 'register' in a social—semiotic perspective by Halliday will be discussed in detail in order to realize the concept.

A classical work describing the concept of 'register' appears in 1959. Charles Ferguson characterizes some aspects of registral features in Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German and Haitian Creole with regard to grammar, lexicon, and phonology. He uses the term 'diglossia' referring to the use of two language varieties in the same speech community. He defines the situation of 'diglossia' as follows:

> DIGLOSSIA is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a language and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (244−5).

He mentions that an important feature of diglossia is the specialized function of H ('high') variety and L ('low') variety, and that one is used in a certain situation and the other is in a different one, with the two variations overlapping only very slightly (255 − 6). Furthermore, he says, with regard to the acquisition of diglossia, that L is learned by children through the normal way of acquiring one's mother tongue but H is mainly achieved by means of formal education (239).

Although he mentions the shifting from L to H or the other way around which is made by the speakers of those 'defining' languages in accordance with the situation, he does not make a special reference to such shifting as might occur in any speaker's utterance in any language. It seems that the differences between L and H in 'defining' languages are very distinctive compared to those in such a language as English.

Basil Bernstein's noted work on social classes and their codes provides another viewpoint to consider the speech 'code' and its shifting. He defines the notion of the code as follows; "the concept of socio−linguistic code points to the social structuring of meanings and to their diverse but related contextual linguistic realizations "(158).

He says the social structuring of meanings is realized through certain role relationships in a society, and that it is conceived differently depending on the role a man is taking. He makes further distinction between two orders of meanings, that is, universalistic meanings and particularistic ones. In the former, principles and operations are made linguistically explicit, but they are relatively linguistically implicit in the

latter. In other words, meanings are perceived independent of contexts
in the former case, but they need to be interpreted in close connection
with the contexts in the latter. Therefore, it follows that there are two
roughly divided speech forms or codes, elaborate code and restricted
code, either of which is suitable for realizing one type of the meanings
mentioned above. The elaborate speech variants require speakers to
take individualized roles in order to realize the universalistic meanings,
but the restricted ones let them in communalized roles to perceive the
particularistic meanings. Complex editing at the grammatical and lexi-
cal levels is characteristic of the former variants, but syntactic alterna-
tives and lexical choices are limited because of the closer identification
of the speakers in the latter (162−7).

Furthermore, he indicates with reference to child's socialization,
that such speech variants or codes are closely related to the speaker's
social class or the type of family in which he was born and raised. That
is, the former type of variants is likely to be observed in the speech of
the children from person−centered families typically seen in the
middle−class in which the relationships are more egocentric and the uni-
que attributes of family members are more substantive in the com-
munication structure, but the latter is likely to be seen in positional
families characteristic of the working−class where the differentiation of
members is strong and the authority structure is based on the status of
the family members. He argues that children raised in the former type of
families are able to generate universalistic meanings, which are freed
from context and are understood by everybody, through their use of
elaborate code, but that is not the case with children brought up in the
latter type of families. He further says that the middle−class children
are able to control both the elaborate code and the restricted one but
children from the working−class can manipulate only the restricted one
(170−7).

His view on the relationship between children's perception and
speech codes mentioned above has caused substantial criticism as seen
in Peter Trudgill's. He mentions that what Bernstein considers to be a
difference between two distinctive codes is merely a stylistic difference
in the same dialect and that some working−class children are not so

willing to use a formal style or not so accustomed to speaking in a for-
mal style as those in the middle—class. This leads to working—class
children's seeming lack of elaborate code. It seems that Bernstein does
not pay much attention to the fact that any child has an ability to shift
his speech styles depending on the situation and that he sticks to his
overgeneralized distinction of the speech variants in the two codes.

Neither Ferguson's concept on diglossia nor Bernstein's one on
elaborate code and restricted code is involved in the scope of the author
of the present study, although they provide an important insight into the
switching of speech styles or codes which is always taking place in our
discourse. The author would like to deal with the problem of code—
swiching, style—shifting, or 'register variation' in the social—semiotic
perspective proposed by Michael Halliday who is leading The London
School.

Halliday defines a culture as a set of semiotic system or a set of
systems of meaning and regards language as one of many systems of
meanings which constitute human culture $(3-12)$. These meanings are
exchanged in the 'context of situation', the social context of a text. By
the term 'text', he means an instance of the process and product of so-
cial meaning which is chosen on the basis of the need from a particular
'context of situation'. In other words, it is a functional aspect of lan-
guage which appears in doing some job in a certain situation. In the
'context of situation' in which a 'text' functions, there are three major
features: 'the field of discourse', 'the tenor of discourse', and 'the mode
of discourse', as defined in the following:

1.　The FIELD OF DISCOURSE refers to what is happen-
　　ing, to the nature of the social interaction that is taking
　　place : — — —
2.　The TENOR OF DISCOURSE refers to who is taking
　　part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and
　　roles : — — —
3.　THE MODE OF DISCOURSE refers to what part of
　　language is playing, what it is that the participants are
　　expecting the language to do for them in that situation:

$- - - (12)$.

In his definition of 'register', a certain aspect of language corresponds to these variations in the context of situation, as in the following:

> A register is a semantic concept. It can be defined as a con-
> figuration of meanings that are typically associated with a
> particular situational configuration of field, mode, and tenor.
> But since it is a configuration of meanings, a register must
> also, of course, include the expressions, the lexico—gramma-
> tical and phonological features, that typically accompany or
> REALISE these meanings (38−9).

Taking these into consideration, it follows that any person with com-municative competence with respect to the register variation is manipu-lating his ability to make his utterances appropriate to a certain situa-tion while paying attention to the parameters above consciously or sub—consciously. It also follows that the utterances produced have cer-tain characteristics of the situation in terms of discourse, lexicon, gram-mar, and phonology, etc.

However, there is an important point to be considered; that is, a close interconnection between registers and dialects. As in the case where a standard variation of language as a regional variety is used as the bureaucratic register in many societies, particular features of utter-ance can be both registral features and dialectal features at the same time, although a clear distinction is theoretically made between the two.

Ⅳ. Acquisition of Register Variation by a Young Japanese Child

Andersen reports substantial amount of previous research findings regarding both dialectal variation and register variation with her own interest in children's acquisition of register variation in order to outline the domain of 'developmental socio—linguistics'. In her definition, regis-ter variation consists of 'mode of discourse', 'field of discourse', and 'manner of discourse'. The former two correspond to those in Halliday's

but only the last one is referred to differently from Halliday's 'TENOR OF DISCOURSE', although what she describes as the contents of each is almost the same as Halliday's.

Based on her research on children's ability to deal with register variation in which those aged between 4 and 7 were investigated as to whether they could use utterances characteristic of their assigned roles in role—plays with puppets, she mentions those children are able to play roles with both social and contextual significance on their speech in spite of the previous views by Piaget or Labov, and further argues that "one might find evidence of some knowledge of register variation much earlier than 4" (173).

In this section speech samples which have been collected from a Japanese child, the researcher's son, in natural settings from his 2 years and 5 months of age to 4 years and 9 months will be introduced in order to outline the process of his linguistic socialization with respect to acquisition of register variation. The samples have been tape—recorded in most cases with a small cassette recorder set in the way he did not become overconscious of it, but other occasional ones with registral features were transcribed immediately after his utterances were made.

> (A) In a spontaneous, open—ended role—play in a shop setting taking 4 minutes played by the subject and his mother; (2 years and 5 months)

(1) *Budoo wa ikaga.* 'Would you like some grapes ?'
(2) *Kore hutachu ga nijuu-en.* ' This is 20 yen for two.'
(3) *Moo ikko nijuu-en dechu.* 'Another one is also 20 yen.'
(4) *Kore utte Kudachai.* 'Pllease sell this.'

In this setting the subject used such typical registral expressions as in (1) and (2) which always take place in a shop. A copula in the form of addressee honorifics, *desu,* and *kudasai,* a polite imperative form of a verb *kure,* appeared here as well. However, these are considered to be subject's mimicries of his mother's utterance in the role—play, taking his limited experience at a shop into account.

(B) In a spontaneous, open—ended role—play played by the subject and his mother with finger puppets, which took 12 minutes in which puppets friends were playing; (2 years and 7 months)

(Using two puppets, one male kitten and one female kitten)
(5) *Oira kokoda yo.* ' I'm here.' *Watachi kokoda yo.* (with a high pitch) 'I'm here.'

Both *oira,* a rare stigmatized variant of the first person referent for men, and *watashi,* a woman's typical variant referring to the first person, were used, depending on the role he played. In addition, a girl kitten's utterance was made in a higher pitch.

(Playing the part of a girl kitten right after he was tickled)
(6) *Yamenasai yo.* 'Stop it ! ' *Konna koto chitara watachi okottyau wayo.* 'I'11 be mad if you do such a thing.'

Nasaiyo, a polite imperative form often used by women and the sentence final perticle, *wayo,* which is exclusively used in women's speech, appeared here besides the woman's first person referent, *watashi,* when he played the role of a girl kitten.

(7) *Chotto booshi tukutterundesu.* ' I'm just making a hat.'
(8) *Takuchan no ouchi desuyo.* ' This is my (Takuchan' s) house.'
(9) *Haidesuyo. Haidesuyo.* ' Yes, yes.'

Consistent use of *desu,* a copula in the form of addressee honorifics, was observed here with some overgeneralized use of *desu* as in (9), although he did not use it at all when he was not playing the roles.

(10) *Kochirani kirasshai.* 'Please come here.'
(11) *Haai, donata.* ' Yes, who is it ? '

Kochira, a polite form of *koko* indicating ' here', and *irasshai,* an impera-

tive honorific form of *koi* 'come' were observed although his use of the latter was ungrammatical. Furthermore, *donata*, a polite form of *dare*, 'who' was used as well. These polite expressions were mostly addressed to his 'guests'. In this setting the subject occasionally showed his ability to change linguistic forms, although with some grammatical errors. Considering the fact that the sentences from (5) to (11) were never used in his natural conversation with his mother outside the role—play, it may be that he was conscious of the linguistic forms characteristic of certain roles to a limited degree. However, the influence of his mother with whom he spent most of his time playing together should not be over-looked in considering his linguistic socialization until the time, on the ground that register variations had been involved in the plays including role—plays.

(C) In a spontaneous, open—ended role—play played by the sub-ject and his father in 'doctor fish and patient fish' setting which took 15 minutes ; (2 years and 10 months)

(Playing the role of Dr. Halfbeak)
(12) *Sayori desu boku.* ' I'm Halfbeak.'
(13) *Dooshitan desuka, Tobiuokun.* ' How are we, Mr. Flying fish ? '
(14) *Dooshitan desuka, Burichan.* ' How are we, Friend Yellowtail ? '

In this setting the subject referred to himself as 'boku', a formal first person referent for a boy which he never used in natural settings at that time, appeared. In addition, honorific titles such as *kun*, usually addres-sed to a person of lower or equal social standing or a younger person, and *chan,* usually to a child or a close person, were used depending on the addressee.

(15) *Dokoga itain desuka.* ' What part hurts ? '
(16) *Jaa, bandoeido wo hatte agemashoo.* ' Then, I '11 put a Band—Aid on it.'
(17) *Atama mo chotto netsu ga arimasuka.* 'Do you have a slight fever (in your head) ?'

(18) *Dokoga waruin desuka.* ' What part is bad ? '

(19) *Chotto shinjoo mo tomatte masu.* ' Your heart has also stopped for a moment.'

(20) *Kusurinanka motte kimasu.* ' I'll get medicine or something like that.'

(21) *Chikun shite agemashoo ka.* 'Shall I give you a shot ? '

As in sentences (15) to (21), the subject used lexical items such as *netu* 'fever', *shinjoo* 'heart' and *kusuri* 'medicine' which were related to medical register at that time, although some of them were awkward and adjusted within his lexical limitation. It is observed that the subject had acquired the expressions mostly through his role—plays with his caretakers considering his limited experience in the hospital, but there seems to be a possibility that he had picked up some expressions from his actual experience because he occasionally referred to his experience out of the lines in the role—play above as in his referring to ' the automatic door at the hospital'. Addressee honorific verb endings such as *desu* and *masu* which add certain formality to the sentences are consistently used in this setting.

(Playing the role of the child fish)

(22) *Chotto guai ga waruin dayo.* 'I feel a litte bad.'

(23) *Koko dayo.* ' This part hurts.'

(24) *Netsga arun dayo.* 'I have a fever.'

(25) *Sorede atama mo itaishi.* 'and I have a headache.'

Addressee honorific verb endings were not used as in (22) to (25) when he played the role of the child patient, and the utterances were made in obviously higher pitch than his normal conversation pitch.

(D) In a spontaneous, open—ended role—play by the subject playing the role of Doctor and his patient in a hospital setting; (3 years and 5 months)

(Playing the role of Doctor examining a patient)

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(26) *Koko, me no toko, me no kono chikaku wa* 50*senchi* desu. *Soshite koko wa* 1*senchi desu.* ' Here around the eye, (a wound) around the eye is 50cm. And it is 1cm here.'

(27) *Taionkei de hakatte agemashooka.* 'Shall I take (your body temperature) with a clinical thermometer.'

(28) *Honga ippai arimasu yo. Omoshirokunai hon ya, omoshiroi hon ya. Mite, Byoki no hito no hon desu yo. Kono hon wo mitara desune, aa kokokanatte wakarun desu yo.* ' We have many books, both interesting ones and uninteresting ones. Look. (That is) a book about a sick person. I can make a guess (about the place) if I look it up in the book.'

(29) *Atama ga baikinmamire ni natte atamano su ni nattyattetan desu.* 'The head had been full of germs and had become a germ's nest.'

(30) *Saisho chuusha shite, itaku nakunaru yoo ni chuusha shite, sorekara kitte iretan desu.* ' At first I gave a injection, (for the patient) not to feel pain, and then, I cut (the head) open and put (the medicine) into it.'

In this setting more sophisticated lexical items regarding medical register as in *taionkei*, 'a clinical thermometer', *baikin*, 'a germ', and *chuusha*, 'injection', appeared, and the length of one unit utterance made at a time became longer than before. Here as well, addressee honorific verb endings are consistently used.

    (E) In a natural conversation with his mother; (3 years and 7 months)

(31) *Kore Takuchan no ya kee.* ' Because this is Takuchan' s.'

Around 3 years and 7 months the subject started to use expressions with regional variety as in *noyakee* in stead of *no da kara* meaning 'since it is' only occasionally as he began to play with children in his neiborhood. However, the use was very limited in accordance with the time spent with his friends nearby. In his natural conversation with his parents outside role—plays, he still referred to himslf as *Takuchan* without using

other variants of the first person referent such as *boku* 'I' and *ore* ' I '.

(F) In a natural conversation with a guest, a college professor ; (3 years and 10 months)

(32) *Anone, sensei, bokuno otoosan ne ippai tabetan da yo.* ' Say, Professor, my father ate a lot.'

As in the sentence above, he addressed the guest professor as *sensei* 'teacher' or 'professor'. Furthermore, he referred to himself as *boku* ' I ', a formal first person referent for boys, in stead of *Takuchan* which he was always using at that time, and referred to his father as *otoosan* ' father' in place of *papa* 'daddy' used in addressing his father directly. This was the first time he switched his use of address forms or person referents depending on the person he was talking to.

(G) In a role–play setting where the subject and his close friend played the roles of 'space fighters' using dolls and robots; (4 years and 5 months)

(33) *Daijoobu ka.* ' Are you all right ? '
(34) *Zenin yattsukero.* ' Beat up all members.'
(35) *Ore no sei da.* ' I'm responsible (for this).'

Relatively shorter utterances per unit with manly tone as in the interrogative form, nominal + *ka,* the direct imperative form, verb stem + *ro,* and the copula form at the end of a sentence, nominal + *da,* were recorded here. These features seem to be related to his role as a space fighter. In addition, these utterances in the role–play were made in the standard variety which the subject has easy access to through this type of TV programs. The use of *ore* in (35), a stigmatized first person referent, which he did not use in speaking to his parents, is noteworthy as well.

(36) Kichi ni modottan yo. (*modottan da yo*) ' We've returned to our

base.'

(37) *Shiran cha*. (shiranaitteba) 'I'm saying I don't know.'

(38) *Reddo Kingu wa taichoo ya kee shinan no yo.* (*taichoo dakara shinanain da yo*) 'Since Red King is the captain, he won't die.'

(39) *Iken hocchaa.* (*Damedatteba*) 'I'm saying No Way.'

Sentences (36) to (38) were produced when the subject was explaining his intended story to his friend. Therefore, all these utterances with features of regional variety were made out of the lines in the role—play. The standard equivalents are provided in the parentheses. Utterances in this setting were recorded one month after he entered kindergarten. By the time of recording, he had acquired substantial ability to control his speech with regional variety almost for one month. Considering he had had limited experience in playing with local children at the time of entrance, his rate of acquisition of regional variety is noteworthy. It seems that his identity as a local child is strong enough for him to acquire the regional variety in a short time.

(H) The following samples were recorded in the situation in which the subject was conversing with his nurse at his kindergarten who asked questions related to the contents of the book which he had read with nurse; (4 years and 7 months)

(Asked about the story).

(40) *Demo Jitensha, taiya ga hekkomun yo.* (*hekkomun da yo*) 'But as for the bicycle, the tire becomes deformed.'

(41) *Demo mata konnani maaruku shite kurerun yo.* (*kurerun da yo*) 'But (someone) makes it round again.'

(Asked about if his mother reads books for him at home.)

(42) *Yonde kuren.* (*Kurenai*) 'She doesn't read for me.' *Shitade neteru kee.* (*neteru kara*) 'Because she sleeps downstairs.'

Utterances (40) to (42) shows the subject used sentence final particles with regional features to the nurse who asked questions in a similar speech

style, although his perceived psychological distance from the nurse is greater than that from people mentioned in other settings above. The recording was done in a room without any other participants, and this may be the reason why the nurse spoke in an informal style with regional features.

(Asked about who reads books for him at home)
(43) *Uchidewa otoosan ga yonderu kedo.* ' Father reads at home, but ——.'

A rather formal variant for referring to his father, *otoosan,* was used when he was talking to his nurse although he did not use the variant to his family members at all.

(I) Recorded when he told his own story to his mother while looking at a picture book with many dinosaurs. The utterances were made nonstop; (4 years and 7 months)

(44) *Mukashi muhashi oomukashi tiranozaurusu to iu kyooryuu ga imashita. Sono Kyooryuu wo shitte imasu ka. Sono kyooryuu wa sugoi mukashi kara ita no desu. Sono tiranozaurusu wa sugoi chikara wo motte ite ningen nanka kuichigitte, hokano kyooryuu to tatakattatte hokano kyooryuu ga make masu. Sono tiranozaurusu wa nakama datte korose masu. Owari.*

' Long, long ago, there lived a dinosaur called tyrannosaur. Do you know that (dinosaur) ? That dinosaur had lived from ancient times. The tyrannosaur had great power, bit off things like humans, and other dinosaurs were beaten when it fought with them. The tyrannosaur could kill his fellows. The end.'

These utterances seem to have been produced in a typical narrative register because such expressions as *mukashi mukashi oomukashi,* 'long, long, ago' and *owari,* ' the end', which mark narratives, were involved and addressee honorific verd endings consistently appeared. Demonstrative words were effectively used and they provided certain cohesion to the

utterances in the narrative. More specialized lexical item as in tyranno-saur was also noteworthy. The expression, *shitte imasuka,* 'do you know' in a rather formal style, was used here. This was used as if he had been making a narrative statement on dinosaurs on TV.

> (J) The following utterances were recorded in the situation where the subject instructed his sister aged 1 year and 7 months to arrange pieces of a picture puzzle; (4 years and 9 months)

(45) *Hai, kore koko. Hai, kore koko yatte, kore. Kore wa koko da yo. Pero yat-te. Ne, koko dayo, ne. Kore yatte, kore yatte. Chigau. A, so, so, so. Kore wa doko. Soo. Yatte. Honjaane, kore yatte. Koko, koko.*
   ' OK, this here. Yeah, this, do this, this one. This comes here. Do Pero's. OK ? , it's here, right ? Do this, do this. NO. Yeah, yes, yes, yes. Where this ? Right. Do it. Well, do this. Here, here.'

The subject used extremely limited sets of vocabulary such as *kore,* 'this', *koko,* ' here', and *yatte,* ' Do' in an informal imperative form. These utterances seem to be his use of 'bady — talk' register in which simplified syntactic patterns and exaggerated intonations are significant in consid-eration of the bady' s seeming incomprehension of normal utterances.

(46) *Kore niichan no nee.* ' This is Brother's, right ? '

The subject referred to himself as *niichan,* 'older brother', when he was talking to his baby sister. The fact was observed for the first time in the earlier stage in his acquisition of register variation, around 4 years of age. It is observed that the subject has the following variants in his natural use as the first person referents at the time of 4 years and 9 months; *Takuchan* to parents, *boku* to his friends and nurse, *niichan* to his sister, *ore* or *washi* to his friends in situations where he tried to show off his masculinity.

V. Conclusion

It is true that the process of acquiring register variations by a Japanese child introduced above is based only on scarce speech samples taken from one subject. However, the notes on the process seem to provide a few points to be argued for future research on the acquisition of register variations in Japanese.

The first point is that there might be ample evidence to support Andersen's argument that "one might find evidence of some knowledge of register variation much earlier that 4 " (173) in the acquisition of register variations in Japanese. This might be closely related to the socio–linguistic features of Japanese language. As Sachiko Ide indicates, speakers of Japanese are said to be dependent on changing linguistic forms in making socially and contextually appropriate utterances in that they are conscious of proper selection of person referents, verb forms, and sentence final particles which are appropriate to a certain situation. However, changing linguistic forms is not always made much of in producing socio–culturally appropriate speech in English. Japanese' heavy reliance on changing grammatical forms might lead to children's comparatively early acqustion of grammatical aspects of register variations. Therefore, it might be easier to find the evidence regarding the acquisition of grammatical aspects of register variations in such languages as Japanese.

Secondly, there might be a possibility for a Japanese middle–class child to acquire relatively formal speech variety before he receives formal education. Unlike Ferguson's description on the acquisition of High variety, formal education does not seem to be a prerequisite for acquiring a formal variation in Japanese. This may be because the difference between formal variety and informal one in Japanese is not so big as that between High variety and Low one in Ferguson's defining languages, or because TVs and books are prevalent over the country and children have easy access to them. It is observed that young Japanese children in elementary school always use formal speech style with addressee honorific verb endings in the classroom, but

not outside the classroom. It is probable that Japanese children aged 4 are conscious of the difference in speech styles to a certain extent.

Thirdly, it might be argued that social–psychological traits of Japanese are related to this context–dependent language use and Japanese are more consious of linguistic forms appropriate to a situation than speakers of other languages who are not so dependent on linguistic forms when making situationally appropriate utterances. As indicated in the above speech samples, it is considered that Japanese young children are surrounded by environments full of situational language use with formal changes and are expected to acquire the ability to speak appropriately to a situation with formal markings. This might cause Japanese' over – consciousness of linguistic forms appropriate to a situation.

Needless to say, much more research data are indispensable to argue the points mentioned above.

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