Terms of Address
Used by Japanese College Students

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Choosing an appropriate term of address in a given social context requires sophisticated social skills and awareness, for an address term reveals what type of social relationship exists between the speaker and his addressee. Speakers should carefully consider social factors such as age, sex, occupation, social status, or degrees of familiarity, all of which determine the relationship of speakers to one another. This delicate task often causes difficulty for a speaker, particularly when the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the person to whom he is talking is vague, unstable, or prematurely developed. In case of considerable uncertainty the speaker manages to do without any address terms.

Conversely, a speaker, by manipulating the application of address terms at will, is able to regulate his social relationship with his interlocutor so as either to promote a personal relationship or to keep a distance from his interlocutor. Either being the case, an adept selection of address forms is key for successful social relations.

When I first accompanied a group of Japanese college students, I noticed that in this rather formal and stiff atmosphere that there were few address terms exchanged within the group. It was this occasion which drew my attention to the issue of address form usage, and I took

the occasion to satisfy my interest concerning how each student would use address terms in the course of developing her relationships with other students.

This paper is exploratory and is intended to grasp the general characteristic of address behaviors performed by some Japanese students in a certain situation. I will describe here in this paper the variety of linguistic forms of address used by Japanese college students in a tentatively organized Japanese language community, and how the students came to use them; then, the results will be examined in light of other sources from the precedent literature. Some comments will be added from an EFL viewpoint.

Data

The data was collected through informal interviews with four students and occasional observation, from a group consisting of fifty-two Japanese female students from the same college. The group, a mixture of Freshmen (28), Sophomores(10), and Juniors(14), was formed for the purpose of participating a six-week summer session on a university campus in the United States. This group was the only Japanese language community on campus and in its vicinity then. After the session was over, the group dispersed.

As most of the group members, particularly the Freshmen, were strangers to each other at the beginning of the session, the students tended to fraternize with the few students whom they had known previously and hardly had any verbal interaction with the remaining students on the journey to America and in the first few days before the course began. By the end of the second week, when the interviews were held, however, each student had enlarged her circle of friends and acquaintances through various activities in and out of class.

Freshmen: The interviews were held with two Freshmen(F1 and F2) and two Juniors(J1 and J2). F1 and F2 had been close friends with each other since high school. They addressed each other by the following

address terms:

		[examples]
(i)	Full First Name [FFN] + *chan* *	*Hanako* + *chan*
(ii)	Affectionate Nickname** [AfNn] + *chan*	*Hana* + *chan*
(iii)	Affectionate Nickname	*Hana*

* *Chan* is used for children or a person on close terms with addresser, suffixed to propernames.
** Affectionate Nicknames, or names of endearment, include familiar abbreviations, diminutive forms, and so forth. Japanese AfNns are often phonologically modified, shortened in most cases, from a proper name--either last or first name--such as *Mari* for *Mariko*, *Kun* for *Kuniko*, or, *Yama* for *Yamada* (family name).

F2 receives two kinds of address terms, FFN + *chan* and AfNn. Her AfNn is from her highschool days and only F1 in this group calls F2 by both terms interchangeably. By the time of the interview, F1, F2 and most of the other Freshmen had come to address each other reciprocally by one of the three address modes, (i), (ii) and (iii).

There were five students out of 28 Freshmen whom F1 had never addressed by any address terms. With three of them, F1 had scarcely talked; she had just exchanged greetings with them. With the other two, F1 had often talked; yet, she had not used any terms of address, but only Attention Drawers, such as *Nee nee* or *Chotto chotto* , as needed.

According to F1's explanation, whenever F1 came across these two classmates in the Dinning Hall, for instance, or sit with them side by side in a classroom, they naturally started talking; however, they were not on such terms as asking each other to do something together, like shopping, playing sports, and so forth.

F2 also had five Freshmen classmates whom she had not called by any address terms. F2 had had little communication with two of them, and with the other three, F2 had talked frequently but without using address terms. F2 said that if she should need to address them, she might call them by (iv) Last Name [LN] + *san* . *San*, the most general suffixal title, is normally

suffixed to the family or given name of the person addressed. It closely corresponds to "Mr., Mrs., and Miss" in English.

When F1 and F2 address Sophomores and Juniors, the following linguistic modes of address are used:

(v) FFN + *Senpai* *

(vi) LN + *Senpai*

(vii) *Senpai*

*Senpai refers to a person, usually a man, who is older and has more experience in work, in school, or in any other field. Recently, the word has come to be widely used among female students of junior high school and upwards.

While (v) and (vi) are used interchangeably for those with whom F1 and F2 are closely associated, only (vi) LN + *senpai* , is used when F1 and F2 feel that the relationship to their elders is a little less familiar. In either case, FFN and LN are omitted as long as the given situation shows who is addressed; as a result, *senpai* is used alone.

This omission should be distinguished from (vii) which is for Sophomores and Juniors with whom F1 and F2 are on nodding terms and/or of whose names F1 and F2 have a dim remembrance.

Juniors: The Juniors of this group, having been students in a small school for three years, had more than a nodding acquaintance with each other before this summer program. They reciprocally use (i), (ii) or (iii) when they address each other. There is one Junior student who is addressed by her peers by her full name with *chan* . I interviewed J1 and J2, who had been close friends during the previous three college years. Both J1 and J2 address each other by (ii) AfNn + *chan* .

To address a Freshman with whom they are on close personal terms, J1 and J2 adopt the address term that is used by the Freshman's peers. That is to say, in most cases, J1 and J2 use either (i), (ii) or (iii). On the other hand, to address their subordinates with whom they have little contact, J1 and J2 use (iv) LN + *san* , as long as they know their names.

Let us now identify the different levels of familiarity or formality

of address forms employed by this group of students by placing each in a list of Japanese address terms suggested by Hijirida and Ho-min Sohn (1986: 144). In the list shown below, a set of address terms are roughly arranged according to the degree of social/psychological distance. As we go down the list of terms, the degree of social/psychological distance decreases from a term identifying a person only by a broad category to a term that identifies a very specific person. On the right side of the list, the address terms used by the subjects of this article have been ordered to correspond to Hijirida, et al's list.

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GT/PT/KT* + sama#
LN + sama
(LN) + sensei/senpai##          . . . .(vii) senpai
FFN + sama
GT/PT/KT + san
LN + san                        . . . . .(iv) LN + san
FFN + san
(LN) + GT/PT/KT**               . . . . . (v) FN + senpai  :  (vi) LN + senpai
LN
LN + kun#
FFN + kun
FFN
FFN +chan#                      . . . . . (i) FFN + chan
AfNn +chan                      . . . . .(ii) AfNn + chan
                                . . . . (iii) AfNn###
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* GT: General Title, includes *sensei* and *senpai*. *Sensei* , which literally means a teacher, as GT refers primarily to respected people. PT: Professional Title such as *sensei* (a teacher here), *shacho* (the president of a company), *untenshu* (a taxi/bus driver), etc. KT: Kinship Title. These kinds of titles are used as if they were proper names, with or without suffixal titles.
** Also, GT/PT/KT are often used following a proper name, in place of such suffixal title as *san* and *chan*.
# *Sama* is a suffixal title more polite than *san*. *Kun* , a suffixal title less polite than *san* , is used after the LN/FN of a male friend or subordinate to address him.
Sensei/senpai , here, are independent address terms of politeness/formalness for unfamiliar addressees rather than being regarded as suffixal GT.
The omission of suffixal titles usually decreases politeness and increases familiarity/closeness.

Summary: The addressing behaviors of this group of students, mainly Freshmen and Juniors, may be summarized as follows:

(1) Between a peer dyad, the most intimate terms of address are reciprocally used when the dyad is on reasonably close personal terms.

(2) Between an age-different dyad on close terms, address terms are non-reciprocally used; the elder calls by intimate address terms and is called by ones which are marked with a respect for seniority.

(3) In the absence of sufficient personal contacts or intimacy, less intimate, more formal, or no address terms are used, reciprocally in principle, in both peer dyads and non-peer dyads.

(4) In the case of non-peer dyads in (3), address forms for elders are always linguistically signalled by a seniority marker, while address forms for youngers may be subject to variation, but non-intimate terms are rarely used.

Universality of Address Term Usage

In this section, the nature of the addressing behaviors of the students will be considered in view of a "sociolinguistic universal" of address terms proposed in leading studies in this field.

Brown and Gilman (1960), in their pioneering studies of sociolinguistic meanings of the address term and its usage, have illustrated that the choice of address terms made by the speaker is not random, but systematic, and that the usage of address terms correlates the two social dimensions of "power" and "solidarity." "Power" derives from higher or lower social status, difference in age, sex, social roles and so forth; "solidarity" derives from intimacy and similarity between speakers. In other words, the selection of a certain address form depends upon the relative positions of each individual of a dyad on these two dimensions. This correlation and the general patterns of address term usage, having been confirmed by successive research (Brown & Ford 1961; Bates & Benigui 1975 ; Haugen 1975; Slobin, et al. 1968), conducted on several different (mainly Indo-European) languages, are assumed to be universal, albeit factors comprising each dimension and the particular

weights attached to them may vary across language communities.

There are a variety of address terms in any language. The basic rules for the address term usage discovered and confirmed to date have been generalized into three addressing patterns, which are shown bellow in their most simplified diagram.

	power equal	power different
less solidarity	**V – V**	**V – V** ↑ (**V – T**) ↓ **T – T**
more solidarity	**T – T**	

For the convenience of distinguishing power-laden or polite forms of address for the non-solidarity, and intimate or familiar forms of address for the solidarity, two symbols V and T, signifying the two categories respectively, have been widely adopted. V derived from Latin "vos," a polite second person pronoun; T from "tu," a familiar second person pronoun. In languages without two second person pronouns, like modern English, TLN (title with last name) and FN (first name) correspond to V and T, respectively.

Between a dyad of equals in power with distant social relations, or less solidarity, the members of the dyad mutually exchange V or TLN as is in the upper left quadrant of the diagram. Between a dyad of equals in power with intimacy, the mutual exchange of T or FN is made by the dyad as is in the lower left quadrant. Where power difference is involved in a dyad, the nonreciprocal pattern in which the superior gives T or FN and receives V or TLN occurs as is in the dotted-line circle.

Historically, as Brown and Gilman mention, the "power" dimension used to be expressed primarily in addressing behaviors. However, by the mid-twentieth century, "solidarity" began to outweigh "power" as the dominant governing semantics in selecting address terms in most European languages, particularly in modern American English.

As to this tendency, Brown and Gilman (1960:260) note, "it is the

present practice to reinterpret power-laden attributes so as to turn them into symmetrical solidarity attributes." The net result is that asymmetrical addressing tends to be resolved toward the reciprocality of either T/FN or V/TLN, depending on the degree of intimacy. As a matter of course, a dyad of the power-different relation should make a shift from asymmetrical addressing to the mutual T addressing once the intimacy in the dyad advances.

It is here in the switch of addressing pattern where we can see the residual power semantic yet in force. The switch is initiated by the member with more power--the elder, the higher in status, the more distinguished individual in the relationship.

Distinctiveness of Japanese Address Usage

It could be said that the addressing patterns of the Japanese students under review seem to follow, in principle, the outline of Brown and Gilman's very basic patterns of address term usage: Mutual V/TLN; Mutual T/FN; and Non-reciprocal exchange of V/TLN and T/FN. However, there is one exception. While in modern, industrialized language communities, such as most European countries, the power semantic is receding and the solidarity semantic is replacing the power semantic in importance. In the community of Japanese students here, the solidarity semantic does not overshadow the power semantic in their address system. Rather, the power semantic acts as the most fundamental property. This has been seen in age-different Freshman-Junior dyads where the students keep addressing each other asymmetrically even after they have increased intimacy with each other.

The critical role age plays in the Japanese language has been frequently pointed out. Smith(1983:77) mentions that it is impossible to speak Japanese while disregarding the level of speech and that, before uttering, the speaker is compelled to make a choice of a suitable level based on social distance--the distance which is "perceived in terms of a

complex combination of age, sex, social position, nature of previous interaction, and context."

Among those social factors, age plays a more influential and decisive role in the course of selecting the proper address forms in Japanese, for there is a keen awareness of the sense of senior-junior relationships in Japanese society(Nakane 1970:26-27). Age difference, even if it is only a year or so, especially within an in-group, is significant.

Thus, asymmetrical use of address, due to the difference of a power variable, age, is hardly neutralized by a solidarity variable of intimacy.

Address Usage in American English

With regard to this power-related factor, age, it might be noteworthy from an EFL standpoint to refer to how this factor plays its part in the address system in American English, considering the present desire of more and more Japanese students to fly across the Pacific to America and participate in face-to-face communication in English.

In American English, two power-related factors govern the non-reciprocal pattern--they are age and occupational status (Brown and Ford 1964). For Americans, nevertheless, the difference in power between the two people of a dyad is not so vital as, for example, it is in Japanese, especially when the difference is in age. If all other things are equal, it is not uncommon for age-different dyads to exchange address terms on a reciprocal basis, which is almost always mutual FN, unless the disparity is as great as approximately the size of a generation (Ervin-Trip 1969; 228).

Fasold (1990: 8) has pointed out that if some relatively permanent basis for solidarity is acknowledged, mutual FN is commonly exchanged as soon as the introductions are over. In a case where imbalance, not only in age but also in occupational status, exists in a dyad, reciprocality is still possible, only it may take longer. On the other hand, Wardhaugh (1986 :260) added the proviso that the use of FN in North America does not necessarily indicate friendship, and that FNs are required among people

who work closely together regardless of whether or not they are on friendly terms. An apposite illustration to this mutual FN practice in America is found in *The Good Times* (1989 : 187-198), where the author describes the process prior to the stage where he, then a cub foreign correspondent of twenty-seven, began calling his much older, awesome, fearful boss by his first name.

Difference in Opening

How did the students come to use these certain forms of address? This is another interesting aspect of address behavior.

Both F1 and F2, and the other Freshmen as well, did not actually decide on her own which address term to use for their peer fellows; instead, each student asked her peer interlocutor, "How does everyone usually call you?" or "How are you called (by everyone)?" "Everyone" here means someone who has a very close, intimate relationship with "you," such as family members, relatives, close friends, and the like. This question, therefore, can be put in another way such as, "How do your closely related people call you?" This could be interpreted as, "I'd like to have the T-usage relationship with you." This question was limited between Freshmen only; it was never asked by Freshmen to their elders. This point is in agreement with a rule of address shift: it is the superior who has the right to decide when the inferior starts to call him by T.

To choose address terms for Sophomores and Juniors; a Freshman has two options. One is to use *senpai* alone as has been seen in (vii). The other is to pick up her proper name, and then to add *senpai* to it. For example, if a Junior calls another Junior by FN + *chan*, a Freshman picks up FN only and replace *chan* with *senpai*. This was a common strategy employed by the Freshmen.

As for J1 and J2, when they addressed a Freshman on close terms they simply adopted the address terms used by her peers. Occasionally, J1 and J2 asked the question "How does everyone call you?" to Sophomores

and Freshmen with whom they have become familiar. In other words, each member of a dyad did not introduce herself at the initial stage of association, i.e., she did not voluntarily tell her name at the initial meeting.

This is quite contrary from a very common kind of opening between strangers, for instance, in North America. Wardhaugh's (1985:125) model conversation shown below exemplifies a system of self-naming process commonly adopted at a designated event such as a meeting or a party, where the first party initiates conversation by giving a name, and then, the other party follows suit and responds by giving a name.

> A: Hello, I'm Sally Jones.
> B: Hi, I'm John. John Smith.

Implication to EFL

From an EFL point of view, there are some noteworthy implications in what has been reviewed above. The extent of FN-usage in Japanese being narrower than that in American English, a Japanese student may give a rather formal, sometimes unfriendly, impression to an American who regard the relationship as reciprocal FN. On the contrary, a Japanese student may take the FN-relation with Americans much more privately than the conventional level in American English. Another student, knowing the gap between the two languages in terms of address patterns, may oversimplify the casualness in the American address system and apply the FN-usage to everyone in any situation, missing the sense of formality functioning differently from her native language.

Also, it is not difficult to imagine a Japanese student left alone in a party of strangers, waiting to be talked to. Even if she determines to take the initiative, she may only bewilder a person by asking his/her name before introducing herself.

For the EFL learner, linguistic knowledge of her target language is surely requisite. Nonetheless, the same emphasis should be placed on the

knowledge of language use, that is, the knowledge of how to use a language appropriately in a given social situation.

Once the EFL learner has equipped herself with both the rules of grammar usage and the rules of social use of her target language, she can use the language comfortably as a means of communication in a true sense. Knowing appropriate use of address terms in English, the learner will be able to have a good start at English speaking social gatherings. As the proverb goes, "A good beginning makes a good ending."

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