

Politeness Strategies in Giving Compliment by Native Japanese Speakers in Podcast

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Abstract

Compliments serve as a positive politeness strategy to establish and maintain relationships by recognizing and appreciating the positive face of the interlocutor. This research analyzes positive politeness strategies in Japanese compliment speech acts. The approach employed is a qualitative method that involves analyzing information from four data sources, specifically podcasts uploaded across various YouTube channels. The study revealed that 8 out of 15 positive politeness strategies appeared in 33 dialogues, with: 1) Exaggerate being the most frequently used strategy at 19 occurrences; 2) Notice & attend to the hearer appeared 9 times; 3) Intensify interest for the hearer was noted 8 times; 4) Give or ask for reasons happened 3 times; 5) Include both speaker and hearer in the activity occurred twice; 6) Assert common ground, tell a joke, and give a gift to the hearer were each utilized once.

Keywords: Politeness; Compliment; Japanese

1. Introduction

Language serves as a tool for humans to convey information and comprehend one another. In this activity, the speaker is using the existing language structure; however, communication also depends on the context and social factors (Leech, 2016). Austin (1975) indicated that speech acts encompass not only the expressions made but also the actions that arise as a result of language users. Austin divides speech acts into three types: (1) locutionary acts, (2) illocutionary acts, and (3) perlocutionary acts. In contrast, Searle (1976) classifies speech acts into five categories: (1) representatives, (2) directives, (3) expressive, (4) commissives, and (5) declarative. Searle classifies the act of compliment as a type of expressive speech act function.

Compliments are positive utterances directed at the interlocutor that are frequently employed to enhance or reinforce social connections. Holmes (1988) indicated that compliments create a favorable impression that can be conveyed either directly or indirectly. Compliments reflect a favorable judgment of the person being addressed by demonstrating interest or attentiveness. This favorable evaluation may manifest as a positive judgment of an individual's appearance, skills, possession, and character (Bayu et al., 2021).

Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that politeness involves striving to uphold an

individual's face, or self-perception in social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize face into two aspects: (1) positive face, which reflects desire to get a good self-image that can be realized by getting approval or being appreciated by others; (2) negative face, which embodies the wish to remain unregulated or to have the freedom to act. Matsuoka categorizes three functions of compliments through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory: (1) Compliments serve as positive affective speech acts by recognizing an individual's positive face requirements and enhancing group solidarity; (2) Compliments work to mitigate face threats through positive politeness; (3) Compliments can also pose a face threat to an individual to satisfy the speaker's own face needs.

Politeness frequently utilized as a subject in pragmatic studies. A study on politeness strategies in social media for Japanese and Indonesian revealed that positive politeness is the most commonly used in both languages, followed by negative politeness in Japanese and off-record strategies in Indonesian (Sarila et al., 2023). Kusumarinai et al. (2021), the use of negative politeness in Japanese is shown by using *Keigo* or formal language, while the use of positive politeness is shown by giving attention, offers and sympathy. This research aims to explore the use of positive politeness strategies found in compliment speech acts within Japanese language interactions.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach. Fiantika et al. (2022) state that Qualitative research seeks to comprehend a phenomenon that is thoroughly depicted through verbal descriptions.

The data utilized consists of compliments extracted from Japanese-language podcast videos available on the YouTube platform. The information utilized is sourced from the YouTube channels *YUYU no Nihongo Podcast* and *Miku Real Japanese* with the following title:

1. 「コラボ」はじめましての SAYAKA さんにインタビューしました (uploaded on April 20, 2023)
2. Japanese conversation with YUSUKE san YUYU NIHONGO (No1), (uploaded on March 14, 2021)
3. Japanese conversation with YUSUKE san YUYU NIHONGO [2], (uploaded on March 21, 2021)
4. Japanese conversation with Ryouma san (About his life), (uploaded on April 11, 2021).

The gathered data were subsequently organized by the theme of compliment according to Holmes' classification. The data were then subsequently analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to comprehend the strategies of politeness employed.

3. Result

In this analysis, the authors categorize the data as compliments based on Holmes' theory of compliments. The information is subsequently categorized into 15 strategies of positive politeness based on Brown & Levinson's politeness theory. In this discussion, the term "speaker" will be represented as [S], while the term "hearer" will be denoted as [H].

A total of 44 instances of positive politeness strategies were identified in 33

conversations containing compliments with details shown in table (1). In several utterances, there is more than one politeness strategy also observed in providing compliments.

Table (1)

Strategy	Compliment Topics				Total
	Appearance	Skill	Character	Possession	
Notice & Attend to [H]	-	8	1	-	9
Exaggerate	-	10	9	-	19
Intensify interest to [H]	-	5	2	1	8
Use in-group identity markers	-	-	-	-	0
Seek agreement	-	-	-	-	0
Avoid disagreement	-	-	-	-	0
Assert common ground	-	1	-	-	1
Joke	-	-	1	-	1
Assert [S]’s knowledge & concern for [H]’s wants	-	-	-	-	0
Offer, promise	-	-	-	-	0
Be optimistic	-	-	-	-	0
Include both [S]&[H] in the activity	-	1	-	1	2
Give or ask for reasons	-	1	-	2	3
Assume or assert reciprocity	-	-	-	-	0
Give a gift to [H]	-	1	-	-	1
Total	0	27	13	4	44

4. Discussion

4.1. Notice & Attend to [H]

Y: え、なんかこう昔からそういうこう演技とかが得意だったんですか。

“*e, are nanka kou mukashi kara sou iu kou en’gi toka ga tokui dattan desuka*” (1)

“Oh, have you always been kind a good at performing or stuff like that?”

S: いやあ、全然そんなことないんですよ。

“*iyaa, zenzen son’na koto nai n desu kedo...*”

“no, it’s not like that actually...”

In the dialogue, (Y) talks about (S), who frequently creates educational videos using role-playing. (Y) poses a straightforward question in utterance (1) to (S) as a compliment for (S)’s talent in acting.

Utterance (1) demonstrates the use of the notice and focus on [H]’s strategy. The statement “*kou en’gi toka ga tokui dattan desuka*” is a question indicating that (Y) focuses on (S)’s performance skills. According to the *Kokugojiten* dictionary, “*tokui*” is defined as “*mottomo tenareteite jishin ga ari, jouzu de aru koto,*” which means “to possess great skill, confidence, and cleverness.” The term “*tokui*” is intended to express that (S) is someone skilled in acting. Moreover, the phrase “*e, are nanka..*” is used to soften the speech, thereby minimizing possible face threats (S).

4.2. Exaggerate

S: なんか歌いたくなくてずっとピアノしかやりたくないってピアノだけやってました。

“..*nanka utaitakunakute zutto piano shika yaritakunai tte itte piano dake yatte mashita.*”

(a)

“.. I just didn’t want to sing, I only wanted to play the piano, so that’s all I did.”

Y: うわあカッコいいなあ、カッコいいですね。

“*uwaa kakkoi naa. Kakkoi desu yo ne.*” (2)

“wow, that’s awesome, it’s really cool.”

In the dialogue, (Y) considers that (S) has been playing the piano since childhood and inquired if (S) had ever served as an accompanist for a choir. (S) who has ever been an accompanist clarified why he preferred playing music in that role instead of participating in a choir, indicated in utterance (a). (Y) Subsequently responded to (S)’s comment with praise as indicated in utterance (2).

Utterance (2) is an expression of complement by (Y) using the strategy of exaggeration. The utterance “*uwaa kakkoi naa, kakkoi desu yo ne*” expresses admiration for (S). The term “*kakkoi*” as defined in the *kokugo jiten* dictionary signifies “*mibae ga shitari, taido ya koudou ga sawayaka dattari shite kokoro hikareru, to iu kimochi de tsukau-go; subarashii*” that has the meaning “a term used to express interest based on someone’s looks, attitude or behavior; remarkable.” The term “*kakkoi*” used by (Y) indicates compliment and interest in what (S) possessed. The interjection “*uwaa*” serves as a way to express admiration, and the repeated use of “*kakkoi*” serves as an exaggeration in delivering the compliment.

4.3. Intensify Interest to [H]

Y: あの、休むその一つの理由がちょっと演技することに疲れてしまったんですよ。

“*ano, yasumu sono hitosu no riyuu ga chotto engi suru koto ni tsukarete shimattan desu yo*” (3a)

“um, one of the reasons I took a break was because I got kind a tired of acting”

S: ああ、なるほど。

“*aa, naruhodo.*”

“Ah, I see.”

Y: “*sou sou sou, chotto boku mentaru herusu teki ni anmari yokunai na to omotte ano oyasumi shiteru n desu kedo* (3b), *iya nande sayaka-san wa an'na ni iron'na kyarakutaa wo enji tsudzukeru koto ga dekirun darou. Shikamo kanari kou hindo de appuroodo shite..tte iu ka koukou no toki kara*”(3c)

“yeah, i felt like my mental health wasn't in a good condition, so i decided to take a break. But i wonder how Sayaka-san can keep playing so many different characters like that and uploading it pretty often too.. I mean, even since high school”

In the dialogue, (Y) talked about (S)'s talent for creating role-play content. In utterance (3a), (Y) clarifies that he has ceased producing role-play content, which is subsequently elaborated in utterance (3b). In utterance (3c), (Y) expressed admiration for (S)'s acting skills.

The dialogue demonstrates the strategy of intensifying of interest toward [H]. Utterance (3a) is expressed by (Y) as a way to take (S)'s attention on the subject sought by (Y) by revealing his vulnerabilities. Utterance (3b) is expressed by (Y) to spark (S)'s interest in the subject that (Y) tends to deliver. The statement “*iya nande sayaka-san wa an'na ni iron'na kyarakutaa wo enji tsudzukeru koto ga dekirun darou. Shikamo kanari kou hindo de appuroodo shite*” expressed praise for (S)'s talent in creating role-play content, presented in a question. That statement contrasts with the acting skills of (Y) and (S) states through utterances (3a) and (3b). In utterance (3c), (Y) expresses “*tte iu ka kou kou no toki kara*” as an attempt to attract (S)'s deeper attention.

4.4. Assert common ground

M: 大学の授業を日本語で受けるのも難しいのに、英語でなんか学ぶって絶対難しいですね。

“*daigaku no jugyou wo nihongo de ukeru no mo muzukashii no ni, eigo de nanka manabu tte zettai muzukashii desuyo ne.*” (4)

“it's already hard enough taking university classes in Japanese, so trying to learning it in English must be insanlely hard”

R: そうですね、大変でしたね。

“*sou desu ne, taihen deshita ne.*”

“yeah, it's really hard.”

The dialogue covers (R) who enrolls in a department college in which every course is conducted in English instead of attending regular classes. In response to this, (M) expressed a compliment for (R)'s experience as being challenging.

The assert of common ground strategy is illustrated in utterance (4). The utterance “*daigaku no jugyou wo nihongo de ukeru no mo muzukashii noni*” “expressing a common recognition that participating in university courses overall is challenging. In addition, the expression “*eigo de nanka manabu tte zettai muzukashii desu yo ne*” is spoken by (M) to highlight that (R)'s experience is more challenging, thus indirectly acknowledging (R)'s talent in the English language.

4.5. Joke

Y: いやもうこんな先生に学んだ方がいいですよ皆さん。

“*iya mou kon'na sensei ni mananda hou ga ii desu yo mina-san.* (5a)

“listen, you guys should learn from a teacher like this (S)”

S: (laughing)

Y:あのこういう先生に学ぶべきだと僕は思いますけど。

“*ano kou iu sensei ni manabu beki dato boku wa omoimasu kedo.*” (5b)

“honestly, I think teachers like this are the ones we should be learning from..” (while laughing)

In the conversation, (S) tells about his motivation in creating learning content because of his own desire to continue to teach more things about Japanese to his students and followers.

In utterance (5a), expressing a joke (Y), indirectly gives praise to the exaggerated (S)’s personality. The term “*mina*” expressed by (Y) signifies “*soko ni iru hito subete. Zen’in, mata, aru mono zenbu. Ooku no hitobito ni yobikakeru-go to shite mo mochiirareru*” which means “everyone who is there, everyone, a term to address many people,” which refers to the podcast audience not to invite the public, perhaps to imitate the situation of public announcement. In utterance (5b), (Y) tells re-exaggeration with laughing, indicating the humorous purpose of the compliment.

4.6. Include both [S] & [H] in the activity

M: いろいろりょうまさんの人生の考え方とか、どうしてスペイン語を勉強し始めたとか、音楽の話とか、いろんな話が聞けてホントに今ね録画してることホントに忘れてました私普通に話してました。

“*iroiro ryouma-san no jinsei no kangae kata toka, doushite supein go wo benkyou shi hajimeta toka, ongaku no hanashi toka, iron’na hanashi ga kikete honto ni ima ne* (6a), *rokuga shiteru koto honto ni wasuretemashita watashi futsuu ni hanashitemashita.*” (6b)

“getting to hear all sorts of things like your view on life, why you started to learning Spanish, your music carrier, honestly, i totally forgot we were recording right now. I was just talking like normal.”

R: 大丈夫かな、早かったかな話すのスピード。

“*daijoubu kana, hayakatta kana, hanasu no supiiido.*”

“it’s okay? Was I speaking too fast?”

In the conversation, (M) expressed his impression after talking with (R). (M) briefly reviewed what they both talked about during the podcast recording which is shown in utterance (6a).

In utterance (6a), the term “*kikete*” appears, which is a *te*-form verb derived from the potential form of the word “*kiku*,” which means to listen. The inclusion of this term indicates that (M) also took part in hearing the various stories presented by (R). Furthermore, this term also serves to indicate the cause-and-effect relationship between utterance (6a) and utterance (6b). In utterance (6b), due to the conversation being very natural, (M) overlooked the fact that it was being recorded. This indirectly reflects (M)’s appreciation for (R)’s skill in sharing his life story, making the dialogue seem like a natural conversation.

4.7. Give or ask for reasons.

Y: だからやっぱりこうオリジナリティがあってなんかミクのチャンネルだなんていうのがすごく感じるなあと思います。

“*dakara yappa kou orijinariti ga atte nanka miku no chaneru da na tte iu no ga sugoku kanjiru naa to omoimasu*” (7)

“because that originality that your channel make it just feels so *you*, like, ‘Yeah, this is Miku’s channel’.”

M: いやあ、嬉しいです、嬉しいです。

“*iyaa, ureshii desu, ureshii desu*”

“aww, that makes me so happy, really.”

The dialogue covers the YouTube channel along with the content created by (M). In expression (7), (Y) provides a favorable appraisal of (M)’s YouTube channel. The statement conveys an implicit compliment for the content created by (M). The utterance “*orijinariti ga atte*” indicates that (Y) believes that (M) has an incredible YouTube channel that sets it different from many other similar channels.

The expression of a compliment includes the technique of giving or asking for reasons. The strategy involves giving reasons to support the compliments. In this instance, (Y) states that the authenticity or originality found in the content created by (M) is the reason for the praise. Furthermore, the term “*dakara*” is employed to indicate the reason. By stating the reason for “originality,” (Y) is impressed that (M)’s YouTube channel presented in utterance (7) may serve as a compliment.

4.8. Give a gift to [H]

S: ただ長いビデオってやっぱりリサーチが必要だったりとかすごい仕事量だから、そのゆうすけさんとミクさんも本当にめっちゃくちゃ尊敬してて長いビデオをそれだけ続けられるのが本当にすごくなって思って. . .なのでこれからは今年はずっとユーチューブを上げたいなって思ってます

“*tada nagai bideo tte yappari risaachi ga hitsuyou dattari toka sugoi shigoto ryou dakara, sono yuusuke-san to miku-san mo hontou ni meccha kuccha sonkei shite te nagai bideo wo sore dake tsudzukerareru no ga hontou ni sugi na tte omotte te..nana de kore kara wa kotoshi wa motto Youtube wo agetai natte omottemasu.*” (8)

“It’s just that long videos were taking a lot of research and ton of work, so I honestly really, really put much respect for Yusuke-san (Y) and Miku-san. Being able to keep making those kind of video is really amazing. That’s why this year, I’m thinking that I want to upload more on Youtube”

Y: おおお。

“*Ooo*”

“ooh”

In this utterance, (S) expresses appreciation for (Y). In utterance (8), (S) as a content creator who tends to make reel content, explains his reasons for admiring (Y) who typically creates long content. (S) asserts that producing lengthy content demands significant effort and planning, which leads him to consider it as a challenging task.

In utterance (8), (S) gives praise to Yuusuke (Y) and Miku who frequently create long content. During stating compliments, (S) employs different politeness strategies. (S)

employs the strategy of giving a gift to [H]. In this utterance “gift” refers to giving respect and understanding to (Y). The term “*sonkei*” signifies “(tanin no) *jinkaku ya okonai no subarashii sa ni kanjiiri*” which means “being impressed by the behaviors and personality of others.” The expression “*mechakucha sonkei shite te*” demonstrates respect from (S) to (Y). Moreover, the utterance “*nagai bideo tte yappari risaachi ga hitsuyou dattari toka sugoi shigoto ryou dakara*” indicates the reasons to praise and reflects an awareness of the effort that (Y) faced in creating long content. In the expression “*hontou ni meccha kuccha sonkei shite te.*”, an exaggerated strategy is employed. The term “*hontou*” signifies “*hanahadashii koto, mata kokoro kara sou omottari kanjitari shiteiru kimochi wo arawasu*” which has the meaning “extremely, showing something that is truly believed or felt”, whereas “*meccha kuccha*” is used as an expression to express something at an extreme or remarkable degree. Merging the two terms that have the function of increasing the degree, demonstrates an exaggerated effort in giving praise.

5. Conclusion

From the gathered data, there are eight positive politeness strategies identified in the speech act of giving compliments, with the following details: 1) exaggeration strategy found in nineteen utterances; 2) notice & attend to [H] strategy appearing in nine utterances; 3) intensify interest to [H] found eight times; 4) give or ask for reason noted three times; 5) including both [S] & [H] mentioned twice; 6) strategies of asserting common ground, joking, and giving a gift to [H] found in one utterance each. Moreover, it was observed that employing multiple strategies in one scope of conversation context was common in giving compliments.

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