

# **Speaking politely 'but' powerfully: A Linguistic Dilemma for Japanese Professional Women in Charge**

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Japanese culture is often referred to as a proto-typical negative-face culture with a greater emphasis on indirectness and politeness in interpersonal communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Women in particular as the vanguard of such normative behaviors are expected to acquire or at least parade prescribed social personalities (Bourdieu, 1977): being modest in behavior and opinions, and being polite and gentle to others (Mashimo, 1969). Such personalities are to be reflected in their language use, resulting in polite, indirect ways of speaking, which have become the norms for the speech of Japanese women in general (e.g., Nakano, 1980; Kanemaru, 1988; Nakamura, 1989). While it is evident that women's gender roles and identities have recently undergone drastic change and have greatly affected their ways of speaking in the society today (Takasaki, 1988; Takano, 2000), the linguistic ideology that women should talk indirectly and politely still survives rigidly at a folklinguistic level (Kindaichi, 1969; Tanaka, 1969; Suzuki, 1981; reported in Mogami, 1986). Women who deviate from the normative ways of speaking are thus the easy target of social stigma and disrepute.

While Japanese women have considerable power in domestic life, they traditionally have not held positions of authority and leadership in the public sphere (Rosenberger, 1994). In reality, however, as increasing numbers of women enter into the marketplace, the prescribed ideologies have seriously contradicted the communicative requirements arising from their new roles in male-dominated occupational activities: against the prescriptive norms of feminine speech, professional women must speak with assertion and forcefulness to establish authority in the workplace. Jugaku (1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990) has consistently focused on this sociolinguistic dilemma, arguing that the prevalent cultural ideology that women should talk in feminine ways ('*onna rashiku*') inhibits women's active participation in the marketplace. Stereotyped images of women's powerlessness in communication (derived from prescribed politeness and indirectness) and stigmatization against those who adopt non-feminine ways of speaking are both likely to segregate Japanese women from the public sphere. This type of conflict is likely to become most serious for professional women in positions of authority and leadership, which have traditionally belonged to men (Mogami, 1986; Takenobu, 1994).

How professional Japanese women in charge linguistically manage the contradictions between the social expectations of 'domestic' gender roles and the realities of their lives as working women in the public domain is a complex and understudied question (Smith, 1992). Based primarily on either native speakers' introspective and observational data or a

relatively small-scale sample, several sociolinguistic studies have reported that Japanese women in gender-atypical occupational statuses in fact suffer from such dilemmas. Rather conflicting views, however, have thus far emerged from the outcome of prior research concerning the true nature of their linguistic solutions: de-feminization as a power-seeking innovation (Reynolds, 1990), and emphatic uses of polite speech as a marker of their new identity and dignity as women in the gender-atypical, public domain (Abe, 1992; Ide & Inoue, 1992; Ide, 1993) or as female-specific power strategies (Smith, 1992; Sunaoshi, 1995).

The objective of the present study is to account for the linguistic nature of their dilemma solutions in more empirical and comprehensive ways by compensating for two types of shortcomings common to prior investigation. First, in order to attain a higher degree of generalizability, I will analyze a larger corpus from naturally occurring interactions at various types of workplaces. There is a wealth of evidence that native speakers' introspective reports are "notoriously unreliable" (Sankoff, 1988: 145) and more likely to reflect what they think they 'should' say rather than what they say in reality (Labov, 1972 c; Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, Huber, 1983; Schmidt, 1993). Moreover, native intuitions or introspective data are likely to reduce a rich repertoire of actual language practices in context (Wolfson, 1989: 37-44). Second, while past studies are all concerned with the sentence-level analysis of language (i.e., feminine or masculine characteristics of surface morphosyntactic structures), I will shed extensive light on the 'emic' aspects of language use — the functional relationships between the linguistic code and specific socio-cultural contexts of use. This emphasis on the suprasentential accounts of language in its immediate context of use allows us to reveal female executives' strategic manipulations of language more efficiently; moreover, it also contributes to a better understanding of linguistic powerfulness, which the present study aims to show is not necessarily derived from the surface power code per se, but also from the speaker-addressee relationships uniquely defined by language in context (Duranti, 1992).

## THE STUDY

### *The variable examined: Directives*

As the target of my analysis, I have particularly focused on uses of directives,<sup>1</sup> one of the most face-threatening speech acts, with an assumption that the linguistic dilemmas in such highly face-threatening situations would confront professional women in charge so momentarily that their strategic manipulations of language are most likely to rise to the surface. As the analytical framework (TABLE 1), I have utilized Blum-Kulka et al's (1989: 275-6) system of analysis, in which several discrete components are also taken into account in addition to the "Head Act" of directives, the exclusive domain of analysis in past

1 Directives are the attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something (Searle, 1976) or to refrain from actions (Jones, 1992).

studies (e.g., Smith, 1992; Sunaoshi, 1995):

TABLE 1  
The System of Analysis

I. Directive

**"John, get me a beer, please. I'm terribly thirsty."**

II. Analytical Units

- 1) **get me a beer** = the Head Act
- 2) **John** = an alerter
- 3) **please** = a downgrader
- 4) **I'm terribly thirsty** = a postposed supportive move

This chain of directive discourse, "John, get me a beer, please. I'm terribly thirsty," includes four distinct components for analysis. First, the head act of the directive is 'get me a beer'; second, 'John' as an attention-getter; third, 'please' as a downgrader, and last 'I'm terribly thirsty' as a supportive move or a grounder. I have found this expanded analytical framework very useful and productive for figuring out strategic aspects of directive speech acts — the aspects that the previous studies have failed to capture using the more limited, 'head-act-only' framework.

*Subjects and data for analysis*

I conducted fieldwork for this study in three cities in Japan for three months of the summer of 1994, with two specific goals in mind. First, I tape-recorded a fairly large amount of data from many different individuals engaged in natural workplace interactions in order to attain a high degree of generalizability. Second, through extensive observations and field notes, I obtained a great deal of information on situational factors and utilized it for analysis. The researcher's direct observations of interactions and detailed knowledge of a variety of contextual constraints on the interactions were considered to be indispensable for legitimate analyses of highly context-bound strategies in the uses of directives.

As the primary corpus, I analyzed a total of 630 naturally occurring directives issued by 9 professional women in charge at their workplaces (Group I). For comparative purposes, I also took advantage of a total of 122 directives issued by 4 male company executives on TV documentaries as a control group (Group II).<sup>2</sup> TABLE 2 indicates the types of the subjects' occupations and the number of directive tokens per subject.

<sup>2</sup> These are three two-hour-long television programs broadcast in Japan. Two of them portray success stories of rich people, and the remaining program is focused on keen competition in the restaurant business in Japan. All the programs include a number of scenes of actual everyday workplace interactions between male executives and their subordinates.



TABLE 2  
Subjects and the Number of Tokens

**Group I : 9 professional women in charge in three cities in Japan**

	<i>No. of Directives</i>
1 division chief at a big corporation:	37
1 division chief at a research institute:	24
1 medical doctor at a university hospital:	85
1 clothing store owner:	42
1 top executive at a foundation:	102
1 top executive at a small printing company:	41
1 head nurse at a big hospital:	38
1 section manager at a language school:	102
1 general manager at a municipal hall:	115
	Total 630

**Group II: 4 male company executives on TV documentaries**

	<i>No. of Directives</i>
1 company president in restaurant-chain business	43
1 company president in recycling business	23
1 regional manager in fast-food business	22
1 division chief at a major corporation	34
	Total 122

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Classification of directives and cross-gender comparisons*

First, I quantitatively classified morphosyntactic structures of the head act of directives, benefiting from the analytical framework used in such pioneering work as Smith (1992: 64–8). I found, however, that the Smith system accommodates only 44% of the directive tokens I collected (333/752 forms; 44% [278/630] for female data; 45% [55/122] for male data). While Smith based her system on dictionary definitions focusing primarily on canonical types of directives with transparent structures of directive morphology, I faced a wide variety of non-canonical shapes which encode the illocutionary force by referential meanings of utterances rather than explicitly by morphological structures. I argue that this gap is due to at least two methodological factors; first, the majority of Smith's data is derived from scripted television shows, in which a series of commands must be framed clearly for the audience. Second, Smith's analytical approach, focusing on sentence-level directive structures alone, might have missed a great deal of strategic aspects that the speaker resorts to in negotiating for varying degrees of indirectness for face-saving, depending on the immediate context.

In any event, the most general finding, which accords with Smith (1992), is that Japanese professional women in charge (PWC hereafter) are likely to speak more 'politely'

and 'indirectly' in issuing directives than their male counterparts, as far as the head act of directives is concerned.<sup>3</sup> Regarding politeness, look at Table 3 for gender-linked differences in the frequency and distribution of various surface forms of the head act. The forms (i.e., surface morphosyntactic forms of the head act), 1) through 31), are in order of decreasing forcefulness and directness: the bigger the number assigned to the form is, the less direct and forceful the directive speech act is supposed to be.<sup>4</sup>

Note that Table 3 includes only a total of 434 forms (68.9%) out of 630 directives issued by PWC and a total of 85 forms (69.7%) out of 122 directives by male executives. The remaining tokens have been categorized as "non-conventionally indirect acts" (Blum-Kulka, 1989: 18), which are typically interpreted as requests only by contextual information rather than by specific linguistic cues (e.g., directive morphology, performative verbs, expressions of the speaker's desire, formulaic expressions, etc.). Significance of this particular category as PWC's strategic uses of directives is discussed later in this section.

PWC tend to prefer 'polite' variants as compared with male counterparts as represented in their uses of the most frequent forms such as Variant 7 (Verb root + *te kudasai*) [F: 23.0%; M: 10.7%] and Variant 1 (Verb root + *ro*) [M: 15.6%; F: 0%], in PWC's categorical use of polite Variant 12 (*onagai shimasu/itashimasu*) [F: 5.2%; M: 0%], and in PWC's more frequent uses of interrogative directives (Variants 25 through 31). As a whole, it is evident that women's directive forms tend to cluster at the more indirect/polite end of the continuum as compared with men's forms; while a majority of men's directives are mainly identified between Variants 1 (V-root + *ro*) and 7 (V-root + *te kudasai*), women's repertoire consists of a wider variety of forms that are scattered below Variant 7 as well. As far as the head act is concerned, Japanese professional women in charge who often use those types of directives may give their subordinates an impression of being incompetent over the control of power and authority.

Women's inclination for indirectness can be identified even more distinctly in the speaker's choice of "request perspective" (Blum-Kulka, 1989). How the speaker linguistically encodes the recipient (i.e., the one who performs the requested act) and the agent (i.e., the one who issues directives) of directive speech acts in forming directives is closely linked to his or her manipulations of various face-saving strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 190–206). There are four universalistic choices of perspectives in directive speech acts, which exhibit varying degrees of coerciveness (Blum-Kulka, 1989):

3 However, the present results do not support Smith's (1992) and Sunaoshi's (1995) unanimous claim that PWC uniquely resort to two specific strategies called the motherese strategy and the passive power strategy (see Smith [1992: 77–8] for their definitions and actual forms), at least in terms of frequency. In the present data, the motherese-strategy equivalents were used 8.7% of the time by PWC (55/630) and 9.8% by male executives (12/122); the passive-power-strategy equivalents were used only 3.3% by PWC (21/630) and 3.3% also by male executives (4/122). No gender-linked preference for these strategies was observed (see Takano [1997: 291–302] for further discussion).

4 The degree of illocutionary force of the form marked (\*) in Table 3 is judged to be roughly equal to that of the form that immediately follows.

TABLE 3  
Cross-Gender Distribution of Directives<sup>5</sup>

(DIRECTNESS HIERARCHY)	WOMEN (630 Forms)	MEN (122 Forms)	(DIRECTIVE HIERARCHY)	WOMEN (630 Forms)	MEN (122 Forms)
1) Verb root + ro	0	19 (15.6)	28) Verb root + te kureru?/ kureru kana?/ kuremasu ka?/ kudasaru?/ kudasaimasu ka?	15 (2.4)	3 (2.5)
2) Verb plain + koto/yooni	9 (1.4)	2 (1.6)	29) Verb root + te moraeru?/ moraemasu?/ moraemasen?/ itadakemasu ka?	28 (4.4)	3 (2.5)
3) Verb stem + na(sai)/tyaina(sai)	2 (0.3)	0	30) (Verb root + te) ii desu ka?/ yoroshii desu ka?	6 (1.0)	0
4) Verb root + te (ne/yo)	52 (8.3)	9 (7.4)	31) Onegai dekimasu ka?	2 (0.3)	0
5) Verb root + te goran	1 (0.2)	3 (2.5)			
6) Verb root + te kure	0	4 (3.3)			
7) (*) Verb root + te kudasai	145 (23.0)	13 (10.7)			
8) ~o kudasai	2 (0.3)	0			
9) tanomu yo/zo	1 (0.2)	1 (0.8)			
10) Verb root + te morau/te itadaku	2 (0.3)	1 (0.8)			
11) Vstem + Causative Aux Vroot + te morau/te itadaku	7 (1.1)	0			
12) onegai shimasu/ itashimasu	33 (5.2)	0			
13) Verb root + te hoshii	9 (1.4)	0			
14) onegai shitai/ shitai n desu	4 (0.6)	1 (0.8)			
15) Verb root + te moraitai/ te itadakitai	10 (1.6)	1 (0.8)			
16) doozo	8 (1.3)	0			
17) N wa ikenai	1 (0.2)	0			
18) Verb stem + nai to dame/ikan	4 (0.6)	8 (6.6)			
19) N wa hitsuyoo da. (to omou)	4 (0.6)	0			
20) N wa/Verb root -te ii/yoroshii/ kamawanai/kekko desu	31 (4.9)	8 (6.6)			
21) N no/Verb plain + hoo ga ii (kamoshirenai/ to omou)	12 (1.9)	0			
22) Verb stem + ba ii/kekko da	9 (1.4)	1 (0.8)			
23) Verb Stem + tai (to omou)	8 (1.3)	0			
24) Verb stem (y)oo (yo)/mashoo (ka)	27 (4.3)	7 (5.7)			
25) Verb stem + tara (doo?/ii n ja nai?)	8 (1.3)	1 (0.8)			
26) Verb stem + nai (ka)?	1 (0.2)	0			
27) Verb stem + ba ii no ni/ii n ja nai?	1 (0.2)	0			

Gloss Form 1) through 4): 'Do X.'  
Form 5): 'Try doing X (and see).'

Form 6): '-te kure,' is the gerund form of the main verb plus the imperative form of a verb of giving 'kureru' ('give') \*

Form 7): 'Please do X.'

Form 8): 'Please give (hand) me X.'

Form 9): 'I ask you (for X, to do X).'

Form 10): 'I receive your favor of doing X.'  
'Morau' is a verb of receiving, and 'itadaku' is its humble form.

Form 11): 'I receive your favor of letting me do X.'

Verb stem + Causative voice auxiliary root + -te itadaku (e.g. Ato de yomasete itadakimasu. 'I will receive your favor of letting me a read it later.')

Form 12): 'I ask you a favor.'  
'Itashimasu' is the humble form of 'shimasu.'

Form 13): 'I want you to do X.'

Form 14): 'I would like to ask you a favor.'  
'-tai' is a desiderative auxiliary.

Form 15): Strategy 10 plus a desiderative '-tai' ('want').  
'I would like to receive your favor of doing X.'

Form 16): 'Please (do X).'

Form 17): 'N is no good/not a good idea/useless.'

Form 18): 'It wouldn't work well unless you do X, (so you must do it).'

Form 19): '(I think) N is necessary.'

Form 20): 'N is alright.'

Form 21): '(I think) N would (might) be better.'

Form 22): 'You should do X.' or 'It would be good if you do X.'

Form 23): '(I think) I want to do X.'

Form 24): 'Let's do X.' or 'Shall we do X?'

Form 25): 'How about doing X?'

Form 26): 'Won't you do X?'

Form 27): 'Wouldn't it be good if you did X?'

Form 28): 'Will you do me the favor of doing X?'

Form 29): 'Could I have you do X?'

Form 30): 'May I do X? 'Yoroshii' is a polite form of 'ii'

Form 31): 'Could I ask you this favor?'

<sup>5</sup> The numbers in parenthesis are percentages.

- (a) Hearer/Recipient-oriented  
e.g., *Chotto matte.*  
'Wait a second.'
- (b) Speaker/Agent-oriented  
e.g., *Ja mata juuni-gatsu ni onegai shimasu.*  
'Then, (I) ask (you to come and see me) again in December.'
- (c) Inclusive ('we' directives)  
e.g., *Kore sotchi okoo ne.*  
'Let's put these over there, shall we?'
- (d) Impersonal  
e.g., *Renshuu o takusan suru koto ga hitsuyoo da to omoimasu ne.*  
'I think it is necessary to (have students) practice a lot.'

In Perspective (a), an emphasis is given to the addressee as the person who is to perform the desired action. Either overt or covert encoding of the recipient of the directive speech act makes a strategy coercive (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In Perspective (b), an emphasis is on the speaker himself/herself asking for accomplishment of the requested act, which implies that the addressee has control over the speaker with freedom of non-compliance; thus, this particular way of framing directives is more face-saving and deferential (negative politeness). Perspective (c) is a typical "point-of-view operation" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 118). The "inclusive" morphology mitigates the inherent coerciveness of the act by framing the directive as collaborative work and asserting the common ground (positive politeness). Finally, in Perspective (d) an "impersonal verb" (e.g., it is necessary that...) (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 191) masks both the inherent issuer and recipient of the act and disguises the driving force of the illocutionary intent as something extrinsic from the speaker's own will (negative politeness).

Table 4 presents the results of a quantitative analysis of gender-linked differentiation in request perspectives of the directives classified in Table 3.<sup>6</sup>

6 There are two types of verbs, which perform deictic functions in Japanese (Tsuji-mura, 1996: 334–344). The first type is the so-called 'giving' verbs (e.g., *kureru*, *kudasaru*, *yaru*, *ageru*, *sashiageru*), by which the speaker chooses to focus on the giver's side in a giving/receiving event. This makes the directive act sound more forceful and direct. The other type is called 'receiving' verbs (e.g., *morau*, *itadaku*), by which the speaker chooses to stand on the receiver's (the speaker's) side. The act of receiving is more focused, thus the act sounds more indirect and mitigated. The four perspectives become immediately problematic when we deal with the complexities of the relative stance of the agent and the recipient in the uses of giving and receiving verbs in Japanese. Consequently, the directives which involve either of these types of verbs have been excluded from the quantitative analysis. See Takano (1997: 280–88) for the details of the classifying procedures.

TABLE 4

Request Perspectives x Gender

	Hearer-Oriented	Speaker-Oriented	Inclusive	Impersonal
Women	45.9% (107/233)	30.9% (72/233)	12.5% (29/233)	10.7% (25/233)
Men	83.3% (50/60)	3.3% (2/60)	11.7% (7/60)	1.7% (1/60)
	53.6% (157/293)	25.3% (74/293)	12.3% (36/293)	8.9% (26/293)

d.f. = 3; Chi-square = 46.75;  $p < .001$ 

Women's preference for indirectness in issuing directives is evident from the high frequencies of the speaker-oriented perspective (30.9%) and the impersonal perspective (10.7%) as compared with men (3.3%, 1.7%, respectively). Men's preference for direct strategies, on the other hand, is indicated by their frequent use of hearer-oriented strategies (M: 83.3% vs. F: 45.9%). These differences between the gender groups are found statistically highly significant at  $p < .001$ . Note that there is no distinct differentiation in the use of the inclusive perspective (F: 12.5%; M: 11.7%), which counters a general claim that women tend to emphasize 'sharedness' or 'connection' with others by exploiting linguistic devices such as an inclusive pronoun, 'we' (Lakoff, 1975).

*Strategic elaboration of the head act for powerfulness*

The findings from morphosyntactic analyses of the head act discussed so far simply provide another robust confirmation to the general claim that Japanese women speak more politely and indirectly than men, and an empirical fact that PWC form no exception. Critical questions, however, remain unanswered: How can PWC manage to exercise their authority and leadership by speaking politely and indirectly? What is the source of their powerfulness in language use? How can they manage to direct their subordinates efficiently without explicitly masculine power markers in their speech? I have found that it is crucial to take into account the supra-sentential domains beyond the head act of individual directives in order to find the key to these questions: PWC tend to innovate what is called "contextualization cues" (Gumperz, 1982) and exploit them strategically in practicing face-threatening acts.

One kind of contextualization cues is concerned with the supportive move.<sup>7</sup> The use of supportive moves is highly differentiated between the sexes, and both quantitative and qualitative differences can be identified.

7 Other types of contextualization cues created by PWC are discussed in detail in Takano (in preparation).

**FIGURE 1**  
Use of Supportive Moves by Gender

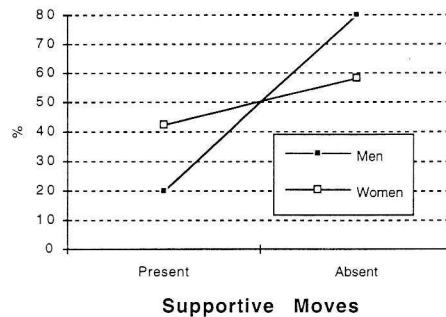
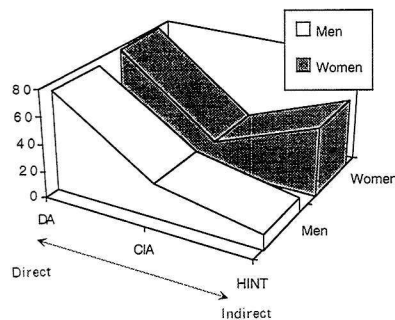


Figure 1 shows that while only 20% of directives issued by male executives carry supportive moves, 42% of those issued by female executives carry them. This quantitative difference is also found statistically significant at  $p < .001$  (d.f. = 1; Chi-square = 11.4).

Our immediate guess to account for this gender-linked differentiation may concern mitigation. That is, PWC who want to speak indirectly are more likely to mitigate the degree of imposition on their subordinates by providing reasons or apologetic statements, or expressing reluctance or hesitation to issue particular directives through the means of supportive moves. However, this interpretation turns out to be a mistaken assumption as shown in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**  
Correlation between Directness and Supportive Moves



Notes (see Table 3) :

DA = Direct Acts:

Variants 1 (Verb root + *ro*) through Variants 23 (Verb Stem + *tai* [*to omou*])

CIA = Conventionally Indirect Acts:

Variants 24 (Verb Stem + [*y*] *oo* [*yo*]/*mashoo* [*ka*]) through Variants 31 (*Onegai dekimasu ka?*)

HINT = Non-conventionally Indirect Acts:

See PWC 9's discourse sample presented below.

Direct acts (DA) (Variants 1 through 23 in Table 3) are usually thought of as more coercive than conventionally indirect acts (CIA) (Variants 24 through 31 in Table 3). If supportive moves were a typical strategy for PWC to mitigate, we would expect that the more coercive particular directives are, the more frequently PWC exploit supportive moves for mitigation. Contrary to our expectation, the uses of supportive moves with those categories of directness do not involve much gender-linked differentiation as far as relatively coercive directives are concerned. It is only in the use of directive hints that the huge gap in the use of supportive moves can be identified (F: 51%; M: 11%) [d.f. = 1; Chi-square = 25.8;  $p < .001$ ]. Women use supportive moves along with this least coercive type of directives far more extensively than men do.

Let us look at some examples. The segments in question are underlined, and the directive head acts are in boldface. PWC 9, a 45-year-old director at a public assembly hall, is talking to M1, a male subordinate in his 60s.

#### Supportive Moves as a Contextualization Cue: Example<sup>8</sup>

SITUATION: PWC 9, Director at a public assembly hall for women, talking to a male, 'uchi' (ingroup) subordinate in his 60s (M1)

F9: kankisen o ne∨

nitchuu wa kakete okitai to omou n desu.

'You know, the ventilation fan? I'm thinking that (we) should leave it on during the daytime.'

M1:xxx [xx]

F9: [naka ni aru] n desu.

'(The switch) is inside (the building).'

De kaeru toki ni suimasen ga,

'Then, sorry to bother, but, when you leave,

M1:*Hai wakari* [mashita.]

'Yes, I understand.'

8 Japanese transcriptions are based on Du Bois, et al's (1993) system. Each line represents a single intonation unit (Chafe, 1993). Major symbols include: [ ] (speech overlap); . (transitional continuity [in terms of intonational contours] is final); , (transitional continuity is continuing); / (rising terminal pitch); \_ (leveling terminal pitch); ^ (emphatic accent); = (lengthening); ... (N) (long pause with seconds N); ... (medium pause); .. (short pause); @ (laughter); <@ @> (laugh quality); x (indecipherable syllable); & (intonation unit continued); (...) (researcher's comment ...). ' ' contains equivalent Japanese translations, in which { } indicates the illocutionary intention the speaker is hinting at.

F9: [*ano suicchi o.*]

'um, {turn off} the switch.'

In this example, the first two supportive moves are preparatory moves: 'you know, the ventilation fan? I'm thinking that we should leave it on during the daytime,' and 'the switch is inside that room.' These supportive moves raise the topic in question to the hearer's awareness and set up a factual environment leading to the upcoming act. Concluding the framing, the third supportive move functions as an apologetic move, 'Sorry to bother, but, when you leave the office.' It succeeds in signaling to the addressee the upcoming sequence as a directive. The addressee, her male subordinate, immediately responds to the speaker's illocutionary intention positively, and he states, 'Yes, I understand,' overlapping with her hint directive, 'that switch,' in the end.

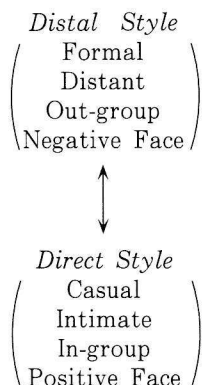
The directive-giver who adopts hint strategies in general runs the risk of relying on the addressee's free will for compliance. Japanese PWC who tend to have preference for indirectness seem to take advantage of supportive moves to compensate for this risk. In this example, the supportive moves function as contextualization cues to 'preset' the frame or the scene for the upcoming statements to be recognized as a directive. By the time PWC 9 issues the directive itself, her intent becomes quite obvious to the addressee. Her illocutionary act is empowered through the manipulation of these contextualization cues.

The combination of highly indirect strategies and situationally relevant supportive moves also allows the speaker to create natural trajectories of events. The natural event sequence allows the subordinates to feel they comply with the requested act by themselves. By transforming the act of directing into a more egalitarian act of cooperation toward a common goal, PWC are likely to succeed in receiving willing, voluntary support and compliance from their subordinates without damaging their face.

#### *Polite speech as a linguistic weapon*

Another intriguing example of contextualization cues innovated by PWC in particular concerns their preference for polite speech. I have observed that, contrary to naive perceptions of polite speech as powerless markers, PWC seem to utilize polite speech in conjunction with style-shifting as a useful linguistic weapon.



Style-Shifting as a Contextualization Cue

There are two styles differentiated by the forms of the predicate in Japanese: direct-informal style and distal-formal style. Especially in highly confrontational phases of interactions, PWC seem to manipulate upward shifts from direct to distal; namely, casual to formal, intimate to distant, in-group to out-group, and positive-face to negative-face orientation. I define this particular move as metaphorical style-shifting (Gumperz, 1982) in order to obtain power and authority from the immediate context of use. Here are some illustrations.

Upward Shift: Example

SITUATION: PWC 5 at a small meeting involving 6 participants around a table.

- |    |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | PWC 5 : <i>Kichi tto shita kekka ga &amp; deru</i><br><i>yoo ni,</i>                             | F 5 : I want you to manage (the upcoming event of student exchange) so that satisfactory outcomes can be obtained. |
| 2  | <i>ano = motte itte hoshii.</i>                                                                  | Then, um, Mr. Tanaka, (you)                                                                                        |
| 3  | <i>De ano = Tanaka-san ga,</i>                                                                   | take good care of the whole process.                                                                               |
| 4  | <i>kichi tto zentai o matomete.</i>                                                              | um, as much as possible                                                                                            |
| 5  | <i>Ano = dekiru dake,</i>                                                                        | get yourself involved                                                                                              |
| 6  | <i>naka ni haitte</i><br><br><i>chokusetsu ni yatteiku yooni</i><br><i>shite.</i>                | (in the actual activities)<br>and get things under your direct control.                                            |
| 7  | <i>De tantoosha wa e = &amp;</i><br><i>Yamada-san to yuu &amp;</i><br><i>katachi no naka de.</i> | And while Ms.<br>Yamada is the person in charge (at the site).                                                     |
| 8  | <i>... Minna ni,</i>                                                                             | To everyone,                                                                                                       |
| 9  | <i>yahari saishuuteki ni wa,</i>                                                                 | (I) ultimately want you to                                                                                         |
| 10 | <i>puraza no minna ni &amp;</i><br><i><u>hookoku shite hoshii n</u> &amp;</i>                    | report to everyone at<br>the Plaza after all.                                                                      |

	<u>desu yone.</u>	
11	...Sore wa ohutari & kara,	The two of you
12	<u>.. ano .. hookoku &amp; shite kudasai.</u>	um, please report (how the event goes to everyone)
13	Owatta ato.	after it's over.
14	Saigo no matome nanode,	Because this will be the
15	kibishiku,	synthesis (of the project), strictly,
16	ano = .. ee yatte iku & koto ni shimasu.	I will be doing (demanding) from now on

Throughout the fieldwork, I observed that PWC 5 talked with the other participants in an unmarked, direct-casual style almost all the time. Also in Line 2, in Line 4, and in Line 6, she issued the directives in the same style. Up to Line 6, the speaker had simply been making sure what each participant would take charge of at the upcoming convention they had prepared. So what she was asking them to do is not highly face-threatening because it was what they had expected to be asked.

In Line 10, however, she issues a highly imposing directive to have her subordinates do something brand-new, *hookoku shite hoshii n desu yone* ('I want you to report to everyone at the Plaza after all.'). There were more than 100 staff members at this workplace, so preparing and giving a formal presentation was quite a heavy burden for the subordinates to carry. The atmosphere of the meeting suddenly changed. Up to this point, the speaker had consistently spoken in casual-informal style, acting as a co-participant of the discussion group. By doing so, she had managed to maintain relatively close working relationships with her subordinates, seeking their collaboration and willing support. Hierarchical relationships were being masked.

At the point she issued the highly imposing directive, however, she rather abruptly made an upward shift. She switched her unmarked, casual style to a marked, polite-formal style. In Line 12, she again repeats the same directive in the same, polite-formal style, picking two particular subordinates present.

I interpret her upward shift as one clear example of metaphorical style shifting for the speaker to negotiate her marked identity. In facing the confrontational phases of the interaction where her authority might be challenged, the speaker takes up the polite, formal style directive to indexicalize or re-define her higher rank identity different from the lower rank subordinates. The speaker, who had been identifying herself as part of the subordinate group by using the unmarked direct, intimate style, now exploits the marked polite-formal style to segregate herself from the in-group membership. By doing so, the speaker brings her institutional role and professional authority back to the surface, and draws a demarcation line of status and power from her subordinates.

Switching to polite-formal style also increases the degree of formality of the whole context, thus further increases the seriousness of that particular act. Shifting to the polite-

formal style, the speaker succeeds in finishing up her address as if her request is institutionally sanctioned, thus non-negotiable.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates clear cases where language is both context-defined and context-defining. The speakers' choices of particular directive strategies are context-defined, in that Japanese PWC who are subject to norms of indirectness and politeness vary their language use appropriately to the face-threatening context of use. At the same time, their strategic uses of directives along with the invented contextualization cues are context-defining. Strategic uses of supportive moves help define a context where it becomes natural for subordinates to comply voluntarily with requested acts. Especially in highly confrontational phases of interactions, metaphorical style-shifts also help define and maintain a context where asymmetrical statuses of the two parties are evoked to the surface and maintained for the requested acts to succeed.

We have also gained a better understanding of relationships between linguistic politeness and communicative power. This study rejects a common, a priori assumption that indirect, polite ways of speaking lead to the speaker's powerlessness in communication. By expanding the traditional sentence-level analysis, this study demonstrates that communicative power does not always have to be driven from explicit surface manifestations of the powerful code per se, but can also be derived from multiple dimensions of linguistic faculty interacting with the immediate context of use.

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[ Abstract ]

Speaking politely 'but' powerfully: A Linguistic  
Dilemma for Japanese Professional Women in Charge

Shoji TAKANO

Japanese culture is often referred to as a proto-typical negative-face culture with a greater emphasis on indirectness and politeness in interpersonal communication. Women in particular are the vanguard of such normative behaviors, speaking 'indirectly' and 'politely.' As an increasing number of women are engaged in marketplace activities and are even playing a traditionally male role of leadership and authority in their workplaces, the prescribed ways of speaking have confronted professional women who need to manage discourse in a socioeconomically appropriate way — speaking assertively and powerfully. Given such a sociolinguistic climate, Japanese women in gender-atypical occupational statuses suffer from a "linguistic dilemma" in choosing between the traditional prescribed feminine ways of speaking and the communicative need to talk powerfully from their authoritative roles in the workplace. While conflicting views on the linguistic solution for this dilemma have been proposed based on either native introspective and observational data or a relatively small-scale sample, no large-scale empirical study of natural workplace interactions has been conducted for a further understanding of the issue.

This paper investigates 9 female executives' strategic uses of directive speech acts in a large number of actual workplace interactions and compares them with those of 4 male executives, who act as a control group. Moving beyond the traditional sentence-level analysis of the use of feminine (or masculine) morphosyntactic variants, the present study analyzes the speakers' strategies of "contextualization" which lie in the larger domain of discourse. Observations of the workplace interactions also allow us to interpret the "situated meanings" of the acts involving a variety of factors in the immediate contexts of language use.