

# INTERPLAY OF LANGUAGE AND GENDER IN JAPANESE AND HINDI

Ashok V. Ojha

Department of Japanese

Bhasha Bhavana

VISVA-BHARATI, SANTINIKETAN

## ABSTRACT

Politeness and use of honorifics are essential syntactical constituents of languages. Two languages from Asia, namely Japanese and Hindi have been considered for this purpose in this article. Women speakers of both the languages opt for more polite forms and such a norm is ingrained in the cultural milieu of both the societies. However, politeness in Japanese has a tighter definition and it is used in a uniform manner. The formulation for politeness in Hindi has more exceptions due to consecutive influences of other Indian and foreign languages.

## KEY-WORDS

Politeness, Honorifics, Japanese, Hindi

## INTRODUCTION

Linguistic politeness, which includes use of honorifics in a language, constitutes a well-defined mechanism for expressing respect and ordaining a formal position in conversation. The expression of politeness is often based on age, familial relationships, level of personal acquaintance, social hierarchy, status, familiarity and the like among the members of a society. In recent years, scholarly studies of gendered utterances in Japanese language are becoming a focussed area. The native speakers of Japanese tend to adopt temporal changes in gender-based use of politeness through societal inculcation from their childhood. Being native speaker of a language creates an advantage as no special effort is required to learn the cultural context for usage of politeness and honorifics. In contrast, those using Japanese as second language find it complicated to synchronise the forms of politeness with the cultural context. In other words, appropriateness of polite utterances call for a deep knowledge of the target language culture with regard to human relationships. This article explores such cultural context through examples from Japanese and Hindi.

## THE JAPANESE CONTEXT

In most Asian societies, gender is strong determinant for degree of politeness in linguistic utterances and accordingly, in Japanese, *Joseigo* (masculine ways of using language) and *danseigo* (feminine ways of speaking) are the two technical terms mainly used by scholars but generally *onnarasi hanashikata* and *otokorashii kotobazukai* are used by non-profession people. *Onnarashii hanashikata*, mainly deals with four things, namely, *teinei* (polite), *yawarakai* (gentle), *hikame* (reserved) and *johin* (refined). To explore the “societal norms for women speech”, Okamoto (2007) examined consecutive periods of Japanese history and also examined it in terms of two kinds of relationship.

(a) what is the relation between polite and gentle mode of speaking and femininity?

(b) What is the relation between polite and gentle mode of speaking and linguistic forms?

It is now known that in the Heian period (794-1185), Japanese males used Chinese characters *kango* for women, whereas females used Japanese characters *wago* while interacting with men-folk which was considered to be gentler. Famous stories written in this period showed that women spoke in low voice which was the norm and that was desirable. In other words, it was believed that behaving in a reserved manner and showing gentleness were the symbols of womanhood. Hence, the use of low voice in speaking and use of indirect speech could be noticed.

This kind of speaking norms continued till the medieval period (1185-1600). Moreover, in this period, a new variety of speech was introduced and that was *nyobo kotoba* which stood for the imperial court language and was to be used by women. For politeness prefix, *o* was used (*o-imo* ‘potatoes’), and the suffix *-moji* was employed for nouns (*ka-moji* is for *kami* that is, ‘hair’). Similarly, indirect expressions formed through abbreviations, such as *take* for *takenoko* that is, ‘bamboo shoot’ and word associations (*kabe* or ‘white wall’ for *tofu*) were used without any expression of emotion and in low voice. This kind of speech had become a cultural ideal for women because it was considered to be of highly gentle type. In drama of this period, like *kyougen*, the dialogues of women used to be interspersed with honorific expressions. Further, even the verbal exchange between husband and wife used to be filled with politeness.

In the Edo period (1603-1868), Confucian ethical norms of *dansonjohi* (male supremacy) and *Shogunate* (government) policy of languages became major factors for the behavioural and linguistic traits of women-folk. Even many books were published during this period for women. Endo (2006) and Sugimoto (1997) have opined that a new norm for women speech, *yamato kotoba* came up in Japanese society and it had most ingredients of *nyoubou kotoba* of preceding era. The books like *Fujin-yashinaigusa* (1968) and *Onna-chohoki* (1692) were published and used during this period to define linguistic politeness and behavioural gentleness for the women.

In Meiji period (1868-1912) the race for modern Japan had influenced the social life of every Japanese people starting from western life style to women education. The Japanese language used to be used by educated Tokyo people was considered as standard Japanese language and not only became the medium of education but also used for media.

A new idea appeared in this period 'ryousai kenbo' (good wife and wise mother). The reason behind of this idea was that not only men but also women have the same right to contribute for nations development. But due to Japan becoming more militaristic and reactionary, 'ryousai kenbo' shifted to feudalistic ideology where men were powerful.

In Meiji period one thing was pointed out that sentence final particles 'teyo' and 'dawa' were used by female students of reputed family but it was criticized as vulgar. Moreover it was used more and more by female student characters in novels and it influenced the speech of young women as well as older women. However later they were included in standard Japanese and they were no longer regarded as vulgar. But in the text books of Meiji era these particles were not instructed to use by women and instead of that polite and gentle language was insisted.

According to Vranic (2013), in modern Japan the standard women language has been seen in various kind of manga, T.V. serials, movies etc. Before proceeding its necessary to know that women uses more polite language than men. "Watakushi is the most polite and formal version of all first-person pronouns and it is used by both genders. Watashi is a formal first-person pronoun for men, but a plain pronoun for women. The male equivalent to the plain watashi/atashi for women is boku. Associated with high masculinity and often with domination is the male first-person pronoun ore and there is no such equivalent for women"

"Following is an example of the difference between the expected male language and the expected female language. It is illustrated by an excerpt from a book written by a male author on how to write letters. (1) is how a woman should write a letter and (2) is how a man should write a letter:

- (1) (From a woman to her nephew, congratulating his marriage engagement)

Haruki-san, go-konyaku omedetoo-gozaimasu. Saikin no anata no yoosu kara sore to naku kanjite wa i- mashita ga, konna ni hayaku konyaku to wa bikkuri-suru yara odoroku yara, nan to itte o-iwai no kotoba o okur-imashoo ka. . . .

'Haruki, congratulations on your engagement! I had a feeling [that you might] from the way you have been behaving recently, but I'm very surprised that you got engaged so fast. What kind of congratulatory words shall I give you?'

- (2) (From a man to his nephew, congratulating him on his engagement)

Masaki-kun, konyaku-shita soo da ne. Omedetoo. Sore to naku kanjite wa ita kedo, konna ni hayaku to wa bikkuri-suru yara odoroku yara, nan to itte o-iwai no kotoba o okur-oo ka. . . .

'Masaki, I heard that you got engaged. Congratulations! I had a feeling [that you might], but I'm very surprised that it came so fast. What kinds of congratulatory words shall I give you?'

The excerpts show how the woman is using more honorifics and polite forms (gozaimasu, - mashita, okur-imashoo, -san) and the man is using more casual informal language (-kun, omedetoo, okur-oo)." (Vranic 2013)

"As manga is one of the main elements in Japanese popular culture, it undoubtedly has a great influence on its readers in many areas. Language use, naturally, is one of them. Again, manga is a medium where role language is firmly established. Moreover, gendered language is highly evident in manga, and, for instance, the feminine sentence-final particle wa is frequent in the speech of female characters." (Vranic 2013)

In T.V. serials it is seen that female characters use *kashira*, *wa + yo*, *no + yo*, *noun + yo* (without the copula *-da*), *-da + wa*. (Vranic 2013)

'Kashira' is usually used by female speakers in rather informal speech. 'Wa' is a sentence particle used in weak as assertive or volitional sentences by female speaker whereas 'wa+yo' and 'no+yo' are used by female speaker in nonpolite, informal speech.' (Makino & Tsutsui 1986)

For example one of the dialogue from a popular serial Hakuoki SSL: Sweet School Life. A female student name Yukimura saw her one of friend (Heinosuke) fainted and lying on stairs. She went to him hurriedly and the utterances are given below

Yukimura: 'Heinosuke! Sukosi demo nemutta houga ii yo.'

Heinosuke it's better for you to take rest.

Heinosuke: 'Demo ima nemuttara, asamade zettai okirarenai yo.'

If I sleep now, I definitely won't be able to wake up until morning.

A chapter Sex-based Differences in Spoken Japanese- From written materials about the TV drama "Beautiful Life" from the book 'Japanese Linguistics European Chapter' where the author analysed the spoken Japanese differences between male and female. According to him in the drama four second person forms used-*anata* (impolite 'you'), *anta* (familiar 'you'), *omae* (friendly but abrupt 'you'), *omae-san* (intimate 'you'). (Endo 2007)

Not only this polite language is also used in drama, movies by women. Here are some examples from two Japanese web serials 'Sumika Sumire' and 'Love in Tokyo'.

In first scene of *Sumika Sumire* an old aged lady has who had been taking care of her mother lost her and for her funeral she went to a temple where the priest is saying her that once the parents they have been looking after pass away many of my parishioners feel a bit relaxed. In reply the lady said: 'okidukai arigatou gozaimasu.' -Thank you for your concern.

Again in another scene where she was recalling her childhood days. Her friends came to call her for play but she couldn't play because she had to take care of her family flower shop and she was the only child. So in reply she said: 'hontouni gommenne, demo sasottekurete arigatou' - I am really sorry, but thanks for inviting me.

In first scene of 'Love in Tokyo' one young girl (Honoka Miki as Kotoko Aihara) was travelling in a plane and suddenly a lady waiter came and there conversations are given below.

Waiter: 'Okyakusama onomimono wa ikaga desuka.'

Madam, would you like something to drink?

Kotoko Aihara: 'Ah, hai.'

Oh, yes

Waiter: 'Kohi koucha nihoncha orengijusu to gozaimasu.'

We have coffee, tea, Japanese tea, orange juice.

Kotoko Aihara: 'Kohi purize.'

Coffee please.

Waiter: 'Kashikomarimasita. Douzo.'

Certainly mam. Please (At the time of giving coffee).

Now 'ikaga' is more polite than *dou*. 'Gozaimasu' essentially a keigo version of the common words 'arimasu' and 'imasu' (to be exist). 'Kashikomarimasita' It's used to show you agree with something that's been said. This phrase is very formal. It is often used by a store clerk, waiter/waitress or taxi driver to a customer, and is translated, "It would be my pleasure." "Certainly" or "All right."

#### THE INDIAN (HINDI) CONTEXT

The context of India, in comparison to the Japanese uniformity as discussed above, offers the distinctiveness of both cultural diversity and discernible changes in women's social position over the historical periods. Indian history provides multiple instances in diverse social domains relating to women's position such as, Rudrama Devi, who was a monarch of the Kakatiya dynasty in the Deccan Plateau with capital at Warangal of present day Telangana from circa 1263 until her death. In religio-cultural domain, Akka Mahadevi was a prominent figure of the Veerashaiva Bhakti movement of the 12th century Karnataka. Her "Vachanas" in Kannada, a form of didactic poetry, are considered her most notable contribution to Kannada Bhakti literature. While, a few centuries later, Meera in northern India, became a leading Hindu mystic poet of the Bhakti movement.

The invasion and consequent establishment of Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent brought significant cultural changes in Indian social life and the position of Indian women in society deteriorated during this period. Afterwards, during the British rule, many reformers fought for regaining enhanced role for women in the society. In spite of such geographical, social and historical diversities and cultural upheavals, the women in India have always remained conformant to the politeness norm of their society.

In Hindi, the pronoun "aap" and corresponding verbal form provide a mechanism for polite expressions. A conversation between the male and female protagonists in a Hindi movie 'Jewel thief' (1967) exemplifies this point. The heroine (Tanuja- her name was Anjali in the movie) of the movie came to her father's shop to buy a necklace. The male lead character (Dev Anand- his name was Vinay in the movie) who was working in her father's shop was showing her necklaces while complementing about her beauty. After choosing the necklace she said:

*'hiro se badke to apki jawan hai'* - Beyond the diamonds are your words.

Now in other scene a friend (Ashok Kumar-His name was Arjun) and his younger sister (Vyjayantimala-Her name was Shalini/Shalu) of her (Tanuja) father came to meet him. Where she had a conversation with her father's friend. The dialogues are:

Arjun: *'Tum nahi janti beti tumhara yeh baap aur main bachpan ke dost hain. Hum dono ne eksath likhai padhai suru ki. Kam bhi suru kia.....Shalu. Shalu se mili?.....yeh meri chhoti bahen Shalu hai paheli baar Bumbai ayi hai ise Bumbai ki sair kara dena. Karadogi na?'*

Daughter, you don't know that your father and I are childhood friends. We did our education together.. started our business at the same time..... did you meet Shalu ? She is my younger sister came to Bombay for the first time. Show her the city. Will you?

Anjali: *'Ji zaroor'*.

Yes definitely.

"If one is older and the other of higher status, both may use *tum* or *aap*" (Jain 1969). Such a realistic context of early 20<sup>th</sup> century is depicted in the short story, "Bade Ghar ki Beti" written by Munshi Premchand. The story revolves around a rural family consisting of two brothers Srikanth (elder), Lalbihari, their father (Benimadhav) and Anandi (wife of Srikanth). After a family skirmish between Lalbahadur and Anandi, all the characters become repentant and the conversation takes place as follow:

Lalbihari (to Anandi): *Main tum logon ke sath rahne योग्या nahi hun* (I am not fit to live with you people)

Anandi (to Lalbihari): *Tumhe saugandh, ab ek pag bhi aage na barhana* (In God's name, you must not take even a single step away)

Lalbihari (to Srikanth): *Iske siva aap jo dand denge, main meri saharsh swikar karunga* (I shall gladly agree to any punishment, other than this)

Srikanth (to Lalbihari): *Lallu! Ein baton ko bilkul bhul jao.* (Lallu, forget all these things)

In this conversation, Lalbihari addresses his elder brother respectfully (*aap*) but uses *tum* to address Anandi who occupies higher family position as elder brother's wife. Other than use of *tum*, Lalbihari and Anandi use respectful language for each other. This example depicts an exceptional situation in which linguistic politeness is expressed even with the use of pronoun *tum*.

"In a symmetrical non-intimate relationship the dyad shows respect to each other. Two strangers of equal status exchange *aap*. But difference in status between strangers, as determined by the occupation, appearance and the dress of the two, may determine the use of *aap* by one and *tum* by the other; if one is much older and of equal or higher status than the other, he would receive *aap* and return *tum*". (Jain 1969)

In another movie name *Baghban* the lead role played by Amitabh Bachhan and Hema Malini. In this movie they played the role of a married couple as well as parents of three grown up sons. In the opening scene, he returned from office and as he was to press the door-bell, his wife opened the door and the dialogues are:

Amitabh Bachhan: *Tum na ekdam jadugarni ho. Humare ghanti bajane ke pahale hi janleti ho ki hum hain.*

(You are a magician. Before I ring the bell, you know it's me.)

Hema Malini: *Aap ghanti bajae na bajae ap ke kadmo ki ahaat se mere dil ki ghanti pahale se baj jaati hai.*

(Whether you ring the bell or not... your footsteps ring a bell in my heart.)

"In an asymmetrical intimate relationship (father-son, husband-wife) the one of lower status gives respect to the other without receiving it or else he receives it in a lesser degree. The two use different pronouns. As she uses *aap*, she gets addressed as *tum*; if she says *tum*, she is responded as . In Hindi, the use of *ap-tum* marks the crux of conversation of the dyad. In anger or affection (differentiated by intonation) in the *ap-tum* dyad, the superior (father, husband) comes down to *tu*." (Jain 1969)

"Yet another type of divergence in *aap-tum* dyad is evident from a Hindi movie called" (Jain 1969) 'Gully boy'. The lead character has been played by Ranveer Singh (Murad) and Alia Bhatt (Safeena). Both are couple. In a scene where Safeena is giving her iPad to Murad for use in his study, their dialogues are.

Murad: *'Kal wapas kardunga'*.

I'll return it tomorrow.

Safeena: *'Ab tera hai.'*

It's yours.

Murad: *'Pagal hai kya tu?'*

Are you crazy?

Safeena: 'Kyun? Second hand gift nahi leta tu?'

Why? Don't you accept second hand gifts?

"In symmetric intimate relationships most friends (both male or both female) address *tu* to each other. Deviations from the normally used pronoun have special meanings. The pronoun *tu* shows closeness and affection in intimate moments among friends using *tum*. When spoken in anger, *tu* will be considered as insulting." (Jain 1969)

It is obvious that politeness is more tightly defined in Japanese than in Hindi. Apparently, there are two intertwined factors which may be assigned for such a difference. First, the cultural milieu of Japan is defined by uniformity but diversity is a distinctive feature of Indian society. Second, the Meiji Japan and even the preceding government codified the language for citizenry which included exclusive norms for the women. In contrast, the Indian context for Hindi was not just accommodative for consecutive external influences, no attempt for a tightly codified Hindi was ever made. The external influences include foreign as well as other Indian languages, thereby creating several divergences in the usage of standard Hindi. Yet, the Indian socio-cultural milieu is similar to that of Japan in usage of more polite linguistic formulation by women.

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