

Consequences of Shifting Styles in Japanese: L2 Style-Shifting and L1 Listeners' Attitudes

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1. Introduction

One of the most difficult aspects of the Japanese language for second language (L2) learners is believed to be honorific language or *keigo* (Carroll, 2005). Arguments even arise among the Japanese population over their own ability and inability to cope with *keigo* (Wetzel, 2004). Use of honorifics is primarily a sociolinguistic concern (Kasper, 1992), and speakers who can communicate appropriately with sociolinguistic competence are able to navigate different levels of politeness, formal styles, plain styles, and honorific forms. Traditionally, a speaker's choice among styles has been described as the distinction between formality and informality (Martin, 1964; Neustupny, 1978). However, it has been reported consistently that different styles can be used by the same speaker in a single conversation (Cook, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Makino, 1983; Maynard, 1991, 1993; Noda 1998). Therefore, in order to be fully proficient, L2 speakers of Japanese may want to learn how to shift styles appropriately in a single dialogue with the same speaker.

In this study, L2 and first language (L1) speakers' style-shifting in a conversation is analyzed using a multivariate analysis program, Goldvarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005). First, the frequency of L2 speakers' style-shifting when having a conversation with an L1 speaker is investigated. Second, the patterns of L2 speakers' style-shifting are analyzed to see if there are any tendencies. Third, L2 and L1 speakers' style-shifting are compared. Finally, the appropriateness of these speakers' style-shifting is further investigated through in-depth qualitative interview with L1 listeners concerning their judgments of the L2 speakers' speech. Mixed attitudes of four Japanese listeners suggest multifaceted aspects of style-shifting, specifically on the perception of politeness. Some listeners noticed the style-shifting and judged the speech as inappropriate, whereas others did not comment on the change of style and evaluated the same speech as appropriately polite.

The results of this study will show that the frequency and the patterns of style-shifting between L2 and L1 speakers are somewhat different. The differences suggest that the L2 speakers have not fully mastered the use of politeness and the complexity of style-shifting. The findings of this study should provide language educators and researchers with valuable information on the acquisition and management of politeness levels and style-shifting in Japanese.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Style-shifting

As mentioned above, it is believed within the Japanese language teaching community that one of the most difficult aspects of the language for L2 learners is honorific language (Carroll, 2005). Speakers who can communicate appropriately with sociolinguistic competence are able to navigate different levels of politeness, formal styles, plain styles and honorific forms. Table 1 illustrates how these styles are realized, and includes other terms used by different linguists to denote them. Learners of Japanese usually first acquire the use of formal styles, and then are introduced to plain styles, typically in their second year of instruction. Honorifics are gradually integrated generally from the third year of study. Honorific forms are typically used for verbs. However, they are also used with adjectives and nouns in a number of different ways, for example, attaching an honorific form *de irassharu* instead of the copula *desu*. Further, honorific forms can further be marked with formal (listed first in the cell) and plain styles (second listed). Use of appropriate address forms is another means to indicate politeness. What motivates these choices of styles?

Table 1 (Janes, 2000; modified)
Formal/Plain/Honorifics

| | Formal Polite <i>Desu/masu</i> style | Plain Informal <i>Da</i> style | Honorifics | |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Non-perfective</i> Verb | Deki masu | Dekiru | O dekininarimasu O dekininaru | ‘is able’ |
| Adjective | Takai desu | Takai | Takakuteirasshaimasu Takakuteirassharu | ‘is tall/ expensive’ |
| Noun | Sensei desu | Sensei (da) | Sensei deirasshaimasu Sensei deirassharu | ‘is a teacher’ |
| <i>Perfective</i> Verb | Deki mashita | Dekita | O dekininarimashita O dekininata | ‘was able’ |
| Adjective | Takakatta desu | Takakatta | Takakuteirasshaimashita Takakuteirasshatta | ‘was tall/ expensive’ |
| Noun | Sensei deshita | Sensei datta | Senseideirasshaimashita Senseideirasshatta | ‘was a teacher’ |

The choice between styles, especially formal and plain styles, has traditionally been described as the distinction between formality and informality respectively (Martin, 1964; Neustupny, 1978). From his own observations, Martin (1964) finds four factors operating to influence a speaker’s choice of style to determine formality of the situation; age difference, sex difference, social position, and outgroupness. Neustupny (1987) also treats formal and plain as styles that the speaker varies according to one’s interlocutor. However, it has been reported that both styles can be used by the same speaker in a single conversation (Makino, 1983), and the reasons for a shift between the two styles have been investigated (Maynard, 1991, 1993; Cook, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Noda, 1998).¹ Maynard (1993) claims that shifting between formal and plain forms is motivated by the speaker’s sensitivity toward ‘thou’ (the listener). She proposes that in a ‘high awareness situation of thou’, the plain style is more likely to be chosen. For example, the formal ending can appear in the plain style discourse “when the speaker communicates main information directly addressed to the listener” (Maynard, 1993, p. 179). On the other hand, in a ‘low awareness situation’, the formal style is more likely to be chosen. Therefore, “when the speaker presents information semantically subordinate in nature” (ibid.), that is, backgrounded information, the plain style is likely to be chosen, for instance.

Similarly, Cook (1996b) sees formal and plain forms as indicators of distance and proximity. She assumes the difference between encoded and situational meanings and proposes that the encoded meaning is the one that is always present, and situational meaning is derived from the encoded meaning in a given context. For example, the encoded meaning of the formal form is distance. However, in a non-conventional situational meaning, the use of formal forms can be seen as an index of social role or negative affect. On the other hand, the encoded meaning of plain form is lack of distancing between the speaker and addressee. In a non-conventional situational meaning, this can index immediate and spontaneous reaction, spontaneous assertion of the speaker’s thought, or higher social status. If the choice of styles by speakers is not simply a matter of formality, what do L2 speakers base their judgment on when they switch styles?

2.2. Attitudes toward L2 politeness

Since universal principles of cooperation and politeness have been claimed (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), intercultural pragmatic use of politeness has attracted much attention. Marriott (1995) focused on exploring the extent to which Australian secondary students who participate in

¹ Beebe & Giles’ (1984) speech-accommodation theory regarding shifts in people’s speech styles may be mentioned here. However, speech convergence and divergence alone cannot explain style-shifting and the non-reciprocal nature of politeness in unequal power encounters in Japanese.

exchange programs in Japan acquire norms of politeness. In a number of papers on study abroad (Marriott, 1995; Marriott & Enomoto, 1995), the authors reported that after spending some time abroad in Japan, learners increased their use of the plain style and “their discourse characteristically carried a mixture of both plain and polite styles which did not accord with the Japanese norm” (Marriott, 1995, p. 217). Related to the problem of lack of acquisition of addressee honorifics, Marriott claims that it is important to understand how the learners’ behavior is evaluated by the L1 speakers with whom they interact. In some cases, the inability to employ addressee honorifics seemed to be one aspect which commonly attracted a very strong evaluation of inadequacy and hence ranked highly in terms of seriousness (Neustupny, 1987). In a study on L2 learners’ comprehension of appropriate speech styles, Cook (2001)² also reports that the instructors negatively evaluated an L2 speech based on the speaker’s inappropriate use of pragmatic features including plain forms. There needs to be more of these studies to understand the attitudes and perception of L1 users toward L2 learners. The findings of attitudinal research on pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence, such as the use of politeness in Japanese, should provide educators and researchers with valuable information on what is regarded as socially acceptable communication, and how such competence can be acquired. Moreover, language attitudes of L1 interlocutors may influence L2 learners’ acquisition of politeness and style-shifting.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Quantitative Analysis of Style-Shifting*

This study examines L2 speakers’ style-shifting compared to L1 speaker’s style-shifting, and its appropriateness. Therefore the research questions are;

1. How often do L2 speakers shift style when speaking in Japanese?
2. What motivates L2 speakers’ style-shifting?
3. Is L2 speakers’ style-shifting similar to L1 speaker’s style-shifting?
4. How is L2 speakers’ style-shifting perceived by L1 listeners?

Two conversations between two different L2 speakers and a teacher and one conversation between an L1 student and a teacher were recorded for comparison. Each conversation was approximately half an hour long, and the participants talked about various topics ranging from languages and experiences abroad to family. For each conversations, the whole interaction was used for coding style-shifting.

The two L2 participants, Nathan³ and Candy have rather similar profiles, having gone on the same exchange program to Tokyo, Japan the previous year of this study. They both learned the language by taking Japanese at the university where this study was conducted before going to Japan. Nathan was advised by an advanced learner of Japanese that going to restaurants and talking with people in a relaxed atmosphere will help him improve his fluency, and he goes out with his friends as recorded in the example conversation below. In such environments, he may have been exposed more to the plain forms of the language. As a matter of fact, he admits that he is not good at speaking politely in Japanese. Candy developed her speaking skills by socializing in sports activities at her dormitory, and participating in sport games. In Japan, such a college environment can be clearly marked by seniority, and she may have been exposed to formal forms used by other junior members of that society. When asked whether she can distinguish the use of plain and formal forms, she answered ‘yes’. The L1 participant, Yoshi was living in the US for 4 months on an exchange program from Tokyo, Japan. The L1 teacher participant, Ms. Clark is a lecturer at the university, and she knew all the students at the time when the conversations took place. She knew Nathan from his active participation in the Japanese community. Ms. Clark also knew Candy as she was in her Japanese class two years prior to the study. The L1 participant, Yoshi was in Japanese classes as a teaching assistant and tutored students.

For the data analysis, a multivariate analysis program, Goldvarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005) was employed. This program is appropriate for conducting statistical analysis on sociolinguistic variation in natural speech. Variable rule analysis is a “type of multivariate analysis

² In Cook’s (2001) study, L2 students of Japanese did not notice the L2 speaker’s impolite speech when listening to a self-introduction of a job applicant. It would be an interesting question to pose whether the participants in this study can comprehend appropriate speech styles. However, such inquiry was out of the scope of this small scale project.

³ All names are pseudonyms.

which uses the logit additive model in which many independent factors can be treated simultaneously” (Tagliamonte, 2006, p. 266). Variables and factors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Variables and factors

| Dependent variable: Style | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|--------|
| Formal | Plain | Honorific | Misuse |
| Factors (Independent variables) | | | |
| - Sentence type: statement, question | | | |
| - Clause type: main, subordinate | | | |
| - Lexical type: noun, verb, adjective, postposition | | | |
| - Preceding form type | | | |
| own utterance in plain form | | | |
| own utterance in formal form | | | |
| own utterance in honorific form | | | |
| teacher’s utterance in plain form | | | |
| teacher’s utterance in formal form | | | |
| teacher’s utterance in honorific form | | | |

Students’ utterances were coded as shown in example (1) in square brackets.

- (1) Nathan: Boku wa 30pun ijo...
 ‘For me, more than 30 minutes...’
 Ms. Clark: *Kakarimasu* yo ne? [formal]
 ‘It takes, doesn’t it?’
 Nathan: *Kakarimasu*. [formal, statement, main, verb, teacher’s utterance in formal]
 ‘It takes.’
 Demo *kamawanai*. [plain, statement, main, verb, own utterance in formal]
 ‘But I don’t mind.’
 Ms. Clark: Ma nomiya toka itte...
 ‘So, you went to bars and such and...’
 Nathan: So hai.
 ‘That’s right, yes.’

Incomplete sentences were not marked for style, since styles can only be marked on sentence endings and endings of subordinate clauses. Back-channeling responses such as ‘*So desu ne*. (That’s right.)’ and ‘*Hai*. (Yes.)’ were not marked for style, since they are rather formulaic and frequent. Repetitions, such as Nathan’s repetition of ‘*kakarimasu*’ after Ms. Clark, were coded for style. Lastly, sentences where predicate and a copula of nominal predicate were omitted were coded plain form. As in example (2), ‘*Watashi wa eigo de (kakimashita--predicate omitted)*’ was interpreted as a plain form of the sentence ‘*Watashi wa eigo de desu*’. Also, the adjectival noun ‘*daijobu (da---copula of nominal predicate omitted)*’ was considered as a plain form of ‘*daijobu desu*’.

- (2) Ms. Clark: Nihongo de *kakimashita* ka? [formal]
 ‘Did you write in Japanese?’
 Candy: *Watashi wa eigo de*.
 [plain, statement, main, postposition, teacher’s utterance in formal]
 ‘I did in English.’
 KKU no policy wa nanka ryugakusei wa eigo de itsumo *daijobu*.
 [plain, statement, main, noun, own utterance in plain]
 ‘KKU’s policy was um exchange students were okay in English.’

Variable rule analyses are reported in table format in the findings section which illustrates the components necessary for optimal interpretation. ‘Factor weights’ are “values assigned by the variable rule program indicating the probability of rule application” (Tagliamonte, 2006, p. 264). When the factor weight is between .5 and 1.0, it is interpreted as favoring the application value – in this case, the

use of formal styles. The percent value shown as ‘%’, is the proportion of the application value, or the use of formal styles occurring with each type of sentence, clause, lexical item, or preceding form. ‘N’ indicates the number of tokens per cell.

With this analysis, it is expected that some patterns of style-shifting will be found for the speakers. It can be anticipated that L2 speakers will be more governed by the ease of structural formation rather than context, as might be the case for L1 speakers. However, context was not examined in this project since the researcher was interested in finding out the patterns of L2 speaker’s style-shifting related to linguistic forms. L1 speakers can easily choose conjugated forms appropriately according to the message they wish to convey, unlike L2 speakers. For example, in order to change the style of a noun past form from formal to plain, a speaker simply needs to switch ‘noun+*deshita*’ to ‘noun+*datta*’. However, to change the style of a verb past form, a speaker must conjugate the verb form as in ‘*wakarimashita* (understood-formal)’ to ‘*wakatta* (understood-plain)’ (See Table 1 for complete chart of styles). How context and situation influence their use of styles (Cook, 1996b; Maynard, 1993) is left for further research.⁴

3.2. *Qualitative Analysis of L1 Listeners’ Attitudes toward Style-Shifting*

For L2 speech evaluation, segments of two conversations, one between Nathan and Ms. Clark and the other between Candy and Ms. Clark were employed.⁵ The segments were approximately 5-10 minutes each. Specific segments where the speakers talked about similar topics were chosen to decrease the effect of content on the evaluators’ perceptions. The two conversations are about the students’ stay in Japan and learning Japanese. Four judges from Japan were recruited to listen to these segments and qualitative interviews were conducted to elicit their perceptions of each segments with style-shifting extracted from the conversations. Two judges were interviewed together and each evaluation lasted for approximately an hour. While they listened to the recordings, they were asked to signal and stop the recordings if they heard anything they did not understand or if there was anything awkward. After the judges listened to the segmented recordings, they were asked specific questions about what they heard.

Out of the four judges, two male judges were studying English at the University Extension Center on an agricultural internship program from Japan. One joined this government sponsored program right out of college, whereas the other came after working in a company and at his family farm. Before coming to the Northern Californian university town where this research was conducted, they had already been in Southern California for approximately one and a half years where they were trained in agriculture. The other two female students both came from a university in Hokkaido (Northern Japan) on a five-week exchange program to learn English at the University Extension Center. The researcher met them soon after their arrival in the US, and they were selected with the hope that their attitudes would be closer to those of people in Japan. Three judges were in their 20s, as were the student speakers they judged, and one male judge was in his early 30s. Profiles of two different groups of people (the two male judges and the two female judges) will be used to explain any idiosyncratic responses without making any generalization.

4. Findings

4.1. *Quantitative Analysis of Style-Shifting*

Regarding the first research question, “How often do L2 speakers shift styles when speaking in Japanese?”, there was a difference in the frequency of the two participants’ style-shifting, as shown in Table 3.⁶ Nathan shifts style frequently choosing formal and plain forms approximately 50% of the time respectively, as shown in the % column (use of formal styles, 51%).

⁴ A few instances of style-shifting possibly induced by situation can be observed in the L2 participants’ speech. For example, when recalling events which happened in Japan, Candy exclaims ‘*Tanoshikatta*. [plain]’ in a formal style discourse as if expressing “internal thought self-reflectingly” (Maynard, 1993, p. 179). I do believe some of the L2 participants’ style-shifting in this study can be accounted for in this manner. However, the instances were too few to be analyzed statistically.

⁵ Conversation between Yoshi and Ms. Clark was not used for evaluation.

⁶ Refer to methodology section 3.1 ‘Quantitative Analysis of Style-Shifting’ for interpretation of the table.

Table 3

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of factors significant to the probability of formal styles;
 factors not significant in square brackets

| <u>L2 speakers use of formal styles</u> | | | |
|---|---------------|----|----------|
| Corrected Mean | | | 0.648 |
| Log likelihood | | | -162.146 |
| Total N | | | 274 |
| | Factor weight | % | N |
| Sentence type | | | |
| Statement | .52 | 66 | 251 |
| Question | .34 | 35 | 23 |
| Clause type | | | |
| Main | [.55] | 63 | 172 |
| Subordinate | [.42] | 64 | 102 |
| Lexical type | | | |
| Verb | .60 | 74 | 149 |
| Noun | .39 | 48 | 75 |
| Adjective | .37 | 54 | 50 |
| Preceding form type | | | |
| Teacher/Own formal | .55 | 70 | 174 |
| Teacher/Own plain | .41 | 52 | 100 |
| Speakers | | | |
| Candy | .60 | 74 | 143 |
| Nathan | .40 | 51 | 131 |

Nathan and Ms. Clark's conversation went on typically as in Example (3), shifting styles occasionally. Here, they are talking about their lives in Japan, and Nathan mainly uses plain forms as in the turn indicated by the arrow.

- (3) Nathan: Boku wa 30pun ijo...
 'For me, more than 30 minutes...'
- Ms. Clark: *Kakarimasu yo ne?* [formal]
 'It takes, doesn't it?'
- Nathan: *Kakarimasu.* [formal]
 'It takes.'
Demo kamawanai. [plain]
 'But I don't mind.'
- Ms. Clark: Ma nomiya toka itte...
 'So, you went to bars and such and...'
- Nathan: So hai.
 'That's right, yes.'
- Ms. Clark: ...tomodachi to *iku* no? [plain]
 '...did you used to go with friends?'
- Nathan: Daigaku no tomodachi wa...KKU no baai wa kekko gakusei wa 3tsu...de
 1nenkan ryugakusei to xxx wa nihonjin nanka *hairinikui.* [plain]
 'College friends...in case of KKU there are three groups...exchange
 students...it is difficult for Japanese to get in.'
Kaigai ni sundete kaettekita ee gakusei kekko hairi yasui. [plain]
 'For students who lived abroad and came back, it is easy to get in.'
 KKU wa sono baai ni...
 'In that case, KKU...'
- Ms. Clark: So desu ne.
 'That's right.'
- Nathan: ...3tsu wa wakarete shimaimashita. [formal]
 'Those three groups were divided.'

Even though Nathan did not use any honorific forms, Ms. Clark actually used this form in plain style once in example (4) indicated by the arrow. Even if Ms. Clark is a teacher talking to a student, she used honorifics in plain style in this manner to ask personal questions or questions related to family. However, honorifics were removed from the analysis as ‘KnockOut’ (Tagliamonte, 2006) since they were not used by either Nathan or Candy. This simply means that there was a 0 percent value in the analysis, and a multivariate analysis cannot be run because it means that the data is not variable.

- (4)⁷ Nathan: Tokyu Hands, Costco mitai na...
 ‘Tokyu Hands, like Costco...’
 →Ms. Clark: Yoku shitteru wa yo.
 ‘You know well indeed.’
 Itsu *kaettekoreta* no? [honorific-plain]
 ‘When did you come back?’
 Nathan: Kotoshi no 7gatsu ni kaette...
 ‘I came back this July and...’

Candy used formal style (74%) over plain style (26%) significantly more than Nathan (significance=0.002). Consequently, her misuse of formal styles (7.6%) is three times greater than Nathan’s (2.2%). As in example (5) indicated by the arrow, even though some grammatical structures require plain form, Candy misuses formal form in this situation.

- (5) Ms. Clark: Nihongo de *kakimashita* ka? [formal]
 ‘Did you write in Japanese?’
 Candy: Watashi wa *eigo de*. [plain]
 ‘I did in English.’
 KKU no policy wa nanka ryugakusei wa eigo de itsumo *daijobu*. [plain]
 ‘KKU’s policy was um exchange students were okay in English.’
 Tabun nihongo de *dekimashi...mashita* [-→misuse] *kamoshirenai desu*
 [formal] ga so iu toki wa chotto jikan ga *nakatta* [plain] kara eigo de
shimashita. [formal]
 ‘Probably I could write in Japanese but such times I did not have time a
 little so I did it in English.’

In this example of grammatical error, she uses ‘*dekimashita* (could)’ in formal style preceding ‘*kamo shirenai* (may/might)’, which should take plain form ‘*dekita* (could)’, yielding ‘*dekita kamo shirenai* (could probably).’

In addition, Candy makes every effort to use formal style, even rephrasing herself after use of plain form as indicated by the arrow in example (6).

- (6) Candy: So desu ne saisho no wa watashi wa nihongo o zenzen wakarimasen *deshita*
 [formal] kara kazoku to eigo o hanashiteru tomodachi...
 ‘Yes the first time I did not understand Japanese at all so family spoke
 English with friends...’
 Watashi wa soto de nanka okoru koto o zenzen wakarimasen *deshita*
 [formal] kara semai sekai *da* [plain→]...*deshita* [formal].
 ‘I um did not understand what was happening out there at all so it was a
 small world.’
 De kono 1nen wa motto *wakarimashita* [formal] shi nnn xxx jibun no um
 nan daro jibun ga nani ka *shimashita* [misuse] baai wa hoka no hito no
 reaction toka um motto waku waku yo ni *narimashita* [formal].
 ‘And this year I understood more and um my um what is it when I did
 something other people’s reaction and such um more I became to
 understand understand.’

⁷ This excerpt was not played to the judges.

This utterance is typical of Candy where she maintains the formal style through her turn with a few misuses of formal forms.

To answer the second research question, “What motivates L2 speakers’ style-shifting?”, Nathan and Candy’s data were examined together. First of all, formal style was used more with verbs than adjectives and nouns. (Prepositional phrases were excluded from the analysis given the small N.) This may be explained by the fact that some verbs must change forms in order to switch styles, whereas for some adjectives and nouns, the formal morpheme ‘*desu*’ may simply be added or dropped (See Table 1). Secondly, Nathan tended to favor formal style more on statements than questions. Nathan’s short questions or confirmations such as ‘*Narau koto?* (To learn?)’ and ‘*Tocho?* (City Hall?)’ might have contributed to this result. As a matter of fact, approximately half of Nathan’s questions in plain forms functioned as such clarifications. Lastly, Nathan and Candy tended to favor formal styles after Ms. Clark’s or their own utterance in formal style compared to an utterance in plain form. In other words, they tended to follow utterances in formal style with formal style, and plain form with plain form. This conclusion was drawn by reducing ‘Teacher formal’ with ‘Own formal’, and ‘Teacher plain’ with ‘Own plain’ to a binary factor group of formal versus plain, since each of them were not significantly different. There is linguistic justification for collapsing them (Young & Bayley, 1996), as it is likely that formal style induces formal style rather than plain style, and vice versa.

Results of the analysis of Yoshi’s speech with Ms. Clark were a little surprising, as can be seen in Table 4. Yoshi’s choice of style was strongly related to sentence type and other structural elements, even with the small number of tokens.

Table 4

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of factors significant to the probability of formal styles

L1 speaker’s use of formal styles

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Corrected Mean | 0.857 |
| Log likelihood | -36.673 |
| Total N | 107 |

| | Factor weight | % | N |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|----|----|
| Lexical and Clause type | | | |
| Verbs in main clauses | .85 | 97 | 36 |
| Nouns in main and subordinate clauses | .48 | 85 | 52 |
| Verbs in subordinate clauses | .04 | 21 | 19 |

First, the factor group ‘sentence type’ had to be excluded from the analysis since Yoshi used formal style 100% on questions (10 tokens), even on confirmation questions. This is not unexpected, and may be explained by Maynard’s notion of ‘*thou*’ awareness where the speaker is more aware of the other speaker when posing a question. Second, adjectives and prepositional phrases had to be removed from the second factor group since adjectives were marked with formal forms 100% of the time (10 tokens), and Yoshi did not end sentences with prepositional phrases. Third, the factor group ‘preceding form type’ was excluded since Yoshi responded in formal style 100% when Ms. Clark used honorifics to address him (5 tokens). When there is a 100 percent value in the analysis, these are also ‘KnockOuts’ and must be removed from analysis (Tagliamonte, 2006). Ms. Clark used honorifics specifically to ask Yoshi about his family, especially his parents. Example (7) is an excerpt from their conversation when Ms. Clark uses honorifics to ask about Yoshi’s father, and in response he uses formal form.

- (7) Ms. Clark: Daigaku ja gaikokugo no *ikareta* no, otosan? [honorifics-plain]
 ‘University then he went to foreign language’s, your father?’
 Yoshi: ...Tokyo gaigodaigaku de roshiago to docchi ka nayanda rashikute
 chugokugo ni shita rashii *desu* kedo... [formal]
 ‘...at Tokyo foreign language university he had a choice between Russian
 and chose Chinese but...’

In addition, since there was a serious interaction between clause type and lexical type, the factors were combined to have a single group with four factors: nouns in main clauses, verbs in main clauses,

nouns in subordinate clauses, and verbs in subordinate clauses. Further, nouns in main and subordinate clauses were combined, since there was no significant difference. Linguistic rationale for collapsing these factors (Young & Bayley, 1996) is that ‘...*n desu*’ construction explained below can frequently be used in main and subordinate clauses. With the final analysis, it is possible to say that Yoshi used more formal style in main clauses than in subordinate clauses. This is perhaps due to the fact that he used plain form consistently in the ‘...*node* (therefore)’ subordinate clause construction. It must be noted that plain form in subordinate clauses does not necessarily mark casualness as long as the final predicate of the sentence is marked with formal style. Even though it says commonly in Japanese textbooks that ‘...*node*’ can be preceded by either plain or formal style (Jordan & Noda, 1988), this L1 speaker seemed to use plain forms consistently. However, learners of Japanese may encounter both forms in the input through grammar books and classroom instructions. Clauses coded as subordinate clauses in this study includes ‘...*kara* (so/because)’, ‘...*kedo* (but)’, ‘...*tte/to* (that)’, ‘...*shi* (and)’, ‘...*ga* (but)’, ‘...*baai* (when/case)’, and ‘...*node/nde* (therefore/so)’, the last one used only by the L1 speaker. Some of these function as coordinated clauses and they can play a range of non-subordinating roles as in the English ‘because’ (Schleppegrell, 1991). Therefore, some prefer formal style whereas others commonly take plain form even when formal style is used in the main clause. A more nuanced way of categorizing these clauses and the effect of excluding all subordinate clauses from the analysis would be subject for further research.

Second, Yoshi favored formal style significantly more on nouns than verbs. A large proportion of these nouns are in the use of ‘...*n desu*’, the construction where predicates are turned into a noun phrase. This structure is commonly used when the speaker wants to explain reasons and wants the listener’s attention, where ‘*n*’ is a contraction of ‘*no*’ which is a noun. This construction was not observed as much in L2 speech, which might mean that it is not yet acquired fully by these L2 speakers. Example (8) shows this ‘...*n desu*’ construction, translated in English as ‘you see’.

- (8) Ms. Clark: Otosan choki taizai dewa ittenai *desu* ka? [formal]
 ‘Your father does not go for long stays?’
- Yoshi: ...kaette kita noga 2nen mae gurai datta *n desu*. [formal]
 ‘...it was about two years ago that we came back, you see.’
 Ano ikai uchi no ani ga chugaku ni hairu tte koto de...dakara chotto nihon
 kaette zutto chichioya ita *n desu* [formal] kedo hai sore de chodo kaette kite
 chugoku kara...
 ‘Um once my older brother was entering middle school...so returned to
 Japan a little and my father was there all that time, you see, but yes and he
 had just come back from China...’

To explore the third research question, “Is L2 speakers’ style-shifting similar to L1 speakers’?”, Nathan, Candy and Yoshi’s style-shifting patterns were compared. There are a few differences and similarities among these speakers. The most significant difference is the use of plain versus formal styles on statements and questions. Nathan favored the use of plain forms on questions whereas Yoshi only used formal styles when asking questions. Secondly, Nathan and Candy used more formal styles on verbs than nouns, whereas Yoshi used more on nouns than verbs. This contradictory result may be explained by the influence on L2 speakers of different verb and noun conjugations, and by the L1 speakers’ frequent use of formal style in ‘...*n desu*’ noun phrase structures. Thirdly, Yoshi favored formal style in main clauses more than subordinate clause whereas Nathan and Candy’s use of formal style in main clauses was not significant. This may be due to Candy’s frequent use of formal styles even on subordinate clauses. Lastly, Yoshi’s categorical use of formal style after Ms. Clark’s questions using honorifics contrasts sharply with Nathan’s non-use of formal style after such utterance. The interesting question to ask is whether Nathan was able to comprehend Ms. Clark’s use of honorifics (cf. Cook, 2001), and if he was, whether he would interpret that instance as an occasion to use formal styles in his response. Regarding the frequency of style use, Nathan and Candy used plain forms more (formal 63%, plain 27%) than Yoshi (formal 80%, plain 20%). However, Candy’s formal and plain style ratio (formal 74%, plain 26%) was closer to Yoshi’s than Nathan’s (formal 51%, plain 49%). Table 5 compares the results and choices of individual speaker’s use of formal styles. Regardless of these differences, Nathan, Candy and Yoshi all shifted styles in a single conversation with the same

speaker, namely Ms. Clark. Even though Ms. Clark's style-shifting was not statistically analyzed, she does indeed shift styles, and her use of honorifics seemed to induce Yoshi's use of formal styles.

Table 5
Comparison of frequent use of formal styles by each speaker

| | Sentence type | Clause type | Lexical type | Preceding form type | % |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|----|
| Yoshi (L1) | Questions | Main | Nouns | Honorifics | 80 |
| Candy (L2) | Statements | Subordinate | Verbs | Formal | 74 |
| Nathan (L2) | Statements | Main | Verbs | Formal | 51 |

4.2. Qualitative Analysis of L1 Listeners' Attitudes toward Style-Shifting

From the perspective of language socialization, Japanese people acquire polite and plain forms by participating in every day language interaction and use them appropriately (Cook, 1996a). In order to know whether L2 speakers' verbal behaviors are socially appropriate, they must be placed in a social context. Therefore, interpretation of overall L1 listeners' attitudes was based on the following question, "Which of the two do you think is more likely to succeed working in Japan?". Of the four judges who listened to Nathan and Candy talking with Ms. Clark, three of them chose Nathan over Candy. One judge explained as follows;

He can convey his opinions a little more clearly.

This is a comment they could have given to a L1 speaker of Japanese, as can be interpreted from the following response.

As expected, ordinary Japanese students are also not used to such company situations so similarly if he is this much used to such situations I think he can deal with company situations soon.

Nathan's smooth interaction with Ms. Clark gave the judge an impression that he can even respond to unexpected utterances, and deal with various situations.

However, there were mixed responses to the question, "Do you think Nathan's Japanese is appropriate talking to a teacher?" Two judges noticed his use of plain forms as in the following comment;

Well he is American so...If Japanese I think it would be a rude conversation...he does not say *desu* [polite form] at the end, does he?

On the other hand, the other two judges rated his speech as appropriate, even commenting on his use of polite form before conjunction '*kara*', as in the following response;

That, like, I heard '*desu kara*' [so-polite form] and such so it sounded too polite, so yes I think his speech is good.

This is a rather striking difference in their perception, which may be explained by their backgrounds as these two judges are older, one having experience working in a Japanese company, whereas the other two judges were college students. As expected, the two older judges thought his speech was 'rude', whereas the two college students thought his speech was appropriate. It is possible that working age Japanese have similar negative views of the speech of college students. As reported in Lauwereyns (2001), older and younger speakers have different attitudes regarding the use of hedges in Japanese. The older group showed negative views, considering hedges as corrupt, inappropriate, or unpleasant, whereas, the younger group considered them as a normal way of talking, fun, and easy to say. Similarly, in a response to another question, "Can you give some advice to this speaker so that he can improve his Japanese?", the older judge emphasized the importance of being able to communicate properly in a work situation, commenting on Nathan's overuse of filler words such as *eeto* and *nanka*.

Words trying to fill in the gap are on the contrary um getting in the way of words trying to speak normally...I think he is good to just chat with but with such manner working and such would be a little difficult, I mean, you have to speak precisely like 'this is this' and 'that is that'...he does not speak in such manner but speaking ad lib seems to continue.

Even though Candy's speech was quantitatively analyzed as using more polite forms, her speech was judged as being no more appropriate than Nathan's speech. One judge said that she should be more polite, and another actually commented on her style-shifting as follows;

It sounded like spoken language...and polite language were mixed, so it conveys message but I think it is better to use one form...to speak politely properly I think it is better to use one form and be polite.

Other two judges did not seem to notice her more frequent use of polite forms either.

Female's [formal styles] like I could not hear maybe she said it but I was concentrating on comprehending words so like image I don't remember...

They compared her speech with Nathan's and commented as follows.

Previous person speaks well...so if he puts *desu/masu* [polite forms] probably he will be fine, but this female person has not reached that level yet...so it seems like such things would still be impossible.

Even though the learners of Japanese had acquired polite forms first and then learned casual forms, these judges seemed to believe that polite forms are more difficult than casual forms. Additionally, there may be a universal expectation that a female would speak more politely than a male (Brown & Levinson, 1987), therefore, Candy's politeness may have been taken for granted.

5. Conclusion and Implications

In this study, style-shifting in the politeness level of L2 and L1 speakers of Japanese were examined. Even though politeness in Japanese has traditionally been explained simply by the formality of the situation, these speakers shifted styles for reasons beyond just formality. All of them showed a certain tendency to prefer one style over another according to some structural aspects of their utterance and the style of the previous utterance spoken by the interlocutor. Specifically, one L2 speaker tended to favor plain forms in questions, with approximately half functioning as clarifications, whereas the L1 speaker only used formal styles in them. L2 speakers also used formal style more with verbs, whereas the L1 speaker used formal forms more with noun phrases. In addition, even though there was no significance on the tendency to use formal forms in main clauses by L2 speakers, the L1 speaker's preference for formal forms in main clauses was significant. Lastly, the L1 speaker used formal forms consistently when responding to the teacher's utterances using honorifics, whereas the L2 speaker did not seem to respond using polite forms. With only three speakers and a small number of tokens used for multivariate analysis, no generalization can be made. However, this study showed some tendencies that may account for style-shifting among L2 and L1 speakers, and further study is suggested, including the effects of context and situation.

The most interesting and important question whether L2 speakers' style-shifting is appropriate may be explored in a larger scale study with various factors fixed. In this study, appropriateness was tested by four L1 speakers' judgment of these conversations. Qualitative analysis of their judgment suggests that the evaluation of L2 speakers' style-shifting is multiple and can be contradictory. Listening to the speech sample that contained fewer politeness markers, some listeners noticed the infrequent use of polite forms to a teacher and judged the speech 'rude', whereas other listeners commented on the overuse of polite forms in subordinate clauses, judging the speech 'too polite'. When the same listeners evaluated the speech sample with more frequent use of polite forms, they thought that the speaker could be more polite by using polite forms consistently, one of them noticing the style-shifting. Results of this small scale study imply that even in a larger scale quantitative study,

opinions on appropriateness will be diverse and multiple. Control of factors such as gender might yield clearer and more unified attitudes of L1 listeners.

In addition, to find out why L2 speakers shift styles the way they do is another question worth investigating. Through her English interviews, Marriott (1995) discovered that the students could rarely remember having received negative feedback about their stylistic choice, and several learners revealed their belief that without any correction they assumed their language behavior was acceptable. Similarly, in this data when Ms. Clark asked Candy whether she could choose styles appropriately, she makes a comment as follows:

...tokidoki nihongo no jugyo de seito wa sensei ni xxx sugoku kajuaru de hanashimashita...demo sensei wa nan nanka okoranai yo ni nanka so iu daijobu da na to omoi...omotteru kamo shirenai.
'...sometimes in Japanese class students talked to the teacher in real casual forms...but the teacher um like tried not to be mad like and maybe thinks it is okay.'

Marriott (1995) suggests that students cannot acquire Japanese addressee honorifics unless they receive corrective feedback. One of the reasons she gives is the non-reciprocal nature of stylistic variation. The learners' senior interlocutors in Japan would use the plain style towards them but according to the norm, learners would be expected to employ the polite style. This discrepancy between input and output may contribute to the difficulty for learners.⁸

This evidence gives some insights to educators and researchers concerning whether providing appropriate corrective feedback on the use of politeness styles as part of Japanese language instruction would facilitate acquisition. Once L2 learners of Japanese have mastered the use of plain forms, especially those who have an opportunity to study abroad, they can be reminded that there are situations where formal style is more appropriate to use than plain forms. Concerning the multiple and mixed attitudes of L1 listeners on politeness, it may be preferable to advise L2 learners to use plain forms in subordinate clauses and formal styles in main clauses in formal situations, until they master the complexity of style-shifting in a single conversation with the same speaker. Since L1 listeners do not seem to perceive the level of politeness in the same way, the social consequence of using plain form in an inappropriate situation is unpredictable.

This study has also suggested that language attitudes may have an impact on L2 learners' language learning and use, and further research is needed. If L1 interlocutors do not expect L2 interlocutors to use formal styles according to L1 norms, L2 learners are less likely to be motivated to learn to do so. Without knowing, these speakers who do not use formal styles may be perceived negatively as being too informal and could cause relationships to suffer, depending on the interlocutor as the study has shown. On the other hand, if an L2 interlocutor's appropriate use of styles was perceived positively by an L1 interlocutor consistently, perhaps the L2 speaker would make an extra effort to choose the appropriate styles according to the circumstances, consciously or unconsciously. Not only classroom teachers but also other Japanese people who interact with L2 speakers can encourage L2 learning by giving feedback and understanding the process of language learning. The ultimate question is whether Japanese people in general are prepared to accept all kinds of diversity – in languages, dialects, ethnicities, gender, and different levels of Japanese spoken by L2 learners.

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⁸ It is reported that asymmetrical use of address forms in Spanish (Solé, 1978) also makes it difficult for the learners to acquire appropriate use.

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