5th International Conference on Applied Research in
EDUCATION
20- 22 October 2023   Rome, Italy

IARECONF

Effects of Participating in Multicultural Communication for English Learners on their First Language Use

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Abstract

This paper deals with effects of participating in multicultural communication for Japanese learners of English by analyzing their first language use. The investigation is made in a Japanese university, where a group of Japanese students are invited to an English language course for overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam. The attempt to encourage Japanese students to practice speaking English with international students can be regarded successful, judging from some participants' comments that say they tend to feel easy with the non-native speakers of English and focus on what they talk about, rather than how well they speak English. Such feedback may give a good reason to carry on the collaborative activities for language teachers, but this study further provides rationale based on a sign of positive attitude or a sense of solidarity that is linguistically expressed by code-switching in conversation with the overseas students in Japanese. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the experience of intercultural communication can provide an opportunity to take notice and make adjustments on their first language use and to nurture a sense of solidarity among the participants.

Keywords: a sense of solidarity; code-switching; English classes; expanding circle countries; Japanese learners of English

1.   Introduction

The present paper makes an investigation on effects of participating in multicultural communication in English for second language learners. Although communication in English as a lingua franca is taking place everywhere in the world, there are some places like Japan where most of the learners share their first language and do not have many opportunities to interact face-to-face with people with different cultural backgrounds in a classroom. The investigation is made in a Japanese university where a group of Japanese students are invited to an English language course for overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam.

The attempt to encourage Japanese students to practice speaking English with international students can be regarded successful, judging from some participants' comments that point out they tend to feel easy and fun with the non-native speakers of English and focus on what they talk about, rather than how well they speak English. Such feedback may give a good reason for language teachers to carry on the collaborative activities, but this study further provides rationale based on a sign of positive attitude or a sense of solidarity that is linguistically expressed by code-switching in conversation with the overseas students in Japanese before commencing and after completing the English activities. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how extensively the experience of intercultural communication may give influence on the participants in terms of some changes in their first language use, or more specifically their treatment of polite forms in Japanese.

In making discourse analysis on conversations between Japanese and overseas students, Kitamura (2022) finds that Japanese students strategically manage the choice of polite and plain forms or code-switching from one to the other. Since their linguistic practices are observed in their ongoing conversation, the motivation can be explained by the discourse analysis. However, there are some cases where code-switching occurs without any sign observable in their conversations, and all of which are taking place when they start speaking Japanese again after taking part in the English activities. It is posited that the changes in their way of treating polite forms in Japanese should be correlated with some changes in their attitude towards conversational partners during the English conversation part. This paper will elaborate on the linguistic changes as positive effects of participating in the multicultural communication activities.

2.   Literary Review

Prior to materials and methods, it is indispensable to make a review on linguistic background of Japanese honorifics in order to discuss the language use for adjusting social and psychological distance between speakers defined by the system. Japanese language presents a complex system of social deixis. They are explicit linguistic device that expresses respect, deference, and politeness in social relationships and contexts. Each of them is expressed by three different forms: honorific, humble, and polite forms respectively.

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Honorific and humble forms can be explained in the same dimension. Honorific forms are used when a speaker expresses respect by locating the addressee in higher position. Humble forms, on the other hand, are used when a speaker shows deference by placing the speaker himself or herself in lower position, which, in turn, expresses respect to the addressee. Polite forms which are to be investigated on in this study operate in relation to the addressee, but not necessarily of higher social status. They are also characterized as a feature of formal speech. Polite forms are conventionally described to be neutral with regard to the target of respect (Tsujimura, 1996) and used when a conversational context is formal and a social relationship between speakers is distant.

The study of polite forms has been conducted mainly in terms of social distance, by focusing on its discourse functions (Ikuta & Ide, 1983) and the sense of self in relation to other participants (Maynard, 1991). Social distance has been regarded as a key to describe pragmatic functions of polite forms (Usami, 2002) and to categorize conditions for the occurrence of code-switching between polite and plain forms (Mimaki, 2013). Mimaki takes Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness into consideration in making discourse analysis on code-switching or in her term "speech-level shift" (Mimaki, 2013, p. 85) and attempts to its pragmatic functions. This study refers to code-switching between polite and plain forms as style-shifting hereafter.

Regarding to formality, it has been long discussed that it invokes "positional identities" (Irvine, 1979, p. 778) or the social identities of participants in social gatherings. Important to note as to the social gatherings or social categories is that every society has its own way of categorizing interpersonal relationships. Sets of individuals who occupy similar interests, briefs and dispositions can be regarded as a distinctive group in society. In fact, beyond the fundamental attributes such as age and gender, there are a great number of categories extensively institutionalized in society. Examples of which are, business corporations, political parties, religious affiliations, and educational associations.

Kitamura (2016) points out that crucial to Japanese language is the fact that its linguistic choice is determined by the way the speaker relativizes such social categories based on the dichotomy of "*uchi*" and "*soto*" or in-group and out-group framework. In the case of polite forms, the choice of one style over the other reflects the speakers' view of self in relation to other participants in a given context. For example, especially when there is no big gap in age and social status, like among university students, once they identify themselves as in-group members who share the sense of solidarity, they might not use polite forms. And, conversely, once they identify themselves as out-group members, they might well use polite forms.

In studying Japanese linguistic politeness, Kitamura (2016) argues the necessity of taking a correlation with a range of cultural values, or the two contrasting but shifting parameters of in-group and out-group consciousness into consideration as follows:

> Due to its fluid nature of the parameters, the frame of social relationships and contexts is not fixed but consistently negotiated in ongoing social interactions. The motivation for style-shifting from one form to the other is therefore to be discussed further by

examining how people extensively relativize a boundary of in-group and out-group relationships with each other in their social encounters. (p. 212)

An in-group relationship can be regarded as a form of linguistically constituted reality or what Bourdieu may call "a purely theoretical existence" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 231) that is constructed based on subjective judgments in social gatherings. It is not automatically realized by simply being in the same social gathering, but is often strategically appealed by practicing what a typical member is believed to do including language use.

As one of the empirical studies on the correlation between the linguistic practice and cultural norms, Kitamura (2020) demonstrates how the treatment of polite forms functions as a means of expressing a sense of in-group and out-group consciousness in a social gathering through his field work with a group of Japanese Working Holiday makers in Australia. According to the questionnaire survey on their understanding of what Working Holiday scheme is for and what its makers are like, images most commonly addressed by the informants are summarized as friendly people who share a goal to travel around Australia. Moreover, through the discourse analysis on the distribution of polite forms in their conversations, it becomes apparent that the choice of not using polite forms is recognized as a linguistic practice diagnostic of such a friendly group of Working Holiday makers and most notably realized when highlighting their shared interests in the scheme or traveling around Australia.

It should be noted that just holding the same visa itself would not lead to a sense of in-group consciousness. The study also reports that there are cases when their perspectives towards Working Holiday scheme and its makers are not always agreed. Some informants challenge or object to the typical image, insisting that the goal of Working Holiday makers should not be traveling, and one should never fail to show respect in conversation with strangers whose ages are not known even outside of Japan. Such a mismatch in the notion of the social group is realized in their strategic use or rather unnaturally emphasized use of polite forms in speaking to the other Working Holiday makers. It is concluded in Kitamura (2020) that style-shifting can be viewed as an action not only to nurture a sense of solidarity within the in-group members, but to distance oneself from such sub-culturally constituted circle of Working Holiday makers.

Style-shifting in Japanese can in this sense be regarded as a linguistic practice generative of and generated by an act of relativizing social relationships. In the case of a social gathering of the English language class for multicultural communication activities in this study, it is posited that some changes in the participants' way of using polite forms would be a key to explain a correlation between style-shifting and in-group consciousness raised in a course of intercultural communication. By paying attention to the distribution of polite forms, this paper demonstrates how the experience of having social encounters with overseas students gives positive effects on Japanese students' attitude in terms of the sense of solidarity that is reflected on their first language use.

3.   Materials and Methods

Research on style-choice of using or not using polite forms and shifting from one style to the other was previously conducted by Kitamura (2022) in a university in Japan. Through the discourse analysis on conversations between Japanese and overseas students, it was demonstrated that there were some cases in which a group of Japanese students practiced style-shifting from polite to plain forms and vice versa. The previous research was successful in a sense that it elaborated on the process of style-shifting by illustrating the distribution of polite forms and paying attention to every part of conversations when it occurred and characterized some cases as a form of solidarity enhancing acts.
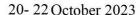
However, there were other cases that were not taken up for analysis because the process was missing in the conversation data. This study focuses on the cases not discussed in the previous study and attempts to characterize them in relation to effects of participating in multicultural communication. The activities to speak not only English but also Japanese as a common language is provided by inviting a group of Japanese students as visitors to an English language course for international students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam. The participants are encouraged to practice speaking English together while enjoying their chances to make friends with each other.

One of the easiest ways for the overseas students to join the collaborative classes is using Japanese with a single speaker at the beginning. All of them are successful learners of Japanese, considering that they take all the university lectures in Japanese as language of instruction. Despite their high proficiency in Japanese as their second language, many of them do not have confidence in English or a foreign language for them. Therefore, the first task is often set to make pairs with Japanese students and talk freely in Japanese, before going into an English part. And, before closing the class, they are advised to review their English conversations again in Japanese so that they can evaluate how well they were able to make themselves understood in English and check if there were no misunderstandings from a lack of English proficiency.

The class designed for intercultural communication activities therefore consists of three parts: introduction in Japanese, conversation in English, and evaluation in Japanese. The data are collected from the two parts of conversations in Japanese which are audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. To investigate on the process of style-shifting in the first contact situation, the Japanese students are asked to wait outside the classroom until the international students seat themselves at the pair tables with audio-recorders. The Japanese students are then invited into the classroom and begin their conversations in pairs.

4.   Results

Among a great number of sets of conversation data provided by pairs of Japanese and overseas students in the project, this study refers to the result from six sets taken up in Kitamura (2022). In describing the distribution of polite forms on each speaker, six Japanese students or first

language speakers of Japanese are referred to as L1 (a), L1 (b), L1 (c), L1 (d), L1 (e) and L1 (f), while six overseas students or second language speakers of Japanese as L2 (A), L2 (B), L2 (c), L2 (D), L2 (E) and L2 (f). The alphabets in brackets represent the gender of the speakers: Capital or uppercase letters for male, and lowercase letters for female speakers respectively. The percentage as well as the number of using polite forms observed by the six speakers are available in the table illustrated below.
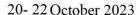
Table 1. The distribution of polite forms

Pair	Participants	Total percentage	Total (number)	First part percentage	First part (number)	Third part percentage	Third part (number)
1	L1 (e)	85.2 %	(115/134)	78.3 %	(54/ 69)	92.4 %	(61/ 66)
1	L2 (A)	57.6 %	(83/144)	59.5 %	(47/ 79)	55.4 %	(36/ 65)
2	L1 (c)	70.1 %	(61/ 87)	72.2 %	(39/ 54)	66.7 %	(22/ 33)
2	L2 (B)	9.8 %	(15/153)	16.7 %	(14/ 84)	1.4 %	(1/ 69)
3	L1 (d)	15.5 %	(11/ 71)	31.0 %	(9/ 29)	4.8 %	(2/ 42)
3	L2 (c)	3.2 %	(4/125)	6.3 %	(4/ 63)	0.0 %	(0/ 62)
4	L1 (b)	5.3 %	(10/187)	9.5 %	(10/105)	0.0 %	(0/ 82)
4	L2 (D)	75.3 %	(137/182)	89.5 %	(85/ 95)	59.8 %	(52/ 87)
5	L1 (f)	6.3 %	(11/176)	13.0 %	(10/ 77)	1.0 %	(1/ 99)
5	L2 (E)	71.9 %	(100/139)	71.6 %	(53/ 74)	72.3 %	(47/ 65)
6	L1 (a)	66.7 %	(66/ 99)	80.0 %	(40/ 50)	53.1 %	(26/ 49)
6	L2 (f)	66.9 %	(85/127)	70.6 %	(48/ 68)	62.7 %	(37/ 59)

Source: (Kitamura, 2022, pp.267-268, Revised with translation)

The data show that both Japanese and overseas students use both polite and plain forms in the first and third parts of their conversations exchanged in Japanese, though the degree of their use may vary from student to student. Some prefer using one style over the other, and there observed no significant difference in style choice between the L1 and L2 speakers.

However, when it comes to style-shifting, the former practice in many parts of their conversations while the later tend to maintain the same style that they choose at the beginning. As for the difference between the two groups, it is concluded in the previous research that the changes in the way Japanese students treat polite forms should be correlated with the changes in the way they relativize the relationship with their conversational partners in terms of in-group and out-group axis on the course of their social interactions.

Based on the result, some pedagogical implications can be presented for L2 speakers of Japanese in a form of strategies as to treating polite forms in communication with L1 speakers in line with the Japanese cultural norms opperative in its language use. Discussion on the development of strategic language use for international students would be of great importance in Japanese language education; however, the present paper specifically focuses on

style-shifting practiced by the Japanese students as a means to demonstrate positive effects of promoting multicultural communication activities in an English language classroom.

In analyzing the distribution of polite forms, it is possible to find style-shifting occurring in many parts of the conversation data. However, it should be noted that a type of style-shifting observed in utterances not directly addressed to the conversational partners is not dealt with as a target of analysis in this study. Examples of which are observed in such utterances as talking to oneself, recalling something, and referring to some factual information. When excluding the type of style-shifting in the utterances with little interpersonal functions in nature, there are two situations where style-shifting occurs: One is in the middle of conversations, and the other when restarting conversation in Japanese.

5. Discussion

5.1 Style-shifting observed in the middle of conversations in Japanese

In the case of style-shifting appearing in the middle of the conversations, the motivation for the language use can be explained through discourse analysis as it is demonstrated in Kitamura (2022). Style-shifting from polite to plain form is observed when the speakers find some special interests in common with their conversation partners such as recommended cosmetics or make-up techniques, favorite Korean music groups, some extraordinary experiences understandable only for those who are in the same part-time jobs, and so forth. One of the example conversations is partially extracted from the previous work for clarification of the language patterns in e.g.1 below:

e.g. 1. Conversation between L1 (d) and L2 (e) as Pair 3 [1]

18. *L1 (d): (trade name) wa sugoi osusume, osusume-desu.*

    [(trade name) TOP / very / recommended / recommended-POLITE]

    '(trade name) is highly recommended. I can recommend it to you.'

19. *L2 (c):   sou nano? atashi-mo nikibi bakkari.*

    [so be ? / I TOP / pimple / many]

    'Is that so? I also have lots of pimples.'

20. *L1 (d): sugu dekichatte, nanka. ki,kisetsu ga kawaru toki ni, sugoi.*

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[1] The following abbreviations are used for glossing Japanese data:

POLITE: polite forms (i.e. endings with verb morphology *masu* or *desu* in Japanese)

ACC : accusative case – *o*	GEN : genitive case – *no*	NEG : negative morpheme
NOM: nominalizer – *ga*	Q : question marker – *ka*	TOP: topic marker – *wa / mo*

[soon / have, / somehow. / season NOM / change / when / very]

 'I get it quite often, somehow. Especially when the seasons change, it's terrible.'

21. L2 (c): un. watashi-mo, cho ya-da !

 tomoda… shitteru hito ga sono (trade name) tsukatete, iitte iwarete

 [yes. / I TOP / very / disgusting!

 friend… / person I know NOM / that / (trade name) / use, / good / say-PASSIVE]

 'Me, too. It's really disgusting!

 A friend, or an acquaintance, of mine uses that (trade name) and she is telling me it's good.'

22. L1 (d): un un.

 [yes / yes]

 'Uh huh.

23. L2 (c): jibun ga kansou-hada- you no taipu no… are, (trade name) nan-shyurui ka aru?

 [self NOM / for dry-skin GEN / type GEN… / oh / (trade name) how many types / be ?]

 'I use the one for dry skin. Oh, are there several types in (trade name) ?'

24. L1 (d): ano, nanka, keshou-sui mo aru-shi, keshou-hin mo aru.

 [well / somehow / make-up-water / be / and / make-up-product / be]

 'Well, it's kind of like, there are types like skin lotion besides cosmetics.'

25. L2 (c): nanka, nikibi-you no (trade name) mo aru.

 [somehow / for pimple GEN / (trade name) TOP / be]

 'Then, there is the type in (trade name) specifically for pimples.'

26. L1 (d): un un un.

 [yes / yes / yes]

 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'

27. L2 (c): aru-n-da-yo-ne. nani-iro dakke? mizu-iro?

 [be-PARTICLE-PARTICLE / what color / be ? / water-color?]

 'There is, as you know. What color was the container? Light blue, no?'

28. L1 (d): etto, ao ka pinku ka.

 [well / blue / or / pink / maybe]

 'Well, I guess that's blue or pink color.'

29. L2 (c): sou na-no.

 [so / be ?]

 'Oh, was it?'

30. L1 (d): ki-iro ka murasaki.

[yellow / or / purple]

'Yellow or purple color.'

31. L2 (c): un un un.

[yes / yes / yes]

'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'

32. L1 (d): keshyo-sui ga ato mou-hitotsu attta ki-ga-suru.

[make-up-water NOM / moreover / another one / be / have a feeling]

'I think, there is another type for skin lotion.'

(Kitamura, 2022, pp.277-278, e.g. 7. Revised with translation)

In the segment of conversation illustrated in e.g. 1, it is noticeable that the Japanese speaker L1 (d) speaks in polite form until the turn 18, but not anymore in the next turn 20 and thereafter. Although the audio data are not presented in the paper, it is obvious from their tone of voice and cheerful laughter that the participants fully enjoy talking about cosmetics or the topic they are so excited about. It can be interpreted that style-shifting should be performed as a result of or according to the changes in the social and psychological distance relativized in the Japanese speaker's mind.

It is quite common to start conversation with strangers in polite form in the first contact situation in Japanese. However, once they share in-group consciousness or a sense of solidarity, many young people often switch and go without using polite forms. Moreover, it is not unusual to see style-shifting appear again back to polite forms, when social distance is realized and out-group consciousness is highlighted among the participants in the middle of conversations.

In fact, in the data, style-shifting from plain to polite forms is observed especially when the Japanese students change the subject or start talking about new topics with such questions as "What is your major by the way?" "Where do you live?" and "Do you have brothers or sisters?" This tendency can also be explained in terms of the social and psychological distance the Japanese students attempt to re-define. New topics may make the speakers become aware that they actually do not know each other that well, and the consciousness of social and psychological distance is likely to lead to the use of polite forms.

Based on the findings on style-shifting, pedagogical implications can be addressed for Japanese students to successfully participate in multicultural communication in Japanese as a common language. They should realize that, even though some international students are such fluent speakers of Japanese, they do not always share sociolinguistic norms or pragmatic use of polite forms in Japanese. Style-shifting may not function as a form of communication strategies or "positive politeness strategies" (Brown and Levinson, 1987) to appeal a sense of solidarity in communication with second language speakers of Japanese. The experience of participating in multicultural communication can provide them with an opportunity to take notice and make adjustments on their first language use.

5.2 Style-shifting observed when restarting conversation in Japanese

As mentioned in Materials and Methods, data analyzed in Kitamura (2022) include two parts of conversations exchanged in Japanese: introduction and evaluation. Each conversation lasts for ten minutes before starting and after completing the English activity part. Style-shifting discussed in the previous study is the one practiced in ongoing conversations within the first and third parts, which makes it possible to analyze every moment when style-shifting occurs in the conversation data. However, there are more than one cases where the process is not observable within the single part. This type of style-shifting can only be detected by comparing the distribution of polite forms in the two parts.

According to the percentages of using polite forms illustrated in Table 1, the four out of six Japanese participants decrease them to the significant degree from the first introduction part to the third evaluation part. In fact, except for the first and the second speakers or L1 (e) and L1 (c), the percentages drop from 31.0 % to 4.8 % on the third speaker L1 (d), from 9.5 % to 0 % on the fourth speaker L1 (b), from 13.0 % to 1.0 % on the fifth speaker L1 (f), and from 80.0% to 53.1 % on the sixth speaker L1 (a) respectively. Style-shifting whose process cannot be accessible in the conversation data is in the cases that some speakers already carry it out at the time of restarting their conversations in the third part.

For example, the third speaker L1 (d) who uses polite forms at the rate of 31.0 % in the first part starts to go without them in the third part. Although she occasionally uses polite forms during the conversation in the third part at the rate of 4.8 %, it is noticeable that she decides not to speak in polite form when starting her conversation again in Japanese. However, as discussed earlier on her style-shifting in e.g. 1, it is explained that the change in language use should be influenced by a sense of solidarity the speaker L1 (d) enacts when sharing her special interests in using the same cosmetics with L2 (c). Therefore, her choice of not using polite forms at the beginning of her conversation in the third part can be explained in the same line. It is interpreted that L1 (d) maintains not to use polite forms as a neutral style to speak with L2 (c) whom she might well feel in-group consciousness with.

The case at issue is the style choice that is different from the first and third parts as observed in the conversations data provided by the sixth speaker L1 (a). Although she uses polite forms at the rate of as much as 80.0 % in the first part, she uses them less or at the rate of 53.1 % in the third part. It is worthwhile pointing out that, even though the speaker L1 (a) continues to use polite forms in the third part, she restarts her conversation in Japanese without them. Style-shifting whose motivations are not pursued in the previous study is the following type of conversations in which the speaker uses polite forms at the end of the first part and plain forms at the beginning of the third part. The two segments of the conversation data are presented in the following examples.

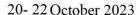*e.g. 2. Conversation between L1 (a) and L2 (f) at the end of the first part*

230. L2 (f): kimura-san, shitte-masu? megane kaketa?

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[Ms. Kimura (ACC) / know-POLITE ? / wearing / glasses ?]

'Do you know Ms. Kimura, who is wearing glasses?'

231. L1 (a): megane kaketa … un. shitte-masu

[wearing / glasses… / yes / know-POLITE]

'Wearing glasses … yeah, I know her.'

232. L2 (f): ano kata, ano kata wa higaeri de kankoku ni itta-te itte

[that person / that person-TOP / one-day-trip / in / Korea / to / went / said]

'That lady, she said she went on a day trip to South Korea.'

233. L1 (a): ee.

[wow]

'Wow.'

234. L2 (f): yabaku nai desu-ka. sugoi-desu-ne.

[extraordinary-NEG-POLITE-Q / awesome-POLITE-PARTICLE]

'That's great, isn't it? That's awesome.'

235. L1 (a): onna-no-hito desu-yo-ne? ano bisita: no?

[female person-POLITE-PARTICLE-PARTICLE ? / that / visitor]

'You mean, the lady who came as a visitor student?'

e.g. 3. Conversation between L1 (a) and L2 (f) at the beginning of the third part

1. L2 (f): etto, nani hanashi-mashi-t-kke? At the beginning of c

[well / what / talked-POLITE ?]

'Well, what did we talk about (in the second part in English)?'

2. L1 (a): etto, kanko-meishyo de nanka yuumeina toko naikatte

[well / sightseeing-spot / about / somewhat / famous / place / be]

'Well, about some sightseeing spots, we were talking about somewhere famous (in Korea).'

3. L2 (f): a … watashi wa, a… bashyo dattara, tabemono jya-nakute, bashyo dattara hangan ga suki.

[oh / I-TOP/ oh / about place / about food-NEG / about place / Hanggang-ACC / like   ]

'Oh, the place … I though we talked about foods. Well, as for the place, I like Hanggang.'

4. L1 (a): han …

[han …]

'Hang …'

5. L2 (f):   hangan shitte-masu?

> *[Hanggang / know-POLITE ?]*
>
> *'Hanggang. Do you know?'*

6. L1 (a):   a, kawa ?

> *[oh / river ?]*
>
> *'Oh, you mean, the river?'*

7. L2 (f):   un un un.

> *[yes / yes / yes]*
>
> *'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'*

With the conversation in English involved in between, the two segments of the conversations presented in e.g. 3 and e.g. 4 are not sequential. Therefore, unlike style-shifting that occurs in the middle of conversations within the first or within the third part, it is not possible to count on the script for indicating the motivation for the change in style that the speaker L1 (a) made at the beginning of the third part. It is true that there are no such clues as favorite topics been talked about that are observable from the conversation data. However, with the decrease in the percentage of using polite forms in utterances of L1 (a) (i.e. 26.9 %), there remains possibility to develop the discussion on the same theoretical grounds, or in terms of a sense of solidarity that she come to have towards her conversational partner.

In the same way as sharing some special interests in common, participating in the challenging task of speaking only in English with some anxiety and having achieved it together in the second part might well become a special experience in common that can lead to solidarity enhancing acts linguistically expressed as a form of style-shifting from polite to plain forms at the beginning of the third part. The change in their first language use can therefore be interpreted as a measure to demonstrate effects of participating in multicultural communication.

5.3 Implications and Future Research

The present paper has dealt with a project of organizing multicultural communication activities in an English language classroom at a Japanese university as a useful means to enhance not only the students' speaking skills in the target language, but moreover positive attitude among the participants. While positive attitude the Japanese students have towards the overseas students from China, South Korea, and Vietnam can be subjectively judged from their remarks in reaction papers, this study provides some theoretical grounds by paying attention to a sense of solidarity that is linguistically expressed in Japanese.

Some beneficial aspects reported by the Japanese participants are often referred to the practice of speaking English with other non-native speakers evaluated from affective points of view. They tend to feel relaxed and speak more with overseas students from expanding circle countries, while many of them cannot help worrying about mistakes they are making with native speakers of English. This study demonstrates such feelings of the Japanese students are

reflected on their first language use, and objectively provides the evidence on positive effects of participating in multicultural communication by characterizing their solidarity enhancing acts expressed by style-shifting in Japanese.

The findings of the same tendency for the Japanese participants to practice style-shifting from polite to plain forms through collaborative work in English language activities sheds light on some effects to enhance their positive attitudes towards the overseas students. It is suggested that such social interactions with those who have different cultural backgrounds may give the participants an opportunity to reflect on their first language use. It would be of great use for the Japanese students to have experiences of communicating with international students in their native language as well as in the target language, since the needs of intercultural communication in Japanese as a common language have been expanding with increasing number of people from overseas who live in Japan in the globalized era.

The findings of this study on effects of participating in multicultural communication also signifies the necessity of further elaboration on the cause. In order to identify what gives influence on the Japanese students' way of treating polite forms in the third part, there needs be further research on the second parts of the class activities conducted in English. The research method of investigating positive attitude in terms of linguistic signs is expected to be applicable to discourse analysis on their English conversations. In the future study, the discussion on effects of organizing multicultural communication activities in an English language classroom will be further developed by incorporating the analysis of their first language use into that of their second language use.

Acknowledgment

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