

Politeness Maxim Violations in the Japanese Variety Show “Sake No Tsumami Ni Naru Hanashi”

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ABSTRACT

This study examines violations of politeness principles by Geoffrey Leech (1983) on a Japanese variety show called "Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi". The study uses an approach to understand politeness based on what Geoffrey Leech said, which includes six maxims: tactful, generous, approbation, agreeing, modesty, and empathy. The study uses a method to describe what is the real meaning behind the violation. The information was collected from one episode of the show that aired on Fuji TV. The participants on the show were talking casually. The study looked at what they said. The results show that participants on the show are often not polite when they talk to each other. There were 20 times when participants said something that was not polite according to Leech's theory. Most of the time, participants did not agree with each other. Sometimes they were not tactful or humble. When participants were not polite on the show, it was usually to make audience laugh and keep the show entertaining. So being impolite on this show was not meant to cause problems. To make the show funny and interesting. The "Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi" show uses violations to make people laugh, and that is what makes it entertaining.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Politeness Principle, Variety Show, Japanese Language, Humor*

INTRODUCTION

Language is really important for people to talk to each other and share what they think and feel. It also helps people stay connected with each other. Urbaite (2025) said that “language is a way for people to share ideas and emotions” This means people can say what they mean, even if it is a little hard to explain, and this can help people understand each other better. When people learn about language, they look at how it's used in real life, like how people talk to each other and make friends. There is something called the politeness principle that Leech talked about in 1983. This principle is about using language in a way that does not hurt people's feelings. So being polite with language helps people get along and not fight. It makes it easier for people to talk to each other. Language is a part of this because it helps people be kind to each other and have good relationships. In Japanese culture, being polite is very important, as it is closely associated with social structure, respect, and harmony. When speaking, people choose their words carefully based on their relationship with the listener, the situation, and how formal they want to be. However, in some situations, like variety shows, people often break rules. They do this to be funny and grab the audience's attention.

One show that does this is a Japanese variety show called *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi*. It's a show where celebrities talk, share stories, and joke around while drinking. They often say things that're not polite, like teasing or criticizing each other. This study looks at how they break rules and what they're trying to do when they do it. The goal is to understand how language is used in a fun way on the show.

In these interactions, participants often make remarks that violate the maxim of politeness by leech, Such as teasing, criticizing, or making comments. Therefore, it is important to analyze breaches of politeness in this program. The aim is to understand how language is used creatively in the context of entertainment. This study aims to identify types of breaches of politeness. It also aims to explain their functions in interactions, on the show.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a part of linguistics that looks at what language means in situations. The main goal of pragmatics is to figure out how people create and understand the meaning when they talk to each other every day. It is not just about the language itself. Levinson, who wrote about this in 1983, says that pragmatics is the study of how language and the situation it's used in work together to help people understand what is being said. This way of looking at pragmatics thinks that the situation where something is said is very serious, and it includes the situation when a person speaks, the situation when a person listens, why they are talking, when and where they are talking, and the social background of the speaker and listener, all of which help determine what the words mean.

At the time, Yule, who wrote about this in 1996, says that pragmatics is about what the person speaking wants to say and how the person listening understands it. The things that influence what pragmatics is about are not related to language, like how people interact with each other, what they want to achieve by talking, and the situation they are in. There are some ideas in pragmatics, like what people do with words, what they mean but do not say, the idea that people work together to understand each other, and being polite. In this study, we use pragmatics to look at what people said and what is the real meaning of the conversation is that exists on a Japanese variety show *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi*.

Politeness Principle and Its Violations

The principle of politeness is really important when we talk about how people use language to get along with each other. These studies show us that using language in a way is not just about saying things correctly but also about saying things that are appropriate for the situation and the people around us. The principle of politeness is not about following grammar rules but also about being mindful of social norms, cultural values, and the context in which we are speaking, as noted by Atikah and her team in 2023.

In 1983, Leech came up with six politeness maxims: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. These maxims are rules to help us communicate better by avoiding things that might hurt others and focusing on things that build respect and harmony between people. What happens when we break these rules? Sometimes, breaking the principle of politeness is not always a thing. Fadlilah and Hasanudin (2023) said that breaking the rules of politeness can be a part of language that we should look at in the context of the conversation. Breaking the rules can take forms like criticizing someone, directly making fun of them, disagreeing with them, or saying things that hurt their feelings or ignore their social status. In some cases, like in the entertainment industry, breaking the rules of politeness can be a strategy to make people laugh, highlight character traits, or create a drama. So, to really understand when people break the rules of politeness, we need to pay attention to what is happening in the situation and why people are interacting with each other.

Language and Politeness in Japanese Culture and Variety Shows

Politeness in Japanese is really important because it is connected to the cultural values of the country. You can see this when people choose their words and how they say things; it all depends on who they're talking to. Things like how old someone is, their social status, and how well they know each other all play a big role in how people speak in Japan, as noted by Wiyatasari (2022). Japanese has something called keigo, which is a way of speaking that shows respect. It has three parts: sonkeigo, which is when you show respect to someone; kenjōgo, which is when you are humble; and teineigo, which is just being polite, according to Kurniawati (2019). When people are with friends or, in casual situations, they often use simpler keigo or mix it with more casual language, as Pertiwi(2024) said, to make the atmosphere more relaxed and friendly.

Japanese variety shows are entertaining not only because of their content, but also because of the way people use language. The hosts and guests often speak in a lively and distinctive style, using certain words, humor, and even

sarcasm to keep the show engaging (Mamoto and Handayani, 2018). As Calvetti (2020) explains, impoliteness strategies such as raising one's voice, using direct criticism, or performing face-threatening acts are often tolerated and even appreciated in this kind of spontaneous interaction. This is quite different from typical Japanese communication, which usually values a softer and more polite tone. In variety shows, however, things like interruptions, teasing, or blunt comments are part of the entertainment. These moments often make the audience laugh because the playful context makes them feel harmless, even if they might seem rude in other situations. For example, hosts may intentionally provoke disagreements or interrupt others to create humorous exchanges. Because of this, Japanese variety shows provide a useful setting for studying pragmatics, especially in understanding how language that might be considered impolite can still be acceptable depending on the context.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method to look at language in a natural setting. The goal of this kind of research is to understand what is happening with language by looking at the things people say and do naturally. This means paying attention to what things mean and how they are used, rather than just counting numbers. The researcher Sugiyono (2015) said, When people study language, they can use this approach to look closely at how people talk. Language researchers can think about what words mean, how they are used in conversation, and how people communicate with each other when they speak. This helps language researchers understand language phenomena and natural communication. Language phenomena are important to understand because they happen in communication.

The qualitative method was chosen because the data used consisted of statements from participants in the Japanese variety show *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi*. This show is about conversations between the host and guests. They have drinks, This makes their conversations natural and spontaneous. In situations, people often say things that are not polite. To understand these, we need to look at the situation, not just use numbers.

The object is conversations that came from a TV show called *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi*. The show has an atmosphere with casual conversations between the host and guests. This results in spontaneous interactions. We wanted to see how people are polite or not polite in these conversations. We used a set of rules, from Leech's Politeness Principle, which includes six politeness maxims: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. We looked at each conversation, what they were talking about, and who they were talking to. This helped us understand the conversations better.

The data source of this study is one episode of the variety show *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi* titled 「ロックなオジサンに振り回された夜」, which aired on August 11, 2023, on Fuji TV. The episode features several public figures, including Hitoshi Matsumoto (Downtown), Daigo (Chidori), Kazuki Mimura (Summers), Hiroyuki Otake (Summers), SUGIZO (GLAY), Asuka Wada, Zin (THE RAMPAGE), and Shunsuke Ito (Oswald). This episode was selected because it contains active verbal interaction, informal language use, and spontaneous conversations that potentially include violations of politeness principles, making it relevant for pragmatic analysis.

DISCUSSION

Below are findings related to violations of the principles of politeness according to the six politeness maxim by Leech's theory. From the transcripts analyzed in this study, several utterances were found to violate six maxims of politeness, namely the maxim of tact, the maxim of generosity, the maxim of agreement, the maxim of simplicity, the maxim of agreement, and the maxim of sympathy. Each example will be accompanied by the context of the conversation, a transcript of the utterance, its translation, an analysis, and the meaning and function that explains the reasons behind the violation according to pragmatic theory. Through this analysis, the purpose of this study is to show that the principles of politeness are not always followed in variety shows.

Tact Maxim Violation

Situation

Situation: At 13:39, SUGIZO shared his thoughts and views for quite some time. While he was still talking, Matsumoto suddenly said that SUGIZO's explanation was really long in front of the other participants.

Transcript

Matsumoto: “SUGIZOさんの話って長くない?”

SUGIZO: “すみません。長いです、僕。”

Translation

Matsumoto: “Isn't SUGIZO's story too long?”

SUGIZO: "Sorry, I talk a lot.”

Analysis

Matsumoto's statement violates the maxim of tact, which states that speakers should minimize the burden on others and maximize the benefit to others. Matsumoto should have said it in a way.. Instead, he just said what he thought. This comment may have embarrassed the listener by negatively highlighting his behavior in front of other participants. So what Matsumoto said was wrong because it was not polite. He should have been more careful with his words. Matsumoto's statement violates the rule of being tactful, which means trying to help others and not hurt their feelings. In this case, Matsumoto did the opposite. He hurt Sugizo's feelings by criticizing him. Therefore, this statement violates the principle of tact maxim.

Meaning and Function

Matsumoto talks about how long SUGIZO's explanations are. He says what he thinks, which might seem rude in conversations. However, we already know that humor and laughter are important in conversations. Laughter can show how people are feeling and what they want to say. It helps conversations go smoothly. This supports previous findings that “humor and laughter play an important role in shaping interaction” (Jahiu 2025), where laughter can function as “a social signal that can convey a range of emotions and intentions, thereby shaping the flow of dialogue”(Shuyue 2025). In this context, Matsumoto's utterance is not simply a violation of politeness, but also a deliberate communicative strategy to maintain engagement and create entertainment. This is something you often see in variety shows. SUGIZO and Matsumoto use humor to make their conversation fun. They want to keep people engaged and make them laugh. This is what makes their conversation so enjoyable.

Generosity Maxim Violation

Situation

At 14:19, the discussion is about gluten-free foods and ramen. SUGIZO and Wada start thinking about making gluten-free noodles. They share their thoughts. Then Matsumoto interrupts them.

Transcript

SUGIZO: “グルテンフリーメンやりましょう、絶対ニーズありますから。”

Wada: “あります、絶対にあります。”

Matsumoto: “二人で話すの禁止!”

Translation

SUGIZO: "Let's make gluten-free noodles. People will definitely want them.”

Wada: "Yes, people will want them for sure.”

Matsumoto: “Talking between the two of you is forbidden!”

Analysis

This statement violates the Maxim of Generosity, which encourages speakers to minimize benefits for themselves and maximize benefits for others. In this case, Matsumoto forbids SUGIZO and Wada from continuing their conversation. This statement limits the freedom of the other speakers and demonstrates the speaker's dominance in controlling the conversation. Instead of allowing SUGIZO and Wada to share their ideas, Matsumoto prioritizes his own control. Therefore, this statement represents a violation of the Maxim of Generosity.

Meaning and Function

By stopping SUGIZO and Wada from continuing their conversation, He was in charge. He controlled what was happening. We can look at this in two aspects of rapport and intrusion, where interruptions may function as a progression to keep the discussion aligned with the main topic, or as a tease that enhances audience engagement (Tao 2018). In this case, Matsumoto did this to keep the conversation from going off track. He also did it to get a stronger reaction from the audience. As a host, Matsumoto has to do what the show needs him to do. He has to keep the story going and make sure the audience is entertained. So even though interrupting someone is usually considered impolite, Matsumoto did it to control the conversation and make the show more fun for the audience. This is what makes the show enjoyable for the people watching. Matsumoto and the way he runs the show is important, for the audience's enjoyment of SUGIZO and Wada.

Approbation Maxim Violation

Situation

At 14:49 minutes into the conversation, Zin remained silent. Just listened to the other participants while drinking his beverage. Then Ito noticed this. Asked him directly in front of everyone.

Transcript

Zin: (無言で飲んでいる)

Ito: “お前退屈か?”

Translation

Zin: (Drinking silently)

Ito: “Are you bored?”

Analysis

This statement violates the Maxim of Appreciation, which encourages speakers to minimize criticism and maximize praise of others. In this situation, Ito is implying that Zin is bored with the conversation. This is like criticizing Zin in front of other participants. It might even embarrass Zin. Ito should have said something instead of saying something that might hurt Zin's feelings. Therefore, this remark violates the Maxim of Appreciation.

Meaning and Function

In this statement, Ito indirectly criticizes Zin. Says that Zin is not taking part in the conversation. This might make Zin feel uncomfortable. Ito's comment can be seen as a way to get Zin to join in. It is, like what Yizhuo said in 2024, that hosts use ways of talking to get quiet people to speak up. Ito's comment is not a criticism, it is a way to get Zin to pay attention and join the conversation. This helps to keep the conversation balanced. As Yizhuo suggested, this helps to make sure that everyone can take part equally. It also keeps it fun and lively. Ito's comment does this by trying to get Zin to take part more. Zin's lack of participation is something that Ito is trying to change. Yizhuo's idea supports this. The conversation needs to be balanced and fun. Zin needs to join in more. This is what Ito is trying to achieve.

Modesty Maxim Violation

Situation

At 22:37 into the conversation, the participants talk about getting older and whether they feel like a middle-aged man or “ossan”. Zin, who is 29 years old, says he does not want to seem like a middle-aged man or “ossan”. He tells the other participants that he picks words on purpose, like calling pants “pantusu”(パンツ) instead of “Zubon” (ズボン), so people do not call him “ossan”. By saying he is still young and different from other participants, Zin is really saying good things about himself.

Transcript

Zin: “僕は29なんで、逆にパンツって頑張って言ってるんですよ。”

Translation

Zin: “I’m 29, so I purposely try to say 'pants' instead.”

Analysis

This statement violates the principle of politeness, which suggests that speakers should minimize self-praise and avoid emphasizing their own positive qualities. Here, Zin says he is young and tries to seem young on purpose. By telling the other participants his age and what he does to seem different from others who are mostly middle-aged men, Zin is saying good things about himself. This is not polite because Zin should be humble and not talk about how great he's. This contradicts the principle of politeness because Zin does not minimize praise for himself, but instead highlights his positive qualities.

Meaning and Function

In this statement, Zin attempts to highlight the positive aspect of being younger than the other cast members. Although this may seem like bragging and putting others down. Functionally, Zin uses this statement to build a relationship with the other participant by sparking a discussion about age. Additionally, this statement is also used to inject humor, making the show more engaging for the audience. This aligns with the previous generosity maxim violation, where Matsumoto’s interruptions, although seemingly impolite, serve as a communicative strategy to make the show more interesting for the people watching.

Agreement Maxim Violation

Situation

At 15:50, the participants were talking about the food they eat when they are sick. Ito thought that eating expensive food like melons might help them feel better. Then SUGIZO said something that did not agree with Ito's idea.

Transcript

Ito: “メロンとか、体に悪いわけない。”

SUGIZO: “メロンは絶対に風邪に効かないよね。”

Translation

Ito: “Melons can't be bad for the body .”

SUGIZO: “Melon definitely doesn’t cure a cold.”

Analysis

This statement violates the Maxim of Agreement, which encourages speakers to minimize disagreement and maximize agreement with others. In this case, SUGIZO directly rejected Ito's idea by stating that melons definitely do not cure the cold. The word "definitely" makes his disagreement even stronger. He did not try to be polite or agree with Ito. Instead, he strongly disagreed with what Ito said. This is not a way to respond in a conversation. Therefore, this remark represents a violation of the Maxim of Agreement.

Meaning and Function

In that statement, SUGIZO openly disagrees with Ito's argument in a very straightforward way. As Juliani (2024) explains, “strong opposition voiced highlights differing perspectives directly, amplifying humor via unexpected clashes.” Juliani (2024). In this case, the humor comes from how SUGIZO states his disagreement, which makes the difference between their views stand out. Even though SUGIZO's response might seem rude, it actually fits with what Juliani says. In comedy, breaking rules can make things feel more relaxed by focusing on being interesting rather than being polite. So SUGIZO's directness makes the conversation feel more lively and entertaining for the audience than

creating tension. It makes the conversation feel more relaxed. SUGIZO's way of disagreeing helps to make the conversation engaging.

Sympathy Maxim Violation

Situation

At 04:30, SUGIZO was really excited about his idea of people living on Mars in the future. He told the other participants about how it might be possible for humans to move to Mars and shared his dream of growing old on the planet Mars. While he was seriously talking about his thoughts, Matsumoto jumped in. Said he was talking too much. This was not very nice. Did not show that Matsumoto cared about SUGIZO's idea.

Transcript

Matsumoto : “一人ですごい喋りますね。”

Translation

Matsumoto: “You talk a lot by yourself.”

Analysis

Matsumoto's statement violates the Maxim of Sympathy, which encourages speakers to express understanding, support, or positive feelings toward others. In this dialogue, SUGIZO enthusiastically shares his thoughts on the possibility of life on Mars. However, instead of saying something nice, Matsumoto told him he was talking too much. This did not show that Matsumoto was interested in what SUGIZO had to say. It seemed like Matsumoto did not care about Sugizo's thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the statement violates the principle of sympathy because it does not show sympathy or a supportive attitude towards the interlocutor.

Meaning and Function

In this remark, Matsumoto appears to show less empathy toward SUGIZO's enthusiasm by saying that he is talking too much. If we look at this together with the earlier example of generosity maxim violation and modesty maxim violation, it is clear that Matsumoto is using a similar way of handling the conversation. Like when he interrupts SUGIZO and Wada to control how the conversation goes, serving as both progression and tease (Tao 2018). Which helps move it forward and also teases them. This comment also helps guide the discussion and keeps it on track. So Matsumoto is not just being unkind, he is managing the conversation to keep it focused. Also makes it funny. In a variety show, this kind of approach is what a host like Matsumoto does, keeping the conversation moving and making sure the show stays entertaining

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, it can be concluded that violations of the maxim of politeness often occur in conversational interactions on the Japanese variety show *Sake no Tsumami ni Naru Hanashi*. These violations are not intended to provoke conflict between the speakers, but rather serve as a means of creating humor and maintaining an entertaining atmosphere.

The results of the study show that there were 20 statements that violated Geoffrey Leech's maxims of politeness in this episode. Of these statements, the Maxim of Agreement was the most frequently violated, with 8 occurrences, followed by the Maxim of Tact with 4 occurrences and the Maxim of Humility with 3 occurrences. On the other hand, the Maxim of Generosity and the Maxim of Agreement were each violated twice, while the Maxim of Sympathy appeared only once in the analyzed data.

The prevalence of violations of the Maxim of Consent indicates that speakers often make teasing or critical comments about other participants. In the context of variety shows, such expressions are usually used as a humorous device that strengthens interaction and increases entertainment value. Therefore, it can be concluded that violations of the politeness maxim in this program are not only a pragmatic phenomenon but also serve as a communication strategy that supports comedic discourse.

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