Differences in Sino-Japanese Politeness Principles in Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract: Different cultural background have different manners, the language politeness principle in Chinese and Japanese is of great difference as well. This paper discusses and analyzes the characteristics and differences of politeness principles between China and Japan from the viewpoint of intercultural communication, and summarizes the different language strategies of China and Japan, hoping to help Japanese learners in China to deepen their understanding of the two cultures, to improve their intercultural communication skills, to avoid linguistic errors, as well to achieve successful intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

Since the development of Japanese major education in Chinese colleges and universities, a large number of Japanese professionals have been active in various fields of Sino-Japanese communication. However, there is still a shortage of excellent Japanese learners who are truly proficient in the language and Japanese culture and aslo have cross-cultural communication skills. In the process of today's globaliazation, Japanese professionals who only master the basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation can no longer meet the needs of Sino-Japanese communication. As early as 2001, the revised syllabus of the Basic Stage of Japanese Major in Colleges and Universities has clearly stated that "cultivating cross-cultural communication skills will become an important goal of Japanese education in the 21st century", and "the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching is to cultivate students with cross-cultural communication skills". In the National Standards for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of Foreign Language Majors issued by the institutions of Higher Education, Ministry of Education also emphasizes the changing from the cultivation of language ability and communication ability to the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability. Therefore, we must learn and use Japanese from a cross-cultural communication perspective. The principle of politeness and face theory play a very significant role in cross-cultural communication. Linguist and Professor Yuzumi of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies has pointed out that the principle of politeness is simply a linguistic strategy for maintaining harmonious relationships, also contains the language of banter and companionship, but it's not necessary to use polite expressions. The language principles of politeness are not the same in different cultural backgrounds. This paper starts with the characteristics of two politeness principles, and aims to analyze and compare the differences in the principles of politeness, hoping to play a certain reference role in the teaching and learning of cross-cultural communication between China and Japan.

2. The Principle of Politeness and Face Theory

2.1 The Principle of Politeness

This paper is based on the American scholar E. Goffman (1967) of the concept of FACE, and for the American language philosopher H. P. Grice(1975)'s Cooperative Principle, and the English grammologist Leech who proposed the politeness principle from the perspective of rhetoric and philology in 1983. Leech's politeness principle has six subguidelines: (1) The Tact maxim: to

minimize damage to others, try to benefit others the most; (2) The Generosity maxim: to benefit yourself, try to do the most damage to yourself; (3) The Approbation (or flattery) maxim: to minimize derogatory to others, praise others as much as possible; (4) The Modesty Maxim: to minimize your praise, try to exaggerate your criticism; (5) The Agreement Maxim: to minimize differences between self and others, increase consistency between self and others; (6) The Sympathy Maxim: to minimize self's aversion to others, try to increase your sympathy for others. It can be seen that among these six subguidelines, (1) and (2) are two aspects of the same problem from the perspective of the distribution of benefits. The strategy criteria is about how to treat others and applies to the verbal behavior of requesting or ordering others to do something. The criterion of generosity is how to treat oneself and promise to help others do something; (3) and (4) praise the two aspects of the same question from the perspective of evaluation, and (5) and (6) discuss the consensus and compassion criteria from the perspective of attitudes towards others.

2.2 Face Theory

In the 1950s, E. Goffman puts forward the FACE theory from a sociological perspective. He believed that communication always involves "face work". FACE is the positive social value which people effectively win for themselves in social communication, and is the self-image of individuals expressed according to the standard of social praise. Goffman said: "Face theory works with each other. A person losing face is ultimately in the hands of others. If you want yourself not to lose face, the safest way is not to hurt others' face. As a result, people tend to belittle themselves and elevate each other in their conversation. If people all elevate themselves and belittle each other, social communication will be incredible."

In 1978, Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage: Politeness cowrited by the English linguist Brown. P and S. C. Levinson was published, which for the first time systematically elaborated and discussed the problems of "politeness" and "face". They follow Goffman's "FACE" view, believe that people have two kinds of "FACE": one is positive face (positive face), is to be understood, praised, liked, accepted by others; the other negative face (negative face), is the negative desire to do not want to be interfered by others, their behavior is not constrained by others.

3. Characteristics and Differences of the Sino-Japanese Principle of Politeness

3.1 Politeness Principle in Japanese

Many Japanese learners believe that when communicating with the Japanese people, the correct use of the keigo (honorific language) can make each other feel happy, which is a successful communication, maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship. In fact, this understanding is one-sided. For example, in order to show their friendliness to Japanese classmates, Japanese learners who study in Japan use many respectful words learned in Japanese textbooks, but were reminded that there is no such saying between friends by local pal. After staying in Japan for a long time, this student gradually made a lot of Japanese friends, and he began to speak the language of some young people who did not use keigo (honorific language). Therefore, the relationship with friends became more and more harmonious. From this example, we can see that instead of respectful language, sometimes constructing "a comfortable interpersonal relationships" depends on the object and context of the speech. Brown & Levinson's face theory is divided into both positive and negative aspects, so the politeness principle can also be divided into two kinds: the positive politeness principle (positive politeness) and the negative politeness principle (negative politeness). Take the Japanese students just mentioned as an example. When he first came to Japan, he wanted to borrow books from his Japanese students. He could say, "Ko no hon o ka shi te i ta da ke ma sen ka?" (Would you mind lending me this book?), This sentence uses the honorific language, which is a respect for the "negative face" of the desire to give trouble to others and worry that the other person does not want to be hindered by others. After staying in Japan for a period of time, and integrating into the Japanese students, he can say "Ko no hon o ka shi te ku re ru?"(Take this book to me), which is in line with a "positive polite principle" of "positive face" for wanting to be

recognized and accepted as a partner, and makes the other person feel close and friendly. Brown & Levinson believes that many language behaviors are essentially threatening to "FACE", and that social communication should respect both the "positive face" and the "negative face", so as to better achieve the purpose of communication, and meet people's desire for "FACE".

AS below, we analyze the "positive politeness strategy" and "negative politeness strategy" in the Japanese politeness principle through several examples of Japanese dialogue.

First, the positive courtesy strategy. The so-called positive politeness strategy is a language strategy to satisfy the others'" positive face": to satisfy the listener in order to shorten the psychological distance from others, and be close to others' desire. There are many strategies in a practical conversation, such as expressing interest in and sharing the topic; praising each other, using dialect markers between partners; joking about laughing and avoiding differences; finding common ground; advocating mutual interests and optimistically shifting awkward topics. Let take a glance at the example. A is chatting with a woman colleague. The woman said that she was 30 years old and has no boyfriend, and according to the public opinion it would feel embrassing that a woman was 30 years old and unmarried, so in order to avoid it, A replied like this. "a, u chi no kaisha ha saa,35sai no onna ga dokushin de, ippai i ru wa yo. Ima no jidai ha ne, kekkonn shi na ku te mo ii de su yo. "(Ah, there are so many 35-year-old single women in our company. It's normal not to get married in this era.) Whether it is true or not, what A said can make the topic easy, comfort the other person, and protect her "FACE".

Next, let's take a look at the "negative politeness strategy" in Japanese. The "negative politeness strategy" is a language strategy to satisfy the other's "negative face": to meet the listener with the purpose of keeping a psychological distance, do not want to be interfered by others. The "negative face" definitely involve no negative meaning. For example, from Brown & Levinson's perspective, the preface expression in Japanese can minimize the damage to the "negative face". For example: "o so re i ri ma su ga, go renraku i ta da ke ru yō o tu ta e ku da sa i." (I would appreciate it if you could ask him to contact me.), "o tesū de su ga, ko no shiryō o yūsō shi te i ta da ke ma su ka." (I am sorry to trouble you, but would you mail this information to me, please?). These two sentences are used to ask others for help, through such preface expression, it can ease their psychological burden and avoid being too much abrupted. "watashi no omoichigai ka mo shi re na i ke re do......" (maybe I understand in the wrong way...), "shitsurei na ko to o itta ra, go men na sa i......" (Please forgive me if I say something wrong...). These two sentences are commonly using preface expression when you express opinions to others. Like the example of "o so re i ri ma su ga (I would appreciate it if)" and "o tesū de su ga((I am sorry to trouble you, but)", they are both language strategies used to minimize the damage to the "negative face" of the listener in communication.

3.2 Politeness Principle of Chinese

Leech's principle of politeness is highly systematic, but it is based on Western culture, and it is not suitable for Chinese culture in many ways. In 1990, Gu Yueguo proposed four features of politeness and displine Chinese culture: respect, humility, enthusiasm, and elegance. In 1992, on the basis of Leech's politeness principle, Gu Yueguo first adopted Chinese culture in his article Politeness, Pragmatism and Culture. According to the connection between ancient "Li(etiquette)" and modern "politeness", he summed up five politeness principles related to Chinese culture, which has strong practicality: (1) The principle of derogatorying oneself and respecting others. It means to "belittle" and "humble"; to "lift" and "respect" the listener or listener. (2) Code of address. That is to take the initiative to greet each other with the appropriate address. (3) Code of refinement. That is to choose elegant language, ban language; use more euphemism and less blunt. (4) Seek common ground criterion. That is to say, the listeners strive for harmony in many aspects, and try to satisfy the other side's desire. (5) Code of morality, speech and action. It means to minimize the cost of others and minimize the benefits to others (great virtue), try to exaggerate the benefits of others to themselves, and try to say the cost they pay (a gentleman).

The two politeness principles have similarities and different characteristics. For example, Gu Yueguo (1990) proposed that the attitude and enthusiasm of Chinese culture and politeness displine

is very different from the politeness principle in Japanese. In Chinese, there is a saying that "nobody will find fault with extra courtesy".　If a person show more etiquette to others, it will not be bored by others, on the contrary will be recognized by others, which can close the distance with others. In Japanese, there is also a familiar saying called "ingin-burei(a feigned politeness)", which means that the etiquette is too much and will makes people feel that it is not sincere instead, and the listener will feel that it is flattering on the surface . These two statements reflect somewhat the differences in the principles of politeness between China and Japan. The Chinese principle of "politeness" is more active than the Japanese language. The speaker has a positive tendency to geting close to each other, hoping them to accept and like it. For example, when a Japanese man drops in at a Chinese friend, the Chinese host will express his hospitality in such language: "There are fruit, biscuits, peanuts, sunflower seeds, tea on the table, you can eat whatever you want, please feel yourself at home." For such a Chinese way of hospitality, the Japanese will feel that is very warm, but also feel lengthy and not easy. We can put this paragraph in a Japanese expression into: "o suki na mo no o dō zo." (please eat whatever you like). In addition, when guests can not stay until the dinner time, Chinese people will generally persuade the guests to stay for many times, and if the guests really want to leave, the host would say: "It is not easy to come, how can you not even eat a meal!" This is slightly mandatory language to express enthusiasm. Such language expression is in line with the principle of Chinese politeness, but it is difficult for the Japanese to understand. The Chinese think that giving, inviting and asking are not impolite to the speaker, but they expose their face to the listener. But for the listener, not meeting the requirements of the speaker will hurt ones' face. The principle of seeking common ground in the politeness principle of Han culture put forward by Gu Yueguo (1992) is to require the listeners to "be less obedient" as far as possible, so as to obtain the harmony of the speakers and listeners.

4. Differences in Distance Awareness and Privacy Awareness in the Sino-Japanese Politeness Principle

As mentioned above, Chinese people like to express their friendliness to others in mandatory and positive ways, while Japanese people believe that there is a difference between inside and outside, and they like to keep a safe distance in interpersonal communication, and they do not want others to interfere in their own behavior. For example, A has already bought movie tickets and he wants to invite B to see it, he would usually say:"eiga no ticket,i chi mai amatte i ru n da ke do......"(I just got one movie ticket...). Why A already bought the ticket but didn't send an invitation to B directly? It is because the Japanese think that if anyone has specially prepared a movie ticket for themselves, even if it is not very convenient to go, they will refuse due to the bad situation. In order to avoid causing trouble to the other, A has adopted such an ambiguous expression, leaving a full choice for the other. If B doesn't want to go, he can gently answer: "sou de su ka, sekkaku de su ke do, ko no goro isogashi ku te ne....." (Well, it is nice of you to do that, but recently I just got a tight schdule...). Honestly, A's attitude is not hard to understand. Such implied-induced expression reflects the characteristics of the Japanese people who pay attention to consider each other's position in communication, and like to use the non-mandatory "negative politeness strategy".

Here's a look at the "positive politeness strategy" conversation between China and Japan about the "private sphere". A is Chinese and B is Japanese.

(1)A: I think your dress is very good-looking. Where did you buy it? how much?

(2) B: ko no huku, hontouni kirei de su ne. totemo o niai de su yo. (What a beautiful dress you have! Very suitable for you!)

From the two examples above, in order to emphasize the intimacy with each other and shorten the psychological distance between them, Chinese people make more remarks in the private field of each other's personal affairs. Japanese feel that when you ask about others' age, income, the price of everything, marital status, you are to violate the other side of the private domain category. Ttherefore, the Japanese praising each other and their property will not ask more about price or other related to theprivate information, while the Chinese use "praise + questions" in the form of communication. Also, like "nan nen umare de su ka? (When were you born?)", "gekkyū ha o ikura

de su ka. (How much is your monthly income?)", "kekkon shi te i ma su ka. (Are you married?)", "okosan ga i ru n de su ka. (How many kids in your family?)" Such questions are extremely common in China, where most Chinese people believe that sharing their personal information can become closer. On the other hand, the question can be extended into more topics, relieve the shyness of the listener after being praised by the other, so that the conversation can become more natural.

It can be said that the Japanese attach more importance to protecting privacy than the Chinese. So what is the scope of the private sector? The other person's desire, wishes, emotion, feeling, psychological activity, will, plans, and ability and possibility are all in the private sphere of the Japanese people. Therefore, although the following Chinese Japanese learners use honorific expressions, they will not leave a good polite impression on the other side, but will make the other unhappy and cause misunderstanding and disgust from the other side. For example: "sensei, so no kaban o omochi ni na re ma su ka. (Sir, can you carry that bag?)", "tennis, odeki ni na ri ma su ka. (Can you play tennis?)", "syuu-matsu ha nani o na sa ru tsu mo ri de su ka. (What are you going to do over the weekend?)",「do chi ra e irassyaru tsu mo ri de su ka. (Where are you going?)」. The question of these sentences lies in the other's ability, intention and other private areas. Take the first example, the speaker also as a student cares about the teacher and wants to help the teacher carry the bag, but this question will make the Japanese teacher feel that the student is questioning his ability and implying his age and physical strength. In fact, we can say: "sensei, so no ka ban o omochi shi ma syou ka. (Teacher, let me carry that bag for you.) ". From questioning the teacher's ability to directly expressing their kindness, this saying will reduce listeners' private domain violation, and in this sentence with such euphemistic questioning way "ma syou ka (let me)", which can both directly express his willingness of helping the teacher to carry the bag, and give the teacher a choice to accept or not, taking care of the listener's "negative face".

It can be seen from the analysis above that due to the different cultural backgrounds of the two countries, the distance awareness between the principle of politeness and the understanding of the private fields also vary greatly. In communication, Chinese people tend to actively approach each other, shorten the distance between both parties, and believe that sharing private information is a sign of intimacy; Instead, Japanese people try to keep a distance from others, and do not like privacy-violation. It can be said that Japanese people are more inclined to use "negative politeness strategy", while Chinese people are more inclined to use "positive politeness strategy".

5. Conclusion

Language expression is closely related to national culture, and the differences in language and culture between China and Japan lead to considerable differences in the principles of politeness between the Chinese and Japanese people in communication. With the accelerating process of globalization, cross-cultural communication ability has become more and more important. Exploring and analyzing the differences in polite principles in different cultural contexts can avoid misunderstandings and conflicts in the process of cross-cultural communication, and deepen and promote the understanding and exchanges between the two peoples. Japanese learning should not only stay on the mechanical memory of grammar vocabulary, but also have a deeper understanding of Japanese culture, thinking and the differences between Chinese and Japanese language culture, which enables us to understand the language performance and communication strategies of Japanese, improves the ability to use Japanese, and achieves successful cross-cultural communication between China and Japan. Japanese teachers should also pay attention to the introduction of cross-cultural communication related knowledge, the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication ability and practical language application ability, so as to realize the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching.

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