

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF JAPANESE FAMILY ADDRESS TERMS AS PART OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Introduction

As one of the commonly observed phenomena in second/foreign language learning, the appropriate use of Japanese family address terms has become a persistent learning difficulty. This paper discusses and explains such a learning difficulty in terms of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences between Japanese and American English. Based on the research findings, it relates such a learning difficulty to cultural aspects of language use in Japanese.¹ By adopting the Acculturation Model in second language acquisition, it proposes that the sociolinguistic studies of language forms and functions should be an indispensable part of second/foreign language learning. That is, if learners acculturate, they will learn; if learners do not acculturate, they will not learn. This is because family address terms reflect interpersonal relationships as identified and expressed in a particular culture, the learning of language-specific terms (i.e., language-specific lexical items) themselves without understanding the appropriate or accurate use of such terms is not sufficient enough for the acquisition of such terms. Thus, second/foreign language acquisition is understood as learners' knowledge of certain specific target language items (i.e., language forms), including vocabulary and grammatical rules, and their appropriate use of them (i.e., language functions). Without understanding the social and cultural aspects of Japanese family address terms and variations in using them in particular speech contexts, learners may know the relevant addressing forms but fail to use them appropriately.²

From some sociolinguistic perspectives, this paper discusses certain semantic implications of Japanese family address terms as commonly used between parents and children, husbands and wives, and siblings. It raises questions like: Why do native Japanese speakers address family members by using various lexical items and address non-family members by using family address terms? Why do they use various formal and informal address terms in different speech contexts? Why are such variations sociolinguistically significant? It also explains the differences between the Japanese and American family

¹ John H. Schumann, "The Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition" in Gingras, Rosario C. ed., *Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*: 27-50 (Arlington VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978). John H. Schumann, *The Pidginization Process: A Model for Second Language Acquisition* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1978). Some researchers have stressed the similarities between second language acquisition and contact situations involving speakers of different languages, such as those in which pidgins and creoles are found. The best-known is the Acculturation Model initially proposed by John H. Schumann. In the original research the concept of acculturation accounted for failure and success in second language learning, 'acculturation' meaning social and psychological integration with the target group. As hypothesized, the integration with the target culture is a key to success in learning a second language.

² Susan M. Gass and Larry Selinker, *Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* (Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2000). These authors emphasize the importance of understanding the relationship between language forms and functions, without which, the appropriate use of target language addressing forms would be impossible.

interpersonal relationships as reflected in their respective lexical items. It further examines language performance data from the natural use of the family address terms by Japanese and American college students in their native language settings in order to explore the potential sources of learner errors created by American students learning Japanese as a foreign language. The research findings provide the evidence that social and cultural differences are the sources of cross-linguistic lexical influence or transfer. The research concludes: (1) Japanese address terms reflect some essential Japanese social and cultural traditions, Japanese social hierarchical structure, and Japanese family values. (2) Learner errors can be caused by cross-cultural differences in perceiving interpersonal relationships as reflected in language-specific lexical items. (3) Any successful second/foreign language acquisition must be understood as acquisition of both target language forms and functions. (4) Acculturation is a crucial part of the learning process itself, without which native-like use of the target language would be impossible.

Japanese Family Address Terms and Their Social Functions

People in any society or culture use language in daily living to refer to various kinds of kin. In sociolinguistic studies of language, there is a considerable literature on kinship terminology, describing how people in various parts of the world refer to relatives by blood (or descent) and marriage.³ Kinship systems are a universal feature of languages, because kinship is so important in social organization. Some kinship systems are much richer than others, but all make use of such factors as gender, age, generation, blood, and marriage in their organization. In any language or social organization, people use address terms to refer to various kinds of kin. However, every language necessarily creates and uses different address terms to describe particular kin relationships as identified in its own culture.⁴

Kinship is also a semantic domain, and like many other semantic domains, the analysis of kinship has been studied from two perspectives: universalist⁵ and relativist⁶. The

³ Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes, *American English: Dialects and Variation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002). These authors explain the complexity of kinship systems in different cultures and the importance of understanding the relationship between various address terms and kinds of kin in particular cultures.

⁴ William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997). Haruhiko Kindaichi, *The Japanese Language* (translated and annotated by Umeyo Hirano) (Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1978). Takao Suzuki, *Japanese and the Japanese: Words in Culture* (translated by Akira Miura) (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International Ltd., 1978). These authors explain why different languages create and use different address terms to describe interpersonal relationships as identified in their particular social and cultural settings.

⁵ Ward H. Goodenough, *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970). Floyd G. Lounsbury, "Another View of the Trobriand Kinship Categories" in Hammel, Eugene A. ed., *Formal Semantic Analysis*: 142-185 (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1965). Floyd G. Lounsbury, "A Formal Account of the Omaha- and Crow-type Kinship Terminologies" in Tyler, Stephen ed., *Cognitive Anthropology: Readings*: 212-255 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969). These authors adopt the universalist approach to the analysis of kinship system by arguing that the nuclear family is a universal cultural phenomenon and any kinship system possesses its kinship terms to reflect the primary and wider kinship relations are related in terms of extension.

⁶ Edmund R. Leach, "Concerning Trobriand Clans and the Kinship Category Tabu" in Goody, Jack ed., *The Developmental Cycle of Domestic Groups*: 120-145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University

universalist approach to the analysis of kinship system sees “the genesis of kinship within the nuclear family, with its primary kinship relationships being the basis of all kinship, the wider kinship relations in the society being derived from these by a process of extension” (Foley, 1999: 131).⁷ In other words, from the universalist perspective the nuclear family is seen as a cultural universal. In this approach the kinship terms of the nuclear family is said to be the universal salient foci of any kinship system as well as its fundamental building blocks. However, the relativist approach sees kinship terminologies as not being solely structured in mainly biological, and particularly genealogical, terms, but, rather in social ones. The relativist approach is based on the assumption that individuals are not simply classified into particular kin categories according to their genealogical connections, because of their membership in certain social groupings, especially those defined by descent or marriage prescriptions. Most relevant to the current studies of kin terms or address terms are two of the relativist’s strong arguments. One is that kin terms often have much wider uses than just reference to individuals related through kin-type (i.e., biological) relationships, and the other is that kinship is not clearly separable from other aspects of social organization. Leach (1958) and Needham (1971) posit that because the categories of social personhood in different cultures are in no obvious way subject to biological constraints.⁸ Of course, the relativistic assumptions can not totally depart from the universal ones in that human cultures first and foremost employ universal biologically given dimensions in kin terms to symbolize social meanings, and such dimensions are the most basic but may not be the only ones.

Based on the above theoretical assumptions regarding kinship systems and terminologies (i.e., address terms), this paper proposes that although categories of kinship are biologically and genealogically identified and named, in different cultures kin terms may go beyond biological or genealogical constraints and reflect culturally based social relationships. This paper only focuses on some most important cultural aspects of Japanese family address terms in relation to some potential learning difficulties caused by cross-cultural differences.

One interesting hypothesis about address terms is that in societies where status is ascribed, that is, derived from birth into a particular social group, we are much more likely to

Press, 1958). Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone, 1962). Rodney Needham, “Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage” in Needham, Rodney ed., *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage*: 1-34 (London: Tavistock). David M. Schneider, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980). David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984). These authors adopt the relativist approach to the analysis of kinship system by assuming that kinship terms are created not only in terms of biological and genealogical connections but also in terms of individuals’ membership in particular social organizations, especially those prescribed by descent or marriage.

⁷ William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*: 131 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999).

⁸ Edmund R. Leach, “Concerning Trobriand Clans and the Kinship Category Tabu” in Goody, Jack ed., *The Developmental Cycle of Domestic Groups*: 120-145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone, 1962). Rodney Needham, “Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage” in Needham, Rodney ed., *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage*: 1-34 (London: Tavistock, 1971). Both authors emphasize that kin terms should be defined in terms of not only biological relationships but also aspects of social groupings.

find sets of finely graded address terms.⁹ Such sets of address terms are employed to reflect the social structures of those societies. Data on Japanese address terms would suggest that these societies are much more stratified and that social position within them is more ascribed than earned. One consequence is that choosing the right terms of address to use in a hierarchical organization may not always be easy. To demonstrate the complexity of Japanese address terms, listed in Table 1 are some most commonly used Japanese address terms for ‘calling’ among family members, and listed in Table 2 are some most commonly used Japanese address terms for ‘introducing’ family members to other people or the public.

Table 1: Japanese Address Terms for Calling among Family Members

Relationship	Variations in Japanese Address Terms
I father	(o-)too-chan, (o-)too-san, papa
I mother	(o-)kaa-chan, (o-)kaa-san, mama
I elder brother	(o-)nii-chan, (o-)nii-san, first name-san, first name, aniki
I elder sister	(o-)nee-chan, (o-)nee-san, first name-san, first name
I younger brother	first name, first name-kun
I younger sister	first name, first name-chan
Father mother	oi, first name, first name-san, (o-)kaa-chan, (o-)kaa-san, mama, (o-)baa-chan, (o-)baa-san
mother father	(o-)too-chan, (o-)too-san, anata, first name, first name-san, papa, (o-)jii-chan, (o-)jii-san
I grandfather	(o-)jii-chan, (o-)jii-san, o-jii, first name-no-(o-)jii-chan, first name-no-(o-)jii-san
I grandmother	(o-)baa-chan, (o-)baa-san, o-baa, first name-no-(o-)baa-chan, first name-no-(o-)baa-san
Parents I	first name, nickname
grandparents I	first name, nickname

Note: (1) The table only includes the most commonly used Japanese address terms in average Japanese daily life. (2) The items in the brackets are optional. (3) The explanation of variations in Japanese address terms is offered in the paper where it is relevant and necessary.

In studying Japanese politeness and the relationship between language forms and functions, Liu (2004) assumes that “Japanese polite forms are deeply embedded in the Japanese social hierarchical structure through its history of social and cultural development,” and “sources of Japanese addressing forms originate in the clearly stratified social status of individuals”.¹⁰ Thus, various Japanese address terms directly reflect the social status that the addresser is currently holding in relation to the addressee.¹¹ It is important to know that in Japanese society speakers are expected to pay tribute to the social hierarchy which is strictly

⁹ William P. Robinson, *Language and Social Behavior* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972). The author hypothesizes that sets of address terms become finely graded in societies where an individual’s social status is ascribed rather than earned.

¹⁰ Quoted from Xuexin Liu, “Politeness as a Social Strategy in Japanese Culture” in Metraus, Daniel A. ed., *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI: 71-90 (A Publication of Southeast Conference Association for Asian Studies, 2004: 78).

¹¹ Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behavior* (New York: Doubleday, 1967). Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes, *American English: Dialects and Variation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). These authors assume that a particular address term that the addresser is using at the moment of speaking reflects his/her current social status in relation to his/her addressee.

based on their age, social status, and gender. “The normative use of polite language is a common practice and a socioculturally expected speech behavior” (Liu, 2004: 78).¹²

Like other languages, in addition to the normative use of language, in Japanese there exist variations in address terms for the addresser’s appropriate choices. Table 1 shows such variations used among Japanese family members. Some address patterns across the relationships as indicated in the table are summarized in the following.

(1) ‘o-’ is the Japanese prefix used together with the suffix such as ‘chan’ or ‘san’ to introduce an honorific address term. In the family situation, it is used by the addresser to his/her senior, such as I father, I mother, I elder brother, and I elder sister. The prefix ‘o-’ can be left out to make an address term less formal but more intimate. It should be obvious that such an honorific address term is used by the addresser to show his/her ‘politeness’ toward his/her addressee.

(2) The degree of so-called ‘politeness’ can be reduced by using the addresser’s first name plus ‘san’ (e.g., Mieko san, Toshi san).

(3) Among family members, informal address terms can also be used, such as ‘oyaji’, ‘o-hukuro’, ‘aniki’, and ‘Meiko’ (first name), to express the addresser’s intimacy or closeness with the addressee.

(4) Borrowed address terms like ‘papa’ and ‘mama’ tend to be used by kids.

(5) When the addresser calls his/her juniors and wants to show his/her ‘politeness’ toward his/her addressee, he/she may use ‘kun’ or ‘chan’ as the suffix attached to the addressee’s first name (e.g., Masamichi kun, Kumiko chan).

(6) When the addresser wants to be informal or casual, he/she uses the addressee’s first name to express intimacy or closeness.

(7) If the relationship is father mother or mother father, the address patterns as mentioned under (1)-(4) are followed. It’s interesting to see that ‘papa’, ‘o-too-san/too-chan’, ‘o-jii-chan and ‘mama’, ‘o-kaa-san’/kaa-chan’, and ‘o-baa-chan’ are also used between the father and the mother (i.e., between the husband and the wife) in the same manner as kids do. In addition, the wife may call her husband ‘anata’ (second person singular: ‘you’) to indicate intimacy.

(8) When the relation is I parents or I grandparents, only the ‘polite’ address terms are used.

(9) When the relationship is parents I or grandparents I, only the addressee’s first name or nickname is used.

The general address patterns commonly practiced among Japanese family members reflect the complexity of the address terms in relation to the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. What stands out as being characteristic lies in the fact that formality vs. informality is embedded in the hierarchical relationship. What may make Japanese address terms more complicated are variations in those used for introducing family members to non-family ones.

¹² Quoted from Xuexin Liu, “Politeness as a Social Strategy in Japanese Culture” in Metraux, Daniel A. ed., *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI: 71-90 (A Publication of Southeast Conference Association for Asian Studies, 2004: 78).

Table 2: Japanese Address Terms for Introducing Family Members to Other People

Relationship	Variations in Japanese Address Terms
I father	(o-)too-chan, (o-)too-san, chichioya, (uchi-no-)chichi, (uchi-no-)oyaji
I mother	(o-)kaa-chan, (o-)kaa-san, hahaoya, (uchi-no-)haha, (uchi-no-)o-hukuro
I elder brother	(o-)nii-chan, (o-)nii-san, ani, ani-no-first name
I elder sister	(o-)nee-chan, (o-)nee-san, ane, ane-no-first name
I younger brother	otooto, otooto-no-first name
I younger sister	imooto, imooto-no-first name
father mother	kanai, tsuma, nyoo boo, uchi-no-mono, (uchi-no-)kami-san, kaa-san, kaa-chan, oku-san, baa-san
mother father	shujin, otto, uchi, uchi-no-hito, (uchi-no-)danna, first name, first name-san, last name, teeshu
I grandfather	sofu, (uchi-no-)(o-)jii-chan, (uchi-no-)(o-)jii-san
I grandmother	soba, (uchi-no-)(o-)baa-chan, (uchi-no-)(o-)baa-san
parents I	(musuko-no-)(uchi-no-)first name/nickname, (musume-no-)(uchi-no-)first name/nickname
Grandparents I	(mago-no-)(uchi-no-)first name/nickname

Note: (1) The table only includes the most commonly used Japanese address terms in average Japanese daily life. (2) The items in the brackets are optional. (3) The explanation of variations in Japanese address terms is offered in the paper where it is relevant and necessary.

The address terms listed in Table 2 are some most commonly used ones for introducing family members to non-family ones. Their characteristics can be summarized as follows.

(1) The honorific prefix ‘o-’ is used together with ‘chan’ or ‘san’ in the same way as those listed in Table 1, that is, the addresser uses it to show his/her politeness, and this prefix is optional for the reason.

(2) For informality or casualty, the addresser uses the family member’s first name introduced by ‘no’ as in ‘ani no Taroo’ (elder brother Taroo), ‘ane no Yuriko’ (elder sister Yuriko), ‘otooto no Jiroo’ (younger brother Jiroo), and ‘imooto no Masako’ (younger sister Masako).

(3) What makes the address terms very different from those listed in Table 1 are those independent lexical items such as ‘chichi’, ‘chichioya’, ‘oyaji’, ‘haha’, ‘hahaoya’, ‘o-hukuro’, ‘ani’, ‘ane’, ‘otooto’, ‘imooto’, ‘kanai’, ‘tsuma’, ‘nyoo boo’, ‘uchi-no-mono’, ‘uchi-no-hito’, ‘uchi-no-kami-san’, ‘shujin’, ‘otto’, ‘danna’, ‘teeshu’, ‘sofu’, ‘soba’, ‘musuko’, ‘musume’, and ‘mago’.

(4) Among such lexical items, some are formal, honorific or humble depending on the relationship between the addresser and the addressee (in this case, the non-family member), but others are ‘informal’ and ‘intimate’.

(5) The apparent differences between the address terms in Table 1 and those in Table 2 for two different communicative settings tend to make the accurate and appropriate choice of particular address terms difficult especially to learners of Japanese as a second/foreign language. It is well known that many factors are involved in using Japanese address terms accurately and appropriately, such as social hierarchies, age differences, formality vs. informality, family vs. non-

family relationships, and so on.¹³

Potential Sources of Learner Errors

Learners may create various errors because of different factors. In other words, there are various potential sources of learner errors. For example, at a certain stage of learning, learners have not learned or acquired a sufficient number of lexical items for particular addressees in particular speech situations. Also, learners may have learned a good number of lexical items but do not know which one(s) should be used appropriately for a particular relationship in a particular speech situation. Furthermore, the address terms listed in Table 1 and Table 2 may be mixed up for different speech situations, such as certain address terms for calling family members may be used for introducing family members to non-family members and vice versa. Discussed below are some most frequently occurring learner errors when the speaker mentions his/her family members to other people.

Situation: The professor asking his/her student the question. *The symbol ‘*’ indicates the improper use of the Japanese address term.*

- (a) A: *o-jii-san to o-baa-san wa ogenki desu ka?*
‘How are your grandfather and grandmother?’
B: **ee, o-jii-san to o-baa-san wa genki desu.*
‘My grandfather and grandmother are fine.’
- (b) A: *o-too-san wa nani wo shite imasu ka?*
‘What is your father doing?’
B: **watashi no o-too-san wa kaisha ni tsutomete imasu.*
‘My father is working at a company.’
- (c) A: *o-kaa-san wa donna hito desu ka?*
‘What kind of person is your mother?’
B: **o-kaa-san wa totemo kirei de yasashii hito desu.*
‘My mother is very beautiful and kind.’
- (d) A: *o-ni-san wa donna hito desu ka?*
‘What kind of person is your elder brother?’
B: **watashi no o-ni-san wa se ga takakute hansamna hito desu.*
‘My elder brother is very tall and handsome.’

¹³ Xuexin Liu, “The Forms of Addressing ‘Wife’ and Their Semantic Implications and Social Functions” in the Japanese National Language Research Institute ed., *Collected Articles on the Japanese Language* (Nihongogaku Ronsetsu), Vol. 16 (1990): 469-474.

- (e) A: *otooto-san to imooto-san wa nani wo shite imasu ka?*
 ‘What are your younger brother and younger sister doing?’
- B: **watashi no otoo-san wa kookoosei de, watashi no imooto-san wa chuugakusei desu.*
 ‘My younger brother is a high school student, and my younger sister is a middle school student.’

It is obvious that the speakers in the above answers should have used the humble address terms rather than the honorific ones. The sources of such learner errors can be traced to cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influence or transfer. Linguistically speaking, in English the address terms like ‘grandfather’, ‘grandmother’, ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘elder brother’, ‘younger brother’, and ‘younger sister’ can be used between any people in any speech situation, but in Japanese the speaker must consider his/her relationship with the listener in a particular speech situation in order to choose the appropriate address terms among the ones available. Culturally speaking, in English speakers are less constrained by the socioculturally prescribed rules, but in Japanese speakers are expected to follow such rules.

In addition, it has been frequently observed that learners may create another type of errors when they ask other people about their family members. Below are some typical instances.

Situation: A student asking his/her professor the questions

- (f) **sensei no musuko wa nansai desu ka?*
 ‘Professor, how old is your son?’
- (g) **sensei no ootoo wa doko ni imasu ka?*
 ‘Professor, where is your younger brother?’
- (h) **Katoosensei no tsuma-san wa Amerikahin desu ka?*
 ‘Is Professor Katoo’s wife an American?’
- (i) **sensei no o-chichi-san to o-haha-san wa doko ni sunde imasu ka?*
 ‘Professor, where are your father and mother living?’
- (j) **sensei no otto-san wa nanijin desu ka?*
 ‘Professor, what is your husband’s nationality?’
- (k) **sensei wa ani-san to ane-san ga imasu ka?*
 ‘Professor, do you have any elder brothers and elder sisters?’

In both (f) and (g), the speakers should have used ‘-san’ in ‘musuko-san’ and ‘otooto-san’. This error may be caused by both cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer. Although in Japanese if the addressee holds a higher social status than the addresser, the latter should show ‘politeness’ or ‘respect’ by using the relevant polite form, in English it is up to the addresser to choose the most appropriate terms for his/her intention. In (h)-(k), the speakers

should have used another group of address terms indicating ‘politeness’ or ‘respect’ to the addressee and his/her family members. For example, in (h) ‘oku-san’, in (i) ‘o-kaa-san’, in (j) ‘go-shujin’, and in (k) ‘o-nii-san’ and ‘o-nee-san’ should have been used. Again, the potential sources of such learner errors can be traced to cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influence or transfer. It is for this reason that this paper proposes that acculturation should be regarded as an important part of second/foreign language learning process.

Acculturation as a Learning Process

Schumann’s Acculturation Model (1978) was established to account for the acquisition of a second language by immigrants in majority language settings.¹⁴ It specifically excludes learners who receive formal instruction. Brown defines acculturation as “the process of becoming adapted to a new culture” (1980: 129),¹⁵ is seen by Schumann as governing the extent to which learners achieve target-language norms. “... second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target-language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language (1978: 34).¹⁶ The model recognizes the developmental nature of second language acquisition and seeks to explain differences in learners’ rate of development and also in their ultimate level of achievement in terms of the extent to which they adapt to the target-language culture. Although the Acculturation Model was proposed specifically for studies of second language acquisition, it is also directly relevant to studies of foreign language acquisition in general, such as learning Japanese outside the target-language settings (e.g., learning Japanese in the United States). The relevance of the model to foreign language acquisition can be explained as follows.

(1) Acculturation can be seen as one aspect of the overall process of second/foreign language acquisition. Degree of success in second/foreign acquisition is thus determined by degree of success in acculturation in general. This is because acculturation may affect the nature of the verbal interactions that learners take part in and thus the quality as well as the quantity of target-language input.

(2) Acculturation becomes more difficult in foreign language acquisition because learners do have no direct access to the target-language cultural environment or no direct contact with the target-language natural communicative contexts. Such a difficulty makes the acquisition of the cultural aspects of the target-language in relation to specific lexical items and the appropriate use of them an indispensable part of the learning process itself.

¹⁴ John H. Schumann, “The Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition” in Gingras, Rosario C. ed., *Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*: 27-50 (Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978). Xuexin Liu, “Politeness as a Social Strategy in Japanese Culture” in Metraus, Daniel A. ed., *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI: 71-90 (A Publication of Southeast Conference Association for Asian Studies, 2004: 78). The author proposes that the extent to which second language learners achieve target language proficiency is to a great extent determined by learners’ integration with the target culture.

¹⁵ Penelope Brown, “How and Why Are Women More Polite: Some Evidence from a Mayan Community” in McConnell-Ginet, Sally, Borker, Ruth and Furman, Nelly eds., *Women and language in Literature and Society*: 111-136 (New York: Praeger).

¹⁶ John H. Schumann, “The Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition in Gingras, Rosario C. ed., *Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*: 27-50 (Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978: 34).

(3) The culture of the foreign language learning group may be similar to or different from that of the target-language group. Thus, cultural congruence becomes one of the factors affecting social and psychological distance.¹⁷ As predicted, the greater the difference between the two cultures, the greater the learning difficulty.

(4) Foreign language learning, like second language learning, is to a great extent also cultural learning due to the fact that every language serves communicative functions in a society by using appropriate language forms for particular functions. Without understanding the cultural aspects of specific target-language items, native-like use of the target-language will be impossible.

The current discussion of the complexity in Japanese address terms and the potential sources of learner errors is directly relevant to the issues of acculturation. This paper proposes that acculturation should be understood not only as an important part of non-educational second language learning process but also as a crucial part of educational foreign language learning process (in the current case, formal Japanese learning in a non-Japanese speaking country). Cultural understanding of Japanese address terms, including all other culturally-embedded lexical items, and appropriate use of them become extremely necessary for those whose culture differs dramatically from that of the target language. It may be argued that the acquisition of native-like proficiency becomes possible if textbooks offer natural language material and instructors provide native or native-like natural language input. However, without direct contact with the target language culture or sufficient natural language input and exchange for real communication, acculturation by some means or other become necessary. This paper suggests the following.

(1) Foreign language teaching and learning should pay close attention to cultural aspects of target language items because foreign language learning is also foreign cultural learning, without which real understanding of language-specific items would be difficult or impossible.¹⁸ This can be done by connecting target language items to their actual use in specific native cultural environment.

(2) In the same manner, target language forms should be taught and learned in terms of their sociocultural functions in natural communicative settings. This is because without understanding the specific functions of target language forms, appropriate or native-like use of target language would be difficult or impossible.¹⁹ Like most types of learning, foreign

¹⁷ John H. Schumann, *The Pidginization Process: A Model for Second Language Acquisition* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1978). The author assumes that the degree of difference between second language learners' native culture and their target culture determines the degree of learning difficulty, and cultural congruence becomes an important factor affecting learners' social and psychological distance with the target group.

¹⁸ Xuexin Liu, "Politeness as a Social Strategy in Japanese Culture" in Metraus, Daniel A. ed., *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI: 71-90 (A Publication of Southeast Conference Association for Asian Studies, 2004). The author relates foreign language learning to foreign cultural learning and emphasizes the importance of the appropriate use of target language items in the target cultural environment.

¹⁹ Longxing Wei, "Unequal Election of Morphemes in Adult Second Language Acquisition." *Applied Linguistics*, 21/1 (2000): 106-140. Longxing Wei, "The Bilingual Mental Lexicon and Speech Production Process." *Brain and Language*, 81(2002): 691-707. The author emphasizes the relationship between target language forms and their sociocultural functions, and the importance of meaningful learning.

language learning must be meaningful because only meaningful learning can promote acquisition.

(3) In order to make a connection between language forms and their functions for communication, instructors should not only offer native or native-like input,²⁰ but also create communicative interaction among learners in the classroom teaching and learning environment.²¹ In addition to some essential knowledge of the target language, appropriate use of specific target language items for natural communication should be emphasized for better learning.

Conclusion

This paper has explored some cultural aspects of Japanese address terms in relation to foreign language learning. It has presented and explained certain complexity of Japanese address terms used among family members and between family members and non-family members. Based on the analysis of sources of learner errors, it has proposed the acculturation approach to foreign language teaching and learning. Below are the major conclusions as reached by the current research.

(1) Foreign language learning can never be separated from foreign cultural learning. Every language has its own particular ways of realizing the social and interpersonal relationships among speakers living in the same speech community. Address terms are one of the linguistic means by which such relationships are expressed.

(2) Not only cross-linguistic differences but also cross-cultural differences can be potential sources of learner errors. Without understanding the cultural aspects of specific target language items, learners will remain at the superficial level of foreign language acquisition, and such an acquisition is of no real value in terms of learners' communicative competence. Acculturation should be an indispensable part of second/foreign language learning process.

(3) In foreign language learning situations, it is instructors' responsibility to offer natural language input and create culturally related foreign language learning activities in which target language-specific items are practiced for communication. Only such meaningfully learned target language items can be truly 'acquired'.

²⁰ Stephen P. Corder, "The Significance of Learners' Errors." *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 5 (1967), 161-170. The author emphasizes the role of target (native) language or native-like input in second language learning.

²¹ Evangeline M. Varonis and Susan M. Gass, "Non-native/non-native Conversations: A Model for Negotiation of Meaning." *Applied Linguistics*, 6 (1985), 71-90. These authors emphasize the importance of communicative interaction among second language learners even in classroom settings.