

Perspective Difference in ‘Bald on Record’ between Japanese and English Speakers

Yuka Shigemitsu^{*1}

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to show a different perspective on ‘bald on record’ strategy between English speakers and Japanese speakers. ‘Bald on record’ strategy is one of the politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987). It is acceptable to use the bald on record strategy in Japanese when the following Rule 1 and Rule 2 are applied. Rule 1: Gricean Maxim efficiency is very important and this is mutually known to both Speaker and Hearer. Rule2: Power Difference between Speaker and Hearer is great. Sub-Rule 1: Do not use the bald-on-record strategy to the situation unless they are in the same rank as you. Sub-rule 2: Don’t use bald-on record strategies when you feel superior to your close friend. Sub-rule 3: Don’t use the bald-on-record strategies when Speaker and Hearer clearly have different opinions. Sub-rule 4: Don’t use the bald-on-record when you mention the Hearer’s defect. Sub-rule 5: Even saying in hinting, if it violates those sub rules above.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to show a different perspective on ‘bald on record’ strategy between English speakers and Japanese speakers. ‘Bald on record’ strategy is one of the politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987). I found that Japanese people have difficulty in catching the correct concept of ‘baldness’ in communication when I introduced it to the students in three different colleges. Japanese students put more emphasis on interpersonal aspect between Speaker and Hearer rather than the proposition of utterances. In this paper, I would like to give you an overview of ‘Bald on record.’ After that, how and why Japanese perceive ‘baldness’ are different from the original bald-on-record strategies given by Brown and Levinson are illustrated. Finally, I would like to suggest some rules which apply to use of bald-on-record strategies.

2. Overview of Bald on Record

Brown and Levinson’s Politeness theory has been the most influential for over thirty years. ‘Rationality’ and ‘face’ are key concept for their theory. Brown and Levinson claim that these two terms are universal to all people in the world. Rationality is defined as the application of a specific mode of reasoning that guarantees inferences from ends or goals to means that will satisfy those ends. Since Brown

^{*1} Associate Professor, General Education and Research Center, Tokyo Polytechnic University
Received Sept. 10, 2004

and Levinson's objective is to arrive at a universal theory, they treat this concept broadly rather than as a culturally specific one (Usami, 2002, 12). Face consists of two specific kinds of desires (wants) attributed by every competent adult members: positive face and negative face. Positive face is the desire to be approved of, liked, admired, accepted, understood, and so forth. Negative face is the desire to be unimpeded, in other words, not to be imposed upon. Brown and Levinson define politeness as a face-saving strategy which addresses both the positive and the negative face needs of the interlocutor (Usami, 2002). The Figure 1 shows possible politeness strategies for doing Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). FTAs are a wide variety of acts including greetings, requests, invitations, and refusals.

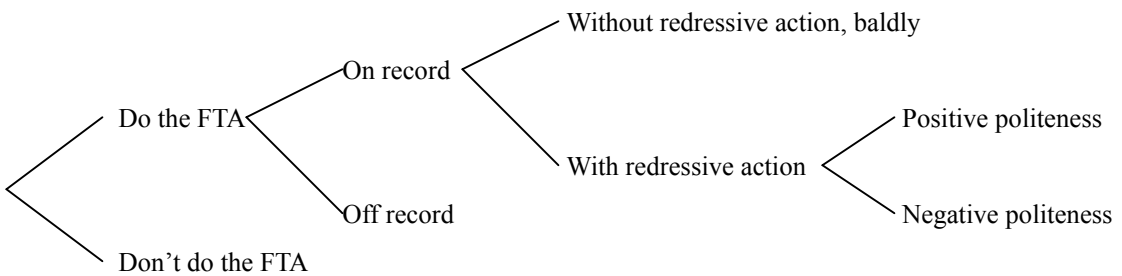


Fig. 1 Possible strategies for doing FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69)

This paper focuses on bald-on-record strategies which are shown as ‘Don’t do the FTAs’ in Fig. 1. One of the politeness strategies is usually selected according to the weight of the FTA_x(W_x) that is calculated by speakers from the social variables such as power difference between speaker and hearer (P), the perceived social distance between speaker and hearer (D), and ranking of imposition (R). R differs from culture to culture because they are ways of how threatening or dangerous in a specific culture. P, D and R do not have any absolute value. Mainly a speaker valued them according to the situation and culture subjectively. Thus, weightiness is calculated as follows.

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(S, H) + R_x$$

According to the Brown and Levinson, Speaker does not consider P, D and R value for bald-on-record strategies. However, still, even for bald-on-record, Speaker had better take P, D and R value into consideration to save the Hearer's face. In the following section, bald-on-record strategies presented in Brown and Levinson (1987) are overviewed.

3. Bald-on-record strategies

In Brown and Levinson (1987), bald-on-record strategy is treated as speaking in conformity with Grice's Maxims (Grice 1975).

Maxim of Quality: Be sincere.

Maxim of Quantity: Don't say less than is required/Don't say more than is required.

Maxim of Relevance: Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner: Avoid ambiguity.

Bald on record strategies may be used whenever a speaker wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he/she wants to satisfy the hearer's face. There are different kinds of bald-on-record usage in different circumstances, because S can have different motives for his want to do the FTA with maximum efficiency.

There are two kinds of bald-on-record usage.

Type 1: Where face is ignored or is irrelevant so the face threat is not minimized.

Type 2: S minimizes face threats by implication where in doing the FTA baldly on record.

Because of the Type 2, we also have to consider P, D and R and face redressing is required.

Let us overview these two types of bald-on-record strategies studying examples from Brown and Levinson (1987) and I will summarize bald-on-record strategy (94-101).

3.1 Type I: Non-minimization of the face threat

According to Brown and Levinson, Type I is the standard uses of bald-on-record usages where other demands override face concerns.

3.1.1 Maximum efficiency

Where maximum efficiency is very important, and this is mutually known to both S and H, face redress is not required. In cases of great urgency or desperation, redress would actually decrease the communicated urgency.

(1) Help!

You should compare the non-urgent 'Please help me, if you would be so kind.'

(2) Watch out!

(3) Your pants are on fire!

(4) Give me just one more week! (to pay the rent)

3.1.2 Metaphorical urgency for emphasis.

When Speaker speaks as if maximum efficiency were very important, he provides metaphorical urgency for emphasis. Attention-getters are included in this sub-category of Type I.

(5) Listen, I've got an idea.

(6) Hear me out.

(7) Look, the point is this.

These metaphorical usages seem to occur in many languages with the same superficial syntax---imperatives. In English, there are some formulaic entreaties.

(8) Excuse me.

(9) Forgive me.

(10) Pardon me.

(11) Accept my thanks.

In Japanese, we cannot obtain any expression in normal context

3.1.3 Metaphorical urgency for high valuation of H's friendship

The metaphorical entreaties are stressing his or her high valuation of H's friendship.

(12) Send me a postcard.

(13) Don't forget us.

3.1.4 Overcoming Channel noise

Where communication difficulties exert pressure to speak with maximum efficiency, these bald-on-record usages are used. In (14), the speaker is calling across the distance or talking on the telephone with a bad connection as in (15).

(14) Come home right now!

(15) I need another \$1000.

3.1.5 Task oriented/paradigmatic form of instruction

Where the focus of interaction is task-oriented, face redress may be felt to irrelevant.

(16) Lend me a hand here.

(17) Give me the nails.

The following two are the usages of paradigmatic form of instructions and recipes:

(18) Open other end.

(19) Add three cups of flour and stir vigorously.

3.1.6 Power difference between S and H (S is higher)

If there is power difference between S and H, and S's power is greater than H, S does not have to redress the expression in order to satisfy H's face, bald-on-record usages are found.

(20) Bring me wine, Parker.—Yes, me lady.

3.1.7 Sympathetic advice or warnings

In doing the FTA, S conveys that he or she does care about H (and therefore about H's positive face), so that no redress is required. Sympathetic advice or warning may be baldly on record.

(21) Be careful! He's a dangerous man.

(22) Your slip is showing.

(23) Your wig is askew; let me fix it for you.

(24) Your headlights are on!

3.1.8 Permission that H has requested

Granting permission for something that H has requested may likewise be baldly on record.

(25) Yes, you may go.

3.2. Type II. FTA-oriented bald-on-record usage

This use of bald on record is actually oriented to face. This illustrates the way in which respect for face involves mutual orientation, so that each participant attempts to foresee what the other participant is attempting to foresee. For in certain circumstances it is reasonable for S to assume that H will be especially circumstances it is polite for S to eliminate S's anxieties by pre-emptively inviting H to impinge on S's preserve. There are three subcategories in Type II.

- (i) welcoming (or post-greetings), where Speaker insists that h may imposes on his negative face;
- (ii) farewells, where Speaker insists that Hearer may transgress on his positive face by taking his leave
- (iii) offers, where Speaker insists that Hearer may impose on Speaker's negative face.

Let us look at the examples that Brown and Levinson offer (1987).

3.2.1 Welcome

(26) Come in, don't hesitate, I'm not busy.

Brown and Levinson say that 'come in' is a bald-on record imperative in many languages, as I show later Japanese is exception.

3.2.2 Greetings and Farewells

Brown and Levinson do not give the English examples however, they give examples from Tzeltal and some New Guinea pidgin English.

3.2.3 Offers

Again, Brown and Levinson do not give the English examples. They give some Tzeltal examples.

3.2.4 Others

Other cases of bald-on-record imperatives seem to be addressed to H's reluctance to transgress on S's positive face (as contrasted with the above, that are aimed at forestalling H's reluctance to impinge on S's negative face.)

(27) Don't worry about me.

(28) Don't let me keep you.

Here, S communicates essentially 'Feel free to get on with your business and don't worry about offending me.'

(29) Don't mind the mess.

In (29), S communicates something like, 'Don't worry that I will mind you seeing me in such a mess: I won't.'

Brown and Levinson add a note that only sometimes is the 'urgency' expressed by such face-oriented bald-on-record usages are totally unredressed. Therefore, it may often be emphasized by positive-politeness hedges:

(30) Do come in, I insist, really!

(31) Do go first.

It may be softened by negative-politeness respect terms, or by 'please.'

4. Findings from Japanese data

I have overviewed the bald on-record strategies by Brown and Levinson. Then, I would like to point out the different picture of bald-on-records strategies in Japanese. Politeness Principle (PP) explains why, despite the maxims of Quality and Quantity, people sometimes quite appropriately say things that are false or less informative than is required (Moedesty 1983: pp. 80-1 cited in Brown and Levinson 1987).

Japanese expressions presented in this paper were obtained from class activities at three different colleges where I teach pragmatics. Students wrote Japanese expression after preview the B and L's

politeness strategies. Their task is to give one expression for each five strategies and gave context suitable for expression. Then, students found that some expressions were prohibited at some contexts or would have some risk if he or she really uttered them. Then I revised the task a little. Their new task was to write two expressions each. One of them should be acceptable in a context. The other should be unacceptable in a certain context. As a result, I gained different aspect of bald on record from the student intuitions. So this data can be called some side-products of the task in the classroom with native Japanese speakers' intuition.

Now let us examine the bald-on-record strategy from the viewpoint of Japanese. Followings are the list of the classification and sub-classification having done by Brown and Levinson (1987). The following list is from section 3.1.

Type I: Where face is ignored or is irrelevant so the face threat is not minimized.

- (i) Maximum efficiency
- (ii) Metaphorical urgency for emphasis
- (iii) Metaphorical urgency for high valuation of H's friendship
- (iv) Overcoming Channel noise
- (v) Task oriented/paradigmatic form of instruction
- (vi) Power difference between S and H (S is higher)
- (vii) Sympathetic advice or warnings
- (viii) Permission that H has requested

Type II: FTA-oriented bald-on-record usage

- (i) welcoming
- (ii) farewells
- (iii) offers
- (iv) Other cases of bald-on-record imperatives seem to be addressed to H's reluctance to transgress on S's positive face

4.1 Bald on record strategies application rules

Let us examine the Japanese expressions comparing with examples offered by Brown and Levinson (1987).

4.1.1 Rule 1: Gricean Maxim efficiency is very important and this is mutually known to both Speaker and Hearer.

As for type one, where maximum efficiency is very important, and this is mutually known to both

Speaker and Hearer, no face redress is necessary, this usages applies to Japanese. See the examples below.

(32) *Tobidasuna* (Don't run out into the street). [When someone is in danger as in car is coming in high speed]

(33) *Abunai!*(You are in danger.) [Any dangerous situation]

Both (32) and (33) can be uttered in any situation and conform with Gricean Maxims. Notice that (32) is in an imperative form however, (33) is in statement form which describes only the situation. (32) and (33) can be called bald-on-record expressions.

4.1.2 Rule2: Power Difference between Speaker and Hearer is great

Some imperatives are acceptable only when the hearer is lower than the speaker.

(34) *Doite.* (Get out of my way.) [to the younger]

(34') **Doite* [to the elder and someone at the same rank as the speaker]

So now we obtain the limited use of imperatives according to the hearer's relative status. However, such imperatives give very strong impression of power difference to the Hearer, it is usually redressed with some minimum stylistic auxiliary and sentence final form with indirect form. The direct form is used to make a definite and most assertive statement in English while the indirect form in Japanese is used to make a less definite and weaker assertion. Japanese try to avoid such direct form, so imperatives are redressed with some honorific.

Japanese tend not to use imperatives as a bald on record expressions, and even hinting impress the interlocutor the bald on record expression, I would say it is a maximum of baldness. Brown and Levinson (1987: 5) comment if the speaker has broken the maxim of Tact (or some such sub-principle); however, given the Politeness Principle, we must assume that the speaker is in fact following the PP, the only way to preserve this assumption is to assume that he is not in a position to observe the maxim of Tact, say because he is in a hurry; it is clear that we can work this out ; therefore he P-implicates that he in a hurry.' We take this to be a *reductio*, and an argument against setting up politeness principles as coordinate in nature to Grice's Cooperative Principle.

'The theory of territory of information (Kamio, 1990, 1997)' can provide an explanation for this phenomenon. In his theory, the set of information which falls into one's general storage of information is a conceptual category called the territory of information. In the theory, the indirect form can be used when a

given piece of information falls outside the speaker's territory (Kamio, 1997, 52). Kamio gives examples of statement sentences. However, this aspect can be applied to bald on record expression. Therefore, Japanese avoid using bald on record expression without redress.

Actions including in the PP is mostly performative utterances. Some typical examples of Japanese performatives given in Kamio (1987, 77-78) are in the following,

(35)a. *Okyakusama, sain o onegai shimasu.*

(Mr. Ms., I request you to sign.)

b. *Hikokunin o tyooeiki 2-nen ni sho suru.*

(I sentence two year's labor on the defendant.)

c. *Kokoni honsen o Diana-zyouoo-goo to nazukemasu.*

(I hereby name this ship Queen Diana.)

According to Kamio, in all these typical performative utterances it is clear that information expressed in them falls within the speaker's territory to the fullest degree. Moreover, there are many instances of Japanese performatives that take the non-direct form. (37) is also given in Kamio (1997, 78).

(36) a. *Kooen o onegai sitai to omou-n desu ga.*

(I think I would like to ask you to give us a talk.)

b. *Kono hune o Diana-zyouoo-goo to nazukemasyoo.*

(We will name the ship Queen Diana.)

In a situation more informal than those of examples (1), we can make a request of someone by using an indirect form like (1a) or name a ship in an informal lunching ceremony by an indirect form like (1c).

Kamio mentions how politeness is treated with the theory of territory of information. He classified the treatment of politeness within the theory into three different types.

1) The principles of information apply without any modification.

2) The principles of territory of information are intentionally violated to make an utterance polite.

2-1) Cases where information falling within the speaker's territory of information is intentionally made to move outside the speaker's territory

2-2) Cases where information falling outside the speaker's territory is made to move inside the speaker's territory.

4.2 Other sub rules

It can be said that those two rules above govern the main use of bald-on record strategy. They are very limited to a limited situation. This is because the following sub rules govern the usages and has strongly culturally biased usages.

4.2.1 Sub-Rule 1: Do not use the bald-on-record strategy to the situation unless they are in the same rank as you.

The metaphorical urgency for emphasis cannot be found in collected data. Metaphorical urgency for high valuation of H's friendship cannot be found in the collected data either. However, it is said that Japanese distinguish the situation which accepts the bald on record strategy when he/she talks to someone who is very close and when he/she talks to someone who is not close or strangers.

(37) Machigatteiru. (you are wrong) [to someone who is close to the speaker, family, close friends]

(37') *Machigatteiru [to someone who is not close to the speaker]

(38) Kotae ga machigatteiru. (Your answer is wrong.) [to someone who is close to the speaker]

(38') *Kotae ga machigatteiru. [to someone who is not close to the speaker]

Some students say that it is impolite to point out the teachers' mistakes. For example, when teachers write wrong Chinese character and misspelling English words, they will not point them out to the teacher because it is very impolite and they know the correct words, they neglect the mistakes. It is interesting that students say that they correct teachers' mistakes when teacher writes numerical formulas. It is because the mistakes relate to the incorrect result. This math example can be included in rule 1. Efficiency is more important than the face saving acts and this is mutually known to both Speaker and Hearer.

4.2.2 Sub-rule 2: Don't use bald-on record strategies when you feel superior to your close friend

(39) **Benkyo-shiro*. (Do study) [To a close friend who failed a test which Speaker passed.]

The reason why it is unaccepted is that if so, Speaker emphasizes his superiority to his close friends.

4.2.3 Sub-rule 3: Don't use the bald-on-record strategies when Speaker and Hearer clearly have

different opinions

It is because the different opinion creates arguing atmosphere and conflict among friends. The examples are shown (37')* and (38')*.

4.2.4 Sub-rule 4: Don't use the bald-on-record when you mention the Hearer's defect

This includes example as in (22) and (23) in English. However, in Japanese, it is impolite if it S conveys that he or she does care about H (and therefore about H's positive face).

4.2.5 Sub-rule 5: Even saying in hinting, if it violates those sub rules above.

It is because violating sub-rules above has same value as impinging on Hearer's territory. This act is not accepted in Japan and limited to the particular situation. As a result, some pragmatically unacceptable sentences can be seen in some places. The following examples are found at a bus stop at a university located in suburban Tokyo.

(40)?? *Yakan ni shudan de sawagu nado, MEIWAKU koui wa oyame kudasai. KINRIN NI MEIWAKU O KAKENAI tame no hairyo o onegai shimasu.* (The university would like to ask you no to be nuisance to the neighbors, such as making loud noises with many other people at night please. The university would also like to ask you to extend to neighbors your thoughtful consideration.) [Capital letters are written with the bold time letter on the sign board.]

(40) is written on the sign board that is put by the university. However, from the location of the sign we can assume the target reader is its students who make a lot of noise that makes the neighbor annoyed. This honorific misusages are result of the writer's attitude toward the target reader. The writer's attitude tries to redress this FTA somehow. Every order in the sign is the action in the Hearer's territory. Speaker and Hearer relation in this situation has great power difference. So clearly, Rule 2 can be applied. However, psychologically, the writer avoid to do it because it sounds strong. In this situation, the writer should write some neutral expression of nominal sentence without any honorifics, redress as in

(41) *Yakan Meiwaku Koui Kinshi* (No loud noises at night).

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I surveyed the usage of bald-on-record strategies in Japanese and compare them with English usages. It is found that 1) Bald-on-record is seldom used in Japanese and its usages are restricted to the situation according to the power relation (S, H) and distance (S, H). Moreover, even some expressions

categorized in Brown and Levinson's off-record strategies, Japanese people perceive them as a bald-on-record strategy and 'being said straight out'. As the rules given shows, Japanese face threatening act is redressed in such culturally based biases. It is concluded that to use the bald on record strategy in Japanese is acceptable when the following Rule 1 and Rule 2 are applied. Rule 1: Gricean Maxim efficiency is very important and this is mutually known to both Speaker and Hearer. Rule2: Power Difference between Speaker and Hearer is great. Sub-Rule 1: Do not use the bald-on-record strategy to the situation unless they are in the same rank as you. Sub-rule 2: Don't use bald-on record strategies when you feel superior to your close friend. Sub-rule 3: Don't use the bald-on-record strategies when Speaker and Hearer clearly have different opinions. Sub-rule 4: Don't use the bald-on-record when you mention the Hearer's defect. Sub-rule 5: Even saying in hinting, if it violates those sub rules above.

Notes:

* shows pragmatically incorrect expression.

?? shows pragmatically questionable expression.

References:

- Brown, Penelope. and Levinson, Steven. (1987) *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kamio, Akio. (1990) *Joho no Nawabari Riron. Gengo no Kinouteki Bunseki. (Territory of Information—Functional analysis.)* Tokyo: Taishukan.
- Kamio, Akio. (1997) *Territory of Information*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Usami, Mayumi. (2002) *Discourse Politeness in Japanese Conversation: Some Implications for a Universal Theory of Politeness*. Tokyo: Hitsuji Shobo.