

The strategic use of speech style shifts in Japanese radio

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Abstract

Speech styles reflect not only the relationship between speakers but also the formality of an interaction. In many languages, Asian in particular, speech style is encoded in a complex pronominal and honorific system. Which speech style speakers choose depends on social factors such as age, status, type of relationship, and the situation. Speakers are expected to choose the appropriate style, particularly in formal situations, because the use of incorrect style can incur social consequences.

However, momentary shifts of speech styles have been observed in casual and formal Japanese interactions even though all social factors remain the same. This study looks at such speech style shifts used in radio phone-in programs and demonstrates that they are strategically used to conduct the program in an informative and engaging way. These findings provide a different perspective for viewing speech style: not as an exclusive encoder of social relationships, but as psychological and discourse functions particular to 'institutional' broadcasting settings.

Introduction

Brown and Gilman (1972) published their pioneering work titled 'The pronouns of power and solidarity' in which they describe how social relationships are encoded in two different personal pronouns. They describe speakers of some European languages as having a pronominal system based on status differences known as the *T/V* paradigm. *T* pronouns are used among intimates and are an indication of solidarity, whereas the *V* pronouns are used towards higher status people. The difference in status between interlocutors means that the pronouns are not reciprocated and this

creates a power difference. Asian languages too, possess a complex system of not only pronouns but also honorifics that operate in the same way as the *T/V* system. In Japanese, speech styles are defined by the degree of formality, and differences of age and status between interlocutors. An additional factor that influences the choice of speech style is known as the *uchi/soto* concept or in-group/out-group membership. Membership inclusion or exclusion is crucial not only in the choice of speech style but also of honorifics and other syntactic constructions.

Two speech styles in Japanese, known as the polite or *desu/masu* form and the informal or the *da* form, function similarly to the *T/V* pronominal system. Both styles are expressed in different verbal, nominal and adjectival endings and signal the interpersonal relationships between speakers. The polite form is used in formal situations, among people who do not know each other well, by someone who is of lower status or by a younger person talking to an older person. The polite form indexes social distance. The plain form on the other hand, indexes solidarity and is used among family members, friends and towards people of lower status or to persons younger than the speaker, and in informal settings. The same conceptual statements can be expressed in various ways with polite and plain styles encoded usually at the end of phrases or sentences. As Matsumoto (1988) writes, even the simplest greeting has the degree of formality encoded. Thus, the greeting 'How are you?' is expressed in the polite honorific as *ogenki deirasshaimasu ka?*, in the polite form as *ogenki desu ka*, and in the informal form as *genki?*

More than thirty years have passed since the publication of Brown and Gilman's (1972) work, yet, interest in the relationship between social structure and language has not diminished. It has, in fact, increased with the birth of politeness theories that explain how language is used. The first and most influential theory is based on the universal concept of 'face' (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Other approaches have followed which take a critical approach and are based on discernment (Ide, 1989) and more recently on the heterogeneity of cultures (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003). In Japanese in particular, the interest in politeness has created a debate in relation to the use of honorifics (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988; Usami, 2002; Yoshida and Sakurai, 2005).

Despite the fact that speech style reveals the type of relationship between interlocutors, shifts from informal to formal and vice versa have been observed in Japanese despite the fact that all factors remain unchanged. These shifts have been looked at by several scholars from different viewpoints; but, the majority have analysed them from the perspective of politeness. However, it is immediately clear that there are limitations when trying to explain these shifts from the point of view of politeness alone: given that there has not been any change in the relationship between the interlocutors, politeness cannot fully explain instances of co-occurring formal and informal styles.

Style shifts have been observed in many types of discourse, spoken and written. However, shifts from formal to informal in broadcast discourse occur often enough to attract attention. The fact that 'institutional' discourse is a public exchange, in which the inappropriate use of speech styles carries a greater risk than everyday conversation for all interlocutors, suggest that there might be particular reasons independent of social factors for the occurrence of such shifts.

This paper examines the motivations behind speech style shifts in institutional-radio discourse. The frequency of style shifts in this genre suggests the preliminary conclusion that interlocutors must have a particular motive in making these shifts, and that they cannot be explained on the basis of their social status or interpersonal relations; but other factors more closely related to the nature of the broadcast interaction are likely to be at work.

The radio phone-in programs analysed indicate that speech style shifts have diverse functions which are particular to the nature of broadcast discourse. Not only do shifts encode the social distance between interlocutors, but they are also used as an interactional strategy by the host and the counsellor in order to conduct the program successfully. These shifts can be inclusive or exclusive strategies towards the caller and the over-hearing audience.

Past Studies

Speech style shifts in Japan were noticed quite early (for a fuller discussion see Maynard, 1991) by grammarians and language educators who have criticized this phenomenon as 'incorrect' use of language, a view still maintained today particularly in relation to the written language. However, style shifts occur frequently enough to have caught the attention of linguists who have looked at this phenomenon from various viewpoints.

The first works published in English on this topic were by Makino (1983) and Ikuta (1983). Makino (1983) defines the Principle of Speaker-Orientation as being based on the assumption that there are two different mechanisms in conversation: speaker orientation and listener orientation. Makino's approach provides a ready explanation for some of the shifts, in particular, those that are considered to be more self-directed. However, his approach is problematic because it does not take into account social factors that are the most essential determinants in speech styles. Ikuta (1983) uses the concept of interpersonal distance and explains that speakers shift to informal or [-Distant] style when they feel psychologically closer to the listener and [+Distant] when they feel that appropriate distance should be kept. She argues that speakers can use these shifts quite skilfully

without violating any social rules. She also explains that when very personal and delicate topics are being discussed, speakers will choose the [+Distant] style even though this seems to be a contradiction as empathy involves a closer interpersonal relationship. While her study is a pioneering work in the concept of personal distance, it cannot be used to explain all types of shifts.

Discourse modality has been used to explain speech style shifts in spoken and written data (Maynard, 1991, 2001). Maynard (1991) found that the informal style is used when speakers:

1. suddenly recall or explain something;
2. vividly express events;
3. talk to themselves;
4. jointly create utterances;
5. present background information; or
6. express an intimate relationship with the listener.

The polite style is used when speakers:

- a. express a thought which directly addresses the listener; or
- b. communicate essential information.

Maynard (2001) also incorporates the concept of 'awareness of thou' when discussing shifts from polite to informal styles. While her works cover a range of shifts, the complete absence of social factors in the analysis is rather problematic as speech styles are essentially based on the social status of speakers.

Psychological motivations for shifts to the informal style were connected to the need to express ideas directed inwardly or when the topics were about non-controllable matters (Makino 2002).

Using the theories of universal politeness and discernment politeness, speech style shifts were examined in natural data (Megumi, 2002; Cook, 2006). Cook (2006) argued that social identities are created in moment-by-moment interaction because speakers have a choice at each and every turn and they are by no means passively following the social rules of discernment. Megumi (2002) takes an opposing view arguing that social factors are crucial in the overall choice of polite and plain forms. In her analysis of a discussion where two seniors consistently use plain forms whereas the junior student uses polite speech, Megumi shows that age, status and discernment are basic determinants in an interaction.

A more complex picture emerged when multiple theories were used to explain style shifts (Janes, 2000). The use of sentence-final particles with plain forms appears to be motivated by negative politeness, thus providing listeners with more choices of how to respond. On the other hand, shifts

motivated by the 'awareness of thou' or caused by 'attitudinal distance' are characterized by naked plain forms (without sentence-final particles). Janes' use of TV dramas to analyze shifts in informal conversation provides a new perspective on the research of this area. However, the paucity of data in Janes' study and the lack of distinction between formal and informal interactions in the studies by Cook and Megumi are shortcomings.

Style shifts have also been identified as mechanisms to index role identity (Yoshida & Sakurai, 2005). In casual conversations, speakers are very creative when talking to friends or family members to mark their socio-cultural identity by shifting to polite forms. It was found that in informal situations, factors such as status or age difference seem to be irrelevant in style shifting. Their observations are very important to the understanding of this phenomenon and emphasize the need to differentiate formal and informal interactions.

While these studies contribute greatly to the understating of style shifts, a major problem is the lack of differentiation between the type of shifts (formal to informal and vice versa) and the inclusion of social factors in the type of interaction (with some exceptions (Megumi, 2002; Yoshida & Sakurai, 2005). The motivations for style shifts are quite different in both settings. Most importantly, the incorrect use of speech style risks greater social sanctions in a formal situation than in a conversation between family members or close friends. The present study demonstrates that the type of interaction is an essential determinant of motivations and functions of speech style shifts.

Radio phone-in programs

The radio phone-in programs used in this study (approximately 340 minutes of recordings) feature a host, a caller and a counsellor. In the initial stage of the program only the host and the caller talk. The host asks questions related to age, marital status, family background of the caller and other information that is relevant to his/her problem/s. In most of the programs, callers do not provide all the essential information and often the real problem is completely unrelated to the initial story. Due to the time limitations of the program, it is crucial for the host to probe the caller in order to get the most essential information. Only after the problem has been identified is the counsellor introduced to the caller. The counsellor then immediately gives appropriate advice and information that could be helpful not only to the caller but also to the audience.

The speech style of the host and counsellor in this series of radio programs is polite but the frequent shifts to informal style challenge the politeness concepts of a formal-institutional interaction; namely, that polite style is to be used in formal settings among people who do not know each other, or are of

unequal status. The only speaker that follows this rule is the caller, because his/her status is unambiguous in terms of his/her relatively lower status in relation to the host and the counsellor.

The host and counsellor are aware of the restrictions that constrain an 'institutional' interaction. This is observed in the ways that they fulfil their duties as host and counsellor respectively and do not deviate from the specific 'purpose' of this program: to give advice to callers and the audience. As with other types of 'institutional' settings, there are a number of routines that interlocutors have to perform such as at the beginning and closing of the interaction (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Hutchby, 1995). The host has control over turn allocation, when to end the program, and when to introduce the counsellor while the latter contributes to the interaction only after he/she has been introduced.

The default style in these programs is the polite form as seen in the first example below. The caller appears to suffer from depression because she is the sole carer for her elderly husband. In this excerpt all participants use the formal style as the underlined sections indicate.

Excerpt 1¹

- ↑1 H: *iu fuu ni mo omoimasu ne. (a=, **hai wakarimashita.**) de,*
 2 *saishuuteki ni wa ano, sono okusuri, (e=.) no*
 3 *chikara o kariru to(**hai.**) iu koto mo arimasushi[ne to iu-]*
 4 Ca: *[a=, hai.]-*
 5 Co: *-ryouhou*
 ↑6 *zahi nasutte kudasai ne. hontoni ne,*
- 'H: I think so, (**Oh, I understand**) and in the end, you can
 (**uhm**) get some [medicine]
 Ca: [Oh, yes]
 Co: I urge you to get some treatment'.

In most programs it is possible to see a certain pattern where shifts from polite to informal styles occur once the interaction develops. Shifts from formal to informal occur only after the host has asked the caller's age. However, the style does not remain informal all the time, and shifts from informal to formal and vice versa can be observed even in the same turn. The patterns observed in the data are summarized in Table 1.

¹ Abbreviations and conventions in transcripts:

H: host, Ca: caller, Co: counsellor, ↑ formal style, ↓ informal style, (**bold**): backchannels, []: overlaps, (): comments, = :lengthening,

Table 1: Speech style patterns observed in the data

	Formal speech	Shifts to informal
Host	Start and end of program formulations	asking questions directly criticism
Counsellor	advice directed at audience making a point	criticism directly addressing caller

The speech style of the host is always formal at the beginning and end of the program, and as mentioned earlier, only after the host knows the caller's age does he/she shift to informal speech. In Excerpts 2 and 3, routine telephone greetings are exchanged with both interlocutors using standard phrases in formal Japanese (lines 1 – 6). Excerpt 2 is an example of the beginning of a program, and Excerpt 3 shows the ending.

Excerpt 2

- ↑1 H: *moshimoshi, terehon jinsei soudan desuga.*
 2 Ca: *hai. moshimoshi. konnichiwa.*
 3 H: *konnichiwa.*
 ↑4 Ca: *hai, [osewa] ni narimasu.*
 5 H: *[ano=,] hai. kochirakoso=.mazu otoshi kara*
 ↑6 *oukagai dekimasuka? anata no.*
 ↑7 Ca: *hai. watakushi, yonjyussai desu.*

- 'H: Hello, this is Telephone Counseling.
 Ca: Yes, hello. Good Morning.
 H: Good morning.
 Ca: Yes. Thank you for being kind enough to take my call.
 H: Well, on the contrary. Now, can I ask your age ?
 Ca: Yes, I am 40 years old.

Excerpt 3

- ↑1 Ca: *a. wakarimashita.*
 ↑2 H: *hai. do=mo shitsurei shimasu.*
 ↑3 Ca: *hai moushiwake arimasen. arigatou gozaima=su.*

- 'Ca: Oh, I understand.

- H: Yes. See you then.
 Ca: Yes. Thank you very much.'

A shift to the informal once the host knows the caller's age is shown in Excerpt 4. The host asks the caller's age in the very first line. Then the host enquires about the age of the caller's husband and whether they have any children. Line 3 shows the turn in which the host repeats the caller's answer in relation to having children and he shifts to informal style as seen in the verb form and in the ending of the turn with the use of the particle *no* in line 3.

Excerpt 4

- ↑1 H: *mazu nenrei o oshitekudasai.*
 2 Ca: *hai. eeto watashi sanjussai desu.*
 (lines omitted)
 ↓3 H: *imasen. (hai) de futari de kurashitenno.*
- 'H: First would you mind telling me your age?
 Ca: Yes, uhm, I am 30.
 (lines omitted)
 H: No children. **(None.)** So, you two live together?'

The host does not keep the informal style but shifts back and forth depending on the function of his turn. In Excerpt 5, the host uses formal style to indicate a different stage in the program. The caller had explained in previous lines that her 18-year-old son had crashed a car that he had bought, although he is still under age. The caller wants to know how he can sue the man who sold the car to his son. After this explanation, the host uses formal style to indicate that he has understood the problem and that the legal side of the caller's problems will be dealt with by the counsellor. This section is expressed in the formal style. However, in line 4, the host comments that the situation in relation to the caller's son is awful and questions him about his parenting style. It is at this point that we see a style shift; given the accusatory tone of the host, the informal style might function to soften his question.

Excerpt 5

- ↑1 H: *naruhodo ne. (e=) hai wakarimashita. sono houritsuteki ni ne,*
 2 *(e=) nakoto wa atode senmon no bengoshi no sensei ni*
 ↑3 *ukagaimasu ga, (hai) mazu desune, (hai)*
 ↑↓4 *hidoi joutai desune=. ... de, doui (e=) kosodate shitawake?*

'H: I see **(yes)** All right. I understand. Uhm the legal side, **(yes)** you can ask the lawyer later, **(yes)** but first, **(yes)** it is an awful situation, isn't it? ... and how did you raise your kids?

Another function of style shifts seems to be that of formulation or when the host summarizes the gist provided by the caller (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). In other words, shifts to formal occur when the host directs his talk to the audience. Excerpt 6 is from the same program as Excerpt 5 though many turns later. In line 1 the host asks in informal Japanese about the caller's wife's view towards their son's problems. After the caller's turn (lines 3 and 4), the host butts in and finishes the caller's sentence, summarizing the situation and shifting back to the polite form.

Excerpt 6

↓1 H: *de okaasan, ano=, okusan wa nante itteru no? kono musuko*
 2 *ni tsuite.*
 3 Ca: *mo= shoujiki itte, doushitara ii no ka ga wakaranai*
 4 *joutai nan desu yo. (nn=) itte mo iu koto kikanai desu shi-*
 5 H: *-mou*
 ↑6 *sudeni, yuukoto kikanai shi, doushiyo mo nai tte koto desuyo ne=?*

'H: And what does the mother, well- your wife say to all of this?
 About this son.

Ca: Well-, to tell the truth, we don't know what to do **(uh-huh)**
 he doesn't listen even if we tell him-

H: -So what you are saying is
 that he will not listen to you, and you don't know what to
 do, right?'

Counsellors' shifts

The counsellor shifts to the informal style when addressing the caller directly as in the example below. In this program, the caller is a mother whose child self harms. Here, the counsellor asks more information about the mother herself and shifts to the informal style in line 1.

Excerpt 7

↑↓1 Co: *sore wa, dou deshita? ... yuunou na shakaijin de atta to omou?*

- 2 Ca: a=, mou, shigoto wa munou datta desu ne=.
- ↑3 Co: a, munou deshitaka=
- ‘Co: How was your experience (of work)? You think you were a capable worker?
- Ca: Oh, well I was really incompetent at work.
- Co: Oh, you were incompetent?’

However, later in the same program (see Excerpt 8) the counsellor gives advice to the caller and to the audience by using not only the formal style, but adding the particle *yo* to stress a viewpoint.

Excerpt 8

- ↑1 Co: sorejane=, (**un.**) mazu ano nikki o okakinasaiyo. (**nikki**↓.) un↓.
- 2 nikki o tsuketene=, (**e=e.**) mainichi ano, jibun ga shita koto dake
(lines omitted)
- ↑3 chiisana koto, gutaiteki na koto de ii n desuyo. (**e=, e=.**)
- ‘Co: So then, (**yes**) I would like to see you keeping a diary (**diary**) yes. a diary. Write down (**uh-hu**) only what you have done each day.
(lines omitted)
small things, concrete things are fine, you see (**yes, yes**)’

Another example of the use of formal Japanese accompanied by the particle *yo* is seen in Excerpt 9. The caller is afraid that his wife is borrowing money from loan sharks and he also suspects that she is being unfaithful. So, the counsellor advises the caller to solve the financial problems first but ignore his suspicions of his wife’s infidelity. Note the use of the informal style when asking a question in line 1, and later shifting to the polite form plus the particle *yo* in later turns (lines 4 onwards) when he is giving advice.

Excerpt 9

- ↓1 Co: anata no hou wa nande sonnani shakkin atta no?
- 2 Ca: iya, ikkai, ano=, kaisha no, oyagaisha ni, nigerareta n desuyo=.
(lines omitted)
- 3 Co: kore wa desune=, ano= mou chotto otona no handan o shita
- ↑4 hou ga ii kamoshiremasen yo. kore wa, souiu koto ga attemo
- ↑5 nakute mo desu yo, (**hai**)

(lines omitted)
 ↑6 *kore okusan wa, nakuttatte yurushimasen yo. (soudesune)*
 ↑7 *NAKATTA koto ni surushika naidesuyo. NAKATTAN DESUYO.*
 ↑8 *NAIn desuyo. (e=)*

'Co: Why were you in so much debt?
 Ca: No, once, well, the firm's, the contractor ran off, you see
 (lines omitted)
 Co: Well, uhm, you might need to take a more adult decision,
 I tell you. Whether she was unfaithful or not, you see **(yes)**
 (lines omitted)
 your wife will not forgive you **(you are right)** you have no other
 choice than think that NOTHING happened. NOTHING happened.
 There was no incident, you see **(yes)**'

Informal Japanese is also used when the following counsellor criticizes the caller. Here, the mother is concerned about her son who sleeps around with women, has been declared insolvent, carries a knife and has other problems. First, she says that he was a 'good child'; however, as the whole extent of the problem is revealed the counsellor criticizes her. First, he delivers his criticism in the polite form (line 1), but shifts to the informal when he continues his criticism in lines 4, 6 and 7. This seems to be a way of softening his disapproval – or of indicating that his criticism is directed exclusively at the caller (lines 3 – 7).

Excerpt 10

↑1 Co: *anmari ii ko de wa nai desu yo=, hakkiri itte=.*
 2 *(soudesuyone=.) jyoushiki teki ni itte, (hai. soudesu. hai.)*
 3 *soudesho (soudesu.) dakara yappari anata ga kuroushita*
 ↓4 *wariai ni, kono ko wa_sonnani yoku sodatte nai yone=/*
 (lines omitted)
 5 *(e=) sono=... sono mune no poketto ni hasami motteru tte*
 ↓6 *iu no wa, sono onna no kata kara kiita n dane? (soudesu.) nde,*
 ↓7 *kono hasami no mondai mo anata wa shiranai wake da.*

'Co: He is not really a very good lad, you see. If we are honest
(yes, you are right). Talking sensibly **(yes. you're right, yes)**
 isn't it? **(yes)** therefore, despite your sufferings your son has not

been brought up well, has he?

(lines omitted)

You heard that your son carries a knife in his pocket from the woman he lives with? **(yes)** so, that means that you don't know about the knife problem either.'

Formal style is used when the counsellor gives advice, in particular when, as stated before, the topic deals with legal problems. The following example shows the counsellor talking about the legal aspect of the caller's complex problems related to land and ownership. This is one example of many where 'legalese' is used and advice is invariably given in the polite form.

Excerpt 11

- ↑1 Co: [sounan desune.] (**ha=**↓) *desukara sarakin ga desu ne=,*
2 **(hai)** *hitotsu wa=,ano=, jyoukyouto shite, ma hanketsu*
3 *o totteru toka, (hai) hitotsu wa ima no,*
↑4 *teitouken o settei shiteiru baai desu ne=. (hai) de, haratte*
↑5 *kurenaikara,=keibai no moushitate o shimasu to. (H: un, G: hai)*
↑6 *kore ga hitotsu desu.*
(lines omitted)
7 *de, kyouseishikkou ni yoru keibai, ... kore mo hitotsu*
↑8 *arimasu. (a=) tada, sou yuu youna tetsuzuki made itteiru*
↑9 *no ka to iu nomo chotto wakaranai n desu ne*
10 H: *n*
11 Ca: *ha, hai. wakarimasu*

'Co: Yes, it is like that. **(yes)** Therefore, if the loan-sharks are **(yes)** well, one possibility is that if the house has been mortgaged, they will ask for a motion for a public auction, if the loans are not repaid.
(lines omitted)
There is also the executor's auction, this is another action they would take, however, we don't know if they have started the proper legal work'.

Discussion

The radio phone-in data in this study show that speech style shifts are more complex and 'untidy' than is generally thought to be the case. Given that radio broadcast is an 'institutional' setting, one would expect a neat exchange of formal Japanese. However, the analysed data show constant, seemingly ad hoc, speech style shifts by hosts and counsellors. These style shifts can be explained from two overlapping viewpoints: social factors; and the nature of the program. While the differences in status, one of the social factors, seems to be an important aspect of determining the incidence of shifts, the very nature of this radio program allows hosts and counsellors to use these shifts in strategic ways in order to conduct it in an engaging yet informative way.

As previously stated, social factors seem to be one of the basic elements in defining the speech style in the data. This is demonstrated when hosts shift to informal style only after the age of the caller is revealed. Hosts start the program using formal Japanese, exchanging routine greetings. It is only a few turns later, after he/she learns the age of the caller, that a shift to the informal style occurs. On the other hand, all the callers use polite forms throughout the program. In other words, shifts to informal styles are not reciprocated by the callers. This indicates that callers are aware of their relative status in the program, and use the polite form in recognition of the fact that the 'experts' deserve respect and deference. However, and most importantly, hosts and counsellors avoid shifts if the caller is relatively 'old' (more than 60 years old). This aspect is obvious when comparing the same host's speech in two different programs, one where the caller is younger (Excerpt 9) and another where the caller is older than the host (Excerpt 1).

The twofold aspect of shifts is seen in the fact that their occurrence is contingent on the topic of the callers' 'problems'. This is particularly observed in the speech of the counsellors when they are giving advice, particularly legal; they do so invariably using polite forms and do not shift to informal speech as seen in lines 1 – 6 of Excerpt 11. In other programs, hosts and counsellors avoid style shifts when the callers' problems are related to depression or health. In other words, when the callers' problems are 'non-controllable', hosts and counsellors seem to show some deference to the caller by maintaining the formality level. Thus, in the interviews where the 65-year-old woman calls about her situation as a sole carer of her husband for more than seven years (see Excerpt 1), both host and counsellor do not shift at all. However, the same counsellor is quite scathing in a different program when talking to a man with financial and possible marital problems (see Excerpt 9). He shifts to informal forms to ask particular details.

The two-faceted nature of shifts in the present data is observed in the way hosts and counsellors shift to informal forms when directing talk to callers and when including the audience. This is seen particularly in Excerpts 7, 9 and 10. Informal style is used when hosts ask questions or counsellors

criticize and directly address the caller. On the other hand, polite forms are used when the talk is directed at the audience such as when the counsellor gives advice. Although every situation is unique to the caller, the programs in this study, like many similar ones, (Hutchby, 1995), are targeted at a larger audience that may share comparable problems.

The frequency of shifts in radio phone-in programs may also be related to the fact that even if hosts and counsellors use inappropriate speech styles they do not face any risk of social sanctions because of their relatively higher status, the callers are anonymous and it is a one-off interaction. This is, in fact, one of the striking differences between other 'institutional' programs such as television interviews (Tanaka, 2008) where shifts from polite to informal are brief and are more often discourse motivated. Shifts triggered by psychological reasons, or those that are directed at the interlocutors, occur only when there is some rapport between host and guest, where the guest is a famous person.

There are sections in the present data where speech style shifts are clearly self-directed such as the 'soliloquy' type that Maynard (1991, 2001) and Makino (1983, 2002) write about. These were not included in the analysis due to the different focus of this study. Similarly, many style shifts could not be explained and larger or more comprehensive studies are necessary to fully understand this phenomenon.

It is hoped that this study has demonstrated that style shifts in radio phone-in programs are not solely used as a means to convey social meaning and distance, but also as a strategy to show psychological stance and talk orientation.

Conclusion

This study has shown that speech style shifts in the particular discourse setting of radio phone-in programs are strategically manipulated by hosts and counsellors in order to engage with callers, and at the same time to convey relevant information and advice to the audience. While the social factors that decide the appropriate speech style are important, the fact that constant shifts occur in the course of the program demonstrates that these are used as a strategy in the delivery of the program rather than to index social status. While this study shows the complexity of speech style shifts, it also demonstrates that the type of interaction is the paramount factor that determines choice and use of style shifts. Future research using a range of data, and differentiating formal and informal interactions is needed to fully understand the complexity of speech style shifts.

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