Compliment Response in Japanese: Learners' Motivation in Pragmatic Choices

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate what motivates learners' pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response. Although many researchers have studied L2 learners' pragmatic choices in compliment response in Japanese, the majority of studies has been focusing on a comparison between L1 and L2 speakers' pragmatic choices. The current study investigates learners' pragmatic choices focusing on learners' motivation in their pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response, as well as how learners' subjectivity influences their production in L2 pragmatics. A discourse completion task (DCT) and follow-up interviews were conducted. The results indicate that what motivated their pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response varied – transfer of L1 norms, insufficient L2 cultural knowledge, lack of linguistic abilities, personal beliefs, resistance to L2 cultural norms, and so on. Learners who had Asian backgrounds showed their tendency to transfer their L1 norms to their L2 norms.

Keywords: pragmatics, speech acts, compliment responses, subjectivity, interlanguage

1. Introduction

A number of researchers show that the strategies of compliment response are different based on the target cultural norms. For example, American speakers of English use Positive strategy most frequently, whereas Japanese native speakers use Avoidance strategy most frequently (Yokota, 1986). However, contrary to this empirical data, there is a popular stereotype that the Japanese people usually deny compliments to show their modesty (Shimizu, 2009). This stereotype is taken into the popular JFL textbooks in the U.S. Therefore, some researchers consider these textbooks problematic since the stereotype described in the textbooks give a negative impact on learners' pragmatic choices in L2 production. However, recent research shows that learners' pragmatic choices are motivated by not only classroom instruction and textbooks, but also by self-identity, personal beliefs, experiences outside the classroom, previously gained knowledge and so on (Fukuda 2006; Ishihara and Tarone 2009; Siegal 1995). The purpose of this study is to investigate what motivates learner's pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response. A discourse completion task (DCT) involving five compliment situations was conducted to four intermediate learners of Japanese. Follow-up interviews were conducted in order to investigate their motivations in their L2 productions in the DCTs. This study will reveal learners' motivation in their pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response, as well as how learners' subjectivity influences their production in L2 pragmatics.

2. Literature Review

Speech Act of Compliments

    Compliments are one of the most investigated types of speech acts, along with apologies, requests, and refusals. This is because giving and responding to compliments are important social strategies that function as an opener for a conversation, allowing meaningful social interactions to follow (Ishihara 2003). Thus, teaching how to give and respond to compliments appropriately in the target cultures is one of the crucial issues in FL classrooms.

    Many researchers have found that there is a crucial difference between Japanese culture and American culture in the speech act of compliments. In particular, the compliment response types differ based on the target cultures. For example, the majority of traditional research claims that native speakers of Japanese normally respond to compliments with denials or avoidance, whereas most Americans reply to compliments with a simple "thank you" of acceptance (Barnlund and Araki 1985; Daikuhara, 1986). College Japanese textbooks for JFL learners in the U.S. tend to reflect these findings from the previous research about compliment responses. According to Saito and Beecken (1997), the majority of the widely used college Japanese textbooks in the U.S. view response to compliments in Japanese as "negative" and provide examples along with accompanying explanations that put too much emphasis on "the modesty maxim in the Japanese culture" (Shimizu, 2009, p. 182). Because of this tendency among the popular JFL textbooks, it is not rare to see American learners of Japanese respond to compliments only with denials, as if they do not have any other options.

Compliment Response in Japanese and the Problems in JFL Instructions

    As the majority of previous studies claimed, compliment responses are commonly categorized into the following three strategy types: Positive (acceptance, e.g. accept compliments by saying "thank you"), Negative (denial, e.g. reject compliments by saying "no, it's not like that"), and Avoidance (neither of the above, e.g. avoid directly responding to compliments, for instance, respond to compliments about an outfit with explanations such as "I bought it at a sale", "it was cheap") (Barnlund and Araki 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Saito and Beecken 1997; Shimizu 2009). As mentioned earlier, it is often said that Negative is the normative strategy of compliment response in Japanese. However, according to Yokota (1986) and Saito and Beecken (1997), Avoidance strategy is most predominantly used among Japanese speakers, and Positive strategy is the second most common strategy. Negative strategy is in fact least frequently used by native speakers of Japanese. Saito and Beecken stated in their study that Japanese speakers respond to compliments not only with denials but also with other strategies (i.e. Avoidance and Positive) and that the use of different strategies is predominantly based on who gave the compliments (e.g. higher status person or close friend).

    However, learners of Japanese often tend to use Negative strategy most frequently. For example, Saito and Beecken reported that American learners of Japanese who had studied Japanese in the U.S for at least three and a half years denied compliments more frequently than

the native speakers of Japanese. Also in Shimizu's study (2009), he found that "JFL participants use Negative more often than Avoidance" and that they "tended to deny compliments more strongly than native Japanese speakers" (p. 181).

The strong negation tendency in compliment response which seems to diverge from the native Japanese norms might be caused by "transfer of training" (Shimizu, 2009). As mentioned previously, the popular college Japanese textbooks in the U.S. put too much emphasis on the Negative strategy in Japanese compliment response. Shimizu mentioned that Japanese textbooks emphasize that strong and explicit denial is an ideal strategy to respond to compliments in Japanese. Another problematic transfer of training is classroom instruction. Saito and Beecken (1997) mentioned that classroom practice often ignores Positive and Avoidance strategy because of the heavy emphasis on Negative strategy.

Learners' subjectivity and pragmatic choices in L2

Although some researchers view the stereotyped classroom instructions and textbooks as problematic for learners' pragmatic choices in L2, they are not the only reasons for learners to diverge from L2 norms in the speech act. For example, Ishihara and Tarone (2009) claimed that "learners' pragmatic decisions were guided by their subjectivity and intertwined with their life experiences and previous learning and use of Japanese in and outside the classroom" (p.101). According to Ishihara and Tarone, learners' L2 production has been examined in terms of how it conforms to native norms, and if their production diverges from that of native speakers, it is often considered as awkward, problematic, or even as "pragmatic failure." However, Fukuda (2006) claimed that not all learners always desire to converge to a target norm. Learners are not passive participants who always conform to L2 norms, but rather, they make active and selective choices in L2 interaction.

Ishihara and Tarone investigated the link between learners' subjectivity and their pragmatic use in L2 Japanese in their case study. Subjectivity is defined as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world," and it includes such things as "self-identity, values, beliefs, morals, feelings, and personal principles" (Ishihara and Tarone, 2009). Subjectivity is not given, static, or rigid, but fluid, complex, hybrid, and dynamic (Fukuda 2006; Ishihara and Tarone 2009; Siegal 1995). Ishihara and Tarone's study showed some occasions where learners intentionally either accommodated to or resisted perceived L2 pragmatic norms. In their study, while the participants mostly converged toward L2 norms to follow the target culture, some of them occasionally diverged from L2 norms intentionally to resist pragmatic use of, for example, higher-level honorifics or gendered language. One of the participants in their study had a sufficient linguistic ability to use honorifics appropriately but chose not to use it. This is because he perceived the L2 norm of honorifics as "unfair" and rejected it in his speech. It was his personal beliefs that motivated his pragmatics choices.

3. Research Questions

As seen in the literature review section, there have been a growing number of studies on the speech act of compliment response in Japanese (e.g. Barnlund and Araki 1985; Daikuhara 1986; Saito and Beecken 1997; Yokota 1986). Many researchers have studied L2 learners' pragmatic choices in compliment response in their L2 Japanese (e.g. Ishihara and Tarone 2009; Saito and Beecken 1997; Shimizu 2009). However, the majority of the previous research has considered native speakers' pragmatic choices as "standards" and examined how L2 learners' production diverges from/conforms to the native norms. Thus, L2 learners' pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment have been examined through a comparison with native speakers. However, as recent researchers highlighted, for research of learners' pragmatic choices, it is important for us to see what is in the background of their choices and not merely compare their pragmatic choices with native speakers. For example, what needs to be taken into account is what motivates their pragmatic choices in the speech act, such as their self-identity, values, beliefs, feelings, personal principles, and so on. It is important to see "why" they make the choice, not only see "what" they produce in their L2. Thus, the present paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What motivates learners' pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response?
2. How does learners' subjectivity influence their production in L2 pragmatics?

4. Methods
4-1. Participants

Participants were four intermediate learners of Japanese, all females, who were enrolled in an intermediate-level Japanese course at a university in the U.S. They were all undergraduate students between 21-23 years old. None of them had experience of living in Japan. They all had received formal L2 instruction for two years in the Japanese program at the university, and one of them had previous experience of learning Japanese at a high school for three years. Two of them were Caucasian Americans (Amy, Suzanne), and the other two were a native speaker of Chinese (Rebecca) and a native speaker of Korean (Vivian). Their names have been changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality.

4-2. Data collection and analysis procedure

The process of data collection in this study consisted of the following steps: a written discourse completion task (DCT), 15-20 minutes of retrospective interviews, and follow-up email correspondence if necessary. First, in order to explore how the participants respond to compliments in Japanese, a DCT (written) was conducted. In order to investigate the participants' responses to compliments in different situations, three situations were chosen: compliments about appearance or possessions, compliments about ability or skills, compliments about a family member. These three are chosen based on the fact that Japanese speakers respond to compliments differently in accordance with the object of a compliment (CARLA; Responses to Compliments in Japanese). Also, as mentioned earlier, Japanese speakers respond to compliments based on who

gives them. Thus, the DCT conducted in this study had the following five different situations:

The contents of the DCT (See Appendix for details)
1. Compliments about outfit
2. Compliments about ability (given by someone the participant has just met)
3. Compliments about ability (given by a close friend)
4. Compliments about a family member (given by someone the participant has just met)
5. Compliments about a family member (given by a close friend)

After the participants completed the DCT, retrospective interviews were conducted for 15-20 minutes. Interviews were conducted individually by the researcher, and they were all audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. The format of the interview was semi-structured interview.

Sample questions asked during the interviews were as below:
1. If you speak in your L1 in the same situation, how would you respond?
2. What do you think typical speakers of Japanese would say in this situation? Why do you think so?
3. Why did you answer differently in #2 and 3 although they are similar situations? Would you do the same in your L1? How about #4 and 5?

5. Results and discussion

Due to the limitations of space, only two cases – Amy's and Rebecca's - are reported in this paper. Since the participants have all different backgrounds and experience, the findings are described and discussed individually.

5-1. Case 1: Rebecca

Rebecca is a native speaker of Chinese who grew up in Singapore since she was eight. Although her L1 is Chinese, she also speaks English very fluently because she grew up in English speaking community in Singapore. She has studied Japanese for two years in formal settings. She has never been to Japan, but since she has a strong interest in Japanese culture, she often listens to Japanese pop-music and watches various Japanese TV shows and movies in Japanese. She also sometimes talks with her Chinese friends in Japanese for their practice. Thus, Rebecca seems to have some exposure to the language and culture of Japan outside of the classroom.

In the retrospective interview, she said that while she is talking in one of the three languages she speaks, she considers the culture of the language because she thinks cultures are important. Also, when asked what she thinks typical speakers of Japanese would respond to the compliments in the DCT, she answered that she thinks native speakers would answer in the same way she did. Thus, based on what she commented in the interview, she seems to follow the target culture

of the language that she is speaking in, that is, she follows Japanese culture when she speaks in Japanese, follows American culture when she speaks in English, and follows Chinese culture when she speaks in Chinese. However, when we looked at how she responded to compliments in the DCT, her pragmatic choices in Japanese did not seem to exactly follow the Japanese norms.

(1) Rebecca: DCT-1
ホストファミリーの
お母さん：そのシャツ素敵ね！
あなた：そんなによくないんですよ。
ホストファミリーの
お母さん：とってもよく似合っているわよ。
あなた：ありがとう。うれしいです。

Excerpt (1) is her response to the compliment about her outfit. In her response, she first denied with an indirect negation expression "そんなによくないんですよ" and then accepted the compliment with gratitude. However, in the retrospective interview, she commented that if the person who gave the compliment was someone whom she met for the first time, she would just keep denying, not accept it with gratitude in the second turn. She said it would be rude to accept compliments given by a not very close person, just saying "*thank you*". She said it would not be modest. The reason she said "ありがとう。うれしいです" in the DCT was that the compliment was given by a close person (i.e. her host mother). Therefore, she would not have said "*thank you*" if the person in the DCT was not her host mother, but someone whom she met for the first time. When the interviewer asked her whether or not this is her perceived Japanese culture, she said "not really". Rather, she commented since Japan is an Asian country like China, she considers these two cultures similar. Thus, it seems that she put Japanese and Chinese cultures in the same category just because they both are Asian countries. She does not seem to consider the cultural differences between Japanese and Chinese. Her perceived "cultures" is that Japanese and Chinese cultures are "indirect" culture and American culture is "direct" culture. She commented that in Japanese and Chinese when talking to close people, she can express what she thinks/feels directly, but when talking to someone not close to her, she has to speak more indirectly to show her humbleness. That is why she said she would keep denying the compliments, not just accept it with "*thank you*" if they were given by a person whom she met for the first time. On the other hand, she commented that when she is speaking in English she speaks and expresses her feelings more directly. She said when she was speaking in English, she would just accept the compliment by saying "oh, thank you".

The next excerpt is Rebecca's response to the compliment about her family member. Here, she also seems to put Japanese and Chinese norms together.

(2) Rebecca: DCT-4

山田さん：＿＿＿＿さんのお兄さん、ハーバード大学に行ってるんだって？
　　　　　頭がいいんだね！
あなた：そんなことないんですよ。
山田さん：いやぁ本当にすごいなあ。
あなた：ありがとうございます。

It is often said that "Japanese speakers tend to avoid complimenting other family members, or reject (or downgrade) compliments to family members in the presence of a third party" (CARLA: Responses to Compliments in Japanese). However, in Rebecca's response, although she denied the compliment in her first turn, in her second turn she accepted it with gratitude " ありがとうございます ". When asked why she chose to respond this way, she commented that in China when they received compliments about a family member, Chinese people express their gratitude, so she thinks Japanese people would do the same. Here, once again, she seems to perceive the Japanese norms in the same manner with the Chinese norms even though they have cultural differences.

When asked whether or not she had learned anything in class about how to respond to compliments in Japanese, she answered as follows:

(3) Rebecca: Interview
"I can't remember if we've learned, but because my 1st culture is the Chinese culture, it comes to me naturally that I have to be more modest (than when I talk in English)"

Thus, although she mentioned earlier in the interview that she followed the respective cultures of the languages she speaks, in actuality she views L2 norms in the same category with her L1 norms (i.e. norms of Asian cultures). The reason was only because they both are Asian cultures, and she did not take their cultural differences into consideration. She seems to unconsciously transfer her L1 norms to L2 norms.

5-2. Case 2: Amy

Amy is a Caucasian American who seems to have the least exposure to the Japanese language and cultures among the four participants in this study. She has received formal L2 instruction at the university for two years, but she told in the interview that although she sometimes enjoys watching Japanese anime, she does not have any chances to hear or speak in Japanese outside of the classroom.

In the interview, when asked what she thought native speakers of Japanese would respond in the DCT, she said she really did not have any ideas about how they would respond. Also she said she was thinking in her own way, in an American way, when she was answering the DCT. When asked if she always thought in this way (in her own way) even when she is speaking in Japanese, she commented as below:

(4) Amy: Interview

"I've been trying to change how I think so that I can think like how they (native speakers of Japanese) would answer. But it's hard to not translate things directly."

Thus, it seems that she keeps her American identity even when she speaks in her L2 Japanese, and she does not attune herself with L2 pragmatic norms.

The following two excerpts are Amy's responses to compliments about her Japanese language ability. First, when she received compliment from a close friend (in excerpt (5)), she first denied it with direct negation "いいえ。いいえ。上手じゃない". In her second turn, she used Avoidance strategy to downgrade[1] herself.

(5) Amy: DCT-3
けんじ：＿＿＿＿＿＿って日本語が上手だよね。
あなた：いいえ。いいえ。上手じゃない。
けんじ：いやぁ本当に上手だと思うよ！
あなた：まぁ、たくさん勉強するからだけ。

(6) Amy: DCT-4
田中さん：＿＿＿＿＿さん、日本語がお上手ですねえ！
あなた：ありがとうございます。でも、ぜんぜん上手じゃありませんと思います。
田中さん：いや本当に上手でびっくりしましたよ。
あなた：ありがとうございます。もっと上手になってみます。

On the other hand, in excerpt (6), when she received compliments about her ability from a person whom she met for the first time, she responded with Positive strategy, showing gratitude "ありがとうございます" in both turns. When asked for the reason, she commented as below:

(7) Amy: Interview

"I'm not close to them at all, so it's more likely to… at least in English, you always thank people more if you are not as close to them... (but) this one (DCT-3) is… I'm talking to my friend, so I thought that it wasn't as necessary to… thanking them so much. Anyway it's just what I normally say in English. I normally say 'oh, no', 'not really' or something to my friends when they make compliments on me."

In her comments, she said "at least in English", and this shows that she stayed with her L1 norms and kept her own personality in her L2 production. When asked if she had learned anything about how to respond to compliments in Japanese, she said she learned that Japanese people often denied compliments by saying "いえいえ". Thus, she has some knowledge about compliment responses in Japanese. However, she did not follow her perceived L2 norms. The

reason she provided was:

(8) Amy: Interview

"Japanese has all different levels of formality, and I didn't know if "*ieie*" was something you would use for all those levels. But anyway, for me it sounds little rude not to thank someone for what they are complimenting in, but I don't know if it's a little different in Japan."

Thus, although she knew something about Japanese norms in compliment response, she did not emulate them. The reason seems to be her insufficient knowledge in Japanese norms. Therefore, she just followed what she personally believed in her L1 when she was answering the DCT.

Other interesting findings were that Amy responded to compliments about her family member with Positive strategy by showing her gratitude (i.e. saying "ありがとうございます") as well as upgrading such as "頭がいいかな", "やさしい人だと思いますね" regardless of who gave them. When asked if she knew about this tendency that Japanese people reject compliments about their own family members, she said she did not know and commented as below:

(9) Amy: Interview

"I understand for your own compliment just putting yourself down so that you don't seem boastful. But at least for me it seems weird to deny the compliment about my family. I don't want to be rude to my brother. He is an individual person, not part of me."

Thus, it seems that her pragmatic choice is based on her L1 norms. This is because her knowledge about L2 norms is insufficient and because she feels resistance to L2 norms.

6. Conclusion and implications

Contrary to the generalization stated in the previous studies, learners in this study did not have transfer of training in their choice of L2 pragmatics. Rather, what motivated their pragmatic choices in the speech act of compliment response varied – transfer of L1 norms, insufficient L2 cultural knowledge, lack of linguistics abilities, personal beliefs, resistance to L2 cultural norms, and so on. Ishihara and Tarone (2009) mentioned "learners should be free to produce the L2 in any way they choose, and this choice should be respected in the classroom" (p. 118). Thus, we need to be more sensitive to learner differences in terms not only of their language ability, but also of their personality, cultural backgrounds, and their goals toward learning Japanese. If the learner's goal is not to speak like a native speaker, the learner might not want to totally converge to Japanese cultural norms. In that case, Japanese L2 norms should not be imposed on the learner by the classroom instruction. In the present study, only two cases were reported. However, those

two cases showed us very different learners' motivations in pragmatic choices. Thus, teachers need to be aware that there are much wider varieties of individual learner differences in the actual classroom.

Although learners should be free to produce the L2 in any way they want, they still need to know the L2 norms. While it is learner's choice whether or not they emulate the L2 norms, they need to know what is appropriate or inappropriate in Japanese culture. In the DCT, Amy accepted compliments about her family member by saying "*thank you.*" However, it diverges from Japanese cultural norms of avoiding or rejecting compliments to family members, and if Amy responds to compliments in this way in a real conversation with a native Japanese speaker, she might be seen as an "ignorant foreigner." Thus, while teachers should respect individual learner differences and refrain from imposing L2 norms, it is important that they show learners how native Japanese speakers normally respond and teach what is appropriate or inappropriate in Japanese culture from various perspectives.

Limitations

First, the participants in this study were all females. This unbalanced gender choice must have affected the results of this study. In order to investigate learners' subjectivities in different perspectives, future study should include male participants too. Second, the current study involved only four students. The findings from the present study cannot be generalized due to the limited number of participants. In order to investigate learners' subjectivities in broader perspective, a larger size of participants should be involved in future research.

In this study, the participants' Japanese proficiency levels were not taken into consideration, since formal measurement was not available at the time the research was conducted. However, their Japanese proficiency levels vary, and the different proficiency levels may have affected the results of this study.

Written DCTs were conducted in the present study. However, written responses are different from spontaneous natural speech in real contexts. In order to get more spontaneous and natural speech, future study should conduct oral DCT. For example, a researcher can give compliments to the participants while having a natural conversation with them about topics such as their outfits or their Japanese ability. In this way, the participants will give their spontaneous natural response to compliments. Also the researcher's choice of the five DCT situations did not have a consistency. For example, in the two situations of compliments about family, the first situation involved compliments about a family member's ability, but the second one involved a family member's appearance. Although they are the same situations, the responses to those two situations might be different since the objects of compliments are different. Thus, the inconsistent choice of DCT situations might have affected the way the participants responded.

Note:

1. Although her statement "たくさん勉強するから" in the second turn sounds like an upgrade, the researcher analyzed it as downgrade since the statement has " だけ ('only', 'merely')" at the end.

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Appendix:

Discourse Completion Task

What would you say if you were in the following situations? Please write down your response in each blank.

1. (<u>Suppose you are doing a home stay in Japan.</u>)
You are talking with your host mother in Japanese. She made a compliment about your outfit. Respond to her.
ホストファミリーの
お母さん：そのシャツ素敵(=nice)ね！
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。
ホストファミリーの
お母さん：とってもよく似合っているわよ (=It looks very nice on you)。
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

2. You are talking with **your close Japanese friend**, Kenji. He made a compliment about your Japanese. Respond to him.
けんじ：＿＿＿＿＿って日本語が上手だよね。
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。
けんじ：いやぁ本当に上手だと思うよ！
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

3. (Suppose you are doing a home stay in Japan)
You met a friend of your host family, Mr. Tanaka, **for the first time**. While you are talking with him in Japanese, He made a compliment about your Japanese. Respond to him.
田中さん：＿＿＿＿＿さん、日本語がお上手ですねえ！
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。
田中さん：いや本当に上手でびっくりしましたよ。
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

4. (Suppose you have an older brother who is a student at Harvard University)
You are talking with your Japanese friend's father, Mr. Yamada. He made a compliment about your older brother. Respond to him.
山田さん：＿＿＿＿＿＿さんのお兄さん、ハーバード大学に行ってるんだって？
　　　　　頭がいいんだね！
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。
山田さん：いやぁ本当にすごいなあ。
あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

5. (Suppose you have an older sister.)

You are showing a picture of your family to your Japanese friend, Yumi. While you are talking about your family, she made a compliment about your older sister. Respond to her.

ゆみ：わぁ！＿＿＿＿＿＿さんのお姉さん、本当に美人 (=beautiful) だね！

　　　モデル (=fashion model) みたい！

あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

ゆみ：美人だし、やさしそうだし、私もこんなお姉さんがほしいなぁ！

あなた：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿。

日本語の褒め言葉に対する返答について
―語用論的選択に見られる学習者のモチベーションに焦点を当てて―

助川　愛

　学習者の発話行為に注目した語用論的研究は多いが、その多くは、学習者の発話行為を日本語の規範と照らし合わせて比較分析したものであり、学習者の語用論的選択における動機付けや主観性に注目したものは少ない。本研究では、日本語学習者の褒め言葉に対する返答に焦点を当て、学習者が発話行為における語用論的選択を行う際、どのような動機付けが行なわれ、どのように自身の主観性を反映させているかを調査した。DCT（談話完成タスク）とその後のインタビュー調査により、学習者の語用論的選択は、これまでの研究（Saito and Beecken 1997 他）に見られるような学習の転移（transfer of training）によるものにとどまらず、学習者個人のビリーフ、日本語の規範への抵抗感など、様々な要因が影響を与えていることがわかった。教室内で教師は、学習者の異なるバックグラウンドや主体性を尊重しながら、日本語の語用論的規範を様々な視点から見て指導することが重要だと言えるだろう。