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Developing Intercultural Competence in Beginning Japanese Courses: The Case of One Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) Environment

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Abstract: Based on case studies conducted in beginning Japanese courses, this paper will present an approach for developing intercultural competence utilizing technology, including editing popular movies and implementing online tools to develop students' intercultural competence focusing on politeness expressions in Japanese. To make students aware of speech act differences between Japanese and Americans I strive to create culturally-based contexts within the classroom, in my Japanese language course, that offer students the challenge of functioning successfully in a Japanese environment. These culturally-based sessions aim to develop procedural knowledge such as knowing how to perform competently in a Japanese context. In Japanese, for example, there are particular ways to express politeness. In order to acquire polite Japanese expressions, learners need to acquire pragmatics. Consequently, an approach that focuses on linguistic features and pragmatic competence within a larger cultural framework is beneficial for students. Taking advantage of students' prior knowledge acquired through recent technological advancements, I compiled video clips from Japanese movies that covered a particular grammar topic in the textbook. By watching and listening to the conversations in the clips, students learned not only the grammar points, but also native speakers' usage and topic-related cultural appropriateness that students could later apply in real-world situations.

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Introduction

There are many ways to show politeness: tone of voice, pausing, speech rate, non-verbal behavior such as eye contact, and language expressions. There is also the consideration of social customs. Each society and culture has a different way of showing politeness.

Japanese honorifics and politeness pose one of the greatest challenges for learners of Japanese. Previous studies (Hashimoto, 1993; Marriott, 1995; Siegal, 1995, 1996) indicate that although students who learn Japanese in Japan receive a massive amount of input, they fail to acquire honorifics. This failure indicates that there are some sociocultural and sociolinguistic features that are difficult for the students to learn even in the target-language country. However, such research often focuses on linguistic features, which are usually introduced in an intermediate or advanced language course. Although non-verbal interaction is an important communication factor, it is often treated as a supporting action.

The recent visit of President Obama to Japan brought great attention to Japanese non-verbal interaction. At first, the Japanese media broadcast general information about the day President Obama visited the Imperial Palace. However, two days later, the media picked up on the American media's preoccupation with the President's greeting of the imperial couple. It appears the Japanese media did not see anything unusual about President Obama's conduct. However, according to one Japanese media outlet ("Teishiseisugiru Obamashi," 2009), American media criticized the bow in terms

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of depth and number. This situation demonstrates the existence of misinterpretations arising from differences in how the same action is interpreted by different interlocutors.

This paper discusses the limitations and problems of learning Japanese in the beginning language course, especially outside of Japan, and possible ways of achieving a situation similar to the environment of the target-language country to help students develop better cultural competence while studying Japanese in the United States.

Japanese Politeness

Nakane (1970) characterizes Japanese society as a vertical organization with a group-oriented ranking system based on an institution. She explains that the Japanese expression uchi comes from a group consciousness. Uchi means inside, interior and private, and refers to an insider. Conversely, soto means outside, exterior, and public, and refers to an outsider (Lebra, 1976; Sugimoto, 1997). These uchi and soto orientations are linked to the meaning of "self" and "society" (Bachnik, 1994). The Japanese distinguish interactional behavior between uchi and soto (Lebra, 1976). Consequently, this group consciousness is "reflected in Japanese speech, particularly in polite speech" (Niyekawa, 1991). "Politeness in Japanese often requires a prescribed set of behaviors as well as certain avoidance behaviors" such as using an apology phrase repeatedly for making a request (Maynard, 1997, p. 59).

Ide (1982) indicates the following social rules of politeness: "Rule 1, be polite to a person of a higher social position; Rule 2, be polite to a person with power; Rule 3, be polite to an older person; and the Overriding Rule, be polite in a formal setting" (pp. 366-377). In Rule 1, a higher social position is a position to which society pays respect such as lawyers and doctors. Rule 2 applies in a relationship such as one between an employer and an employee, or a doctor and a patient. Rule 3 has a Japanese cultural aspect which includes "(1) the referent is an in-group member of the addressee, (2) the referent is present within earshot, (3) the speaker displays his good demeanor, (4) the speaker shows genuine respect toward the referent, and (5) the speaker educates his or her children" (p. 370). Rule 3 reflects a common Japanese cultural feature, but Rules 1 and 2 outweigh Rule 3 (p. 369). Among participants, Ide introduces the concept of in-group and out-group and explains that the speaker uses humble forms toward lower in-group members' status in order to express politeness to out-group members. However, Rule 1 and 2 outweigh Rule 3. According to Ide, the ranking of determinants of politeness for the addressee is Rule 2, 1, and then 3, while for the referent the order is Rule 1, 3 and 2. She explains in this ranking that the addressee is more important than the referent because the addressee is always present, and the referent is most often absent. Furthermore, the Overriding Rule applies to the following: formality among participants, formality of occasion, and formality of topics.

Brown and Levinson (1978) use the term "face" to define politeness as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself (p. 61). Face is classified into two elements: positive face (the desire for approval), and negative face (the need for freedom). Matsumoto (1989) claims the Brown and Levinson theory is "unsuited to Japanese culture and language" (p. 219). She and other scholars (Ide, 1989; Ōhashi, 2003) argue that positive and negative face relate to internal factors, whereas politeness in Japan concerns the external factors of society. Quantitative research (Hill et al., 1986) indicates cross-cultural sociolinguistic rules of politeness do not support the Brown and Levinson theory. They suggest adding "the concept of wakimae ['discernment'] which is fundamental to politeness in Japanese" (p. 347) and volition, which is the speaker's intention. This survey provided three measures answered by Japanese and Americans students: information about linguistic rules of politeness, social rules of behavior based on discernment, and "the relative frequency with which specific request forms are used toward specific categories of addressee in typical situations" (p. 354). The results show that when Japanese people use polite forms to certain addressees, specific

linguistic forms are used in strong agreement. In other words, discernment is obligatory and volition is optional for the Japanese. However, for American English, "the factors of addressee status and (typical) situation define a very broad range of politeness" (p. 362). Therefore, volition is obligatory, and discernment is obligatory as well, but it is not primary. There is another finding from this research: longer sentences are considered more polite in both American English and Japanese.

There are critiques of the concept of wakimae (Fukada & Asato, 2004; Pizziconi, 2003;) that claim there are cases of honorifics used in a volitional manner. Cook (2006) reexamined honorifics focusing on the masu form and concluded that the "distinction between discernment and volition (strategic choice based on face needs) is irrelevant" (p. 288). Based on her data, speakers actively participate and choose their linguistic forms strategically.

In terms of Japanese grammar, politeness can be expressed grammatically in many ways. According to Ide and Yoshida (1999) these are classified as "nominal elements" and "predicative elements." "Predicative elements" are divided into "referent honorifics" and "addressee honorifics," and "referent honorifics" are further divided into "subject honorifics" and "object honorifics" (Ide & Yoshida, 1999). "Subject honorifics are used when the subject noun phrase refers to a person toward whom the speaker is expected to show great respect" (1999, p. 450). Nominal elements are used for people and objects such as a person's title as in (1). Subject honorifics include the prefix *o* or *go* and the ending *ni naru* for verbs of infinitive forms as demonstrated in (1). Subject honorifics have another suffix, *(r)are*, which has the same morpheme as the passives and is added to the verbal root as well. Subject honorifics also include the prefix o or go for adjectives. There are suppletive forms as well.

(1) *Tanaka-sensei wa gohon o okakininatta.*
name + sensei / *go* + nouns / *o* + V + *ni naru*
'Professor Tanaka wrote a book.'

Object honorifics are used "in connection with non-subject noun phrases" (1999, p. 450). Object honorifics also have regular forms and suppletive forms. They also add the prefix o or go for nouns, but there are no adjective forms. The prefix and the ending suru are added to infinitive verbs as in (2). There are also suppletive forms.

(2) *Tanaka-sensei no gohon wo okarishita.*
go + nouns / *o* + V + *suru*
'I borrowed Professor Tanaka's book.'

Addressee honorifics are used "when the speaker's respectful attitude toward the addressee is expressed" (1999, p. 450). Addressee honorifics are so-called desu/masu forms. They appear independently and dependently of the referent honorifics as in (3) and (4). According to Ide and Yoshida (1999), there are many cases of the addressee and the referent being the same in actual speech events.

(3) *Tanaka-sensei ga kimasu.*
V+addressee honorifics
'Professor Tanaka will come.'

(4) *Tanaka-sensei ga irasshaimasu.*
Subject honorifics + addressee honorifics
'Professor Tanaka will come.'

Humble forms are used to "neither exalt the referent nor respect the addressee, but humble the speaker" (1999, p. 453). Verbs like *mai-ru* 'go', *zonji-ru* 'know', and *ita-su* 'do' are categorized as humble forms. This type of expression occurs when the speakers lower themselves. In modern speech humble forms are used with addressee honorifics. Ide and Yoshida (1999) explain that the humble forms are used with non-subject honorific forms to show the non-subject referent a higher respect.

Shibatani (1990) reports the form o-V-ni naru originated in the Edo dialect and became widely used beginning in the middle of the Meiji period. The ending *ni naru* literally means 'to become', and this ending is generally used "to avoid direct reference to the person to be honored" (Ikegami, 1991). Subject honorifics have another suffix, (r)are, which has the same morpheme as the passives and is added to the verbal root.

There are cases when Japanese speakers do not use honorifics or mix the polite and non-polite styles: When a speaker wants to show intimacy s/he avoids honorifics, or when vendors at a market want to create a friendly

atmosphere they use mixed styles (Maynard, 1997; Okamoto, 1997). Moreover, other factors need to be considered. One factor is gender. Many studies have been conducted which show the differences between women's and men's speech (Ide, 1982, 1997, 1999; Ide & Yoshida, 1999; Shibamoto, 1985). On the other hand, studies also show that the usage of honorific forms differs depending on the individual, time, and context (Okamoto, 1997, 2004).

Acquisition of Japanese Honorifics and Politeness

Japanese honorifics and politeness are not just linguistic features, but rather require the acquisition of pragmatic competency. Children acquire politeness early (Bates, 1976). Clancy (1999) points out that Japanese children learn how to express their feelings in their culture with the mother-child interaction developing children's linguistic social skills, which presents "socialization through language and socialization to use language" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 2). Nakamura's study (1999) illustrates that addressee honorifics are "one of the easiest forms of polite language for young children to acquire" (p. 509). She organized children's *desu/masu* form usage into four categories . She points out that children are sensitive to social contexts because they use addressee honorific forms when they interact with unfamiliar adults, switch between addressee honorific forms and plain forms when they role-play, and use addressee honorific forms when they need formality. Japanese children acquire language socialization skills through interaction at home and at school. At elementary school, children explore socializing by participating in classroom interactions. In particular, they learn how to interact and listen to other opinions and speak as a member of a group with attentive listening (Cook, 1999). Through classroom activities at school, children also distinguish between plain forms and *desu/masu* forms depending on the situation (Cook, 2002).

How can learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) acquire such sociocultural and sociolinguistic competence? Can learners of Japanese acquire it from social environments, such as home and school, while they are in Japan, like Japanese children do? Few studies have been done on the acquisition of honorifics and politeness in Japanese as a second language (JSL) in Japan.

Hashimoto (1993) investigated an Australian high school female student's language acquisition in a home-stay environment. The data, recorded five times in Japan in the last month of the student's one-year stay, show the student's interaction with members of the host family and the efforts of the student and the host family members to understand each other, especially when the student faced unfamiliar vocabulary. During the student's stay in Japan, the student mostly used the plain forms with dialectal forms. Marriott (1995) also investigated the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence focusing on politeness patterns of eight Australian high school students who studied Japanese in a home-stay environment for one year in Japan. The results from the role-play task show that all the students performed successfully in opening and closing a request, using formulaic routines with supportive moves. On the other hand, the results showed that the students were less successful in the appropriate usage of honorific styles. A study conducted by Falsgraf, Fujii, and Kataoka (1993) involved interviewing 34 non-Japanese who were working in Japan and using Japanese for their work. They divided subjects into four proficiency levels and analyzed each groups' difficulties. According to their findings, advanced speakers reported the use of honorifics difficult, namely the appropriate level of honorifics and the shift between honorific and casual speech styles. This suggests that working in Japan creates a greater awareness of sociolinguistic norms than does merely studying there. Previous studies of learners of Japanese in home-stay and work environments (Falsgraf, Fujii, & Kataoka, 1993; Hashimoto, 1993; Marriott, 1995) indicate that students who learn Japanese in Japan receive a massive amount of input and try to interact with native speakers. However, the studies also indicate the difficulty of raising awareness of sociolinguistic norms while they are students.

Armour (2003) analyzed the case of two Australian students who had studied the Japanese language in a JFL environment and participated in a home-stay that immersed them in a JSL environment. He investigated how "multiple self-presentations are scaffolded by the ability to make meaning in Japanese as an additional language" and how those learners process identity slippage. His discourse data indicate how the learners change their views of Japan and gain intercultural competence, and how this change makes their narrative space: to identity slips and express multiple self-presentations. Siegal (1995) studied two adult women, Mary and Arina, learning Japanese in Japan, including their acquisition of sociolinguistic competence and use of honorifics. The research focused on language use associated with the image the students wanted to present, and their individuality. Unlike the two studies above, Mary and Arina were aware of the different speech styles associated with expressing politeness. Although Mary wanted to express her politeness, her data indicate inappropriate usage of the epistemic modal deshō, and formulaic routine expressions such as 'I'm sorry' *sumimasen*. The research focused on language use associated with the image the participants wanted to present, and subjectivity. As Siegal (1996) described, Mary often thought she could not express certain 'subtleties' like she could in English. In the case of learners wanting to express deference or politeness, this gap seems larger for an adult learner than for a younger student. However, an interlocutor did not necessarily view pragmatic inappropriateness as failure (Siegal, 1995, 1996). Her further research (1996) concludes that a learner's subjectivity plays an important role.

Whereas the above studies addressed JFL contexts, several studies focused on Japanese honorifics including formulas in JFL classroom environments. Tateyama (2001) conducted a study on students who were studying Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) at university in the United States, and investigated the effects of explicit and implicit instruction of Japanese formulaic routines. For example, the formulaic routine sumimasen expresses not only 'I'm sorry,' which learners of Japanese are usually taught, but also expresses gratitude. The result was in a multiple-choice test: the group that had explicit instruction improved their scores on the second test compared to the first one, whereas, in the implicit group, students' scores decreased between the first test and the second. On the other hand, the result from the role-play showed that the explicit group's score decreased between the first and second tests, whereas the implicit group's second score improved over their first. Both results were not radically different statistically, but in the multiple-choice test, the explicit group performed better than the implicit group with a situation that required higher formality. Cook (2001) presents another study that indicates the difficulty of acquisition of pragmatic competency even for students who had explicit instructions. She studied university students studying Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) in Australia to determine if they could distinguish between masu forms and plain forms in particular social contexts. Cook had the students listen to speeches by three different people that were applying for the same job. They then chose one applicant. 120 students who were studying Japanese and eight instructors of Japanese judged these three applicants' speeches. 97 (80.8%) of the students judged Applicant A as qualified, since he had more qualifications than the other two, whereas all instructors judged Applicant A as having the least polite speech since he used masu forms, plain forms, and formulaic routines inappropriately. 68 students who chose Applicant A could not recognize that his speech was in an inappropriate style. Cook points out that students' judgments were based on the content and they "barely pa[id] attention to the pragmatic meaning index by collocation of linguistic features" (p. 96). Cook also points out the explicit instruction did not corroborate this result: Although one instructor taught two classes explicitly, one class chose A 20% of the time, and the other class chose A 71% of the time. Although some claim instruction helps develop awareness of target language features, this study suggests it is difficult for learners to

relate linguistic features and pragmatic competency. Two studies on JFL learners in Canada and England, respectively, report that classroom interactional routines provide language socialization for both children and adult language learners (Kanagy, 1999; Ohta, 1999). Although these studies were not focused on politeness and intercultural competency, the studies suggest that repetition helps to develop students' interactional competence.

The studies in a study-abroad context show that, despite the fact that students who learn Japanese in Japan (essentially a JSL context) receive a massive amount of input, it is difficult for student learners to acquire sociocultural norms. The studies in a classroom environment illustrate the difficulty of sociolinguistic and sociocultural feature acquisition in the classroom. The explicit instruction of sociolinguistic and sociocultural features is difficult in classroom settings, but "it is important to instruct students to pay attention to the relationship between linguistic form, its social meaning, and the social context" (Cook, 2001, p. 101). Kondō (2004) suggests that explicit instruction of pragmatics "can sensitize learners to cultural differences and different variables involved in language use" (p. 67).

The aforementioned studies conclude that for learners to acquire Japanese honorifics they need to develop pragmatic competency. In terms of Japanese honorifics, acquisition is not comprised only of linguistic features, because Japanese honorifics are not just a linguistic feature, but rather require the acquisition of sociocultural competency. Although these studies focus on linguistic features and not on learners' intercultural competence, they indicate that it is essential to develop intercultural competence (Byram, 1997) in the language course.

Intercultural Competence in Beginning Japanese Language Classroom

Although much research has been conducted in the area of Japanese second language (JSL) acquisition and honorifics, little research has been done on Japanese politeness and intercultural competence. Most previous studies that focus on intercultural competence focus on workplace settings (Fujio, 2004; Marriott, 1993; Miller, 1994). Although all previous studies suggest broader ideas to introduce the results to real classrooms, and some scholars (Carroll, 2005; Haugh, 2005) mention the importance of introducing politeness in language classrooms, there are no clear instructions, especially for the beginning language courses. The analyses of major JFL textbooks indicate that all textbooks except one introduce honorific forms in the second half of the textbook, with the exception of addressee honorifics, the so-called *desu/masu* forms (Carroll, 2005). This illustrates that in textbooks, the students' first systematic exposure to Japanese, honorifics are not introduced at the beginning.

It is challenging to develop students' intercultural competence in the classroom environment since most higher education language courses use certain textbooks. In my third-year Japanese course, we attempted to overcome this limitation by having students create and exchange campus maps using Google Maps, and exchange comments using blogs with students at a Japanese university. They could communicate using their target language with native speakers and observe how native students use honorific forms, begin to change honorific forms to casual forms, or do not use honorifics at all. By reading, observing and exchanging comments, students can develop their intercultural competence. However, could this tactic be effectively implemented in beginning language courses? In this section, I will provide two cases of common problems that language instructors face and suggest classroom instructions that can overcome those problems.

Case 1: Greetings

Greetings and formulaic expressions are usually introduced at the beginning of the language course. According to the surveys I conducted, 90.5% (n = 95) of students have knowledge about how Japanese people greet each other prior to class instruction. Among them, 81.3% of students gained this knowledge from media, including anime, movies, and TV dramas. This indicates that students already have some knowledge, such

as differences and similarities between their cultural norms of greetings and the Japanese practices. I examined two textbooks most of the higher education institutions in Arizona used and found explanations about Japanese greetings, including degrees of bowing. However, there is no explanation to develop students' intercultural knowledge, such as why Japanese people greet a certain way. Care must be taken not to oversimplify the target culture (Guest, 2002). As previous research (Hashimoto, 1993; Marriott, 1995; Siegal, 1995, 1996) indicates, the interlocutors' acceptability is one factor when we consider honorifics usage and expressions of politeness. What happens when a Japanese person violates the rules of politeness? According to Maynard, "in general, noncompliance with the rules of linguistics politeness creates a negative impression. The violator is thought to be childish, unsophisticated, and lacking in common sense" (Maynard, 1997, p. 63). On the other hand, most Japanese seem very forgiving of a non-native's errors (Carroll, 2005; Siegal, 1995, 1996). Although there is much emphasis on verbal behaviors, it is important to include non-verbal expressions such as gestures into consideration. "The concept of linguistic politeness can be extended to gestures" (Kita, 2009), since gestures are part of language and cannot be considered as different from uttered language (McNeill, 2005).

It is important that students understand social meanings of actions such as bowing and the interlocutor's expectation in real life. Most available videos for language courses, or those accompanying textbooks, show examples of greetings. However, as mentioned above, most students already have basic knowledge of how Japanese people greet from popular media resources. I show both good and bad examples using available videos on the Internet (Shinagawa, 2007). Doing so, the students can observe not only how to greet, but also discern the interlocutor's expectations in actual social contexts.

According to the questionnaire data I gathered at the end of the semester, 97.9% (n = 95) of students answered that they bow when greeting a Japanese instructor. Since this was self-reported, I confirmed their response by checking the Online Language Environment (OLE) assignment. OLE is a web-based instructional tool developed at the University of Arizona, which allows students to record video and audio and post it to receive feedback (Fujii, 2009). According to the OLE assignment, 95% (n = 61) of students bowed when they introduced themselves. The OLE video evidence confirms the high percentage of students who bow while greeting. I asked the reason for their bowing, for which students were asked to indicate all that apply. 93.8% of students stated they wanted to show respect. On the other hand, 50.0% of students answered that they bow when they greet Japanese people in general. For those who answered they do not bow, the most frequently marked reason was because Japanese people they know do not greet this way. Some students reported that they feel strange bowing in the American social context. It seems most Japanese people with whom students have some contact are Japanese students on campus or friends, so they are very close in age. Although these are questionnaires and are self-reported, it is significant that the students chose to distinguish between greeting Japanese instructors and others. Importantly, students demonstrate some awareness of the differences between Japanese and American ways of greeting, and apply them according to the situation.

Case 2: Kinship-terms

Kinship-terms are another topic usually introduced in the first or second semester of beginning Japanese courses. In Japanese there are particular terms that refer to one's family when speaking to out-group members (Loveday, 1986). When speaking to out-group members about my family, for example, humble expressions are used, as shown in Table 1. For example, *Otō-san* is used when referring to "someone's father" and to address the speaker's own father. When referring to one's own father, *chichi* is used to humble oneself to show respect to the addressee. The differences between English kinship terms and Japanese are stressed together with the

Table 1. *Japanese Kinship Terms*

	When speaking to out-group member about:		When addressing own family:
	Own family	Someone else's family	
Father	*Chichi*	(person's name *no*) *Otō-san*	*Otō-san* or *otō-chan*[a]
Mother	*Haha*	(person's name *no*) *Okaa-san*	*Okaa-san* or *okaa-chan*[a]
Older brother	*Ani*	(person's name *no*) *Onii-san*	*Onii-san* or *onii-chan*[a]
Older sister	*Ane*	(person's name *no*) *Onee-san*	*Onee-san* or *onee-chan*[a]
Younger brother	*Otōto*	(person's name *no*) *Otōto-san*	(name or nickname)
Younger sister	*Imōto*	(person's name *no*) *Imōto-san*	(name or nickname)

Note. [a]For parents and older siblings in one's own family, other forms of address (e.g., nicknames) are possible.

concept of *uchi* and *soto* in the textbooks I examined above.

Carroll (2005) suggests using Japanese television programs, and as a possible resource she lists home dramas, news programs, and chat shows. Due to the exceptional growth in students' use of technology innovations such as YouTube, students already have some prior knowledge of Japanese customs, as mentioned earlier. In regard to kinship-terms, students can access Japanese home dramas and observe the use of customs. However, since the interactions between characters is often in a home setting, the kinship-terms are usually limited to those used between family members or close friends, as in the rightmost column in Table 1, "when you address your family members." In addition, as seen in table 1, these terms are similar to the terms when speaking to out-group members about their family (e.g., in both cases *Otō-san* is used to refer to the father as in (5) and (6).

(5) *"Tanaka-san no otō-san, konnichiwa."*
'Good afternoon, Mr. Tanaka's father.'

(6) *"Otō-san, ohayō."*
'Good morning, dad.'

Since the textbooks are not designed to teach students to address their family members in Japanese, those terms are generally not included

Taking advantage of students' prior knowledge, I compiled video clips from Japanese movies that cover kinship-terms that students are familiar with, and the target material, which includes humble nominal forms. For example, I used the Japanese anime film *Tonari no Totoro* [My Neighbor Totoro] (Hara & Miyazaki, 1988). The setting is in suburban Japan in the 1950s and features a family of a father, mother, the main character (Satsuki), and her sister. While watching the clips students are required to fill out a handout that indicates each character, and diagrams their relationship, so students can focus on target materials. A particularly effective scene, when Satsuki calls her father's office, demonstrates the politeness shift in a conversation about one's family with an out-group person (when Satsuki asks the secretary for her father) and between family members (when Satsuki is talking with her father). Thus, by watching and listening to the conversations in the clips, students can learn native speakers' usage and topic-related cultural appropriateness.

Online technologies are widely used in daily life and students can access them anywhere now. We can build on their knowledge and facilitate understanding of social context. The above examples are focused on beginning Japanese language course materials and I used them in my courses. There are many available visual materials as Carroll (2006) suggests that cover a particular grammar topic in the textbook.

Conclusion

It is essential for language learners to develop intercultural competence. However, the degree to which this can be accomplished with in-class activities depends on the language instructor and the textbook covered in a given period. This paper discussed the limitations and problems of language learning, especially in learning Japanese outside of Japan (JFL), and proposes possible ways of

achieving a situation similar to the environment in the target country (JSL) to help students develop better cultural competence in the beginning language classroom. Taking advantage of students' prior knowledge of Japanese culture and available materials, we can build on this knowledge and provide proper social meaning. To do so, students must learn not only the linguistic features, but also native speakers' usage and topic-related cultural appropriateness.

A persistently problematic example of such appropriateness is Japanese honorifics and politeness, which can be considered the greatest challenge for learners of Japanese. This is complicated by the fact that the use of honorifics is not static because acceptability varies according to the situation and interlocutor. Other factors need to be considered when we research Japanese honorifics and politeness such as social setting, age, and gender. In addition, motivation and learning strategies differ for each learner, and the sensitivity or awareness of an individual learner creates considerable variation.

Few studies have been conducted on how learners develop and process their intercultural competence in the study of Japanese as a second language (JSL). More quantitative research needs to be performed on acquisition of Japanese honorifics and politeness, especially in the area of acquisition of intercultural competence. For now, in the language classroom it behooves the instructors to provide authentic examples of social interactions that can be analyzed in relation to the classroom agenda and used as potential models for the students' own language production. Since the stated goal is to attempt a simulation of a target-country environment, audio-visual materials can provide some approximation, at least by providing natural examples of social interactions.

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