

**Cross-linguistic Transference of  
Politeness Phenomena**

**(Module Two)  
A Comparison of Politeness Strategies in  
Japanese and Cantonese**

**by  
SHIH Pei Chun**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham in part fulfillment of the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of English  
The University of Birmingham  
March 2009**

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## Contents

### List of Tables

### List of Charts

### Abbreviations Used

1. Introduction	1
2. The Languages	3
2.1 Cantonese	3
2.1.1 Utterance Particles	4
2.1.2 Interrogative Sentences	5
2.2 Japanese	6
3. Methodology	9
3.1 Japanese Questionnaire	9
3.1.1 Questionnaire Design	9
3.1.2 Pilot Study	10
3.1.3 Questionnaire Distribution and Subjects	11
3.1.4 Data	11
3.2 Cantonese Questionnaire	25
3.2.1 Questionnaire Design	25
3.2.2 Composition of Cantonese Expressions	27
4. Analysis of Cantonese Data	54
4.1 Subjects	54
4.2 Subject Data	55
4.3 Summary	74

5. Interpretation of Data	75
5.1 Japanese Politeness	75
5.1.1 Volitional Use of Politeness	75
5.1.1a Apology	76
5.1.1b Interrogative Form	76
5.1.1c Being Pessimistic	78
5.1.1d Minor Sentence	79
5.1.2 Discernment Use of Politeness	80
5.1.3 Summary	83
5.2 Cantonese Politeness	84
5.2.1 Volitional Use of Politeness	84
5.2.1a Apology	84
5.2.1b Interrogative Form	85
5.2.1c Being Pessimistic	87
5.2.1d Minor Sentence	88
5.2.2 Discernment Use of Politeness	89
5.2.3 Fixed Expressions	91
5.2.4 Summary	92
6. Summary	93
Reference	95

## List of Tables

Table 1	Utterance particles in this paper	5
Table 2	Different forms of basic parts of speech	7
Table 3	Ten situations included in the Japanese questionnaire	10
Table 4	Age distribution of 30 Japanese subjects	11
Table 5.1	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 1	12
Table 5.2	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 2	14
Table 5.3	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 3	16
Table 5.4	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 4	17
Table 5.5	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 5	18
Table 5.6	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 6	19
Table 5.7	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 7	21
Table 5.8	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 8	22
Table 5.9	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 9	23
Table 5.10	Common politeness markers identified in Situation 10	24
Table 6.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 1	27
Table 6.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 1	28
Table 6.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 1	28
Table 6.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 1	29
Table 7.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 2	30
Table 7.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 2	31
Table 7.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 2	32
Table 7.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 2	33
Table 8.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 3	34
Table 8.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 3	35

Table 8.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 3	35
Table 8.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 3	36
Table 9.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 5	38
Table 9.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 5	39
Table 9.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 5	39
Table 9.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 5	40
Table 10.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 6	41
Table 10.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 6	41
Table 10.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 6	42
Table 10.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 6	43
Table 11.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 7	44
Table 11.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 7	44
Table 11.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 7	45
Table 11.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 7	46
Table 12.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 8	46
Table 12.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 8	47
Table 12.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 8	48
Table 12.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 8	49
Table 13.1	Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 10	50
Table 13.2	Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 10	51
Table 13.3	Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 10	52
Table 13.4	Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 10	52
Table 14	Sources of Cantonese subjects	54
Table 15	Age distribution of 100 Cantonese subjects	55
Table 16.1	Age distribution in Situation 1	56
Table 16.2	Age distribution in Situation 2	58

Table 16.3	Age distribution in Situation 3	60
Table 16.4	Age distribution in Situation 4	62
Table 16.5	Age distribution in Situation 5	64
Table 16.6	Age distribution in Situation 6	66
Table 16.7	Age distribution in Situation 7	68
Table 16.8	Age distribution in Situation 8	69
Table 16.9	Age distribution in Situation 9	71
Table 16.10	Age distribution in Situation 10	73

## List of Charts

Chart 1	Data analysis of Situation 1	56
Chart 2	Data analysis of Situation 2	58
Chart 3	Data analysis of Situation 3	60
Chart 4	Data analysis of Situation 4	62
Chart 5	Data analysis of Situation 5	64
Chart 6	Data analysis of Situation 6	66
Chart 7	Data analysis of Situation 7	67
Chart 8	Data analysis of Situation 8	69
Chart 9	Data analysis of Situation 9	71
Chart 10	Data analysis of Situation 10	72



## Abbreviations Used

Abbreviation	Representation
ACC	Accusative
ADV	Adverb
ASP	Aspect
CAUS	Causative
CL	Classifier
ENG	English
EXCL	Exclamation
HON	Honorific
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative
PA	Particle
QUES	Question Marker
UP	Utterance Particle

## **1. Introduction**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 74), the weight of a face threatening act and the adoption of politeness strategies usually depend on three valuables: D (the social distance between the interlocutors), P (the relative power between interlocutors) and R (the ranking of impositions in the particular culture). This means that the same imposition might not arouse the same reaction in different cultures. As well as that, people in different cultures are very likely to possess different criteria when assessing these three valuables before they decide which politeness strategies to adopt. As a result, though universal in its broad sense, politeness is actually culture-specific in application. The cross-linguistic transference of politeness features might “require a degree of linguistic modification at the level of texture” (Hatim and Mason 2000: 431).

In this paper, I will first collect through questionnaires some frequently used politeness strategies in Japanese. Based on the Japanese data, I will survey Cantonese-speaking subjects to see how these common politeness strategies can be rendered into Cantonese, and also to investigate how Cantonese subjects respond to different situations requiring different levels of politeness. The purpose of this investigation is to set up a framework for the analysis of translation strategies used for movies. Specifically, in Module Three, this framework will be used for the qualitative and quantitative analysis of translation strategies used in Japanese animated movies dubbed and subtitled for the Hong Kong market, with specific reference to the films of Hayao Miyazaki.

I will give a brief account of the two languages involved (i.e. Cantonese and Japanese) in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will explain the design and content of both Japanese and Cantonese questionnaires. Chapter 3.1 will look at the design of the Japanese questionnaire and present the Japanese data. In addition to that, how Cantonese

expressions are created on the basis of the Japanese data will be discussed in Chapter 3.2. In Chapter 4, the quantitative analysis of the Cantonese data will be included. Finally, to facilitate the discussion of subtitles/ dubbings of Miyazaki's animated films in Module Three, a comparison between Japanese (the source language) and Cantonese (the target language) data will also be conducted in Chapter 5 to investigate potential problems in the translation of politeness phenomena from Japanese into Cantonese. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings presented in this Module and outlines how these will be exploited in the creation of a translation analysis framework in Module Three.

## **2. Languages**

In this Chapter a brief account will be given of the two languages dealt with in this research. Section 2.1 will introduce two aspects of Cantonese and Section 2.2 will review the complex system of honorifics in Japanese.

### **2.1 Cantonese**

Cantonese is one of the Chinese varieties used mainly in Hong Kong and Guangdong Province of China. The written form of Cantonese is identical in many ways to the standard written form of China's official Putonghua (Mandarin) language. However, there is some variation in the representation of local Cantonese colloquialisms commonly used in "genres such as novels, popular magazines, newspaper gossip columns, and informal personal communications" (Matthews & Yip 1994: 6). For example, a few characters used to represent colloquial Cantonese are intelligible exclusively to Cantonese speakers and Standard Chinese speakers might find it difficult to understand the meaning. Although both dialects/languages use the same written form, they are not mutually comprehensible in spoken form.

The data included in the Cantonese questionnaire are intended to represent oral expressions. Therefore, Cantonese data below will be presented first in Chinese characters used to represent colloquial Cantonese for the benefit of readers with knowledge of Cantonese, together with Romanization (in italics), then as literal translation of each word/phrase and finally as semantic translation of whole sentences. As far as Romanization is concerned, 'The Cantonese Transliteration Scheme' (the Guangdong Provincial Education Department, 1960) will be adopted to transcribe all the Cantonese utterances in this paper. The nine tones of Cantonese are represented by small numerical figures 1 to 9 (for example *ga*<sup>3</sup>) to distinguish them from the 4 tones of Mandarin Chinese officially marked by the symbols for rising and falling

tones (for example, *chī*, *chí*, *chǐ*, and *chì*).

Unlike many European languages, Cantonese grammar is inflectionally weak as there are for example no verb conjugations or tense system (Matthews & Yip 1994). To facilitate the discussions in the following chapters, two characteristics of Cantonese will be described here. Section 2.1.1 will deal with utterance particles and Section 2.1.2 will introduce the interrogative forms; these forms are chosen to as illustrative examples of Cantonese language as they are also prominent features in the expression of politeness in Cantonese (the politeness functions of these structures are discussed in Section 3.2 below).

### **2.1.1 Utterance Particles**

There are thirty basic forms of sentence-final particles in Cantonese which are adopted mainly to either “[indicate] the speech-act type” such as imperative and interrogative or to add “affective and emotional colouring” to sentences (Matthews and Yip 1994: 338). These particles occur not only at the end of a sentence but also “after the sentence topic and at other natural breaks in the sentence” (ibid.). As a result, it is also called “utterance particle” (Luke 1990: 3). Table 1 below demonstrates the utterance particle used in this paper and their main functions (Kwok 1984, Luke 1990) in sentences.

Utterance Particles	Functions
呀 ( <i>a<sup>3</sup></i> )	attached to question to make the sentence sound less direct
㗎 ( <i>a<sup>1</sup></i> )	attached to imperative/statement to make sentence sound more consultative
噏 ( <i>wo<sup>5</sup></i> )	to report what other people said / to draw the addressee's attention to something
嘞 ( <i>la<sup>3</sup></i> )	to indicate the completion of an action
啦 ( <i>la<sup>1</sup></i> )	to indicate uncertainty
咩 ( <i>me<sup>9</sup></i> )	to indicate the speaker's doubt about something
呢 ( <i>ne<sup>1</sup></i> )	attached to a statement to form interrogative sentence
番 ( <i>bo<sup>5</sup></i> )	a variant of <i>wo<sup>5</sup></i> to make a warning sound less abrupt and direct / to respond negatively to an invitation

Table 1 Utterance particles in this paper

### 2.1.2 Interrogative Sentences

There are several ways in Cantonese to form interrogative sentences. Three of them can be observed in the Cantonese questionnaire.

- (a) A-not-A question
- (b) Interrogative-word question
- (c) Particle question

An A-not-A question, similar in meaning to yes-no questions in English, is “one in which a verb is followed by it's negative counterpart” (Kwok 1984: 16); for example 你去唔去? (*néi<sup>5</sup>-hêu<sup>3</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-hêu<sup>3</sup>*, you-go-not-go, ‘Are you coming?’). Utterance particles such as 呀 (*a<sup>3</sup>*) can be attached to an A-not-A question to soften the sentence. An interrogative-word question is more like WH-questions in English which are formed by adoption of interrogative words, for example 你覺得呢條橋點?

(*néi<sup>5</sup>-gog<sup>3</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>-ni<sup>1</sup>-tiu<sup>4</sup>-kiu<sup>4</sup>-dim<sup>3</sup>*, you-feel-this-CL-idea-how, ‘How do you feel about this idea?’). Again, sentence final particle 呀 (*a<sup>3</sup>*) can be attached to this kind of question to soften the tone. As discussed in Section 2.1.1 above, one of the functions of utterance particle is to indicate speech-act types such as interrogative. Therefore, a particle question is one “in which a particle suffixed to the end of a statement ... transforms the utterance into a question” (Kwok 1984, 17), for instance 你唔去呀 (*néi<sup>5</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-hêu<sup>3</sup>-a<sup>1</sup>*, you-not-come-UP, ‘Aren’t you going?’).

## 2.2 Japanese

Japanese is a typical SOV language with the Object normally preceding the Verb. It is also a left-branching language with the dependents of a phrase coming before the head; for example, the relative clause is placed before the modified noun and the adverb before the modified verb. Unlike Cantonese, Japanese verbs carry tenses marking, at least for past and present. In addition, nouns and pronouns in Japanese are case-marked as follows; Nominative particle が (*ga*) is attached to the Subject of a sentence and Accusative particle を (*o*) to the Object (Tsujimura 1996). Moreover, Japanese have a very complex system to indicate interpersonal relationships as well as to pay respect to addressees. Every part of speech can be divided into plain form and formal form as shown in Table 2 below (repeated here from Module One for convenience).

Language forms Parts of speech	Plain	Formal
Copula	だ <i>da</i>	です <i>desu</i> でございます <i>degozai masu</i>
Verb 1	来る <i>kuru</i> (to come)	(neutral) 来ます <i>kimasu</i>
		(exalting) いらっしゃる <i>irassharu</i>
		(humbling) まいる <i>mairu</i>
Verb 2	聞く <i>kiku</i> (to inquire)	(neutral) 聞きます <i>kikimasu</i>
		(exalting) お聞きになる <i>o-kiki-ni-naru</i>
		(humbling) お聞きにする <i>o-kiki-ni-suru</i>
Noun	意見 <i>iken</i> (opinion)	ご意見 <i>go-iken</i>
	写真 <i>shashin</i> (photograph)	お写真 <i>o-shashin</i>
Adjective	元気 <i>genki</i> (healthy)	お元気 <i>o-genki</i>
Adverb	ゆっくり <i>yukkuri</i> (slowly)	ごゆっくり <i>go-yukkuri</i>

Table 2 Different forms of basic parts of speech (examples taken from Niyekawa 1995: 53- 70)

Plain form is usually used in conversations with in-group members (such as family), juniors and inferiors, while formal form is for out-group members (such as stranger), seniors and superiors. As shown in Table 2 above, formal form of verbs can be further divided into neutral forms, humbling forms and exalting forms. By adopting humbling forms, speakers lower their own behaviours to pay respect to hearers. Speakers can also elevate hearers' behaviours for respect by adopting exalting forms. Neutral forms are normally used in formal situations with no special respect paid to the hearers. For example, a businessman who uses plain form of the verb *kuru* ('to come') in a conversation with his wife will definitely change to the humbling form *mairu* ('to come') when he talks about his own movement to his client and the



exalting form *irassharu* ('to come') when he refers to the movement of his clients in a conversation with clients themselves or a third party.

Japanese texts will be presented in *Hiragana* (Japanese syllabary) and *Kanji* (Chinese characters), followed by the Romanization (in italics), literal translation of each word/phrase and finally semantic translation of the whole sentence. In-text quotation of Japanese phrases will be presented in italicized Romanization only with the literal translation of each character/word (if necessary) and the semantic translation of the whole phrase in brackets. In transcription of Japanese Data, the Hepburn Romanization system is adopted. When the *Hiragana* へ' (*he*), は' (*ha*) and を' (*wo*) are used as particles, they will be marked as [*e*], [*wa*] and [*o*] respectively.

This chapter has given a very brief account of a limited number of features in the languages under study. The purpose of this account is to facilitate the more in-depth analysis of politeness features in both languages that take place in coming chapters.

### **3. Methodology**

This research is divided into two phases. The first is the data collection of Japanese politeness by means of questionnaire. Based on the data collected in phase one, a Cantonese questionnaire was devised to obtain audiences' responses to different politeness markers in phase two. The design and collection of Japanese questionnaire will be described in Section 3.1, while the formulation of the Cantonese questionnaire will be explained in Section 3.2.

#### **3.1 Japanese Questionnaire**

##### **3.1.1 Questionnaire Design**

The Japanese questionnaire attempts to gather as many different politeness markers in Japanese as possible. It contains ten situations in which linguistic politeness might be applied. Subjects (native speakers of Japanese) are asked to write down the most appropriate expressions to use in each situation. As Brown and Levinson have been criticized for their over-generalization of mitigation to face-threatening acts as the only realization of politeness (Locher 2004), "neutral or pro-social intent" (Werkhofer 1992: 169) of performing politeness, for example a mere greeting with no potential face threatening act involved, is taken into consideration in the formulation of the questionnaire. Table 3 demonstrates ten situations to be included in the Japanese questionnaire and their semantic translation in English with potential addressees highlighted.

1	郵便局で見知らぬ人にペンを借りようとする時 When you want to borrow a pen from a stranger at a post office
2	知り合いをパーティーに誘おうとする時 When you want to invite an acquaintance to go to a party
3	近所のお年寄りを行きたがる所まで自分の車に乗せて上げようとする時 When you want to offer a ride to an elder who lives next to you
4	宿題をできたお子さんを褒めようとする時 When you want to praise your child for completing his/her assignments
5	友人から自分のアイディアに対して認めてもらおうとする時 When you seek agreement from your friend about an idea you just came up with
6	妻／夫にお茶を作ってもらおうと頼む時 When you ask your spouse to make tea for you
7	近所の人に貸したコーヒーマーカを壊されたと分かった時 When you found your neighbor broke the coffee machine you lent him / her
8	上司に年休を取らせてもらおうよう申入れる時 When you submit an application form for annual leave to your supervisor
9	ランチタイムの時に外で同僚と偶然に会った時 When you meet, by chance, your colleague outside the office during lunch time
10	兄弟から食事を誘われてそれを断わろうとする時 When you want to reject an invitation for dinner from your brother/ sister

Table 3 Ten situations included in the Japanese questionnaire

### 3.1.2 Pilot Study

Five native speakers of Japanese were asked to complete the questionnaire as a pilot

study. All five subjects are male between the ages of 35-44. One of them works in the headquarters of a Japanese trading company located in Tokyo and the other four are staff of the Hong Kong branch of the same company. The latter have worked in Hong Kong for 3 to 5 years, but none of them demonstrates knowledge of Cantonese. Although the responses written by the 5 subjects were different in most of the situations, certain characteristics of Japanese politeness which have been analyzed in my Module One were apparent. For example, formal forms were adopted in conversation with strangers (situation 1) or superiors (situation 8) while informal forms were detected in utterances with family members (situation 10). As a result, no amendments were made to the questionnaire after the pilot study.

### **3.1.3 Questionnaire Distribution and Subjects**

A soft copy of the questionnaire was distributed via email among Japanese native speakers and a total of 30 completed questionnaires were collected. About two thirds of the subjects live in Japan, while the rest of them reside in countries such as China and the United Kingdom for study or work. Among the 30 subjects, there are 9 males, 19 females and 2 subjects who did not state their gender. Table 4 below demonstrates the number of Japanese subjects in each age group.

Age group	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65
No. of subjects	3	15	7	4	1

Table 4 Age distribution of 30 Japanese subjects

### **3.1.4 Data**

Like the pilot study, the responses gathered in each situation differ from individual to individual. However, we can still identify some common politeness markers which

are summarized in Table 5.1-5.10 below. To analyze the expressions collected, Ide's (1989) dichotomous classification is adopted. In other words, both the volition and discernment aspect of politeness are taken into consideration. As reviewed in my Module One, Ide argues that linguistic politeness should consist of two aspects, that is "volition aspect" and "discernment aspect" (Hill et al. 1986: 348). The volition aspect of politeness, on the one hand, allows the speakers to perform their free will and choose appropriate linguistic strategies to redress the addressee's face in interactions. Most of the strategies Brown and Levinson propose belong to the volitional use of politeness. The discernment aspect of politeness, on the other hand, regulates speakers to use the proper forms of a language according to the social norms. Formal forms and honorifics which are two major devices of politeness in Japanese belong to this aspect. Table 5.1 to 5.10 are brief summaries of common politeness markers identified in each situation with the Romanization of Japanese phrases italicized and literal/semantic translations in brackets.

Situation 1: When you want to borrow a pen from a stranger at a post office

Common politeness markers	Varieties	No. of people who used it
Apology	<i>sumimasen</i> (sorry)	27
	<i>shitsurei-desu</i> (sorry-COPULA)	1
	<i>mooshiwake-gozaimasen</i> ('I am extremely sorry')	1
Interrogative	<i>ka</i> (QUES)	29
Honorifics	<i>kashite-itadaku</i> (lend-verb of receiving)	13
	<i>o-kari-suru</i> (HON-borrow-HON)	15

Table 5.1 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 1

Apology and interrogative form, two negative politeness strategies in Brown and

Levinson's scheme, are both volitional use of politeness. Three phrases of apology observed are different in their extent of formality, with *sumimasen* being the least and *mooshiwake-gozaimasen* being the most formal one. When borrowing a pen from a stranger, 29 out of 30 subjects chose to use the interrogative form. In Japanese, "the question particle *ka* is added at the end of the sentence to form an interrogative sentence" (Tsujimura 1996: 181) without any rearrangement of word order as required in English. Honorifics are also commonly used by the subjects in this situation. Two different forms of honorifics are equally preferred. The first one [the gerund form of VERB – *itadaku*] is used to signify the receiving of an action (of lending in this case), especially from people of higher status. The second one [*o*-VERB-*suru*] is the humble form of a verb performed by the addresser to pay respect to the addressee. 28 out of 30 subjects used all the three politeness markers (i.e. apology + interrogative + honorifics) in their responses.

Situation 2 - When you want to invite an acquaintance to go to a party

Common politeness markers	Varieties	No. of people who used it
Negative interrogative	(Plain form) <i>ika-nai?</i> (go-NEG, 'Aren't you going?') <i>ko-nai?</i> (come-NEG, 'Aren't you coming?')	11
	(Formal neutral form) <i>ikima-sen-ka?</i> (go-NEG-QUES, 'Aren't you going?')	6
	(Honorific – exalting) <i>irassyaima-sen-ka</i> (go-NEG-QUES, 'Aren't you going?')	1
Condition	<i>yoka-ttara</i> (good-if, 'if it's ok')	4
	<i>jikan-ga-attara</i> (time-PA-have, 'if you have time')	1
	<i>tsugoo-ga-yoroshi-kereba</i> (condition-NOM-good-if, 'if it's convenient')	4
Clause particle	<i>ga</i> (although)	4
	<i>kedo</i> (although)	17

Table 5.2 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 2

18 subjects chose to use negative interrogative (Aren't you coming / going?) when putting forward an invitation. Three varieties of negative interrogative can be observed. Most of the subjects adopted the plain form which is usually used in conversation with in-group members (acquaintances in this situation). The particle *ka* which is used to form question was omitted in plain form. Six subjects chose to use formal neutral form where a formal conjugational ending *-sen* replaced the negative suffix *-nai* used in plain form and the question particle *ka* was attached. The exalting form of the verb 'go/come' (*irassyaru*) was adopted by one subject only to refer to the action of superiors or out-group members.

In addition to negative interrogatives, the clause particle *ga* and *kedo* were also preferred by more than two thirds of the subjects. Both *ga* and *kedo* literally mean ‘although’ or ‘however’ in English, but “there are many examples where English requires two independent sentences as the equivalent of a complex Japanese sentence that includes *kedo* or *ga*” (Jordan and Noda 1987, 1: 104). The *kedo / ga* detected in this situation are this kind. One of the responses collected is examined below to exemplify the usage of *kedo / ga*.

パーティー	を	開く	けど、	来ない？
<i>paatii</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>hiraku</i>	<b><i>kedo</i></b>	<i>ko-nai</i>
party	ACC	hold	although	come-NEG

‘We are having a party. Aren’t you coming?’

The sentence above cannot be rendered as ‘Although we are having party, aren’t you coming?’ into English. Instead, *kedo* simply “serves to introduce the topic of discussion” (ibid.). *Kedo* sounds softer than *ga* and therefore is preferred by more subjects in a conversation with an acquaintance.



Situation 3- When you want to offer a ride to an elder who lives next to you

Common politeness markers	Varieties	No. of people who used it
Humbling form of verb [ <i>o</i> -VERB- <i>shimasu</i> ]	<i>o-okuri-shimasu</i> ( <i>o</i> -drive- <i>shimasu</i> , 'I will drive you there.')	7
	<i>o-nose-shimasu</i> ( <i>o</i> -take in the car- <i>shimasu</i> , 'I will take you there in my car.')	2
	<i>o-tsurre-shimasu</i> ( <i>o</i> -take- <i>shimasu</i> , 'I will take you there.')	2
Exalting form of verb [ <i>o</i> -VERB- <i>narimasu</i> ]	<i>o-nori-narima-sen-ka</i> ( <i>o</i> -ride- <i>narima</i> -NEG-QUES, 'Don't you want a ride?')	2
<i>kudasai</i>	[gerund form of VERB - <i>kudasai</i> ] <i>notte-kudasai</i> (ride- <i>kudasai</i> , 'Please get on board.')	6
	[ <i>o</i> -VERB- <i>kudasai</i> ] <i>o-nori-kudasai</i> ( <i>o</i> -ride- <i>kudasai</i> , 'Please get on board.')	1

Table 5.3 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 3

Honorifics, a discernment aspect of politeness, are the most remarkable characteristic observed in this situation. As the addressee is a senior, some subjects chose to use either humbling form or exalting form to pay respect to the addressee. The humbling form of a verb [*o*-VERB-*shimasu*] is used to lower the status of the speaker so as to elevate the addressee, so the verb here is an action performed by the speaker. The deferential form of a verb [*o*-VERB-*narimasu*], on the contrary, is used to elevate the status of the addressee in order to pay deference. Therefore, the verb used in the deferential form refers to an action performed by the addressee. In addition, the

Japanese term *kudasai*, similar to ‘please’ in English, appeared 7 times in the data collected. [Gerund form of VERB + *kudasai*] is usually adopted to ask someone to do something in a polite way. [*O*-VERB-*kudasai*] is a more deferential way to put it.

Situation 4 –When you want to praise your child for completing his/her assignments

Common politeness markers	Varieties	No. of people who used it
Fixed expressions of praise	<i>ganbatta-ne</i> (try one’s best-PA, ‘You’ve tried your best!’)	14
	<i>yoku dekita</i> (‘Well-done!’)	8
	<i>erai / sugoi</i> (‘Brilliant!’)	6

Table 5.4 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 4

Situation 4 is a situation which Brown and Levinson’s analysis has been criticized for, as they treat avoidance of conflicts (face-threatening actions) as the only source of politeness and rule out many neutral intentions. Three sets of fixed expressions can be detected among the responses. The most favoured one is *ganbatta-ne* (‘You’ve tried your best!’). Almost half of the subjects chose to use this expression.

Situation 5 - When you seek agreement from your friend about an idea you just came up with

Common politeness markers	Varieties	No. of people who used it
Negative interrogative (in plain form)	<i>ii-to-omowa-nai?</i> (good-PA-think-NEG, ‘Don’t you think it’s good?’)	4
	<i>sugoku-nai?</i> (brilliant-NEG, ‘Isn’t it brilliant?’)	2
Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	<i>ii-to-omou-kedo...</i> (good-PA-think- <i>kedo</i> ..., ‘I think it’s good though...’)	4
Open-ended question	(Formal form) <i>doo-omoimasu-ka</i> (how-think-QUES, ‘How do you feel?’)	1
	(Plain form) <i>doo-omou?</i> (how-think, ‘How do you feel?’)	5
	(Plain form) <i>doo?</i> (how, ‘How do you feel?’)	8

Table 5.5 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 5

Three different forms can be observed. Open-ended question is the most preferred form (by 14 subjects) to ask a friend’s opinion about an idea. Only one subject used formal form with the question particle *ka* at the end of the sentence to form a question. The question particle *ka* was left out in the other 13 responses, 8 of which had dropped the verb *omou* (‘think’). Moreover, 6 out of 14 subjects who chose open-ended question suffixed the question with *kana*, a combination of the question particle *ka* and the exclamation particle *na* to express uncertainty.

The clause particle *kedo* (‘although’) which was observed many times in Situation 2 can also be detected in Situation 5. However, its function here is not to connect two clauses. Instead, it appears at the end of the utterance and leaves the sentence incomplete. The incomplete sentence with *kedo* is called “minor sentence” (Jordan

and Noda 1987, 1: 104) which is “a device to present material politely” and “enable(s) the speaker deliberately to allow for comments from others” (ibid.) because this kind of sentence sounds inconclusive and thus non-confrontational.

Situation 6 - When you ask your spouse to make tea for you

Common politeness markers	Variety	No. of people who used it
Apology	<i>gomen</i> (sorry, ‘Excuse me’), less formal than <i>sumimasen</i> as shown in Situation 1	1
	<i>warui-kedo</i> (bad-though, ‘It’s bad though’)	4
Verb of giving and receiving in plain question form	[gerund form of VERB – <i>kureru</i> ] <i>ocha-o-irete-kureru?</i> (tea-ACC-make- <i>kureru</i> , ‘Can you make tea for me?’)	13
	[gerund form of VERB– <i>moraeru</i> ] <i>ocha-o-irete-moraeru?</i> (tea-ACC-make- <i>moraeru</i> , ‘Can I ask you to make tea for me?’)	11
Uncertainty	<i>kashira / kana</i>	6
	Interrogative form	20

Table 5.6 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 6

As discussed in my Module One, verbs of giving and receiving are one of the many “relationship-acknowledging devices” (Matsumoto 1988: 411) which are essential in a hierarchical society like Japan to reveal the relationship between interlocutors. There are a total of five giving verbs and two receiving verbs in Japanese. Two of them can be observed and are widely favoured by subjects in Situation 6 as shown in Table 5.6. The verb of giving *kureru* is adopted when “someone [in lower or of the

same status] gives me or my in-group something” (Tsujimura 1996: 341, my insertion). This giving verb was attached to the gerund form of the verb *ireru* (‘to make’) to signify the giving of the action ‘making tea’ performed by one’s spouse. The verb *moraeru* is one of the conjugational varieties of the receiving verb *morau* denoting possibility. This verb is used when “I, or my in-group receive something from someone [in lower or of the same status]” (Tsujimura 1996: 329, my insertion). Again, it was also attached to the gerund form of the verb *ireru* (to make) to signify the receiving of the action ‘making tea’ from one’s spouse. Therefore, when transferred literally, the response (*ocha-o-irete-moraeu*) listed in Table 5.6 should read as ‘Can I receive the action of making tea from you?’ which bears an implication of debt. In both cases of giving (*kureru*) and receiving verbs (*moraeru*), the question particle *ka* was omitted as the plain form is usually adopted among couples.

In addition to verbs of giving and receiving, a few subjects chose to apologize but in a rather informal way. 6 subjects attached the particle *kashiralkana* to the end of the utterance to express uncertainty which is a negative politeness strategy for being pessimistic, as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Uncertainty was also realized by the adoption of interrogative form. Among 20 subjects who put their request in question form to show their uncertainty, 8 people chose to use negative interrogative form which was more indirect than a mere question.

Situation 7 - When you found your neighbor broke the coffee machine you lent him / her

Common politeness markers	Variety	No. of people who used it
Uncertainty	<i>kowareta-mitai</i> (broken-look like, 'It looks like broken.')	5
Intransitive verb	<i>kowareta</i> ('It's broken.')	9
Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	<i>kowareta-mitai-desu-kedo</i> (broken-look like-COPULA- <i>kedo</i> , 'It looks like broken though...')	4

Table 5.7 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 7

This is the situation in which I got answers of great diversity. 14 subjects chose not to complain about the damage caused, while 14 subjects expressed their dissatisfaction about it. 2 subjects left it blank, explaining that it's difficult to answer. Although not complaining at all is an extremely polite behavior, I will only consider answers of subjects who responded to the situation with complaints which are face-threatening in nature and might involve some linguistic politeness markers for analysis.

Like Situation 6, the strategy of uncertainty can be observed again in complaints. The term *mitai* ('look like') is attached to a verb or noun to show uncertainty. Besides, the intransitive verb *kowareta* ('it's broken') is preferred to transitive verb *kowashita* ('you broke it') which appeared once only among all the responses. The difference between the intransitive and transitive verb in Japanese is like that of passive and active voice in English. Therefore, the use of the intransitive verb is an impersonalisation strategy, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) in order to avoid

direct accusation. Finally, like Situation 5, the minor sentence with *kedo* was applied to leave deliberately the utterance incomplete and thus sound less confrontational.

Situation 8 - When you submit an application form for annual leave to your supervisor

Common politeness markers	Variety	No. of people who used it
Apology	<i>mooshiwake-gozaimasen</i> (sorry)	6
	<i>sumimasen</i> (sorry)	7
Indirectness	... <i>deshoo-ka</i> (... COPULA-QUES, 'Is it possible if ...')	16
	Minor sentence with <i>ga</i>	9
Verb of receiving	<i>yasumi-o-itadaku</i> (holiday-ACC-verb of receiving, '[I] receive the holiday')	21

Table 5.8 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 8

So far, several different phrases of apology have been detected, which are *mooshiwake-gozaimasen* (in Situation 1 and 8), *shitsurei-desu* (in Situation 1), *sumimasen* (in Situation 1 and 8) and *gomen* (in Situation 6) in decreasing order of formality. In addition, minor sentences (i.e. sentences that are left incomplete deliberately) with *ga* which bears the same meaning as *kedo* but is stiffer in tone can be observed here. When speaking with one's supervisor, subjects chose to use *ga* instead of *kedo* which is usually applied in a less formal conversation as in Situation 5 and 7. Indirectness can also be realized by means of copula *deshoo* which is "the tentative equivalence of *desu* ...indicating probability, lack of certainty, imprecision and/or indirectness" (Jordan and Noda 1987, 1: 150). Furthermore, over two thirds of subjects prefer to use the verb of receiving *itadaku* which is applicable to cases

where “I, or my in-group receive something from someone [who is higher in status]” (Tsujimura 1996: 339, my insertion). The combination of the receiving verb *itadaku* and the tentative copula *deshoo* with the question particle *ka* is the most common way to make a request to one’s superiors.

#### Situation 9 - When you meet your colleague outside the office during lunch time

Common politeness markers	Variety	No. of people who used it
Fixed expressions	<i>otsukare-sama</i> (‘It’s been very hardworking of you.’)	3
	<i>konnichiwa</i> (‘Good afternoon!’)	2
	<i>guuzen-da-ne</i> (coincidence-COPULA-PA, ‘What a coincidence!’)	9

Table 5.9 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 9

Responses collected in this situation are most difficult to summarize and classify. Like situation 4, this situation has been included in order to deal with many neutral intentions which have been neglected by Brown and Levinson (1987). As there is no potential face-threatening factor, subjects’ responses to this situation varied a great deal. Expressions listed above are just a portion of responses collected. Among all the expressions collected, I found a fixed expression *otsukare-sama* (‘It’s been very hardworking of you’). This expression is usually used after a job is completed or when a person is about to go off from duty, so it is interesting to find it used here. Although there are only 3 subjects who responded to the designated situation with this expression, it was decided to examine how this concept can be rendered into Cantonese.



Situation 10 - When you want to reject an invitation for dinner from your brother/sister

Common politeness markers	Variety	No. of people who used it
Apology	<i>gomen</i> (sorry)	15
	<i>warui-kedo</i> (bad-though, 'It's bad though ...')	5
Plain form	All responses in plain form	30
Offering excuse	<i>yooji-ga-arui</i> (engagement-PA-have, 'I have engagement.')	7
	<i>tsugoo-ga-warui</i> (timing-PA-bad, 'It's not convenient.')	6

Table 5.10 Common politeness markers identified in Situation 10

20 out of 30 subjects chose to apologize first for turning their siblings down. The least formal term *gomen*, which can also be seen in Situation 6, was preferred by most of the subjects. Moreover, all 30 subjects used plain form in speaking with their brothers or sisters. Plain forms can also be observed in Situation 4 and 6, the addressees of which are both in-group members (one's child in Situation 4 and spouse in Situation 6). Some subjects chose to offer concrete excuses in this situation.

## **3.2 Cantonese Questionnaire**

### **3.2.1 Questionnaire Design**

The Cantonese questionnaire was formulated on the basis of the politeness markers identified in the responses of Japanese subjects. The ten situations included in the Japanese questionnaire were adopted again in the Cantonese questionnaire. However, as the Cantonese subjects are instructed to choose one out of four expressions rather than elaborate the expressions they think appropriate to a situation as Japanese subjects were asked to do, I made, during the process of translation, some minor changes to the descriptions of the situations by adding a few details so that subjects could have more focused information to make their decisions. Besides, some culture specific concepts in Japanese, for example ‘making tea’ in situation 6, were also modified to be incorporated into Cantonese culture. All amendments to the descriptions of situations are underlined in the account in Section 3.2.2 below.

As summarized in Section 3.1.4 above, three commonly used politeness markers can be identified in all situations except situation 4 and 9 where most of the expressions collected were fixed expressions which cannot be analyzed further into politeness markers. For Cantonese questionnaire, I came up with four sets of expressions for each situation. Each option contains equivalent(s) to at least one of the politeness markers identified in each situation in the Japanese questionnaire. It is also possible that none of the three politeness markers was rendered into Cantonese in certain options (such as option (d) in situation 2 and situation 5) because no natural combination other than those in the other three options of the same situation can be found. To produce options for situation 4 and 9 where fixed expressions were identified, Cantonese fixed expressions appropriate to each situation were adopted.

Native speakers of Cantonese are asked to choose the most appropriate of the four expressions in a given situation. They should be unaware of the fact that the

expressions were produced with the aim of achieving equivalence to certain politeness markers in Japanese. Therefore, to make sure all expressions sound natural in the ear of native speakers, every expression included in the questionnaire was proofread by a native speaker of Cantonese who was not among the subjects.

Section 3.2.2 will discuss the four expressions in each situation. All Cantonese expressions in each situation will be demonstrated in Chinese characters together with the Romanization, the literal translation of each character/phrase as well as the semantic translation of the whole sentence. Equivalent politeness markers will be highlighted. Moreover, to further expound on the relationship between the Japanese and Cantonese politeness markers, a table of equivalence will be displayed after each expression.

### 3.2.2 Composition of Cantonese Expressions

Situation 1: You want to borrow a pen from a lady next to you at a post office when you want to fill in a form but have no pen at hand

(a) 唔好意思

*m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>*

excuse me

可唔可以	請	你	借	支	筆	比	我?
<i>ho<sup>2</sup>m<sup>4</sup>ho<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>qing<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>nei<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>ze<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>ji<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>bed<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>bei<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ngo<sup>5</sup></i>
can-not-can	ask	you	lend	CL	pen	give	me

‘Excuse me. Is it possible for you to lend me a pen, please?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	<i>m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup></i> (‘excuse me’)
Politeness marker 2: Interrogative	<i>ho<sup>2</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-ho<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>5</sup></i> (can-not-can)
Politeness marker 3: Honorifics	<i>qing<sup>2</sup></i> (‘ask’)

Table 6.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 1

In option (a), all three politeness markers identified in Japanese questionnaires are transferred into equivalent Cantonese expressions. ‘A-not-A’ (can-not-can in this case) is a common way in Cantonese to form a yes-no question. *Qing<sup>2</sup>* which literally means ‘ask’ is the honorific used to make requests in Cantonese.

(b) 唔該	可唔可以	借	支	筆	比	我	呀?
<i>m<sup>4</sup>goi<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>ho<sup>2</sup>m<sup>4</sup>ho<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>ze<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>ji<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>bed<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>bei<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ngo<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>a<sup>3</sup></i>
sorry	can-not-can	lend	CL	pen	give	me	UP

‘Sorry. Is it possible for you to lend me a pen?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	$m^4 goi^1$ ('excuse me')
Politeness marker 2: Interrogative	$ho^2-m^4-ho^2 yi^5$ (can-not-can)
Politeness marker 3: Honorifics	$a^3$ (UP)

Table 6.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 1

Like option (a), all three politeness markers are rendered into equivalent Cantonese in option (b). However, the apology  $m^4 goi^1$  in option (b) is less formal in extent than the phrase  $m^4 hou^2 yi^3 xi^3$  used in option (a). Besides, the utterance particle  $a^3$  is attached to the question to “make the sentence sound less curt and abrupt” (Kwok 1984: 71). It is similar to honorifics in the function that marks speaker’s politeness toward the addressee.

- (c) 可唔可以 同 你 借 支 筆 呀?  
 $ho^2 m^4 ho^2 yi^5$   $tung^4$   $nei^5$   $ze^3$   $ji^1$   $bed^1$   $a^3$   
 can-not-can ask you borrow CL pen UP

‘May I borrow a pen from you?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Interrogative	$ho^2-m^4-ho^2 yi^5$ (can-not-can)
Politeness marker 3: Honorifics	$a^3$ (UP)

Table 6.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 1

In option (c), only politeness marker 2 (interrogative form) and 3 (honorifics) are retained in the Cantonese expression. Again, the utterance particle is attached to soften the request and signify politeness.

(d) 借 支 筆 比 我 咁!  
*zé<sup>3</sup> ji<sup>1</sup> bed<sup>1</sup> béi<sup>2</sup> ngo<sup>5</sup> a<sup>1</sup>*  
 lend CL pen give me UP

‘Lend me a pen, can’t you?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Honorifics	<i>a<sup>1</sup></i> (UP)

Table 6.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 1

In option (d), only politeness marker 3 (honorifics) is rendered into an utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* which can make the sentence sound “more consultative and more lively in tone” (Kwok 1984: 80) when attached to imperatives.

Situation 2: When you want to invite an acquaintance to go to a party at your home next week

(a) 下 星期一 開 party 啲,  
*ha<sup>6</sup> xing<sup>1</sup> kéi<sup>4</sup> yed<sup>1</sup> hoi<sup>1</sup> party wo<sup>5</sup>*  
 next Monday hold ENG UP

得閒 嘅話 一齊 咁。  
*deg<sup>1</sup> han<sup>4</sup> gé<sup>3</sup> wa<sup>6</sup> yed<sup>1</sup> cei<sup>4</sup> a<sup>1</sup>*  
 free if together UP

‘We are having party next Monday. Come along if you are free.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Condition	<i>deg<sup>1</sup> han<sup>4</sup> gē<sup>3</sup> wa<sup>6</sup></i> ('if you are free')
Politeness marker 3: Clause particle <i>kedo</i>	<i>wo<sup>5</sup></i> (UP)

Table 7.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 2

Although politeness marker 1 (negative interrogative) is left out in option (a), an attempt was made to distinguish the formal form from the plain form which is adopted by the majority of Japanese subjects (11 out of 18 subjects who used negative interrogative in situation 2). To render the plain form which is common among in-group members, I used the adverb *yed<sup>1</sup>cei<sup>4</sup>* ('together') alone and deliberately omitted the verb (come / go in this case) to make the sentence sound more like a casual invitation. I also added an utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* which sounds "more consultative and more lively in tone, inviting the addressee to agree to the action proposed" (Kwok 1987: 80).

As discussed in Section 3.1.4 (Table 5.2), the clause particle *kedo* (politeness marker 3) can be used to "introduce the topic of discussion" (Jordan and Noda 1987, 1: 104) in a less abrupt way. The utterance particle *wo<sup>5</sup>* in option (b) is "a device to report what someone else has said" (Kwok 1987: 67) and thus sounds as indirect as the Japanese clause particle *kedo*.

(b) 下            星期一            開            party ,  
*ha*<sup>6</sup>        *xing*<sup>1</sup>*kéi*<sup>4</sup>*yed*<sup>1</sup>        *hoi*<sup>1</sup>        *party*  
 next        Monday            hold        ENG

你            唔            去            呀?  
*nei*<sup>5</sup>        *m*<sup>4</sup>        *hêu*<sup>3</sup>        *a*<sup>1</sup>  
 you        not            go            UP

‘We are having party next Monday.    Aren’t you going?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	<i>nei</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>m</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>hêu</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>a</i> <sup>1</sup> (‘Aren’t you coming?’)
Politeness marker 2: Condition	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Clause particle <i>kedo</i>	Nil

Table 7.2    Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 2

Among the four options in situation 2, option (b) is the only one in which negative interrogative (politeness marker 1) can be observed. An utterance particle *a*<sup>1</sup> is attached to the negative sentence *nei*<sup>5</sup>*m*<sup>4</sup>*hêu*<sup>3</sup> (you-not-go) to form a particle question. However, the question with *a*<sup>1</sup> “expresses a measure of doubt” and reveals “an element of surprise” (Kwok 1987: 86). Therefore, option (b), though it faithfully transfers the politeness marker of negative interrogative, sounds different in meaning from the Japanese original.

(c) 喂!            下            星期一            開            party            啲...  
*wei*<sup>3</sup>        *ha*<sup>6</sup>        *xing*<sup>1</sup>*kéi*<sup>4</sup>*yed*<sup>1</sup>        *hoi*<sup>1</sup>        *party*        *wo*<sup>5</sup>  
 hey        next        Monday            hold        ENG        UP

‘Hey, we are having party next Monday though...’



Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Condition	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Clause particle <i>kedo</i>	<i>wo</i> <sup>5</sup> (UP)

Table 7.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 2

The same particle *wo*<sup>5</sup> is used here to render the clause particle *kedo*. However, instead of connecting two clauses as in option (a), *wo*<sup>5</sup> here is located at the end of the utterance and leaves the sentence incomplete. It has the same function as *kedo* in a minor sentence ((Jordan and Noda 1987, 1: 104, i.e. a minor sentence is a sentence that is deliberately left incomplete as discussed in Section 3.1.4) which is incomplete and thus inconclusive. Therefore, by using option (c), the speaker assumes that his/her utterance will be naturally interpreted by the addressee as an invitation to the party without stating it explicitly. Moreover, a *wo*<sup>5</sup>-suffixing utterance, prefaced here by the attention-drawing exclamation *wei*<sup>3</sup> ('hey'), is usually interpreted as "something that is worthy of the recipient's attention" (Luke 1990: 240).

(d) 下            星期一            開            party ,  
*ha*<sup>6</sup>            *xing*<sup>1</sup>*kéi*<sup>4</sup>*yed*<sup>1</sup>            *hoi*<sup>1</sup>            *party*  
next            Monday            hold            ENG

你    有冇            時間    嚟    參加            呀?  
*nei*<sup>5</sup>    *yeo*<sup>5</sup>-*mou*<sup>5</sup>            *xi*<sup>4</sup>*gan*<sup>1</sup>            *lei*<sup>4</sup>            *cam*<sup>1</sup>*ga*<sup>1</sup>            *a*<sup>3</sup>  
you    have-not have            time            come            participate            UP

'We are having party next Monday. Do you have time to join us?'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Condition	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Clause particle <i>kedo</i>	Nil

Table 7.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 2

None of the three politeness markers is rendered into option (d) as no other natural combination can be found. In option (a), the element of plain form is incorporated by the adoption of the adverb *yed<sup>1</sup>cei<sup>4</sup>* ('together') alone without the main verb 'go/come'. However, in order to check the preference of Cantonese subjects in situation 2, formal form instead is incorporated by adopting a more formal verb *cam<sup>1</sup>ga<sup>1</sup>* ('participate') in option (d) to replace a simply 'come' or 'go' as observed in option (b). Besides, although not negative, an interrogative form (*yeo<sup>5</sup>-mou<sup>5</sup>-xi<sup>4</sup>gan<sup>1</sup>* 'have-not have-time) is adopted here.

Situation 3: When you want to offer a ride to an eighty-year old lady who lives next to you and wants to go to Central (a place name in Hong Kong)

- (a) 婆婆，            等            我            載            你            一程            㗎。  
*po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>*            *deng<sup>2</sup>*            *ngo<sup>5</sup>*            *zoi<sup>3</sup>*            *nei<sup>5</sup>*            *yed<sup>1</sup>qing<sup>4</sup>*            *a<sup>1</sup>*  
grandmother    wait            me            carry            you            one way            UP

'Grandma, let me give you a ride.'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Humbling form	<i>po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup></i> ('grandmother') <i>zoi<sup>3</sup></i> ('to carry')
Politeness marker 2: Exalting form	
Politeness marker 3: <i>kudasai</i>	

Table 8.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 3

Japanese is rich in honorific expressions. Three different kinds of honorifics can be identified among the responses of Japanese subjects. The speaker can choose to either lower him/herself (humbling form) or elevate the addressee (exalting form) to pay respect. In addition, a neutral polite term *kudasai* ('please') is another device to show deference. It is not easy to find equivalents in Cantonese to such a variety of honorifics. I adopted four different verbs which share a similar semantic meaning (i.e. give /hitch a ride) but bear different connotative meanings and thus degrees of politeness. The verb *zoi<sup>3</sup>* ('to carry') adopted in option (a), an action performed by the speaker, is the most formal of the four verbs. In addition, a kinship term *po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>* ('grandmother') is prefaced. As reviewed in my Module One, some kinship terms can be used to address non-kin people and this generalized reference is frequently used in Hong Kong. For example, *a-poh* ('grandmother') is used to address elderly women and *a-yi* ('auntie') to address "a friend's mother or one's parents' friends (Matthews and Yip 1994: 374). Finally, an utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* is suffixed. As discussed above in option (a), Situation 2, the particle *a<sup>1</sup>* can make the imperative sentence sound more consultative.

(b) 婆婆，      等      我      車      你      去      吖。  
*po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>*      *deng<sup>2</sup>*      *ngo<sup>5</sup>*      *cé<sup>1</sup>*      *néi<sup>5</sup>*      *hêu<sup>3</sup>*      *a<sup>1</sup>*  
grandmother      wait      me      drive      you      go      UP

'Grandma, let me drive you there.'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Humbling form	<i>po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup></i> ('grandmother') <i>cé<sup>1</sup></i> ('to drive')
Politeness marker 2: Exalting form	
Politeness marker 3: <i>kudasai</i>	

Table 8.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 3

The verb adopted in option (b), *cé<sup>1</sup>* ('to drive'), is also an action performed by the speaker. It is a little less formal than the verb in option (a) but sounds more like an oral expression. As in option (a), the kinship term *po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>* ('grandmother') and the utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* are adopted in option (b) too.

(c) 婆婆，	駛唔駛	我	兜	埋
<i>po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>sei<sup>2</sup> m<sup>4</sup> sei<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ngo<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>deo<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>mai<sup>4</sup></i>
grandmother	need-not-need	me	stroll in a car	at my convenience
你	呀？			
<i>néi<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>a<sup>3</sup></i>			
you	UP			

'Grandma, do you need me to give you a ride on my way there?'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Humbling form	<i>po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup></i> ('grandmother') <i>deo<sup>1</sup></i> ('to stroll in a car')
Politeness marker 2: Exalting form	
Politeness marker 3: <i>kudasai</i>	

Table 8.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 3

Like the verbs in option (a) and (b), the verb *deo<sup>1</sup>* ('to stroll in a car') in option (c) is also an action performed by the speaker. However, it is less formal than those two options. This verb is usually used together with the adverb *mai<sup>4</sup>* (at someone's

convenience) which can minimize the imposition of an offering. Unlike the imperatives used in option (a) and (b), an interrogative structure (*sei<sup>2</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-sei<sup>2</sup>*, need-not-need) is adopted here. Again, the kinship term *po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>* ('grandmother') is inserted.

- (d) 要唔要                      搭                      順風                      車                      呀?  
*yiū<sup>3</sup> m<sup>4</sup> yiū<sup>3</sup>*                      *dab<sup>3</sup>*                      *sên<sup>1</sup>fung<sup>6</sup>*                      *cé<sup>1</sup>*                      *a<sup>3</sup>*  
 need-not-need                      take                      leeward                      car                      UP

'Want to hitch a ride?'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Humbling form	<i>dab<sup>3</sup>-sên<sup>1</sup>fung<sup>6</sup>-cé<sup>1</sup></i> (‘take leeward car’)
Politeness marker 2: Exalting form	
Politeness marker 3: <i>kudasai</i>	

Table 8.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 3

The verb *dab<sup>3</sup>-sên<sup>1</sup>fung<sup>6</sup>-cé<sup>1</sup>* ('take leeward car') is the only one that denotes the action performed by the addressee. In terms of connotative meaning, it is the least formal of the four verbs in Situation 3. The kinship term *po<sup>4</sup> po<sup>4</sup>* ('grandmother') is eliminated in option (d) as it does not match the casualness carried by the verb and might sound unnatural.

Situation 4: When you want to praise your child for completing his/her assignments

The Japanese expressions collected in Situation 4 are mostly short fixed expressions which cannot be analyzed into smaller politeness markers as in the other situations. Among 30 Japanese subjects, 14 used the expression *ganbatta-ne* ('You've tried your

best’) which is rendered literally into option (a) below, 8 people used *yoku-dekita* (‘Well-done!’) which corresponds to option (b) and 6 people used the adjective *erai* / *sugoi* (‘Brilliant’) which is equivalent to option (c). As four options are needed in each situation, I added one more fixed expression as option (d). The adjective *guai<sup>1</sup>* (well-behaved) in option (d) is a conduct that children in Chinese society are frequently asked to observe.

- (a) 你            盡咗力            嘞!  
       *néi<sup>5</sup>*        *zên<sup>6</sup>-zo<sup>2</sup>-lig<sup>6</sup>*        *la<sup>3</sup>*  
       you        try-ASP-your best        UP

‘You’ve tried your best.’

- (b) 做            得            好!  
       *zou<sup>6</sup>*        *deg<sup>1</sup>*        *hou<sup>3</sup>*  
       do        ADV        well

‘Well-done!’

The adverb *deg<sup>1</sup>* here in the structure of [VERB- *deg<sup>1</sup>*-ADJECTIVE] is used to “describe the result ... of an action” (Matthews and Yip 1994: 156).

- (c) 叻            仔 /        叻            女!  
       *lég<sup>1</sup>*        *zei<sup>2</sup>*        *lég<sup>1</sup>*        *nêu<sup>5</sup>*  
       clever    boy        clever    girl

‘Clever boy / Clever girl!’

- (d) 乖                      啦!  
*guai<sup>1</sup>*                  *la<sup>1</sup>*  
 well-behaved          UP

‘Lovely boy/ girl!’

Situation 5: When doing a project, you want to seek agreement from your colleague (or classmate) about an idea you just came up with

Three different sets of Japanese expressions can be identified when one seeks agreement from colleagues. Among 30 subjects, six used negative interrogative (politeness marker 1) to make the query sound indirect. In addition, five subjects used minor sentence (politeness marker 2) without stating the real intention explicitly and thirteen used open-ended question (politeness marker 3).

- (a) 你    唔    覺得                  呢                  條    橋                  幾                  好                  咩?  
*nei<sup>5</sup>*    *m<sup>4</sup>* *gog<sup>3</sup>* *deg<sup>1</sup>*    *ni<sup>1</sup>*                  *tiu<sup>4</sup>* *kiu<sup>4</sup>*                  *gei<sup>2</sup>*                  *hou<sup>2</sup>*                  *me<sup>9</sup>*  
 you    not    feel                  this                  CL    idea                  quite                  good                  UP

‘Don’t you think this idea is quite good?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	<i>m<sup>4</sup>-gog<sup>3</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>...me<sup>9</sup></i> (not-feel... UP)
Politeness marker 2: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Open-ended question	Nil

Table 9.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 5

The utterance particle *me<sup>9</sup>* is attached to the declarative stem (*m<sup>4</sup>-gog<sup>3</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>*, not-feel) to form a particle question. The *me<sup>9</sup>*-attached question “is not neutral, but it is used by the speaker to query the truth of something” (Kwok 1987: 88). It sometimes has

‘rhetorical force’ (Kwok 1987: 89).

(b) 你 覺得 呢 條 橋 點 呀?  
*néi<sup>5</sup> gog<sup>3</sup> deg<sup>1</sup> ni<sup>1</sup> tiu<sup>4</sup> kiu<sup>4</sup> dim<sup>3</sup> a<sup>3</sup>*  
 you feel this CL idea how UP

‘How do you feel like this idea?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Open-ended question	<i>dim<sup>3</sup>-a</i> (how-UP)

Table 9.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 5

(c) 我 覺得 呢 條 橋 都 幾 好 吖...  
*ngo<sup>5</sup> gog<sup>3</sup> deg<sup>1</sup> ni<sup>1</sup> tiu<sup>4</sup> kiu<sup>4</sup> dou<sup>1</sup> gei<sup>2</sup> hou<sup>2</sup> a<sup>1</sup>*  
 I feel this CL idea also quite good UP

‘I feel this idea is quite good though...’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	<i>a<sup>1</sup></i> (UP)
Politeness marker 3: Open-ended question	Nil

Table 9.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 5

As discussed in Section 3.1.4 (Table 5.5), a minor sentence (i.e. a sentence that is left deliberately incomplete) with *kedo* is a polite way for Japanese to elicit comments from others because this kind of sentence sounds inconclusive and non-confrontational. The incomplete sentence is rendered into Cantonese by means of suffixing an utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* to make the sentence sound “more consultative



and more lively in tone, inviting the addressee to agree to the action proposed” (Kwok 1987: 80).

- (d) 你 覺得 呢 條 橋 好唔好?  
*nei<sup>5</sup> gog<sup>3</sup> deg<sup>1</sup> ni<sup>1</sup> tiu<sup>4</sup> kiu<sup>4</sup> hou<sup>2</sup> m<sup>4</sup> hou<sup>2</sup>*  
 you feel this CL idea good-not-good?

‘Do you feel this idea is good?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Negative interrogative	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Open-ended question	Nil

Table 9.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 5

In addition to the three politeness markers adopted in option (a), (b) and (c) respectively, a simple but direct yes-no question (A-not-A) is incorporated as the fourth option to query others’ opinion.

Situation 6: When you ask your spouse (or boyfriend/girlfriend) to pour a cup of water for you

- (a) 斟 杯 水 比 我 𠵼, 唔該!  
*zem<sup>1</sup> bui<sup>1</sup> seu<sup>2</sup> bei<sup>2</sup> ngo<sup>5</sup> a<sup>1</sup> m<sup>4</sup> goi<sup>1</sup>*  
 pour CL water give me UP please

‘Pour me a cup of water, please.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	<i>m<sup>4</sup>goi<sup>1</sup></i> ('please')
Politeness marker 2: Verbs of giving and receiving in plain (question) form	<i>béi<sup>2</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup></i> (give-me)
Politeness marker 3: Uncertainty	Nil

Table 10.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 6

The term *m<sup>4</sup>goi<sup>1</sup>* is less formal in degree than *m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* ('excuse me') as used in option (b) below and has a similar function here as the English term 'please.' In addition, the phrase *béi<sup>2</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup>* (give-me) can be regarded as the equivalent to the verb of giving '*kureru*' ('You do something for me') in Japanese. Most of the collected Japanese expressions with '*kureru*' are in interrogative form. Nevertheless, an imperative is adopted in option (a) with an utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* which makes the sentence "more consultative and more lively in tone" (Kwok 1987: 80).

- (b) 唔好意思， 請 你 幫 我 斟 杯 水 㗎。  
*m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* *qing<sup>2</sup>* *néi<sup>5</sup>* *bong<sup>1</sup>* *ngo<sup>5</sup>* *zem<sup>1</sup>* *bui<sup>1</sup>* *sêu<sup>2</sup>* *a<sup>1</sup>*  
excuse me ask you help me pour CL water UP

'Excuse me, please help me pour a cup of water.'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	<i>m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup></i> ('excuse me')
Politeness marker 2: Verbs of giving and receiving in plain (question) form	<i>qing<sup>2</sup>-néi<sup>5</sup>-bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup></i> (ask-you-help-me)
Politeness marker 3: Uncertainty	Nil

Table 10.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 6

A more formal apology *m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* ('excuse me') is adopted in option (b). Besides, the phrase *qing<sup>2</sup>-néi<sup>5</sup>-bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup>* (ask-you-help-me) is equivalent to the verb of

receiving ‘*moraeru*’ (I ask you to do something for me) in Japanese. Like option (a), an imperative sentence is adopted but this time with the verb *qing*<sup>2</sup> which is the honorific used to make requests in Cantonese as well as the utterance particle *a*<sup>1</sup>.

- (c) 可唔可以      幫      我      斟      杯      水?  
*ho<sup>2</sup>m<sup>4</sup>ho<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>5</sup>*    *bong<sup>1</sup> ngo<sup>5</sup>*    *zem<sup>1</sup>*    *bui<sup>1</sup>*    *sêu<sup>2</sup>*  
 can-not-can    help    me    pour    CL    water

‘Can you help me pour a cup of water?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Verbs of giving and receiving in plain (question) form	<i>bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup></i> (help-me)
Politeness marker 3: Uncertainty	<i>ho<sup>2</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-ho<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>5</sup></i> (can-not-can)

Table 10.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 6

The phrase *bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup>* (help-me) in option (c) is also equivalent to the verb of giving ‘*kureru*’ (‘You do something for me’) as in option (a). Besides, the adoption of yes-no question (can-not-can) is a way for the speaker to express his/her uncertainty about the addressee’s willingness to comply with the request.

- (d) 唔      知      你      得唔得閒      幫      我  
*m<sup>4</sup> ji<sup>1</sup> néi<sup>5</sup> deg<sup>1</sup> m<sup>4</sup> deg<sup>1</sup> han<sup>4</sup>*    *bong<sup>1</sup> ngo<sup>5</sup>*  
 not    know    you    free-not-free    help    me

斟      杯      水      呢?  
*zem<sup>1</sup>    bui<sup>1</sup>    sêu<sup>2</sup>    né<sup>1</sup>*  
 pour    CL    water    UP

‘I am wondering if you are free to help me pour a cup of water.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Verbs of giving and receiving in plain (question) form	<i>bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup></i> (help-me)
Politeness marker 3: Uncertainty	<i>m<sup>4</sup>-ji<sup>1</sup>-néi<sup>5</sup>-deg<sup>1</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-deg<sup>1</sup>han<sup>4</sup></i> (not-know-you-free-not-free)

Table 10.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 6

Like option (c), the phrase *bong<sup>1</sup>-ngo<sup>5</sup>* (help-me) in option (d) corresponds to the verb of giving ‘*kureru*’ (‘You do something for me’) in Japanese. In addition to the interrogative form as shown in option (c), some Japanese subjects chose to express their uncertainty by suffixing the utterance with the particle *kashira/kana*. In Cantonese, there is no such particle which can be used to signify uncertainty here. Therefore, in option (d), the term *m<sup>4</sup>-ji<sup>1</sup>* (not-know) and yes-no question (free-not-free) are adopted to manifest the speaker’s uncertainty about the addressee’s willingness. In addition, the utterance particle *néi<sup>1</sup>* at the end of the utterance also “suggests a sense of tentativeness” (Kwok 1984: 73).

Situation 7: Mrs Wong, who lives next door, borrowed a mixer from you last week.  
You found the mixer was broken when she returned it to you yesterday.

- (a) 好似                      壞壞                      㗎                      番。  
*hou<sup>2</sup>qi<sup>5</sup>*                      *wai<sup>6</sup> wai<sup>6</sup>*                      *déi<sup>6</sup>*                      *bo<sup>5</sup>*  
look like                      broken-broken                      a little                      UP

‘It seems it’s a little bit broken.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Uncertainty	<i>hou<sup>2</sup>qi<sup>5</sup></i> ('look like')
Politeness marker 2: Intransitive verb	<i>wai<sup>6</sup>-wai<sup>6</sup>-dét<sup>6</sup></i> (broken-broken-a little)
Politeness marker 3: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	<i>bo<sup>5</sup></i> (UP)

Table 11.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 7

To minimize the potential threat caused by complaints, the suffix *dét<sup>6</sup>* (a little) is attached to the reduplicated intransitive verbs *wai<sup>6</sup>wai<sup>6</sup>* (broken-broken) used as adjective here. Minimization of imposition is a negative politeness strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The utterance particle *bo<sup>5</sup>* is a variant of *wo<sup>5</sup>* (Luke 1990: 199) which “is used to remind the hearer to take something into special consideration” (Kwok 1987:64) and sometimes serves as “a mild warning” (ibid.). Therefore, by using option (a), the speaker expects an explanation from the addressee without requesting it explicitly.

(b) 咦!	係唔係	壞	咗	嘞?
<i>yi<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>hei<sup>6</sup> m<sup>4</sup> hei<sup>6</sup></i>	<i>wai<sup>6</sup></i>	<i>zo<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>la<sup>3</sup></i>
EXCL	be-not-be	broken	ASP	UP

‘Is it broken?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Uncertainty	<i>hei<sup>6</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-hei<sup>6</sup></i> (be-not-be)
Politeness marker 2: Intransitive verb	<i>wai<sup>6</sup>-zo<sup>2</sup></i> (broken-ASP)
Politeness marker 3: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil

Table 11.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 7

The exclamation *yi<sup>2</sup>* is usually used to express surprise (Matthew and Yip 1994: 358).

As expounded in Situation 6 above, a yes-no question (be-not-be) is adopted to signify the speaker’s uncertainty.

(c) 你 有冇 整壞 到 呀?  
néi<sup>5</sup> yeo<sup>5</sup>-mou<sup>5</sup> jing<sup>2</sup> wai<sup>6</sup> dou<sup>3</sup> a<sup>3</sup>  
you be-not be break ASP UP

‘Did you break it?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Uncertainty	yeo <sup>5</sup> -mou <sup>5</sup> (be-not be)
Politeness marker 2: Intransitive verb	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil

Table 11.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 7

In option (c), a transitive verb *jing<sup>2</sup>wai<sup>6</sup>* (‘break’) is deliberately incorporated to check the Cantonese subjects’ response to the difference between transitive and intransitive verb. Again, the speaker’s uncertainty is shown in the adoption of a yes-no question (be-not be).

(d) 壞 咗 嘞?  
wai<sup>6</sup> zo<sup>2</sup> la<sup>3</sup>  
broken ASP UP

‘Broken?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Uncertainty	Interrogative form with the utterance particle <i>la</i> <sup>3</sup>
Politeness marker 2: Intransitive verb	<i>wai</i> <sup>6</sup> - <i>zo</i> <sup>2</sup> (broken-ASP)
Politeness marker 3: Minor sentence with <i>kedo</i>	Nil

Table 11.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 7

The utterance particle *la*<sup>3</sup> is attached to an affirmative sentence (*wai*<sup>6</sup>-*zo*<sup>2</sup>, broken-ASP) to form a particle question which demonstrates the speaker's uncertainty about the truth.

Situation 8: When you submit an application form for annual leave to your supervisor

- (a) 唔好意思， 我 下 星期 想  
*m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* *ngo*<sup>5</sup> *ha*<sup>6</sup> *xing*<sup>1</sup>*kéi*<sup>4</sup> *sêng*<sup>2</sup>  
excuse me I next week want
- 請 三日 假。  
*qing*<sup>2</sup> *sam*<sup>1</sup>*yed*<sup>6</sup> *ga*<sup>3</sup>  
take three days leave

'Excuse me, I want to take three days off next week.'

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	<i>m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup></i> ('excuse me')
Politeness marker 2: Indirectness	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Verb of receiving	Nil

Table 12.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 8

In all the four options, no attempt was made to find equivalents to the verb of

receiving observed in the responses of Japanese subjects. In Hong Kong, employees are allowed to take a certain amount of annual leaves as stated in their contract. Therefore, people do not ask their supervisors to ‘give’ (the concept of receiving) them leave. Instead, what people usually do is submit the leave application form for the approval of their supervisors.

(b) 我            下            星期            想  
*ngo*<sup>5</sup>        *ha*<sup>6</sup>        *xing*<sup>1</sup>*kéi*<sup>4</sup>        *sêng*<sup>2</sup>  
 I            next        week            want

請            三日            假            呀。  
*qing*<sup>2</sup>        *sam*<sup>1</sup>*yed*<sup>6</sup>        *ga*<sup>3</sup>        *a*<sup>3</sup>  
 take        three days        leave            UP

‘I want to take three days off next week.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Indirectness	<i>a</i> <sup>3</sup> (UP)
Politeness marker 3: Verb of receiving	Nil

Table 12.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 8

As summarized in Table 5.8, indirectness is realized in two different ways in Japanese. Among 30 Japanese subjects, sixteen used the tentative copula *deshoo* which is usually used to signify lack of certainty. Another eight subjects used minor (incomplete) sentence which ended in *ga* (‘although’) to make a request without stating it explicitly. In the Cantonese questionnaire, the strategy of indirectness is incorporated into three of the options in different ways. In option (b), an utterance particle *a*<sup>3</sup> is adopted to make the request sound less abrupt and direct.



(c) 阻 你 一陣， 我 下 星期  
 $zo^2$   $nei^5$   $yed^1 zen^6$   $ngo^5$   $ha^6$   $xing^1 kei^4$   
 interrupt you a while I next week

可唔可以 攞 三日 假?  
 $ho^2 m^4 ho^2 yi^5$   $lo^2$   $sam^1 yed^6$   $ga^3$   
 can-not-can take three days leave

‘Sorry to interrupt you, but can I take three days off next week?’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	$zo^2-nei^5-yed^1 zen^6$ (interrupt-you-for a while)
Politeness marker 2: Indirectness	$ho^2-m^4-ho^2 yi^5$ (can-not-can)
Politeness marker 3: Verb of receiving	Nil

Table 12.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 8

In option (c), a yes-no question (can-not-can) is used to signify the speakers’ uncertainty about the addressee’s response.

(d) 唔好意思， 我 下 個 星期 想 請 假，  
 $m^4 hou^2 yi^3 xi^3$   $ngo^5 ha^6$   $go^3$   $xing^1 kei^4$   $seng^2$   $qing^2$   $ga^3$   
 excuse me I next CL week want take leave

唔 知 得唔得 呢?  
 $m^4$   $ji^1$   $deg^1 m^4 deg^1$   $ne^1$   
 not know ok-not-ok UP

‘Excuse me, I am not sure whether it’s ok if I want to take leaves next week.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	<i>m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup></i> ('excuse me')
Politeness marker 2: Indirectness	<i>m<sup>4</sup>-ji<sup>1</sup>-deg<sup>1</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-deg<sup>1</sup>-ne</i> (not-know-ok-not-ok-UP)
Politeness marker 3: Verb of receiving	Nil

Table 12.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 8

In option (d), the indirectness is realized by the combination of the phrase *m<sup>4</sup>-ji<sup>1</sup>* (not-know) and a yes-no question *deg<sup>1</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-deg<sup>1</sup>* (ok-not-ok).

Situation 9: When you meet your colleague outside the office during lunch time

Like Situation 4, most of the expressions collected in Situation 9 are short fixed expressions which cannot be further analyzed into smaller politeness markers. It was decided to examine one of the fixed expressions *otsukare-sama* ('It's been very hardworking of you') as this culture-specific expression might cause problems in the process of translation. Option (a) below is a literal translation of the designated expression *otsukare-sama*. I came up with another three options which are appropriate in the captioned situation. Option (b) and (c) are frequently used greetings in Chinese society, while option (d) is common among young people or close friends.

(a) 辛苦                      晒!  
*sen<sup>1</sup>fu<sup>2</sup>*                      *sai<sup>3</sup>*  
hard-working      completely

'Thank you for your hardworking!'

(b) 食 咗 飯 未?  
*xig<sup>6</sup> zo<sup>2</sup> fan<sup>6</sup> méi<sup>6</sup>*  
 eat ASP rice yet

‘Have you had lunch yet?’

(c) 食 飯 呀?  
*xig<sup>6</sup> fan<sup>6</sup> a<sup>3</sup>*  
 eat rice UP

‘Coming out for lunch?’

(d) 喂!  
*wei<sup>3</sup>*  
 EXCL

‘Hey!’

Situation 10: When you want to reject an invitation for dinner from your brother/  
 sister

(a) sorry , 今日 有 啲 野 做 㗎。  
*sorry gem<sup>1</sup>yed<sup>6</sup> yeo<sup>5</sup> di<sup>1</sup> yé<sup>5</sup> zou<sup>6</sup> wo<sup>5</sup>*  
 ENG today have some thing do UP

‘Sorry, I got something to do today.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	sorry
Politeness marker 2: Plain form	wo <sup>5</sup> (UP)
Politeness marker 3: Offering excuse	gem <sup>1</sup> yed <sup>6</sup> -yeo <sup>5</sup> -di <sup>1</sup> -yé <sup>5</sup> -zou <sup>6</sup> (today-have-some-thing-do)

Table 13.1 Cantonese equivalents in option (a), Situation 10

As discussed in my Module One, the incorporation of English is one of the characteristics of Cantonese. Therefore, in addition to the Cantonese terms such as *m<sup>4</sup>goi<sup>1</sup>* or *m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* (both mean ‘excuse me’) which can be observed several times in the situations above, it is very common in Hong Kong to use the English term ‘sorry’ to apologize. The utterance particle *wo* is attached in option (a) to make the utterance sound softer as well as to distinguish plain form which is used in conversation with in-group members such as family and friends from formal form. Moreover, according to Luke (1990), *wo<sup>5</sup>* is frequently adopted in a negative response to an invitation. A *wo<sup>5</sup>*-suffixed sentence “by relating some incapacitating circumstances which make the fulfillment of the caller’s official expectations difficult or impossible amounts to a positive politeness strategy” (Luke 1990: 227).

(b) sorry ,      今晚              約              咗              人 ,              下次              啦 。  
*sorry*              *gem<sup>1</sup>man<sup>5</sup>*              *yêg<sup>3</sup>*              *zo<sup>2</sup>*              *yen<sup>4</sup>*              *ha<sup>6</sup>qi<sup>3</sup>*              *la<sup>3</sup>*  
ENG              tonight              date              ASP              person              next time              UP

‘Sorry, I have appointment with someone else tonight. Maybe next time.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	sorry
Politeness marker 2: Plain form	<i>la<sup>3</sup></i> (UP)
Politeness marker 3: Offering excuse	<i>gem<sup>1</sup>man<sup>5</sup>-yêg<sup>3</sup>-zo<sup>2</sup>-yen<sup>4</sup></i> (tonight-date-ASP-person)

Table 13.2 Cantonese equivalents in option (b), Situation 10

The utterance particle *la<sup>3</sup>* is adopted to render the informal atmosphere of plain form.

(c) 今晚                  唔    得                  番。  
*gem<sup>1</sup>man<sup>5</sup>*        *m<sup>4</sup> deg<sup>1</sup>*        *bo<sup>5</sup>*  
 tonight              not ok              UP

‘I am not ok tonight.’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Plain form	<i>bo<sup>5</sup></i> (UP)
Politeness marker 3: Offering excuse	Nil

Table 13.3 Cantonese equivalents in option (c), Situation 10

Neither apology nor excuse is offered in option (c). Only politeness marker 2 (plain form) is rendered into Cantonese by means of an utterance particle *bo<sup>5</sup>*. The particle *bo<sup>5</sup>*, a variant of *wo<sup>5</sup>* as in option (a), can also be used to respond negatively to an invitation.

(d) 今晚                  唔    方便，                  下次                  先。  
*gem<sup>1</sup>man<sup>5</sup>*        *m<sup>4</sup> fong<sup>1</sup>bin<sup>6</sup>*        *ha<sup>6</sup>qi<sup>3</sup>*        *xin<sup>1</sup>*  
 tonight              not convenient        next time              again

‘Tonight is not convenient for me. Next time!’

Common politeness markers identified in Japanese Questionnaires	Equivalents in Cantonese
Politeness marker 1: Apology	Nil
Politeness marker 2: Plain form	Nil
Politeness marker 3: Offering excuse	<i>gem<sup>1</sup>man<sup>5</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-fong<sup>1</sup>bin<sup>6</sup></i> (tonight-not-convenient)

Table 13.4 Cantonese equivalents in option (d), Situation 10

Like option (c), no apology is offered in option (d) in order to check Cantonese

subjects' response to apology in an intimate relationship.

## 4. Analysis

The Cantonese questionnaire was distributed among native speakers of Cantonese who were asked to choose the expression they think most appropriate to each situation. A total of 100 subjects have completed the questionnaire and I have interviewed 20 of them about their preference in each situation. Section 4.1 will give a brief account of the Cantonese subjects. The data collected through Cantonese questionnaires will be analyzed quantitatively in Section 4.2.

### 4.1 Subjects

In order to gain responses from people of diverse background, the questionnaire was first distributed by means of emails with the assistance of three friends. As a result, a large portion of the subjects were unknown internet users. Students between the ages of 18-22 as well as colleagues in my school were also asked to take part in the research. In addition, a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine helped to distribute the questionnaires to her patients. Table 14 is a summary of the subject sources.

Sources	Amount
Internet users	43
Students (between ages of 18-22)	32
Colleagues (both academic and administrative staff)	15
Patients of a Chinese medicine practitioner	10

Table 14 Sources of Cantonese subjects

Among the 100 Cantonese subjects, 50 are females and 50 are males. The majority

of subjects are between 15-24 and 25-34. Table 15 shows the age distribution among subjects.

Age group	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65
No. of subjects	39	34	13	11	3

Table 15 Age distribution of 100 Cantonese subjects

In addition, ten female and ten male subjects were randomly chosen for follow-up interviews about their choices in each situation after they completed the questionnaire. As there were no saliently different sets of responses among subjects, random selection was justified. The comments the 20 subjects offered in interview will also be included in the following analysis to facilitate the discussion in Chapter 5.

## 4.2 Subject Data

In this section, the data collected through Cantonese questionnaires will be analyzed quantitatively. In each situation, the preference of male and female subjects for each of the four options will be summarized in figures in a bar chart. Following that, a table illustrating the age distribution in each option will be displayed. Finally, subjects' comments collected in the interviews will be included.



Situation 1 - You want to borrow a pen from a lady next to you at a post office when you want to fill in a form but have no pen at hand

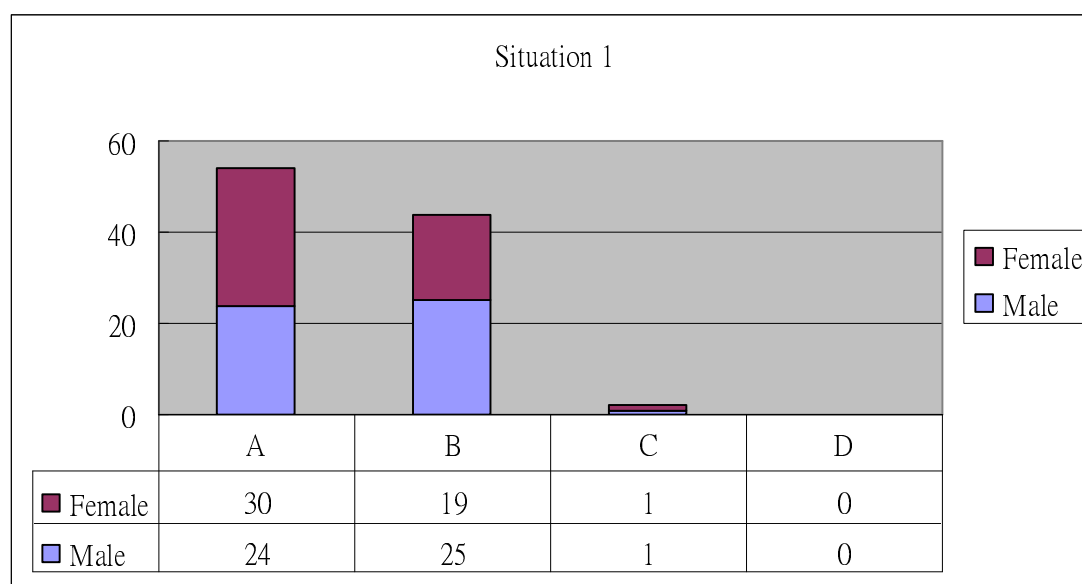


Chart 1 Data analysis of Situation 1

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	19	19	1	0
25-34	20	13	1	0
35-44	9	4	0	0
45-54	5	6	0	0
55-65	1	2	0	0

Table 16.1 Age distribution in Situation 1

Among 100 subjects, 54 chose option (a) which includes politeness features like apology  $m^4hou^2yi^3xi^3$  ('excuse me'), interrogative  $ho^2-m^4-ho^2yi^5$  (can-not-can) and honorific  $qing^2$  ('ask'). Next to (a), option (b), with a less formal 'excuse me' ( $m^4goi^1$ ) and an utterance particle  $a^3$  to replace the honorific  $qing^2$  ('ask'), was preferred by 44 subjects. Male subjects showed no special preference for either (a)

or (b). The number of male subjects who chose option (a) and those who chose (b) were nearly the same (24 vs. 25). However, female subjects seemed to prefer (a) a little more to (b). Four female subjects I interviewed expounded that the phrase  $m^4hou^2yi^3xi^3$  ('excuse me') in option (a) sounded more polite in a request. The less formal substitute  $m^4goi^1$  in option (b) will be applied only when they assume the addressee will not reject their request and thus is perceived to be in a closer relationship. Interestingly, three female subjects and one male subject who chose option (a) indicated that the honorific  $qing^2nei^5$  ('ask you') sounded too polite in such situation and they would eliminate it in genuine conversations. No subject chose option (d) in which no politeness marker except the utterance particle  $a^1$  can be detected.

As shown in Table 5.1, both the verb 'lend' (*kasu* in *kashite-itadaku*) and 'borrow' (*kariru* in *o-kari-suru*) can be observed in the Japanese data. The verb 'borrow' which is an action performed by the speaker carries an implication of debt and thus might sound a little bit more polite than 'lend'. However, since Japanese is rich in deferential expressions, both verbs in its deferential form were equally adopted. I tried to demonstrate the difference between 'borrow' and 'lend' in Cantonese options. In Cantonese, we use a single character  $ze^3$  (借) to indicate both the act of lending and borrowing. The syntactical structure decides whether it denotes lending or borrowing in a sentence. Among the four options, the character  $ze^3$  (借) in (a), (b) and (d) refers to 'lending' while the one in (c) refers to 'borrowing.' Interestingly, only two subjects chose expression (c). A male subject who chose (c) elaborated his interpretation of the difference between 'lending' and 'borrowing': his 'borrowing' a pen from the lady (i.e. option (c)) implies that the pen belongs to the lady while the lady can 'lend' him any pen that happens to be around. However, as a pen was not an expensive item, this difference did not influence his decision. He preferred (c) to

the rest because the interrogative form itself was polite enough in this situation.

Situation 2 - When you want to invite an acquaintance to go to a party at your home next week

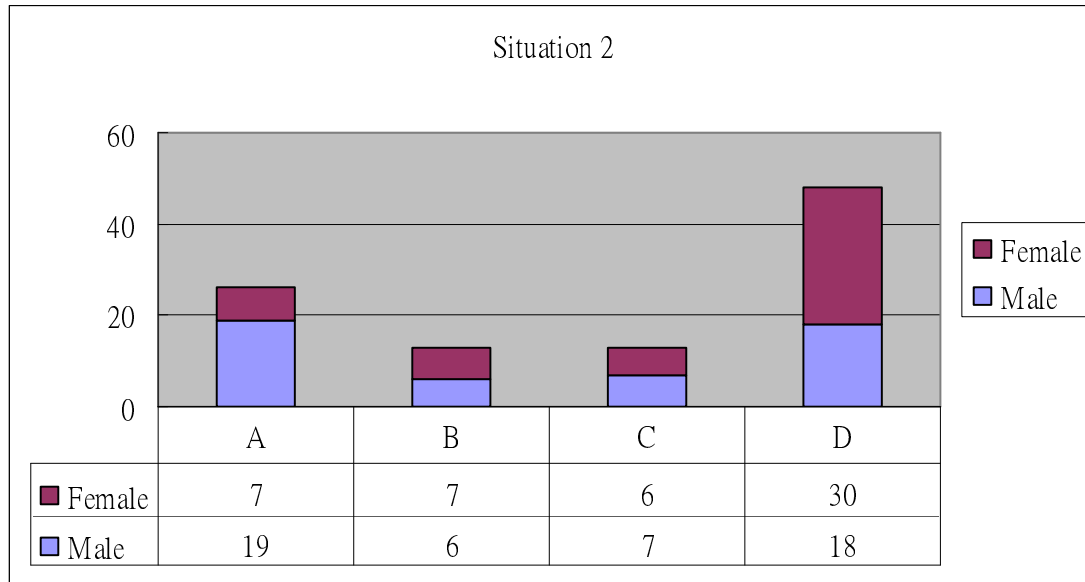


Chart 2 Data analysis of Situation 2

Option \ Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	17	6	8	8
25-34	5	5	4	20
35-44	1	2	1	9
45-54	1	0	0	10
55-65	2	0	0	1

Table 16.2 Age distribution in Situation 2

Almost half of the subjects (48 out of 100) chose option (d) in which a formal verb *cam<sup>l</sup>ga<sup>l</sup>* ('to participate') was adopted. Like Situation 1, female subjects seemed to prefer formal expressions, so 60% of the female subjects (30 out of 50) chose option

(d) in comparison with male subjects among which only 36% (18 out of 50) chose (d). Moreover, option (d) was preferred in the age group of 25-34 (59%, 20 out of 34), 35-44 (69%, 9 out of 13) as well as 45-54 (91%, 10 out of 11). However, among the age group of 15-24, the most chosen expression is (a) in which a less formal invitation is put forward by omitting the main verb ‘come/go.’ A male subject who belonged to the age group of 15-24 chose expression (a) because (d) sounded too serious in a conversation with friends.

Option (c) was chosen by 13 subjects, 8 out of whom belonged to the age group of 15-24. As discussed in Section 3.2.2 (Table 7.3), an utterance particle *wo*<sup>5</sup> was adopted in option (c) to achieve the effect of a Japanese minor sentence (i.e. a sentence which is deliberately left incomplete) to make the sentence sound less conclusive and confrontational. One of the female subjects who chose (c) explained that there was no need to be explicit when one talked with friends. Some subjects who chose (a) also stated that they might use (c) in a conversation with intimate friends.

Surprisingly, there were still 13 subjects who chose expression (b) which was a literal translation of the negative interrogative sentence used frequently in the Japanese data. As discussed in Section 3.2.2 (Table 7.2), negative interrogative form suffixed with the sentence final particle *a*<sup>1</sup> “expresses a measure of doubt” (Kwok 1987: 86) in Cantonese and thus is different in meaning from the original Japanese expression. Through interviews, I found that subjects seemed to misinterpret expression (b) – a negative interrogative form as a yes-no question. Two subjects, when filling in the questionnaire, enquired if there was one character (*hêu*<sup>3</sup> which means ‘go’) missing in option (b) and thought the correct expression should be a yes-no question in the form of A-not-A-UP like ‘*néi*<sup>5</sup>-*hêu*<sup>3</sup>-*m*<sup>4</sup>-*hêu*<sup>3</sup>-*a*<sup>1</sup>’ (you-go-not-go-UP, ‘Are you going?’) instead of a negative interrogative *néi*<sup>5</sup>-*m*<sup>4</sup>-*hêu*<sup>3</sup>-*a*<sup>1</sup> (you-not-go-UP, ‘Aren’t you

coming?’) as in option (b). The subjects’ response demonstrated how awkward a negative interrogative might sound in an invitation in Cantonese. However, the halo effect that researchers would not make mistakes in their professions might account for the result that an awkward expression like (b) was still chosen by 13 subjects.

Situation 3 - When you want to offer a ride to an eighty-year old lady who lives next to you and wants to go to Central (a place name in Hong Kong)

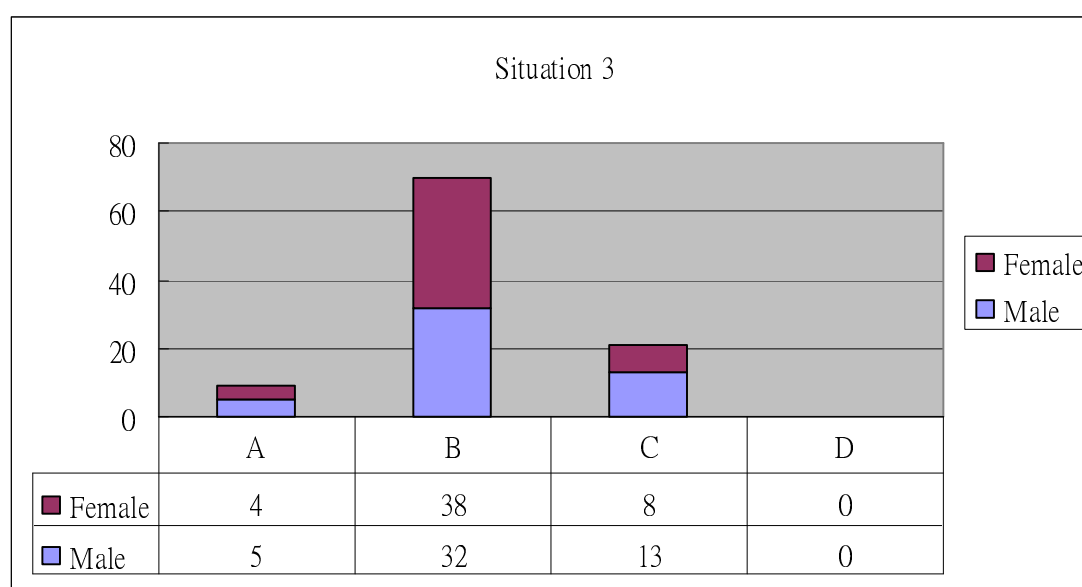


Chart 3 Data analysis of Situation 3

Option \ Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	5	24	10	0
25-34	1	24	9	0
35-44	0	11	2	0
45-54	2	9	0	0
55-65	1	2	0	0

Table 16.3 Age distribution in Situation 3

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2 (Table 8.1-8.4), a subtle difference among 4 options in Situation 3 lies in the different degree of politeness each verb denotes. Verbs of different connotative meanings were adopted to render honorifics (either the humbling or exalting forms) frequently used by Japanese subjects in a conversation with seniors. The verb *zoi*<sup>3</sup> ('carry') in option (a) is the most formal, with *cé*<sup>1</sup> ('drive') in option (b) being the second and *dab*<sup>3</sup>-*sên*<sup>1</sup>*fung*<sup>6</sup>-*cé*<sup>1</sup> (take-leeward-car) in option (d) being the least formal. Surprisingly, option (b) is the most chosen. The majority of Cantonese subjects (70%) preferred a less formal verb *cé*<sup>1</sup> ('drive') in option (b) to *zoi*<sup>3</sup> ('carry') in option (a). Comments collected through interviews showed that *zoi*<sup>3</sup> ('carry') in option (a) sounded more like a written expression which was seldom used in dialogues. Although representation of colloquial Cantonese in characters can still be found in newspapers and magazines, people resort to standard Chinese when they write in formal settings. As a result, how to distinguish written form (i.e. Standard Chinese) from spoken one (i.e. Cantonese) has been emphasized in Chinese lessons in Hong Kong. This might explain why most of the subjects chose option (b) rather than (a). Moreover, two interviewees provided an interesting reason why they thought option (a) was less suitable in such situation. Expression (a) which literally means 'give someone a ride' has another implication 'to help someone go to hell faster.' This slang can be used when a gangster wants to kill his enemy or when a teacher wants to fail a student who never attends a single lesson. Therefore, it might not be appropriate to use the expression of negative implication with an eighty-year-old lady.

21% of the subjects chose option (c) in which an interrogative was adopted. A female subject who chose (c) stated that the adoption of interrogative form sounded less forcing as it offered options to the addressee. Another subject chose (c) because of the adverb *mai*<sup>4</sup> ('at my convenience') which minimized the imposition of an

offering. However, two female subjects who chose (b) thought a direct offer like (b) instead showed people's willingness to help and thus sounded more sincere. Not surprisingly, not a single subject chose expression (d). Many subjects in the interview identified option (d) as an expression used in conversations with friends only.

#### Situation 4 - When you want to praise your child for completing his/her assignments

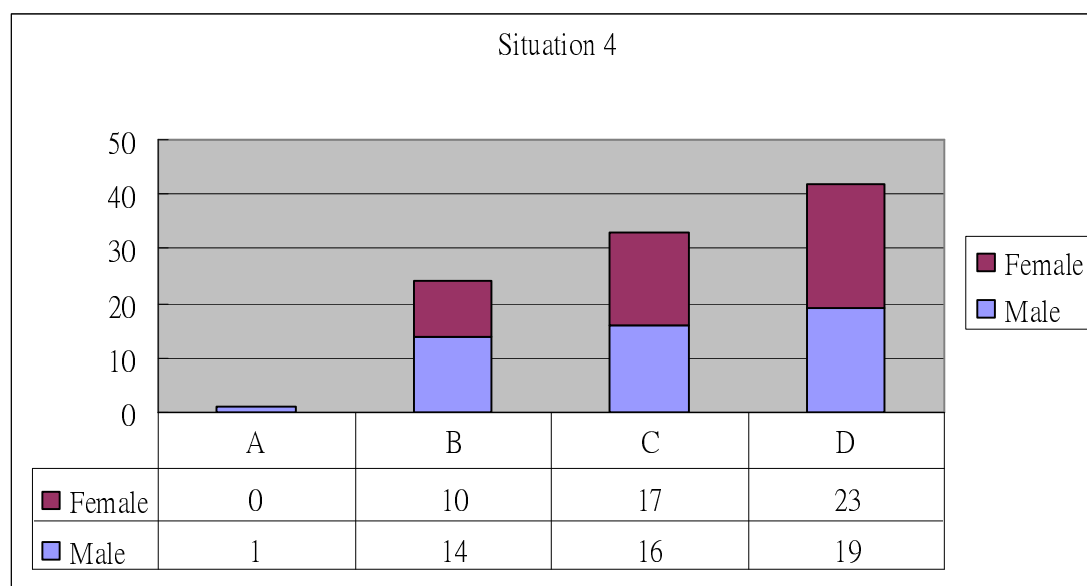


Chart 4 Data analysis of Situation 4

Option \ Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	0	5	15	19
25-34	0	9	12	13
35-44	0	2	4	7
45-54	1	7	2	1
55-65	0	1	0	2

Table 16.4 Age distribution in Situation 4

Situation 4 aims to examine the transference of some fixed expressions people use to praise their children. Option (d) - *guai<sup>1</sup> la<sup>1</sup>* (well-behaved-UP) - is the most chosen (42%). The character *guai<sup>1</sup>* ('well-behaved') is an adjective commonly used by the senior to praise their junior in Chinese society. Many subjects who chose (d) stated that completing an assignment did not necessarily mean the assignment was well completed (option (b) – 'Well-done') and thus could not stand as a proof that the kid was clever (option (c) – 'Clever boy/girl'). The expression that is ranked second is (c) - *lég<sup>1</sup>zei<sup>2</sup>/nêu<sup>5</sup>* ('clever boy/ girl') which is equivalent to the Japanese adjective *erai* ('brilliant').

One male subject who chose (c) revealed in the interview that option (b) was rather a Western than Chinese concept. However, there were still 24 subjects who chose expression (b) - *zou<sup>6</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>hou<sup>3</sup>* ('Well-done'). The influence of British colonial rule might account for this preference of certain subjects. Interestingly, a male subject at the age of 55-65 said that he would insert an adverb *géi<sup>2</sup>* ('quite') in expression (b) to make it *zou<sup>6</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>géi<sup>2</sup>hou<sup>3</sup>* ('You've done it quite well') which sounded less direct than the given one. Not surprisingly, only one person chose option (a) which was a literal translation of the mostly used phrase *ganbatta* ('You've tried your best') in the Japanese data. Many Cantonese subjects I interviewed expressed that option (a) sounded quite strange in the given situation. They would use this expression only when they wanted to comfort people who failed an exam.



Situation 5 - When doing a project, you want to seek agreement from your colleague (or classmate) about an idea you just came up with

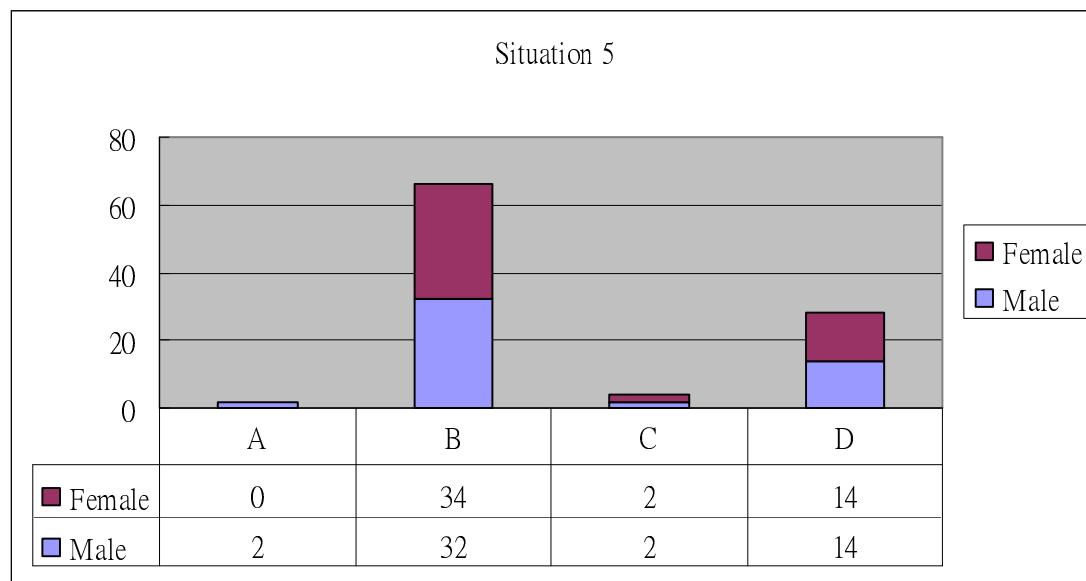


Chart 5 Data analysis of Situation 5

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	1	23	4	11
25-34	0	23	0	11
35-44	1	9	0	3
45-54	0	9	0	2
55-65	0	2	0	1

Table 16.5 Age distribution in Situation 5

Option (b) – an open-ended question - is the most chosen (66%). It is also the most frequently used expression in the Japanese data. A male subject explained that an open-ended question could elicit objective opinions as it did not impose any of the speaker's opinions on the addressees. Some subjects I consulted revealed that option (b) and (d) sounded similar to them. One male subject elaborated that he would use

an open-ended question like (b) with a close friend but a yes-no question like (d) with an acquaintance. This might account for the second popularity of option (d) (28%). Option (a) – a negative interrogative – is the least chosen (2%). Owing to its indirectness to put forward a question, negative interrogative is widely used in various Japanese expressions, for example in a request (Situation 1), invitation (Situation 2) and comment-seeking (Situation 5). We have seen in Situation 2 how awkward it might sound to issue an invitation in negative interrogative form in Cantonese. In Situation 5, Cantonese subjects also responded differently to a negative interrogative used in seeking comments. Four of the Cantonese subjects felt that a positive answer was expected when people put their question in a negative interrogative form. Moreover, a Japanese minor sentence (i.e. a sentence that is deliberately left incomplete) gives people the feeling of uncertainty, so it's also a polite way to seek comments from others in the Japanese data. However, like the negative interrogative, it imposed a totally different impression on the Cantonese subjects. One of the female subjects stated that an incomplete sentence like option (c) gave the audience a feeling that the speaker was praising him/herself. Therefore, merely 6% of the subjects chose either option (a) or (c).

Situation 6 - When you ask your spouse (or boyfriend/girlfriend) to pour a cup of water for you

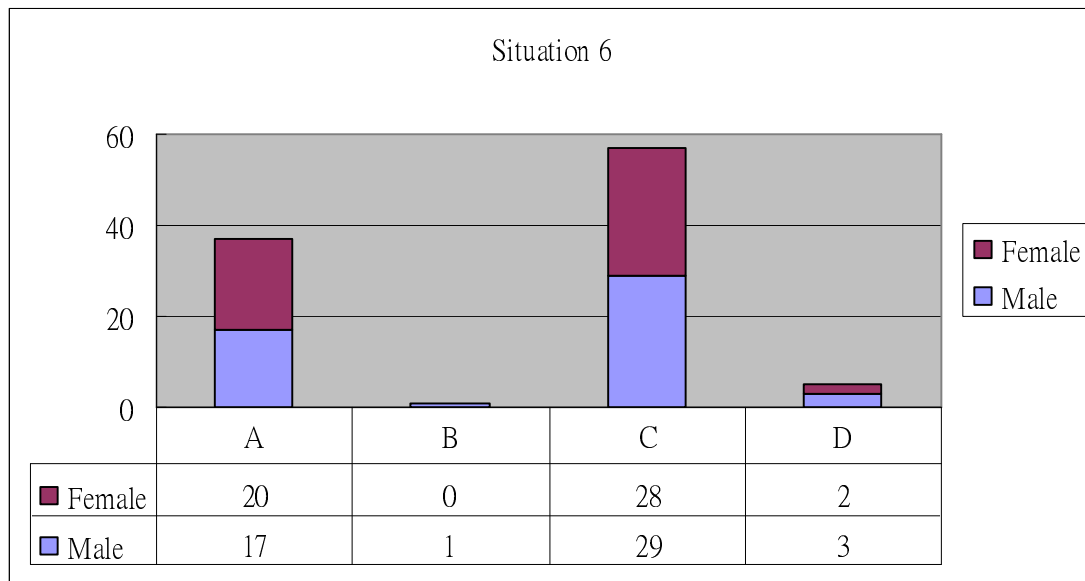


Chart 6 Data analysis of Situation 6

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	16	1	17	5
25-34	13	0	21	0
35-44	5	0	8	0
45-54	2	0	9	0
55-65	1	0	2	0

Table 16.6 Age Distribution in Situation 6

Expression (c), a request in an interrogative form, is the most chosen (57%) with expression (a), an imperative with a slight apology  $m^4goi^l$  ('excuse me') being the second (37%). Subjects who preferred (c) to (a) revealed that the apology  $m^4goi^l$  ('excuse me') in expression (a) was too polite between couples and an interrogative form ( $ho^2-m^4-ho^2yi^5$ , can-not-can) in expression (c) was proper enough in such request.

A male subject revealed in the interview that he would put the term  $m^4goi^1$  ('excuse me') before rather than after the request to make it sound more like an attention drawing device instead of an apology. Expressions (b) and (d), two very polite ways to put forward a request, were obviously not preferred in an intimate relationship. According to a male subject, the expression of uncertainty in expression (d),  $m^4ji^1-nei^5-deg^1-m^4-deg^1han^4$  (not-know-you-free-not-free), was likely to be interpreted as sarcasm.

Situation 7 - Mrs Wong, who lives next door, borrowed a mixer from you last week.

You found the mixer was broken when she returned it to you yesterday.

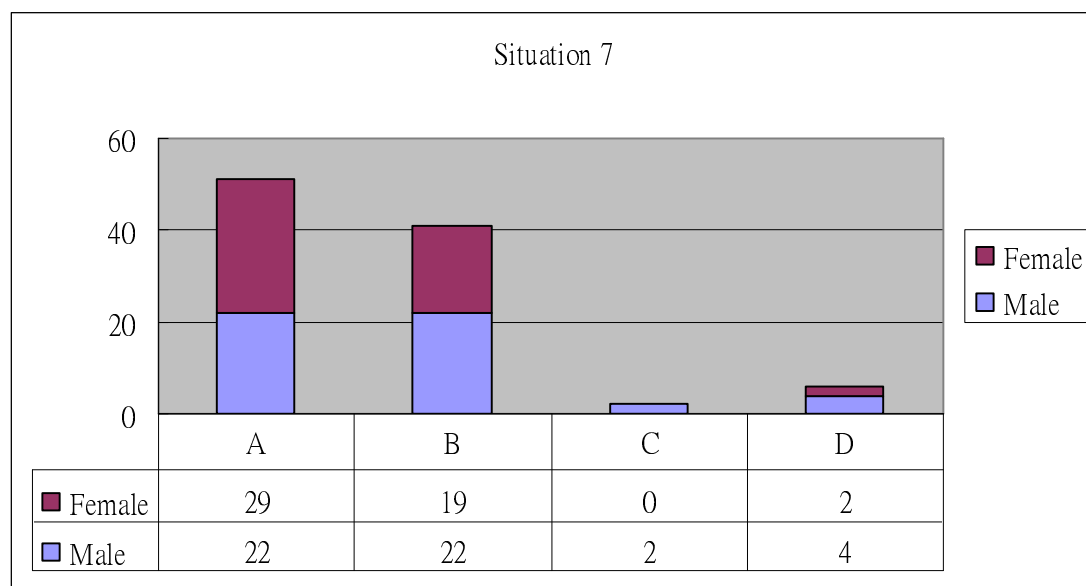


Chart 7 Data analysis of Situation 7

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	17	16	2	4
25-34	17	15	0	2
35-44	8	5	0	0
45-54	7	4	0	0
55-65	2	1	0	0

Table 16.7 Age distribution in Situation 7

Expression (a) is the most chosen (51%) with (b) being the second (41%). As discussed in Section 3.1.4 (Table 5.7), uncertainty is one of the politeness features identified in the Japanese data. The same effect is achieved in Cantonese questionnaire by the adoption of *hou<sup>2</sup>qi<sup>5</sup>* ('look like') in expression (a) and the interrogative form *hei<sup>6</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-hei<sup>6</sup>* (be-not-be) in expression (b). The term *hou<sup>2</sup>qi<sup>5</sup>* ('look like') seemed to account for the reason why expression (a) was preferred. A female subject expounded that by using *hou<sup>2</sup>qi<sup>5</sup>* ('look like') she could convey the feeling of uncertainty and wait for the addressee to confirm or explain spontaneously. Subjects who chose (b) felt that expression (a) sounded like a reproach and an interrogative form would be a more proper way to raise the issue indirectly.

Expression (c) is the least chosen. Apparently, like Japanese, a direct accusation by adoption of transitive verb ('Did you break it?') is considered rude and improper in this situation. Of course a few subjects I consulted revealed that they would put the complaint in a more indirect way other than the four options provided (such as 'Was it working properly when you used it?'). However, indirectness is still the emphasis in such complaint. In addition, like some Japanese subjects, there were two subjects who chose not to complain at all in reality.

### Situation 8 - When you submit an application form for annual leave to your supervisor

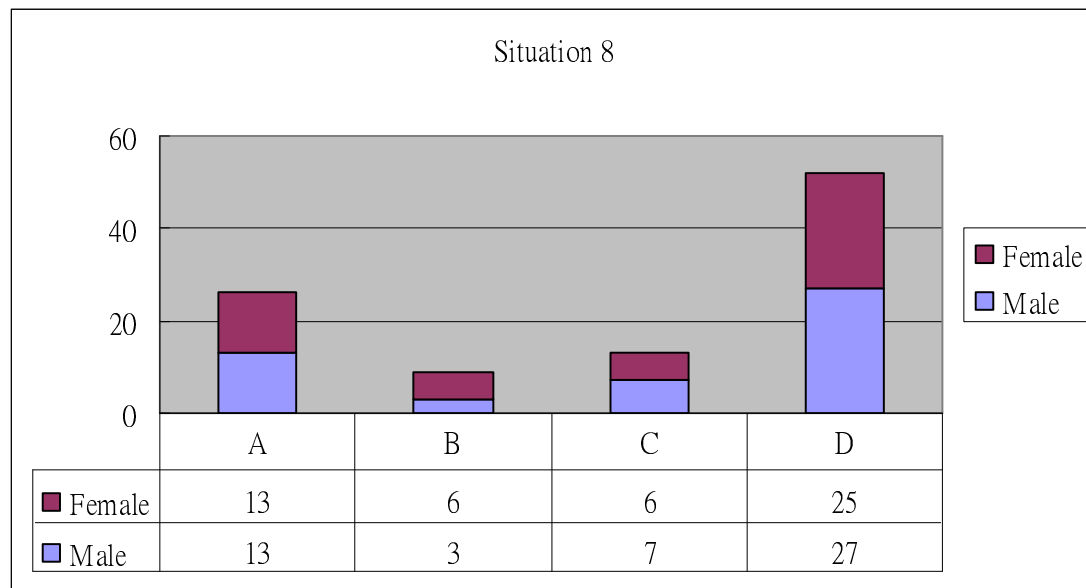


Chart 8 Data analysis of Situation 8

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	9	1	3	26
25-34	9	6	5	14
35-44	5	1	3	4
45-54	3	1	0	7
55-65	0	0	2	1

Table 16.8 Age distribution in Situation 8

As a whole, expression (d) – ‘Excuse me, I am not sure whether it’s ok if I want to take leaves next week’ – is the most chosen (52%), twice as many as subjects who chose expression (a) – ‘Excuse me, I want to take three days off next week’ (26%). Among four options, expression (d) is the most indirect and thus polite one. One male subject chose (d) as he sensed the hierarchical difference between his supervisor and himself. Expression (a), he felt, was too direct to address one’s supervisor. However, two female subjects who chose (a) both revealed that they just needed to

inform their supervisor instead of asking for permission in such situation. This account responded to the statement in Section 3.2.2 that no attempt was being made to transfer the verb of receiving observed in Japanese expressions into Cantonese options because employees in Hong Kong are granted instead of being given by their supervisors a certain amount of annual leaves stated in the contract. Moreover, by adopting an affirmative sentence like (a), one can avoid the negative response that an interrogative sentence like (d) might possibly bring.

Interestingly, expression (d) is the most chosen one in all age groups except the group of 35-44, among which about 38% (5 subjects out of 13) chose expression (a) and only 31% chose (d), possibly because subjects between the ages of 35-44 have worked for more than ten years and might occupy a significant position in the company. As a result, it is very likely for them to put such a request in a more direct way. On the contrary, among the age group of 15-24, the subjects who chose (a) (23%, 9 out of 39) were greatly outnumbered by those who chose (d) (66%, 26 out of 39). Lack of working experience might account for the inclination that young people between the ages of 15-24 tend to use indirect expression in a conversation with their supervisors.

### Situation 9 - When you meet your colleague outside the office during lunch time

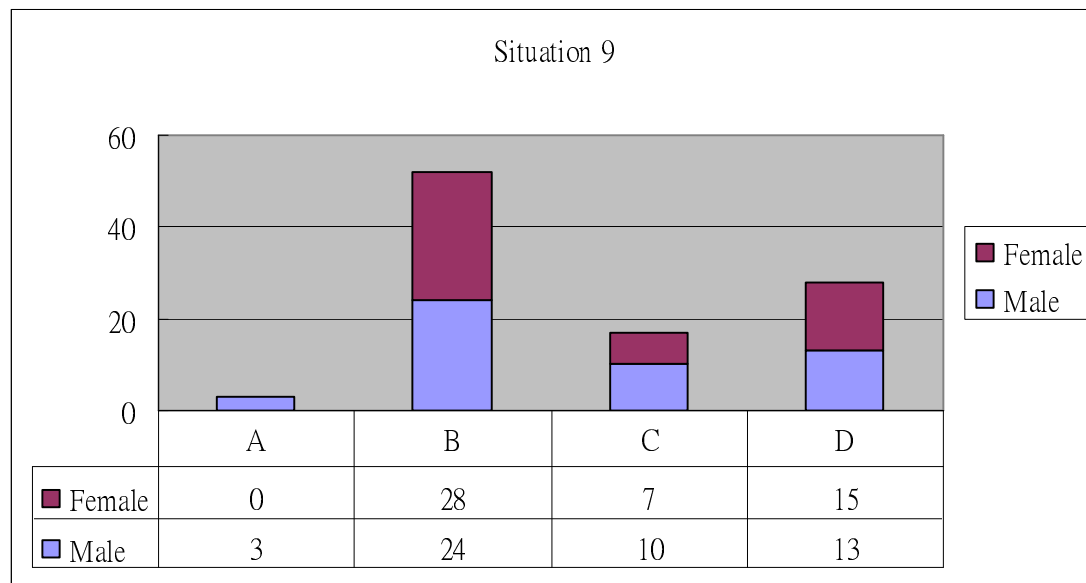


Chart 9 Data analysis of Situation 9

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	1	16	11	11
25-34	0	19	3	12
35-44	1	6	3	3
45-54	1	9	0	1
55-65	0	2	0	1

Table 16.9 Age distribution in Situation 9

Expression (b) is the most chosen. Subjects who chose option (b) – ‘Have you had lunch yet?’ and (c) – ‘Coming out for lunch?’ make up 69% of all subjects. It is interesting to find how frequently Cantonese like to greet people by querying about each other’s stomach, just like how often English usually greet each other by talking about weather. A female subject, when asked about the reason why she went for (b), revealed that she could not come up with any other possibilities than the fixed



expression (b) appropriate in the designated situation. A male subject at the age of 55-65 also regarded expression (b) as a widely used greeting in Cantonese. Many subjects preferred (b) to (c) because expression (c) sounded vague and less sincere. By using (b), the speaker showed that he/she really wanted to elicit some information from the addressee.

Though preferred by 28% of the subjects, expression (d) – ‘Hey’ – sounded too frivolous to some subjects and might be used with close friends only. Being a literal translation of the Japanese fixed expression, option (a) – ‘Thank you for your hardworking!’ – is the least chosen. I didn’t expect that anyone would choose it, as it sounded out of place in the given situation. Some subjects who have knowledge of Japanese culture identified Japanese element of this sentence.

Situation 10 - When you want to reject an invitation for dinner from your brother/sister

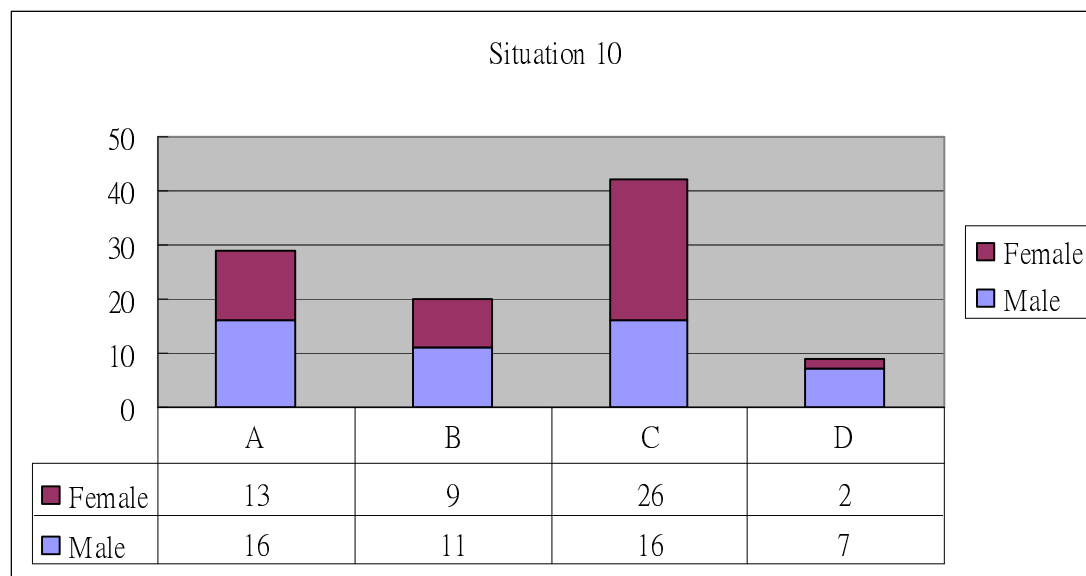


Chart 10 Data analysis of Situation 10

Option Age group	A	B	C	D
15-24	13	11	12	3
25-34	6	6	20	2
35-44	2	1	8	2
45-54	8	1	1	1
55-65	0	1	1	1

Table 16.10 Age distribution in Situation 10

In option (a), (b) and (d), different excuses are offered to turn down the invitation from one's siblings. Moreover, apology is offered in option (a) and (b). However, option (c), a direct refusal without any apology and excuses, is the most chosen (42%). Some subjects I consulted expressed that there was no need to apologize between siblings or even to give excuses. They explained that apology in this situation created distance between family members. In the above nine situations, female subjects tended to be more polite than male subjects. For example, in Situation 1 when someone wants to borrow a pen from a stranger in a post office, 30 female subjects preferred  $m^4hou^2yi^3xi^3$  ('excuse me'), compared with another 19 female subjects who chose a lighter 'excuse me' ( $m^4goi^l$ ). However, if we regard option (a) and (b) in which both apology and excuse are offered as one kind of rejection and option (c), a direct refusal as the other, we can find that males seem to be more polite than females in this situation. There are only 16 male subjects who chose (c). Nevertheless, the total number of male subjects who chose either (a) or (b) is 27. On the contrary, there are 26 female subjects who went for (c), in comparison with 21 female subjects who chose either (a) or (b).

In expression (d), an excuse – 'Tonight is not convenient for me' – is offered. However, unlike other excuses offered in (a) and (b), this one sounded unnatural and

might be regarded as an expression given to an outsider. Therefore, expression (d) is the least chosen.

### **4.3 Summary**

As shown in the above analysis, the three valuables (Distance, Power and Ranking of impositions) that Brown and Levinson (1987) propose to calculate the weighting of a face threatening act cannot account for all the linguistic politeness phenomena. A lot more factors such as the interlocutors' gender and age might influence the politeness strategies adopted to redress a potential face-threatening act. In Chapter 5, a comparison between Japanese and Cantonese data will be conducted to investigate potential problems in the translation of politeness phenomena from Japanese into Cantonese.

## **5. Interpretation of Data**

### **5.1 Japanese politeness**

Although Matsumoto (1988) disagreed with Brown and Levinson's (1989: 251) categorization of Japanese as a negative-politeness culture in which "one would expect symmetrical use of high-numbered strategies" such as negative politeness or going off-record, the data I collected via Japanese questionnaires showed that negative politeness strategies were favoured in most of the situations. However, negative politeness alone can not account for politeness phenomena in Japanese. Negative politeness strategies which are exploited according to the speaker's free will to redress the hearer's face belong to the "volitional aspect" of politeness (Hill et al. 1986:348). Japanese are also required grammatically to observe the social norms on interpersonal relationships which make up the "discernment aspect" of politeness (ibid.). For example, the appropriate use of plain form and formal form with different addressees in different situations is so "firmly grammaticalized" in Japanese that "it is impossible to say anything at all which is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate to certain kinds of addressees only" (Levinson 1983: 90-91). In the following sections, the Japanese data summarized in Section 3.1.4 will be discussed from the perspective of volitional use (Section 5.1.1) and discernment use (Section 5.1.2) of politeness respectively to facilitate the comparison with Cantonese data in Section 5.2.

#### **5.1.1 Volitional Use of Politeness**

Sections 5.1.1a to 5.1.1d below will discuss and illustrate with examples some negative politeness strategies observed frequently among the responses of Japanese subjects.

### 5.1.1a Apology

According to Brown and Levinson (1989: 187), apology is a way for speakers to show the “reluctance to impinge on [the hearer’s] negative face” of not being disturbed. Therefore, it is commonly used in requests, such as in Situation 1 when someone attempts to borrow a pen from a stranger at a post office, in Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea and in Situation 8 when someone submits the leave application form to his/her supervisor. Apology can also be observed in Situation 10 when someone turns down an invitation to dinner from his/her sibling. Three major forms of apology can be detected among the responses. A casual apology *gomen* (‘sorry’) is adopted in Situation 6 and 10 when both addressees are in-group members (spouse in Situation 6 and sibling in Situation 10). In addition, the neutral term *sumimasen* (‘sorry’) and the most formal phrase *mooshiwake-gozaimasen* (‘I am extremely sorry’) are used in conversations with out-group members as in Situation 1 or in dealing with one’s superior as in Situation 8.

### 5.1.1b Interrogative Form

In addition to apology, interrogative form is also a common device for making requests as shown in Example (1) to (3) below.

- |     |              |                            |           |
|-----|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| (1) | ペンを          | 貸していただけます                  | か。        |
|     | <i>pen-o</i> | <i>kashite-itadakemasu</i> | <i>ka</i> |
|     | pen-ACC      | lend-receive               | QUES      |

‘Could I ask you to lend me a pen?’

(Situation 1: When you want to borrow a pen from a stranger at a post office)

- (2) お茶を            いれてくれる？  
       *ocha-o            irete-kureru?*  
       tea-ACC        make-give

‘Can you make tea for me?’

(Situation 6: When you ask your spouse to make tea for you)

- (3) 休ませていただけます            か。  
       *yasum-asete-itadakemasu            ka*  
       break-CAUS-receive                QUES

‘Can I ask you to let me take some leaves?’

(Situation 8: When you submit an application form for annual leave to your supervisor)

In Example (1) and (3) when the addressee is either an out-group member or one’s superior, the question particle *ka* is attached. However, it is omitted in Example (2) when someone talks with in-group members like one’s spouse. This distinction between formal and plain language will be further discussed in Section 5.1.2 which will deal with the discernment use of politeness.

Moreover, interrogative form can also be found in Situation 5 when one seeks agreement from his/her friend about an idea.

- (4) どう            思います            か。  
       *doo                omoimasu            ka*  
       how            think                QUES

‘How you do feel?’

As a variety of interrogative, negative interrogative is commonly adopted in Situation 2 when someone wants to invite an acquaintance to go to a party.

(5)	パーティー	を	開く	けど、	来ない？
	<i>paatii</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>hiraku</i>	<b><i>kedo</i></b>	<i>ko-nai</i>
	party	ACC	hold	although	come-NEG

‘We are having a party. Aren’t you coming?’

Among 20 subjects who used question for invitation, eighteen of them put the invitation in negative interrogative form. Compared with a mere question, negative interrogative is a more indirect and thus more polite way to deal with a face-threatening action. In short, by putting a request or an invitation in question form, the speaker takes care of the hearer’s negative face by not assuming he/she will respond positively to the request or invitation.

### 5.1.1c Being Pessimistic

Being pessimistic is a negative politeness strategy by which the speaker expresses his/her hesitation about the addressee’s willingness to perform a face-threatening act. This strategy, according to Brown and Levinson (1989: 175), is usually realized by adoption of subjunctive or negative in English. In the Japanese data collected, the uncertainty was achieved by two major devices. First, in Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea, the particles *kashira* or *kana* are suffixed to the request to show the speaker’s doubt as in Example (6) below.

(6)	お茶を	くれる	かしら。
	<i>ocha-o</i>	<i>kureru</i>	<b><i>kashira</i></b>
	tea-ACC	give	PA

‘Could you possibly make tea for me?’

In addition, in Situation 8 when someone submits the leave application form to his/her supervisor, the speaker’s hesitation is realized by means of the copula *deshoo* which is “the tentative equivalence of *desu* ...indicating probability, lack of certainty,

imprecision and/or indirectness” (Jordan and Noda 1987: 150). Example (7) below demonstrates the use of *desyou*.

(7)	お休みを	頂いても	宜しい	でしょう	か。
	<i>o-yasumi-o</i>	<i>itadai-temo</i>	<i>yoroshii</i>	<b><i>deshoo</i></b>	<i>ka</i>
	HON-leave-ACC	receive-if	good	COPULA	QUES

‘Is it alright if I take some leaves?’

### 5.1.1d Minor Sentence

Minor sentence is a special way in Japanese to be linguistically indirect in dealing with potential face-threatening acts. As explained in Section 3.1.4, a deliberately incomplete sentence which ends with the clause particle *kedo* or *ga* is termed “minor sentence” (Jordan and Noda 1987, 1: 104). In a minor sentence, the speaker only articulates the first half of the utterance and leaves the second half which is usually face-threatening for the interpretation of the addressee. It is “a device to present material politely” and “enable the speaker deliberately to allow for comments from others” (ibid.) because this kind of sentence sounds inconclusive and thus non-confrontational. Therefore, minor sentences can be found in Situation 5 when someone seeks agreement from his/her friend about an idea.

(8)	いい	と	思う	けど	...
	<i>ii</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>omou</i>	<i>kedo</i>	
	good	PA	think	though	

‘I think it’s good though...’

By saying Example (8), the speaker indirectly invites the addressee to give his/her opinion without stating it explicitly. As shown in Example (9) below, minor sentence is also frequently adopted in Situation 7 when someone found his/her neighbor broke the coffee machine one lent him / her.



(9)	壊れた	みたい	です	けど	...
	<i>kowareta</i>	<i>mitai</i>	<i>desu</i>	<i>kedo</i>	
	broken	look like	COPULA	though	

‘It seems broken though ...’

By means of minor sentence, the speaker can express his/her dissatisfaction without accusing the addressee directly and furthermore create a chance for the addressee to offer an explanation spontaneously. On top of that, a hedge *mitai* (‘look like’) is adopted to minimize the imposition.

In addition to interrogative form discussed in Section 5.1.1b above, a minor sentence can also be used in a request as in Situation 8 when someone submits a leave application form to his/her supervisor.

(10)	休みを	頂きたいの	です	が	...
	<i>yasumi-o</i>	<i>itadaki-tai-no</i>	<i>desu</i>	<i>ga</i>	
	leave-ACC	receive-want-PA	COPULA	although	

‘I would like to ask you to grant me some leaves though...’

Example (10) is a very indirect and polite way to make a request. Unlike *kedo* in Example (8) and (9), the clause particle *ga* in Example (10) sounds stiffer and thus is appropriate in a conversation with one’s supervisor. Without it, the request will become very abrupt and might sound rude to one’s superior.

### 5.1.2 Discernment Use of Politeness

In addition to the above-mentioned negative politeness strategies which are classified as volitional aspect of politeness, Japanese are also obliged to observe the discernment aspect of politeness. Japanese are required to make decisions between plain forms and formal forms in every utterance “(s)ince the choices cover such parts of speech as copulas, verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs” (Ide 1989: 231). As suggested in

Section 2.2, plain form is normally adopted in a conversation with in-group members, juniors and inferiors, while formal form is for out-group members, seniors and superiors.

This distinction between plain and formal forms can be clearly observed in the Japanese data I collected. In Situation 9 when someone meets his/her colleague outside the office during lunch time and Situation 10 when someone turns down an invitation for dinner from his/her sibling, all 30 subjects used plain forms as colleagues and siblings are in-group members to the speaker. Plain form was also adopted by the majority of the subjects in Situation 4 when someone praises his/her child for completing the assignments, Situation 5 when someone seeks agreement from his/her friend about an idea and Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea. The addressees in these three situations are either speaker's junior or in-group members.

Formal form of verbs can be further divided into neutral forms, humbling forms (i.e. lowering the speaker's status to pay respect to the addressee) and exalting forms (i.e. elevating the addressee's status to show respect). Two different kinds of humbling form can be identified among responses in Situation 1 when someone borrows a pen from a stranger. On the one hand, thirteen subjects attached the humbling form of the verb 'receive' (*itadaku*) to the gerund form of the verb 'lend' (*kashite*) to lower him/herself when acknowledging the act (of lending) performed by an out-group member. Another fifteen subjects, on the other, chose to use the humbling form of the verb 'borrow' - *o-kari-shimasu* (HON-borrow-HON) to pay respect by lowering their own status when performing the act (of borrowing). Humbling form is also frequently adopted in Situation 3 when someone wants to offer a ride to an elder who lives next door. The humbling form of three different verbs can be observed among

the responses – *o-okuri-shimasu* (HON-drive-HON), *o-nose-shimasu* (HON-take in a car-HON) and *o-tsure-shimasu* (HON-take-HON), all of which are actions performed by the speaker. In addition to a variety of humbling forms, two subjects chose to show their respect to seniors by adopting the exalting form of the verb ‘ride’ (*o-nori-ni-narimasu*, HON-ride-HON) which is the action performed by the addressee. Besides humbling and exalting forms, some subjects simply used neutral form in this situation. For example, seven subjects made the offer by attaching a neutral term *kudasai* (‘please’) to the gerund form of the verb ‘ride.’ No plain form can be observed in Situation 3 as all subjects were aware of the hierarchical difference created by age. Hierarchy in an office is also a significant element as far as discernment use of politeness is concerned. Being conscious of the hierarchical difference created by the position, 22 subjects adopted the humbling form of the verb ‘receive’ (*itadaku*) in Situation 8 when they asked their supervisor for permission to take leaves. In Situation 7 when someone found his/her neighbor broke the coffee machine one lent him/her, whether the subject decided to complain or not, the majority of subjects used formal neutral form. This preference showed that most of the subjects intended to maintain distance with the addressee in this unpleasant situation, although they adopted courteous expressions in their conversation.

Situation 2 when someone invites an acquaintance to go to a party is the only situation in which plain form and formal form are almost equally adopted. Fifteen subjects used plain form and another thirteen subjects used formal form, twelve of which belonged to neutral form and one to exalting form. As ‘acquaintance’ is a relatively vague term for the speaker to define the relationship between him/herself and the addressee, it might be difficult to make a decision on which form to use. As a result, two subjects gave two sets of expressions at the same time, one in plain form to be used with acquaintances in private life and the other in formal form used in a

conversation with acquaintances at work place. The dichotomy of responses collected in Situation 2 demonstrates the significance of discernment politeness in Japanese.

### **5.1.3 Summary**

In Section 5.1, data collected through Japanese questionnaires were discussed in terms of volitional use as well as discernment use of politeness. As far as volitional use of politeness is concerned, negative politeness is a popular strategy among Japanese in dealing with face-threatening acts. Commonly used negative politeness strategies include apology, interrogative, being pessimistic and minor sentence. In addition to negative politeness, discernment aspect of politeness plays an important role in Japanese politeness. Regardless of the strategies adopted, Japanese are obliged to choose between plain form and formal form in every utterance according to the interpersonal relationship defined by many external factors such as age, position and intimacy. In Section 5.2 below, the Cantonese questionnaire data will be compared in terms of politeness strategies with the Japanese data.

## 5.2 Cantonese Politeness

In this section, the Cantonese questionnaire data will be compared to the Japanese data examined in Section 5.1 to investigate common politeness features across the two sets of data. Section 5.2.1 will discuss the presence in the Cantonese data of the four major negative politeness strategies identified in the Japanese data and Section 5.2.2 will look at how the distinction between plain form and formal form in Japanese is rendered into Cantonese. Finally, the translation of the fixed expressions found in the situations where no potential face-threatening act is involved will be discussed.

### 5.2.1 Volitional Use of Politeness

#### 5.2.1a Apology

As discussed in Section 5.1.1a above, the negative politeness strategy of apology is observed among the Japanese responses in Situation 1, 6, 8 and 10. This politeness marker is rendered into various options in the corresponding Cantonese situations. The analysis in Chapter 4 showed that Cantonese subjects had two extremely different responses to the adoption of apology in the above-mentioned four situations. In Situation 1 when someone wants to borrow a pen from a stranger and Situation 8 when someone submits an application form to his/her supervisor, the options with apology (that is, option (a) in Situation 1 and option (d) in Situation 8) are the most frequently chosen. Although there are two kinds of apology adopted in Situation 1, option (a) with a formal apology  $m^4hou^2yi^3xi^3$  was chosen by more subjects (54%) than option (b), the casual apology  $m^4goi^1$  (44%). The two options with apology – option (a) and (b) – account for 98% of all responses. On the contrary, in Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea and Situation 10 when someone turns down the invitation for dinner from his/her sibling, the most chosen option is the one without apology (option (c) in Situation 6 and option (c) in Situation 8). In both

situations, the addressees are in-group members. Subjects who preferred options without apology revealed in the post-questionnaire interview that apology created distance between family members and was regarded as redundant in an inside relationship. As reviewed in my Module One, Pan's (2000) data collected in a state-run stamp store in Mainland China suggests that Chinese politeness is observed only in inside relationships. In other words, face of an out-group member, for example a stranger in Situation 1, will not be attended to and no politeness strategies can be observed in interaction with an outsider. It may be that Mandarin speaking Mainlander politeness behaviour is not equivalent to Cantonese politeness behavior. However, as far as apology is concerned, the Cantonese data show that politeness strategy is usually adopted in an outside relationship and omitted in an inside relationship.

### **5.2.1b Interrogative Form**

Interrogative form is observed among the Japanese responses in Situation 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8. Situation 1, 6 and 8 are requests. Situation 2 is an invitation and Situation 5 is seeking opinions. In the corresponding Cantonese situations, subjects also prefer the options in the form of interrogative. In Situation 1 when someone borrows a pen from a stranger, the most chosen two options (option (a) and (b)) which account for 98% of the overall responses are in interrogative form. In Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea, more than half of the Cantonese subjects (57%) felt that apology was redundant and a simple yes-no question like option (c) was appropriate enough to make such request. Moreover, in Situation 8 when someone submits a leave application form to his/her supervisor, option (d), a request in interrogative form, is the most chosen (52%). Interestingly, although preferred by relatively fewer subjects (26%), option (a) in Situation 8 was the second ranked of the

four. It is a direct statement (*ngo<sup>5</sup>-ha<sup>6</sup>-xing<sup>1</sup>kéi<sup>4</sup>-sêng<sup>2</sup>-qing<sup>2</sup>-sam<sup>1</sup>-yed<sup>6</sup>-ga<sup>3</sup>*, I-next-week-want-take-three-day-leave, ‘I want to take three days off next week’) with an apology *m<sup>4</sup>hou<sup>2</sup>yi<sup>3</sup>xi<sup>3</sup>* (‘excuse me’). Subjects who preferred option (a) revealed that they just needed to inform their supervisor instead of asking for permission in such situation. This kind of direct statement might sound too blunt to Japanese and therefore only one Japanese subject adopted direct statement rather than interrogative in his response.

As discussed in Section 3.1.4 (Table 5.2), Japanese tend to adopt negative interrogative form (*ko-nai?*, come-not, ‘Aren’t you coming?’) in Situation 2 when someone invites an acquaintance to a party. Negative interrogative which sounds more indirect and polite than a mere question is rendered as option (b) - *nei<sup>5</sup>m<sup>4</sup>heu<sup>3</sup>a<sup>1</sup>* (you-not-go-UP, ‘Aren’t you going?’) in Situation 2. However, most of the Cantonese subjects found this option awkward in this situation. The connotation of the utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* might explain why this option is not preferred by Cantonese subjects. The utterance particle *a<sup>1</sup>* is attached to the negative sentence *nei<sup>5</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-heu<sup>3</sup>* (you-not-go) to form a particle question. The question with *a<sup>1</sup>* “expresses a measure of doubt” and denotes “an element of surprise” (Kwok 1987: 86). Therefore, negative interrogative sounds more like a challenge than an invitation in a Cantonese’s ears. Data from Situation 5 can further exemplify this. Among Japanese responses, negative interrogative (*ii-to-omowa-nai?*, good-PA-think-not, ‘Don’t you think it’s good?’) is also frequently used in Situation 5 when someone seeks agreement from his/her friend about an idea. The negative interrogative sentence is rendered into option (a) - *nei<sup>5</sup>-m<sup>4</sup>-gog<sup>3</sup>deg<sup>1</sup>-ni<sup>1</sup>-tiu<sup>4</sup>-kiu<sup>4</sup>-gei<sup>2</sup>-hou<sup>2</sup>-me<sup>9</sup>* (you-not-feel-this-CL-idea-quite-good-UP, ‘Don’t you think this idea is quite good?’) in Situation 5 of Cantonese questionnaire. Nevertheless, this option was chosen by 2 subjects only. Four Cantonese subjects I consulted felt that a positive answer was

expected when people put their question in a negative interrogative form. In other words, it sounds like a rhetorical question. In short, negative interrogative, though commonly used in Japanese owing to its indirectness, has totally different connotation in Cantonese and therefore cannot be rendered literally into Cantonese.

### 5.2.1c Being Pessimistic

As summarized in Section 5.1.1c above, the particle *kashira/kana* suffixed to an utterance in Situation 6 and the copula *deshoo* in Situation 8 are two major devices in Japanese to show the speaker's hesitation about the addressee's willingness to carry out a face-threatening act. In the Cantonese questionnaire, the term  $m^4-jí^1$  (not-know) is prefixed to a question to render the politeness strategy of being pessimistic, as in option (d) of Situation 6 and option (d) of Situation 8. However, Cantonese subjects responded differently to the same strategy adopted in these two situations. In Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea, option (d) -  $m^4-jí^1-néi^5-deg^1-m^4-deg^1han^4$  (not-know-you-free-not-free) - was chosen by 5 subjects only. A subject explained in the interview that option (d) sounded too polite in an intimate relationship and was likely to be interpreted as sarcasm by the addressee. On the contrary, the politeness strategy of being pessimistic which is also realized by the adoption of the term  $m^4-jí^1$  (not-know) is regarded as appropriate in Situation 8 when someone submits a leave application form to his/her supervisor. Option (d) in which the strategy of apology, interrogative and being pessimistic can be observed in one expression is the most chosen (52%). Different responses to the same politeness marker used in different situations demonstrate again that it is more necessary to observe politeness in an outside than an inside relationship in Cantonese culture; this is in complete opposition to Pan's (2000) findings for Mainland Mandarin speakers.



### 5.2.1d Minor Sentence

Minor sentence is an incomplete sentence that ends with the particle *kedo/ga*. It can be frequently observed in Situation 5, 7 and 8 among the responses of Japanese subjects. Being somewhat unique in Japanese, minor sentences are not easily rendered into Cantonese. However, in order to test Cantonese subjects' responses to this politeness marker, several utterance particles are adopted in an attempt to transfer Japanese minor sentences into Cantonese. In option (c) of Situation 5 when someone seeks the addressee's opinion on an idea, an utterance particle  $a^1$  is attached to the utterance  $ngo^5-gog^3deg^1-ni^1-tiu^4-kiu^4-dou^1-gei^2-hou^2$  (I-think-this-CL-idea-also-quite-good, 'I think this idea is quite good') to invite other's opinions without revealing the speaker's real intention explicitly. This option is not accepted by the Cantonese subjects. A female subject I consulted stated that option (c) gave the interlocutor the impression that the speaker is somewhat egotistical and self-praising. As reviewed in my Module One, Gu (1990: 245) depicts Chinese politeness phenomenon with four Maxims - The Tact Maxim, The Generosity Maxim, The Self-denigration Maxim and The Address Maxim. Self-praise obviously violates the Self-denigration Maxim and thus option (c) of Situation 5 was chosen by 4 subjects only. Moreover, in option (a) of Situation 7 when someone complains to his/her neighbor about the broken mixer the neighbor returns, the utterance  $hou^2qi^5-wai^6-wai^6-déi^6$  (look like-broken-broken-a little) together with the utterance particle  $bo^5$  forms another minor sentence. By adoption of minor sentence, the speaker can express his/her dissatisfaction about the broken mixer without accusing the addressee directly. Therefore, this option is the most chosen (51%) among the four. Last, in option (b) of Situation 8 when someone submits a leave application form to his/her supervisor, an utterance particle  $a^3$  is added to the utterance  $ngo^5-ha^6-xing^1két^4-sêng^2-qing^2-sam^1-yed^6-ga^3$

(I-next-week-want-take-three-day-leave, ‘I want to take three days off next week’) to ask for permission. Unlike *kedo* in the Japanese minor sentence, the utterance particle *a*<sup>3</sup> in full Cantonese sentence does not achieve the softening effect of the Japanese minor sentence. Therefore, this option is the least chosen as it sounds too direct in a conversation with one’s superior.

To summarize, minor sentence is rendered into Cantonese in the above-mentioned three situations by means of different utterance particles. However, to Cantonese subjects, it is taken as appropriate only when the speaker attempts to complain indirectly about some actions conducted by the addressee.

### 5.2.2 Discernment Use of Politeness

The discernment use of politeness is so deeply grammaticalized in Japanese that it is difficult to render this aspect of Japanese politeness into other languages. Three attempts were made to transfer into Cantonese the distinction between the plain form and formal form. First of all, as discussed in Section 5.1.2, plain form and formal form are almost equally adopted among the responses of Japanese subjects in Situation 2 when someone invites an acquaintance to a party. In the Cantonese questionnaire, in order to render the distinction between plain form and formal form, the adverb *yed<sup>1</sup>cei<sup>4</sup>* (‘together’) is used alone and the verb (come/go in this case) is deliberately omitted in option (a) to make the sentence sound more like a casual invitation, while a more formal verb *cam<sup>1</sup>ga<sup>1</sup>* (‘to participate’) is adopted in option (d) to replace a simple ‘come’ or ‘go.’ The data show that more Cantonese subjects opt for option (d) with a formal verb than option (a). A male subject revealed that the verb *yiulqing<sup>2</sup>* (‘to invite’) gave him an impression of formality and thus a more formal verb *cam<sup>1</sup>ga<sup>1</sup>* (‘to participate’) as in option (d) sounded more appropriate.

Second, in Situation 3 when someone gives a ride to an elderly lady, all 30 Japanese

subjects used formal form (either neutral form or honorifics) to address a senior. To render this delicate distinction between formal and plain form, 4 verbs which are similar in semantic meaning but different in connotative meaning are adopted in Cantonese questionnaire. The verb *zoi*<sup>3</sup> ('to carry') in option (a) is the most formal and polite one. However, the majority (70%) of Cantonese subjects chose option (b) in which a less but not the least formal verb *cé*<sup>1</sup> ('to drive') was used. Many subjects revealed in the interview that the verb in option (a) was too formal to be used as an oral expression in a conversation. Therefore, unlike Japanese, who observe the distinction between plain and formal form in every utterance, Cantonese speakers seem to feel it more important to distinguish written forms (i.e. standard Chinese) from colloquial expressions (i.e. Cantonese).

Finally, in an attempt to transfer the Japanese honorifics, the verb *qing*<sup>2</sup> which literally means 'ask' is adopted. *Qing*<sup>2</sup> ('to ask') is the honorific inserted in an utterance when people want to make a request politely in Cantonese. It is used in option (a) of Situation 1 when someone borrows a pen from a stranger and option (b) of Situation 6 when someone asks his/her spouse to make tea. It is not surprising that only one Cantonese subject chose option (b) in Situation 6 as the honorific *qing*<sup>2</sup>*néi*<sup>5</sup> ('ask you') in option (b) of Situation 6 sounded too polite in an intimate relationship. In Situation 1, with all three politeness markers observed in Japanese (i.e. apology, interrogative form and honorific) rendered into Cantonese, option (a) is the most formal expression among the four. It is also the most chosen one. However, three female subjects and one male subject who chose option (a) indicated that the honorific phrase *qing*<sup>2</sup>*néi*<sup>5</sup> ('ask you') sounded too polite in such an easy request and they would not use it in genuine conversations.

In short, although several attempts were made to render by means of Mandarin-based equivalents the formal forms and honorifics into Cantonese, it was found that most

subjects tended to use less formal expressions in oral conversations.

### 5.2.3 Fixed Expressions

As discussed in Section 3.2.2, in Situation 4 when someone praises his/her child for completing homework and Situation 9 when someone meets his/her colleague outside the office during lunch time, no potential face-threatening act is involved. Therefore, only short fixed expressions which cannot be further analyzed into politeness markers were found in the Japanese data. In Situation 4, three commonly used Japanese fixed expressions are rendered literally into option (a) – ‘You’ve tried your best’, (b) – ‘Well-done!’ and (c) – ‘Clever boy / Clever girl!’ respectively in Cantonese. One Cantonese fixed expression was added as option (d). In Situation 9, the fixed expression *otsukare-sama* (‘It’s been very hardworking of you’) is transferred literally into option (a) with another three Cantonese expressions added as another three options. The analysis in Chapter 4 showed that literal translation equivalents were not preferred by Cantonese subjects. In Situation 4, the most chosen one is option (d), a Cantonese fixed expression which can not be found among the responses of Japanese subjects. On the contrary, option (a) which was the most popular expression among Japanese subjects (observed fourteen times) sounded very awkward to Cantonese subjects in such situation and was chosen by one person only. In Situation 9, option (a), the literal translation of the Japanese fixed expression *otsukare-sama* (‘It’s been very hardworking of you’), was the least preferred one, chosen by three subjects only. More than half of the Cantonese subjects (52%) found it more appropriate to use option (b) which is a common greeting in Chinese society.

In short, according to the reaction of Cantonese subjects, literal translation of fixed expressions usually creates awkwardness as fixed expressions are usually culture-specific.

#### **5.2.4 Summary**

To summarize, among the four major negative politeness strategies observed among Japanese expressions, interrogative form was found to be preferred by Cantonese subjects as well, especially in making requests. However, negative interrogative, an extremely indirect way that Japanese use to make invitations, carries a totally different meaning in Cantonese and thus is not preferred by Cantonese subjects. Besides, Japanese use the strategy of apology and being pessimistic in conversations with both in-group members (such as spouse and sibling) and out-group members (such as stranger and supervisor). However, Cantonese subjects find it inappropriate to use these two strategies with in-group members. An apology to one's spouse might create distance and expression of uncertainty might sound like sarcasm in an intimate relationship. In addition, minor sentence, a common way in Japanese to be indirect is only applicable in a complaint in Cantonese. As far as discernment aspect of politeness is concerned, the distinction between plain form and formal form is not as important to Cantonese subjects as the distinction between oral (colloquial Cantonese) and written (Standard Chinese) expressions. Moreover, Mandarin-based equivalents adopted to render Japanese honorifics sometimes sound too polite to Cantonese. Finally, it is not easy to translate fixed expressions as they are normally culture-specific. Literal translation of fixed expressions is not an appropriate strategy for transferring Japanese politeness strategies into Cantonese.

## 6. Summary

In this paper, I have discussed some common politeness features in Japanese. Based on the data of the Japanese questionnaire, it is found that negative politeness is a popular strategy among Japanese for dealing with face threatening acts. Four frequently used negative politeness strategies can be detected in the Japanese data, which are apology, interrogative form, being pessimistic and minor sentence (i.e. sentences that are deliberately left incomplete). In addition to negative politeness strategies which are usually categorized as the volitional use of politeness, Japanese are obliged to observe the discernment use of politeness, among which the distinction between formal form and plain form is one of the characteristics. Plain form is normally adopted in a conversation with in-group members, juniors and inferiors, while formal form is for out-group members, seniors and superiors. In other words, with negative politeness being the prevalent strategy in dealing with face-threatening acts, discernment use of politeness is an important device by which Japanese distinguish linguistically their interpersonal relationships with people around them.

I have also examined by means of questionnaire and interview the reaction of Cantonese-speaking subjects to Cantonese language versions of the various politeness features identified in the Japanese data. Cantonese subjects respond to the four frequently used negative politeness strategies in a different manner. Apology is still a popular strategy but only adopted in a conversation with outsiders. It creates distance in an intimate relationship and is usually regarded as redundant in conversations with in-group members such as one's spouse or sibling. Interrogative form is also preferred by Cantonese subjects in making requests. However, negative interrogative, an extremely indirect way in Japanese to make invitations, carries a totally different meaning in Cantonese and thus is not preferred by Cantonese subjects. Moreover, Cantonese subjects find it inappropriate to use the strategy of being

pessimistic with in-group members. Expressions of uncertainty might sound like sarcasm in an inside relationship. Finally, the minor sentence, a unique politeness device in Japanese, is taken as appropriate only in a complaint. In short, politeness in Cantonese is applied only with outsiders and is usually omitted in an inside relationship. In terms of discernment politeness, the distinction between formal form and plain form seems to be a distinctive characteristic of Japanese politeness and is not applicable to Cantonese. Instead, Cantonese seem to prefer colloquial Cantonese expressions to more formal Mandarin-based equivalents. Mandarin-based equivalents adopted to render Japanese honorifics sometimes sound too polite to Cantonese.

To sum up, as the achievement of politeness differs from language to language, literal translation is not an appropriate strategy in dealing with cross-linguistic transference of politeness phenomena. The data collected and analyzed in this paper will be the basis for evaluating the subtitles / dubbings in Miyazaki's animated films in Module Three. From the data presented and analyzed here, we can move on in Module 3 to develop an analytical framework that will present a hierarchy of preferences for the appropriate translation of different Japanese politeness-bound situations into Cantonese. This hierarchy in turn will allow for the systematic analysis of dubbed/subtitled translations of Japanese animation movies into Cantonese at both qualitative and quantitative ways.

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