Situational Meanings of Japanese Social Deixis: The Mixed Use of the *Masu* and Plain Forms

This article explores indexical relations between honorific forms and their situational meanings by examining the Japanese addressee honorific masu form and its nonhonorific counterpart, the plain form. Arguing against a simple view of these forms as speech-level markers, the article proposes that both addressee-deference and speaker-focused self-presentation are indexical values of the masu form; the plain form is associated with an absence of these values. By examining two contrastive social situations, the article investigates ways in which co-occurring contextual features foreground one value over the other.

It is generally believed in Japanese society that (1) the Japanese addressee honorific suffix, the *masu* form, is used in polite and formal social contexts; (2) its nonhonorific counterpart, the plain form, when it occurs in the main clause predicate, is used in intimate and informal contexts; and (3) a mixed use of the two indexes an unequal social status.¹ Contrary to this folk notion, Japanese speakers mix the two forms within a clause, a sentence, or across a speaker boundary even when they are not indicating a status difference (see Cook 1996b; Okamoto 1998). In fact, speakers shift back and forth between the two forms in most speech situations if not all. When speakers mix the two forms, in some social contexts the masu form indexes the addressee's higher social status, but in others, it indexes instead the speaker's self-presentation display. What does it mean, then, to mix the two forms?² How are the two situational meanings accounted for? While

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there have been a number of studies on Japanese addressee honorifics, many of them focus on the sentence meaning of the masu and plain forms, and scarcely address these questions. In order to answer these questions, since shifting of the two forms occurs in routine practices of interaction, we need to study the phenomenon from an indexical point of view. In other words, it is necessary to examine not only the linguistic forms in question but also the co-occurring contextual features that surround them in communicative events.

This article considers the Japanese addressee honorific, the masu form, and its nonhonorific counterpart, the plain form, to be manifestations of "social deixis" (Fillmore 1975; Levinson 1979, 1983). From an indexical point of view, the article examines how style shifts occur and what their situational meanings are. It attempts to show how different situational meanings of a mixed use of the masu and plain forms are foregrounded in two different communicative contexts, namely a television interview program and a neighborhood quarrel. These two situations are chosen because they are contrastive with respect to how much attention is paid to the presentation of self.

The Indexical Nature of Honorific Expressions

Before investigating these style shift phenomena in Japanese, I will briefly discuss the indexical relationship between honorific forms and social status. A central question in studying honorifics is whether there is a direct relationship between the linguistic form of an honorific expression and a pre-existing social status. Many previous studies assumed or claimed such a relationship (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1987; Geertz 1960; Harada 1976; Hill et al. 1986; Hori 1986; Stevens 1965). For example, Brown and Levinson consider honorifics as "direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants, or between participants and persons or things referred to in the communicative event" (1987:179). More recent studies of honorifics, however, demonstrate that crosslinguistically an honorific form and social status are not in a one-to-one relationship in actual usage. Social status is not directly indexed by a linguistic form; rather, the relationship is mediated in a complex fashion by various co-occurring linguistic and nonlinguistic contextual factors, including folk beliefs about usage (Agha 1993, 1994; Anderson 1993; Cook 1996b; Duranti 1992; Irvine 1992; Miller 1996; Okamoto 1998; Smith-Hefner 1988). Studies based on observational data illustrate that an honorific expression is not always used to an addressee or a referent of higher social status. For example, in Sundanese, the honorific speech style *Lemes* is used to express thanks, discuss bad news, and deflect anger regardless of the relative statuses of the interlocutors (Anderson 1993). In Japanese, the addressee honorific masu form is occasionally used by a high-status person (e.g., a parent, a teacher) to a lower-status person (e.g., a child, a student) when the former is acting in role toward the latter (Cook 1996b). A theory that claims a direct relationship between an honorific form and social status cannot account for these phenomena. Agha (1993), who studies Lhasa Tibetan honorifics, makes a significant theoretical contribution to the
study of honorifics by distinguishing social status from deference entitlement. He proposes that while social status places an individual in a pre-existing social stratification, deference entitlement is an interational notion placing an individual in a moment-by-moment creation of different footings. He claims that honorifics index deference entitlements, which foreground particular kinds of deference in interactional events.

Although honorifics are grammatical encodings of the pragmatic value of deference, when they are used in social contexts they index various shades of situational meaning, for they are interpreted in a given social context. We need to differentiate the sentence meaning of a linguistic form with honorifics and the distribution of use (Agha 1993, 1994; Hanks 1990, 1992; Irvine 1988, 1992; Levinson 1979; Silverstein 1976). For example, Levinson (1979) argues that in analyzing social deixis, a distinction between the sentence meaning and the usage must be made. If social deictic features had only utterance meanings, he argues, then it would be difficult to account for (1) metaphorical and ironic uses of honorifics, because such uses are only possible when there is an established meaning, and (2) the relation between syntax and pragmatics. While it is true that honorifics are grammatical encodings of pragmatic values, they are simultaneously part of pragmatic processes, as we see when we regard language as "a mode of practical action" (Malinowski 1923). On the relationship between sentence meaning and an indexical value, Agha (1993) claims that indexical categories are constituted by both sentence meanings of linguistic forms and their indexical functions. He states, "It is the indexical categories of deference that constitute the pragmatic phenomenon itself. Such indexical categories are constituted at the intersection of two kinds of principles: the grammatical values of items, and indexical capacity to pick out a variable of context as focus of deference" (1993:138).

From the point of view of language as "social action," what we are interested in in this article is not sentence meaning but the situational meanings that arise in communicative practice. How is a certain indexical value foregrounded in a certain context while another is backgrounded? Silverstein's (1976) proposal is helpful here. He proposes that according to the indexical capacity to point to or pick out a certain aspect of context, indexes are classified into two types: presupposing and creative/performative. A presupposing indexical sign points to some contextual aspect independently known. In this sense, the sign presupposes the aspect. An indexical sign can also create some contextual aspect by picking out the referent. In other words, it can make a particular contextual feature operative in the communicative context. This function is referred to as creative or performative. For example, the personal pronoun you is a creative index, for it picks out a particular participant as a current addressee in the ongoing interaction. Studies of honorifics by Agha and other scholars suggest that honorifics can be performative as well as creative indexes. On the one hand, an honorific expression functions as a presupposing index when it points to the addressee's higher status in a social context where social status difference exists between the interlocutors and is recognized by them. On the other hand,
Table 1
Three clause types and gerund in the masu and plain forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause Type</th>
<th>Masu form</th>
<th>Plain form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal clause</td>
<td>-mas-u (present)</td>
<td>-(r) u (present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-mas-en (negative)</td>
<td>(present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-mashi-ta (past)</td>
<td>-ta (past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal clause (Nominal + copula)</td>
<td>N des-u (present)</td>
<td>N da (present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N deshi-ta (past)</td>
<td>N dat-ta (past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival clause</td>
<td>A des-u (present)</td>
<td>-i (present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A kat-ta desu (past)</td>
<td>-kat-ta (past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund</td>
<td>-mashi-te</td>
<td>-(t) te/de</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

an honorific expression can function as a creative index when it foregrounds a certain other relevant aspect of the context and puts it on record.

Empirical research that is based on naturally occurring data and investigates ways in which honorifics focus on different aspects of deference is still scarce. It is important to examine in detail pragmatic processes of indexical signs (i.e., exactly what co-occurring contextual factors foreground a certain situational meaning) in naturally occurring interactions. This article identifies two indexical values (i.e., situational meanings) associated with the masu and plain forms and investigates the pragmatic processes of how one value is made salient in a given context.

Descriptions and Previous Studies of the Japanese Masu and Plain Forms

When speakers of Japanese produce an utterance, they must choose between a masu or a plain form in the clause-final position. Table 1 shows three clause types and gerunds in the two forms. In this article the masu forms are the forms listed in column 1, and the plain forms are those in column 2.

An utterance with the masu form and the corresponding utterance with the plain form in the clause-final position have identical referential meanings but contrast in their pragmatic meanings. In Example 1, the subject of the sentence is the first person, but (1a) can signal politeness or formality to the addressee while (1b) does not. The relevant deictics are underlined:

Example 1

(1a) Ashita watashi wa gakkoo e ikimasu [masu]
    tomorrow I TOP school to go
    ‘I will go to school tomorrow.’
(1b) Ashita watashi wa gakkoo e iku [plain]
    tomorrow I TOP school to go
    ‘I will go to school tomorrow.’


Since the Japanese masu form can signal politeness to an addressee who may not be mentioned in the sentence, Comrie (1976) classifies it as an addressee honorific. Based upon the native perception of their usage, a number of scholars call these forms "speech-level markers" (cf. Harada 1976; Ikuta and Ide 1983; Martin 1964; Neustupny 1978; Niyekawa 1991). The masu form is considered to be a polite or formal speech-level marker and the plain form, a non-polite or informal speech-level marker. In traditional Japanese grammar, the masu form is also called teineitai 'polite style.' Mutual exchanges of the masu form are viewed as indicating a formal, or soto 'outside', relationship (cf. Harada 1976; Shibatani 1990; Sukle 1994), while mutual plain form exchanges are viewed as an informal, casual, or uchi 'inside' relationship. A nonreciprocal exchange of these forms can imply unequal social status. In this respect, the masu and plain forms resemble various other linguistic markings of social relationships found in other languages (e.g. Anderson 1993; Errington 1988; Wolff and Poedjosoedarmo 1982). For example, they are like the Javanese speech levels krömō and ngoko (Errington 1988; Wolff and Poedjosoedarmo 1982). But unlike Javanese krömō and ngoko, for which a different set of lexical forms are required, the masu and plain forms are indicated by verbal morphemes. They are also similar to the second personal pronouns V (as in French vous) and T (as in French tu) that occur in many European (and some non-European) languages (see, e.g., Brown and Gilman 1960; Morford 1997). However, the difference is that the V and T pronouns are used only when there is an explicit second-person referent, whereas in Japanese the masu and plain forms can index deference to the addressee regardless of the referent of an utterance. Consequently, they are much more pervasive.

Recent studies of Japanese honorific usages in situated practice have also found that the above-mentioned folk belief does not necessarily hold (Miller 1996; Okamoto 1998; Wetzel and Inoue 1996). For example, having examined naturally occurring workplace interactions, Miller (1996) states that language practice does not necessarily reflect social hierarchy and that such a hierarchy is not necessarily indexed solely by honorific words but is often indexed by other aspects of the communicative context such as seating arrangements. Okamoto (1998), who studied uses of both addressee and referent honorifics in marketplaces and department stores, has found that the use of honorifics is directly linked to neither the addressee’s higher status nor the degree of formality normatively considered appropriate in a given social situation (e.g., shopping in a department store). She states that the use or nonuse of honorific forms is "best understood as a speaker’s strategy to express the desired degree of formality in a situation" (1998:154).

It is true that the masu form is a polite or formal speech-level marker in some social contexts. This interpretation is clearly evidenced by native speakers’ metapragmatic knowledge about its usage. The pragmatic functions of the masu and plain forms are, however, not limited to the three above-mentioned social relationships, and their actual usages are far more complex. In the rest of this section, I will present previously proposed analyses that attempted to account for various pragmatic meanings of the masu
and plain forms—meanings that deviate from the normative meanings of politeness/formality and nonpoliteness/informality, respectively.

Speakers use both forms (i.e., the masu and plain forms) in addressing the same person in a single speech event. For example, in intimate or casual conversations, such as those between parents and children at home, while most of the conversation is carried out in the plain form, sometimes parents switch to the masu form in speaking to the child. Example 2 illustrates such an instance. In this example, at the dinner table, the father is telling his three-year-old daughter A to finish her soup. The father uses the masu form.¹⁶

Example 2: Family M

Father: Otoofu no omisoshiru ga sukoshi

→ nokotte imasu yo. [masu]

'There's still some tofu soup left (in your soup bowl).'

Child A: Iranai. [plain]

'(I) don't want (it).'

If the masu form is solely a polite or formal speech marker that indexes the addressee's higher status, it is difficult to explain the reason why a higher-status person (the parent) would use the polite or formal form to a lower-status person (the child) in a family dinner conversation.

Some scholars claim that the masu form is a marker of interpersonal distance (Hinds 1978; Ikuta 1983; Jorden and Noda 1987; Shibatani 1990). For example, based on his findings in natural interview data, Hinds (1978) claims that the masu form is chosen when there is a perceived social distance between the speaker and the addressee. Hinds (1978) also reports that the masu form appears when a high-status person other than the addressee is present and when the situation is formal. Noticing the tendency for the masu form to be used frequently in formal contexts as well as toward addressees who are considered the speaker's out-group, Shibatani (1990) proposes that it indicates psychological distance between the speakers. Ikuta (1983), who studied a television interview program, proposes that the masu form indicates [+distance] and the plain form [-distance] in interpersonal relationships. She further claims that speakers obligatorily choose one of the forms according to a social situation; however, they can optionally switch to a level appropriate to a momentary feeling to express attitudes, particularly of empathy toward the addressee. Ikuta's view that the social situation dictates the choice of language, however, does not account for some instances of use of these forms in various social contexts. For example, Cook (1996b) shows that elementary school teachers alternate between the masu and plain forms in talking to their students in the classroom. Ikuta's proposal does not offer an explanation as to which form is the socially appropriate level of speech that speakers must obligatorily choose in such contexts.

The proposal that the masu form indexes interpersonal distance is insightful. Since keeping a distance is the essence of negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987), the proposal can account for the reason the masu form is also called a polite form. However, it is difficult to explain adequately why, for example, parents use this form in teaching children.
social norms. In Cook (1996a) it was proposed that the masu form also indexes intrapersonal distance (i.e., the distance between the speaker’s innate self and his or her social role/persona) and that the plain form indexes interpersonal and intrapersonal proximity. This accounts for why, for instance, a mother may use the masu form with a child in teaching social norms. By doing so, she indicates her social role as “mother” by distancing her innate self from her role as teacher of social rules of behavior.

In natural interactions and even in some written genres such as novels, the two forms are commonly mixed not only within a clause and sentence, but also across a speaker boundary. While the majority of research has been interested in the meaning of the masu form, some studies examine both of the forms. Explaining the phenomenon of style mixing, some scholars (Kindaichi 1982; Makino 1983; Maynard 1991, 1993) associate the masu form with speech to others, and the plain form with speech to oneself. Kindaichi (1982) states that the plain form is used for self-addressed utterances, and the masu form is used when a speaker speaks to someone else. Makino (1983) proposes that if the content of the utterance is “speaker-oriented,” the utterance cannot be marked with the masu form. He defines the term speaker-orientation as “the speaker’s communicative motivation to express some highly subjective and presuppositional information by inwardly looking at himself,” and the term listener-orientation as “non-speaker orientation” (1983:139). He explains the use of the plain form in informal and intimate conversation by stating that in informal situations, “such orientational dichotomy is neutralized” (1983:143) and that the informal form (i.e., the plain form) is chosen as the norm. It seems counterintuitive, however, to claim that the orientational dichotomy (assuming that such a dichotomy exists) disappears just because the participants are in an intimate relationship. Furthermore, Makino’s proposals are not based on natural speech data. In dealing with indexicality, it is crucial to examine natural data with a rich context surrounding the linguistic forms in question.

Maynard (1991, 1993), whose study includes both intimate spoken conversation and written prose as data, has contributed to our knowledge of style mixing and its effects. She clarifies when the plain form (the form without a final particle) appears in these spoken and written genres. She found that the masu form is shifted to the plain form in the following contexts: (1) when the speaker remembers abruptly or expresses sudden emotions; (2) in echo responses in intimate conversations; (3) when the speaker expresses internal thoughts or describes an event scene-internally; (4) when the speaker jointly produces an utterance with the addressee; and (5) when the interlocutors are in an intimate relationship. Based on these findings, she proposes that when speakers are more aware of the addressee (in her terms, “thou”) as a separate entity, they are more likely to use the masu form, and when they share a sense of oneness (i.e., are in a psychologically close relationship), they are more likely to use the plain form. Her characterizations are insightful but do not capture the fact that the plain form can be used when the interlocutors do not share a sense of oneness. In natural data, for example, people who are involved in a quarrel will use the plain form predominantly to argue against each other.
These previous studies have assumed that the masu and plain forms have only one meaning, and they have ignored the forms’ indexical nature, when, in fact, indexical signs have multiple situational meanings that arise out of communicative practice situated in social contexts.

Examining family conversations between parents and children as well as elementary school classroom interactions, Cook (1996b) has found that in both social contexts, the participants tend to use the masu form when they show the cultivated side of their social persona and that they mainly use the plain form when they are not paying much attention to showing their cultivated side. These uses are consistent throughout the entire recorded corpus of more than 30 hours. Thus, the masu form indexes the speaker’s self, which is acting "in role," or the speaker-focused self-presentation. Meanwhile, the plain form indexes the speaker’s not acting in role or an absence of the speaker’s self-presentation. As a result, the plain form foregrounds other relevant contextual aspects (such as intimacy, or the referential content of an utterance, depending on the other co-occurring contextual factors). One is typically acting "in role" when one is watched by others, is on stage, and/or acts as a particular social persona such as “mother” or “teacher” (a role which comes with social responsibilities and obligations). Conversely, one is not acting “in role” when one is not conscious of being watched, and is uninhibited.

This proposal has at least three advantages over previous analyses. First, it incorporates and advances Maynard’s (1991, 1993) insight that the masu form is more likely to be used when the speaker’s self-awareness is high, and the plain form when that awareness is low. It is reasonable to say that the speaker is most likely to display speaker-focused self-presentation when aware of the addressee, and that he or she is most likely not to display it when unaware of the addressee. Furthermore, while Maynard claims that the plain form indexes an intimate relationship, the present analysis can also account for the use of the plain form when the interlocutors are not psychologically close.

Second, this analysis can explain what the most established previous analyses (i.e., those maintaining that the masu form is a marker of formality or politeness) cannot adequately account for. For instance, if one takes the view that the masu form is a marker of politeness or formality, as mentioned above, it is difficult to explain the reason why the father in example 2 displays politeness or formality to his child in this context. Rather, it makes more sense to say that since the masu form encodes display of the self acting in role, the father’s use of it in this particular context indexes his showing his social persona as “father” (someone who instructs his child in what to do) in suggesting that the child finish the soup.

Third, and perhaps most important, this proposal can account for various shades of utterance meaning arising in different communicative contexts. The masu form indexes speaker-focused self-presentation in a context in which the speaker is on public display and/or shows a social persona. For example, when it occurs in the speech of a mother offering food to her child, then the masu form indexes the mother’s acting as a “mother” who has the social responsibility to provide food for her child. When the masu
form occurs in the speech of an elementary school student in the context of the classroom activity called happyoo 'presentation,' it indexes his or her stance as an official player in the activity of happyoo. When it occurs in the speech of a teacher instructing students in class, he or she is performing the role of a "teacher." In fact, teachers use the masu form more frequently when they talk to the whole class than when they talk to individual students (see Cook 1996b). In contrast, the plain form tends to occur in contexts in which speakers are not self-conscious and can express themselves in an uninhibited manner without enacting a social persona. For example, the use of the plain form in family conversations is interpreted as signaling spontaneity and intimacy. On the other hand, the use of the plain form to discuss the academic content in classroom discussions indexes the speaker's focus on the content.

Indexing of Speaker-Focused Self-Presentation and Higher Addressee-Status

As we have seen above and will see in the first set of data to be presented here, in many contexts the masu form indexes speaker-focused self-presentation, which seems to be one of the conventional values of the form. At the same time, as is clearly evidenced by native speakers' perception, it is also true that the masu form can index higher addressee-status in a non-reciprocal exchange in some contexts. How do we account for these conflicting indexical values of the masu form? A display of self-presentation or social persona can be interpreted as a display of deference to the addressee in some contexts. For example, Smith-Hefner describes how Javanese women's polite speech form to their husbands can be ambiguous in terms of refinement and deference:

There is an obvious ambiguity, in short, to the use of polite speech, and in their own commentary women take advantage of this ambiguity to emphasize that in speaking politely they are not being subservient, but polite and refined, as is proper conduct for a mature woman. It is, in this sense, very possible for speakers to interpret their own behavior in a given speech interaction as statusful, while the other interlocutor regards it as deferential. [1988:540-541]

I propose that both of the indexical values (i.e., the addressee deference and the speaker-focused self-presentation) are part of the masu form and that certain contextual features of a communicative event foreground one over the other. Specifically, in what communicative contexts does the use of masu signal these two different indexical values? To answer this question I now turn to microanalyses of natural data. In what follows, I attempt to show in detail co-occurring contextual features that foreground the two indexical values in two contrasting social contexts, namely a television interview program and a neighborhood quarrel.

In the television interview program, since both the interviewer and interviewee are conscious of being in front of the television camera and being watched by the television audience, it is assumed that they pay attention to their own speech. In contrast, in the quarrel in the neighborhood, the
participants' emotional engrossment in the argument makes it reasonable to assume that the participants are not fully paying attention to their speech.

**Television Interview Program**

The television interview program was audiotaped from television broadcasts aired in Japan. It is entitled "Otoko no Ryoori" ("Men's Cooking") and was televised by NHK. In this one-hour program, the host (a male in his early thirties) interviewed the chef of a yakitori restaurant in Tokyo (a male in his late fifties or early sixties), asking about his career and his restaurant.

For the first few minutes the interviewer talks to two customers who happen to be in the restaurant, and the rest of the time (50 minutes) he interviews Mr. Mizoguchi, the chef, asking him how to prepare yakitori and other dishes. We see a predominant use of the masu form in this interview. All the participants in this program are aware of being watched by the television audience, especially the interviewer and the chef, who are talking to each other in their professional capacities. Thus the interview requires a mannered self-display, and as a result, addressee-deference is no longer contrastive. Although the participants are still understood as deferring to each other, this is not the most salient effect. However, the interviewer sometimes shifts to the plain form in his summary and/or assessment turns, often in the form of an echo response. (Here the term *assessment* is defined as evaluation of persons and events being described within their talk; see Goodwin and Goodwin 1992). In contrast, the chef shifts to the plain form only once (in line 20 in example 3) during the entire one-hour program. What is significant is that all the instances of the plain form used by the interviewer and the chef occur in summary and/or assessment turns and never occur at other points, for instance as the first part of an adjacency pair (such as a question turn). This shift to the plain form does not index the speaker's higher status and his addressee's lower status.

Consider Example 3, in which, from lines 1 through 16, the interviewer is talking to the two customers, and from lines 17 through 21, he is talking to the chef. Below, I indicates the interviewer, C1 indicates customer 1 (a male), C2 indicates customer 2 (a female), and M indicates Mr. Mizoguchi (the chef).

**Example 3**

1  I: Ano yappari nomu to iu to yakitoriya-san desu ka? [masu]
   'Uh, when it comes to drinking, (you) come to a yakitori restaurant, don't you?'
2  C1: Ee soo desu nee. Yakitori ga yappari nee natsu wa ichiban ii desu wa. [masu]
   'Yes, that's right. Yakitori is the best in the summer after all.'
3  I: Aa.
   'Uhuh.'
4  C2: Shotchuu kimasu. [masu]
   '(I) come (here) often.'
5  →I: Shotchuu kichau. [plain]
'You) come (here) often.’
6 ((the customers laugh))
7 I: Ano yakitori no miryoku wa doo iu toko desu ka? [masu]
   ‘Uh, what’s so attractive about yakitori?’
8 C2: A yappari yasui n de oishii kara. [plain]
   ‘After all it’s cheap and delicious.’
9 →I: Yasukute oishii. [plain]
   ‘Cheap and delicious.’
10 Jibun de anoo tsukuchaaoo nante ki wa?
   ‘Do you have a desire to cook your own (yakitori)?’
11 C2: Arimasen. [masu]
   ‘No, I don’t.’
12 →I: Nai. [plain]
   ‘No, I don’t.’
13 ((Customers laugh))
14 →I: Shooganai! !Nihon no shoora wa kurai! [plain]
   ‘Can’t be helped. The future of Japan is dark.’
15 ((Customers laugh))
16 I: Soo desu ka. [masu]
   ‘Is that right.’
17 I: ((turns to the chef))
   Ano kore o ne, okusama ga uchi de yaita to shirara onnaji aji deru to
   omoimasu ka? [masu]
   ‘Uh, if a housewife cooks this at home, do (you) think she can produce the
   same flavors?’
18 M: Shio aji dake desu ne. [masu]
   ‘Only the salt flavor.’
19 →I: Tare wa muzukashii. [plain]
   ‘The yakitori sauce is difficult.’
20 →M: Tare wa kore muzukashii. [plain]
   ‘The yakitori sauce is difficult.’
21 Kore wa nenki ga kakaranai to dekimasan. [masu]
   ‘One cannot make it unless one is experienced.’

From lines 1 through 16, both the interviewer and the customers mainly use
the masu form. However, what is significant is that in summarizing the in-
terviewee's response, the interviewer shifts to the plain form in lines 5, 9,
and 12 in the form of echo responses and in line 14 in the form of assessment.
In lines 5, 9, and 12, he repeats the customer’s response, which is given in the
masu form in lines 4 and 10 and in the plain form in line 8. In these echo re-
sponse turns, the interviewer restates the answers given by the customers.
In line 14, the interviewer gives, in an animated voice, an assessment of cus-
tomer 2’s opinion that she has no intention of making yakitori at home.
Since women are supposed to be good cooks in Japanese society, the inter-
viewer’s assessment is a negative one in its referential content; however,
since it is said in an animated voice, it is exaggerated and funny. In lines 17
through 21, the interviewer turns to the chef. In line 17 he asks if a layperson
such as a housewife could produce the same flavors at home. Here it is un-
derstood that there are two kinds of yakitori flavors, salt flavor and yakitori
sauce flavor. In line 18 the chef responds that only the salt flavor can be
made at home, which implies that the yakitori sauce flavor is difficult to
produce at home. In line 19, the interviewer explicitly states what is implied by the chef. This is a type of evaluative summary. The lack of speaker-focused self-presentation indexed by the plain form in the evaluative summary turn foregrounds a report of the important content of the interview. The chef echoes the interviewer's comment in the plain form in line 20, which is the only instance in which the chef uses the plain form during the entire interview. Perhaps the chef momentarily moves out of his professional self in echoing his own understated opinion explicitly summarized by the interviewer. The chef's repetition of the interviewer's summary aligns his affective stance with that of the interviewer.

Why does the interviewer often use the plain form in summary and assessment turns? Note that except for the utterance in line 14, which I will discuss later, the plain form is accompanied by no affect keys (e.g., final particles or animated tone of voice, among others), and the expressed informational content of the talk is summary and/or assessment, which focuses on the content of the talk from the perspective of the speaker or the audience. In fact, the plain form without affect keys is found in other contexts in which the focus is on the informational content. For example, in classroom interactions, one of the ways in which students express the content of the study is to use the plain form without co-occurring affect keys such as final particles (Cook 1998). Furthermore, written genres whose focus is on the content of information, such as expository writing and newspapers, are also typically written in the plain form without co-occurring affect keys. These instances of the plain form background the addressee-focus and foreground the informational content. It could be stated that the interviewer has momentarily shifted his footing (see Goffman 1981) by stepping out of his self-presentational display to a more neutral self focusing on the informational content of the interviewee's utterance—or, in Maynard's words, "perceptual view" (1993:158).

It is important to note that the interviewer's use of the plain form here neither sounds rude nor shows the interviewer's higher status in any way. The interviewer has at least two important professional responsibilities, both of which are indispensable. One is to show his cultivated persona in relation to the interviewee and the television audience, and the other is to report the content of the interview clearly. In using the plain form in summary and assessment turns, the interviewer is reporting the content of the interviewee's opinion, which fulfills one of his professional responsibilities (i.e., to report the content clearly). Furthermore, by focusing on the informational content, he foregrounds the relation between customer 2 and her words, leaving his relation to her in the background. The content-focus indexed by the plain form in one sense contrasts with how one would expect him to behave as a professional interviewer in front of a television camera. Just as flouting the Gricean maxims gives rise to an implicature different from what is explicitly stated (see Grice 1975), the speaker's unexpected use of the plain form in summarizing or assessing the interviewee's opinion or response produces the effect that the interviewer is focusing on the content with a fresh and lively manner (fresh because the plain form is an unexpected style in the interview).
Consider Example 4, which is a conversation between the interviewer and the chef, Mizoguchi. In this example the chef is demonstrating a technique of putting a stick into a piece of chicken and some green onions. Just as the demonstration has been completed, the interviewer uses the plain form to describe the technique that he has just observed, which summarizes the action taken by the chef. His report of the chef's demonstration makes the content of the interview clearer and more explicit to the television audience, and the use of the plain form in this particular context adds a fresh touch to the interview.\textsuperscript{11}

Example 4: The chef is demonstrating how to skewer chicken and green onions.

1. M: Chotto mawasu n desu ne. [masu]
   'Turn it a little bit.'
2. Kyokutan ni mawasanakute mo, kagen de
   'Even though you don't turn it a lot, by turning a bit'
3. I: Haa.
   'Yes.'
4. M: warenai yoo n narimasu kara [masu]
   'it won't break, so'
5. I: Haa.
   'Yes.'
6. M: Mawasanai to hosoi negi wa koo kushi ga futoi to toku ni warete
   shimaimasu shi [masu]
   'If you don't turn it, slender green onions, in particular when a stick is
   thick, will break and'
7. →I: Sasu shunkan ni mawasu. [plain]
   'The moment you pierce (the onion), you turn (it).'
8. M: Soo desu. [masu]
   'That's right.'

Returning to the utterance in line 14 in example 3, we observe that when the interviewer expresses a gender stereotype (that women should be good cooks), he uses an animated tone of voice in the plain form. An animated tone of voice is a type of affect key. When the plain form (in contrast to the masu form, which indexes the speaker's acting in role) occurs with an affect key that indexes intimacy, the speaker is not acting in role but is speaking in an intimate manner. By using the plain form in an animated voice, the male interviewer shifts his footing to that of intimacy with the female interviewee, which gives a comical touch to the interview. Thus, in the highly formal setting of an interview program, a shift from the masu form to the plain form with or without an affect key breaks the norm of an interview program and produces a certain effect.

Ikuta (1983), who also examined data from a TV interview program, found that in such a program the interlocutors mostly use the masu form, but occasionally they switch to the plain form.\textsuperscript{12} Example 5, which comes from Ikuta's excerpt 1 (1983:40), shows that in line 3 the speaker switches to the plain form. Claiming that the masu form is a marker of [+distance] and that the plain form is a marker of [-distance], she explains that the switch to the plain form is triggered by the speaker's empathy with the
addressee. However, her proposal does not explain (1) the reason empathy is communicated at this particular turn and not at another (i.e., why the speaker uses the plain form in this particular turn), or (2) what has brought about empathy at this turn. The present proposal can account for these points. Ikuta does not mention turn types, but in example 5 below, it is obvious that the plain form is used by the interviewer K in an assessment turn. In addition, it is followed by the final particles no and ne, both of which are used to create rapport with the addressee (Cook 1990, 1992). The interviewer evaluates the content of what the interviewee said in the plain form, which foregrounds not acting in role, while her use of the final particles no and ne indexes intimacy. The empathy with the speaker does not come solely from the plain form itself but from the combination of the plain form and the co-occurring affect keys (i.e., the final particles). Again, since the interviewer as a professional is normally expected to use the masu form in the speech event of an interview, the unexpected form of the utterance makes the interview sound fresh and vivacious and, in this case, conducted in an intimate manner.

In this example, K, a professional actress/interviewer, is interviewing J, a female writer.

Example 5

1  K: Sono oheya wa kositu ni natte iru n desu ka? [masu]
   ‘Is your apartment designed for a single person?’
2  J: Ee, roku-zyoo to yo-zyoo-han to sanruumu ga taihen hiroi n desu no. [masu]
   ‘Yes, there is a six-mat (tatami) room, a four-and-one-half mat room, and a
   sunroom, which is really large.’
3  →K: Maa zuibun ii no ne. [plain]
   ‘Oh, that’s really nice.’
4  J: Hitori ni wa tyoodo ii n desu, [masu]
   ‘It’s just the right size for one person.’
5  K: Otonari nanka wa sizuka na n desu ka? [masu]
   ‘Are your neighbors quiet?’
6  J: Ee, booon ga tyan to site iru n desu. [masu]
   ‘Yes, (because) the soundproofing is very good.’ [Ikuta 1983:40]

In sum, a mixed use of the masu and plain forms does not index unequal social status in a television program. The interviewer’s occasional shift to the plain form, which occurs in summary and/or assessment turns, breaks the norm of an interview program and can be seen as a strategic manipulation of the demands of the television interview frame. The presence or absence of co-occurring affect keys adds a different shade of situational meaning to the interview but in either case, departure from the normative usage of the masu form adds freshness and vivacity to the interview. This situational meaning arises out of the use of the plain form with several co-occurring contextual features: a summary/assessment turn; the expected norm of self-presentation in a television interview program; and the professional responsibilities of the interviewer.
Neighborhood Quarrel: Power Relationship and Social Hierarchy

In contrast to the television interview program, in the neighborhood quarrel between a landlord and a tenant, the landlord’s use of the plain form and the tenant’s shift to the masu form index social distance and a power differential in the relationship. The neighborhood quarrel occurred in a middle-class neighborhood in Tokyo. The researcher mingled with a few neighbors who came to watch the quarrel and anonymously recorded it.

The quarrel starts when Mr. Suzuki, the landlord, sees one of his tenants, Mr. Kobayashi, dump his garbage without separating burnable and unburnable types. At first, Kobayashi does not recognize who his addressee is. Suzuki is very angry, and both men are emotionally charged. Once the tenant, Kobayashi, realizes that he is speaking to his landlord, he switches to the addressee-deferring masu forms. Kobayashi’s deference is particularly salient in contrast to his earlier use of plain forms.

From lines 1 through 14, the language of the interaction is rough, and no social hierarchy is linguistically indexed. After line 15, he starts to use the masu form, while Suzuki continues to use the plain form. Social hierarchy is constituted here by the nonreciprocal use of the masu and plain forms. Other features co-occur: the recognition of the status of the addressee by the tenant, and other morphological and referential indications of the status difference. Below, S indicates Suzuki (the landlord), and K indicates Kobayashi (the tenant). "Rough"-sounding words are indicated in boldface.

Example 6

1 K: Koo iu gomi wa ii n daro, koo iu gomi wa? [plain]  
   'This type of garbage is OK, right? This type.'
2 Moeru gomi ga dame na n desho? [masu]  
   'The burnable type is prohibited, right?'
3 S: Dakara sa, () chanto itte kurereba, ore mo yatte yaru yo. [plain]  
   'See, if you had told me so, I'd have done that for you.'
4 Damatte oitetcha komaru n da yo. [plain]  
   'When you leave the garbage without telling us, it is troublesome.'
5 K: ()
6 S: Nani itte ya n da yoo. [plain]  
   'What are you talking about?'
7 Wakannai koto iu n ja nai yoo. [plain]  
   'Don’t say unreasonable things.'

8 S: Kochaa nani mo ne, kono yatte-yatte n ja nai n da kara. [plain]  
   'We are not doing, doing.'
9 Kochaa uchi no kanri dake na n da kara. [plain]  
   'We only manage the apartments.'
10 → K: Otaku wa koko no kanrinin na no? [plain]  
   'Are you the manager here?'
11 S: Atarimae yo. Yatten no, uchi wa. [plain]  
   'Of course. We are doing it.'
12 Kotchi wa mada zembu yaru kedo sa [plain]  
   'We are still doing all of it but'
13 Hito no uchi made sa, konna oitette sa ( )
'You leave it (garbage) even at another's house ( )'

14 K: Dakara () dakara
'So, () so
→dashitaku nai n desu kedo [masu]
I wouldn't like to leave it but'
15 S: Un.
'Uhuh.'
16 K: Hikkoshite ashita wa inai kara shooganai ja nai desu ka? [masu]
'Since I am moving and won't be here tomorrow, isn't it the case that it
can't be helped?'
17 S: Dakara soo iu toki wa chanto hanashite kurereba sa, uchi mo chanto soo
iu toki ni yaru kedo sa. [plain]
'So, in such a case if (you) had told us (about it), we'd have done (it for
you) in such a case.'

18 K: Sonna nen gara nen juu dashiteru wake ja nai desu shi nee. [masu]
'(I) do not put out (the garbage on wrong days) all the time.'
19 Toriaezu hikkoshi dakara.
'For the present (I did so) because of the move.'
20 S: Un.
'Uhun.'
21 K: Koko ni (oita n desu yo) = [masu]
'(I) put it out here.'
22 S: = Iya, kotchi wa sonna koto shiranai yo. [plain]
'No, I don't know that.'
Da- dakara otaku mo saa, hikkoshi suru kara kore tanomu tteba ore mo
yatte yaru yo. [plain]
'So if you had asked me to put out the garbage because of your move, I'd
have done that for you.'
23 K: Chotto wakannasugiru n ja nai desu ka? [masu]
'You are a little too unreasonable, aren't you?'
24 S: Iya, wakannaku nai yo. [plain]
'No, I am not unreasonable.'
25 K: Sonna tsuyoki na shisee de deraretatte kotchi datte ii bun arimasu yo
nee. [masu]
'If you take such a strong attitude, I have something to say, you know.'
26 S: Doo iu iibun da yo? [plain]
'What do you have to say?'

In this example, from lines 1 through 10, the reciprocal use of the plain form
is found except in line 2, where Kobayashi momentarily shifts to desho, the
masu equivalent of the tentative form of the copula daroo. Since the two
men are beside themselves with anger and do not seem to care much about
how they appear to each other, they are not concerned with their public self-
presentation, which is marked by the use of the plain form in the exchanges.
In these exchanges, in which the other's identity is unknown, at least to Ko-ayashi, the reciprocal use of the plain form and rough-sounding words
index symmetrical social status. In addition, the rough-sounding words
that co-occur with the use of the plain form make the interaction appear ag-
gressive. For example, in line 1, Kobayashi talks to Suzuki using daro, the
tentative form of the copula in the plain form, which sounds "rough" to an extent such that women usually avoid it and switch to the masu-form equivalent, deshoo, even when they maintain the plain form elsewhere. In the same line, Kobayashi also repeats koo iu gomi wa ‘this sort of garbage,’ which sounds aggressive because it asserts his opinion to the addressee. Although he somewhat softens his stance in line 2, using desho, the masu form of daro, Kobayashi sounds aggressive in these two lines. In line 3 Suzuki uses ore ‘I,’ a form that is exclusively used by men in their rough speech. In addition, he chooses the verb yaru ‘give down’ as an auxiliary verb in yatte yaru ‘giving down a favor.’ This verb phrase clearly indicates that Suzuki is claiming some power over Kobayashi. Further, in line 6, he uses ya, as in Nani itte ya n da yoo ‘What are you talking about?’ Ya here is an abbreviated form of the verb yagaru, which is a vulgar form of the verb iru ‘to be.’ In the same line the ending da yoo, which consists of da (the plain form of the copula) and yo (final particle of insistence), also sounds pushy, especially since Suzuki pronounces it with a prolonged o as in yoo. For these reasons Suzuki’s utterance, Nani itte ya n da yoo ‘What are you talking about?’ sounds extremely rough. In lines 8 and 9, Suzuki also uses kochaa, the contracted form of kotchi wa ‘this side (i.e., “we”),’ which also sounds coarse. Since the contracted form kochaa typically does not occur in careful speech, Suzuki’s use of it here suggests that he is not paying attention to his speech form but is emotionally involved in the argument. These rough words are indicative of the two men’s display of power. The reciprocal use of the plain form (a lack of addressee-deference and self-presentation) together with the rough-sounding words indexes a display of their power and animosity toward each other.

In line 10, Kobayashi, using the plain form, asks the addressee if he is the manager of the apartment complex, and in line 11 Suzuki responds affirmatively to this question. Once Suzuki has said so, Kobayashi shifts his speech to the masu form (lines 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, and 25), even while he is still engaged in the quarrel. When he switches to the masu form in line 14, he even gives an excuse by stating that what he did was contrary to his desire, but due to the circumstances of moving, it could not be avoided. Suzuki’s response indicates a somewhat cooperative attitude; however, he does not reciprocate Kobayashi’s switch to masu. Although in line 21 Kobayashi asserts that he put the garbage where the two men are standing, in line 22 Suzuki ignores that claim, and repeats what he said in line 17 (i.e., that he could have been cooperative if only Kobayashi had asked him to be). This time, however, he uses the vulgar first person pronoun ore ‘I’ and yaru ‘give (down)’ in yatte yaru ‘give (down) the favor of putting out the garbage.’ When Kobayashi asserts (line 23) that Suzuki is a little unreasonable, the quarrel becomes intense. Even in this intense argument, however, Kobayashi uses the masu form (line 25) while Suzuki continues to use the plain form and display his power by using rough words and showing an aggressive attitude.

After line 14, when Kobayashi recognizes Suzuki as his landlord, he shifts to the masu form. It is in this particular communicative context that Kobayashi’s use of the masu form is interpreted as his display of deference to
his landlord as a higher-status addressee. The foregrounded indexical value of the masu form is the addressee-deference, for both men are angry and aggressive, and self-presentation is not at issue. It is, of course, Suzuki's personal choice not to reciprocate, and by his not reciprocating, the unequal social and power relationship is created and maintained.

The fact that Kobayashi's switch to the masu form is triggered by his recognition of the addressee's social status suggests that it is not just the existence of interlocutors' unequal status but their conscious recognition of it that makes the situational meaning of unequal social status salient in the mixed use of the two forms across turns. When the interlocutors are consciously aware of the status difference, the status difference is independently known. Thus the use of the masu form presupposes the existence of an identifiable referent (i.e., the addressee's high status) in the context. In this sense, according to Silverstein's (1976) classification, it is a case of presupposing indexicality. In contrast, when the use of the masu form foregrounds the speaker's self-presentation even when there exists a difference in social status, such as that of a mother and her child, it creates his or her social persona in the context. In this sense, it is a case of creative or performative indexicality. This suggestion is further supported by studies of children's mixed use (Cook 1996b, 1997) which have found that the mixed use foregrounds the children's self-presentation and backgrounds unequal status even where there is a clear status difference. Perhaps Japanese young children are not yet consciously aware of unequal social status, for parents and teachers are not highly authoritarian figures in present-day Japanese society (see Lewis 1984; Tobin et al. 1989).

Comparing the two speech events examined above, the present study has found the following points of contrast between them. First, the genre of a television interview program demands a display of mannered self-presentation, whereas in a quarrel, participants are angry and belligerent. Second, although the mixed use of masu and plain forms is observed in both social contexts, the way in which it is implemented differs. While in the television interview program the plain form mainly occurs in the second part of an adjacency pair in the interviewer's utterances, in the quarrel situation we do not see a specific correlation between the forms and a turn-type. Third, in the interview program the plain form used by the interviewer is not, for the most part, accompanied by affect keys, whereas in the quarrel situation, the plain form often occurs with such a key. (For example, Suzuki frequently uses the sentence-final particle of insistence yo to make his point.) The plain form without an affect key foregrounds the informational content of an utterance, while the plain form with an affect key foregrounds the speaker's affective stance toward the addressee or the referent of talk. These differences are important contextual features that foreground different indexical values of the masu form, namely, speaker-focused self-presentation and addressee-focused deference, the latter being interpreted as higher addressee-status in nonreciprocal use of the forms.
Conclusion

Crosslinguistically, the most salient situational meaning of a nonreciprocal use of speech-level markers is unequal social status of the interlocutors. The belief that a mixed use of the masu and plain forms indicates a status difference is indeed a dominant linguistic ideology in Japanese society. This belief is often found in Japanese language textbooks and academic books on Japanese honorifics in the form of a statement that a nonreciprocal use of the masu and plain forms is an obligatory social convention between persons of unequal status (e.g., Niyekawa 1991). Many analyses of the masu form found in scholarly books and articles also assume this folk notion without a close examination of natural data. This characterization, however, is limited in its validity. In this article, I have shown that indexical signs are much more complex, that a mixed use of the masu and plain forms does not automatically index a status difference, and that any situational meaning is an outcome of multiple co-occurring contextual features.

From the perspective of language as social action, I have demonstrated that an exchange involving both the masu and plain forms is interpreted in the specific communicative context in which it occurs. The co-occurring contextual features that surround the linguistic forms in question play an important role in foregrounding one indexical value of the form and backgrounding the other. Because the television interview program requires a mannered self-presentation (acting in role on stage), addressee-deference is not contrastive. The distinctive effect is the display of a good self-presentation, which is marked by the rather consistent masu usage. A switch to the plain form is limited to the second part of an adjacency pair, and it is used mainly by the interviewer in assessment and/or summary turns. The plain form, which in this context contrasts with the masu form foregrounding the speaker’s acting in role on stage, focuses on the referential content of the interviewee’s utterance in assessment and/or summary turns. Thus, it implicates a departure from the normative interview framework, and so it gives the interview freshness and vivacity. In contrast, in a neighborhood quarrel, where the interlocutors are angry and belligerent, reciprocal plain-form exchanges are observed. Once the tenant recognizes the addressee’s higher status (as his landlord), however, he switches to the masu form, while his landlord does not reciprocate. This nonreciprocal usage of the two forms across turns indexes a status difference. The use of the masu form foregrounds deference toward the addressee. The key contextual factor is the interlocutor’s recognition of the existence of a status difference. In this particular context the plain form signals an absence of addressee-deference since it is contrasted with the foregrounded value of the masu form. Furthermore, the plain form is neither restricted to the second part of an adjacency pair nor to assessment and/or summary turns.

This study, finally, suggests that it is not just the existence of interlocutors’ unequal status but their conscious recognition of it that makes the situational meaning of unequal social status salient (i.e., makes this practice—a mixed use of the two forms across turns—interpretable in terms of status inequality). In this sense, the mixed use of speech-level markers can function as a
presupposing indexical sign when it foregrounds the interlocutors’ social status difference, whereas it functions as a creative indexical sign when it foregrounds their self-presentation. It remains for future research to investigate further the indexical complexity of masu and plain form usage in other social contexts.

Notes

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1. In the literature, the masu form is also referred to as polite style, formal form, and distal form, and the plain form is also called da style, informal form and direct form. Some scholars (such as Errington 1988) include only referent honorifics in the category of “honorifics,” but in this article I use the term honorifics in a broader sense.

2. Although switches in level are observed within a clause, a sentence, or across a speaker boundary, in this study I focus on switches across a speaker boundary.

3. Throughout, the term context is defined as “the social and psychological world in which the language user operates at any given time” (Ochs and Schieffelin 1979:1).

4. Javanese also has a middle level called madyo, which is the mixture of krömô and ngoko.

5. Comrie (1976) refers to the T/V pronouns as referent honorifics, for they show respect to the referent who happens to be the addressee.

6. The following transcription conventions are used:

? rising pitch
((text)) information for which a symbol is not available
() incoherent string
(word) conjectured string
!word! animated string
→ position of illustrative element
'(word)' a word that does not occur in the Japanese
= turn latching
— untimed pause

7. This example comes from family conversation data I collected in Tokyo, which include dinner-table conversations between parents and children. All participants are middle-class speakers of the standard Tokyo dialect.

8. Maynard (1991, 1993) uses the terms da style and abrupt style to refer to what I call “plain form.” She calls an instance of the plain form without any final particle “naked abrupt style” and “naked da style.”

9. Customer 2 momentarily shifts to the plain form here for some reason. This use of the plain form does not index her higher status. What is significant here is that this turn is not the first part of the adjacency pair.

10. The interviewer still could use the masu form in summary and/or evaluation turns. By repeating the interviewee’s utterance, he could fulfill the professional responsibilities of acting as a professional interviewer and clarifying the content of the interview for the audience.

11. The interviewer’s use of plain forms could be a professionally calculated technique to give the effect of spontaneity. It is not possible to tell whether the
interviewer genuinely steps out of his professional role or whether he purposely does so for professional effect. This distinction is not an important one in the present discussion.

12. Ikuta does not mention how often the interviewee uses the plain form. Apparently, the topic of the interview shifts to a more personal one, and the two people involved seem to speak more intimately than those in the yakitori chef interview.

13. The formatting of Ikuta's transcript has been revised for consistency with other transcripts in the present article.

14. The names Suzuki and Kobayashi are pseudonyms.

15. In Japan, garbage must be separated into burnable and unburnable types, and the two types are collected on different days of the week.

16. Kobayashi drops the final o in the words deshoo and daroo.

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