

# The notion of “language worldview” as a tool in effective acquisition of Japanese horizontal honorifics (*teineigo*) to adult Polish language native speakers

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## 【要旨】

題名：『言語における世界観』を使用したポーランド語母語話者を対象とした丁寧語の効果的な習得方法について

本稿は『ポーランド語を母語とする初・中級日本語学習者における日本語の丁寧語（デス・マス体）の教授法とその問題点』という博士論文の一部として実行された『言語における世界観』についてのアンケートの理論的背景および、結果を提示する。このアンケートの目的はポーランド語を母語とする初・中級日本語学習者の「ポライトネス・礼儀正しさ・親切さ・愛想のよさ」概念の理解におけるプロトタイプ要素を明確にすることである。

このアンケートの結果によって、日本語の丁寧語（デス・マス体）概念とその役割と働きをポーランド語でより効率的に説明でき、且つ正確で的確なボキャブラリーを作成できると期待される。

また、ポーランド語の母語話者の特殊な言語・語用的なニーズに合わせた日本語における丁寧語の教授法の選択と効果的な課題導入が可能になると期待される。

その上、(さらに)『言語における世界観』概念に基づいた教授法によって、学習者が日本語学習における自律性をもつようになるだけでなく、日本語講師も効果的な教授ツールを手に入れることができる。

『言語における世界観』概念は、ドイツの言語学者のヴィルヘルム・フォン・フンボルトの研究によって、19世紀初期から発展してきた、言語学的な概念の一つである。また、サピア・ウォーフの仮説に基づいた言語相対主義と共通点を持つ理論である。『言語における世界観』はポーランドを始め、中東ヨーロッパのスラブ系言語の研究者がよく使うものである。ポーランドのマリー・キュリー・スクウォドフスカ大学（UMCS）のBartminski教授は「『言語における世界観』は単語に暗記されて、慣用表現・コロケーションで固定された自然言語の中に隠された現実世界の解釈である。」と定義する。

## 1. Introduction

“Meaning has to be based on a particular cultural context and it does not exist without it.” (Shūichi Hida, 1990). This statement can become a starting point to reflect on how didactic materials can be comprehended

and used by their potential receivers. Can they use them effectively? Do they understand the content properly? The author thinks that those questions about didactic sources efficiency are strongly connected with “language worldview”.

According to the author’s didactic experience, *teineigo* - horizontal honorifics - causes problems in effective acquisition among adult Polish native

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speakers. *Teineigo* is a honorific modification performed automatically through adjusting to language savoir-vivre requirements. The ability to adjust is based on long-lasting process of enculturation all native speakers go through from childhood. It is not easy to achieve this enculturation effect during classes, especially among adult learners. While learning foreign language as L2, adults have to use their native language as a cognitive basis and source of analogies. Therefore creating a solid cognitive frame based on learners' native language is a must-have step to make the necessary process of automation easier for both sides - the teacher and students.

The questionnaire presented below and its findings on "language worldview" notion is a part of the author's PhD thesis research. The aim of the questionnaire is to define prototype elements of understanding "politeness/kindness/affability" notion among young adult Polish native speakers learning Japanese as L2. The author hopes that these findings will become a basis for more exact and precise Polish vocabulary, which can be used both by teachers and learners in *teineigo* acquisition process. Moreover acquisition based on "language worldview" framework will let adult learners gain Japanese language self-reliance and give teachers a useful didactic tool.

## 2. Japanese language honorifics - definitions

Looking at the phenomenon of honorifics we have to remember that it can be observed in all natural languages, not only in Japanese. It has universal character. Honorifics have a particular type of meaning that is included in an utterance: information about social relations between sender and receiver. Since they have a dynamic and multidimensional character, they have to be examined from different perspectives: morphological, pragmatic and semiotic. They should

be described in action (Jablonski, 2012). And last but not least, this phenomenon is related to culture and can not be separated from its cultural background.

### 2. 1. *Sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teineigo*

Japanese language handbooks and manuals for foreigners present different approach to Japanese honorifics. *Keigo hyōgen* (expression of respect/deference) is the most traditional term used to describe honorifics in Japanese. This language dimension is has strong grammatical aspect. At the same time it refers to communication correctness in social context. Usually three types *keigo hyōgen* are recognized: *sonkeigo* (language of reverence), *kenjōgo* (modest language; they are collectively called *honorificativum*, and are also often described with an abbreviated term *sonjōgo*) and *teineigo* (polite/kind/tactful language), *addressivum* (Huszcza, 2006).

Although in Japanese language handbooks and manuals the above terms are predominant, in terms of teaching Japanese honorifics and classroom reality, a dynamic approach based on Martin (1964) and Miller's (1967) idea of vertical and horizontal honorifics seems to be more convincing. This classification allows to grasp not only the semiotic and morphological aspects of honorifics (which are static) but also its their more dynamic and situation related to pragmatic dimension.

### 2. 2. Vertical honorifics

Vertical dimension of honorifics refers to the so called "axis of reference" (Martin, 1964; Miller, 1967), where the sender and the receiver are positioned vertically, due to the process of elevation or dilution. Both *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo*, language of respect and language of modesty are identified as "real honorifics" just because they are connected with process of elevation or dilution between the sender and the

receiver. In other words, because vertical dimension of honorifics is based on rank and relation, in many Japanese language handbooks and manuals for foreigners *sonkeigo* and *kenjogō* are equated to “real honorifics”.

Types of Japanese honorifics Samuel M. Martin (1964), Roy Andrew Miller (1967), Romuald Huszcza (2006)	
<b>VERTICAL HONORIFICS</b>	<b>HORIZONTAL HONORIFICS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AXIS OF REFERENCE</li> <li>• elevation : dilution</li> <li>• determination of rank and relation between sender and receiver</li> <li>• <i>honorificativum</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AXIS OF ADDRESS</li> <li>• closeness : distance</li> <li>• speech level</li> <li>• adjustment to requirements of language etiquette</li> <li>• <i>adressivum</i></li> </ul>
<b>SONJŌGO (尊謙語)</b>	<b>TEINEIGO (丁寧語)</b>

### 2. 3. Horizontal honorifics

The basic Japanese term describing horizontal aspect of honorifics in didactic sources - both textbooks and teachers’ manuals - is *teineigo* or *teineitai*. The first word is usually translated as “polite/kind/affable language”, and the second one as “polite/kind/affable style”. It can be associated with broader notions of “politeness/affability/kindness”. This dimension of honorifics is not based on rank and relation, but on requirements of language etiquette expressing closeness or distance between sender and receiver. It is more pragmatic and situation related. It stresses the process of addressing and is dynamic and multidimensional.

Speaking about *teineigo*, the horizontal aspect of Japanese language honorifics, one needs to remember one basic opposition in verb forms: plain/simple versus kind/tactful:

‘*taberu*’ versus ‘*tabemasu*’ or ‘*kaku*’ versus ‘*kakimasu*’.

In Japanese language teaching a teacher comes across the fact that foreign students have problem to decide when to stop using kind/tactful forms and when to start using plain/simple verb forms. Pragmatic, situational and culture related requirements of language etiquette are not easy to apply in reality, when situation changes from moment to moment unpredictably.

### 3. Protocol and procedure

Honorifics can be also understood in context of notions of two dimensions - protocol and procedure (Huszcza, 2006; Jabłonski, 2012).

#### 3. 1. Protocol

The protocol dimension is a set of lexical means and units, grammatical modifications. In the teaching process it requires learning all necessary vocabulary and grammatical modifications by heart.

Protocol and Procedure	
<b>PROTOCOL</b>	<b>PROCEDURE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set of lexical means</li> <li>• Set of lexical units</li> <li>• Grammatical modifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stylistic modifications</li> <li>• Models of communicative situations</li> <li>• Pragmatics based models</li> <li>• Culture based models</li> </ul>

#### 3. 2. Procedure

On the other hand, the procedure dimension means more dynamic stylistic modifications, models of communicative situations, pragmatics and culture based models. It is not so easy to learn and apply them in real conversation, because in reality of conversation the entire process of adjustment takes

place automatically.

#### 4. Politeness

Polish specialist on Japanese and Korean linguistics, Romuald Huszcza said: “Among Slavic languages Polish presumably has developed the most complex and original formal categories of politeness, going beyond lexis.(...) While trying to compare Polish politeness with other European and non-European languages we have to be aware that (...) it developed in different social and cultural environment, (...) it has been influenced in many ways from outside due to historical contacts with (...) languages, near and far.” (Huszcza, 2005).

Having the above in the mind, it is inevitable to stress that definition of ‘politeness’ in Polish language environment has to comprise all these differences connected with language characteristics and cultural background. Therefore we have to ask what the word ‘politeness’ means to Polish native speakers?

How do academic and popular science sources define it?

##### 4. 1. Dictionary definition of ‘politeness’

Dictionary of Polish Language (ed. 2010) gives the following definition of the word “POLITENESS”, in Polish “grzeczność”:

“POLITENESS

- 1) tactful, delicate, good mannered, evidence of good manners;
- 2) the way of behaviour denoting good manners;
- 3) (only in plural) words, gestures as expression of affability or kindness.”

[Source: *Słownik języka polskiego PWN, 2010, volume.1: page 249*]

Polish language identifies three meanings of the

noun ‘politeness’, including one in plural. It is not easy to give one exact definition of the ‘politeness’ notion, which can be used during Japanese language classes. Dictionaries can’t give one exact definition of the word. Therefore in context of explaining language politeness phenomenon, finding out the ‘language worldview’ seems to be one of the most important task.

#### 5. Definition of ‘language worldview’

The exact definition of ‘language worldview’ has not been formulated yet. Generally speaking it can be assumed as an interpretation of reality hidden in language and expressed in different ways. This reality interpretation can be conceptualized as a group of concepts about the world. These concepts can be solidified by grammar, vocabulary and cliché phrases e.g. proverbs. They can also be implied by language forms solidified on social beliefs, myths and rituals. Most definitions oscillate between understanding of ‘language worldview’ as “conceptual structure embedded in language system” and “set of regularities hidden in collocations and lexical structures, which show different ways of world perception and understanding” (Bartmiński, 2012).

##### 5. 1. Historical background

The notion of “language worldview” itself has a long history and complex lineage (Bartmiński, 2012). To grasp the essence of it, one needs to backtrack to 19th century German linguistic thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt and his idea of *Weltansicht*, ‘picture of the world’. It is also connected with linguistic relativity of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. One cannot omit cognitive linguistics and its methodological approach of categorization of the world phenomena, ‘natural’ to human beings

(Lakoff, Johnson, 2010). It is connected with prototype and peripheral understanding of the so-called “mental object” solidified in language.

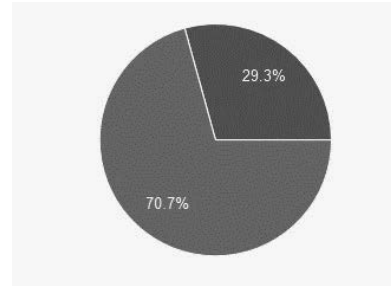
## 5. 2. Lublin School of Linguistics (Maria Skłodowska-Curie University)

As mentioned before, Polish linguists have not agreed on one exact definition of the ‘language worldview’ notion. That is why I have decided to base my questionnaire on a definition formulated by Polish linguist Professor Jerzy Bartminski, the founder of Lublin School of Linguistics. He defines the “language worldview” as “World interpretation hidden in language, implied in words, solidified in collocations or expressions.” This definition has become a cognitive basis for my questionnaire.

## 6. Questionnaire

Since Japanese horizontal honorific in theory (linguistics) and practice (teaching methodology, language acquisition) is described by a word *teineigo* connected with words *teinei* (polite) and *teineisa* (politeness) it is essential to check the cognitive PROTOTYPE UNDERSTANDING (Bartminski, 2012), or in other words “language worldview” of ‘politeness’ notion among young Polish native speakers who learn Japanese and check whether in process of acquisition we can use a word POLITENESS while explaining horizontal honorifics (*teineigo*) to Polish native speakers. Maybe due to “language worldview” we need to change it?

In the questionnaire I have tried to define so-called “language worldview” which can be achieved through language and in language. The intention was to set out a cognitive framework for creating more effective ways of teaching *teineigo* to adult Polish language native speakers. The questionnaire tries to define



“language worldview” and prototype understanding of ‘politeness’ category. In other words the questionnaire aims to look for first association a young Polish native speaker has while hearing a word ‘politeness’. I have tried to define a set of the most automatic associations, vivid and clear cut.

### 6. 1 Preliminaries

The presented questionnaire is a part of the author’s PhD thesis research on understanding *teineigo* among adult Polish native speakers learning Japanese as L2. Its aim is defining prototype elements of understanding of “politeness/kindness/affability” notion among young adult Polish native speakers learning Japanese as L2. It was conducted in May 2018 among 101 participants in paper form (21 participants) and via social media (80 participants). Participants were young adult Polish native speakers, who have been learning Japanese as L2 at university level from top Polish universities: University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun.

#### 6. 1. 1. Gender

Over 70 per cent of participants were female. It does not surprise, because in Poland Japanese language and culture departments have more female than male students. Less than 30 per cent of participants were male.

6. 1. 2. Age

The majority of participants were young adults from 19 to 25 years old. They declared that Polish language was their native language. All of them have received twelve years compulsory education in Polish language. Most of them started to learn Japanese as teenagers - junior or senior high school - or after graduating high school and entering university.

6. 2. Implementation and results

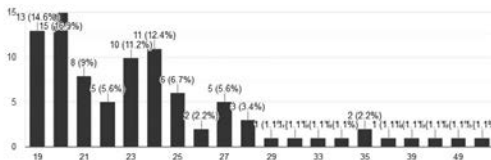
The questionnaire consists of seven questions or tasks.

Question 1.

According to me a word “politeness” is:

Results:

(1) a noun (11), 13,5%



(2) kindness (9), 11,1%

(3) respect (8), 9,9%

(4) behaviour (4), 4,9%

First of all a word ‘politeness’ was associated not with its meaning or pragmatic use, but with its grammatical characteristic (a noun). Next association were kindness, respect or human behaviour.

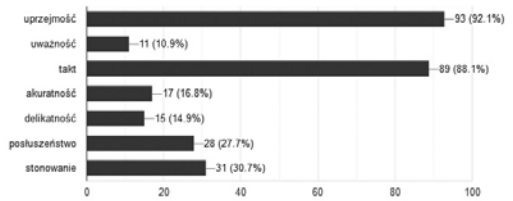
Question 2.

What words can be used instead of a noun “politeness”? Choose from the list below.

Participants could choose from seven nouns to replace ‘politeness’: (1) kindness, (2) mindfulness, (3) tact, (4) correctness, (5) gentleness, (6) obedience, (7) mitigation.

90,1 per cent of participants decided to replace ‘politeness’ with (1) ‘kindness’ and 87,7 per cent chose (3) ‘tact’. Next was (7) mitigation (30,1 per cent), (6) obedience (27,7 per cent) and (4) correctness (16,8 per cent).

Question 3.



Give your first association to a word ‘polite’ (one noun to each adjective).

In Polish, as in most Slavic languages, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs have to convey gender and number (singular and plural). Adjectives and nouns in singular convey three genders - masculine, feminine and neutral. Therefore the questionnaire provided possibility of different answers - a polite (plus a masculine noun), a polite (plus a feminine noun), a polite (plus a neutrum noun). Here we have answers given by participants:

(1) a polite (plus a masculine noun): boy (55,1 per cent), small dog (12,8 per cent), man (7,7 per cent), schoolkid (5,1 per cent).

(2) a polite (plus feminine noun): little girl (50%).

(3) a polite (plus neutrum noun): child (79,5%).

Due to young adult Polish native speakers ‘politeness’ is strongly associated with children, schoolkids and small animals (dogs). In broader sense most associations are to human beings.

In case of Polish language native speakers, ‘politeness’ seems to have a strong social association. It is connected to the society, its members and behaviour, whether accepted or not. Children are

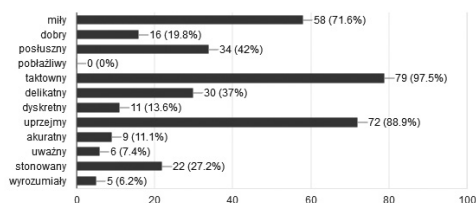
expected to behave politely. We can even say that ‘being polite’, ‘behaving politely’ seem to be expected or even required by adults. Politeness is socially expected, so at the language level it emphasizes relation focused and pragmatic dimension of ‘politeness’ phenomenon.

#### Question 4.

What adjective can be used instead of ‘polite’? Choose an adjective from the list below.

Next question focused on twelve adjectives with meanings close to the word ‘polite’: (1) nice, (2) good, (3) obedient, (4) indulgent, (5) tactful, (6) delicate, (7) discreet, (8) affable, (9) adequate, (10) cautious, (11) soft, (12) lenient.

Most of participants chose ‘tactful’ (97,5 per cent), ‘kind’ (88,9 per cent) and ‘nice’ (71,6 per cent). Next was (3) ‘obedient’ (42 per cent), (6) ‘delicate’ (37 per cent) and (11) ‘soft’ (27,2 per cent)



Again we can notice a strong relation focused pragmatic element in participants’ decisions.

#### Question 5.

Having relations and pragmatic aspect in mind I asked participants to finish the sentence “I am polite in order to...”.

Two answers have dominated:

I am polite in order to (1) show respect.

I am polite in order to (2) not to hurt anybody.

The association of ‘politeness’ with social relations, mainly respect and taking care of feelings of others is

striking.

Again we see a strong relation of focused, pragmatic dimension of understanding of ‘politeness’ notion.

#### Question 6.

On the contrary, I tried to find out who young adult Polish native speakers regard as an impolite person. I asked to finish a sentence “An impolite person is somebody who...”.

The most frequent answer was “An impolite person is somebody who does not know how to behave properly.”

According to young Polish native speakers, ‘politeness’ requires the knowledge of rules of behaviour and applying them in daily life. We have a strong relation focused, interpersonal and pragmatic aspect of ‘politeness’. This is a sort of “mental dress code” you have to observe if you want to be treated as a polite and well behaving person. Other answers also showed that impolite person is regarded as noisy, egoistic or childish, so he/she can not be regarded as an adult.

#### Question 7.

At the end I asked participants to use one of three sentences and finish a phrase “In my daily life...”.

The sentences are:

(1) ...I try to be polite regardless of situation,

(2) ...I try to be polite if a situation requires,

(3) ...I don’t care if I am polite or not.

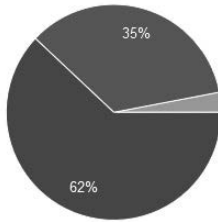
Results are as follows:

(1) ...I try to be polite regardless of situation (62 per cent).

(2) ...I try to be polite if a situation requires (35 per cent).

(3) ...I don’t care if I am polite or not (3,0 per cent).

On one hand the sentence (1) “I try to be polite regardless of situation” shows how behaving politely, according to *savoir vivre*, is still important in daily life regardless

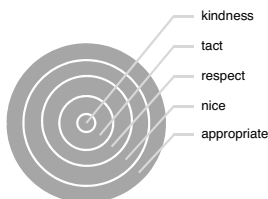


relation or situation. On the other hand, the sentence (2) “I try to be polite if a situation requires” shows a relation focused pragmatism in understanding of ‘politeness’. Still we can see that regardless of an inner motivation, being polite is still highly valued among young adult Polish native speakers. It seems to play a significant role in their everyday life and relations although we can observe a tendency of

## Results

In the questionnaire I have acquired data necessary for creating a “language worldview” of the ‘politeness’ notion. After analysis I have found out that, cognitively speaking, in this case the most prototype element of “language worldview” is ‘kindness’. Young adult Polish native speakers regard a noun ‘politeness’ to be synonymous to ‘kindness’.

Next, we have ‘tact’, ‘respect’, ‘being nice’ and ‘appropriate’ as the most peripheral element. Also the necessity of showing respect and not hurting anybody shows that young Polish native speakers think about ‘politeness’ to be closely related to society accepted behaviour. They stress its relation focused, pragmatic aspect.



## 7. Application of ‘language worldview’ in acquisition of Japanese language horizontal honorifics

This is the first attempt to find out the ‘politeness’ notion in “language worldview” among native young adult Polish native speakers learning Japanese as L2. The author is aware that it is too early to give final answers. Still, results presented above show that young Polish native speakers are prone to equate the notion of ‘politeness’ to ‘kindness’ and stress aspects of relation and pragmatism. If the teacher is aware of this tendency he or she is able to choose an appropriate translation of the word *teineigo* while introducing it to students. Choosing an appropriate word, consistent and rigorous use of it can become a key to better understanding of horizontal dimension of Japanese honorifics. The word *teineigo* usually translated in handbooks and manuals as ‘politeness’ should be replaced by ‘kindness/kind’ or ‘tact/tactful’. On one hand this change would evoke a hidden source of language associations connected with “language worldview”, which helps in understanding the role of horizontal honorifics. On the other hand a teacher gets a useful tool to put clear cut definitions of both vertical (respect/modesty) and horizontal (kindness/tact) aspects of Japanese *keigo*.

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