

# Japanese BBS Websites as Online Communities: (Im)politeness Perspectives

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## Abstract

This article combines two approaches to analysing linguistic features in online communities that are argued to complement one another: computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2004) and *wakimae*, or discernment (Ide, 1989). A structural analysis was conducted of four threads on two open-access Japanese bulletin board system (BBS) websites in terms of politeness, or honorifics, and possible determinants of particular linguistic characteristics were explored. The study finds that discussion topics are relevant to choices of politeness levels and that overall linguistic styles are linked to the norms of each community. On one of the BBS, linguistic features reveal widespread impoliteness, yet participants seem to share a strong sense of community. Watts' (2003) concept of contextually appropriate "politic" behaviour is invoked to reconcile the puzzling coexistence of impoliteness and sense of community.

## Introduction\*

This article extends research characterising the linguistic behaviour of successful online communities to Japanese bulletin board system (BBS) websites. It attempts to fill a research gap in computer-mediated communication (CMC) in non-Western languages (Danet & Herring, 2007), specifically in Japanese (Nishimura, 2007).

Studies on politeness phenomena in CMC date back to Herring's (1994) pioneering analysis of gender differences in politeness in online academic discourse, and more recently include work by Harrison (2000) relating politeness to virtual community. Building on these previous studies, the present study aims to explore how polite and impolite interactions in Japanese BBS can be explained in relation to online community-hood criteria, using the combined approaches of Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and Ide's (1989) theory of discernment, or *wakimae*. Ide clarifies the roles that linguistic forms play in ways that are lacking in the influential theory of linguistic politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), on which most politeness research in CMC has been based. This study

shows how Ide's *wakimae* approach, together with Herring's behavioural analysis of politeness in CMDA, can explain linguistic and interactional politeness and impoliteness in Japanese BBS websites operating as online communities. As such, it advances politeness and much neglected impoliteness research, in that it extends politeness phenomena in Japanese from face-to-face (FTF) to BBS interactions in CMC contexts that are both polite and impolite (according to traditional Japanese cultural values).

Online communities have been a research concern in disciplines other than linguistics, for example, sociology and social psychology. In these fields interactional behaviour is the focus; not much attention has been paid to linguistic behaviour. Linguistic characterisation of online communities can shed light on aspects of such communities that studies in other disciplines may not have discussed. This study analyses interactions in online communities from linguistic perspectives and, as such, contributes to online community studies.

## Two Approaches

### *Ide's (1989) Wakimae: Code of Conduct*

Japanese websites are particularly well suited for sociolinguistic investigation of politeness behaviour and online community, given that politeness seems key to maintaining successful online community (Harrison, 2000) and the Japanese language has a sophisticated linguistic system of politeness. Polite linguistic behaviour can be detected on the basis of overt linguistic forms in Japanese. For example, honorifics "make[ ] the speech polite because of the linguistic role [they] play[ ]" (Ide, 2005, p. 57). To take advantage of this feature, I employ a structurally measurable approach based on Ide's (1989) theory of discernment, or *wakimae*, as the first analytical framework. *Wakimae*, defined as "the practice of polite behaviour according to social conventions" (Ide, 1989, p. 230), is linguistic behaviour that is in agreement with the code of conduct in the Japanese speech community. The honorific system of the Japanese language is a reflection of this code of conduct, which can be embodied by various linguistic forms, including the polite auxiliary verbs *desu/masu*.

In addition to the politeness behaviour realised by these polite auxiliary morphemes, this study further analyses the usage of the sentence-final particles (SFP) *ne* and *yo*. Discernment is required when Japanese speakers actually use SFPs, as there are contexts in which the use of these particles is

not always appropriate. Speakers need to evaluate whether the time, place, addressee, and other elements that constitute the communicative event allow use. The "interactional" SFPs, *ne* and *yo* (Maynard, 1993), provide clues to the nature of interaction in online communities, as they index speakers' judgement of the context and their attitudes in presenting message content. *Ne* functions to indicate that the speaker has a harmony-oriented attitude of seeking confirmation from the listener, and it is relevant to the smooth maintenance of community. The more often *ne* is used, the more it can be posited that community members hold a confirmation-seeking attitude towards their addressees.

*Yo* indicates an attitude in which the speaker is giving information that is considered to belong to the "territory" of the speaker (Kamio, 1994); it delivers the information to the hearer in a way that indexes this attitude to the hearer. The use of *yo* signifies that the speaker consciously has the hearer/addressee in mind when delivering a message. Thus it is of interest to observe how and in what frame of mind message content is conveyed with these particles as online community members exchange opinions and information in discussions.

### ***Herring's (2004) CMDA: Sense of Community***

For the second analytical framework, I employ Herring's (2004) CMDA approach. Herring introduces online community criteria, which are broadly "identity," "sociability," and "support" (2004, pp. 14-15), and lists the kinds of behaviours "hypothesized to indicate virtual community" (p. 19).

Let us clarify how behaviours indicating a sense of community can be identified from a message. First, "identity" can be shown in the domain of structure, which includes "jargon, reference to group, and in-group/out-group language" (Herring, 2004, p. 19). Behaviours involving jargon or group-specific language can realise identity in that they distinguish a particular group from other groups. Such language use is rarely observed outside of the community and may not be understood by non-members. Second, the "sociability" criterion can be directly linked to social behaviour. Its realisation in online communities can take, for example, the form of frequent and reciprocal postings, and it can be researched through interactions showing reciprocity and exchange of knowledge. Finally, "support" can be analysed through types of behaviour similar to "sociability," since supporting someone presupposes companionship. Those who provide, rather than receive, support may also feel a sense of satisfaction in providing what other members need, which

contributes further to the establishment and maintenance of successful online community. Evidence of such behaviour can be found in reciprocal exchanges of messages, including advice-giving/receiving and responding to questions and requests. Korenman and Wyatt (1996) report that sharing personal experiences is considered a useful and satisfying aspect of a women's studies online group; this can lead to "emotional connection with the group" (p. 234). Incorporating their perspective, I argue that community-hood online can be created when members' mutual expectations are satisfied by sharing information and experiences with other members of an online group.

## Methodology

I examined the two most popular anonymous BBS websites in Japan: (1) a site called '*Ni-channeru*,' or Channel 2 (<http://2ch.net>; see Kaigo & Watanabe [2007] for background information on this website) and (2) Yahoo! Japan BBS (henceforth abbreviated as Yahoo) (<http://messages.yahoo.co.jp/index.html>). In order to compare the two sites, I selected threads from each website that were "successful," in the sense that they showed continuous active messaging over the course of this study, and that were on topics discussed on both sites. I selected two topics: (a) a popular Hollywood film and (b) English language study by Japanese speakers. Thus a total of four BBS threads were examined: (1-a) Channel 2 on the film, (2-a) Yahoo on the film, (1-b) Channel 2 on English, and (2-b) Yahoo on English. A preliminary analysis of overall language structure showed that the messages in the four threads share a structurally similar pattern in parts of speech distribution, and the participants can be considered to belong to the larger Japanese speech community.

Based on the behaviours in Herring's (2004) list for identifying whether a particular online group meets the criteria for community-hood, in this study I describe the most typical behaviours for each of the three online community-hood criteria. For the identity criterion, I look at community-specific language uses. For the sociability criterion, I examine social behaviours such as thanking, which is directly relevant to the formation of solidarity. For the support criterion, I examine information exchanges involving self-disclosure of personal experiences and encouragement. I analyse these positive speech acts qualitatively to gauge the extent of community. This is balanced with a contrasting analysis of negative behaviours, such as insults, typically found on Channel 2.

## Results

The results reveal a rich array of linguistic variation in the four Japanese BBS communities, as represented in Figure 1. The vertical axis represents the *wakimae* dimension, showing the degree of agreement with the code of conduct in the Japanese speech community. It is measured by structural analyses of frequency of the honorifics *desu* and *masu* and SFPs *ne* and *yo*. Channel 2 employs far fewer polite auxiliary morphemes than does Yahoo. Of the two topics, discussion of the film also involves fewer polite auxiliary morphemes. The results for the interactional SFPs show the same pattern: Fewer particles are used in Channel 2 than in Yahoo, and fewer are used in discussions of film than of English.

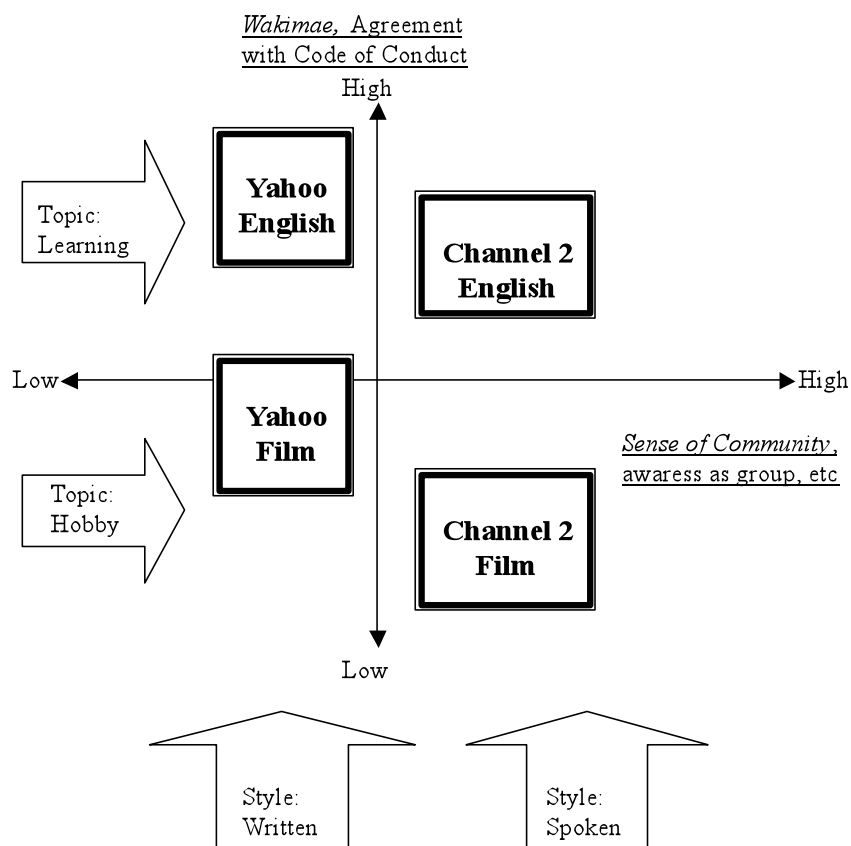


Figure 1. Overall results

The horizontal axis of Figure 1 represents the relative strength of sense of community or awareness as a group, studied in previous research on electronic forums from the viewpoints of CMC and group process (Korenman & Wyatt, 1996) and also pointed out in Herring's (2004) CMDA. Channel 2 is

placed higher than Yahoo for both topics. The reasons can be explained in relation to the three online-community criteria described by Herring (2004): to provide identity, sociability, and support.

As regards the identity criterion, Channel 2 manifests stronger indications of identity, as reflected in the presence of community-specific, unconventional language (Nishimura, 2003). Also, reference to the group is made in Channel 2 interactions. Yahoo does not seem to exhibit group-specific and group-referential language features equivalent to this.

Community-specific language on Channel 2 is evident in unconventional orthographic representations of lexical items such as *otsu*, a shortened form of *otsukaresama* ('thank you') written in unconventional *kanji* with an irrelevant meaning (see example 1 below). Another example of unique lexicon is *gangaru*, a mistyped word that was later lexicalised, which is derived from *ganbaru* 'to stick to it'. Unconventional grammar is seen in certain verbal endings. Examples include dropping a graph for long consonants ("smaller-sized *tsu*"), as in *torenakata* 'couldn't get it' written as トレナカ<sup>2</sup>, where the standard orthography would not only add the smaller-sized graph (underlined below) but would also employ a *kanji* and *hiragana*, *torenakatta* 取れな<sup>2</sup>か<sup>2</sup>た (see example 2 below).

Other examples are found in imperative uses of verb forms such as *mire* in place of *miro* (imperative form of *miru* 'to look at') and *oshiere* for *oshiero*, the imperative of *oshieru* 'to teach.' Some users prefer to use an alternative polite auxiliary *matsu* instead of standard *masu*. Another area of unique language use is seen in personal pronouns, including *more*—whose literal meaning is "leakage"—replacing *ore*, a first person pronoun typically used by men. Members can choose to create their messages with or without such special vocabulary and grammar.

On the use of in-group language, Brown and Levinson (1987) write: "S [speaker] can implicitly claim the common ground with H [hearer]" (p. 107), and they include this among positive politeness strategies (p. 102). Having and using community-specific language can enhance a sense of community, as it raises participants' consciousness of the "common ground" of the community. The features shared only in this community contribute to maintaining a sense of member identity on Channel 2.

The remaining criteria of sociability and support occur to a similar extent in Channel 2 and Yahoo, with some subtle differences that place Channel 2 on

the right side of Figure 1. Sociability is achieved through various speech acts, including thanks. An example from Channel 2 discussing the film is given in example (1) below, which explicitly expresses gratefulness. Observe also the community-specific language in the Japanese scripts for *otsu* and *ichi*:

Channel 2 on film

おお スレ が あった ん かい な  
 Oo sure ga atta n kai na  
 Oh threadSM be-PSTNOM SFP SFP  
 'Oh, there was (such a) thread, wasn't there'

あがた や 乙> 位置<sup>4</sup>  
 ari gata ya otsu > ichi  
 thankful shortened from *otsukaresama* > location= No.1  
 'I'm grateful to you, thanks, Message 1 sender'

Support can be observed in the exchanges, including encouragement and advice giving. Behaviours that show sociability and support are observed across all four BBS communities. Example (2) below is from Channel 2. Before this interaction, the senders of messages 17 and 18 disclosed their personal circumstances. Example (3) from Yahoo contains a number of politeness features:

Channel 2 on English

Message 17 [Same poster as for message 14, response to message 13]

7 は ト ナ カ ヌ 無念。  
 Nana wa tore na kata [= katta] yo. Munen  
 Seven TM take can NEG PST SFP regret  
 'I couldn't get [a score of] 7. Too bad.'

あと 0.5, がんがれ!  
 Ato 0.5, gangare!  
 Additional 0.5, stick to it-IMP  
 'For another 0.5, do your best!'

Message 18 [Same poster as for message 13, response to message 17]

応援 ありがと ね。  
 Ouen arigato ne  
 Support thank you SFP  
 'Thanks for your support.'

## Yahoo on English

## Message 15

ひとつ アドバイス さ せて 頂く と したら、  
 Hitotsu adobaisu sa sete itadaku to shita ra,  
 One advice do CAU give HUM HON QUO do-COND

目標 の ステップ を もう 少し 細かく おいて、  
 Mokuhyou no suteppu wo mou sukoshi komakaku oite,  
 target GEN step OM more a little fine/small set

達成 できたら "やった ね!" と  
 tassei dekitara "yatta ne!" to  
 achieve can do-COND "did it SFP" QUO

素直 に 喜ぶ ことが 大切 と 思い ます。  
 sunao ni yorokobu koto ga taisetu to omoi masu.  
 Honestly rejoice NOM SM important QUO think-POL

'If I can give you one piece of advice, I think it is important to set the target on a little smaller, achievable step, ... and rejoice honestly, saying "I did it!" when the target is attained.'

## Message 16

返信 ありがとう ござい ます!  
 Henshin arigatou gozai masu  
 response thank you exist-HON COP-POL  
 'Thank you very much for your response.'

In Example (2) encouragement is offered, and in (3) advice is given. Here it should also be noted that messages involving support and sociability are expressed on Channel 2 in mostly plain, community-specific language with very few honorifics. In contrast, they are expressed in polite, standard Japanese on Yahoo. The presence or absence of member linguistic practices specific to a BBS community is a factor that crucially differentiates the relative horizontal positioning of the two sites in Figure 1.

Finally, there are many negative interactions, including insults, on Channel 2, while very few instances of such interactions are found in Yahoo. Example (4) below is from Channel 2:



Channel 2 on film

120

ブス オタク 向け の 映画 です!!!!!!!

Busu otaku muke no eiga desu

Ugly geekfor GEN film COP-POL

'It's a film for ugly geek girls!!!!'

121

OB [Actor's name] ファン は ブス だった ので…

OB fan wa busu data no de…

OB fans TM ugly be-PST-PLN because…

ブス 氏ね…

と

busu shine…

to

ugly [non-word consisting of Mr. + *ne*, used as imperative of 'to die'] QUO

'Fans of OB are all ugly anyway, so I say they should just die.'

The poster of messages 120 and 121 considers that the film under discussion is intended for "ugly geek girls," who are bothersome, and sends 11 repetitive messages that contain "bothersome, ugly geek fan." Notice also the use of unconventional orthography for the imperative form *shine* of the verb *shinu* 'to die'.

This poster has the same ID in these 11 messages, although Channel 2 does not require user IDs. One of his/her fellow member worries about this particular poster and asks, "Are you all right?" in Message 122, using Channel 2 jargon. Responding to this message, this problematic poster writes, "Don't fuss over me" in Message 125.<sup>5</sup>

## Discussion

What determines the particular choices of linguistic behaviour depicted on the vertical, *wakimae* axis of Figure 1? I argue that difference in topic can be a determinant. Unlike email lists for professional groups, participants in BBS environments are typically strangers with diverse backgrounds as regards age, occupation, gender, and so forth. Members interact with others about whom almost nothing is known beyond shared interest in a topic. However, the Japanese language requires that speakers choose a certain level of politeness and formality in interacting with others. How and why does the topic of a discussion relate to the choice of a particular level of agreement with the code of conduct, *wakimae*, when interacting with unknown interlocutors?

The film topic is from the entertainment or hobby categories of the two websites. The only common feature that binds people in these discussions is interest in films. Basically, the same thing can be said of the other topic, English language study, where the only common interest is the English language. However, this theme is different in nature from a hobby topic, in that it can involve clear member goals. The English language study topic can provide members with specific answers to questions raised, advice, and suggestions that they might find useful. The English language study topic is objective-oriented. One's goal in English language study can be visibly set and shared by a large number of members. In contrast, with a hobby topic, one's goal may be idiosyncratic and not easily shared with other members.

Thus of the two topics, the English language one involves a more elaborate level of consideration for the hearer and sharing of personal experiences with other members. A higher degree of interpersonal consideration in these Japanese BBS communities is necessary; this results in enhanced *wakimae* (discernment that particular linguistic behaviour is in agreement with the code of conduct in the Japanese speech community) among its members.

What, then, motivates the use of community-specific language for enhancing the sense of community (horizontal axis)? To answer this question, it is necessary to adopt a broader perspective. The overall style employed in message production seems to be relevant in creating and maintaining a sense of community. A closer examination of the linguistic traits of the two BBS sites reveals that the language of Channel 2 is in an informal, colloquial style, including short, fragmentary messages. As such, it resembles conversations among small groups of close friends in Japan and thereby enhances the sense of belonging to a website group of online friends. In contrast, messages on Yahoo are almost three times longer on average, and show more elaborate, complex structures. In fact, the language style on Yahoo discussions approximates standard written Japanese (albeit with more interactional SFPs) and can be understood by anyone in the broader Japanese speech community.

Before posting messages, one normally reads previously posted messages. This is especially stressed on Channel 2, where messages inappropriate to the community theme or norm are discouraged; inappropriate messages are relocated or even erased. Messages are thus created in ways that conform to the norms and expectations of the community, which include the style of previously sent messages. Accumulation of such message creation practices

contributes over time to the creation and maintenance of a community-specific language style.

In Figure 1, the Channel 2 discussion on film, located in the bottom right, displays an interesting feature: It is impolite. There are instances of insults, as seen in example (4) above. In comparison with the English thread on Channel 2, there are far fewer occurrences of polite auxiliary morphemes and interactional SFPs in the Channel 2 discussion on film. Although this community contains troublemakers, fellow members also show concern. In one example one other poster gives advice on how to get out of a problematic situation by using different IDs. This is a case of offering help when a fellow member is in trouble. Of interest is that this advice-giver identifies this behaviour as a personal problem of the poster's—not as rudeness or offensiveness<sup>6</sup>—and does not appear to perceive the situation as problematic for the thread. There are several other instances in which a poster who repeatedly produces annoying messages triggers sympathy. It seems that reactions surrounding such troublemakers build solidarity in the community.

Linguistic and interactional impoliteness in the Channel 2 film discussion is in sharp contrast to both Yahoo discussions and the discussion on English on Channel 2 itself. Nonetheless, this thread shows a strong sense of community. This is seemingly inconsistent with the conventional wisdom that politeness is important in maintaining a successful community, and that impoliteness could potentially destroy an online community.

This phenomenon can be interpreted in the following way. Although the language on Channel 2, which uses direct imperative forms and few polite auxiliaries, may appear impolite in comparison with the polite-seeming language on Yahoo, interactions on Channel 2 reflect the history and normative standards of the community. The overall linguistic style, which can reflect and strengthen a sense of community, has a history since Channel 2 was created in 1999. Kaigo and Watanabe (2007) report that Channel 2 exhibits violation of socially accepted moral principles, yet stops short of transgressing certain boundaries, due to self-regulating mechanisms. A similar observation can be made about linguistic practices. The normal language use on Channel 2 may seem like a violation of the socially-accepted norms of the larger Japanese speech community, but it seems that Channel 2 members consider such practice to be normal and appropriate in the context of their community.

Channel 2 members' behaviour can be considered as contextually appropriate "politic" behaviour, as theorised by scholars such as Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2005), who take a discursive approach to politeness and view interactions in context as fluid. In their framework, the concept of politic behaviour can encompass both polite and non-polite interactions. This approach to politeness is helpful in understanding linguistically coded politeness as well as politeness encoded by non-linguistic behaviour. Such a distinction helps clarify the polite intentions conveyed by superficially non-polite expressions, such as those found in BBS communications.

In fact, on Channel 2 polite and considerate interactions are enacted in a language that looks linguistically impolite to outsiders to the community. Impolite, disparaging messages using such terms as *kimoi* ('disgusting'), *uzai* ('annoying'), *baka* ('fool') can also be observed on Channel 2, yet they seem to be tolerated (or ignored), as threads containing them still extend over long periods. While this kind of behaviour is regarded as annoying and offensive by some, it is enjoyed by others. A similar observation was made as early as 1992 by Herring (1992) in the context of gender differences in discussion lists. Herring noted that "adversarial" messages tended to intimidate or annoy women, while men on the same lists enjoyed them. This phenomenon can be considered a type of voyeuristic pleasure, suggesting that impoliteness is a form of entertainment (Culpeper, 2005) that can be enjoyed by participants and viewers.

## Conclusions

This study examined Japanese BBS websites from the perspective of online community. In order to understand the four target online discussion threads, which can be considered to represent sub-communities of the larger Japanese community, I argued that it is necessary to adopt a two-dimensional analytical framework. One dimension is the relative strength of *wakimae* (Ide, 1989, 2005) or the degree of agreement with the generally accepted code of conduct. *Wakimae* was identified specifically in Japanese communities, and Western community researchers have not yet paid attention to it, although the possibility of Western *wakimae* is not to be discarded. The second dimension is the relative strength of sense of community, cohesiveness, and sense of belonging, which have been studied within the broader framework of CMDA (Herring, 2004).

The study found that among the three broad online community criteria of identity, sociability, and support listed by Herring (2004), Channel 2 expresses

features of identity while Yahoo does not. Channel 2 falls higher on the scale of sense of community than Yahoo, due especially to the presence of community-specific, unconventional language, which is a marker of identity. On the scale of discernment or *wakimae*, Yahoo is higher in general for both topics than Channel 2. Of the two topics, English study requires a higher level of discernment than the film topic. This is because the English study topic calls for more sharing of personal experiences. These overall findings are summarised in Figure 1.

It seems that Channel 2 and Yahoo are different communities with different values, and that members behave according to the values of each community. Polite behaviour in Yahoo is a reflection of that group's values, while seemingly impolite language on Channel 2 is consistent with that group's shared norms and values. Part of what makes participants stick together in Channel 2 is shared jargon and norms of appropriateness, which reflect the values and history of the community. The counterpart for Yahoo is the code of conduct, or discernment, that is also shared by the larger Japanese community.

In discussions of English language study, participants in both communities share clear goals. Interactional behaviours show correspondingly similar activities, such as thanking, recounting personal experiences, and expressing admiration and encouragement. However, the language used in Channel 2 is lacking in politeness features and uses much jargon. In contrast, the language in Yahoo is polite, with very few community-specific linguistic features. For the film topic, encouragement was not overtly observed. However, participants engage in similar cooperative activities in the two BBS contexts, such as sharing information. They just do so using totally different linguistic styles.

If these communities are viewed through the lens of theories of politeness, one possible implication of this study is that a major tenet of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory can be challenged with respect to its applicability to online environments. There are contexts where people may not need to be concerned with face management. Moreover, one's negative face, or desire for freedom from imposition, is less likely to be threatened in anonymous open-access BBS interactions, in that not being mindful of other participants does not have as great a consequence as in FTF environments. Entering an anonymous BBS site can itself be an act of entry into a world of less imposition, where negative face is not as likely to be damaged as in the FTF environment. At the same time, posting messages can be an act of enhancing one's positive face, as one's messages can be read by a large number of

participants. These may be among the motivations for people to engage in BBS activities.

The rich variety of linguistic behaviours observed in Japanese BBS discussions can not be understood solely through either the Western CMDA approach or the Eastern *wakimae* approach. Both approaches, in combination, are necessary to identify the fundamental factors that determine computer-mediated discourse in the Japanese setting. I identified possible determinants of linguistic variation across the four BBS threads, including difference in discussion topics, and asserted that overall language styles can explain different degrees of sense of community. Finally, I argued that seemingly impolite practices on the Channel 2 website can in fact be a reflection of contextually appropriate "politic" behaviour.

This study adds a linguistic dimension based on discernment to the behavioural dimension of Herring's CMDA framework. It contributes to online community research and CMC research in that it illuminates how language and behaviour are intertwined. The study also advances politeness and impoliteness research, by extending it from well-studied FTF communications to barely-researched online environments in the Japanese cultural setting.

## Notes

- \* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. I am also grateful to Michael Beißwenger, Jannis Androutopoulos, and Susan Herring for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Any errors that remain are my own.
- 1. The data for this study were collected from April to August 2006. Channel 2 messages were drawn from archived sources, while those of Yahoo were from threads existing at the time of data collection. The messages used for analysis in this study were sent between: June 2 and July 19 for Channel 2 film, July 31 and September 24, 2003 for Yahoo film, November 9, 2002 and November 20, 2006 for Channel 2 English, and April 25 and June 25, 2006 for Yahoo English.
- 2. This use is doubly unconventional in that it uses half-width *katakana* (□□□□□), which is generally discouraged due to the possibility of misrepresentation. Full-width *katakana* with the smaller graph included (□□□□□□) is closer to the conventional orthography.
- 3. Abbreviations used in linguistic examples are as follows: SM: Subject Marker, PST: Past, NOM: Nominalizer, TM: Topic Marker, NEG: Negative, IMP: Imperative, CAU: Causative, HUM: Humble, HON: Honorific, QUO: Quotative, COND: Conditional, GEN: Genitive, OM: Object Marker, POL: Polite, COP: Copula, PLN: Plain.

4. This *kanji* use is unconventional with irrelevant meanings; it employs the *kanji* that has the same pronunciation as the word for 'No. 1.'
5. For the sequence of messages showing the entire interaction, see Nishimura (2008).
6. This interpretation was pointed out to me by Karen Grainger in personal communication.

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