Contrastive study of "transposition of person" in addressing a co-speaker in Japanese and in French[1]

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1. Introduction[2]

"Transposition of person" is the operation of changing the personal pronoun by the speaker. For example, it refers to the use of the personal pronoun indicating the first person singular, *je* (I), or the personal pronoun indicating the third person singular, *il* (he), instead of the personal pronoun indicating the second person singular, *tu* or *vous* (you).[3] According to Cressot (1943), changing the personal pronoun is equivalent to a breach in logic, and it adds an affective value in the utterance, like the affective effect of changing the gender and number of a noun, as discussed by Dauzat (1946).[4]

For example, in (1), which is an utterance of a mother to her baby, the use of *je* creates an affective nuance from the speaker to the co-speaker. Further, as in (2), which is an utterance from a waiter in a fine-dining restaurant to his customer, the use of the third person instead of the second person *vous* toward the co-speaker is intended to avoid direct communication and is marked as a sign of respect for the co-speaker.

> (1) *Est-ce que j'ai été gentil ?*　　　　　　　　　　　Cressot (1943: 255)
> 　　 * Have I (you) been nice?
> (2) *Que Monsieur désire-t-il ?*
> 　　 * What does Sir wish for?

The same phenomenon is also seen in the Japanese language. For example, (3) is an utterance to a little boy, the speaker using *boku* (I) instead of the second person.

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[2] Among the cases dealt with in this paper, those in which the source is not mentioned have been sampled and checked by multiple native speakers, and the English translation of the case in Japanese and French is given by the author.

[3] The words *tu* and *vous* both mean "you." As a general rule, one addresses people to whom one is close to or familiar with, such as friends or family, as *tu,* while the use of *vous* is reserved for a stranger or one's superior.

[4] In French, a unique expression effect can be derived by using a gender change, that is, for example, using a female article instead of a masculine noun, or by using a number change, wherein the plural is used singularly.

Then, example (4) is an utterance by a shop staff to a customer, wherein the speaker uses *kanozyo* (she) instead of the second person.

    (3) ぼくいくつ？
        Boku ikutsu?
        * How old am I (are you) ?

    (4) - Man (shop staff): プレゼント？
          Purezento?
          It's for a present?
      - Woman (customer): いえ
       Ie
       No.
     - Man: 彼女 着るならちょっと大きいかもね。
       Kanozyo kirunara cyotto ōkii kamone.
       * It might be a little big if she wears (you wear) it.

Barairono Ashita, Ikuemi (2005: 127)

Examples (1) and (3) show how the first person singular personal pronoun is used toward co-speakers in French and Japanese, respectively, while examples (2) and (4) show how the third person singular personal pronoun is used toward co-speakers in French and Japanese, respectively. At first, it may seem that transposition of person is a common operation in both the French and Japanese languages, but are these operations really the same? This paper aims to clarify the qualitative differences between the concept of person in Japanese and in French by focusing on the phenomenon of transposition of person when addressing a co-speaker.[5]

2. "Transpositions of person" in French

2.1 Elimination of mutual dialogue

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[5] In this paper, we focus on the use of other personal pronouns in place of the second person pronoun to analyze the differences between the Japanese and French languages. However, we must mention that the transposition of person occurs in the first person pronoun and third person pronoun too. For example, in French, the personal pronoun indicating the first person plural, *nous*, or an indefinite personal pronoun *on,* is used instead of the first person singular, *je*, and the first person singular, *je*, is used instead of the third person *il* or *elle*, and so on. Post this work, we plan to conduct a comprehensive comparative research that takes these phenomena into consideration.

First, let us consider French cases referring to previous research. In an utterance to a baby, in addition to the case shown in (1), a speaker can use the indefinite personal pronoun *on*,[6] or the-personal pronoun of the first person plural, *nous*, and the personal pronoun of the third person singular *il*, *elle,* as in (5) to (7). Furthermore, as shown in (8), one can speak to an animal using the personal pronoun of the third person singular.

(5) *Mon petit, on a bien dormi ?*
　　 * My little boy, did one (you) sleep well?
(6) *Nous avons bien mangé ?*
　　 * We (you) have eaten well?
(7) *Qu'il était mignon !*
　　 * How pretty he was (you were)!
(8) *Il a de beaux poils, ce toutou- là !*　　　　　Maingueneau (1981: 18)
　　 * He has (you have) beautiful hair, this doggie.

According to Maingueneau, another personal pronoun is employed instead of the personal pronoun denoting the second person singular toward co-speakers who belong to the intimate sphere of the speakers but who are unable to speak, such as babies or pets. In addition to these cases, this kind of utterance has also been established from doctors to patients or from employer to employee, as shown in (9). A doctor may speak to their patient using the personal pronoun indicating the first person singular or plural or the indefinite personal pronoun *on*. It is because between these two persons, there is a disparity relationship indicating that the co-speaker is under the protection of the speaker.

(9) *Alors, on s'inquiète pour son diabète ?*
　　 * So, one is (you're) worried about our (your) diabetes?[7]

Maingueneau also describes the essence of the operation in avoiding the use of the personal pronoun of the second person singular as an abolition of the "reciprocity" that potentially exists between the speaker and the co-speaker in exchanging the pairs pronoun, *je* and *tu*. The reciprocity that exists between the speaker and the co-speaker, which Maingueneau points out, is based on the theory of Benveniste (1976), who demonstrates two characteristics of *je* and *tu*. First is their specific "oneness," that is,

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[6] *On* is an indefinite personal pronoun, and it does not have a specific referent. It is traditionally translated as "one"; however, in today's French *on* mostly means "we," and in some contexts, it may also mean "people," "they," even "I," "you," and "he," "she."

[7] To preserve the nuance of *on* in French, (9) was translated using "one", but in English, "we" instead of "you" may aim for a similar effect like this example: *Now, have we taken our medicine?* (Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987: 163)).

the *je* who states and the *tu* to whom *je* is addressed are unique in each utterance. Therefore, the identification of these referents cannot be separated from the utterance act. A second characteristic is that *je* and *tu* are reversible. In other words, a co-speaker (*tu*), who is passively defined by a speaker (*je*), can think for themselves and speak independently as a speaker (*je*). This is when *tu* becomes *je*. Naturally, our everyday conversation involves the exchange of these two pronouns. The noteworthy aspect here is that *je* and *tu* are indicators that are closely linked to the *instance de discours* (reality of discourse) (Benveniste 1976: 252), and the mutual use of these indicators builds a relationship of mutual dialogue.

Conversely, in operations where the indicator *tu* is not used to indicate the co-speaker, there is no mutual relationship established between the speaker and the co-speaker. Toward co-speakers, such as children and pets, who are unable to speak, not using the second person pronoun is considered an operation that eliminates the confrontation structure between the speaker and the co-speaker. Therefore, it functions as an expression denoting affection toward the co-speakers. On the other hand, regarding the use of the third person toward a superior, as seen in (2), and not using the second person, arbitrarily indicates that the co-speaker is more than an equal conversation partner. Thus, the operation becomes an expression indicating respect by the speaker toward the co-speaker.

2.2 Examining the case

In contrast to what has been mentioned in 2.1, in everyday conversation, when using other person pronouns instead of the second person pronoun to denote affection toward and respect for a socially unequal co-speaker, respectively, what we often hear are utterances of the same type expressing a negative connotation, such as an attitude of teasing or being sarcastic, or to demonstrate irony toward socially equal co-speakers. For example, (10) is an idiomatic expression using *je* to denote the co-speaker. This transposition produces a strong condemnation effect. Similarly, (11) is an utterance toward a friend who drank all the chartreuse (a French liquor) even though the speaker had prepared the drink for them to have it together. It is an utterly condemning expression, and *je* is used to add a sarcastic effect.

(10) *De quoi je me mêle ? Chacun son cul !*
     * What I (you) concern myself (yourself)? Each his ass!
<div align="right">Dix pour cent, Season 3, Episode 2</div>

(11) *Je l'ai bien aimée la chartreuse !*
     * I (you) really loved the chartreuse!

In some cases, the indefinite personal pronoun *on* is used toward co-speakers. In daily conversations, *on* appears more frequently than utterances using *je*. For example,

(12) is an utterance spoken when in a close relationship. *On* is used to make fun of a friend who has dolled up. (13) is a quote from Sartre's *La Nausée* in which the speaker teases the woman and makes fun of her. First, the woman is represented by *on*, and later by *elle*. Next, (14) is a quote from the TV drama *Plan Cœur,* wherein the guards notice the main character trying to re-enter the club after she has been driven out by them for making a fuss in the club. Here, it shows a restrained attitude toward the co-speaker.

> (12) *Bah alors, on est belle aujourd'hui.*
>   * Well, one is (you are) beautiful today.

> (13) *Ha ! Ha ! Ça m'a échappé, dites donc. On est fâché ? Elle est fâchée.*
>   * Ha! Ha! It escaped me, say so. One is (you are) mad? She is (you are) angry.
>   *La Nausée,* Sartre (1938: 95)

> (14) *Hop hop hop ! On va où, là ?*
>   * Hey hey hey! Where is one (are you) going?
>   *Plan Cœur,* Season 2, Episode 2

Cases that depict the negative attitude of a speaker, as described in the above-mentioned example, can also be captured by the same mechanism as in the case of speaking to a child or a superior. It is also a process that eliminates "reciprocity" between the speaker and the co-speaker. Therefore, not using the second person toward co-speakers with whom one is on equal terms implies that the speaker does not recognize them as an equal co-speaker, and hence, negative effects are created or reinforced.

However, what must be added here is that although operations that do not use the second person singular to a socially equal co-speaker are used to express a negative attitude, the indefinite person *on* works as an exception. For example, in (12), when *on* is used, it is possible to express a speaker's natural surprise, without irony, on seeing the co-speaker, probably because she rarely applies makeup. In addition, Asakura (2002) in (15) gives an example that does not show a negative attitude. This is an utterance by an ex-boyfriend, wherein he uses *on* to express how the sense of distance from his ex-girlfriend dawns on him on meeting her after a long time. He hesitates to use *tu* as he once did, and *vous* is very formal and hence, he uses *on*.

> (15) *On se lève tard à la campagne.*   Asakura (2002: 345)
>   * One gets up (you get up) late in the countryside.

Using *on* instead of the second person singular also eliminates the mutual relation between speaker and the co-speaker like *je* or *il*; however, since the referent of *on* is originally unlimited, using *on* does not explicitly exclude the co-speaker from the

dialogic relationship. However, not using *tu* or *vous* here expresses a special tone of the speaker conveying surprise, affection, hesitation, and irony. In other words, the absence of the specific reference of *on* leaves the determination of the meaning and content of the utterance to the individual utterance situation, and hence, various emotions can be expressed based on the utterance situation.

2.3 Characteristics of "transpositions of person" in French

A comprehensive consideration of the cases mentioned above, where other personal pronouns replace second person pronouns, reveals that the process of non-use of the second person pronouns is a dismantling of the mutual and interchangeable dialogic relationship and an operation for changing the mutual relationship between a speaker and their co-speaker.

These pronouns represent affection and respect between two persons whose social positions are unequal, and derision or sarcasm when used between speakers in an equal social position, wherein one does not consider the other an equal dialogue partner, thus producing a negative expression. However, the negative expression varies depending on the situation and relation; if the relationship is close, a negative attitude may represent a close psychological distance between the two. In addition, the existence of the indefinite *on*, which does not belong to any person, enables the transmission of more diverse mental attitudes.

Although the difference in effect produced by the use of each personal pronoun should be examined individually, it can be said that the entire operation of transposition of person while addressing a co-speaker changes the relationship between the speaker and the co-speaker, that is, the mutual relationship created by *je* and *tu*, and this deviation allows the speaker to express their mental attitude toward the co-speaker. In other words, in French, the operation of changing personal pronouns functions as a strategy to convey the speaker's mental attitude.

3. "Transpositions of person" in Japanese

3.1 The nature of the Japanese personal pronoun

Now, we consider the case in Japanese. We begin with an overview of the concept of Japanese personal pronouns, focusing on points that are different from French:

1. Diversity of the personal pronoun: The most distinctive feature of Japanese personal pronouns is that there are many of them, and they include some nouns as well, for example, *otosan* (father), *sensei* (teacher). More than ten words are used to express the first person, and these personal pronouns have limited use. For example,

watashi, the personal pronoun indicating the first person singular, is the first pronoun learned by Japanese learners, and it can be used not only by men and women in formal, but also often by women in casual conversations. Men often use pronouns such as *boku* or *ore*, but these personal pronouns have different characteristics. *Boku* expresses modesty, while *ore* projects a masculine or a vulgar impression. Therefore, since Japanese personal pronouns express the gender, social attributes, and personality of the speaker, the choice of pronoun as a self-expression is left to the speaker. Moreover, the speaker must select the appropriate pronoun based on the situation or relationship with the co-speaker.

2. Singular form of personal pronouns: In Japanese, personal pronouns have only one form, and this does not change when placed at the subject or the object position. Hence, *watashi* is equal to *je*, *me*, and *moi* in French. In the syntax, the function of *watashi* is determined by the particles added to it, such as *ga*, *wo*, or *ni*. Therefore, a noun without pronoun properties can enter the framework of a personal pronoun in Japanese.

3. Omission: The third feature of the personal pronoun is its omission. In French and English, the subject cannot be abbreviated as per structural rule, but in Japanese, the subject is usually omitted when it is understood between the speaker and the co-speaker. In contrast, if one does not abbreviate an obvious subject, it is likely to have the effect of emphasis.

From the properties described above, in Japanese, "the concept of person" has not developed grammatically like in French or English. Hence, there are an abundant number of nouns that do not necessarily have pronoun properties and are syntactically independent. Each personal word has its own semantic content, and its implication denotes the social position based on the speaker's selective use.

3.2 Examining the case

3.2.1 The function of denomination

We now consider the phenomenon of using first person words in Japanese, based on the characteristics of Japanese personal pronouns. Use of the first person toward a child, such as (1) in the French case, is found in Japanese as well. However, because of the wide variety of Japanese personal pronouns, if the co-speaker is a little boy, the speaker uses *boku,* which is a pronoun used by boys to describe themselves, whereas if the co-speaker is a little girl, the speaker uses *watashi,* which is the pronoun used by girls to describe themselves.

> (16) *ぼく どうしたの？／わたし どうしたの？*
> *Boku doushitano? / Watashi doushitano?*
> * What happened to me (you) ?

According to a well-known previous study on the Japanese personal pronoun, Suzuki (1973), in Japanese, the speaker will sometimes place themselves from the point of view of the youngest co-speaker. For example, a mother calls herself *okāsan* (mother) in front of her child and refers to her husband as *otōsan* (dad). She may also call her oldest son *onīchan* (older brother). Similarly, the words *boku* and *watashi* are expressed in example (16), placing oneself from the point of view of the youngest one (co-speaker).

In addition to this analysis by Suzuki, Takubo (1997) says that the reason for focusing on the youngest person is that constantly changing personal expressions such as "I" and "you" require a viewpoint-switching operation. Hence, the speaker adopts a system that allows them and the co-speaker to refer to themselves and others using the same expression because this switching is difficult in small children.[8] In other words, observing the case of French (1) and the case of Japanese (3) and (16), the speaker adapts to the co-speaker's position, avoiding a conflict in the viewpoint of the child. Initially, this may appear to be a common linguistic expression, an utterance that snuggles up to the co-speaker.

However, the major difference between the two languages lies in whether they are seeking a response from the co-speakers. In the case of French, as we saw earlier, this transposition of person is toward a co-speaker who cannot respond, and the non-use of the personal pronoun indicating the second person is an operation that suppresses "reciprocity"; hence, the speaker does not expect a response from the co-speaker. However, in the case of Japanese, first person words are used to address co-speakers even during an interactive conversation. Example (16) shows that it is possible that the speaker does not expect a response from a baby, as would be the case in French, but in Japanese, the sentence may also be used in a situation when the speaker does seek a response from a co-speaker. For example, if an unknown child is spotted crying, a speaker may ask, what happened etc., to soothe the child. In this case, the speaker uses transposition of person because they don't know how to address their co-speaker, and thus, it is not aimed at eliminating mutual dialogue with the co-speaker.

In this regard, Miwa (2000) has pointed out that such phenomena are caused by the variety of personal pronouns to indicate the first person singular in Japanese, and the restricted use of personal pronouns to indicate the second person; the typical Japanese second-person pronoun *anata* and *kimi* has many restrictions of use. For example, it cannot be used toward people whom one meets for the first time or those who are one's superior, and when used to address children, it produces an expression of a psychological distance. Therefore, the speaker uses the first person singular as a

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[8] Aliyah (2006) spotted the same case in French. He said that before infants are capable of a viewpoint switching operation, there exists a stage when they refer to themselves using the personal pronoun indicating the second person singular or the third person singular.

temporary nickname for the co-speaker. Here, by avoiding the use of the second person, the speaker demonstrates a kindness toward the co-speaker, but this does not have the effect of suppressing the mutual relationship as in French.

Furthermore, (4) is also an example of a denominating function. Although it is an old-fashioned way of addressing someone, sometimes the third person pronoun *kare* or *kanozyo* is used when addressing a stranger. This is mainly used toward a co-speaker temporarily as a nickname without their consent, thereby creating a feeling of overfamiliarity.

Considering these cases that we have seen so far, the transposition of person in Japanese is caused by the restricted use of the personal pronoun indicating the second person and the speaker transposing a personal pronoun from the first person and third person groups. These personal pronouns are determined by the age and gender of the co-speakers and can be considered a kind of nickname. This indicates that the Japanese person mechanism is not properly established from a grammatical point of view, and this lack in the nature of the pronoun makes it easy for it to go back and forth in the framework of the three persons.

3.2.2 An imitative use

There has been little previous research on this topic, and hence, we need to consider the following utterances derived from using the personal pronoun of the first person toward co-speakers. For example, (17) is a conversation between a five-year-old child and his father.

> (17) - Boy: *おれも 映画みたい！*
> *Ore mo eiga mitai!*
> I want to watch a movie too!
>   - Father: *おれは みても分かんないでしょ*
> *Ore wa mitemo wakannai desyo.*
> * I (you) can't understand even if I (you) watch.

As we saw earlier, the personal pronoun indicating the first person singular *ore* is the first person usage for men. In (17), the boy uses *ore* considering himself a grown-up and his father also uses *ore* to describe his co-speaker with the same personal pronoun that was used by the boy to describe himself. This use is similar to (16), in which *boku* is used, though it is different as it is neither an operation to avoid a contradictory point of view with a little child, nor is it an operation to denominate a person whose name is unknown. In this case, the speaker repeats the first person pronoun used by the co-speaker to imitate him.

A similar use of the personal pronoun is shown in (18), which is a conversation between a junior high school student (girl) and her classmate (boy). In this example, she says that she would like to visit her sick grandmother, but she cannot, and hence,

she follows the boy unwillingly his grandmother's house.

(18) - Boy: *おまえほんとにオレのばあちゃんち来んの？*
Omae hontoni oreno bāchan chi kuruno ?
Do you really want to come to my grandmother's house with me?
　　- Girl: *うん あたしのばあちゃんに会いたいけど、オレのばあちゃんでガマンするよ*
Unn atashino bāchan ni aitaikedo oreno bāchan de gamannsuruyo.
* Yes, actually I want to see my grandma but my (your) grandma is okay.
　　- Boy: *なんだそれ*
Nanndasore
What?

Me, sky, you, me. Ikuemi Ryo (2014: 72)

Here, in the place where the girl should say "your grandma" she says, "*ore no bāchan* (my grandma)" using *ore*, the personal pronoun of the first person singular for the co-speaker. In this case too, the operation in which the speaker repeats the personal pronoun of the co-speaker is a form of imitation.

The following example is an utterance spoken in a bar, in which a man asks his girlfriend what she would like to drink after mentioning to the server what he is going to have.

(19) *（店員に向かって）俺ビールひとつ、*
（隣にいる彼女を見て）あたしは？まだいい？
Ore bīru hitotsu. (To server) I take a beer.
Atashi wa? mada ii? (To his girlfriend) * And I (you)? Not yet?

In this example, there is no prior utterance using *atashi* (the personal pronoun of first person singular for women) by the co-speaker, but it is understood that this woman usually uses *atashi* to indicate herself when she talks with the speaker. Hence, when the speaker uses the personal pronoun that the co-speaker always uses to indicate herself, it can be understood that he is referring to her. Furthermore, this is possible because the speaker is male and never uses *atashi*; moreover, this does not hold if both use *atashi* in a female-to-female conversation. Hence, for this usage, the speaker and co-speaker must have different personal pronouns of the first person.

Otherwise, it would be difficult to distinguish whether the speaker is referring to themselves or to the other.

Usages as seen in (17) to (19) occur in daily conversations. These have the effect of responding to the utterance of the co-speaker by repeating only their personal pronoun, as well as imitating the co-speaker. The effect of imitation is caused by the variety of Japanese first-person words and their meaning or the characteristics they bear. As we saw earlier, each Japanese personal pronoun has its own unique characteristics and is linked to the personality of the user and establishes this person. Therefore, when the speaker uses first-person words in conversing with a co-speaker, a characteristic effect of imitation is created. In other words, the effect created by this operation is a friendly teasing or caring toward the co-speaker, as in the case of imitating. In addition, these operations are allowed only in close relations as imitation cannot be performed toward a superior or a person one meets for the first time.

3.3 Characteristics of "transposition of person" in Japanese

Based on the above considerations, when other words are used toward a co-speaker instead of the personal pronoun indicating the second person in Japanese, we classify them into the following three cases.

The first is the personal pronoun indicating the first person used on a co-speaker who cannot respond. As in the case of French, the speaker avoids an opposing viewpoint with the co-speaker, and this operation functions as a tender expression toward the co-speaker. Next is the case when the speaker does not know how to address a co-speaker. In such a case, the speaker uses the first person or the third person to avoid using the second person, in which word use is restricted, and this operation works as a kind of denominating the co-speaker to a nickname expressing tender concern toward the speaker; however, if used toward another adult, it will be considered an over-familiar approach. The last case, which we saw, is a partial quotation in which only a part of the personal pronoun of the co-speaker is used by the speaker in addressing the co-speaker, and this imitation signifies a close relationship between the speaker and the co-speaker.

Among these three usages, the ones encountered in everyday conversation are overwhelmingly the second and the third, and these functions arise inevitably from the characteristics of Japanese personal pronouns, such as an abundance of personal pronouns of the first person and the difficulty of using the personal pronoun indicating the second person. Japanese personal words, therefore, are not linked to the dialogic relationship between speaker and the co-speaker; they function as an individual vocabulary, and hence, act as a noun rather than as a pronoun. This is the reason various nouns are included in the frame of personal pronouns, and there are various words that refer to persons.

Particularly regarding the use of imitation in personal pronouns, which was dealt with in section 3.2.2, it is presumed to be related to the functions that appear in the

discourse, such as echoic utterances. This aspect is a topic of research that we wish to examine in the future.

4. Conclusion

So far, we have discussed the phenomenon of the use of another personal pronoun or personal expression instead of the personal pronoun indicating the second person to address co-speakers in French and in Japanese. This seems to be a common phenomenon occurring in the two languages, but since the concepts of person in the two languages are significantly different, the same operation is used in different situations to produce different effects.

In the case of French, as Benveniste pointed out, the personal pronoun and the act of utterance are closely linked, and the operation of changing the personal pronoun changes the relationship between the speaker and the co-speaker. Due to the change in the relationship, the mental attitude of the speaker toward the co-speaker is reflected in the utterance.

In contrast, in the case of Japanese, the concept of person is not defined grammatically, and personal pronouns and the act of utterance are connected weakly. These functions are independent noun function rather than pronouns. Therefore, the traversal of words among the first person, the second person, and the third person happens regardless of the dialogic relationship between the speaker and the co-speaker, and the meaning and content of each word make the transposition of person effective.

Finally, in both languages, such subtle operations of person are related to the mental attitude of the speaker, such as how the speaker perceives the relationship with their co-speaker, and how a speaker manipulates personal pronouns as a strategy to indirectly convey their mental attitude. Although the methods are different, considering the expressions that are used to refer to oneself and to others in different languages will provide an opportunity to resolve the interesting question of how self-recognition and other-recognition occurs, and how a relationship is constructed between the two in each language.

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