

Research Article

The Use of *Bikago* Beautified Style in Usage Instructions of Food, Beverage, and Pharmaceutical Products

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Abstract

The current article discusses a linguistic phenomenon, particularly, the use of *bikago* beautified style, which has been classified as being separate from *teineigo* since 2007. The discussion covers the forms of this particular linguistic style and the background of its emergence. This research was conducted because, to date, Japanese language studies pertaining to this specific style mostly consisted of research that are based on spoken data analysis. This is a descriptive-qualitative study. Data were collected from instruction labels of food, beverage, and pharmaceutical products in Japanese provided on the packages of relevant products. Data were gathered based on the content of *bikago* style element found within a speech. Speeches that do not contain any *bikago* style element were not included as research data. Research results shows that the number of *bikago* terms being used on relevant products is very scarce, only consisting of a few words, yet they are distributed in various elements of usage instruction discourse.

Keywords: *bikago*; beautified style; usage instruction

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1. Introduction

Scholars with particular interests in studying Japanese speech levels have not put much of their focus on research about *bikago* as of late. Studies on speech level have, typically, been about honorific styles. The honorific styles, in this case, refer to *sonkeigo* (respectful style), *kenjougo* (humble style), and *teineigo* (formal style). The lack of studies may be afforded to the other styles having relatively much greater number of words than those included in the *bikago* style. However, despite its insignificant number, this style is one of the speech level categories included in the speech level guideline issued by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan (Agency for Cultural Affairs,

2007), which outlines that its use may be observed in both spoken and written language on various occasions.

The phenomenon of speech level in a given language, perhaps, will always be described as speech that is closely associated with asymmetric relations between speakers and addressees/interlocutors. Some of the styles that speakers use based on the asymmetric relations they have include, for example, the humble style, the respectful style, and maintaining distance, which are always described as speech oriented toward the addressees. However, the case of *bikago* speech level in Japanese is unique, it is not a direct expression of modesty or respect or maintaining distance against an

interlocutor. This speech tends to function as merely a means for the speaker to elevate their own position and leave an impression of elegance before the addressee(s). Therefore, perhaps because its function is not to pay respect to the addressee, it is, supposedly, stated that this particular style is classified as being outside of the *keigo* (Japanese speech level) system (Barešova, 2015).

The *bikago* style is often used in daily life, and it can be found in both spoken and written styles, formal and informal speech, and it can even appear in all kinds of sentences or speech. The group of speakers are quite varied as well, both women and men, adults and children use this style. In other words, its use is much more extensive compared to other styles including the formal style, which is only used by adults in Japanese society.

The use of the *bikago* style has been identified to date back hundreds of years ago, but it has only been categorized separately as one of the styles in the classification of Japanese speech levels in 2007. Before *bikago* was incorporated as one of the styles in Japanese speech levels, experts remained adamant about including this particular style into the speech level group known as *teineigo*. *Teineigo* refers to a Japanese speech level group that functions as a means for formal communication, maintaining distance (Makino, 2004; Masuda, 2016; Obana, 2016).

Today, given the increased mass production of goods, *bikago* can also be found in written style in the form of product usage instruction discourse. These discourses referring to product usage instructions are communication media made by producers/manufacturers to convey information about their product usage to the consumers so that both can gain mutual benefits. For the consumers, the benefits include gaining knowledge about making the most of the purchased product, avoiding negative effects that

product use may have, conserving time and having more comfort in using the product when instructions are given by the producer/manufacturer. The words found in written form, such as product usage instruction discourses are most likely prepared by people responsible for creating usage instructions, wherein the messages they intend to convey are selected so that consumers can easily understand them without neglecting aspects of linguistic politeness and aesthetics. Thus, it is highly likely that the *bikago* style used in these discourses are words that have been specifically selected and prepared to produce easy to understand and polite speeches that portray a high-quality corporate image before their addressees. The words that speakers use to portray themselves as a quality figure are *bikago*, which is the focus of the current article. The discussion is emphasized on the scope of word reference or word meaning and the rationale for using this particular style.

Studies on the use of *bikago* to date tend to utilize data obtained from spoken discourses. Both sources of data (spoken and written) are not only characterized by its media of delivery, but there are also external factors associated with these two types of discourse. Spoken discourses have a highly dynamic external factor and they appear as a result of factors that correlate with extralinguistic aspects, which experience very dynamic changes. These extralinguistic aspects include those pertaining to the speech participants, speech situation, speech purposes, and so forth. The difference between spoken and written discourses is that the external factors of spoken discourses tend to be more dynamic while the external factors of written discourses are more likely to be static or less subject to changes. The speaker in a written discourse engages in a speech act under the assumption that all external factors, e.g., addressees, situation, purposes, etc., remain unchanged. As an example, at the opening of the discourse

they might engage with one particular interlocutor, then at the end of the discourse they might engage with another interlocutor, and so forth.

The present research is aimed at complementing the academic literature on the use of speech levels in the Japanese language, which has been more inclined to focus on spoken discourses, by analyzing the use of *bikago* found in written discourses. The analysis was done by sorting data from written discourses observed in product usage instructions containing elements of *bikago*. Although *bikago* maintains a morphological formation pattern, i.e., prefixes *o* or *go* followed by a noun, the words collected as data were only those that truly function as *bikago*.

Bikago has a long-standing presence in Japanese society and its usage is apparent in daily communication interactions. Moreover, the use of *bikago* can be observed in both spoken and written discourses.

Previous studies tend to examine the use of the *bikago* style with a backdrop of dynamic extralinguistic factor (Adnyani, 2017; Morizane, 1991; Robihim et al., 2021), whereas the current study is aimed at observing a static linguistic phenomenon. This research analyzed speeches that were well thought out and meticulously prepared by a conceptor. Research based on data with static extralinguistic factors has an advantage of greater accuracy since ambiguity, which often appears due to changes in external factors, demands researchers to pay attention to indeterminant factors, and there is possibility of greater variables in place, whereas for written discourses, the external factors are predetermined by the speaker since the beginning of the discourse up till the end.

Studies on the use of *bikago* can be viewed from various perspectives. The present research focuses on selection of diction, elements of discourse or location

of *bikago* use in a discourse. The emphasis on the use of diction and elements of discourse is because despite having its own particular morphological principle *bikago*'s productivity remains relatively low, not all nouns can be changed into the beautified style form. As a matter of fact, in product usage instruction discourses, not all words that can be changed into *bikago* are used as they are in discourses. Meanwhile, elements of discourse are emphasized because they indicate the content of the information expressed by the speaker. Thereby making elaborations on the correlation between the use of *bikago* and the significance of the message speakers intend to convey possible. Although in terms of the correlation between *bikago* use and social structure, e.g., individual speakers, *bikago* is mostly used by women from higher social classification. However, the speaker in a product usage instruction discourse has a relatively egalitarian social status, hence the function of *bikago* was analyzed as a certain group identity but it refers to a company that is generally concerned about consumer treatment and company image.

Japanese speech levels were, commonly, classified into 3 categories, namely: *sonkeigo* (respectful style), *kenjougo* (humble style), and *teineigo* (formal style). Within these categories, *bikago* was included in the *teineigo* category. However, *teineigo* functions as an expression used to respect the addressee(s), while *bikago* is a speech style used to display the prestige of the speaker (Morizane, 1991).

In 2007 the Japanese government through the directorate of culture amended the speech level classification, which initially consisted of 3 categories, into five categories, wherein *kenjougo* was subsequently divided into two categories, i.e., *kenjougo* and *teichougo*, while *teineigo* was also divided into two categories, namely *teineigo* and *bikago*. *Kenjougo* constitutes a speech style that functions to

show modesty or humbleness before the speech partner when the activity is associated with the speech partner, whereas *teichougo* refers to showing modesty for activities in which the speaker has no direct involvement with the speech partner. Since the issuance of the speech level guideline, *bikago* is officially classified as a separate speech level category in Japanese language.

The term *bikago*, in Japanese, is written by using three kanji characters 美 (bi ‘beauty’), 化 (ka ‘change’) and 語 (go ‘language; word; expression’). In the current article, *bikago* is translated to beautified style and both terms are used alternately. The word beautified in the translation does not refer to the sound but to the image that the native Japanese speaker intends to portray. There are various English translations for *bikago*, i.e., *beautification word* (Akamatsu, 2011a; Tsurutani & Shi, 2018; Yamada, 2019), *beautified form* (Taguchi, 2009), *beautifying word* (Inoue, 2010), *beautification expression* (Ivana & Sakai, 2007), *beautified word* (Huynh, 2012), and *beautiful speech* (Hinds, 1983).

Terms referring to beauty are not only found in the phrase beautified style, as it is also observed in the noun phrase *ustukushii nihongo* ‘beautiful Japanese’. To the Japanese, language that does not conform to linguistic principles is typically considered *kitanai* ‘dirty; messy’, as indicated in the expression *ji ga kitanai* ‘the characters are messy’, which implies that the characters are written sloppily and not beautiful, another example is *kitanai kotoba* ‘dirty words’.

The meaning of beauty in the phrase ‘beautified style’ does not refer to something that can be seen such as paintings, sceneries, a person’s face, etc. It is also not something that one can perceive using their sense of hearing like music or sounds. Beauty, in this case, tends to refer to the feelings of the Japanese, which are rather complicated to explain. Despite its

difficulty, beautified style can at least be identified by a noun form preceded by *o-* or *go-* that is intended to show neither humility nor respect. The respectful style is more oriented toward others while the beautified style is merely oriented to the speaker.

Bikago is morphologically formed by way of adding the prefixes *o-* or *go-* to a noun, but not all words with this model constitute a beautified style. The model of prefix *o/go* + noun, aside from its function as *bikago* form (beautified style), also functions a respectful style and humble style (Inoue, 2010; Suzuki, 2003). In basic Japanese language lessons, regarding this particular word formation model, it is always instructed that when a noun is an authentic Japanese word (*wago*) then the prefix *o-* shall be used; when the noun is a word of Chinese origin (*kango*) then the prefix *go-* shall be attached; and there are some exceptions that do not follow this principle. These exceptions occur because they semantically indicate things with observable distribution (Horio, 2010),

Before the Second World War, nouns preceded by the prefix *o-* were considered a respectful style form, but the form became a beautified style form after the war. Initially, *bikago* was deemed as a feminine expression (Akamatsu, 2011b). Akamatsu provides examples of *bikago* he learned when he was young like *osake*, *ohana*, *osaiфу*, *otoire*, *ohasi*, *osushi*, etc. When the prefix *o-* is omitted, the word will give an impression of masculinity or coarseness (Akamatsu, 2011a). There are only about 58 nouns that can be preceded by the prefixes *o-* or *go-* (Wenger, 1983). Since Shouwa 26 until Heisei 8, there were as many as 345 *bikago* (Suzuki, 2003). Nouns that can be preceded by the prefixes *o-* or *go-* are classified into various types of categories (Kikuchi, 1993).

From the perspective of the user, *bikago* was a linguistic style used by women of higher social class (Tsurutani & Shi, 2018). *Bikago* was used to elevate

one's self-worth. In terms of context of usage, *bikago* nouns can be found in both formal and informal speeches, but in formal expressions it is inappropriate if the noun form is not *bikago* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2007). This statement is found in the elaboration of example number (29).

Bikago are words expressed by a speaker with the intention of making the interlocutor(s) think that the speaker is an respectful person (Yamada, 2019). In other words, the style is used to make the speaker seem elegant, respectable, and noble, or in short, *bikago* is an expression used to present oneself as a person of quality.

The function of *bikago* was for the speaker to give an impression of politeness and high social class (Ide, n.d.). Hence, it can be construed here that *bikago* was used by the upper class. In terms of the gender perspective, *bikago* is the linguistic style used by upper class women (Tsurutani & Shi, 2018). Its use does not rely on the social relations that the interlocutors have, but the style is used so that at least the speech sounds polite to the listener (Barešova, 2015). It sounds polite because it is a beautified language, instead of a coarse one, and will automatically sound courteous.

2. Methods

The current study is a descriptive qualitative research pertaining to the use of speech levels by analyzing authentic data (Leech, 2014) found on product usage instructions written in Japanese. The products examined were Japanese products marketed in Japan. The product instructions were found on food packages as well as the manufacturers' website. Data were selected randomly and focused only on three types of products, namely: food, beverages, and pharmaceuticals. The selected data covered all elements of product usage instructions. In general, the product usage instruction discourse elements include composition, method of

storage, precaution, company's address, etc. As a result, relatively varied types of speeches were collected, including speeches in the form of declarative and directive sentences, speeches with various illocutionary forces. Given the assumption that product usage instructions serve as a communication media for requesting or prohibiting consumers to do something, the broad range of data selection sufficiently satisfied the required criteria.

The data acquired from the product packages were corroborated with the manufacturing company's website. Speeches collected from the product packages were compared against those stated in the product usage instructions uploaded by the relevant manufacturers on their website. However, we only found a few cases of companies that also uploaded their product usage instructions online.

These product usage instructions are typically verified by other parties that regulate the format and content of product usage instructions. The other parties involved in conducting confirmation of these usage instructions are private and public institutions. Public institutions refer to the department of trade and the department of health.

In the data collection process, a number of acquaintances living in Japan were requested to collect the packaging or wrappings of food, beverage, and pharmaceutical products. The collected product wrappings were then brought to Indonesia when they had the chance to go to Indonesia. Some of the product wrappings remained intact but some were torn and worn out, perhaps this was because the materials used are easily damaged. Some of the wrappings made from a thin sheet of paper or plastic were found to be crumpled, while those made from cardboard paper mostly remained undamaged. Wrappings that were torn in certain parts were still included as data as long as the usage instruction is entirely intelligible. As for crumpled wrappings,

they were smoothen out first before being read and transliterated into alphabetic writing to avoid any misreading of the product usage instructions.

Data were taken from products that have been in the market since the year 2000, which indicates a quite recent study of language use. Data were randomly taken within the post 2000 period, thereby resulting in a varied year of publication between one product and another. The variation of the period of publication for these product usage instructions can be overlooked in the current study as the focus of the research is solely on the use of *bikago* in communications between producers and consumers by ignoring the development of *keigo* use within a certain period of time.

On the wrappings, there are speeches that may not be considered pertaining to instructions for product use but they only contain a persuasive speech instead. Such samples were still included in the data since they can still be considered an introductory speech in a product usage instruction discourse. The collected data covered all styles, both written and spoken, although the number of spoken style speeches was found to be very insignificant. Hence, accordingly, it can be stated that the majority of the collected data were in the form of the standard Japanese written style.

The collected data were then transliterated into Latin script and classified by speech type, discourse element, and the *bikago* type used. Discourse types include formal or informal speeches. The classification is based on the assumption that *bikago*, which functions to enhance other's impression about the speaker, is correlated with the level of politeness contained within formal speech. Such classification is meant to understand the correlation between the use of *bikago* and the information that producers/manufacturers intend to convey to the consumers. Classification based on word origin was also done to understand

the correlation between frequency of *bikago* use and the level of formality of the diction being used. This is because words with a Chinese origin have a higher level of formality function than words that have a Japanese origin.

3. Result and Discussion

Out of approximately 50 wrappings of various food, beverage, and pharmaceutical products, data on the use of *bikago* were collected as shown in the table 1.

As shown in the table 1, the use of *bikago* is not only found in product usage instructions of one company but several companies, which include companies that produce food, beverage, and pharmaceutical products. The food companies include Alfort, Kitkat, Shiroyo, etc. The beverage companies found in the product usage instructions are Sakura, Engicha, and Instanto Ryokucha, while the pharmaceutical companies found to use *bikago* are Kanebou, Lion, Doctor's Prescription, and others.

In addition to being used across various food, beverage, and pharmaceutical product brands, on a more limited scope, namely discourse elements, the use of *bikago* is distributed across various elements. The elements of discourse employing the beautified style can be found in suggestion box address, instructions for use, precautions, and others. So, *bikago* is not only positioned within certain types of elements.

In terms of morphological format, it was found that the use of *bikago* has a tendency to only take the o + noun model. The use of *bikago* in product usage instructions is limited to words referring to consumer (guest), hot water, skin, cosmetic, sweets, Japanese tea, store, medicine, and burden. Go + noun words implying *bikago* function are very rare. The use of *bikago* style observed in the data indicates a relatively few instances, consisting of only 9 words, yet they tend to

be distributed across various elements of discourse. The number of *bikago* style usage is not as many as the number of formal and informal style usage (Mulyadi et al., 2021). Although *bikago* is included in the five categories of Japanese speech levels, its use tends to be dominated by women (Akamatsu, 2011b). By referring to Akamatsu's finding, there is a possibility that such minimal use of *bikago* is to avoid any overly feminine impression of the company. However, given the unexcessive

use of *bikago*, companies that do use *bikago* still expect to present an elegant impression of the company to the consumers.

The 9 *bikago* words in the table above can be classified into words that are commonly used and those that are relatively infrequently used. Words that are most commonly used include; *okyaku* in *okyakusama* data no (1), *oyu* 'hot water' (2) *okashi* 'sweets' (5) *ocha* 'tea' (6), *otesuu* 'burden' (9).

Table 1 The use of Bikago

No	Words	Sentences/Phrases	Elements	Product Brand	Translation
1	<i>O-kyakusama</i> 'consumer, guest, customer'	お客様相談センターあてに送ってください	Precaution ' <i>toriatsukaijou no chuui</i> '	Alfort	Send to customer center
		<i>Okyakusama sentaa ate ni okuri kudasai</i>			
		お客様の声をお聞かせください	Producer information	Chocolate Kitkat, Matcha Kitkat, Strawberry Kitkat	Please let us know about your opinion (as a customer)
		<i>Okyakusama no koe wo okikase kudasai</i>			
		ネスレお客様相談室	Producer information	Chocolate Kitkat, Matcha Kitkat, Strawberry Kitkat	Nestle's customer service desk
		<i>Nesure okyakusama soudan shitsu</i>			
2	<i>O-yu</i> 'hot water'	利用時にかかる通信費はお客様のご負担となります	Precautionary warning ' <i>chuui jikou</i> '	Pocky Almond Crush, Pocky Double Strawberry, Pocky Strawberry	Customers are responsible for communication charges incurred when using the service
		<i>Riyouji ni kakaru tsuushinhi wa okyakusama no gofutan to narimasu</i>			
		お客様センター宛にお送りください	Information on handling of defective product	Pocky Almond Crush, Pocky Double Strawberry, Pocky Strawberry	Send to customer center
		<i>Okyakusama sentaa ate ni okuri kudasai</i>			
		お客様サービス室	Producer information	Shiroi Koibito	Customer service desk
		<i>Okyakusama saabisu shitsu</i>			
2	<i>O-yu</i> 'hot water'	お客様サービス室までお送りください	Producer information	Shiroi Koibito	Please send to customer service desk
		<i>Okyaku sama saabisu shitsu made okuri kudasai</i>			
		カルビー株式会社お客様相談室	Producer information	Calbee Furugura)	Calbee Ltd. customer consultation desk
		<i>Karubii kabushikigaisha okyakusama soudan shitsu</i>			
		開封して中身をお湯呑みに入れます	Product instruction for use ' <i>irekata</i> '	Sakura Engicha	Pour hot water in after opening
		<i>Kaifuu shite nakami wo oyu nomi ni iremasu</i>			
2	<i>O-yu</i> 'hot water'	またはお湯でかまわずに服用してください	Information on dosage ' <i>youhou youryou</i> '	ロキソプロフェン錠「クニヒロ」 rokisopurofenjou (kunihiro)	Please take without hot water
		<i>Mata wa oyu de kamazu ni fukuyou shite kudasai</i>			
		お湯のお取り扱いには十分ご注意ください	Precaution ' <i>shiyou jou no chuui</i> '	インスタント緑茶 insutanto ryokucha	Please take caution when using hot water
		<i>Oyu no otoratsukai ni wa juubun gochuui kudasai</i>			
2	<i>O-yu</i> 'hot water'	あとはお湯を注ぐだけで	Serving recommendation ' <i>oishii irekata</i> '	インスタント緑茶 insutanto ryokucha	All you need to do next is pour hot water
		<i>Ato wa oyu wo osogu dake de</i>			

To be continued to the next page

Table 1 The use of Bikago (continued from previous page)

No	Words	Sentences/Phrases	Elements	Product Brand	Translation
3	<i>O-hada</i> 'skin'	化粧品がお肌に合わないとき <i>Keshouhin ga ohada ni awanai toki</i>	Precaution ' <i>toriatsukaijou no chuui</i> '	Etude House	When cosmetics do not suit your skin
		使用したお肌に <i>Shiyou shita ohada ni</i>	Precaution ' <i>toriatsukaijou no chuui</i> '	Etude House	For skin already using it
		お肌に柔らかな使用感のあふらとり紙で <i>Ohada ni yawarakana shiyoukan aburatorigami de</i>	Product description	Kanebo Beauty Works	Oil absorbing sheet that feels soft on the skin
		お肌を軽くさえるように使ってください。 <i>Ohada wo karuku osaeru you ni shite otsukai kudasai</i>	Instructions for use ' <i>goshiyou houhou</i> '	Kanebo Beauty Works	Please press lightly on skin for use
4	<i>O-kesho</i> 'cosmetic; make-up'	お化粧くずれや <i>Okeshou kuzureya</i>	Instructions for use ' <i>goshiyou houhou</i> '	Kanebo Beauty Works	When your make-up breaks down
5	<i>O-kashi</i> 'sweets; confection'	お菓子って1日どれくらいまでがいいの? <i>Okashi tte ichinichi dore gurai made ga ii no</i>	Recommended consumption	Chocolate Kitkat, Matcha Kitkat, Strawberry Kitkat	How many times are we allowed to eat sweets per day?
		お菓子などの嗜好品は1日200*。カロリー <i>Okashii nado no shikouhin wa ichinichi 200* karori</i>	Production recommendation	Chocolate Kitkat, Matcha Kitkat, Strawberry Kitkat	Consuming luxury items like sweets should be 200 calories per day
6	<i>O-cha</i> 'green tea'	お茶は鮮度が大切です <i>Ocha wa sendou ga taisetsu desu</i>	Product preparation instruction ' <i>irekata</i> '	Sakura Engicha	Freshness is important in making tea
		いれたお茶は早めにお召し上がりください <i>Ireta ocha wa hayame ni omeshi agari kudasai</i>	Recommended serving instruction ' <i>oishii irekata</i> '	インスタント緑茶 insutanto ryokucha	Please enjoy your tea as soon as it is served
7	<i>O-mise</i> 'store'	お買い求めのお店又は <i>Okai motome no oten wa</i>	Producer's contact information	Bufferin Ricoli Plus	The store where you made the purchase
		お問合せ先お買い求めのお店又は <i>Otoiawase saki okaimotome no oten mata wa</i>	Producer's contact information	Lion	For any inquiry please contact the store where you purchased the product
8	<i>O-kusuri</i> 'medicine'	ディアー キンタン さんのお薬 <i>Diaa kintan san no okusuri</i>	Prescription information	Doctor's prescription	Diah Kintan's medicine
		お薬の説明書です <i>Okusuri no setsumei sho desu</i>	Medication guide	Doctor's prescription	Medication instruction
		お薬を受け取る時は <i>Okusuri wo uketoru toki wa</i>	Precaution ' <i>chuui jikou</i> '	Doctor's prescription	When receiving your medicine
		お薬は用法をよく守り <i>Okusuri wa youhou wo yoku mamori</i>	Precaution ' <i>chuui jikou</i> '	Doctor's prescription	Properly follow your medication instructions
		このお薬についてわからない時は、お薬をご持参のうえ当薬局におたずねください <i>Kono okusuri ni tsuite wakaranai toki wa okusuri wo gojishin no ue tou yakkyoku ni otazune kudasai</i>	Precaution ' <i>chuui jikou</i> '	Doctor's prescription	If you have any questions about the medicine, please bring it to our pharmacy and ask
		このお薬について <i>Okusuri ni tsuite</i>	Product information	Bufferin Ricoli Plus	To spray the medicine
		このお薬について <i>Kono okusuri ni tsuite</i>	Producer's information	Bufferin Ricoli Plus	About this medicine
9	<i>Otesuu</i> 'burde; apology for being a burden'	お手数ですがご購入の月日 <i>Otesu desuga gokounyuu no tsukihi</i>	Information on handling defective product	Morinaga Chocolate	Apologies for the inconvenience, the date of purchase

The relatively minimal use of *bikago* words is most likely due to the scheme that the designer of the discourse had. The *bikago* words selected here were aligned with daily habits according to the needs. They are neither being used excessively nor not used at all. For instance, the use of the word *okyakusama* ‘guest, customer, consumer’ is something that inescapably needs to be done, because although *okyakusama* is a derivative of the word *kyaku*, the forms *okyaku* or *kyakusama* are uncommon. Hence, by using the word *kyaku* preceded by the prefix *o* and followed by *sama* it is considered a common form without any tendency, so the speaker portrays a very elegant image before the consumers. The use of the beautified style *oyu* ‘hot water’ is possibly to avoid using coarse language when simply using the word *yu*, because the word *oyu* is a *bikago* commonly used by all levels of society. Accordingly, when it is articulated by detaching the prefix *o* from *oyu*, it may be considered presenting a rude impression of the users. As for the following data, that is the use of the word *ohada*, it is possibly to give an elegant or feminine impression of the company. The use of *ohada* can be found in descriptive elements for aesthetic medicine produced by Kanebou. Hence, the word *ohada* is used on account of the manufacturer intending to deliver their message in a feminine manner. Unlike *oyu*, detaching the prefix *o* from *ohada* will only result in presenting a masculine impression. However, such masculine impression is to be avoided since the manufacturer aims to identify as being a part of the same group as their consumers, i.e., women.

The use of *bikago* in the usage instructions of food, beverage, and pharmaceutical products was found to be restricted to a few particular words. The use of *bikago* is not as significant as the use of the polite style or *teinego* and *futsuugo* (Mulyadi et al., 2021). When we examine this phenomenon from its functionality, it

seems that the companies do not intend to be too excessive in presenting their image as a sophisticated figure.

Bikago is used in discourse elements that tend to vary. Since each element contain differing information, it is understandable that *bikago* might be used in various speech acts, for utterances that have both low and high illocutionary force. By examining their function, the use of *bikago* was also understood as a form that is not used to avoid face-threatening act (FTA), but simply to paint a better picture or image of the speaker, aside from providing important information to the addressee.

Upon observation of the politeness aspect proposed by Brown and Levinson, this is a bit odd. it does not conform to the formula $W_x = D(S,H)P(H,S) + R_x$, so, at least here it has been identified that there is another variable in politeness

4. Conclusion

Evidently, the use of beautified style in product usage instructions is relatively minimal when compared to the use of other styles, although beautified style is classified as one of the Japanese speech level categories. Despite its nominal use, it still carries substantial meaning to avoid the impression of the companies being like a mother talking to her children. Or, in other words, the companies still consider that their consumers are not interlocutors who should be treated like children. But, aside from not wanting to present themselves as a mother gently talking to her children, the companies also have no intention of being rude or overly masculine before their consumers, and as a result, they still use *bikago* in moderation, in order to present their company as a common figure, neither too feminine, coarse, nor masculine.

By using *bikago*, these companies intend to portray themselves as a figure that continues to maintain politeness in communication. The companies intend to

maintain their customers' feelings so they do not feel that they are being treated rudely or so that they are not considered as a weak figure. The companies treat their consumers proportionally by being neither excessively subtle nor uncouth in their communication.

The use of the go/o + noun model in the product usage instruction discourse in the current study seems to simultaneously function as both *sonkeigo* and *bikago*, an example is the word *okosama*, which can be deemed as respecting parents and can also simply be a beautified style because the context of the utterance can also lead to both functions. Due to the lack of data, further studies on the obscure function of go- and o- between *bikago* and *sonkeigo* are required. The o + noun and the go + noun models are significantly found in the use of element title in product usage instruction discourses. Undoubtedly, most may seem to be like *sonkeigo* but there are also those that can be perceived as both *sonkeigo* and *bikago*.

Upon observation of *bikago*'s function, which is intended to present an elegant impression of the speaker before the addressee, the position of *bikago* in the politeness theory warrants an explanation. This is because the FTA formula proposed by Brown and Levinson only posits variable D constituting the distance or proximity between speaker and hearer; variable P constituting the power between speaker and hearer; and variable R constituting the ranking of imposition in the culture. *Bikago* as a part of Japanese speech levels undoubtedly requires further research on how it is positioned within the theory of politeness.

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