

# Representation *Uchi* and *Soto* Concept in Japanese Social Deixis

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## Abstract

*This study aims to describe the representations of uchi and soto in the textbook Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 recommended by The Japan Foundation using the context and the social deixis of Japanese is explained (Wetzel, 2011). Qualitative descriptive method is used for the presentation of data analysis. Data is written in the form of conversation indicating a connection to social deixis. The tapping technique is implemented on the SBLC free-to-speech method. Data analysis techniques applied sorting technique. The results of this study found that the concepts of uchi and soto in Japanese society are closely related to the social deixis of Japanese, based on the conversation and the context described in the data, that is Marugoto's textbook: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 which presents an explanation of the use and context of how Japanese is actually used by the people by showing the concepts of uchi and soto. Then, in the analysis it was found that social deixis is also closely related to the use of keigo (expression of respect) as well as the phrase yarimorai (give and take). The close relationship between social deixis and the concepts of uchi and soto illustrates the structural order of Japanese society's life which pays close attention to the position and social status of society when interacting and communicating with each other. By choosing the diction of the words used between the speaker and the interlocutor when communicating, it can be assessed whether both of them belong to the uchi or soto class. The results of this study also at the same time prove the statement of (Wetzel 2011).*

**Keywords:** *Social; Deixis Marugoto; Uchi and Soro; Kenjyogo; Sonkeigo*

## 1. Introduction

Deixis can be used as a measure to look at the connection between communicative intention of the speaker and the contexts. In the conversation area, context plays an important role to see who is to whom, where and when the event is, namely, these three deictic are *I*, *here* and *now* (Galbraith, M., 2021; Saffah, Mariam & Al-hindawi, Fareed. 2021). In the field of semantic structural studies deixis shows a relationship between words in a speech in which references change and move (Chaer, 2018; Levinson, 2006). Levinson, S.C., (2006), divide the deixis into exophoric deixis (persona, space, and time), where the speaker is at zero point, the content of the play based on his own point of view. Then, endophora deixis (discant, and social), i.e. deixis indicates its references in the language itself.

Social deixis refers to relationships, social identity, social background, close relationships between speakers and good speech partners in non-formal and formal situations. In this regard, (Lyons, 1977) attributes it to linguistic modesty. Regarding the study of deixis, (Wetzel, 1988) conducted research on deixis in American and Japanese English. Wetzel revealed the use of persona deixis dominated the American English deixis category, while social deixis topped Japanese deixis. The power of the article, Wetzel, proved the similarity of

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text typology in American English and Japanese. Exposure through drawings and graphs shows context and makes the description of the study more structured and clearer.

Next, in a further study of deixis, (Wetzel, 1985) discovered that Japanese expressions of giving and receiving were a description of the very thick social deixis in Japanese. The social deixis in Japanese attests to the level of linguistic modesty based on the distinction of social status, the lower rank between the outer and inner groups of Japanese society structures. The following is an example of a sentence using the *yari-morai* (give-take) expression indicating the existence of social deixis in Japanese society expressed by (Wetzel, 1985: 149):

*Mazu, kochira ni irete itadaite...*

First, here in put in asking

(First of all, would you put in here...)

The context of the above sentence is a conversation between a bank employee and a customer in front of an ATM machine. A bank employee, as a service provider for customers using *kenjyogo* (a humble language), *itadaite* (ask you: humbly...). The use of this word should be used by bank employees considering that the speech opponent is an outside group (customer) and speakers realize that he as a service provider and service should use keigo against customers. The phrase of *Itadaite* is a part of *kenjyogo* that shows the humility of bank employees in serving customers. The phrase *itadaite* actually has a more polite form of suffix-*masu* that has a lower level of decency than *itadaite*, which is a *moratte* that can be used for friends, family.

Preliminary research related to social deixis, also conducted by Cook, 1998), where study data were taken from television interview programs and conversations between neighbors. This study describes the indexal relationship between the polite form of the suffix-*masu* and the meaning of the situation. Cook expressed the indexical value of the polite form of suffix-*masu* appearing when the speaker focused on himself and was aware of his existence. The strength of this article is the data of the study comes from two conflicting situations: television interview programs in formal situations and conversations between neighbors in informal situations. Until the social deixis is clearly illustrated with differences in the background of the level of social status, the situation, and the differences in the variety of languages used.

This study, also focused on the social deixis of the Japanese language, however, the novelty of this study compared (Cook, 1998) was the use of study data. The study data are taken from the Japanese language textbook, *Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1*. The Japan Foundation (the Institute responsible for the development of the Japanese language and culture outside Japan) publishes and recommends the textbook for foreigners who wish to work and live in Japan (<https://www.marugoto.org/en/about/marugoto/>). The topics and material explanations of each chapter are presented following the JF Standard of Can-do based on the teaching standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) (<https://jfstandard.jp/summaryen/ja/render.do>). The book aims to develop Japanese competencies of non-native Japanese learners in understanding sentence patterns, examples and conversational practice, competencies in understanding cultural differences and also, competencies in understanding and respecting cross-cultural differences.

The Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 presents examples of Japanese language sentences and conversations according to topic by providing concrete context. For

example, contextual explanations describing the presence of *Uchi* (inside group environment) and *Soto* (outside group environment), also present upper and lower status levels within *Uchi* itself. While in the *Uchi* neighborhood, speakers and speakers use informal language, while in the *Soto* neighborhood speakers and speakers tend to use formal language and a level of polite language, *Keigo* (honorary language). (Arfianty, Mubshirah & Pujiono, 2023; Takekuro, 2006; Wetzel, 1994; Wehmeyer, 2006).

The Japanese concept of *Uchi* and *Soto* is the concept of grouping people whether they belong to an inner group or an outer group. This concept is used especially when doing business, and interacting with the social community. Respectful language is usually used when interacting with *soto* groups. Even respectful language is also used for people with higher levels of office, seniority, and older age in the *uchi* group (Ashbi, 2013; Wiyatasari, 2020; Wetzel 2004:111; Hinata 1989:24-25).

In general, honorific language is a word that uses *masu-desu* suffixes. (Cook, 1998) states, this form is used for example teacher communication with students. *Keigo* is further divided into *teineigo* (gentle form), *sonkeigo* (language of respect for others) and *kenjyogo* (the language of humble heart). The use of *keigo* is highly dependent on the situation, place and relationship between speaker and speaker and the position of a person in the structure of society. *Keigo* is closely related to the concepts of *uchi* and *soto* (Okamoto, 2021; Marion 2017).

*Yarimorai*'s phrases are marked with the verb *ageru* (give), *morau* (get), *kureru* (take). This form is used in situations where the opposite speech receives or gives goods, and services are those of the *uchi* group and are of the same level or below the speaker's level. While the respect of the three, *sashiageru* (giving), *itadaku* (to receive) and *kudasaru* (to receive) show the giving and receiving of goods or services to/from someone who is socially positioned, higher than the speaker. (Artana, 2020) mentions *yarimorai* phrases consisting of three parts: subject, direct object, and indirect object. It has special cultural characteristics and customs of Japanese society and is closely related to the concepts of *uchi* and *soto*. This illustrates Japanese thinking about respecting others and the importance of maintaining established relationships.

The study aims to test the true social deixis in Japanese and how the context of the social deixis is described in the textbook, Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 published and recommended by The Japan Foundation for foreigners who intend to work and live in Japan. Also, proves the statement of (Wetzel, 2011), that is, social deixis is very clearly seen in the communication of social interactions of Japanese society.

## 2. Methods

The approach used in this study is qualitative descriptive for a description of the results of research on the social status/occupancy between speakers and speech opponents and how language levels are used. Also, it explains how the context of the situation described in the Marugoto textbook: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 can be determined to be true for social deixis. Through a library study, it determined the variations in sentences and conversational forms of textbooks by showing the context of Japanese *uchi* and *soto*, *keigo* (respectful form), *yarimorai* (give and receive expressions) of Japanese (Wetzel, 1985; 1988; 2011). Through free speech (SBLC) techniques, data are sent to obtain data on how to use language (Mahsun, 2007). Data is written in the form of conversation indicating a connection to social deixis. The tapping technique is implemented on the SBLC free-to-speech method

(SBLC) and the technique of recording the context and forms of emerging social deixis. Next, solid techniques are used to test data analysis rules during the analysis process where the determining tool is not from the analyzing language (Sudaryanto, 2015). Data analysis techniques applied sorting technique.

Determining elements (PUPs). Sorting ability is the mental ability to sort and determine. How to divide and separate them is adapted to the nature and characteristics of the determining element itself.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 presents Nine Chapters with different topics. All Chapters are presented by providing context in various formal and informal situations as well as the level of social standing and age level of speakers involved. Who and to whom the conversation took place. The sentence patterns required for each topic are also explained by providing examples of proper usage. Then, in the auditory exercise application section, the learner is directed to think of re-explaining the context in which, who and to whom the conversation takes place.

Here's a sample of the conversations from the chapters in the textbook.

(1) K: *Hai, Kusatsu onsen sanshuukan desu.*

(Yes, Kusatsu Onsen sanshuukan).

Y: *A, moshimoshi, eeto, sumimasen, raishu no 23 nichi ni yoyaku shite iru, Yogi Jamal to moushimasu.*

(Oh, hello, um, excuse me. My name is Yogi Jamal and I have a reservation for next week on the 23rd.)

The social deixis used: *kenjyogo*, *moushimasu* (saying). Relationship K and Y: *soto* (outside group).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 100)

The expression (1), shows a conversation over the phone between hotel staff K and customer Y which used one of a part of *keigo*, that is *kenjyogo* in the form of *moushimasu* (called; say). The phrase of *moushimasu* is the humble phrase of *ii-masu* (called; say). The customer Y, used *moushimasu* for talking about her (name) (Gokenhenshōbu, 2008) against K who was *Soto* (Outer Group). Additionally, between K and Y have also never met face-to-face and interacted before. The use of *moushimasu* in the above conversation is natural and demonstrates the humility. However, even though Y uses the usual formal verb-*masu*, *ii-masu* (say), it does not violate grammatically because of Y spoke as a customer/guest.

✓ *Yogi Jamal to iimasu*

(I'm Yogi Jamal),.

(2) K: *Shoushou omachi kudasai. Oshirabe itashimasu. Eeto, hai, Yogi Jamal sama, 3 gatsu 23 nichi, nimei sama desune.*

(Please wait a moment. I'll look into it. Um, yes, Mr. Yogi Jamal, March 23rd, 2 people.).

Y: *Hai, ano...shokuji no kotode, jitsu wa senshuu meeru o kaitandesuga, henji ga nakatta node, ima Indo kara kakunin shite imasu.*

(Yes, I wrote to you about the meal last week, but I didn't get a reply, so I'm checking from India now).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 100)

Social deixis used are: *keigo*, *shoushou omachi kudasai* (please wait a minute); *kenjyogo*, *o~itashimasu* (I'll do ~ for you). Relationship K and Y: *soto* (outside group).

The expression (2), indicates further conversation over the phone between K and customer Y. It shown that both speakers used *keigo*. K, as a service provider in the business world (hotel) uses *kenjyogo* in the form of *oshirabe itashimasu* (I will check for ~) against Y, as his customer. The phrase of *oshirabe itashimasu* is the humble phrase of *shirabe-masu* (check). This explains that K as a hotel staff member is a representative of the hotel as a service provider to guests showing humility in providing services and serving guests (Gokenhenshubu, 2008). In this context, the expression *oshirabe itashimasu* is a mandatory to use by K, rather than, *shirabe-masu* (check) against Y, such as:

\**Shoushou omachi kudasai, Shirabemasu.*

(Please wait a moment. I'll look into it).

Then, K also uses *sonkeigo* (respectful form), *shoushou omachi kudasai* (please wait a moment) and *nimei sama* (two customers). These *sonkeigo* was applied because K was asking the customer to wait and to confirm the information about the number of guests whom is staying. For this kind of relationship, *sonkeigo* is the phrases that should be used in the Japanese business which is show the respectful the company to the customer, and not be allowed to express like below due to impoliteness.

\**Chotto matte kudasai. Oshirabe itashimasu. Eeto, hai, Yogi Jamal-san, 3 gatsu 23 nichi, futari desune.*

(Wait a minute. I'll look into it. Um, yes, Mr. Yogi Jamal March 23rd, two people.)

(3) Y: A, *dewa, sorede onegaishimasu. Sorekara... eeto... sono... ato, oheya nandesuga... puraibeeto no ofuro ga tsuita heya ni shite itadakemasenka?*

(Oh, well, that's it, please. And then... uh... about the room... Could you please take us to the room with private bath tub?)

K: *Sumimasen, uchi wa soiu oheya wa*

*naindesuyo. Ofuro wa onsen no daiyokujyou o, minasan ni tsukatte itadaite imasuga*

(I'm sorry, but we don't have a room like that. Ofuro is like Onsen's that is mostly used by everyone).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 101)

Social deixis used: *kenjyogo*, *shite itadakemasenka* (may I get (for me)), and also *kenjyogo*, *~teitadaite imasuga* (I beg to be able to~). K and Y relationships: *soto* (outside group).

The expression (3), describes analytical data indicating the existence of the phrases of *yarimorai* (Giving and Receiving) used by Y and K. Y shows humility when he speaks and asks K to do something for himself as does K to Y. This explains that the relationship between the two is as *soto* (outer group). It is suspected that he acknowledged the existence of his interests then used *kenjyogo* with phrase *yarimorai* in the (3). Nevertheless, even though Y, as a customer only used the formal verb-*masu*, *tsukatte moraimasu* (can make it for me~) without *kenjyogo*, it does not violate the grammatical, and rules in *uchi* and *soto* concepts.

√*Sorekara.., eeto.., sono ato, oheya nandesuga, puraibeeto no ofuro ga tsuita heya ni shite moraemasenka?*

(Oh, well, that's it, please. and then... uh... what about the room... Could you please take us to the room with private bath tub?)

On the other hand, K also uses *kenjyogo* and *yarimorai*, the same phrase as Y, which is *~teitadaitai imasuga* (we beg to~). In this case, K, recognizing himself as a representative of the hotel who provides services to guests, asked Y to do the things he directed or the hotel rules, even though the thing he asked Y for was for Y's own benefit. Because of this, when K uses the regular verb *masu*, it is considered impoliteness.

\**Sumimasen, uchi wa soiu oheya wa naindesuyo. Ofuro wa onsen no daiyokujyou o, minasan ni tsukatte moratte imasuga...*

(I'm sorry, but I don't have a room like that. Ofuro is Onsen's It's mostly used by everyone). This suggests that *Yarimorai*'s phrase is also closely related to social deixis, as the form of *Yarimorai*'s phrase used shows social standing, speaking degree and speech opponent at the time (Okamoto, 2021; Marion, 2017). Next, *Yarimorai*'s phrase in the above conversation as well, when viewed from the structure of the sentence is not clearly visible the subject and the object.

Let's compare it to other data examples:

(4) H: *Sou. Demo nanjyuukan mo aru ndesho? chotto nagai kamone.*

(Yes. But you have dozens of editions, right? It might be a little long).

L: *Nn, sou kamoshiremasenga, yomidashitara muchuu ni natte, sugu yomeru to omoimasu*

(Mm, mungkin begitu, tapi, ketika mulai membaca akan menjadi keasyikan dan segera bisa terselesaikan).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 137)

The social deixis used: *keigo*, *kamoshiremasen* (probably), *to omoimasu* (thinking). Non-formal form, *kamone* (probably). Relationship H and L: *uchi* (inner group) but, upper and lower status.

Sentence (4), is a conversation between a teacher H and a foreign student, L. Based on the relationship between the two speakers, they can be classified into *uchi* (internal group). However, within the *uchi* (internal group) there are also status levels based on position, such as seniority and age (Okamoto, 2021; Wetzel, 2004). Thus, the speaker, H, who is aware of himself as a teacher, uses the word *kamone* (possibly) at the end of the conversation sentence with L who is his student status. The word *kamone* is an informal form of the word *kamoshiremasen*. While L speakers use formal forms, *kamoshiremasen* when responding to his teacher, H. In the concept of *soto* and *uchi* with regard to the status of the relationship between teacher and student, the use of informal form by teacher to student is natural and also has nothing to do with H disrespecting to L. But this can also mean the already familiarity between the two. Therefore, if the teacher uses formal forms, *kamoshiremasen* towards the students, it is not unusual. Situations and places of conversation that tend to be more formal may allow teachers to use formal forms, *kamoshiremasen* to their students.

√*Sou. Demo nanjyuukan mo aru ndesho? Chotto nagai kamone.*

(Begitu, tapi berapa puluh edisi pun ada kan? Mungkin sedikit panjang).

(5) H: *Sou. Jyaa, yonde miyou kashira.*

*Reon san mo sonna ni suki nara, kondo wa nihongo de yonde mite kudasai*

(Begitu. Nah, mungkin (saya) akan coba baca nanti. Reon juga bila suka, nanti cobalah baca versi yang bahasa Jepang).

L: *Hai, sou suru tsumori desu.*

(Ya, (saya) juga berencana begitu).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 137)

The social deixis used: *keigo*, *~tekudasai* (~lah), Relationship H and L: *uchi* (inner group) but, upper and lower status.

Expression (5), with the situation and status of position between speaker H and speaker L is the same as expression (4). As teachers of L, H realized that they were in *uchi* (inner group) but with different positions, namely upper and subordinate. The use of the phrase *kudasai* in the phrase *yonde mite kudasai* (try to read), with the intention of instructing those who have a lower rank, younger age to do the requested thing (read) tends to be used in formal situations (class room). Whereas in the same context, if H as a teacher does not use *kudasai*, it is not wrong. The omission of *kudasai* can give the impression of familiarity between the two, as well as indicating a more subtle form of teaching in education.

✓ *Reon san mo sonna ni suki nara, kondo wa nihongo de yonde mite.*

(Reon, if you like it, try reading the Japanese version later).

(6) C: *A, kono shampoo, sanpuru o morattan desuga, otsukai ni narimasenka?*

(A, I got this shampoo, are you willing to use it?)?

N: *Hee, arigatou gozaimasu. Sore ni shitemo Chase san, hontou ni itsumo teinei na kotoba o ohanashi ni narun desune.*

(Chase really always speaks using polite language, huh).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 48)

Social deixis used: casual form of *itadaitan desuga*: *moratta-ndesuga* (got). *Keigo*, *otsukai ni narimasuka* (using); *ohanashi ni narun desune* (speaking). C and N relationships: *soto* (outside group) and for both of them it is the first met.

Sentence (6), gives an overview, a conversation takes place between two speakers C and N who have no close relationship and are not *uchi*-group. Described in the textbook, C is a Japanese language learner who lives in Sidney and N is a housewife who also lives in Sidney. This conversation took place at a fitness center in Sidney and it was described as their first meeting. The speaker C uses casual forms of *moratta-ndesuga* (got) when explaining about himself who has received goods from others. The word *moratta-ndesuga* is used when talking about matters concerning itself. On the other hand, in the same sentence, C used *sonkeigo*, *otsukai ni narimasenka* (would you use this?) when offering shampoo for use to N whom he knew to be Japanese. The use of this *sonkeigo* suggests the relationship between the two is *soto* (outer group), and also, showing respect for C to N. And in return, N also responds to C by using the *sonkeigo* language, *ohanashi ni narun desune* (speaking), which shows N's respect for C. The use of *sonkeigo* by the two speakers also suggests an unfamiliar relationship.

Actually, even if C only used the formal *masu*-form it would be enough, like the following sentence:

✓C: A, *kono shampoo, sanpuru o morattan desuga, tsukaimasenka?*

A, (I) got this shampoo, are (you) willing to use it?

N: *Hee, arigatou gozaimasu. Sore ni shitemo Chase san, hontou ni itsumo teinei na kotoba o hanashimasune.*

(Chase really always speaks using polite language, huh).

(7) T: *Sou. De, Furanki san wa dou? saikin.*

(I see. So, Franki how about you?).

F: *Sugoku isogashii. Raishu, shucchou de Shingapo-ru ni iku koto ni natta kara, Ima wa jyunbi de taihen.*

(A little busy. Next week I will leave for work in Singapore. Now, it's a bit of a hassle with the preparations).

(Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1; 2017: 118)

The social deixis are used: non-formal, *dou* (how); *Isogashii* (busy); *taihen* (tough).

Relationship T and F: *uchi* (inside group) close friends.

For expression (7), the textbook describes the relationship between F and T, which is between two friends who had attended both training and teaching education in Japan. Although they have returned to their country, the two still communicate frequently. Explained in the textbook, the two conversations took place via Skype communication media. Through the above conversation, both use informal language, without formal form, namely *dou* (how); *isogashii* (busy) and *taihen* (tough). These words in the formal form-*masu/desu* are *doudesuka* (how); *isogashii desu* (busy) and *taihen desu* (tough). In the Japanese conversation, the use of informal language without forms-*desu* suggests the relationship between the two is *uchi* (inside group) close friends. This is a natural and even it will feel strange to use formal language without any form/description towards close friends.

The data analysis in sentences (1-7) showed speakers and speech opponents had differences in their position and social status. Sentences (1-3), are conversations between customers and service providers that are certainly *soto* that inevitably lead to the use of a variety of respectful languages between the two. This is also seen in the conversation of the sentence (6) which is also *soto*. It is slightly different for sentences (4-5), although the relationship is *uchi* (teacher and student), but still has to pay attention to the relationship up and down. In this regard, as a disciple, it should continue to use formal language and respectful language. On the other hand, in sentence (7), a variety of honorific languages does not appear at all, because the speaker and the speaker are close friends.

#### 4. Conclusions

The results of the data analysis found that in daily communication, Japanese society pays great attention to the top-down relationship with the person they are talking to. Such as, whether the relationship is in the form of colleagues, senior juniors, customers and service providers or as superiors and subordinates. This top-down relationship is a form of social deixis in Japanese society, which influences the language expressions used when communicating (polite form or casual form). Top-down relationships are the concept of *Uchi*



(inner group) and *Soto* (outside group) in Japanese society. This represents that the social deixis of Japanese were the concepts of *Uchi* (inner group) and *Soto* (outside group). By understanding the concepts of *Uchi* (inner group) and *Soto* (outside group), speakers and speech opponents recognize themselves to determine the variety of languages they can use when communicating. The variety of languages chosen is determined based on top and bottom positions, age and seniority between speakers and speech opponents. However, in case both speakers are *uchi* even though they still have to pay attention to the upper and lower positions, age, in formal or non-formal situations. This concept of *uchi* and *soto* is recognized by the use of a variety of respective languages: *keigo* (*kenjogo*, *teineigo* and *sonkeigo*); *yarimorai* expressions and forms of *~masu/desu*. The concepts of *uchi* and *soto* regulate the system of how Japanese society interacts and how to use various polite languages when communicating in society.

The Japanese Language and Culture Intermediate 1 B1 presents an explanation of the usage and context of how Japanese is actually spoken by its people by demonstrating the concept of *uchi* and *soto*. The textbook details the context with diverse topics in each chapter very close to the actual lives of Japanese people.

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