

Politeness Begins

—Its Underlying Meaning and Psychological Analysis—

Yasuko OBANA

I . Introduction

This paper aims to discuss the underlying meaning of ‘politeness’ from the viewpoint of human nature, and to clarify when and how the universal human psychology starts breaking down into culture-laden politeness phenomena in different languages.

Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) (‘B & L’ thereafter) ‘face-saving strategies’ has broadened the debate on the universality of politeness, and for the last few decades arguments on the universality of their ‘face’ have enriched the field of sociolinguistics. However, much discussion on the universality of politeness focuses on its purpose, values or principles in society, and yet rarely looks at the basic human nature, i.e. human needs/wants and the habit of evaluation, which in fact will break ground for politeness. This is what I call ‘the underlying meaning’ of politeness in this paper, and directly answers to the question of how politeness begins.

The present paper is organised in the following way. In Section II, the etymology of the term ‘politeness’ is discussed as a starting point. This is then compared with the Japanese translated words, *reigi tadashii*, or *teineina*, to see different social interpretations between the two languages. Section III reviews well-known definitions of ‘politeness’ in the previous works. Section IV examines ‘politeness’ by digging its underlying meaning, which creates the basis for politeness to begin with. It also clarifies what causes differing politeness phenomena across cultures.

II . The etymology of ‘politeness’ and Japanese *reigi*

The term ‘politeness’ is derived from a Latin word, *polit-us*, meaning ‘polished, refined’, and its related form is *polire*, which means ‘to smooth, to polish’ (from the Oxford English Dictionary).

The etymology of the term, ‘politeness’, is still a large part of property of modern ‘politeness’, and the previous works on ‘politeness’ by and large purport to its etymology. For example, Watts *et al.* (1992: 2) describes ‘politeness’ as ‘...one of the constraints on human behaviour which help us to achieve “effective social living”’, or as Fraser and Nolen (1981: 96) say that ‘politeness’ is a contract between interactants in an effort to maintain social communication conflict-free. Lakoff (1975) raises ‘formality—keep aloof’ as one of his three rules of politeness, which directly keeps track of the etymology, ‘to polish’.

According to Kasper (1996: 2), the English term, 'polite', dates back to the fifteenth century, and in the seventeenth century, a polite person was 'of refined courteous manners' (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology). Politeness was thus more associated with the social conduct of the upper classes. Kasper (*ibid*) says that 'the semantic association of 'polite' with behaviours of the upper classes is even more obvious in German 'Höflich', French 'courtois', Spanish 'cortes', all of which are adjectival derivatives of nouns for court (G. *Hof*, Fr. *cour*, Sp. *corte*).'

During the Renaissance period, the concept of politeness prevalent in court started shifting its association from 'formal and aloof' to more 'civilised' behaviours; 'civilised' here means that one considers oneself owing to another, and that one should be reciprocal with another in social interactions. 'Politeness' today is more associated with this concept, aiming to 'maintain the equilibrium of interpersonal relationships within the social group' (Reiter 2000: 2).

The term 'to be polite' is translated as *teineina* or *reigi tadashii* in Japanese. *Teineina* can be used as meaning 'elaborate' or 'careful' when it appears, for example, in *teineina shiagari* (elaborate completion), *teneina atsukai* (careful treatment). If it applies to language use such as *teineina kotoba zukai* (polite language use), it is associated with appropriate use of language which the public approves. Since politeness requires careful conducts, it makes sense that this concept includes the meaning of 'carefulness'.

Reigi tadashii, meaning 'manners are correct', on the other hand, is more associated with well-manners and honorifics, or *keigo* (Obana and Tomoda 1994). *Reigi* means literally 'gratitude and rituals', which originates from worshipping gods. *Gi* is a ceremony, and the *kanji* of *rei* originally comes from a picture showing 'kneeling down to offer something to gods'. 'Gods' were everywhere in nature; ancient Japanese worshiped gods and goddesses in nature. Nature is God and Shintoism came from this animism. Later written documents (such as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*) added the sacredness of emperors to this religion.

Keigo originates from words used when praying for gods and goddesses, which developed as *norito* (Shinto prayers) (Asada 2001). It eventually extended its use toward emperors and their families since they were considered as sacred as gods and goddesses. In feudal times, *keigo* further spread out to clarify social ranks among court nobles, and certain honorific styles were assigned to particular ranks.

The history of honorific use still remains today. Social ranks are now replaced with social statuses; juniors use honorifics to seniors. Awe of nature which kept people distant from it is now replaced with emotional distance from strangers. Therefore, status and psychological differences trigger the occurrence of honorifics in Japanese society today.

Although *keigo* is now for mutual respect (Nishida 1987: 18), it cannot be denied that honorifics have never been changed into a type of politeness aiming to achieve friendly, approachable and affable social interactions just as modern 'politeness' in English serves. The original nature of honorifics remains in their modern usage. *Keigo* is still now

associated with 'formal, tense, status-appending, unfamiliar and/or distanced settings' (Obana 2000: 205). Ohishi (1975), Minami (1977), Tsujimura (1989) characterise it as *aratamari* (formal).

It is apparent that the above comparison between Japanese and English shows their different pragmatic meanings due to their differing historical backgrounds. However, these languages are directed toward the same property; that is, 'politeness' is a kind of social standard which each society approves, and politeness functions as a social lubricant. This property also applies to other languages. This is the very reason why varied definitions of politeness and its theories have been introduced in the last three decades to clarify its universality. In the next section, let us briefly look at some major previous works.

III. Review of previous definitions of 'politeness'

1. Definitions of 'politeness' in sociolinguistics

Politeness was once treated as part of Speech Acts. Grice (1975) originally established four maxims underlying the Cooperative conversational principle in transactional discourse. Grice's Cooperative principle and maxims are all directed toward 'effectiveness' in conversation. This idea led Edmondson (1981), Lakoff (1973, 1975, 1977), Leech (1980, 1983) and Searle (1975) to go further into speech act theory, where they suggested rules of politeness. For example, Lakoff (1975) presents three rules: 1. Formality—Keep aloof, 2. Deference—Give options, 3. Camaraderie—Show sympathy. On the other hand, Leech (1983) suggests six principles: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy.

The problem with the above approach is that such rules remain at the abstract level, eliminating particular contexts of human interaction. For example, Lakoff (1975) provides the first rule, 'Formality—Keep aloof'. Indeed, formality is required in certain contexts, however, even in overt 'formal' contexts, keeping aloof is not maintained all the time. Real interactions involve showing both involvement and distance between interactants, depending on how communication develops. The practice of politeness is not just a set of fixed rules, but is more dynamic, transitional and contextual.

Based on Goffman's (1967, 1971) notion of 'face', B & L (1978, 1987) introduced the 'face-saving view'. They claim that their notion of 'face' is a universal concept, and that politeness arises from face-saving strategies. Their work has evoked numerous discussions in sociolinguistics; criticisms have come particularly from researchers working on non-Western languages. However, B & L's attempt is worth considering in detail, because they were the first to try to develop a comprehensive theory of linguistic politeness.

According to B & L, all competent adult members of a society are concerned about their face, the self-image they present to others. 'Face' consists of two kinds of desires (face-wants): the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face), and the desire to be approved of (positive face). These two kinds of face are the basic wants of any individual

in social interaction, and politeness is motivated by the desire to maintain face. However, communication may involve acts that threaten the other's face. B & L (1978: 70) say that many actions are intrinsically face-threatening acts (FTAs); 'by their very nature, they run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker'. Therefore, politeness is manifested as face-saving strategies in order to minimise FTAs.

B & L's theory has evoked numerous reviews, controversies, and criticisms. However, they can be classified into three areas.

1. Their concept of 'face' comes from individualists' societies, and does not apply to collectivists' societies.
2. Their FTAs are not universally applicable. The same behaviour may be or may not be face-threatening across cultures. Thus, their strategies may not apply to other languages.
3. Politeness is not always manifested by strategies.

Concerning the first point, strong objections came from scholars studying Asian politeness (e.g. Chang and Holt 1994: Gu 1990: Hill *et al.* 1986: Ide 1989: Ide *et al.* 1992: Kummer 1992: Mao 1994: Matsumoto 1988, 1989: Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994). They all argue that B & L's 'face' delivers interactants' territorial concerns for autonomy and privacy, the value of which is placed on individualism in Western cultures.

For example, Matsumoto (1988) and Gu (1990), addressing Japanese and Chinese cultures respectively, argue that B & L's concept is untenable in these cultures because their notion of 'face' is not applicable to other societies of socio-centric orientation, where 'face' predominantly entails one's placement in one's social relation with others. Matsumoto (1988) points out that what is most paramount to a Japanese person is not his right to act freely, but his position in a group in relationship to all others, his acceptance by them, and the duties it entails.

In a similar way, Ide (1989) uses the term '*wakimae*' (discerning), arguing that Japanese politeness is the evidence of showing one's *wakimae* in relation to others, or where one stands in relation to others. Therefore, B & L's concept of 'face' is alien to Japanese society.

The second point questions the universality of FTAs across cultures. For example, B & L's classification of 'indirectness' as a negative politeness strategy may not be applicable to all cultures. It has been reported that in south Western and Slavic cultures, directness connotes sincerity, straightforwardness and cordiality (Sifianou 1992: Wierzbicka 1995) rather than imposing upon one's freedom of action. Pan (2000) says that in Chinese culture, a direct suggestion is considered a display of good will. Katriel (1986) observes the Jewish preference to 'straight-talk'. Furthermore, a speech act which is seemingly imposing in one culture may not be so in another. In Japanese, a junior asking a favour of a senior, followed by the expression, *Doozo yoroshiku onegai shimasu.* (lit. Please do good to me), is an FTA, if we take it literally in the English sense. However, this in fact enhances the face of the superior by recognising the hierarchical difference between the two interactants

(Matsumoto 1990).

The third issue, 'politeness is not always manifested by strategies,' has been raised particularly by scholars of Japanese politeness. Japanese honorifics are classified as part of Strategy 5 of Negative Politeness in B & L's categorisation. They define honorifics as 'direct grammatical encodings of relative status between participants, or between participants and persons or things referred to in the communicative event, deriving from frozen outputs of politeness strategies' (B & L 1987: 179). However, Ide (1989) contests that the use of Japanese honorifics is not a strategy but the socio-pragmatic equivalent of grammatical concord. Thus, honorifics are ascribed to socially prescribed norms, while strategies to the speaker's own intention; in other words, the former are conventionally fixed, while the latter are volatile. Kasper (1994: 3207) comments that 'the study of discernment politeness is thus predominantly a sociolinguistic rather than a pragmatic concern.'

The issues and controversies concerning B & L's theory are in general parallel to the dichotomy of 'collectivism' and 'individualism.' Different politeness phenomena and social values seem to be primarily derived from the difference between collectivism and individualism. This dichotomy is one of the most explored areas of social psychology, and sociolinguistics has imported this notion in order to attempt to explain different politeness phenomena across cultures. However, a more careful examination of issues of this dichotomy reveals that politeness phenomena cannot clearly be classified with it.

2. Collectivism vs. individualism, and 'politeness'

Collectivism and individualism are terms used as a yardstick in social psychology whereby universal features are sought through observation of social behavioural patterns across cultures.

Hofstede (1991: 51) views collectivism and individualism as follows: '...individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose... Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated in strong, cohesive ingroups.' In general, individualism is most characteristic of Northern and Western Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Collectivism, on the other hand, is most conserved in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Overall, collectivism and individualism have been treated as bi-polar, and a number of researchers have endeavoured to seek contrastive behavioural patterns. Of course, some scholars (e.g. Schwartz 1990: Tyerman and Spencer 1983: Triandis 1994: Trompenaars 1993: Wierzbicka 1994) warn that the dichotomy may mislead to diametrically opposed binarism. Triandis (1994: 42) and Trompenaars (1993: 49) say that both types exist in every culture, however, one or the other is manifested more conspicuously in different situations, and that each society may tend to be susceptible for one or the other direction. However, because social psychology emphasises more on classification of differences across cultures, seeking evidence of the bi-polar distinction never seems to cease.

Although I have no intention to intervene the domain of social psychology, from the

viewpoint of politeness research, a number of questions can be posited. First, many variables listed as typical features in individualism and collectivism have never been clearly defined, and have been used quite naively. For example, Yoshida (1994) claims that a society valuing collectivism places a high value on harmony and good interpersonal relationships. However, variables such as 'harmony' and 'good interpersonal relationships' have never been questioned. I believe that every society aims at these features in communication, and politeness is a means of achieving them. Yoshida also says that an individualist society is likely to encourage behaviour that brings merits for specific people. However, in Japanese society which is assumed to be a typical collectivist society, business organizations seek merits for their own group members. If these members are not 'specific people', who are they?

Kim (1994) also proposes that collectivist cultures are guided by the requirement not to impose on the hearer and not to hurt the hearer's feelings. She might have found some different patterns in specific social situations in her study. However, this conclusion is too generalised to be accepted without qualification because the requirement quoted here applies to many societies whether they are individualistic or collectivistic.

In other words, variables used to characterise individualism and collectivism are often accepted as axiomatic, and have never been defined. Therefore, words such as 'harmony', 'autonomy', 'self-direction' etc. remain obscure in their meaning.

The second question is whether or not their methodological construction is appropriate. For example, Smith and Bond (1998: 106–109) refer to some results presenting different patterns concerning 'describing oneself.' Americans used many more generalised trait descriptions than the Japanese, so it was concluded that Americans describe themselves in a more abstract manner while Japanese characterise themselves situationally or via interpersonal relationship. However, what questions were made in order to extract this result? If the question is familiar (through education, for instance) to a particular group of people, they will describe themselves successfully, meeting the researcher's expectations. In other words, the questionnaire may be already biased, and might have prevented another group of people from 'describing themselves' in accordance with the researcher's expectations. In this case, the question is not a matter of the dichotomy of sociological types, but is to do with the methodological appropriateness of the research.

Furthermore, because of the over-emphasis on the bi-polar theory in social psychology, research topics have been extended to further phenomena, such as describing oneself, romantic relationship, communication with foreigners and self-disclosure. They are no longer a matter of the dichotomy, but can pick up different responses even within the same culture. For example, regional differences often exhibit diverse attitudes (e.g. foreigners in rural areas in Japan are treated differently from those in urban areas; communication styles naturally differ in these areas within the same country). Up-bringing or class differences in the same culture may present more different degrees of 'self-disclosure' than similar classes in different cultures.

It is now apparent that it is questionable to adopt collectivism and individualism to distinguish politeness phenomena across cultures. It has been found that the dichotomy is not a trustworthy ground to resort to because of too many ambiguous variables and doubts on the experimental validity.

Here, we have reached the question of how then we should understand 'politeness'. That is, what is the fundamental architecture underlying politeness? Where is the crucial point at which culturally specific politeness phenomena emerge from the universal concept of politeness?

IV. The underlying meaning of politeness—A new approach—

This section introduces a new approach to the underlying meaning of politeness. First, fundamental human nature in society, the need/want for involvement and freedom, will be explicated, to show how it develops into a basis for universal politeness. Second, it will be elucidated how universal politeness breaks down into manifestations of different politeness phenomena across cultures.

1. Involvement and independence as basic human needs/wants

In sociology, 'society' is defined as 'a large complex of human relationship,' or 'referring to a system of interaction' (Berger 1966: 38). 'Each person is dependent on others; their survival cannot be separated from their relationships with others, and in turn, relationships depend on the mutual coordination of actions among social actors' (Foley 1997: 261–262). 'Socialisation' is 'the process by which a child learns to be a participant member of society' (Berger 1966: 116). As a result of this process, 'each of us carries within us in the habitus a great number of relational patterns developed through our history of structural couplings with others' (Foley 1997: 262).

This sociological view of the relationship between man and society gives us the impression that society imposes and forces us to be integrated into it, as if society manufactures men it needs to keep going, but at the same time, we individuals are willing to conform to the rules, movements and changes of our society. Let us call this 'involvement' (the term used by Scollon and Scollon 1995); it is our willingness to become part of society.

However, our human nature carries another diverse feature. We need and want to be free and independent from such involvement. At this point, degrees of involvement and freedom are not questioned as different degrees apply to different individuals and circumstances. The point here is that human beings are social creatures, but at the same time, try to maintain their own independence. This does not necessarily mean that we wish to live alone, or do not wish to socialise with people. Rather, it emphasises our right not to be completely controlled by our surroundings or social rules. It is our wish to be free from obligation to or imposition from others. This is because we know that once we are

involved in socialisation, not only will we enjoy sharing, interaction and solidarity, but also we will carry duties and responsibilities, be in debt to others, and sometimes feel as if we had no choices. We wish to have a certain amount of autonomy, or independence from such social rules, and options to choose for ourselves. Therefore, 'involvement' and 'independence' are our basic human nature in social life. Tannen (1986: 30) claims these features as 'universal human needs', but 'trying to honour these conflicting needs puts us in a double bind...'

Man and society are not separable, and every social being carries these two needs/wants. The balance between these human requirements is difficult to maintain. First, everybody has these needs/wants. Second, they are diverse and contradictory human emotions. The simplest solution could be that everybody has every right to pursue 'independence' and 'involvement.' But, would they freely pursue them? In reality, they do not. We do not like certain responsibilities, but we still fulfil them. We may prefer to visit our friends anytime, but in reality we do not do so at three o'clock in the morning. We may feel like turning up at the party at anytime that suits us, but in fact we do our best to be on time. Why?

Here is another part of human nature that makes the pursuit of our basic needs/wants more difficult; that is, our constant consciousness of others. We wish to pursue the needs/wants of 'involvement' and 'independence', however, our consciousness of others controls us in pursuing them freely, because we hope to look good to, to be accepted and even to be appreciated by others. Therefore, in actual socialisation, we all negotiate, compromise and have second thoughts when striving for involvement and independence. In other words, our consciousness about the outer world demarcates the total freedom for involvement and independence, which is what gives rise to the necessity of politeness. Politeness is thus the result of maintaining the balance between our basic needs/wants and our consciousness of others.

2. Evaluation as the basis of politeness

Tannen (1986: 31) says that the reason why the choice between involvement and independence is not entirely free is because 'it is informed by the individual's cultural knowledge.' The cultural knowledge shared between people in society moulds their behaviours in a certain direction. It is social criteria or standards which help to keep a good balance between our consciousness of others and basic needs/wants in society. Where, then, do such standards come from?

Let us think about the word, 'good', here. 'Good' is the opposite of 'bad', but whether something is considered good or bad is actually the result of our judgements. Just as Shakespeare says, 'There is nothing good or bad; thinking makes it so,' 'thinking' is in fact a judgement. There is nothing intrinsically good or bad. Our evaluation is brought to measure something as good or bad. 'Catching fish' may be good from the viewpoint of lovers of fishing, but may be bad from the perspective of lovers of animals. There is no

absolute 'good' or 'bad' when considering phenomena around us. Even 'morality' is the result of our judgements at the social level.

Our daily life involves numerous evaluations of almost everything surrounding us, by comparison, by weighing and by measuring. Many linguistic terms already imply the result of such measurement. For example, warm—cold, tall—short, high—low, big—small, clean—dirty, beautiful—ugly, - these contrasted terms may already carry the result of human judgement. Some are still neutral but others quite judgemental. The term, 'clean', gives a certain image, and in general we take it as 'good'; on the other hand, 'dirty' as 'bad'.

While the word level connotes a certain evaluation, this is even more notable at the sentence and higher levels. That is, words which themselves have a relatively neutral meaning may be coloured by our judgement when they are placed in a certain linguistic context. Peng (2000: 197) gives the following example:

(1) 子供を食物にするあんな奴は人間とは言えない。

Kodomo o kuimono ni suru anna yatsu wa ningen to wa i-e-nai.

child Acc take advantage of such bloke Top human being Quote Top say-can-not

(That guy who takes advantage of children cannot be regarded as a human being.)

Peng says that the word *ningen* (human beings) used in (1) is not an objective description of a sentient being, but connotes certain evaluations about 'human beings'. The basic level of morality (e.g. thou shall not kill) is posited upon the framework of 'human beings', and anyone that would violate such morality is not worthy of being called 'a human being', although biologically they are human beings. Therefore, the term, *ningen*, contains both a factual aspect, namely a biological description, and an evaluative bearing, which satisfy our basic morals. Peng (*ibid*) says that 'the world of meaning presents not only recognition of facts, but also the evaluated world coloured by our judgemental filters.' (translation by the author).

When such evaluations are historically conventionalised and accepted throughout the society, they become social standards, functioning as the yardstick to judge social behaviours as acceptable or not. Social standards may be quite rigorous like laws, or may be unspoken as social etiquettes. They may be so flexible as to be negotiable (e.g. queuing is a social habit well established in British society, but can be broken when someone is in a hurry).

Politeness is a part of such social standards. Politeness thus underlies conventionalised evaluations. The reason why politeness varies across cultures is that evaluations have been developed and conventionalised differently, because societies have all experienced different histories of environments and political situations.

It should be noted that 'conventionalised evaluations' do not mean a set of rules applying to each specific occasion. Certain standardised phenomena exist in each society (e.g. saying 'thank you' to someone who is kind to you¹⁾), but evaluations often differ

1) However, in Swahili and some other African languages, the giver of a present says 'thank you' to the receiver. Giving away something in such cultures means having a divine opportunity to get cooperation of the other under God's blessing (Asada 2001: 29).

within the same society; for example, regional, up-bringing, and gender differences contribute to creating fuzzy areas in social standards. We also know empirically that individuals have their own codes of standards. What is more, standards are negotiable; for instance, two Japanese strangers may start conversing with quite high levels of honorifics, but as time goes on, honorifics will start shifting their levels and settle down at a certain level, or one may end up using honorifics all the time while the other drops them altogether, depending on how their consciousness of each other and their social relationship develops. The same phenomenon may not occur among another group of strangers. This is the very reason why politeness is often described as highly situational, negotiable and dynamic.

We have understood that the underlying meaning of politeness lies in our basic needs/wants, involvement and independence. I use these terms to avoid confusion with B & L's 'positive and negative faces'. They sound similar to 'involvement and independence' because both are closely related to basic human needs/wants. B & L are right in saying that these basic human needs/wants are universal, and constitute the underlying meaning of politeness. However, they are wrong in that their notion of face is directly equalised with human needs/wants, and that it is placed only at the individual's level, regarding the public as an external modifier.

First of all, the basic human needs/wants, involvement and independence, are the self's default desires; they are natural, intuitive and fundamental human emotions. On the other hand, 'face' is something that has been culturally moulded and has become part of one's belief system in society, thus, it differs across cultures. To maintain certain social standards and to follow their evaluation criteria is the manifestation of politeness. To violate such standards may cause loss of face, whether it is the loss of one's individual face or one's group face. In either case, 'face' here is a public arena experientially shaped by one's cultural knowledge, stamped on to one's mind. Politeness is a collective and social phenomenon, and one's face is learnt according to the way in which social standards are constituted in one's society. In other words, the value of 'face' differs across cultures, just as the value of 'politeness' does. Therefore, our human needs/wants cannot be equated with 'face'; the former are basic human emotions prevalent universally, and the latter is based on specific cultural values acquired in order to conform to standards in society.

Second, because 'face' carries the cultural values of a society, it cannot be placed only at the individual level. 'Face' is interpreted differently from society to society. In some societies, 'face' is associated with a self extended to others in one's group. Losing or saving face in such societies encompasses one's relationship with others in the group, and its judgement relies upon where one recognises oneself to be in the group. 'Face' in B & L's sense is limited to concerns of individuals. This is the very reason why their notion of 'face' has been criticised by researchers working on non-Western languages.

3. Independent and interdependent construals of the Self: the breaking point of universal politeness

It seems then that controversies concerning B & L's 'face' are derived from differing perceptions of social behavioural patterns across cultures. Why was their notion of 'face' criticised as representing only an individual's face, indicating that the opposite 'face', group face, exists in other societies? We have now reached the shifting point of universal 'politeness' to culture-specific phenomena of politeness.

Reiter (2000: 23) says that the social self (in contrast with the private self) consists of two different construals of 'face': the independent and the interdependent one. The latter is evidenced in a number of Asian, African, Latin American and many southern European cultures (Reiter quotes from Hall (1976) and Markus & Kitayama (1991)), many of which have had feudal and monarchic systems. Reiter (*ibid*) says:

'...in the independent construal the person is also responsive to the environment, but this social responsiveness derives from the need to strategically determine the best way to express or assert the internal attribute of the 'self.' On the other hand, in the interdependent construal, the 'self' is seen as part of an encompassing social relationship and one's behaviour is determined by what one perceives to be the thoughts and actions of others in the relationship.'

I will employ the terms, independent and interdependent construals of the self, when explaining different socio-psychological motivations for the use of politeness. However, I would not say that societies in the world should be classified according to these two types of construals. Because the 'self' in public manifests both independent and interdependent construals as a result of natural human psychology, it will present one or the other, according to situations that require appropriate behaviours. To explain Japanese politeness, for example, the interdependent construal is not sufficient to cover all its variety, because Japanese politeness emanates from both construals occurring interchangeably, depending upon situations where the speaker is placed, and social relationships between speaker, listener and a person referred to in interaction. In English speaking societies such as Australia, one may find more examples of the independent construal of the self, however, certain social situations do demand the interdependent self in order to achieve smooth communication (e.g. the company's duty to take responsibility in public for the error of one of its members).

The dichotomy of independent and interdependent construals may sound similar to that of collectivism and individualism. However, I avoid the use of the latter because they have been used for classifying societies in the world, and for identifying common behavioural patterns with one or the other type, in order to place them into the binary categorisation. On the other hand, I use independent and interdependent construals to explain how interactants appropriately employ one or the other construal in different situations within the same society. I limit the use of these construals to the domain of the speaker's socio-psychological judgement in a given context. For example,

- (2) いやあ、その意見はちょっと違うような気がするけど、、、。

Iyaa, sono iken wa chotto chigau-yoona ki ga suru kedo...
Well that opinion Top a little different-look feel though
(Well, I feel that your opinion is a little different (= wrong).)

- (3) ちょっと手伝ってくれないかなあ。

Chotto tetsudat-te-kure-nai kanaa.
a little help-TE-receive-not (I) wonder
(I am wondering if you could give me a little help.)

(2) and (3) share a common polite strategy that the speaker avoids a direct opinion or request by using terms such as *chotto* (a little), *chigau* (different, instead of *machigatteiru* = wrong) and *kure-nai* (receive-not). Indirectness is also common in English politeness by using negative forms, euphemism and hedges like ‘Won’t you...?’, ‘He passed away,’ and ‘I rather think...’ Incompleteness as in (2) and self-talk ending as in (3) may occur in English, too (e.g. ‘This may be good, but...’ ‘I’m wondering if you could...’).

Besides the common strategy, English and Japanese carry the same presentation of the self here. That is, the independent construal is conserved. (2) and (3) are both polite strategies whereby the speaker is negotiating with the listener. Indirectness is used as a strategy because the speaker does not wish to impede the listener’s territory (when uttering (3)) or to hurt the listener’s feeling (as in (2)). It is a strategy for maintaining the listener’s individual construal. In this respect, English and Japanese do not differ in dealing with how the self is reserved.

However, English and Japanese are also distinctive especially when the world of *keigo* is considered. First, this world often (not always²⁾) represents the interdependent construal of the Self, and this is evidenced in linguistic terms, too. In this world, the speaker must perceive where he/she stands in relation to the other, and this perception is explicitly realised in honorific styles. For example,

- (4) 田中が戻りましたら、お電話するように伝えておきます。

Tanaka ga modori-mashi-tara, o-denwa-suru-yooni tsutae-te-oki-masu.
Tanaka Nom return-Polite-when Hon-phone-do-to tell-TE-complete-Polite
(When Tanaka returns, I will tell him/her to phone you back.)

In (4), the speaker considers Tanaka to be his/her group member, which is shown in the use of *kenjoo*-style (humble style) for Tanaka’s action (*o-denwa-suru* = to phone up) as if it were the speaker’s own. *O-denwa-suru* is a *kenjoo*-style, implying deference to the listener. Whether Tanaka is the speaker’s senior in the company or not, the speaker treats Tanaka as his/her group member. This means that the speaker employs the interdependent construal of her/himself, showing the listener how the speaker stands socially between Tanaka and the listener.

On the other hand, the interdependent construal is not explicitly stressed in the

2) Interdependent construals are evident when a speaker is acting as a representative of his/her organisation, or talking about his/her family members. However, they are not clearly marked in two interactants’ negotiation.

English language. 'We' may somewhat mark this construal, but except certain behaviours (e.g. pursuing benefits for one's group), the language itself does not symbolise how the speaker places him/herself in relation to the other.

It may be argued that in English, too, the speaker perceives where he/she is situated, especially when he/she is placed in a formal public situation, or when he/she is conscious of status differences. Indeed, such situations may force the speaker to use more formal styles. However, the choice of formal styles is still determined at the independent construal level. How the self wants to present itself to the public results in choosing certain formal styles. As politeness is a social phenomenon, so is the independent construal. The independent construal does not mean 'individualistic' no matter where the self is placed. It should conform to the expectation of society. Therefore, the choice of a formal style in a given situation is a matter of the relationship between an individual and his/her situated environment. On the other hand, the choice of a certain honorific style in Japanese is determined at the interdependent construal level, because a particular style signifies the speaker's perception of where she/he socially stands in relation to the other, and of who is her/his group member and who is not.

What is most distinctive between English and Japanese is that the interdependent construal is linguistically entailed in Japanese politeness, whereas it remains psychological in English politeness and is not systematically realised in linguistic terms. In Japanese, the use of certain honorific styles clarifies who is the speaker's group member and who is placed outside the group. In English, on the other hand, except the collective 'we', and certain jargon and in-group language (e.g. swear words among Australian mates), group consciousness is not linguistically evident, and even if it is in a limited way, its linguistic formation is not systematically organised.

V. Conclusion

This paper examined the underlying meaning of politeness. It is a default human psychology which is possessed by every human being. Our habit of evaluation of the outer world as well as our basic human needs/wants in relation to our surroundings build the foundation of politeness.

'Face' is a secondary and already culturally-formed feature in society; therefore, it is interpreted differently in different cultures. It cannot be the primary basis for politeness. In a similar way, rules of politeness (such as 'keep aloof', 'be modest') cannot be universal, either because they are also coloured by a particular social feature. The examination of politeness should probe more deeply into basic human psychology which exists as a universal feature before any social or cultural colouring comes in.

References

Asada, H. (2001). *Keigo de toku nihon no byodo, fu-byodo* (Japanese equality and inequality analysed with

- honorifics), Tokyo: Kodansha gendai bunko.
- Berger, P. L. (1966). *Invitation to sociology*. Harmondworth: Penguin Books.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. In: Goody, E. N. (ed.), *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 56–289.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness—Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chang, H. C. and Holt, G. R. (1994). A Chinese perspective on face as inter-relational concern. In: Ting-Toomey, S. (ed.), *The challenge of facework*. Albany: State University of New York, 95–131.
- Edmondson, W. (1981). *Spoken discourse. A model for analysis*. London: Longman.
- Foley, W. A. (1997). *Anthropological linguistics—An introduction—*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Fraser, B. and Nolen, W. (1981). The association of deference with linguistic form. *International Journal of the Sociology of the Language*, 27: 93–109.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. New York: Garden City.
- Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public: Microstudies of the public order*. New York: Penguin.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In: Cole, P. & Morgan, J. (eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41–58.
- Gu, Y. (1990). *Politeness phenomena in modern China*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(2), 237–257.
- Hall, E. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hill, B., Ide, S., Ikuta, S., Kawasaki, A., and Ogino, T. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness—Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English—. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 10, 347–371.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua*, 8, 223–248.
- Ide, S., Hill, B., Carnes, Y. M., Ogino, T. and Kawasaki, A. (1992). The concept of politeness: An empirical study of American English and Japanese. In: Watts, R. J. et al. (eds.), 281–297.
- Kasper, G. (1996). Politeness. In: Verschueren, J. et al. (eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publ. Co., 1–20.
- Katriel, T. (1986). *Talking straight: Dugri speech in Israeli Sabra culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, M. S. (1994). Cross-cultural comparisons of the perceived importance of interactive constraints. *Human Communication Research*, 21, 128–151.
- Kim, U., Triandis, H. C., Kagitçibasi, Ç., Choi, S. and Yoon, G. (eds.) (1994). *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method, and applications*. Thousand oaks: Sage.
- Kummer, M. (1992). Politeness in Thai. In: Watts, R. J. et al. (eds.), 325–336.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness: or, minding your p's and q's. *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 292–305.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lakoff, R. (1977). What you can do with words: Politeness, pragmatics and performatives. In: Rogers, A., Wall, B., and Murphy, J. (eds.), *Proceedings of the Texas conference on performatives, presuppositions, and implicatures*. Arlington: Center of Applied Linguistics, 79–105.
- Leech, G. (1980). *Explorations in semantics and pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Mao, L. R. (1994). Beyond politeness theory: "Face" revisited and renewed. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 21, 451-486.
- Markus, H. and Kiyataya, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2): 224-253.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12, 403-426.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1989). Politeness and conversational universals—Observation from Japanese. *Multilingual*, 8 (2/3), 207-221.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1990). Linguistic politeness and cultural style: Observations from Japanese. In: Clancy, P. M. (ed.), *Japanese and Korean linguistics, Vol. 2*. Stanford: Stanford Linguistic Association, 55-67.
- Minami, F. (1977). Keigo no kinoo to keigo koodoo (The function of honorifics and honorific behaviours). In: Ohno, S. and Shibata, T. (eds.), *Keigo: Iwanami kooza, Nihongo, Vol. 4*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1-44.
- Morisaki, S. and Gudykunst, W. B. (1994). Face in Japan and the United States. In: Ting-Toomey, S. (ed.), *The challenge of facework*. Albany: State University of New York, 47-93.
- Nishida, N. (1987). *Keigo*. Tokyo: Tokyodo Publishing Co.
- Obana, Y. (2000). *Understanding Japanese—A handbook for learners and teachers—*. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers.
- Obana, Y. and Tomoda, T. (1994). Sociological significance of the term politeness in English and Japanese. *The Bulletin of Japanese Studies Association of Australia*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 37-49.
- Ohishi, H. (1975). *Keigo*. Tokyo: Chikuma shoboo.
- Pan, Y. (2000). *Politeness in Chinese: Face-to-face interaction*. Stamford: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Peng, G. (2000). Matsushita bunpoo 'taiguu' no honshitsu to sono rironteki kanoosei—'kachi no imiron' no shikumi—(The nature of 'how to treat others' in Matsushita's grammar, and its theoretical feasibility—the framework of semantics of evaluation—). *Sekai no nihongo kyooiku*, 10, 191-206.
- Reiter, R. M. (2000). *Linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1990). Individualism-collectivism: Critique and proposed refinements. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 21(2), 139-157.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In: Cole, P. and Morgan, J. (eds.), *Syntax and semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Sifianou, M. (1992). *Politeness phenomena in England and Greece—A cross-cultural perspective—*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smith, P. B. and Bond, M. H. (1998). *Social psychology across cultures* (second edition). London: Prentice Hall Europe.
- Scollon, R. and Scollon, S. W. (1995). *Intercultural communication*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Tannen, D. (1986). *That's not what I meant: How conversational style makes or breaks your relations with others*. New York: W. Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994). Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of collectivism and individualism. In: Kim, U. et al. (eds.), 41-51.
- Trompenaars, F. (1993). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business*. London:

Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd.

- Tsujimura, T. (1989). Taiguu hyoogen to nihongo kyooiku (Polite expressions and Japanese teaching). *Nihongo Kyooiku*, No. 69, 1-10.
- Tyerman, A. and Spencer, C. (1983). A critical test of the Sherifs' robber's cave experiments. *Small Group Behaviour*, 14, 515-531.
- Watts, R. J. (1992). Linguistic politeness and politic verbal behaviour: Reconsidering claims for universality. In: Watts, R. J. *et al.* (eds.), 43-69.
- Watts, R. J., Ide, S., and Ehlich, K. (eds.) (1992). *Politeness in language—Studies in its history, theory and practice—*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1994). "Cultural scripts": A semantic approach to cultural analysis and cross cultural communication. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 5, 1-24.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1995). Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, 145-161.
- Yoshida, T. (1994). Interpersonal versus non-interpersonal realities: An effective tool individualists can use to better understand collectivists. In: Brislin, R. W. and Yoshida, T. (eds.), *Improving intercultural interactions: Modules for cross-cultural training programs*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 243-267.

Politeness Begins

—Its Underlying Meaning and Psychological Analysis—

尾 鼻 靖 子

本稿はポライトネスの由来を人間の根本の性に求めて探求する。従来ポライトネスの研究は普遍的な定義を求め、そのためこの30年余りさまざまな議論がなされてきた。しかし「円滑なコミュニケーションを図るため」というのは定義よりもポライトネスの目的を示しているにすぎない。また、「改まり」、「faceを守る」、「社会の儀礼」といった定義はある言語に当てはまっても他言語に当てはまらないという普遍性を覆すものとして批判も多々あった。それらは、一定の社会に起きるポライトネスの現象から帰納的に抽出したものである。つまりこれらの定義は「社会性」を帯びた定義だからである。一旦社会性を帯びた定義は普遍性からはずれる。たとえば Brown & Levinson の face においても個人主義社会の face であると批判を浴びたのも、face は社会性を帯びた要素であるからである。ある社会ではそれは個人の名誉かもしれないが、ほかの社会ではそれは個人の所属するグループの名誉に関することと解釈されるからである。

そこで本稿では、人間の根本の欲求、つまり社会とかかわりあいたいという一面と社会から自由になりたいという相反する一面に焦点をあて、そのバランスを取るために必要な条件がポライトネスであると説く。また、ポライトネスの根本は、人間が回りの全ての価値判断をする性質にあり、その個人の価値判断が歴史的に因習化され社会化されたものがその文化のポライトネスの現象であると説く。

このようなポライトネスの根本原理の前では、従来の face の問題、個人主義と集団主義によってポライトネスの概念は異なるという議論は起こり得ない。人間の生来持つ心理原理に由来するからである。