

Politeness as Role-Identity

— Application of Symbolic Interactionism —

Yasuko OBANA

1. Introduction

The present paper attempts to view the concept of politeness from a different perspective. By applying a Role Theory called ‘Symbolic Interactionism’ (SI), which is widely discussed in social psychology, I argue that linguistic politeness is the entailment of one’s social identity, typifying how one has determined to make/take a role in course of interaction. Roles may carry normative attributes, but at the same time can be shaped and re-shaped moment by moment as the interaction unfolds different pragmatic features. In other words, interaction is ‘a matter of negotiating identities and roles’ (McCall, 2003: 329), thus, in ongoing interaction, one’s identities or roles keep changing by taking the most appropriate role in each moment.

The paper emphasizes the following four points. First, while admitting certain conventional, normative elements of politeness (i. e. normative roles in this paper), it also focuses on the volatile and dynamically shifting nature of politeness. It is because human interaction, in all its intricacies, evokes interactants’ interpretation of each interactional moment, which forms their minds and selves, determining certain roles to take. In other words, roles keep changing, and in light of the chosen role, the most appropriate polite action is determined in that moment. This assumption will lead to accounting for, for example, utterances which could deviate from a rule book of politeness or a set of norms, and yet considered ‘polite’ in a particular moment of interaction. That is, politeness is not a set of norms, but negotiable, flexible and situational behaviour.

Second, although I basically agree with the prevalent tenet that politeness aims at smooth communication and exists as a social lubricant, I do not accept that politeness primarily functions as redressing potential Face Threatening Acts (FTAs: Brown & Levinson, 1987). Rather, politeness is the result of one’s appropriate role-taking or role-making, and in this process the consideration of FTAs becomes secondary. Role recognition and its implementation is the principal theme in determining politeness strategies. It is because when a certain role is mutually recognised between the interactants, it is not the content of an utterance (e.g. burden-request) but fulfilling the role which triggers a certain linguistic form (e.g. a direct request as a chairperson in Japanese as long as it is within his/her roles).

Third, this paper emphasises that politeness is the product of how the hearer interprets an utterance the speaker makes. Many Speech Act theories (e.g. Grice, 1975; Lakoff, 1973, 1975, 1977; Leech, 1980, 1983; Searle, 1975, to mention a few) and Brown and Levinson (1987) give much attention to the speaker (or the Model Person in Brown& Levinson), and provides an ideal

situation where this (ideal) speaker uses strategies appropriately to achieve smooth communication. However, the present paper values reality in which the hearer interprets the speaker's utterance, and the interpretation varies due to interactional conditions (e. g. social relationship, what the interactants expect from each other in a given situation, the content of an utterance, where the interaction takes place, etc.). Roles and subsequent actions (strategies) are based on the speaker's interpretation of such interactional conditions. However, the hearer may or may not interpret those actions as appropriate, which results in judging them as polite or not polite.

Finally, this paper does not differentiate Brown & Levinson's strategies from Ide's (1989) *wakimae* (discernment) politeness, particularly in dealing with Japanese politeness. This is because both honorifics and strategies are borne out of the determination of one's roles. The only difference is that honorifics are the grammatical conversion of strategically constructed linguistic forms, i. e. in Japanese the speaker first constructs an unmarked sentence with strategies and then converts its (mainly) verbs and nouns into honorific forms (marked). Honorifics indeed may quite accurately reveal what social relationship the two interactants have (i. e. the socially lower position uses more honorifics toward the higher). However, the motivation to select a certain strategy is not different from that for an honorific form: the recognition and then implementation of one's role(s) in the process of interaction. Furthermore, just as strategies, honorifics are not static but volatile; they dynamically change as interaction proceeds because the interactants identify a different role in each moment.

This paper first introduces the concept of 'roles' in Role Theory, particularly from the viewpoint of Symbolic Interactionism (SI). Second, it illustrates how roles in SI applies to politeness phenomena by providing examples, bearing in mind the four points mentioned above. The present paper focuses on Japanese examples, however, the concept of role should be able to apply to many other languages.

2. The Concept of Role

Role Theory is a discipline in social psychology that explains how individuals form their social identities, how they act out social processes, and what consequences are caused by performing their identities (=roles) in social life. In short, Role Theory studies about self identity in society, and examines how one determines one's social selves and present one's social behaviour. Goffman (1959) explains the relationship between social identities and roles in terms of theatrical actors who play a role on the stage.

Role Theory has developed into different disciplines¹⁾, depending on what aspects of the relationship between individuals and society are more emphasized. For example, Structural Role Theory is more focused on societal influence on individuals. This discipline views one's social status (e. g. company president) as influencing one's behaviour. Thus, it defines 'roles' as

1) There are five perspectives: cognitive, functional, organizational, structural and symbolic interactionist.

‘statuses’, ‘culturally defined norms’, ‘rights, duties and expectations’ and ‘standards for behaviour’ (Linton, 1945). It is more interested in clarifying the stability of social systems and the conformity of social members to society.

On the other hand, Symbolic Interactionism (SI) stresses interactional influences which create, shape and re-create individuals’ identities in the process of interaction. This is because human beings always have a habit of interpreting things (objects or symbols) around them, and the meanings of symbols are created and changed through interaction. In interaction, all sorts of symbols surrounding the interactants become the target of their subjective interpretation, including their social relationship, the situation where the interaction takes place and the content of their conversation, which are all added to the interpretation process.

SI concedes that roles can be normative especially when social expectations are astutely recognised. For example, a teacher in teaching class is expected to behave as an educator, employees in a company try to conform to company regulations to fit in the environment, and customers in a restaurant behave in a certain way that suits the dining scene. In all these social categories, there are shared expectations which members of a community are obligated to fulfil. Thus, expected roles are in their mind, and they behave based on a generalised role conception (or ‘taking the role of the other’ by Mead, 1934). This is because in our general life, ‘abrupt or radical changes in roles undermine predictability and provoke anxiety’ (Turner, 2002: 235).

However, SI claims that in reality, roles also reflect interactants’ attitudes and perceptions, particular contextual demands and negotiation. Social norms may provide a set of broad foundations, however, in reality interactants work out more improvised roles within the normative roles, or even shift their normative roles to completely different ones. In other words, different roles may enter the interaction as it takes on different features. For example, friends may have certain normative aspects²⁾; they have a bond of mutual affection as expected (or generally believed) in society. However, when one of them starts consulting the other about one’s problem with mathematics, the other may employ a role of consultant. If the other gives some mathematical lessons to the other, he/she is playing a role of instructor. Their basic relationship as friends is not changed, but as the interaction is tinged with different features, the interactants recognise different psychological shifts, which triggers role shifts to suit the situational moment. In this way, roles are subject to change in accordance with interactional fluctuations. Such roles are made, which is often differentiated from normative roles that are taken.

It should be noted that shared expectations exist even when improvised roles such as ‘consultant’ and ‘instructor’ above are made. It is because roles are successfully pursued only when both interactants recognise and expect them to be played. For example, the instructor’s job may or may not enhance their friendship; if one with the problem of mathematics did not want to be instructed, the role here would not be successfully accepted. Such a role would be perceived as imposition and their friendship might be jeopardized.

2) Although the definition of friendship may differ and the way friendship is presented may vary from person to person, a mutual affection is an uncontroversial feature assigned to this relationship.

SI claims that roles are social identities, formed and re-formed to fit into the given situation or to create a new interactional dimension. As Benwell & Stokoe (2007: 17f) say, identities (or roles in Role Theory) are ‘contingent on the local conditions of the interactional context’ and ‘may be a matter of being “subject” to, or taking up positions within discourses, but also an active process of discursive “work” in relation to other speakers’. Social norms may initially determine certain expected roles, but it does not mean that they remain rigidly immobilized. Depending on how the ongoing interaction develops, roles may be re-shaped in relation to relevant other roles. Or, improvised (temporary) roles may enter; in other cases, role shifting may occur to alter interactional directions.

3. Roles prior to FTAs- the case of direct requests in Japanese

This section and onwards will examine how the concept of role is applied to politeness. In this paper, politeness is defined as the linguistic implementation of one’s roles in interaction. SI argues that roles are ‘a configuration of ideas and principles about what to do in a situation’, and that ‘people use roles as a resource for interaction in social situations’ (Hewitt & Shulman, 2011: 51). In a similar way politeness is part of social acts, used as a resource for interaction, and disclosing one’s idea of how one perceives the given situation (including the other interactants). Politeness strategies are determined on the basis of how one organises the situation into roles. As one perceives different features in the situation, a different role may be employed to fit the situation and the line of the other interactants’ actions (or roles).

Brown & Levinson (1987: 65) argue that ‘certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face’ and call such threatening acts ‘FTAs’. As ‘face’ is ‘the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself’ (*ibid.*: 61), it is a universal feature possessed by every social member. Face consists of two wants: negative and positive wants, both of which should be treated so as not to be threatened. This is where politeness comes in to avoid potential FTAs.

Brown & Levinson’s theory is perhaps the most influential in the history of politeness studies, provoking numerous oppositions as well as approvals. It has also made politeness studies most flourishing, witnessing great many contributions. It is almost impossible to discuss politeness without making reference to their work.

One of the most controversial areas concerning Brown & Levinson’s (1987) theory is their proposal that indirectness is closely linked with (negative) politeness, functioning as ‘the minimizing of the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects’ (*ibid.*: 129). Notable challenges come from non-Anglo cultures in which directness is proven to be equally polite.

For example, according to Brown & Levinson, a request is considered to be potentially a FTA or an imposition because its end result is beneficial for the speaker, asking the hearer to take a certain action risking the latter’s labour, and impeding the hearer’s territory of freedom. However, Brown & Levinson’s principle,

Request = imposition, therefore, the more indirect, the more polite,

has been proven to be oversimplified. First, Blum-Kulka (1987) claims that conventional indirectness is more preferred and considered more polite than off-record strategies. In other words, hinting without expressing what the speaker wants is less polite than strategies including actual request content. Second, directness can be accepted in many other cultures. For instance, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) find that Hebrew speakers tend to make directives in direct ways. House & Kasper (1981) argue that German speakers are more direct than the British. Third, imposition is accepted in some cultures. For example, Upadhyay (2003) discusses Nepali in which imperative form is used in request although morphological honorifics may somewhat mitigate its imposition. Spencer-Oatey (1992) asserts that imposition and directness are more important in Chinese culture.

Brown & Levinson's FTA concept is problematic mainly because they believe that requests and directives, for example, are of imposing nature and intrinsically threatening because they constrain the hearer's autonomy. First, 'imposing' here is a subjective interpretation by the hearer (not by the speaker), and how the hearer interprets a request or directive depends on the pragmatic conditions surrounding the interaction. Second, utterances *per se* do not possess intrinsic threats; in fact, given certain conditions, every utterance is potentially threatening. For example, positive strategies such as 'thank you' can be threatening in certain contexts (e.g. to say 'thank you' in order to interrupt and to attempt to stop the other's speech). A machine instructor's directives are often in the imperative form (e.g. 'Turn this lever left. OK, then, press the red button.'). but there are no threatening features. In other words, single utterances out of context cannot be judged as polite or not; they are contingent on multiple pragmatic features surrounding them and conditional on the hearer's subjective judgement.

In Japanese, the distinction between direct and indirect request forms is based on whether what is requested to be fulfilled is within the domain of the speaker's roles. For example, a tour guide may be deferential to the tour group, his customers, by using honorifics. However, when his roles as a guide are distinctively recognised, certain requests take a direct imperative form (though honorific-marked) as shown in (1)-(3).

- (1) 昼食の後、1時までにバスにお戻りください。

Chuushoku no ato, ichi-ji madeni basu ni o-modori-kudasai.
lunch of after one-o'clock by bus to Hon-return-please

(After lunch, please come back to the bus by one.)

- (2) 皆様、こちらにお集まりください。

Mina-sama, kochirani o-atsumari-kudasai.
everyone [Hon] here [Hon] Hon-gather-please

(Everyone, please come here.)

- (3) オプションツアーですが、お申し込みの時に代金をお支払いください。

Opushonaru tsuaa desu ga, o-mooshikomi no toki ni daikin o
optional tour Polite Conj Hon-application of time at fee Acc

o-shiharai-kudasai.

Hon-pay-please

(Concerning an optional tour, please pay the fee at the time of application.

→ If you choose an optional tour, please pay the fee at the time of booking.)

The guide's roles such as announcements of schedules and rules, and organising the group to conduct the tour smoothly are all tacitly recognised between the guide and the group members. When the guide's role-responsibilities are strongly expected to be fulfilled by both parties, the use of imperative forms as in (1)–(3) is appropriate, signifying the professional fulfilment of his role; it also substantiates that the requests in (1)–(3) are his job entitlement. If the guide uses indirect forms in the requests above, he does not sound confident or professional. In this pragmatic interpretation, there is no room for imposition or FTA to be considered.

On the other hand, if a request is not one of the highly expected roles the guide is in charge of, he uses indirect requests to mitigate the imposing nature of the request. For example:

- (4) こちらおひとりさまですの、こちらのテーブルに座っていただいてもよろしいでしょうか。

Kochira o-hitori-sama desu node, kochira no teeburu ni suwat-te-itadai-temo
this[Hon] Hon-alone-Hon Polite since this[Hon] of table at sit-TE-ask[Hon]-if

yoroshii-desho-o ka.

good[Hon]-Polite-Aux Q

(This person is (attending the tour) alone. Would it be all right (with you) if (I) ask (this person) to sit (with you) at this table?)

(4) is uttered in the situation that the guide has found that a customer, who is joining the tour alone, was left out when all the others were taking their seat for lunch. The guide is asking a group at a table with a vacant seat to let this lone customer join them. Although this kind of arrangement may be part of the guide's job, he has no right to directly ask the customers to act as he wants. He serves as a mediator between the lone customer and the group at the table. His request is granted only with the group's consent. Therefore, an indirect form to get the hearer's permission is used.

Both (1)–(3) and (4) can be categorised as the guide's jobs in general, however, the former are more conventionally prescribed, thus the most highly expected responsibilities, known to both the guide and his customers as the shared knowledge. On the other hand, (4) is a makeshift

request to particular interactants (the group at a table in this case), thus much less expected as the guide's entitlement. (4) may be one of the guide's jobs, however, job categories themselves do not determine direct or indirect approaches to customers. For example, requests in the process of serving individual customers are not the guide's entitlement. (4) is a service to the lone customer, and therefore the guide cannot demand the other customers at a table to perform as requested.

(1)-(4) show that requests in isolation are not FTAs but requests which lack the recognition of roles result in FTAs. As long as roles are mutually expected between speaker and hearer, and request content is within the domain of the speaker's roles, it is the speaker's entitlement to request directly. On the other hand, if the content of a request goes beyond the limitation of the speaker's roles, the request is potentially a FTA and is expected to redress it by using an indirect strategy.

4. Role shifts and shifts in politeness strategies

To argue against Brown & Levinson's (1987) FTA principles, request types have been classified and benefit-request in contrast with burden-request have been found as acceptable with more direct strategies (e.g. Greek by Sifianou, 1992; Chinese by Oh, 2005; Slavic languages by Wierzbicka, 1985 & 1991). For example, asking someone to eat one more piece of cake (equivalent to invitation) is a request in a broader sense, but beneficial to the hearer. Oh (2005: 28f) explains that an indirect form (e.g. using a negation: Won't you have some more cake?) in Chinese does not sound a positive invitation, and the hearer would be more obliged to say 'no' because she/he would interpret that the speaker is hesitant to offer cake.

However, the dichotomy of request types above seems to be oversimplifid when considering the invitation process discursively. It is because in Japanese initial invitations between friends, i.e. benefit-requests, for example, take an indirect approach with a negation and an interrogative form, i.e., an off-record strategy is the most appropriate. However, in the same situation with the same participants, the same invitation may allow a direct form as the interaction proceeds. Depending on how the ongoing interaction develops, exhibiting the participants' psycho-pragmatic shifts, approaches shift from the indirect to direct invitation. This is shown in (5).

(5) A1: ちょうど食事時だから、夕飯食べていかない？

B1: え？なんか悪いなあ。もう失礼しないと。

A2: いいのいいの。ね、食べて行ってよ。

B2: そう？じゃ、遠慮なくごちそうになろうかな。

A1: Choodo shokuji-doki dakara, yuuhan tabe-te ika-nai?
just meal-time because dinner eat-TE go-not

B1: E? Nanka warui-naa. Moo shitsureshi-nai-to.
oh somehow bad-MD soon leave-not-MD

A2: Iino iino. Ne, tabe-te-it-te yo.
 no problem you see eat-TE-go MD
 B2: Soo? Ja, enryo naku gochisooninar-oo-kana.
 really OK reserve without have dinner-shall-MD

(A1: It's almost dinner time. Won't you each dinner (here)?

B1: Oh, that's somehow bad (=I shouldn't accept it). I must be going now.

A2: No problem at all. Surely you should eat and go home, OK?

B2: Really? OK, then I shouldn't be so reserved. I shall have dinner.)

(5) is an interaction between friends. Person B visited A and after some time A asked B to stay for dinner. In the utterance A1, the invitation request is formed in an indirect way with a negation (*-nai*) and a question (by raising the tone). At this stage, a friend (Person A in (5)), no matter how close she is to her friend (Person B), has no prescribed roles to allow her to request directly whether the request is a burden or benefit to her friend. However, when B is hesitant to accept A's invitation, the interaction is tinged with a different feature. Because A perceives B is hesitant out of courtesy, A takes the liberty of making a role in order to be more persistent, which results in a more imposing invitation as in A2. The utterance, *tabe-te it-te yo* ((You) should go home after eating.), is quite a strong command and does not give any other options to the hearer. However, Person A's new role making is successful in striking out B's reserve, which readily allows Person B to accept the direct invitation as shown in B2.

(5) shows a successful example of Person A's role-making, i.e. stepping into the other's territory, imposing the invitation (as in A2), because Person B accepts it in a positive way and welcomes the invitation (shown in B2). However, it does not necessarily mean that every interaction like (5) employs the same strategies of invitation or that Person A can expect the same response as B2 every time she utters A2. Depending on how close the interactants are, what other pragmatic conditions, such as Person B's willingness to stay longer and whether Person B recognises A's invitation as genuine, help A to utter B2, A's role-making in A2 can be interpreted differently. In other words, a strong invitation like A2 has potential risks to offend Person B, and yet A's appropriate interpretation of the situation including A's intuiting B's psychological state makes A2 successful and considered to be polite.

It may be a cultural norm that in Japanese society even close friends take an indirect way in invitation as an initial approach (though friends can be direct in certain communities). However, as the interaction proceeds, rendering a different psycho-pragmatic feature, their roles shift to fit the ongoing interaction. In other words, there is no one-to-one relation between a social act (e.g. invitation) and a politeness strategy (e.g. an indirect speech act). In many ways, the participants keep changing their roles in interaction, and their strategies to approach each other also keep changing, i.e., their recognition of each situational moment determines role-shifts and role-shifts alter linguistic strategies. Under such conditions, there is no room for FTAs to be considered; roles are placed prior to the consideration of FTAs, and the latter counts only

when particular roles are not recognised or the participants are not sure of their roles in a given situation.

5. Speech level shifts and role shifts

In this Section, speech level shifts are discussed to illustrate that they are a linguistic product of one's psychological identity shifts, i.e. shifts in roles trigger shifts in speech levels.

Roles may be quite normative when the social relationship between the interactants is most predictable. For example, teacher and student, employer and employee, customer and shop keeper, the older and the younger, are all social relationships that project certain shared expectations. Honorifics are expected to be used by the socially lower toward the higher, i.e., student toward teacher, employee toward employer, shop keeper to customer, and the younger to the older. Therefore, honorifics represent the linguistic implementation of one's normative role; one recognises oneself as in a lower position than the other, which one realises in the form of honorifics as linguistic evidence. In this respect, Ide's (1989) *wakimae* points to the normative aspect of one's role, which is socially expected and conventionally conceded.

However, honorific use is not rigidly fixed between the interactants throughout the discourse. Speech level shifts (shifts between honorific and non-honorific forms) often occur in the same discourse. The interactants, who normally do not use honorifics to each other (e.g. between family members, close friends), may suddenly use higher levels of speech (plus-level). Or, a junior is first obliged to use honorifics to a senior, but may cease to use them at some point of interaction (minus-level).

Phenomena of speech level shifts have extensively been studied, and it has generally been accepted that a certain psycho-pragmatic condition causes level shifts. For example, Okamoto (2009) claims that plus-level shifts often imply 'irony'. Because honorifics are basically 'associated with formal, tense, status-appending, unfamiliar and/or distance settings' (Obana, 2000: 205), deliberate use of honorifics in the non-honorific world often results in disclosing the speaker's sarcastic attitude. Ikuta (1983) reports by examining a TV interview that the participants normally use *desu/masu* forms (so-called 'polite verb endings') but the interviewer's use of plain forms shows empathy for the interviewee. Maynard (2001) also reports that the speaker's weak and vulnerable psychology is witnessed when plus-level shifts are observed. Takeda (2011) reports by analysing the informal interviews with university staff and students that minus-level shifts occur when speakers express their emotions, speak as if they were talking to themselves, show their empathy with the hearer, and are emotionally involved with the other's story. On the other hand, plus-level shifts occur when speakers stress their own opinions, focus on the hearer, and switch to a different direction in interaction. Barke (2011: 126) also observed that plus-level shifts not only show 'sarcasm, annoyance and a lack of intimacy' but also 'assist the speaker in appearing calm and in control of his/her emotions in situations of conflict'.

By applying Symbolic Interactionists' Role Theory to speech level shift phenomena, I claim that plus-level shifts show that speakers present their normative role more emphatically at

the time of their utterance. Normative roles include job categories, socially labelled roles such as ‘wife’, ‘mother’, and public speaking roles. For example, as Yoshida & Sakurai (2005: 202) report, a wife suddenly uses *desu/masu* forms index ‘her sociocultural identity as a wife’ (e.g. *Gohandesuyo* = Dinner is ready, mentioned by a wife to her husband). Cook (1997) uses the term ‘acting in role’ as a mother when she refers to a mother’s plus-level shift to her child. Cook (2008: 15) further defines plus-shifts as ‘acting on-stage, either literary or figuratively, showing his or her presentational persona’. These points support my stance in this paper that an astute recognition of one’s normative role is implemented in plus-level shifts in honorifics. Because honorifics basically imply a ceremonial feature, a sudden use of honorifics emphasizes one’s normative role, placing oneself on the stage for one’s role performance.

Family members normally do not use honorifics, but when they do, their sudden psychological awareness of socially labelled role is forwarded to the hearer, who accepts and grants it as a polite gesture. On the other hand, the lack of recognition of such a role between the interactants (e.g. husband and wife) at the time of uttering a honorific form fails to present a socially labelled role, instead resulting in implying ‘anger’ ‘irony’, ‘sarcasm’ or even ‘humour’. In other words, deliberate use of honorifics in the non-honorific world without the recognition of normative role taking gives rise to negative, otherwise humorous, effects.

It should be noted that sudden plus-level shifts do not necessarily mean that the speaker is psychologically distant from the hearer, or that she/he feels more authoritative than before the plus-level utterance. The following example (6) shows that plus-level shifts indicate the speaker’s awareness of her professional responsibilities rather than imposing her senior position’s power onto her student.

The example (6) is an excerpt from the interaction that took place between a university professor (female) and her post-graduate student (female) when the former was supervising the latter concerning the latter’s dissertation.

- (6) A1: うん、だから、ここんとこ、もう少し例を出して。
 B1: あ、ここ、いくつあったら、、、
 A2: うん、そうね、3つあればいいんじゃないかな。3つ探せる？3つ。
 B2: ああ、はい、できると思います。
 A3: あ、そしたら、そうやね、書きなおしてえ、来週提出してください。
 B3: はい、がんばってみます (笑い)。

- A1: Un, dakara, koko-n toko, moosukoshi rei o dashi-te.
 OK so this-of place a few more example Acc produce-TE
 B1: A, koko, ikutsu at-tara...
 I see here how many have-if
 A2: Un, soone, mittsu are-ba ii-n-ja-nai-kana. Mittsu sagas-eru? Mittsu.
 right hmm three have-if enough I think three find-can three

- B2: Aa, hai, dekiru to omoi-masu.
 well yes can Quote think-polite
- A3: A, soshitara, sooya-ne, kaki-naoshi-tee, raishuu teishutsushi-te-kudasai.
 OK then let's-see write-revise-TE next week submit-TE-please
- B3: Hai, ganbat-te-mi-masu (warai).
 yes make effort-TE-try-Polite (laugh)
- (A1: OK, so in this part, (you) need a few examples.
 B1: I see. In here. How many possibly?
 A2: Right, let's see... three would be sufficient, I think. Can you find three?
 Three.
 B2: Well, yes I think I can.
 A3: OK, then, let's see. Rewrite (this part) and submit (it) next week, please.
 B3: Yes, I'll try (to complete it). < laugh >)

Throughout the discourse, the professor A basically uses plain forms toward her student B, which is considered to be her psychological closeness to her student. Colloquial terms such as *un* (yes, OK), *soone* (let's see), *sooyane* (Osaka dialect: let's see) enhance A's affable attitude to B. It may be argued that A does not have to use honorifics to her student because A is senior to B. However, the entire discourse implies that A tries not to be authoritative and makes effort to be closely working together with her student by using colloquial terms, quite intimate back channel cues (*aizuchi*: a kind of grunting noise) and even a dialect. Therefore, A's plain forms are not exactly due to her senior position but due to her egalitarian stance toward her student.

However, when A asks B to submit a revised chapter next week, she suddenly raises her speech level to a polite form and changes her informal and plain forms to a honorific-marked directive (*teishutsushi-te-kudasai* = Please submit (it)). A's normative role as a supervisor to the student is manifested in this polite directive. At the same time, just as honorifics are often called 'a language of *aratamari* (standing on ceremony)' (Iritani, 1978; Minami, 1977; Tsujimura, 1989), the sudden use of a polite form in the utterance A3 implies that the teacher becomes official, fulfilling her role as a supervisor (asking her student to do the given task).

Whether the utterance A3 is considered polite or not depends on how the hearer B interprets it. The fact that A and B laugh together at the end of the discourse proves that B keeps a close relationship with A, taking A3 not as cold or authoritative but as an appropriate and welcome instruction; therefore, A3 is successfully considered polite. In other words, the student B's judgement of A3 comes from how well A and B are normally getting along with each other, how the task (finding three examples) is suggested (A asks B whether it is possible to do that as in A2), and whether or not the task is achievable (B says she can as in B2). These contextual conditions and B's mental preparation altogether lay the basis for B's judgement of A3. Politeness therefore is the result of the hearer's judgement discursively.

Let us now examine the case of minus-level shifts. General consensus in the previous

studies on minus-level shifts is that the shifts show intimacy and empathy with the hearer, and the expression of the speaker's personal emotions or opinions (e.g. *iinaa*=that's good; *sugoi!*=great!). However, the following example shows that in certain situations plain forms can bring opposite outcomes: impersonal and factual effects.

- (7) ...念願の家も買った。... 全力で働いた。...ところが、家を買ったとたんに、何かが変わってしまった。...妻に不満があるわけではない。...そんな時にあなたに出会った。毎日見ているうちにあなたと一度でいいからダンスを踊ってみたいと思ふようになった。

... Nengan no ie mo kat-ta. ... zenryoku de hatarai-ta.
dream of house too buy-Past all efforts with work-Past

... Tokoroga, ie o kat-ta-totanni, nanika ga kawat-te-shimat-ta.
However house Acc buy-Past-once something Nom change-TE-happen-Past

... Tsuma ni fuman ga aru-wakedewa-nai.
wife to discontent Nom have-reason-not

... Sonna toki ni anata ni deat-ta. Mainichi mite-iru-uchini anata to
such time at you with meet-Past every day look-Prog-while you with

ichido de ii-kara dansu o odot-te-mitai to omou-yoo-ni-nat-ta.
one time only good-since dance Acc dance-TE-want Quote came to think

(...(I) purchased a dream house. ...worked very hard. ... However, when (I) bought a house, (I felt) something changed. ... (it) does not mean that (I) am not satisfied with my wife. ...Around that time I met you. Every day I watched you and eventually I came to wish to dance with you just once.)

(Masayuki Suo Scenario Collections, 2008:122)

This is an excerpt from the film 'Shall we dance?' and Sugiyama, the protagonist in this film, is confessing to the dance teacher that the very reason why he started learning social dance is because of her; (7) is part of his confession, during which he uses only plain forms. On the other hand, he maintains *desu/masu* forms to the teacher in all the other scenes (and the entire film indicates that Sugiyama is a polite, modest and shy person, using polite forms to everyone except to his family members).

It may be argued that (7) is a quasi-monologue without directly facing the hearer, therefore, the plain form is used as if speaking to himself. However, in the other scenes where the protagonist expresses his emotions and impressions, he maintains *masu/desu* forms to guard his reserved attitude to everyone. This means that he does not easily shift his polite forms to plain forms, and the scene (7) stands out in all his lines in the film.

(7) is quite an embarrassing confession, not just his feelings but the deep analysis of his

psychology from the past to the present time. To avoid directly facing the humiliation caused by revealing his true emotions, the speaker is temporarily alienating himself from his own emotional state; he identifies himself with an anonymous person who states his psychological analysis on behalf of him. In psychology this is called ‘dissociation’ defined as ‘a perceived detachment of the mind from the emotional state.... the act of separating...’ (MedicineNet.Com, 2011). The protagonist detaches himself from his own state of mind, and utters (7) impersonally and matter-of-factly, which conforms to the protagonist’s monotone throughout (7) in the actual film.

Minus-level shifts are traditionally associated with the speaker’s empathy with the hearer or his/her emphasised emotions. However, when facing with his/her further deep emotions, the speaker utilizes minus-level shifts to dissociate him/herself from his/her own emotions, creating someone else as a speaker. This may be equated with the speaker’s onstage and objective performance when plus-shifts occur (Cook, 1997, 2008). However, plus-shifts still maintain the speaker as a performer, playing a normative role and polite forms are directed toward the hearer. On the other hand, minus-level shifts like (7) create a different speaker, letting this unidentified person speaking on behalf of the real speaker. Interaction is not in operation (though (7) is a confession to the hearer in effect). There is no normative role the speaker can take; only by dissociation, the speaker attempts to protect himself from potential embarrassing consequences. His social identity here is his role as an anonymous speaker.

6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed that politeness is the implementation of one’s social identity or role. Roles are determined through the on-going interaction, and as roles change to fit each situation, politeness strategies change to suit the nature of the interaction. Successful politeness is such that one is astutely aware of the situation, based on which one attempts to take or make a role, implementing it in linguistic terms (or gestures in non-verbal politeness).

The concept of role used in this paper is based on Symbolic Interactionists’ Role Theory. SI claims that the meaning of objects (symbols) is created and formed through joint actions by participants in the community (from a large society to an interactional situation). Participants take a certain role to fit the situation in accordance with their interpretation of symbols (e.g. where they are, who are involved in the interaction, the content of interaction and surrounding tools such as a lectern, blackboard, desks in the educational situation). Politeness is part of such a social act, entailing one’s social identity which one has determined would fit the ongoing situation.

The paper has examined a few examples of Japanese politeness, which show that politeness is not static, rigidly normative or having a one-to-one correspondence between the target of an utterance (e.g. request) and a strategy to be taken (e.g. negative strategy). Politeness is more dynamic, flexible, creative and discursively determined. It is to do with the hearer’s interpretation based on all the surrounding symbols in interaction.

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Abbreviations:

Hon = honorific marking

Q = question marker

Conj = conjunction

MD = mood marker

Acc = accusative marker

Quote = quotation marker

TE = te-form (morphological conjunction)

Aux = auxiliary

Nom = naninative marker

Politeness as Role-Identity

— Application of Symbolic Interactionism —

Yasuko OBANA

本稿では、ポライトネスの概念を、従来の face 理論とは異なる観点で考察する。社会心理学において注目をあびている「役割理論」特にその中でも Symbolic Interactionism (相互作用理論：以下 SI と略す) をポライトネスの基本概念として応用し、日本語のポライトネス現象の分析を試みるのが本稿の目的である。

従来の face 理論や Speech Act 理論では、依頼にはこういうストラテジーを取るべきという規範的な法則を提示していたのであるが、ポライトネスはもっと広範囲に捉えるべきであるという discursive politeness が最近脚光を浴びてきた。しかしこの分野ではポライトネスを判断する基準となる理論がまだ確立していない。本稿では、discursive politeness の方向に賛同しつつ、新しい展開を試みるものである。

ひとつの発話は必ずコンテキストがあり、対話を取り巻く様々な要素が社会的、心理的に存在する。例えば、対話相手との人間関係、対話の内容はもとより、対話の進行によって刻々と変化する対話者の心理状態、発話がどのような状況でいつ、どこでなされたのか、またお互いがどのような感情を持っているのか、という複雑に入り組んだ要素がすべて考慮されて、ある発話が「適切」であるかそうでないかという判断の基準となる。例えば命令形はポライトでないと言われているが、しかし命令形が適切である状況もある。その場合、命令形の使用が認められる基準は、roles が相互にその場面で認知されているかどうかにある、というのが本稿での主張である。

本稿では規範的な roles (教師として、医者としての規範的役割) についても言及するが、ポライトネスストラテジーが同じディスコースでも変化したり、同じ対話者でも敬語が突然現れたり、敬語を使用しなくなるといった、ポライトネスのダイナミックに変化する現象について roles を具体的に示しながら分析する。