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Encoding the Notion of Respect in Narratives*

Naohiro TATARA

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyze how the notion of respect (or upper and lower personal relations) is realized in English and Japanese narratives, and to endeavor to present the homological relationships across language expressions, as well as between language properties and other cultural products. Tatara (2000a, b) proposes the view that the preferred realization patterns, or “*fashions of speaking*” in Whorf’s (1956) sense, in Japanese and English can be coherently explained in terms of what Fromm (1966) calls two fundamental modes of existence, “to have” and “to be”. Following this line of analysis, it is claimed that expressions of the notion of respect or personal relations in Japanese and English narratives are also realized based on these two notions, respectively.

2. Methodological Discussion

The analytical attention in linguistic research so far has been paid to the structure of language or the abstract language system, which has indeed contributed to explicating various universal or idiosyncratic properties of language structures. However, at the cost of its efficiency of the analyses, the subject or what Peirce (1955) calls “interpretant”

who uses and evaluates language has been out of the scope of the linguistic analysis because of the analytical interest. As a result, many aspects of language traditionally categorized in what Saussure calls "*parole*" have been excluded from the field of the scientific research, unless these are the realization of "*langue*". The reason for this exclusion is that these are not considered as the parts of language structures.

Contrary to this exclusion, it has been widely accepted in the field of the Linguistic anthropology that language is a social action embedded in social situations or contexts. Silverstein (1977 : 11-12) claims, based on the view that language or speech is the meaningful social behavior, that the "'pragmatic" analysis of speech behavior ... allows us to describe the linkage of language to culture, and perhaps the most important aspect of the "meaning" of speech". Bakhtin also defines language as a social and ideological phenomenon and claims that verbal interaction is the reality of language :

The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychophysiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances. Thus, verbal interaction is the basic reality of language. (Volshinov 1986 : 94).

Bakhtin (1986) emphasizes that language is tied to the life world only in the form of utterance, so the proper unit of analysis or description is the utterance in contexts rather than the sentence without context.

Phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty also considers language as an action which is embedded in and is not demarcated from the actual utterance context, and this idea leads him to reject firmly any form of linguocentric theory. For Merleau-Ponty, the linguocentric approach is insufficient to explicate the nature of language because he accords an

important role to the human body in expression and understanding, and holds the view that language is the realization of the way the human body is tied to the world—i.e. the phenomenal field. He guides us to “return to the world (or phenomenon) as it is in actuality rather than viewing it through the lens of analytically purified systems”,⁽¹⁾ so as to observe and explicate the essence of phenomena.

The following chapter will analyze how the notion of “respect”,⁽²⁾ which is considered to be universal, is realized in narrative stories in Japanese and English. The scope of analysis in this article is limited to written texts such as novels. The politeness phenomena in interpersonal communication have been discussed so far by many researchers, Brown and Levinson (1986), Wierzbicka (1987), among others, but these are not discussed here. Nonverbal factors are not dealt with here either.

3. The analysis of the realization of the notion of respect

3.1 Japanese

Japanese has such a rich and complex system of the honorific language that users presupposedly or creatively manipulate this property to express the attitude of respect towards others in stories.⁽³⁾ Honorific expressions are either used to describe others' actions or used in direct quotations to express polite attitude, henceforth, personal relationship between protagonists in narratives. Titles, pronouns, and address terms indicate personal relations among protagonists. Auxiliary verbs, “-reru/rareru”, encode several meanings of respect, passive, inchoative, possibility. It goes without saying that the honorific usage of these auxiliary verbs is employed to express the notion of respect. The inchoative usage of those also conveys the honorific meaning in that to avoid paying attention to or indicating an actor's action implies the sense of respect. The choice of framing verbs, or metalinguistic verbs,

such as 'order', 'request', 'ask', etc., also index one's attitudes. Moreover, the Japanese manipulate 'give-and-receive (auxiliary) verbs' and the indirect passive construction to mark the protagonist's position or attitude such as a victim or a beneficiary in events,⁽⁴⁾ which leads to mark personal relations among protagonists. According to Ikegami (1999), such expressions as these convey speakers' subjectivity, which is defined as the "index of speakers' positions". In other words, Japanese speakers are constantly required to select appropriate language forms out of various alternatives with reference to one's relationship with others around him or her.⁽⁵⁾

3.2 English

English has been said to have a tendency to describe events from the objective or neutral points of view from offstage. This view is partly supported by the fact that English lacks a systematic honorific language system, give-and-take verbs and the indirect passive construction as in Japanese. Although one might say that English has the "HAVE passive form" (as in "I had my purse stolen.") which seems to be equivalent to the Japanese indirect passive construction, the former, as Yoshikawa (1995) points out, is different from the latter in that the former is basically utilized to describe painful experiences or great hardships in the past from objective points of views: Henceforth, the former does not encode the same meaning as Japanese counterparts which means "being trouble or annoyed" as described above. Furthermore while the latter is widely and frequently used, the former is not. In fact, the passive voice itself is very limited in usage in English narratives.⁽⁶⁾ Rather than describing in the passive voice, speakers of English show preference to end up with describing actions neutrally in the active voice from offstage or the third person's point of view as in

“Someone stole my wallet”. Passive forms are primarily used to report damage or a loss *afterwards*.⁽⁷⁾ Then how is the notion of respect or personal relations realized in English narrative? As we can see in the example sentences below, titles (1), adverbs (2), and honorific expressions such as the subjunctive mood in direct quotations (3) are widely used to express the notion of respect, namely personal relations, in narrative stories.

(1) Mr. Robinson reached into his pocket for a package of cigarettes and held them out to Benjamin. *“The Graduate”*

(2) Very courteously, she told me of Sensei’s whereabouts.

“Kokoro”⁽⁸⁾

(3) “Good morning, Dr. Sheppard,” said Miss Russell, “I should be obliged if you would take a look at my knee.”⁽⁹⁾

“The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”

Moreover, framing verbs, imperative sentences in direct quotations and so on are also utilized to mark personal relations among protagonists.

3.3 Passives to mark respect

Passive constructions have been analyzed in various fields. What these analyses have in common is that these are only aimed at analyzing the acceptability of the passivization (Bolinger 1975) or extracting the universal or schematic properties of passives in languages, such as the functions of agent-defocusing (Shibatani 1985), object-promotion or topicalization (Givon 1979), and inactivization (Haspelmath 1990; Ikegami 1981). Although it is meaningful and necessary for us to analyze formal language structure as it is, these analyses are insuffi-

cient to explicate the essential nature of language expressions because we need to deal "as much with the actual doings of real agents as it does (we do) with the systematic potentials of symbolic forms".⁽¹⁰⁾ We, as Hanks insists, also have to take the communicative activities and ideological dimensions into consideration.

Japanese has been characterized as having two types of passive constructions, that is, direct and indirect passives. The generally accepted view concerning passive constructions in Japanese is as follows; while indirect sentences as in "Oya ni shinareta" and "Ame ni hurareta" encode the meaning of "being troubled or annoyed", direct passives, on the other hand, tend to have objective and neutral meanings or occasionally the sense of "being troubled".⁽¹¹⁾ However, the careful examination of the phenomena in narratives or actual contexts leads us to realize that passives are also employed to express the sense of respect or to mark upper and lower personal relations as in the following examples.

(4) Hikakuteki tsuyoi taishitu wo motta watasi wa, motto umi no naka de asonde itakatta. Shikashi sensei kara sasowareta toki, watashi wa sugu "ee, kaerimasho" to kokoroyoku kotaeta.

(5) Aru toki watashi wa sensei no taku de sake wo nomasareta.

"Kokoro"

(6) Boku wa sensei no heya de, iwareta tori ni pozu wo toru.

(7) Sagyo ga owaru to, boku wa sensei ni yobarete yaneura ni aru atorie ni itta.

(8) Sensei wa so iu to chiisaku waratta. Kao wo egaite iru toki igai wa oshaberi wo yurusareta. *"Reisei to Jonetsu no Aida"*

What these examples imply is that an actor has such a great power

over a patient that all a patient can do is accept an actor's behavior or obey what he or she is told to do. In other words, an actor is metaphorically recognized as the "uncontrollable". Ikegami (1999) introduces the notion of the "uncontrollable" by that the schema in which a speaker is affected by an event such as natural phenomena which is "uncontrollable" to or beyond him or her conveys the meanings of "being trouble". On the contrary, as above examples show, the schema an actor's power and his action is uncontrollable and absolute for a patient leads to index the power of an actor and the sense of respect for an actor. Auxiliary verbs "*-reru/rareru*" encode several meanings as noted above. The meaning of respect is traditionally said to be related to or derived from the notion of inchoativeness. The careful examination of the phenomena in actuality exploits another new aspect of language expressions; that is to say, the passive constructions are widely used to express power relationships between protagonists in Japanese stories.

Although the passive voice tends to be basically avoided in English narratives because of the characteristic of English that speakers prefer to describe actions neutrally in the form of active sentences, a similar case is also found in English: The passive voice is used to demonstrate the power in English as well. For example, the utterance "Overruled" said by a presiding judge, "Such letters are appropriately disregarded" written by a dean to a complaining professor,⁽¹²⁾ or "The gold medal will be awarded to the Canadian pair" announced by an IOC official. These passives in English are only limited to express institutional authorities, such as governmental institutions and universities, most of the time,⁽¹³⁾ compared with the case of Japanese passive sentences, which are frequently used to encode the human relationship as well as institutional authorities. This difference supports the fact that Japanese speakers are habituated to be conscious about upper and lower relation-

ships between protagonists. Overall, English speakers, on the other hand, show the preference to focus on an action itself from an actor's point of view rather than personal relations in stories. When they need to mark personal relations, the objective means or devices noted above are usually utilized to do so.

4. Habitus and Language Expressions

Understanding is an active process. Contrary to the traditional view that understanding is a passive process or that a receiver only plays a passive role in interaction, a listener or reader in fact actively produces a meaning.⁽¹⁴⁾ But cultural differences lie in the extent that a receiver is expected to take an active part in fixing a meaning of texts. Hinds (1987: 141) proposes the typological notion of reader versus *writer responsibility*, saying that "there are different expectations with regard to the degree of involvement a reader will have, and that this degree of involvement will depend on the language of the reader".

It has been said that English speakers as a rule show preference to lend objective imageries to situations,⁽¹⁵⁾ i.e., describe events objectively and neutrally from offstage. This is also the case in expressing the sense of respect in narratives in which objective means discussed above are primarily utilized, implying that readers are just expected to see situations from offstage of scenes ordinarily and are not required to change their points of view to realize imageries of situations in narratives.

On the other hand, Ikegami (2000) argues that writers in Japanese narratives constantly transpose themselves and their points of view into protagonists; Put another way, Japanese narratives are structured to invite readers into situations so as to experience events directly as the person concerned in stories. The subjective construal of situations and

the omission of subjects of sentences, which are characterized as “the first person centered” expressions, are the typical examples Ikegami (1999, 2000) raises. The expressions of the notion of respect discussed here are not the exception. Japanese narratives consist of various expressions such as give-and-receive verbs and passives, which encode not only objective reality but also subjectivity of speakers or protagonists, for example, the sense of respect and protagonists’ positions or attitudes. Readers are required to project their perspectives into the person concerned in stories and to experience situations directly from his or her standpoint in order to surmise protagonists’ positions and personal relations between protagonists in stories and to fix appropriate meanings of expressions. Moreover, these expressions are exclusively used to describe events concerning central figures,⁽¹⁶⁾ but not used to describe others’ actions which have nothing to do with central figures. Other protagonists’ actions are encoded objectively or neutrally from offstage.⁽¹⁷⁾ This narrative structure forces readers to pay careful and constant attention to the changes of narrator’s points of view and the changes in their perspectives. This enables the readers to understand what is going on and to understand the protagonists’ positions in stories.

Compared with English readers, readers in Japanese stories are presupposed or expected to participate actively in stories provided by narrators, constantly change their perspectives, and experience events concerning central figures directly as if they were protagonists themselves, in order to realize writer’s imageries precisely. This kind of recognition of events through projection of one’s perspective to protagonists or direct experience goes well with the notion of “to be”, one of two fundamental modes of existence proposed by Fromm (1976). In the mode of “to be”, Fromm insists, experiences must be shared with others

and people in the mode of being are unconsciously disposed to being united with the world. Tatara (2000a, b) claims that this notion integrates the preferred realization patterns in static and motion (dynamic) events in Japanese. It is insisted here that various expressions of respect in stories in Japanese are also based on this mode of existence; that is, readers are transposed into the scenes so as to be united with the world or “to be oned to the world” (Fromm 1976 : 19). Put another way, we can observe the homological relationships across language expressions,⁽¹⁸⁾ and say that the notion of “to be” functions as the “*habitus*” in Japanese culture. Bourdieu (1977 : 72) defines the notion of “*habitus*” as follows :

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e. g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

5. Concluding Remarks

Every language has its own fashions of speaking integrated by *habitus*, which creates the homology across language structures or what Hawkins (1982) calls the “cross-category harmony”. As discussed above, while English speakers prefer to describe events objectively

from offstage in narratives, the preferred realization patterns in Japanese tend to be structured to require readers or hearers to take active participation in interpreting stories, in other words, project themselves into the protagonists' perspectives and "be oned to the world". This is also the case in traditional nursery songs in both cultures; in other words, the notion of *habitus* integrates other cultural products as well as the language categories and its preferred expressions.⁽¹⁹⁾ Let us consider the structure of traditional nursery songs in English and Japanese. Most of English traditional nursery songs are described from offstage as in "*Jack and Jill*"⁽²⁰⁾ and "*Humpty Dumpty*"⁽²¹⁾ among others; conceptualizers, on the other hand, tend to give subjective construal to the scenes or in Japanese nursery songs such as in "*Sakura Sakura*"⁽²²⁾ and "*Yuyake Koyake*",⁽²³⁾ to name but a few. It is very important to note that the latter, moreover, expects listeners to change their perspectives in the scene.

What the structures of nursery songs in English and Japanese implies is that these help habituate children to look at or construe events or situations in certain culturally preferred ways. While English songs habituate children to look at scenes objectively from offstage, Japanese songs habituate children to describe scenes subjectively so as to project themselves to the scenes and have direct experiences of them. This is considered to be one part of the process of *language socialization*, which refers to "the process whereby children and other novices are socialized through language, part of such socialization being a socialization to use language meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively".⁽²⁴⁾ When we acquire language, we must not only learn the grammar of our language but also the culturally preferred rhetorical styles or fashions of speaking.

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Notes

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- (1) Hanks (1996 : 136). See Merleau-Ponty (1951) for the importance of the analysis of parole and the importance of the role of human body in meaning production.
- (2) The definition of the notion of *respect* is “an attitude of deference, admiration, or esteem” (*Collins English Dictionary*), “the feeling that one admires someone or something very much and that they or it should be treated well and honourably” (*LDCE*).
- (3) Presupposed usage means that users select some expressions based on their cultural norms: Creative or performative usage, on the other hand, refers to the language function to create a context in a situation. See Silverstein (1977) for a more detailed discussion of these language functions.
- (4) See Teramura (1992), Yoshikawa (1995), and so on.
- (5) See also Yoshikawa (1995) for a similar view.
- (6) Adachi (1996) claims that English passives are primarily used to express result.
- (7) See Yoshikawa (1995).
- (8) “*Kokoro*” translated by McClellan, Edwin. from a novel by Soseki Natsume.
- (9) See footnote 13.
- (10) Hanks (1996 : 231). See Hanks (1996) for a detailed discussion of the practice approach.
- (11) See Yoshikawa (1995)
- (12) This example comes from Bolinger (1980 : 86).
- (13) Of course, there are some exceptions such as “I’m obliged to ...” as in (3) above and “I’m indebted to ...”, “I’m impressed ...” and so on. These forms are relatively conventionalized in English.
- (14) See Hanks (1996), Rommetveit (1974) among others.
- (15) See Langacker (1990, 1999) for a more detailed discussion on the subjective and objective construals. He (1999 : 1-2) defines subjective and objective construal as follows: “Conceptual structure involves a subject and an object of conception. The subject is an implicit locus of consciousness (“perspective point”) which apprehends the object and—if it is *only* the subject—is not itself apprehend. The subject’s activity determines the nature of the conceptual experience but does not per se figure in its “content”. To the extent that an entity functions as *the subject (or the object) of conception*,

it is said to be subjectively (or objectively) construed. It is construed with maximal subjectivity when it remains “offstage” and implicit, inhering in the very process of conception without being its target. It is construed with maximal objectivity when it is put “onstage” as an explicit focus of attention.” (emphasis and brackets Langacker)

- (16) See Ikegami (1999).
- (17) There is no difference between first person novels and third person ones regarding this point.
- (18) See Ikegami (1999-2001). He presents the homology across language categories based on the notions of “bounded” and “unbounded”.
- (19) Tosu (1988) seeks the homology between language structures and narrative structures in English and Japanese.
- (20) The words of *Jack and Jill* : Jack and Jill went up the hill, to fetch up a pail of water ; Jack fell down, and broke his crown, and Jill come tumbling after. Then up Jack got, and home did trot, as fast as he could caper ; to old Dame Dob, who patched his nob with vinegar and brown paper.
- (21) The words of *Humpty Dumpty* : Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall ; All the king’s horses and all the King’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.
- (22) The words of *Sakura Sakura* : Sakura sakura noyama mo sato mo miwatasu kagiri, kasumi ka kumo ka asahi ni niou, sakura sakura hana zakari. Sakura sakura yayoi no sora wa miwatasu kagiri, kasumi ka kumo ka nioizo izuru izaya izaya mini yukan.
- (23) The words of *Yuyake Koyake* : Yuyake koyake de hi ga kurete, yama no otera no kane ga naru, otete tunaide mina kaero, karasu to issho ni kaerimasho. Kodomo ga kaetta atokara ha, marui ookina otukisama, kotori ga yume wo mirukoro ha, sora niha kirakira kin no hoshi.
- (24) Ochs (1996 : 408)