

Politeness and Relevance Theory

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Politeness has been widely researched since 1970's. One striking feature of previous studies is that many studies are based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which takes a speaker-oriented approach. However, it is the hearer who decides if the speaker's utterance is polite or not. Depending on circumstances, even if the speaker intends to be polite, the hearer recognizes the speaker to be impolite because he does not understand her consideration appropriately.¹⁾ We will look at politeness in a new light, namely, a hearer-oriented point of view based on Sperber and Wilson's (1993) Relevance Theory. This study attempts to clarify how the hearer understands the speaker's politeness strategies. Furthermore, we will consider the relationship between politeness and the extent of effort and effect that are elements of relevance.

Key words : Politeness, Relevance Theory, Effort, Effect

1. Introduction

Politeness has been the focus of attention of a number of linguists for more than a quarter of a century. During that time numerous and various attempts have been made to define politeness. One of the notable features of previous studies is that most linguists have taken a speaker-oriented approach in order to deal with politeness. To put it the other way round, they have not taken into consideration a hearer's point of view. We believe that even though a speaker uses politeness strategies to show consideration for a hearer, when he does not notice her intention, it would result in a failure in terms of politeness. It is a hearer that makes the final judgement on whether a speaker's utterance and attitude are polite or not. In this paper, we will consider politeness from the viewpoint of Relevance Theory, which, according to Thomas (1995), takes a hearer-oriented approach, so as to investigate how the hearer interprets politeness strategies included in the speaker's utterance.

2. The Definition of Politeness

Over the past few decades a considerable number of studies have been made on politeness. Thomas (1995: 149) suggests that since politeness has held much interest for linguists, many papers have been written, different theories have been proposed and therefore the term politeness has various meanings. We agree with Thomas in thinking that linguists are using the term politeness with different meanings, believing that they are discussing the same thing. Thus we will begin by defining the term politeness. Here we would like to introduce several previous studies which will be the basis of this study, but, as space is limited, we have concentrated on other linguists' definitions of politeness, and we pay scant attention to previous studies.

Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (henceforth B & L) (1987) are among those who attempt to explain politeness. It could be observed that their studies, just like the majority politeness studies, are based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle.²⁾ Grice's (1975: 45) Cooperative Principle in which conversational participants are assumed to observe explains a general principle in conversation, like the following:

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(1) Cooperative Principle:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

It will be clear from the Cooperative Principle that Grice (1975) sees things only from the speaker's side. Accordingly, most politeness studies, including Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and B & L (1987), consider the speaker mainly and define the term politeness from the speaker-oriented view. In this speaker-oriented view, Green (1989: 145) defines politeness successfully:

- (2) Politeness ... refer(s) to whatever means are employed to display consideration for one's addressee's feelings (or face), regardless of the social distance between the speaker and the addressee. [parentheses ours]

In short, politeness could be defined as the way to show consideration for the hearer when taking a speaker-oriented view.

As a matter of fact, however, it is the hearer who finally decides if the speaker's utterances are polite. Thus, we would like to redefine politeness, taking the hearer into consideration. Before making clear our definition of politeness, let us consider the definition of politeness given by Grundy (1995), who offers the key to consider the hearer's judgement. Grundy (1995: 139) defines politeness as follows, taking not only the speaker but also the hearer into consideration:

- (3) Politeness is the term we use to describe the relationship between how something is said and the addressee's judgement as to how it should be said.

Giving proper consideration to the Green's definition and Grundy's definition, we will define politeness as the consideration for conversational participants made by the speaker and the judgement of the speaker's utterances made by the hearer. It is worth mentioning in passing, why the word *conversational participants* is used instead of *hearers*. The main reason is that the Japanese language takes not only the hearer, including his possession and his acquaintances into consideration, but also takes into consideration a third party who is referred to in the conversation. It seems to be preferable not to use the word *hearers* but to use *conversational participants* in order to make our arguments as universal as possible, although there may be exceptions amongst the numerous languages of the world.

3. Relevance Theory

In the previous chapter, we claimed that most previous studies take a speaker-oriented approach and do not pay attention to the hearer's side. Then how we can take a hearer into consideration? Thomas (1995: 140) refers to the fact that "Leech, like Brown and Levinson, takes a broadly socially-oriented and speaker-oriented approach, whereas Wilson and Sperber take a cognitive and hearer-oriented approach". In order to make sure that Sperber and Wilson (1986) (henceforth S & W) take a hearer-oriented approach, let us pause here to look briefly at their study.

S & W (1995) present Relevance Theory in order to explain communication. They suggest Relevance Principles, which make two claims. The first claim is that human cognition has a tendency to increase relevance. In other words, in communicating, the speaker tends to present an assumption which has a greater effect and minimizes the hearer's effort to process it. On the other hand, the hearer would accept an assumption which requires him smaller processing effort³⁾ and gives him greater effect. On the same condition, the bigger effect an assumption includes, and the smaller processing effort an assumption needs, the greater relevant the assumption has. The second claim is that in ostensive communication, the presented stimulus⁴⁾ must be relevant enough to be deserving of the hearer's processing effort, and it is also the most relevant stimulus within the

speaker's abilities and preferences.

S & W attempt to explain communication and suggest alternative principles to Grice's Cooperative principle. In their Relevance Theory, both the hearer and the speaker are taken into consideration. Therefore, we believe that Relevance Theory enables us to explain politeness, taking not only the speaker but also the hearer into account. S & W themselves do not deal with politeness in their study, but we can find several studies which have already applied Relevance Theory to politeness. They object to previous politeness studies and try to present an alternative explanation for politeness. In the following chapter we will take up one of them, on which we will base our case study later.

4. Jary's (1998) Routes of Interpretation

Jary points out the problem of B & L's study, and takes advantage of Relevance Theory to suggest an alternative politeness theory. B & L (1987: 95) state that politeness is the main reason for deviation from the Cooperative Principle given by Grice. However, Jary criticizes their suggestion. Jary (1998: 1-2) claims that the viewpoint of B & L opposes intuition in that it assumes that an additional layer of meaning is inevitably conveyed whenever the polite forms or strategies are employed, but his experience as a conversationalist suggests that polite forms are often unnoticed by the hearer. In addition, Jary (1998: 6) argues that the hearer would perceive the politeness strategies only when the speaker uses unexpected politeness strategies. That is to say, the hearer's estimate of assumption about their relationship differs from the speaker's one. He attempts to suggest an alternative politeness theory, which excludes B & L's unfounded suggestion and explains the fact that the politeness strategies are often unnoticed by the hearer.

Following S & W (1995), Jary (1998: 6) says that for communication to occur there must be a change in the conversational participants' mutual cognitive environment, and, at the same time, the speaker has to intend this change. Therefore, Jary (1998: 6) claims the necessary condition for the communication of politeness is "that the effect of (the manipulation of W_x)⁵⁾ be mutually manifest, that it result in a change in the mutual cognitive environment of the communicators". If this condition is satisfied, the hearer would attempt to infer the speaker's intention.

For polite verbal behaviour, furthermore, Jary (1998: 2-3) thinks that, "even when the speaker is aiming to protect the hearer's face, her ultimate motivation is to maintain or raise her own status within the group and/or to ensure her continued well-being, in both the long and the short term". Judging from the above, only if the speaker's intention is conveyed to the hearer, polite verbal behaviour will be considered as the communication of politeness.

In order to reveal when the communication of politeness takes place, Jary (1998: 8-10) diagrams the process of interpretation. Since it would take a page to list Jary's figure, we do not introduce it here. See Figure 1 on page 11 that is the revised figure on the basis of Jary's figure. It can be seen from Figure 1 that there are five routes for the hearer to interpret the speaker's verbal behaviour.

According to Jary, route (i) is a case where the speaker's assumption coincides with the hearer's assumption. In this case, the hearer does not pay attention to politeness strategies in particular, but only to the content of that utterance. Jary (1998: 8) claims that route (i) is an unmarked exchange in the light of politeness.

In contrast, the rest of the routes are cases where the speaker's assumption does not agree with the hearer's assumption. Jary (1998: 9) states both routes (ii) and (iii) are situations in which "the speaker holds the hearer in higher regard than he had assumed". Furthermore, depending on

whether the hearer notices the speaker's intention or not, route (ii) is distinguished from route (iii). When the hearer notices the speaker's intention, the speaker's verbal behaviour would then be processed through route (ii). Jary (1998: 9–10) recognizes the interpretation of the speaker's verbal behaviour in route (ii) as the case where the hearer finds that the speaker's attitude is not sincere, and decides that the speaker attempts to please the hearer so as to accomplish her desire. Jary (1998: 10) adds that route (ii) serves another situation where "the speaker is trying to make up for some prior face-threat in order to re-establish an equilibrium".

On the other hand, route (iii) is described as when the hearer does not notice the speaker's intention. Jary (1998: 10) believes that route (iii) is the case where the hearer's assumption is a fault and the speaker actually holds high regard for the hearer. Where there are cultural differences between the speaker and the hearer in terms of politeness, the hearer may also trace route (iii).

According to Jary (1998: 9), the other two routes, (iv) and (v), are the situations in which "the speaker holds the hearer in lower regard than he had assumed". Moreover, route (iv) is the case where the hearer notices the speaker's intention, and route (v) is the case where the hearer does not notice it. Jary (1998: 10) considers route (iv) as the route by which the hearer judges that the speaker's intends to cause upset.

In contrast, Jary (1998: 10) regards route (v) as the case in which the hearer's assumption is faulty, and the speaker actually has low regard for the hearer. Sometimes cultural differences between the speaker and the hearer is also a cause for route (v).

Jary, as mentioned above, shows the process by which the speaker's utterances are understood by the hearer in detail. However, to deal with concrete data lies outside the scope of his study. Thus, in the following chapter we will apply Jary's routes of interpretation to several concrete examples, and analyze how the hearer interprets politeness conveyed by the speaker's utterance.

5. Case Study

5.1. Method

Now, we will consider some concrete examples in terms of Relevance Theory, and then investigate how the speaker's consideration would be interpreted by the hearer. Before turning to a closer examination, it is desirable to make clear the method of this case study. As we have mentioned in Chapter 4, though Jary's (1998) routes of interpretation show how the speaker's verbal behaviour would be interpreted by the hearer in detail, he does not apply this route to enough data. Therefore, we would like to utilize his routes for our case study.

First, we will consider what kind of politeness strategies can be observed in the examples. The examples dealt with here are cited from a magazine, *the Blue Lotus* (Hergé, 1946), and a novel, *Murder on the Links* (Christie, 1923), because we can read the assumptions that are held by conversationalists from their context. When we will consider the politeness strategies used by the speaker, we would follow B & L's politeness strategies. Then, we will consider the connection between politeness and the extent of effort and effect. After that, it will be analyzed how the hearer interprets politeness used by the speaker.

5.2. Examples from *the Blue Lotus*

In this section, we would like to consider the following three examples, which are cited from a magazine, *the Blue Lotus* (Hergé (1946)). Its pictures cannot be put here for lack of space, thus we will take out lines. These examples show the situation in which a French boy, Tintin, communicates with a Japanese man, Mr. Mitsuhiro. Before we attempt to go forward to the

examination of examples, we shall outline only briefly this story up to here. A Chinese messenger comes to see Tintin, who is visiting Maharajah's residence in India. This Chinese man cannot convey a whole message but only "Mitsuhirato", "Someone needs you" and "Shanghai", since he is affected by a poisoned arrow just as he speaks to Tintin. Therefore, this boy comes to Shanghai to look for the person who sends this messenger.

Firstly, let us consider example (4):

- (4) a. Tintin: 'TO MR TINTIN' ... Most peculiar! ... How does anyone know I'm here yet ...
- b. (a letter from Mr. Mitsuhirato to Tintin): Mr Tintin, the news of your arrival fills me with joy. I cannot convey my happiness at the prospect of gazing upon your noble and virtuous features. May I humbly beg the privilege of calling upon you at 3 o'clock this afternoon? My servant will await your gracious ...⁶⁾
- c. Tintin: Excellent! ... Please tell the messenger his master is too kind. He mustn't put himself out. I will call upon him myself.
- d. Tintin: I wonder how our Mr Mitsuhirato knew I was here ... Anyway, he's certainly a man with impeccable manners ...

[Underlines ours. The same shall apply hereinafter]

(Hergé, *The Blue Lotus*, pp.5-6)

Example (4) is the scene in which Tintin, who has just arrived in Shanghai, receives a letter written by Mr. Mitsuhirato from a hotel page at a hotel, and it is the first scene where Tintin communicates with Mr. Mitsuhirato, even though it is not a direct communication. In (4b), we can find B & L's (1987) politeness strategies in the underlined passages. For instance, it can be said that "May I humbly beg the privilege" includes at least four B & L's negative politeness strategies: strategy 1 ("be conventionally indirect"), strategy 2 ("question, hedge"), strategy 4 ("minimize the imposition, Rx")⁷⁾ and strategy 5 ("give deference"). The speaker attempts to avoid conveying a favour directly to the hearer, using the interrogative form and showing humility. More strictly speaking, in order to minimize the hearer's burden, the man writes as if he asked a favour to the person who is held in higher regard. For the other underlined parts, we cannot classify them into an exact strategy, but we can say that the writer attempts to work on the boy's positive face which consists of the desire that self-image should be favourable. Therefore, this part would be classified into a positive politeness strategy.

In this case, we can understand that the writer attempts to maintain a certain distance between him and Tintin, using indirect expressions that impose a great processing effort on Tintin. On the other hand, it can be read from (4c) and (4d) that Tintin receives the effect which gives a polite impression to him.

Now, we would like to examine this example following Jary's routes of interpretation in order to consider how this boy interprets this letter that includes many politeness strategies. It will be clear from "his master is too kind" in (4c) and "he's certainly a man with impeccable manners..." in (4d) that the assumption held by Mr. Mitsuhirato does not agree with the assumption held by Tintin. If Mr. Mitsuhirato's assumption were in accordance with Tintin's assumption, Tintin would not feel that Mr. Mitsuhirato is too kind, and he would just pay attention to the content of this letter. Therefore, the politeness strategies by Mr. Mitsuhirato have enough relevance to attract the boy's attention. Then, Mr. Mitsuhirato's letter will be processed, going forward through the right routes. Furthermore, since the boy notices that Mr. Mitsuhirato holds higher regards for him than he had assumed, we can infer that the process will move to either route (ii) or (iii). Finally, about

whether the boy notices Mr. Mitsuhiro's intention to use these strategies, it can be seen from (4c) and (4d), as mentioned above, that Tintin assumes that Mr. Mitsuhiro's intention to use these politeness strategies is derived not from the strong desire to meet him, but from the difference between their assumptions about their relationship. This letter, thus, would be processed through the route (iii).

Secondly, we would like to examine example (5):

- (5) a. Mr. Mitsuhiro: My dear Mr Tintin, you must go back to India at once. The Maharaja of Gaipajama is in great danger. I sent a Chinese messenger to tell you to guard the Maharaja. Didn't you see him?
- b. Tintin: Yes, but he was struck by a poisoned dart and only managed to say two words: your name and Shanghai. Then ... nonsense ...
- c. Mr. Mitsuhiro: Despicable creatures! Such persons stop at nothing! Believe me, you were wrong to leave the Maharaja. Who knows what they will do in your absence?
- ...
- d. Tintin: Who are 'they'?
- e. Mr. Mitsuhiro: Please pardon me, I cannot tell you more: my own life would be in danger ... But I beg you to take heed and go back to India.
- f. Tintin: I see ... thank you. Maybe I'll take the next boat back. Meanwhile I'll telegraph the Maharaja to be on his guard.
- g. Mr. Mitsuhiro: Excellent plan ... Ah, I was forgetting. Beware of everyone here, and especially the Chinese. Your life hangs by a thread...
- h. Tintin: But ... how do you know? ...
- i. Mr. Mitsuhiro: A true Japanese knows everything, honourable sir.

(Hergé, *The Blue Lotus*, p.8)

It is the scene where Tintin actually meets Mr. Mitsuhiro and has a direct conversation with him. Mr. Mitsuhiro's utterance includes some politeness strategies. In (5a), for example, "My dear Mr Tintin" is the use of honorific which B & L (1987) classify into negative politeness strategy 5 or "give deference". In (5i), likewise, the use of honorific can be found, such as "honourable sir". In (5e), "please pardon me" is negative politeness strategy 6 or "apologize". Yet, this situation, unlike the example (4), does not show enough relevance to attract Tintin's attention on the grounds that Tintin's assumption about Mr. Mitsuhiro has already been modified when he had read the letter from Mr. Mitsuhiro. That is, in the scene (5) both assumptions about their relationship held by each of them agree. Thus, in this case, Mr. Mitsuhiro's utterance will be processed through route (i).

As concerns the relationship between politeness and the extent of effort and effect, since Tintin has the modified assumption about Mr. Mitsuhiro, he does not make as much effort as example (4), and he does not receive a high effect either. Therefore, Mr. Mitsuhiro's utterance does not create a polite impression on Tintin.

It is helpful to outline the story after example (5) before moving on to next example. Following Mr. Mitsuhiro's advice, Tintin tried to go back to India for a time, but he comes back to China again and encounters Mr. Mitsuhiro committing a crime.

Thirdly, example (6) is the scene where Tintin notices that the reason why Mr. Mitsuhiro eagerly advised him to go back to India is that he is a nuisance for Mr. Mitsuhiro.

- (6) a. Mr. Mitsuhiro: He! He! Don't say I didn't warn you! ... China is an unhealthy place for little Nosy Parkers!

- b. Tintin: They've brought me here and locked me in ... what will they do next?
- c. Mr. Mitsuhiroto: My dear Mr Tintin, do forgive me for not paying attention to you sooner ...
- d. Tintin: Well, what are you going to do with me?

(Hergé, *The Blue Lotus*, pp.22-23)

In (6a), Mr. Mitsuhiroto shows a completely different attitude from (4) and (5) towards Tintin. The first point to notice here is that Mr. Mitsuhiroto addresses Tintin as “little Nosy Parkers”. This address form is far from Tintin’s assumption modified in (4). Thus, it has relevance to attract his attention. Applying this utterance into routes of interpretation, the speaker, Mr. Mitsuhiroto, is showing him lower regards than he had assumed. Therefore, either route (iv) or (v) would be possible to process this utterance. The next point to pay attention to here is whether this utterance’s intention is derived from the actual difference between Mr. Mitsuhiroto’s assumption and Tintin’s assumption or from Mr. Mitsuhiroto’s desire to offend Tintin. In this case, it can be read from the context that since Tintin’s movement got on his nerve, Mr. Mitsuhiroto attempts to offend Tintin, and then this utterance would be processed through route (iv).

Before turning to the next scene, we wish to draw attention to the extent of effort and effect. In this case, Mr. Mitsuhiroto expects not to produce a polite impression on Tintin but to upset him. Therefore, Mr. Mitsuhiroto makes his utterance effective in offending Tintin with a certain processing effort. What has to be noticed here is that this example is different from the previous examples in that the effect included in the speaker’s utterance seems to be related to impoliteness rather than politeness.

Now, let us consider scene (6c). Here Mr. Mitsuhiroto is making an utterance including some politeness strategies to Tintin again, like “My dear Mr Tintin, do forgive me for not paying attention to you sooner...”. The use of honorific such as “My dear Mr Tintin”, as mentioned above, is negative politeness strategy 5. Another example is the act to apologize like “do forgive me for not paying attention” that is, also as mentioned above, negative politeness strategy 6. As a result of these politeness strategies, it can be said that this utterance will be processed through either route (ii) or (iii). In this case, however, we can infer that this utterance would not be interpreted by the same procedure as (4) or (5). Here the speaker shows the assumption about their relationship which is different from the hearer’s assumption, that is modified in (6a). Thus, this utterance has enough relevance to attract Tintin’s attention. In addition, we can read from the context that this utterance shows fake politeness strategies and has a motivation to upset the hearer. Even though Jary (1998) fails to account for the case like this, we would like to add that this utterance would be interpreted through route (ii).

With regard to the extent of effort and effect, we can find that Mr. Mitsuhiroto expects certain effect, imposing some processing effort on Tintin. Mr. Mitsuhiroto seems not to create a polite image, but to offend Tintin by being polite. As we have seen in (6a), this case also seems to be related to impoliteness.

5.3. Example from *Murder on the Links*

In the previous section, we observed examples from a magazine. In this section, we will deal with other type of examples, that is, extracts from the novel by Agatha Christie. Because her novels give the detailed descriptions of the characters, we can understand the characters’ views. Here, we would like to consider the examples cited from *Murder on the Links* (1923).

For the moment let us look closely at example (7):

- (7) a. ... Jumping up from her seat, she let down the window and stuck her head out, withdrawing it a moment later with the brief and forcible ejaculation 'Hell!'
- b. Now I am old-fashioned. A woman, I consider, should be womanly. I have no patience with the modern neurotic girl who jazzes from morning to night, smokes like a chimney, and uses language which would make a Billingsgate fishwoman blush!
- I looked up, frowning slightly, into a pretty, impudent face, surmounted by a rakish little red hat. A thick cluster of black curls hid each ear. I judged that she was little more than seventeen, but her face was covered with powder, and her lips were quite impossibly scarlet.
- c. Nothing abashed, she returned my glance, and executed an expressive grimace.
- 'Dear me, we've shocked the kind gentleman!' she observed to an imaginary audience.
- d. 'I apologize for my language! Most unladylike, and all that, but, oh, Lord, there's reason enough for it! Do you know I've lost my only sister?'

(Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Links*, pp.5-6)

Before we examine example (7), we would like to outline the scene of this example. This is a scene where a man and a woman who accidentally happen to be in the same train carriage have a conversation. As we can read from (7a), the young woman stands up from her seat, opens the window, thrusts her face out and uses the brief abusive language, "Hell", then pulls her face back. And the man watches everything about it. It can be read from (7b) that the man's assumption for her is that she is not womanly, but a modern girl such as he has no patience with. The underlined passage (7d) is the utterance from her to the man, and in this utterance, she apologizes to him for her rudeness. This utterance includes some politeness strategies. According to B & L's (1987) analysis, the expressions like "oh, Lord," and "there's reason enough for it!" work as politeness strategies. The former is the use of an expletive, which is classified into negative politeness strategy 2: "question, hedge". This strategy has a function to divert the hearer's attention from the FTA (= Face Threatening Act).⁸⁾ The latter is positive politeness strategy 13: "give (or ask for) reasons", which has a function to show the hearer that the speaker's FTA stands to reason.

Let us now attempt to extend the speaker-oriented view into the hearer-oriented view. How does he interpret these politeness strategies? We would like to apply Jary's (1998) routes of interpretation to this case. First, her assumption, which can be read from (7d), does not agree with his assumption, which is read from (7b). Her utterance, thus, has enough relevance to attract his attention. Next, as we can understand from the context, she shows higher regards than he had assumed in the utterance (7d), so this utterance would be processed through either route (ii) or (iii). In this case, since he can infer that her intention to use politeness strategies is caused from the desire to apologize, he will interpret this utterance through route (ii). This can be seen from the underlined passage (7c). From this passage, especially the expression of "executed an expressive grimace", we can read that he regards her politeness strategies as fake.

Concerning the extent of effort and effect, it can be said that the speaker imposes some processing effort on the man, making her utterance indirect, in order to make it appear to be polite. On the other hand, the man receives the effect exceeding this effort, and then considers her politeness as fake politeness. Therefore, she fails to give him suitable effect to produce polite impression on him.

Before turning to the next example, it is important for us to outline the story after (7). After apologizing to the man, she rattles on and behaves exaggeratedly to attract his attention. The man,

who is watching her, laughs unintentionally.

Now, let us consider the scene (8):

- (8) a. 'There! Now we're friends!' declared the minx. 'Say you're sorry about my sister
—,
'I am desolated!'
'That's a good boy!'
- b. 'Let me finish. I was going to add that, although I am desolated, I can manage
to put up with her absence very well.' I made a little bow.
- c. But this most unaccountable of damsels frowned and shook her head.
- d. 'Cut it out. I prefer the "dignified disapproval" stunt. Oh, your face! "Not one
of us", it said. ...'

(Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Links*, p.6)

We can read from (8a), which is the woman's utterance, that their relationship is changing to the closer one. The man jokingly makes the utterance as (8b) because of the change of their relationship. According to B & L (1987), to tell a joke is positive politeness strategy 8, which has a function to put the hearer in a friendly atmosphere. However, as we can observe from (8c), she recognizes his utterance as offensive. In addition, she gives him an utterance like (8d). In response to his joke, she says angrily that she prefers to be criticized formally, and that he does not consider her a real group member. From this point, we can find that she does not notice his real intention to get closer to her. Moreover, in this case, since she says "I prefer the 'dignified disapproval' stunt", his consideration is lower than she had expected. Therefore, this utterance is processed through route (v).

As concerns the extent of effort and effect, he expects the contextual effect to give her friendly image, imposing some processing effort on her, because he wants to shorten the mental distance between him and her. However, the man fails to give a suitable effect to her and consequently she misunderstands his intention to get mentally closer to her.

6. Revisions

Having observed some examples and considered the validity of Jary's (1998) routes of interpretation, now we can suggest some revisions to his routes. Firstly, we would like to mention the word *regard* which Jary (1998) uses in his routes. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1991: 1060), the word *regard* has the meaning such as 'respect' and 'esteem'. These meanings seem to be relevant to the negative politeness aspect, which has the function to keep a constant distance between the speaker and the hearer. In contrast, they seem not to be relevant to the positive politeness aspect, as we noted in the example (8b), which has the function to reduce the conversationalists' distance. It is precisely on such grounds that we would claim that, if these routes include the word *regard*, to explain the process of politeness interpretation, it would be hard to consider the positive politeness aspect. On the other hand, according to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1991: 263), the word *consideration* has the meaning such as "thoughtful attention to or care for the wishes, needs, or feelings of others". Therefore, we suggest that the word *consideration* should be used for the routes of interpretation instead of the word *regard*, as Figure 1 indicates, that is quoted on page 11.

Secondly, let us consider the part of "assumptions about her relationship with the hearer" and "the hearer's assumptions about their relationship" found in Jary's (1998) routes. According to B & L (1987: 76) *W_x* stands for the weight of the act threatening the hearer's desire. *W_x* is

constituted of three factors: D for Distance which stands for “the social distance” between the hearer and the speaker, P for Power which stands for “the relative power” relationship between the speaker and the hearer, and R for Ranking which stands for “the absolute ranking of imposition in the particular culture”. Only *the assumption about the relationship between the speaker and the hearer*, given by Jary (1998), cannot consider the cultural aspect. The factor of R is necessary to explain the differences between cultures. Thus, even though we have not been concerned here with cultural differences so much, we would like to suggest that we should bring the factor Wx, given by B & L, into these routes. Therefore, “assumptions about Wx” takes the place of “assumptions about her relationship with the hearer”, and “the hearer’s assumptions about Wx” takes the place of “the hearer’s assumptions about their relationship”. As a result, Jary’s (1998) routes of interpretation are modified, as shown in the revised version in Figure 1.

7. Results

The results of the case study are presented in Figure 1 on page 11. In order to show how each utterance is interpreted by the hearer, the number of each example is inserted. In this section we would like to analyze what kind of utterances are processed through each route.

First of all, the interpretation of an utterance in route (i), as in example (5), is the case where the speaker’s politeness strategies would not have enough relevance to attract the hearer’s attention, but only the actual content of the utterance would have relevance. Therefore, the utterance in Route (i) could be analyzed as, to borrow Jary’s phrase, “‘Unmarked’ Politeness”.

Secondly, the interpretation of an utterance in route (ii), as we have examined in examples (6c) and (7d), will be the case where the speaker’s consideration included in the utterance has enough relevance to attract the hearer’s attention, because her consideration is higher than he had assumed. And then, he notices her intention of this consideration. Thus, an utterance in route (ii) might be analyzed as “Intended [+Politeness]”. What has to be noticed is that the speakers’ intention in (7d) is to minimize the FTA (=Face Threatening Act) in order to achieve her aim, which is analyzed as [+politeness], while the speaker’s intention in (6c) is to upset the hearer, showing fake politeness, which is analyzed as [−politeness]. The conversational context seems to affect this difference. Therefore, even though Jary fails to consider this difference, we will suppose that there is a case, which is analyzed as “Intended [−Politeness]”.

Thirdly, the interpretation of an utterance in route (iii), such as example (4), is the case where the speaker’s utterance has enough relevance to attract the hearer’s attention, but he cannot infer her intention to show higher consideration than he had assumed. Thus, the utterance on route (iii) is analyzed as “Unintended [+Politeness]”.

Fourthly, in contrast to route (ii), the interpretation of the utterance on route (iv), as pointed out in example (6a), is the case where the speaker’s utterance has enough relevance to attract the hearer’s intention because of the lower consideration than he had assumed. In this case, since her intention is to offend him, an utterance in route (iv) is analyzed as “Intended [−Politeness]”.

Finally, as concerns route (v), like example (8b), the speaker shows lower consideration than the hearer had assumed, and he cannot notice her intention. An utterance which is processed through route (v) is analyzed as “Unintended [−Politeness]”.

Here, it should be pointed out what these results make clear. In the first place, we would like to consider the types of communication. Jucker (1988: 378) mentions that there are two types of communication: “the content level of communication” and “the relationship level of communication”. We assume that an utterance that is interpreted through route (i) is closely related to “the

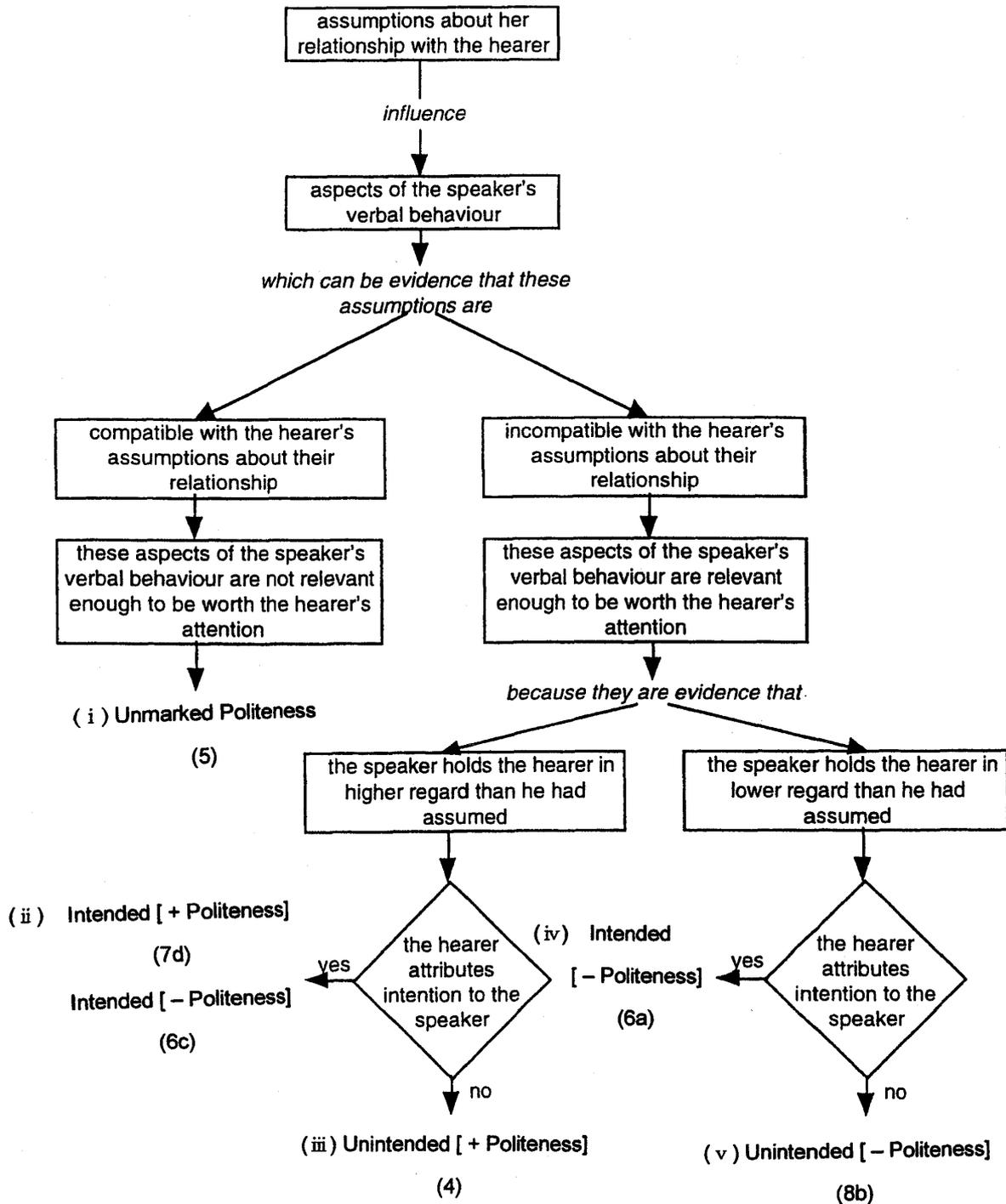


Figure 1. Revised Version of Routes of Interpretation⁹⁾

content level of communication”. In the case of route (i), the hearer’s assumption W_x coincides with the speaker’s assumption about W_x , so that he does not pay attention to the speaker’s consideration in particular, but just to the content of the utterance. On the other hand, the rest of the routes appear to be a combination of “the content level of communication” and “the relationship level of communication”. As Jucker (1988: 378-379) points out, it is difficult to make a distinction between “the content level of communication” and “the relationship level of communication”. It seems that both types of communication are often intertwined. In the case of example (7d)

presented in section 5.3, the speaker, a young lady, conveys her apology, taking the relationship between the speaker and the hearer into consideration. In other words, the speaker attempts to establish a good relationship with the hearer in order to achieve her aim. Therefore, the speaker in example (7d) is engaged in both “the content level of communication” and “the relationship level of communication”. Then, the hearer in example (7d) receives not only the content of her utterance but also a polite impression. In the same way, other examples are also related to both types of communication. This fact justifies Jucker (1988: 378) in his argument that unlike Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle which deal with “the content level of communication” or the previous politeness studies which deal with “the relationship level of communication”, Relevance Theory can deal with both types of communication.

In the second place, we are concerned with the extent of effort and effect. When the speaker attempts to be polite, there seems to be two kinds of the action related to the extent of effort and effect. For one kind, the speaker tries to make the processing effort as small as she can, in order to make the contextual effect as great as possible. For another kind, the speaker attempts to impose some processing effort on the hearer, expecting the great contextual effect to exceed the effort. Considering the results of the case study, we can infer that only route (i) applies to the former: the case in which the speaker reduces the processing effort, in order to produce the great effect, whereas all other routes to the latter: the case in which the speaker imposes some effort on the hearer, expecting the effect beyond the effort. In the case of route (i), the speaker’s assumption about W_x agrees with the hearer’s assumption about W_x , and the speaker does not use politeness strategies more than she needs. In other words, she attempts to reduce any extra processing effort. Concerning what we have just mentioned above, we can say that when the speaker produces the great contextual effect, making the processing effort as little as possible, she engages in “the content level of communication”. As concerns other routes, the speaker’s assumption about W_x does not agree with the hearer’s assumption about W_x . The speaker conveys the content of utterance to the hearer indirectly, using several politeness strategies. Thus, we can say that when the speaker imposes some processing effort on the hearer, expecting the contextual effect beyond the effort, she engages not only in “the content level of communication” but also in “the relationship level of communication”.

Before turning to the next point, we must look more carefully into routes (iii) and (v), which are included in the case where the speaker imposes certain processing effort on the hearer in order to give him an effect exceeding the effort. For these two routes, the hearer takes out the unexpected contextual effect from the speaker’s utterance. Route (iii) is a case in which the hearer receives the contextual effect beyond the speaker’s expectation. Recall that in example (4) presented in section 5.2, the speaker, Mr. Mitsuhiro, conveys his desire of making a short visit to the hearer, Tintin, using several politeness strategies. However, Tintin believes Mr. Mitsuhiro’s polite verbal behaviour to be the result of his nature. Hence, Tintin receives a contextual effect greater than Mr. Mitsuhiro’s estimate. On the other hand, route (v) is a case where the hearer receives the contextual effect less than the speaker’s expectation. It can be also said that the hearer cannot reach the intended implicature. Thus, the speaker makes a wrong estimate of the extent of effort and effect. In example (8b) seen in section 5.3, a man makes a joke so as to make the mental distance between him and a woman shorter, but she cannot understand his intention. In other word, he imposes some effort on her, in order for her to draw the great contextual effect exceeding the effort, but she receives the effect below his estimate. We assume that in both routes (iii) and (v), the speaker makes a mistake in her estimate of the extent of effort and effect, and the hearer receives

a contextual effect outside of her intention.

In the third place, we would like to pay attention to the hearer's judgement about the speaker's utterance. In the previous politeness studies, whenever the speaker's utterance includes the politeness strategies, it is taken to be polite. However, considering the results of our case study, the speaker's utterance including politeness strategies is not always regarded as polite. For route (i), the hearer does not particularly pay attention to the speaker's politeness strategies, because he has already had assumptions about the speaker including those about the use of politeness strategies. As we have mentioned in section 4, Jary (1998: 8) points out that this type of communication is an unmarked exchange in terms of politeness. For route (v), even if the speaker uses politeness strategies in order to produce a polite impression on the hearer, the hearer would consider her utterance as [-politeness], regardless of her intention. In the cases of routes (i) and (v), what previous studies take to be politeness is inconsistent with what the hearer takes to be politeness. Therefore, we argue that it is important to study politeness not only from a speaker-oriented view, but also from a hearer-oriented view.

8. Conclusion

This paper has discussed how the hearer's judgement affects politeness intended by the speaker. Most previous politeness studies have taken a speaker-oriented approach and have not been concerned about the hearer's aspect. In order to take the hearer into account, we have examined politeness from the viewpoint of Relevance Theory that takes a hearer-oriented approach. We tried to show that it is the hearer who judges whether the speaker's utterance is polite or not, using Jary's routes of interpretation, which is also taking the relevance theoretic view.

In this study, two main points were made clear. Firstly, politeness can be divided into three types: [+Politeness], "Unmarked' Politeness" and [-Politeness]. Furthermore, [+Politeness] and [-Politeness] are divided into "Intended [+/-Politeness]" and "Unintended [+/-Politeness]", depending on the hearer's judgement. We find that there is a case where even if the speaker intends to be polite, the hearer takes the speaker not to be polite. Secondly, politeness is closely connected with the extent of effort and effect, which are the factors of relevance. When the mental distance between the conversational participants' is close, the speaker attempts to reduce the processing effort in order to produce the great effect. When the mental distance between them is long, the speaker attempts to impose some effort on the hearer, expecting the effect exceeding the effort.

The relevance theoretic view seems to enable us to make up for the shortcomings in the previous studies. This study has taken no more than one small step in politeness study, but we believe that the relevance theoretic approach will shed light on what the previous study cannot explain.

NOTES

- * We are grateful to Linda Ann Wisker for suggesting stylistic improvements. Needless to say, all remaining inadequacies are our own.
- 1) Following the convention of many other politeness studies, the third person female pronoun is used to refer to the speaker or the writer, and the third person male pronoun to the hearer or the reader. However, when we consider several concrete examples in Chapter 5, we use the person pronouns which

- are correspondent with the characters' sexes.
- 2) Grice's (1975) paper was published after Lakoff's (1973) paper, but Grice had reported his theory as an unpublished manuscript at University of California before Lakoff's paper. Therefore, Lakoff's study is based on Grice's Cooperative Principle.
 - 3) The terms *effort* and *processing effort* are used as the same meaning. Likewise, the terms *effect* and *contextual effect* are used as the same meaning.
 - 4) Sperber and Wilson (1995) suggest that the term utterance be used with various meanings. Thus, they tend to use the term *stimulus*. According to them, "psycholinguists use the term 'stimulus' for any modification of the physical environment designed to be perceived (p. 29)". In addition they suggest that an utterance is itself a stimulus. In this paper, we do not make a restricted distinction between the term utterance and the term stimulus.
 - 5) According to B & L (1987: 60), W_x means the weight of the Face Threatening Act (henceforth FTA). B & L (1987) try to define politeness, using the notion of *face*, which is suggested by Goffman (1967). The term face can be defined as a public image that everyone has. According to B & L (1987: 62), *face* has two aspects:
 - (i) a. Negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others.
 - b. Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.
 B & L (1987: 60) call an act threatening this twofold face as a *Face Threatening Act* (henceforth FTA). The weight of the FTA (W) can be computed by the sum of the three factors as the following:
 - (ii) $W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$
 - a. the 'social distance' (D) of S and H
 - b. the relative 'power' (P) of S and H
 - c. the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture (B & L (1987: 74-76))
 Here "S" means the speaker and "H" is the hearer.
 - 6) The last part of this letter is cut out in this magazine.
 - 7) R_x is one of the factors of W_x . For further details of R_x , see note 5.
 - 8) FTA means a Face Threatening Act. See note 5 for a full account of FTA.
 - 9) The numbers in parentheses agree with the numbers of examples that are presented in section 5.

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