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**Relationality in Japanese with Particular Focus on Gender**

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Human existence is validated through the interaction with the society. The association of “self” and the society create a kind of relationship that is particular to that culture and context. So, each individual has a relationship, or an interaction with the society. The degree to which the concept of “self” is affected, or the way in which the self is related to the other, i.e., relationality, varies from situation to situation, from culture to culture.

Viewing Japanese as a society-relational language (e.g. Maynard 1997), we have examined various Japanese texts (letters, phone conversations, political debate discourse, news reports, interviews, etc.). Each paper of this group deals with various issues in gender-relationality in Japanese, especially, how intricately it is coded in texts of different genres and how it might be changing.

One important key concept that these studies drew upon is the concept of phatic communication. Therefore, a brief discussion of the concept may be in order in this introduction.

The scholar who introduced this term “phatic” is a Polish-British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1923). He wrote that people talk not only to convey reflected thoughts and ideas but also to create ties of union between speaker and hearer. He viewed this function of language as “an indispensable element of concerted human action” (316). Reynolds (2000) argues that the importance of phatic communication varies from culture to culture and demonstrates that the Japanese language is a hyper-phatic one, i.e., a language that abounds with linguistic devices for phatic purposes. Indicating that the phatic communication has been given more significance in the Japanese culture than in other cultures, especially, American culture, which D. Tannen (1998) describes as an “argument culture.” She analyzed tape-recorded and transcribed conversations with particular focus on interactional features, such as, turn taking, back-channeling, interruption, conversational control and co-construction, (or joint production) and hearer involvement (e.g., Sacks et. al. 1974, Sacks 1992 and Tannen 1998), which are all related to phatic communication.

Kubota, assuming that gender is more remarkable in informal conversational discourses, investigated written texts and attempted to clarify the complex process of changes in the gender relationality; Kamimoto, starting with a naïve question why her conversation with her father is always somewhat shorter than her conversation with her mother, she analyzes the telephone closure and argues, like Tannen (1990), that men and women have different sets of pragmatic rules, genderlects.

Martin, while pointing out that the concept of “masculinity” is difficult to define, observes the shift in the media “representation” of masculinity in Japanese society. She attempts to support this perception by looking at some conversational features as used for the phatic purposes.

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