Politeness Strategies Used to Agree, Disagree, and Avoid Disagreement:
roles and linguistic choices in face-to-face interactions

TANAKA Noriko

Abstract
Tanaka (2001) proposed three categories to examine interaction: ‘societal roles’, ‘interpersonal roles’ and ‘activity roles’. Then, she applied this categorization to actual data and analyzed the interaction between a mother and her daughter in telephone conversation (Tanaka, 2005, 2006, 2009).

This paper will apply the same categorization to different data: face-to-face interaction between a father and his daughter. The interaction begins as the daughter asks her father to tell her what he would like to say to the younger generations, and he talks about various topics: children’s behavior, education, his war experience, etc. Although the daughter, whose ‘societal role’ is a teacher, does not always agree with his opinions, she is sometimes constrained by her ‘activity role’ (interviewer) to avoid disagreement.

The focus of analysis will be on politeness strategies used to agree, disagree, and avoid disagreement. The investigation discovered that various linguistic devices can be employed: a simple affirmation, comments, laughter, hedges, and particles. The purposes are also varied: to express token agreement (Brown & Levinson 1987: 113-114), to mitigate disagreement, or to hedge opinions (ibid.: 116). I hope that analyzing these strategies will make us more aware of some politeness aspects in communication.

Abstract
田中（2001）において、会話でのやりとりを分析する際に考察する必要があると考えられる3つの役割、 「社会役割」「対人関係役割」「活動役割」を提案した。その後、このカテゴリーを母と娘の電話での会話に適用し、それらの役割がどのようにコミュニケーションに影響を与えるかを調査してきた（田中 2005, 2006, 2009）。

本稿では、同様のカテゴリーを用いて、父と娘の対面での会話を分析する。ここでは、娘が父に若き世代に言いたいことを話してほしいと依頼し、インタビューのような形で会話を進行する。トピックとして取り上げられたのは、「子供たちの振る舞い」「教育問題」「戦争体験」などである。教員という「社会役割」を持つ娘は、父の意見に必ずしも賛成でないこともあるが、インタビューという「活動役割」のため、反対をはっきりと表現するのはためらわれ場合も多い。

このような役割関係を考慮し、分析の焦点を娘に置き、父の意見に対して賛成・反対を表現する際にどのような言語的選択がなされているかを考察する。また、明確な反対表現を回避するためにどのようなポラティネス・ストラテジーが用いられているかを調べ、「見せかけの賛成」（token agreement）（Brown & Levinson 1987: 113-114）、「意見のほかし」（hedge opinions）（ibid.: 116）などが、日本語ではどのように実現されているかを見る。本研究がコミュニケーションにおけるポラティネス側面の一端を意識化するのに役立てば幸いである。
1. INTRODUCTION

In my previous study (Tanaka 2009), I focused on telephone conversations between a mother and her daughter (myself) and analyzed what politeness strategies they employ to manage some particular discourse. The findings indicated that various roles (e.g. elderly mother / working daughter, advice receiver / advice giver) of each participant affected the power balance between them, and influenced the politeness strategies they employed.

In this study, I would like to take another kind of data, which is different from the previous one in several aspects: the participants are a father and his daughter (myself), the interaction is face-to-face and proceeds in a casual form of interview. It is expected that these differences may affect their politeness parameters: their ‘relative power’, ‘social distance’ and ‘absolute ranking of imposition’ (See Brown and Levinson 1987: 74), and may lead them to use some politeness strategies.

Although these data are very personal and limited in scope, I hope that the analysis will reveal some aspects of interpersonal communication and will also be useful to other researchers in discourse analysis.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In this section, I would like to briefly describe my previous studies, first on the theoretical background and then on some results, which are related to my present study.

2.1 Theoretical Background

Based on Thomas (1986), Tanaka (2001) proposed three roles as sub-categories of ‘social role’, which could be used for discourse analysis. Each role is defined and explained as follows:

*Societal role:* a role which the individual occupies in society, regardless of the relationship with another interactant in the current interaction.

(For example, if a person is a teacher by occupation, s/he may be regarded as a ‘teacher’ by another interactant, even when the interactant is not her / his student.)

*Interpersonal role:* the personal relationship obtaining between one interactant and another.

(Unlike societal role, interpersonal role is based on the actual relationship between the interactants: e.g. teacher – student, friend – friend.)
activity role: the relationship obtaining between one interactant and another in that particular activity type (See Levinson 1979) where the interaction occurs. (For example, in class, a teacher plays the activity role of ‘teacher’, and the role affects her/his linguistic behaviours.)

Chart 1. Sub-categories of Social Role

SOCIAL ROLE

Societal Role Interpersonal Role Activity Role

e.g. a teacher by occupation e.g. your teacher e.g. a teacher in class

2.2 Application to actual data

Based on the categories above, Tanaka (2001) analyzed her TV interview data, and showed how each role affects the communication in each interview. Then, Tanaka (2005, 2006, 2009) applied the same categorization to a personal telephone conversation between a mother and her daughter. She also proposed the concept of role focus, which is defined as ‘the focused aspect of the role in a certain stage of the discourse’; for example, a working daughter is focused at one stage of their interaction, and an elderly mother is highlighted at another stage. Some of the roles discussed there are summarized in the following table.

Chart 2. Roles of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL ROLE</th>
<th>INTERPERSONAL ROLE</th>
<th>ACTIVITY ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIETAL ROLE</td>
<td>INTERPERSONAL ROLE</td>
<td>ACTIVITY ROLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Focus</td>
<td>Main Role</td>
<td>Main Role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M Homemaker elderly Mother Supporter support giver
D Teacher working Daughter Supporter support receiver

Note: Roles are varied and changeable, and the above is simply an example.

3. PRESENT RESEARCH

To analyze conversational data from different aspects, I would like to conduct further research with different kind of data, which I will describe in detail below.
3.1 Data

The data for analysis are shown in the following chart. On 3 November 2001, D (myself) asked her father F what he wanted to say to his younger generations. Their conversation was recorded with F’s permission, and all of their interaction was transcribed for the present research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Recording</th>
<th>3 November, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time length</td>
<td>41 minutes 16 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (F)</td>
<td>82 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter (D)</td>
<td>47 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>What F wants to say to younger generations: war experience, education, families, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Purpose

When the conversation was recorded, my main purpose was simply to keep my father’s voice. He was suffering from cancer at the serious stage, and I wanted to keep ‘him’ as much as possible. I could not tell him the real purpose, and explained him I needed conversational data for my linguistic research. I was involved in such research and it was partly true. He willingly gave me his permission for recording and using the data for my research. Three months after the recording, he passed away. In spite of his cooperation, I was not able to use the data for a long time. His voice was too real for me to listen to without pain. Until recently the tape quietly sat deep in my drawer.

Now, almost nine years has passed since his death, and it is not painful but heart-warming for me to hear his voice. I began to think about realizing the purpose I had explained him. Through the analysis of the data, I would like to reconsider what he wanted to deliver to his following generations including myself, and to deepen my understanding of conversation in general.

3.3 Roles of the Participants

To grasp the relationship between F and D, I first apply the categorization of roles (discussed in 2.1 above) to the data. I hope that it will make the characteristics of their roles clearer to compare the roles of the participants in my previous research (Chart 2 above). The possible roles of F and D are shown in Chart 4 below:
Chart 4. **Roles of the Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL ROLE</th>
<th>INTERPERSONAL ROLE</th>
<th>ACTIVITY ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIETAL ROLE</td>
<td>Role Focus</td>
<td>Main Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pensioner (Retired office worker)</td>
<td>elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Roles are varied and changeable, and the above is simply an example.

Let us focus on some differences between Chart 2 and 4 (the focal points are underlined in Chart 4), and consider how the differences may affect their interaction.

### 3.3.1 Societal role

While their societal roles are Homemaker and Teacher in Chart 2, these are Pensioner and Teacher in Chart 4. That is, F had already retired but has a long experience of working; in that sense, he is in a senior position as a worker to D. On the other hand, F was not a teacher but an office worker; D is probably more familiar with the present issues on education.

### 3.3.2 Interpersonal role

While their interpersonal roles are Mother and Daughter in Chart 2, these are Father and Daughter in Chart 4. The role of mother and father probably differ from each other in Japanese society; and the difference may affect D’s reaction to each. This can also be seen in other societies. Holmes (1995) refers to American families and points out the differences of children’s way of talking to their mother and father. As she also mentions, the motivations behind the differences may vary.

(...) a study of directives in middle-class American families found that children used less polite imperatives to their mothers, and more mitigated directives to fathers. (Ervin-Tripp et al. 1984). The researchers suggest that these studies reflect the fact that mothers are perceived as less powerful than fathers, and as less deserving of respect or negative politeness. (Though it is worth noting that unmitigated directives are normal between intimates. The children may feel closer to their mothers.)

(Holmes 1995: 159)

\(^1\) (...) indicates that this ellipsis was made by myself, not by the author.
In my data, F basically refers himself as ‘otoo-san’ (father)(e.g. 253, 234,107 in the data shown below) instead of using a first person singular pronoun such as ‘boku’ or ‘ore’ (both are translated into ‘I’). This way of reference is fairly common in Japanese, and it may implicitly remind D of their interpersonal relation, father and his daughter.

3.3.3 Activity role

In the previous research (Chart 2), their main activity roles are mutual supporters, and D and M may play a support giver or receiver, and vice versa depending on the context. In the present research (Chart 4), by contrast, their talk is more like an interview; D mainly introduces a certain topic and asks F some related questions, and F answers the questions and expands the topic. In this sense, their main activity roles are regarded as an interviewer (D) and an interviewee (F). The activity and the characteristics of the roles may affect their interactions.

In the analysis of TV interview data, Tanaka (2001) discusses the constraints by ‘activity role’:

‘Activity roles’ constrain all their moves in interaction. ‘The interviewer’ is supposed to take the initiative in controlling the talk (e.g. initiating a topic, guiding a topic in a certain direction), and being ‘polite’ to ‘the interviewee’ who is considered a guest in this activity type. (Tanaka 2001: 74)

Tanaka (2001) also points out, to play their activity roles effectively, both the interviewer and the interviewee avoid displeasing or offending each other (ibid.: 84, 127). Although my present data is not a formal interview, D also asks F to talk about his thoughts and tries to facilitate their discussion. To play this role in an effective and harmonious manner, D should also follow this maxim.

3.4 Results

Considering the roles discussed above, I will investigate how each role affects their interaction and which role surpasses others in what context. The main focus will be on D, and I will see how she reacts to F’s utterances; in particular, how she agrees or disagree with him, and also avoids disagreement.

3.4.1 How to express agreement

As Brown & Levinson (1987: 102) put ‘Seek agreement’ as one of the positive politeness strategies, it is a polite action in many situations to agree with the other person. Let us see what expressions are used to agree in my data.

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2 I translate it into ‘I <lit.:father>’ in these data.
3.4.1.1 simple agreement

When the speaker genuinely agrees with the other person, the expression will often be simple and clear. Also in my data, when F points out the importance of education, D genuinely agrees to his opinion, which is natural to her societal role, teacher. To express her explicit and genuine agreement, D uses ‘un’ (yes) (297) and ‘un, soo nee’ (yes, I think so, too.) (300) as follows. (For the transcription conventions, see after 4. Conclusion.)

| 296 | F: うん、もう本当に教育だもん、 | un, moo hontoo ni kyooiku damon, | (Yes, education is really the point.) |
| 297 | D: うん、 | un, | |
| 298 | F: うん、 | un, | (Yes.) |
| 299 | F: (3s)で、いやあ子供は言わなきゃ والفانねんだもんねえ、 | (3s) de, iyaako kodomo wa iwanakya wakan--nen--da mon nee, | ((3s) well, children will never learn if we don’t tell them, will they?) |
| 300 | D: うん、そうねえ、 | un, soo nee, | (Yes, I think so, too.) |

3.4.1.2 with supportive comments

Agreeing with the other person, the speaker may add some supportive comments. In the discourse below, F deplores the trend of the time, and D sympathizes with him by saying ‘un soo ne’ (Yes, I think so, too.) and adds the following comments: ‘anmari korekara yokunaru kanji ga shinai mon ne’ (We couldn’t expect something better in the future.) (254).

| 253 | F: こんな時代じゃあ、もう、お父さんほん二とにね、がっかりしちゃうよ、 | konna jidai ja, moo, ootoo-san honnto ni ne, gakkari shichau yo, | (With the current trend of the time, I feel really disappointed.) |
| 254 | D: うん、そうねえ、あんまりこれからよくなる感じがしないもんね | un soo ne, anmari korekara yokunaru kanji ga shinai mon ne | (Yes, I think so, too. We couldn’t expect something better in the future.) |

3.4.1.3 with laughter

Although laughter plays an important function to mitigate some face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson 1987) such as expressing disagreement (3.4.2) or to avoid the FTA (3.4.3), it may also play an effective role to express sympathetic agreement when the other person talks about a pitiful but funny story. For example, in the following discourse, F talks about how miserable small men like him were in the army, and D expresses sympathy with laughter:
3.4.2 How to express disagreement: with laughter and hedge

As discussed in 3.3.3, D is expected to play the role of an interviewer in this activity; that is, she should take it into consideration how she avoids displeasing or offending F. For that purpose, it would be better for her not to disagree with him. Yet, it is not always possible. When her own opinion exceeds the maxim she should follow as an interviewer, she expresses disagreement.

In the following discourse, F tells D that war may be needed to teach children the value of things. D disagrees to it but with some mitigations as follows:

234 F: だからお父さんに言われると、あい、口で言っていて言うとききかない、
dakara otoo-san ni iwaseruto, aa, kuchi de ittemo yuukoto kikanai kara,
(If my father tells me, it is better to keep silent than to talk.)

もう1回戦争でも起こって [不自由な目を] [違わせない] とねあい、わかんないんじゃない
moo ikkai senso demo okotte [hujiyuu na me ci] [awase nai] to ne aa, waka-n=na-n=j-a nai
they would never learn until something like war breaks out and they experience the inconvenience,

かなあと思うんだー,
kanaa to omou-ci-da,
I suppose.)

235 D:  [ (laugh) ] [それはちょっと] よくない考え方じゃないや？
[ (laugh) ] [sore wa chotto] yoku nai kangaee ja nai?
[ (laugh) ] [That’s a little bit] a bad idea, isn’t it?]
It should be noted that D laughs and uses ‘chotto’ in the disagreement. ‘Chotto’ is basically categorized into *hedge*, one of the negative politeness strategies (though another categorization is possible, as discussed in 3.4.3.2). Brown and Levinson (1987) define a ‘hedge’ as:

In the literature, a ‘hedge’ is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected (note that this latter sense is an extension of the colloquial sense of ‘hedge’).

(Brown and Levinson 1987: 145)

In my data above, ‘chotto’ (a little bit) with laughter and a question form plays the function to mitigate the possible FTA (disagreeing with F to offend him). In this sense, the disagreement is expressed rather clearly but with some consideration of politeness.

3.4.3 How to avoid disagreement

Even if we actually disagree with the other person, we may choose not to express the disagreement. Depending on the content, we may think it more important not to offend the other person, and to keep some harmony in the interaction. Brown & Levinson (1987: 102) categorize ‘Avoid disagreement’ as one of the positive politeness strategies, and give some kinds of realization of the strategy (ibid.: 113-117). Among them, I will discuss ‘token agreement’ and ‘hedgeing opinions’, and add some other devices which saliently appear in my data.

3.4.3.1 token agreement

Brown & Levinson (1987) explain ‘token agreement’ as follows:

The desire to agree or appear to agree with H leads also to mechanisms for pretending to agree, instances of ‘token’ agreement. Sacks (1973) has collected numerous examples in English of the remarkable degree to which speakers may go in twisting their utterances so as to appear to agree or to hide disagreement – to respond to a preceding utterance with ‘Yes, but…’ in effect, rather than a blatant ‘No’. (Brown & Levinson 1987: 113-114)

The speaker may give the other person a simple token of agreement, or ‘yes’, even if s/he wants to say something else/more. In the following interaction, F criticizes the present teachers for being not so strict to students as the teachers in the past. As a teacher (her societal role), D actually wants to say there are many better teachers than what F thinks. However, her activity
role (an interviewer) exceeds the societal role, and she chooses not to disagree, and reacts only by ‘un’ (112).

107 F:  (...) oto-san no jidai wa, sensei ga kokuban de kaite, ushiro de gyaagyaa sawagu to
(...) In my <lit: father’s> days, when students made much noise while the teacher wrote on
the blackboard.

108 D:  (笑)
(laugh)
(‘laugh’)

109 F:  かっと先生見て、あー、○○立ってろ、○○立ってろって言うんだろ？
katto sensei mite, aa, marumaru tattero, marumaru tattero-tte yuudaro?
(the teacher stared at them, and said ‘So-and-so, stand up, so-and-so, stand up’, didn’t s/he?)

110 D:  うん、
un,
(yes)

111 F:  今の先生は知らーん顔して、時間が来るまでこんなことやってんの。
ima no sensei wa shiran-kao shite,jikan ga kuru made konnakoto yatte-n-no,
(teachers in these days ignore them, and simply keep teaching until the time is up.)

112 D:  うん、
un,
(yes)

‘Token agreement’ is not always a simple ‘token’ but can be a ‘partial agreement’; that is, the speaker agrees with the other person to some extent, as the following example Brown & Levinson give:

We found similar ‘preference for agreement’ in our data on British English:
(54) A: What is she, small?
B: Yes, yes, she’s small, smallish, um, not really small but certainly not very big.                    (Brown & Levinson 1987: 114)

Such examples are also seen in my data. In the following discourse, F argues that the students in these days wouldn’t listen to their teacher and they don’t learn from her/him. D, who is a teacher, first gives F a ‘token agreement’, ‘soo ne’ (That’s right) with laughter (305), but she does not completely agree with F and tries to change his opinion by saying ‘demo kekkoo ii
ko mo iru-n-da kedo, ne’ (But there are also quite good children, you know?) (308), which is what she actually wants to say.
These examples of ‘token agreement’ show that D considers her interpersonal role (a daughter) and her activity role (an interviewer), which constrain her way of talking and make her choose to pay some sufficient respect to F, who is her father and her interviewee.

3.4.3.2 hedging opinions

As another linguistic realization to avoid disagreement, Brown & Levinson (1987: 116) raise ‘hedging opinions’. They basically categorize ‘hedge’ as one of the negative politeness strategies (ibid: 131), but point out that it may play the function of positive politeness when the speaker tries to avoid disagreement:

(...) one characteristic device in positive politeness is to hedge these extremes, so as to make one’s own opinion safely vague. Normally hedges are a feature of negative politeness, (...) but some hedges can have this positive-politeness function as well, most notably (in English): sort of, kind of, like, in a way. (Brown & Levinson 1987: 116)

Also in my data, D uses ‘hedges’ to make her opinion safely vague. For example, in the following discourse, F deplores the behavior of Japanese children (63) in comparison with that of children in other countries, saying ‘ne, gaikoku wa nai mon nee? sooyuu koto’ (right? There is no such a thing in foreign countries, is there?) (65). D, who has more experience in staying abroad, does not completely agree with him, thinking that there are also some naughty children in foreign countries. However, she does not express her disagreement, but uses a hedge, ‘un maa’ (well, sort of.)(66), which suggests that
she does not totally agree with him. Then, in the following discourse, she expresses partial agreement to his opinion in a tentative way: ‘motto kodomo ni kibishii _kamo shin-nai_’ (They may be more strict to children.) (68).

63  F:  (…) まあと一つの例でいくと、あの（2a）公園で、ここへ入って遊んじゃいけませんっていうのが遊んでるだろう？
       (…) maa hitotsu no ree de ikuto, aa (2a) kouen de, koko e haitte asonja ikemasen-tte yuuno asonderudaro?
       (…) well, taking an example, (2a) in the park, children play in the area of ‘No entry’, don’t they?)

64  D:  うん、
       un,
       (yes.)

65  F:  ね？、外国はないもんねえ？そういうこと。
       ne, gaikoku wa nai mon’ nee? soooyu koto,
       (right? There is no such a thing in foreign countries, is there?)

66  D:  うんまあ、
       un maa,
       (well, sort of)

67  F:  ああ、
       aa,
       uh

68  D:  もっと子供に厳しいかもしれない
       motto kodomo ni kibishii kamo shin-nai
       (They may be more strict to children.)

3.4.3.3 asking back
Asking back is another common strategy we may use to avoid disagreement. Also in my data, D employs it quite often. In the following discourse, F makes a critical comment on younger people: ‘gaishite warui ne’ (generally they are bad.). D, as a teacher, has more contact with younger people, and she actually does not think they are generally bad. Yet, at this stage of the discourse, she does not express disagreement and simply asks back with laughter: (laugh) ‘soo?’ (Are they?) (57). Later in their talk, when this topic is raised again, she makes a clearer comment: ‘demo kekkoo iiko mo iru-n-da kedo, ne’ (But there are fairly good young people, you know.) (308).

56  F:  まあと、若い人のいいところもあるけれども、あー様して悪いね。
       maa, wakai hito no ii toko mo aru keredomo, aa gaishite warui ne,
       (Well, young people have some good points, but generally they are bad.)

57  D:  （笑） そう？
       (laugh) soo?
       ((laugh) Are they?)

308  D:  （2a）でも結構いい子もいるんだけど、ね
       (2a) demo kekkoo iiko mo iru-n-da kedo, ne
       ((2a) But there are fairly good young people, you know.)
D may add her opinion right after asking back. In the following example, F argues that it might be necessary for young people to go to war to learn things. D asks back and put her opinions in the following question: ‘demo soremo komaru ja nai? mata sensoo ga okitara’ (but it will be troublesome if war breaks out again, won’t it?) (266).

265 F: うんもうだからお父さんはほんとに、もう1回戦争あって若い、のをね、あー一戦場に引っ張り出したりなんか分からないとわからんねーのかなと思うよ。
un moo dakara otooo-san wa honto ni, moo ikkai sensoo atte wakai, no o ne, aa senjoo ni hippari-dashitari nanka shinai to wakan-nee no kana to omouyo,
(um I <lit.: father> really think it might be necessary for young people to go to war to learn things.)

266 D: 〈笑〉そう？　でもそれも困るじゃない？　また戦争が起こいたら、
(laugh) soo?, demo sore mo komaru ja nai? mata sensoo ga okitara,
(laugh) Do you? But it will be troublesome if war breaks out again, won’t it?

D also asks back when she does not believe the information F gives. In this case, she shows her disagreement in the tone. In the example below, F tells D that there is no person who is more than 100 years old in Tokyo, and D asks back with a doubtful tone:

586 F: だけど東京じゃあ（1s）百年以上いないよ、
dakedo tokyoo jaa (1s) hyaku ijoo inai yo,
(But there is no person who is more than 100 years old (1s) in Tokyo.)

587 D: そーお？
sooo?
(Is that sooo?)

3.4.3.4 claiming no knowledge on the matter

When D doubts the information F gives, D may express her doubtfulness by claiming she does not have knowledge on that. In the following example, F claims that women get a higher salary than men now (157). D actually thinks that it is not generally true, but simply says, ‘sore wa waka-n-nai kedo, uun’ (I don’t know about it, umm)(158) with laughter to suggest that she does not necessarily think so.

155 F: こういう家庭の崩壊ね、これも直していかなくちゃいけないけれど、ちょっとねー、
kooyuu katee no hookai ne, kore mo naoshite ikanakuchaikenai keredo, chotto nee,
huu huu to mogasegi de,
(such breakdown of the family, we have to put it back, but a bit.... cause both husband and wife are working for a living)

156 D: 〈笑〉
(laugh)

[(laugh)]

[(laugh)]

[(laugh)]
3.4.3.5 laughter

As discussed above, laughter plays an important function to mitigate an FTA. It often appears with some utterances, but without any utterance it may be used to avoid disagreement but to imply it. In this following example, F argues that the students and their teacher should not be like friends and the metaphorical ‘first name relationship’ (literally, ‘kimi to boku’, meaning casual and friendly addressing each other) should be abolished in education (125). Although D does not necessarily agree with him, she simply laughs (126):

F: だからね、生徒もね、ああ、先生一を友達扱いにしてんだろ？
dakara ne, seeto mo ne, aa, sensee o tomodachi atsukai ni shite-n daro?
(So students take their teachers as friends, don’t they?)

D: うん,
un,
(umm)

F: うん、もうこれは一はもう徹底的にね、君と僕なんか馴目,
un, moo koree wa moo tetteeteki ni ne, kimi to boku nanka tame,
(Well, it should be abolished, the first name relationship.)

D: (笑)
((laugh))

3.4.4 Distribution of sentence-ending particles: ‘ne’ ‘yo’ ‘sa’ ‘no’

Sentence-ending particles can play various functions in Japanese. As Brown & Levinson (1987: 145) point out, particles are used for ‘hedge’ (See 3.4.2) and make some good effects of politeness. Tanaka (2009: 139) investigates how particles are distributed in their telephone conversation between a mother and her daughter, and reveals that the use varies depending on their topics (For the different topics, see Tanaka 2009:128). The following chart shows the total number of each particle. (They were counted only at the end of the turn.)

Chart 5. Distribution of sentence-ending particles: M and D (Tanaka 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ending</th>
<th>variety</th>
<th>ne</th>
<th>nee</th>
<th>-ne</th>
<th>yo</th>
<th>-ne</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>wa</th>
<th>-ne</th>
<th>-no</th>
<th>wa</th>
<th>-yo</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>yo</th>
<th>-no</th>
<th>wa</th>
<th>-yo</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>sa</th>
<th>saa</th>
<th>wa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would like to compare these results with the numbers of the same particles used in my present data. The results are shown in Chart 6 below (they were also counted only at the end of turn):

**Chart 6. Distribution of sentence-ending particles: F and D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Ne</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yo</th>
<th>Wa</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sa</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>ne</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on the very ending, ‘ne’ (the total) ‘no’ ‘yo’ (the total) ‘sa’ and ‘wa’, the results are shown in Graph 1 and 2 below:

**Graph 1. Sentence-ending particles: M and D**

**Graph 2. Sentence-ending particles: F and D**
These two pieces of data differs in various ways. The data in Tanaka 2009 (Chart 5, Graph 1) is telephone conversation between a mother and her daughter, and they talk to support each other. On the other hand, the present one (Chart 6, Graph 2) is face-to-face interaction between a father and his daughter, and it is a casual interview in which the daughter asks her father to talk about his experiences in life and his messages to the younger generations.

As there are such many variables between the two, it would be difficult to find what factor makes the difference of the distribution of sentence-ending particles, and it would be dangerous to generalize these results. However, it is still interesting we can find some salient similarities and differences. I would like to discuss some of them.

3.4.4.1 Particles which traditionally show femininity

Let us focus on Chart 5 and Chart 6 above. It is interesting to note that in the interaction between F and D (Chart 6), the use of ‘wa-ne’ ‘no-yo-ne’ ‘wa-yo’ and ‘wa’, which traditionally indicate femininity in Japanese, is not seen. By contrast, in the interaction between M and D (Chart 5), M, who was in her 70s when the research was conducted, uses these particles more than D, who is 23 years younger. This may suggest that this kind of feminine ending is less used by younger generations.

3.4.4.2 The powerful sentence-ending particle: ‘ne’

Graph 1 and Graph 2 show that the sentence-ending particle ‘ne’ is used most in both data. As Brown & Levinson (1987: 147) mention, the particle ‘ne’ may play the functions which question tags or expressions like ‘I wonder’ does in English. This indicates that it makes various effects of politeness, as Chino (1991) raises the basic functions:

ne: 1. Indicates emotion or feelings of admiration.
2. Indicates agreement with the other person.
3. Softens a request.
4. Indicates a request for confirmation.
5. Indicates a mild assertion of, or variance in, option.
6. Indicates a mild assertion.

(Chino 1991: 110-112; my underlining)

Also in the examples discussed above, this particle is effectively used to convey the affective aspect of the communication. For instance:

- in a sympathetic agreement: ‘un, soo nee,’ (Yes, I think so, too.) (300)
- in adding a supportive comment after agreement:
‘un soo ne, anmari korekara yokunaru kanji ga shinai mon ne’
(Yes, I think so, too. We couldn’t expect something better in the future.) (254)
● in a token agreement: ‘soo ne’, (That’s right.) (305)
● in adding one’s genuine opinion after a token agreement:
‘demo kekkoo ii ko mo iru’ ‘n da kedoo, ne’
(But there are also quite good children, you know?) (308).

3.4.4.3 Symmetrical and asymmetrical distribution: ‘no’ and ‘yo’
Comparing Graph 1 to Graph 2, we will notice that the uses of the sentence-ending particle ‘no’ and ‘yo’ are fairly symmetrical between M and D (Graph 1) while they are obviously asymmetrical between F and D (Graph 2). What makes the difference? Let us consider some possible causes respectively.

3.4.4.3.1 the use of ‘no’: the activity role of D
In terms of ‘no’, one possible cause of the different distribution may be the difference of the activity type: M and D have telephone conversations to support each other, while F and D have a casual interview in which D gets some information from F. As Chino (1991: 60) points out, one of the main functions of ‘no’ is to indicate a question colloquially. In the interaction between F and D, D plays the role of an interviewer, and the activity role makes her ask questions frequently. Then, she often ends the question with ‘no’, which also creates some casual and soft tone.

In the following discourse, for example, F talks about his war experience, and D facilitates his talk by asking questions with the particle ‘no’:

| 374 | F: お父さんたちは相模湾の沿岸防備、
| 375 | D: うん、じゃあそのあたりにいた、ね、あの辺にいたの？
| 376 | F: うん、という、想定（笑）だったんだけど、
| 377 | D: （笑）そこのまでいかなかったの？
| 408 | D: 場所はどこにいたの？
| 409 | F: え？

(The Coast of Sagami.)
(Well, then you were somewhere along the coast, weren’t you?)
(Yes, we were supposed to, (laugh) but.)
(No way. (laugh) You didn’t go there?)
(Where were you then?)
(eh?)
3.4.4.3.2 the use of ‘yo’; the activity role of F

In the case of ‘yo’, the different distribution Graph 1 and Graph 2 may also be related to their activity role. Tanaka (2009: 141) investigates the use of ‘yo’ in the interaction between M and D, and reveals that D uses ‘yo’ especially when she plays the role of ‘advice giver’. This can be explained by the basic functions of this particle:

yo: 1. Urges a course of action.
2. Indicates a request (somewhat stronger than ne.)
3. Indicates a statement of certainty.
4. Indicates scolding or contempt.

(Chino 1991: 112-113; my underlining)
That is, ‘yo’ is basically used when the speaker shows some power over the other person. In the activity type of Graph 1, M and D are mutual support-giver/receiver, and their general activity type relation is considered symmetrical (though the support-giver usually has more power as mentioned above). On the other hand, in the activity type of Graph 2, F is an interviewee, and has a certain power as an information giver. He also needs to emphasize his statement depending on the content. These factors probably make F use this particle frequently.

In the following discourse, F decries the present state in Japan (78, 253), talks about his war experience (422), and expresses deep emotion on his long life (518). At the end of each utterance, he uses ‘yo’ to emphasize his opinions or feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>78</th>
<th>F:</th>
<th>日本人はね、あの一規則は立派にするけど実行がないんだよ。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nihon-jin wa ne, ano i kisoku wa rippa ni tsukuru kedo jikoo ga nai-n-da yo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Japanese people make good rules, but they don’t follow them.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>253</th>
<th>F:</th>
<th>こんな時代じゃあ、もう、お父さんほんとにおね、がっかりしちゃうよ。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kon-na jidai jaa, moo, otoos-san honnto ni ne, gakkari shichau yo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(With the current trend of the time, I &lt;lit. father&gt; really feel disappointed.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>422</th>
<th>F:</th>
<th>これね、外地、もってかれちゃったら、もうお父さん死んでるよ。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kore ne, gaichi, motte karechattara, moo otoos-san&lt;lit. father&gt; shinderu yo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(If I had been sent abroad, I would have been dead.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>516</th>
<th>F:</th>
<th>いやあでもねぇ、80以上まで生きるっていうことは、</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iya a demo nee, hachijuu joo made ikirute yuu koto wa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Well, but living more than eighty years old is.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>517</th>
<th>D:</th>
<th>うん。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>un, (yeah)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>518</th>
<th>F:</th>
<th>大したもんだよ。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>taishita mono da yo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(certainly great.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Summary

We have seen what roles the participants may have in their interaction, and what their roles affect the linguistic choices they make. With the particular focus on D, it has been investigated how she agrees or disagrees with F, and what strategy she uses when she needs to avoid disagreement. Chart 5 below shows some possible linguistic realizations, which we have found in the data, and how each linguistic choice works in agreeing, disagreeing and avoiding disagreement.
### Chart 5. How each Linguistic Realization Works in Agreeing, Disagreeing, and Avoiding Disagreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic Realization</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Avoid Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>simple affirmation:</td>
<td>explicit agreement</td>
<td>token agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. ‘un’ ‘sōo ne’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(‘Yes’, ‘I think so’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments</td>
<td>support to H</td>
<td>support to S</td>
<td>implication of S’s genuine opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>partial agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughter</td>
<td>sympathy</td>
<td>mitigation of disagreement</td>
<td>implication of disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hedge:</td>
<td>mitigation of disagreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>hedge of S’s opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. ‘chotto’ ‘maa’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘kamo shi-n-nai’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(‘a bit’ ‘well’ ‘may’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particles:</td>
<td>sympathetic agreement</td>
<td>softener of assertion</td>
<td>softener of S’s comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. ‘ne’ (question tag)</td>
<td>supportive comments to H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Notes: S: the speaker; H: the hearer, the addressee)

These findings indicate that a certain linguistic form may have different functions depending on the speech act the speaker intends. For example, a simple Japanese affirmation, ‘un’, which can be translated into ‘yes’, ‘yeah’, ‘um’, etc., may be an explicit agreement in some situations, and a token agreement in some other. In the same way, laughter can convey sympathetic agreement, while it can mitigate disagreement or it may imply disagreement. The interactions in my data have shown that pragmatic meaning is decided in context.

### 4. CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, in Tanaka(2009), I analyzed the telephone conversation between my mother and myself, and I have investigated the face-to-face interaction between my father and myself in the present research. Again, analyzing my own utterances has made me realize how I talked with my father, and what kind of linguistic choice I made according to my intention. I have never been conscious of them while talking. Through this analysis, I felt as if my late father were actually talking to me, and his voice made me feel warm.
TRANSCRIPTIOPN CONVENTIONS (in Japanese excerpts)

F, D = speaker identification
, = parceling of talk; breathing time
? = rising tone
— = prolonged sound
[ = start of overlapping speech
] = end of overlapping speech
(*) = the speaker’s contribution is indistinct
(laugh) = non-verbal contribution
( s) = approximate seconds of the pause

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I thank my late father, ITO Iwao, for giving me permission to record our conversation and to use it for analysis. I clearly remember how he talked then, and how much he loved his family.

REFERENCES
Journal of Graduate School of Applies Linguistics, No. 8. Meikai University. (pp. 123-133)