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Relation	



Politeness in *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Makoto Matsumoto

Politeness theory is effective in explaining theoretically the intent which is involved in the communication between the characters in a play and the way in which they fulfil their desires while maintaining good relationships. In previous studies of the theory, first of all, Brown & Levinson, and then Brown & Gilman defined 15 strategies of Positive Politeness and 10 strategies of Negative Politeness, establishing the most important base of politeness theory in Present-day English. After that, Roman Kopytko analyzed the four major tragedies and the four comedies of William Shakespeare and showed the results numerically, modifying the strategies of Brown & Levinson. Accordingly, more specific analyses were made in this study especially of *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

As a result, many interesting strategies of Iago were found to be examples of Positive Politeness. In terms of Negative Politeness, there are some characteristic examples of 'hedge' and request expressions in the form of questions which are different from those in Present-day English, and this is related to grammaticalization. Through this study, many examples which Kopytko overlooked were found, and especially, some examples are used exceptionally beyond the usual limits of social rank because of emotional excitement. However, the overall ratio of examples of Positive Politeness to those of Negative Politeness was the same as Kopytko's result, so that his claim that Positive Politeness prevailed more than Negative Politeness in 16th-century England was shown to be correct. By comparing the two works, there were found to be differences in the frequency of strategies of Positive Politeness because of the characteristics of each story and the characters. In terms of the characters, the examples of politeness in Iago's speeches account for more than half of all the examples in *Othello*. Iago is therefore obviously an interesting personality. At the same time, there are many examples overlapping between several strategies, which suggests the ambiguity of language and the impossibility of always achieving a definite classification by means of this theory. For further studies, the themes of the pronouns *you* and *thou* and of the application of impoliteness theory to Shakespeare should be examined in detail.