

Rethinking linguistic politeness from the perspective of *ba*/field theory

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Ide (1989) challenged speech act based linguistic politeness theories (Lakoff 1973, 1975, Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987, Leech 1983) as not being applicable to honorific languages and proposed the incorporation of the neglected aspect of *wakimae* (discernment) in order to make the theory universally applicable. While *wakimae* has been recognized as a type of linguistic politeness (Eelen 2001, Wardhaugh 2006), its exact mechanism has yet to be clarified. This is partially because, as complexity is inherent to *wakimae*, it cannot be reduced. After pondering this question for two decades, it has become clear that if properly applied, the *ba* theory approach to complexity would explain the *wakimae* practice of linguistic politeness. Employing the *ba* theory's 'dual mode thinking' hypothesis (Shimizu 2000) appears to be the appropriate way to explain politeness in terms of Japanese native speakers, as proposed in Sugito's model of linguistic politeness (1999).