This dissertation analyzes the use of interpersonal shifters in naturally occurring conversations. Interpersonal shifter is a term invented for the use in this dissertation in order to contrast the manipulation of addressee honorifics by speakers of Japanese and Polish.

Interpersonal shifters are defined as the final speech level forms in Japanese and correspond to such linguistic items as the ~desu, ~masu endings as well as the ~da endings. In Polish on the other hand, they are associated with the first and the second person verb morphemes. It is claimed that in both Japanese and Polish, interpersonal shifters play similar discourse functions, i.e. they regulate the socio-psychological distance between interlocutors.

It is presumed that interpersonal shifters appear in natural conversations and constitute two types of behaviors: behaviors of the use of addressee honorifics and behaviors of their avoidance.

It is stated after Saussure (1916) that meanings arise due to the existing oppositions between linguistic elements. Four kinds of discourse meanings are presumed to be identical for Japanese and Polish texts, but it is stated that they are realized through the use of different linguistic forms.

The first two meanings are recognized as reflecting the asymmetrical relationship between interlocutors, i.e. the difference in their social statuses. The first meaning labeled [up/down] reflects a typical behavior of the more powerful interlocutor towards the less powerful one, as for instance the behavior of a teacher towards his student. In Japanese, this behavior is realized through shifting down from the polite speech level in the previous utterance uttered by the student to the non-polite speech level in the following utterance uttered by the teacher. In Polish on the other hand, it is realized through shifting from the utterance containing the first person verb form uttered by the student, to the following utterance containing the third person verb form (in the function of the second person) and the addressee as its subject uttered by the teacher. The second meaning labeled [down/up] reflects a typical behavior of the less powerful interlocutor towards the more powerful one, as for instance the behavior of a student towards his teacher. In Japanese, this behavior is realized through the shifting up from non-polite speech level in the previous utterance...
uttered by the teacher to the polite speech level in the following utterance uttered by the student. In Polish on the other hand, it is realized through shifting from the utterance containing the third person verb form (in the function of the second person) and the addressee as its subject uttered by the teacher, to the following utterance containing the first person verb form uttered by the student.

The other two discourse meanings are recognized as reflecting the symmetrical relationship between interlocutors, i.e. their socio-psychological distance. The third meaning is labeled [up/up] and reflects a typical behavior performed by strangers or by people who try to keep some distance when talking to each other. In Japanese, this behavior is realized through keeping the whole conversation on a polite speech level while very seldom shifting down to the non-polite level. In Polish on the other hand, it is usually realized by refraining by the speaker himself from placing the addressee as a subject of a sentence and thus from using the verb in the second person form (casual conversation) or the third person form (formal conversation). The fourth kind of meaning is labeled [down/down] and reflects a typical behavior performed between old friends or good acquaintances who are on familiar terms when talking to each other. In Japanese, it is realized through keeping the whole conversation on a non-polite speech level, while in Polish it is realized either through the repeated placement of the addressee as a subject of the sentence or through the frequent use of such discourse markers as for example you know, you see etc.

The goal of this study is testing of the three hypotheses that deal with the use of interpersonal shifters in Japanese and Polish conversations. According to the first hypothesis the terms of the negative and positive face wants (Brown & Levinson 1987) should be treated as universal constituents in human interaction.

The first hypothesis maintains that the negative face wants of the speakers are realized through the use of the polite final speech level forms (addressee honorifics) in Japanese and through the exclusive use of the first person verb forms in Polish. Positive face wants on the other hand, are realized through the use of the non-polite speech level forms in Japanese and through the use of either the second person verb forms (casual speech) or the third person verb forms (formal speech: addressee honorifics) in Polish with the addressee as a subject of a sentence. The first hypothesis states therefore that the use of addressee honorifics in Japanese and Polish corresponds to different face wants of the speakers.

The second hypothesis maintains that the speakers of Japanese use more interpersonal shifters than the speakers of Polish. This hypothesis has been statistically verified showing that there is indeed a significant difference in the quantity of interpersonal shifters used in Japanese and Polish conversations.

The third hypothesis is closely related to the second one and maintains that the speakers of Japanese perform more shifting procedures than their Polish counterparts. The third hypothesis has
also been statistically verified showing that there is indeed a significant difference in the percentage of the shifting procedures performed by Japanese and Polish speakers.

In the conclusion, the following interpretation of the data is proposed.

The results of the first hypothesis suggest that the ‘unmarked’ type of politeness or the ‘unmarked’ face wants of the speakers (that are not marked by the use of honorifics) correspond to the positive face wants in Japanese and the negative face wants in Polish.

The results of the second hypothesis show that the Japanese speech by being more abundant than the Polish speech in the presence of interpersonal shifters makes it more vulnerable to influence the extra-linguistic context of conversation.

The results of the third hypothesis suggest that in order to conform to socio-linguistic norms and conventions, the speaker of Japanese has to perform more shifting procedures than the speaker of Polish which makes him/her therefore more sensitive to the extra-linguistic context of conversation.