

Masking the Face while Showing the Person in COVID-19 Reporting

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1. Introduction

The local section of the *Chunichi Shinbun* newspaper Mikawa edition includes an occasional feature series ‘Mikawa Dayori’ (三河だより, ‘Word from Mikawa’) in which reporters share their experiences of reporting in the area. The layout has an illustration-style portrait of the reporter above a map of Mikawa Bay. Then comes the feature title surrounded by a text of around 430 Japanese characters, equivalent to roughly 210 words in English. This year, several of the features have been observations on the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on reporting work. One such piece by reporter Suzuki Hiroto (鈴木弘人) of the newspaper’s Tahara office was headed ‘Reporting in the corona emergency’ (コロナ禍の取材) (Suzuki 2020).

A lot of local reporting combines a coverage of some representative activity with an interview and photo of someone engaged in it and often the reporter doubles as the photographer. The photo needs to capture the interviewee’s role in a way that strikes the reader as both committed and relaxed. One way to achieve this is to coax the interviewee into a mood and then snap the picture at just the right moment. But this becomes harder to do ‘in the corona emergency’ when the reporter and interviewee are wearing face masks. Also, with the

mouth area of the interviewee's face invisible, the eyes not only need to be as expressive as ever; if anything, there is a need of enhanced expressiveness to make up for the unseen mouth.

This is a fairly light text, and my interest in it will be not so much from the point of view of the cultural or social meanings of face concealment, but more in relation with linguistic expressions of role relationships, at the whole text, or at any rate at a substantial text passage level. I will be on the lookout for language patterns typical of frequently encountered social activities and of the text types associated with them. I will also be interested in the kind of interaction difficulties that arise from stresses of role displacement at times of social turbulence such as the COVID-19 pandemic that the world is at present passing through.

2. Texts for the sharing of experiences and texts that recommend actions

The text 'Reporting in the corona emergency' can be found in an appendix at the back of this paper. Apart from its topical interest, another reason for choosing this as an example is for its rich textual variety, which I will explain shortly. The Japanese text (Appendix [J]) is quoted in full, and followed up with an English translation (Appendix [E]). This translation aims to preserve linguistic features of the Japanese original as far as is comfortably possible, including for example the distributions of main and subordinate clauses. Occasionally, this may result in small oddities, as when I translate the closing stage of a photo-taking session in the form:

Then waiting for the stiff smile to settle into a more natural expression while engaging in small talk, press the shutter. Suzuki 2020 [3]

This is from a longer episode describing the several stages of taking an interview photo that the local news reporter would have gone through in the past. The part ‘press the shutter’ is offered as a match for シャッターを切る (‘shatta- o kiru’) but this is not connected up within the sentence. If it links with the sentence before, it can be accommodated as ‘Then ... I would press the shutter’ (habitually speaking). But it could also be taken as an explanation closure: ‘press the shutter’ (that’s the last thing to do). As both interpretations are viable and the Japanese has no trace of a past tense, I keep to that in the translation, even though it is not the choice I would go for myself. Similarly, I would prefer instinctively to say ‘I engage in small talk while waiting for the stiff smile to settle into a more natural expression so that I can press the shutter’ but in the Japanese the waiting precedes the small talk and ‘press’ is the main clause verb. That are limits to how much order straining is tolerable, but I have generally gone about as far as I dare.

Now let me proceed to some theory, which I will try to compress to a minimum. In recent years, linguists in Hong Kong Polytechnic University have drawn up a topology of text types occurring with particular socio-semiotic activities (Matthiessen, Teruya and Lam 2010: 179–180). ‘Socio-semiotic’ means based on socially shared signing systems, such as speech (Halliday 1978). These activities can be displayed on a segmented disc, with more direct and simply described interactions at the base and more elaborate and less direct ones at the top. Figure 1 partially reproduces this scheme, but with many finer details omitted. The suggested direction arrows and the question glosses *more direct?* and *less direct?* reflect my own views on this layout and are not features of the source diagrams:

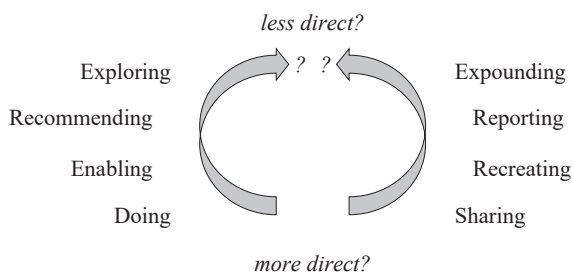


Figure 1 Socio-semiotic activity types, abbreviated from Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 37

(Note: The direction arrows and the questions in italics are my additions and reflect my own views on this layout)

In addition to what I see as a rise in interactional complexity from bottom to top of the figure, it is also possible to make out a difference in mood, or meta-mood, between an imperative-like concern for action outcomes on the left side and an indicative-like concern for experience sharing on the right. Halliday and Matthiessen's terms for these meta-mood functions are 'proposals' for the imperative-like ones and 'propositions' for the indicative-like ones (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 138–139). On the left side, at the bottom, a 'Doing' text or passage might be a request for compliance, while 'Enabling' would also take account of what is possible or permitted and might take the form of a set of rules or instructions. 'Recommending' would further bring in the interests of the hearer or some other party, while 'Exploring' would extend to a broader scope and offer a moral or practical overview of options. Similarly, on the right, 'Sharing' at the bottom might be the telling of an experience or feeling, 'Recreating' would involve some additional process of narration or performance, 'Reporting' is a sorting of experience into relevant categories of place, time and circumstance, and 'Expounding', again, would provide an overview. These eight types of interaction do not cover everything that can be

done in a text, but they cover a great deal. Below, I list passages of Suzuki's text which can be claimed (at a micro level) to be representative of the eight types. Perhaps the reader may agree that there is a lot of variety here. I am assuming, I should add, that these text type distinctions can be applied to this text both in English and Japanese, but the reader should verify this. For texts with culture-specific roots, it may not always be true.

Table 1. Micro passages that seem locally representative of the eight interaction types

<i>Candidate examples for micro level interactions of Doing</i>	
Exploring	... go to more trouble over <u>the expressions I use in the write-up.</u> <u>What was the tone of voice? How was the gesture?</u>
Recommending	... thinking all the while " <u>Must look about right now,</u> " I'll be pressing on the shutter.
Enabling	... Then, <u>waiting for the stiff smile to settle into a more natural expression while engaging in small talk,</u> press the shutter.
Doing	" <u>Riight! Smiile now!</u> "
<i>Candidate examples for micro level interactions of Sharing</i>	
Expounding	But <u>with a mask on, the expression is hard to make out. These days, I point the camera and wait for the smile to appear around the eyes.</u>
Reporting	... <u>in the newspaper, the number of photos taken of people with their masks on has increased.</u>
Recreating	" <u>Left it behind again.</u> " <u>On my way to an interview, I realise I'm not wearing a mask and have to return to the car park.</u>
Sharing	... <u>it's still a relief that I noticed before getting there.</u>

Originally, these interaction types are meant as interpretation schemes for whole texts or extended passages. Taken in that scope, 'Reporting in the corona emergency', which tells of recent problems encountered by a reporter on photo assignments, seems to conform most easily to the 'Sharing' type. The heading of the article, which refers to the writer's job experiences, is consistent with this. At the same time, particular parts taken in a micro context can also be read

in other ways, as shown in the table. For example, the opening speech “Left it behind again”, if cut off there, could be the start of a drama scenario, or cut off a line later, it could be the start of a narrative. Either of these would be a subtype of ‘Recreating’.

Which type of ‘doing’ or ‘sharing’ is going on may not always be immediately clear, but could depend on what criteria are given priority, or whether the outcome is expected or emerges only gradually. Sometimes, it may be unclear to the end whether the writer is ‘Sharing’ an experience, offering options (‘Enabling’) or writing in favour of something (‘Recommending’). Examples of this kind of ambivalence are plentiful recently in user reviews (of restaurants, medical practices) or visitor reviews (of trip destinations). Here is an extract from a trip review that I analysed some years ago (Dykes 2014) on the travel site TripAdvisor®. The trip being reviewed was a climb up Mount Fuji from the Yoshida Trail Head:

If you go at a normal pace, you arrive at the ninth station by 2am/3am. It’s recommended to have a rest here as the main hut is very pleasant and the hot chocolate is rejuvenating. Then continue straight to the top. Mid July the sunrise is around 4am. **We started descending** at 5am and **got down** by 10 (but **we rested** a lot on the way—we weren’t in a hurry as **our bus back to Tokyo was** at 12.

You go through layers of cloud at least four times—twice going up and twice coming down. You need therefore showerproof jacket and warm clothing. (Underlining and bold type added.)

Excluding parts with no personal subject for the time being, it can be seen that the passage starts out with ‘you’ <subject + verb> sets (underlined) up to the time ‘4am’, then switches to ‘**we**’ sets (in bold) from there up to ‘12’. After

that, there is a switch back to ‘you’. These three phases turn out to correspond topically to 1) the climb up, 2) the climb down, and 3) a concluding overview. Let me now focus on each of the three phases in turn.

1) The climb up: This can be mainly read as an ‘Enabling’ passage giving instructions. But in the midst of this, ‘It’s recommended ...’ adds more general ‘Recommending’ support, which the reader accesses simply by accepting that the hut is pleasant and the hot chocolate rejuvenating for me (the reader), too. Similarly, the 4am sunrise time is a general ‘Reporting’ support, which most readers would understand as a motive for me, too, to ‘continue straight to the top’.

2) The climb down: Here, there is an abrupt change to ‘Sharing’. The reviewer shares what she and her companion did and experienced, with some added ‘Reporting’ about the bus time to account for why they had time to rest a lot. There is no direct pressure for the reader to apply this descent information to their own case, but most readers would tend to do so. “If I, too, went back on that bus, I could rest on the way.”

3) Concluding overview: The third phase passage returns to cover the climb and descent together. I would read ‘You need’ as ‘Recommending’, and ‘You go’ as ‘Reporting’ support: ‘You go’ is not a direct report about the reader: This is what happens to most people generally, so it will most likely happen to you, too.

The appearance is that ‘Enabling’ and ‘Recommending’ passages are being used for severe parts of this undertaking, while the descent stage is offered as ‘Sharing’. This may be one way of accounting for the ‘you’/‘we’ alternations, which is a distinctive language feature of review texts. However, the difference between the two styles is not as great as might be expected. The review does not collapse if the ‘you’ and ‘we’ subject phases are swapped round:

We went at a normal pace and **arrived** at the ninth station by 2am/3am. It's recommended to have a rest here as the main hut is very pleasant and the hot chocolate is rejuvenating. Then **we continued** straight to the top. Mid July the sunrise is around 4am. If you start descending at 5am, you can get down by 10, resting a lot on the way. You won't need to be in a hurry if you book your bus back to Tokyo for 12.

We went through layers of cloud at least four times—twice going up and twice coming down. **We certainly needed** a showerproof jacket and warm clothing therefore.

Knowing that the text has been tampered with, it is possible to detect more foregrounding of the reviewer's experiences here, and see that some instructions are hypothetical and tied to conditions ('if you book your bus back for 12'). But even so, it is striking to see how little difference it makes to the practical function of the text to replace 'you arrive' by 'we arrived'. My explanation would be that this effective role reversibility comes from the collaborative nature of most user or visitor reviews. In a guidebook written by a professed expert for non-experts, the roles are fixed, apart from small gestures of humility. But on review sites, the balancing out of values replaces expertise except at the most verifiable public or technical points ('Mid July the sunrise is around 4am'), which are rarely associated with personal subjects anyway. When entering into an exchange like this with masses of people bonding through similar experiences, you may need to preserve enough critical distance to distrust outlier accounts or remember that bonding is no substitute for published bus times. But by and large, a great deal of enablement can be offered and obtained in this way.

3. From experiences in particular to actions in general

In this next section, I mean to examine the possibility that ‘Reporting in the corona emergency’ is grounded, in a different way, on a similar principle of bonding between reader and writer and that, here again, this combines with a matter of practical interest. Suzuki’s article consists of five paragraphs, of which the first two are more general in content and the last three are about a specific difficulty of how to interview and photograph someone in a face mask. In terms of interaction, I will argue in the first case that there is a progression from the reporter sharing his own experiences to reporting more broadly on changes in the nature of the job. In the part involving photography, I will then trace another progression from sharing a personal response to this change in the job, to engaging in more far-reaching strategies to counter the corona emergency. More theoretically, I will continue to argue for the position that a text and its context are not always reducible to a single text type realising just one socio-semiotic activity.

Here are the first two paragraphs, to which I have added paragraph numbering.

Word from Mikawa
Reporting in the corona emergency

[1] “Left it behind again.” On my way to an interview, I realise I’m not wearing a mask and have to return for it to the parking area where I left the car. This happens often, but annoyed as I am at my own forgetfulness, it’s a relief to have noticed before meeting the interviewee.

[2] For some months now, it has been normal to wear a mask when going out. In newspapers, too, the number of photos being carried of people with their masks on has increased.

Paragraphs [1] and [2] both read as expansions of the article heading, first

in the narrow scope of the reporter's own experience and then in the broader context of workplace practice. In [1], the writer is 'Sharing' a representative experience of inconvenience that stands for a more cumulative sense of annoyance. Elements of drama (direct speech) and narration ('On my way to an interview ...') provide highlights. On a micro scale, these are two variants of 'Recreating'. The viewpoint remains first-person throughout. 'This happens' means 'This happens to me' and 'it's a relief' means 'a relief to me'. As a representative illustration, paragraph [1] lacks any definite anchoring in time, place or circumstance. But it achieves the topical purpose of establishing face masks as a new presence to be reckoned with at work.

Paragraph [2] supplies the more definite settings typical of 'Reporting' engagement: when? ('for several months now'), 'in what circumstances?' ('going out', 'with their masks on'), 'where?' ('in newspapers'). To judge from the article heading, 'going out' and 'photos of people with their masks on' are mainly intended to be read with reporting assignments in mind. If so, 'photos of people with their masks on' is the effective transition link from the unspecified interview trip of paragraph [1] to the blocked interviewer / interviewee interaction that will be supplying the problem context for the sharper focused second half of the article.

In the two paragraphs so far, I think, there has been no active sense that the experience shared by the reporter is being offered as guidance for readers to follow. What the reporter has more in focus is his own need for resilience in the face of this blockage. Individual readers might always pick up hints from this too. But there is no general indication yet that they are being advised to calm down, for example, or to remember to take a mask when going out on a job. A prolongation of [2] after the manner found in the Mount Fuji text, e. g.:

... the number of photos being carried of people with their masks on has increased. Nobody needs to feel self-conscious about this.

would fail to fit in with the actual continuation in paragraphs [3]–[5], which involves matters quite far removed from the everyday sphere of most readers, as we shall now see.

Here is the rest of the text. Again, I have inserted paragraph numbering:

[3] “Riight! Smiile now!” That’s what I regularly say when taking a picture of someone. Then waiting for the stiff smile to settle into a more natural expression while engaging in small talk, press the shutter.

[4] But with a mask on, the expression is hard to make out. These days I point the camera and wait for the smile to appear around the eyes, and then, thinking all the while “Must look about right now,” I’ll be pressing on the shutter.

[5] Now that it’s harder to judge someone’s true self from a photo, I aim to go to more trouble over the expressions I use in the write-up. What was the tone of voice? How was the gesture? In this way, I hope to be able to convey an overall sense of the person in a way that is easy to follow.

(Suzuki Hiroto)

Note the vivid direct speech opening: “Riight! Smiile now!” in [3], recalling “Left it behind again” in paragraph [1]. ‘This is a stock phrase from photograph posing, and its use here as a curtain raiser, followed by a crop of camera shot vocabulary (‘press the shutter’, ‘smile’, ‘expression’, ‘hard to make out’) gives a further supporting reason, in my view, for dividing the text here.

Rather than being an active command, “Riight! Smiile now!”, like “Cheese!”, can also be taken as an unanalysed warning that the camera shot is imminent. The equivalent stretched vowels in the Japanese text are はーい、じ
ゃあわらってくださあい (‘Haai jaa waratte kudasaai’). However, there is also an accompanying reporting clause and commentary in the next sentence: ‘That’s what I regularly say when taking a picture of someone’, and this can certainly be read as an implied instance of ‘Enabling’: This is the kind of thing that you, too, Reader, might well want to say if placed in the same situation. The

predominant ‘Sharing’ function, therefore, does come with a parallel instruction potential in this second part of the text. Admittedly, the instruction fits pre-COVID conditions, and is currently unhelpful.

This accounts for the disruptions that take over in paragraph [4]. Under the new working norm of having to photograph interviewees with their masks on, posing calls and small talk now take second place to self-dialogue (“Must look about right now”) on the part of the reporter. What is crucial now is the challenge of how to detect and capture a smile when the interviewee’s mouth is hidden. The best strategy, says this reporter, is to wait for it to appear around the eyes. The suspense implied appears to affect even hand movements, and the aspect details of the verb grammar reflect this: The last step is no longer ‘press the shutter’ (シャッターを切る, ‘shatta- o kiru’), but ‘be pressing on the shutter’ (シャッターを切っている, ‘shatta- o kitte iru’). This seems to mean that the movement has to be trained and set. A similar change also appears with the verb ending ‘-nagara’ (～ながら, ‘while [doing something]’), a feature associated with multitasking. Photos before the pandemic are recalled as having been taken ‘while engaging in small talk’. But photos now need to be taken ‘thinking all the while’ of when is the right moment.

Stepping back a moment and viewing paragraphs [3] and [4] as a self-contained pair, which any reader is free to do by choosing that as a reading scope, this part of the experience sharing can also be thought of as a local ‘problem-solution pattern’ (Hoey 2001). Against the background of the earlier practice of waiting for a smile to settle (situation), the settled natural expression of an interviewee in a face mask is ‘hard to make out’ (problem). The best alternative plan is to watch for other signs of smiling, mainly around the eyes (solution). But while this is possible, it requires a greater outlay in practice, time and effort.

Paragraph [5], finally, moves right away from facial photography to focus on

other means that the reporter still has for conveying a person's true self (人となり, 'hito to nari'). The tone of voice and gestures are the possibilities mentioned. But general body posture and movements also come to mind, even when not organised into gestures. It is worth noting in this connection that internet sites in June, 2020, when this article was written, were awash with articles exploring 'How face masks affect our communication' (Ong 2020). One view upheld in many such pieces was that even in ordinary life it is a question of habituation. After due adjustment: "Humans tend to process faces as a whole, rather than focusing on individual features" (Ong 2020: 3).

One final lexical note is needed about the Japanese words translated by 'expression' in paragraphs [3]–[5]. The word in [3] and [4] is 表情 ('hyōjō'): a mood or emotion stimulus perceived usually from people's faces but also from watching behaviours, actions or displays. In Japanese, 表 ('hyō') is taken as equivalent to 表す ('arawasu', to 'display') or 表れる ('arawareru', to 'appear'). As a noun, it can mean a summary 'table' or 'chart'. The second element of the word, 情 ('jō'), signifies 'mood' or 'emotion', often in contexts of social attachment. Thus the 'natural expression' appearing out of relaxing stiffness in [3] is a kind of social bonding, giving access to the social 'true self' ('hito to nari': 'personality') in [5] that the reporter hopes to portray. The need to wear masks drives this hope into a double impasse: First, the expression becomes 'hard to make out' for the reporter, and second, through the limitations of what the mask will let through, even the best possible camera shot will still leave the interviewee's personality 'harder to judge' for readers.

The last use of 'expression', in [5], comes in a context that has left photography behind: 'I aim to go to more trouble over the expressions I use in the write-up'. The Japanese word here is 表現 ('hyōgen'), which even for a Japanese reader stands in a close relation with 表情 ('hyōjō'), the term outlined above. But the change from 情 ('jō') to 現 ('gen') is important. 'Gen', like

‘hyō’ can be read as 表す (‘arawasu’) or 表れる (‘arawareru’), but in a different nuance of ‘realising’ something or of something being ‘real’ or bodily present. Applying this nuance to ‘expressions’ in [5], we see that the reporter is sharing his main aspiration here: Whatever refinements he brings to the camera play, he can only reduce the interference from face masks so far. While sharpening his interpreting and timing skills as far as he can and learning to take pictures that highlight more holistic features of smile sharing, he still needs to go further and put expressivity into his write-ups as well. A straightforward example would be in the wording ‘wait for the smile to appear around the eyes’, where ‘to appear’ (～なるまで) is an *irrealis* (uncertain future) expression that helps the reader form an anticipatory picture of more than is shown by a photograph. Here, too, there is an ‘Enabling’ role at work alongside the ‘Sharing’ one.

My feeling about Suzuki Hiroto’s article overall is that under an unassuming role of merely sharing experience, he manages creditably well to guide readers into adapting to the constraints forced on local news reporting by the corona emergency.

4. Conclusion

This is the latest of several analyses I have attempted within the framework of ‘socio-semiotic activity’ elaborated by Matthiessen, Teruya and Lam (2010) and integrated since 2014 into Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). This analytic framework was developed with workplace language training in mind, so that priority is given to identifying typical patterns and features and reducing them to a robustly teachable core form.

My interest has been on the counter-side to this: how to pursue complementary analyses by teasing out an underside pattern beneath each

overside one. Thus the sharing of a climb up Mount Fuji has an underside that supplies future climbers with options, recommendations, and warnings. If activities and their text types were arbitrary constructs, it might seem suspect to match each upside with an underside in this way. But this is where the primary imperative and indicative moods help out. Generally, it is enough to match one imperative-like take of an experience (How to climb Mount Fuji) with one indicative-like take (How we climbed Mount Fuji). Then each of these can also be matched to one of the degrees of interactive complexity set out in Figure 1. There is a difficulty, however, that precisely under the recent influence of online reviews, asymmetric layouts of advice, instruction giving and so on are on the wane, while a more egalitarian discourse of sharing, in less defined role relationships, is gaining ground. In circumstances where participants are either hard to differentiate or near to equal in status and experience, there is no such great difference between saying: 'We decided not to climb all the way' and 'You don't need to' climb all the way'.

The text that I have analysed here was an account of recent changes in interviewing work shared in a kind of diary feature by a member of a local reporting team. But it was also a reflection on what changes are viable for countering the constraints imposed on interviewing activities by the COVID-19 pandemic. While these changes may meet with mixed success in themselves, they also add up to an implied 'Enabling' pattern of activity with *ad hoc* or methodic response options. This is the serious implied underside to this article with its lighter 'Sharing' upside. Assuming that masks are likely to remain a feature of interviewing for a year or more still to come, it is worth asking whether it is enough to rely on *ad hoc* steps only as has been done so far, or whether the aim should be extended to take in deliberate changes to the written copy of interview reports to make up for the current visual shortcomings.

Space will not allow me to pursue this expanding argument any further here.

Let me end with a skimming overview of what other points might be considered before making such changes to the text copy.

As face masks became widespread in many countries in the first half of 2020, there was a plethora of discussions, reviews and tuitions in the media on aspects of mask wearing. Not many of them shared Suzuki's concern for how to catch and convey an interviewee's personality. More were about what individuals could do to project their social presence in spite of wearing a mask. By February, an American celebrity called Tyra Banks had been credited with coining a word 'smizing' for smiling with the eyes only (Anonymous 2020). Other articles have focused on religious communities in which believers (usually women) mask their faces in public. In the case of the *niqab* headdress from the Arabian Peninsula, the eyes remain visible through a broad slit, and for that reason this headdress has received close attention. Some commentators say that *niqab* wearers learn to adapt to their limited visibility resources by engaging in livelier eye expression than unveiled people (Ong 2020: 5–6).

Just as I complete this manuscript, a political bombshell has gone off in the USA, with an apparent cluster contagion in the top tiers of the Republican Party just before the presidential elections, probably due to a rejection of mask wearing and distancing codes at a gathering in the White House grounds. This looks sure to develop into an ideological issue again, as rigour or laxness in COVID-19 precautions has been a point of dispute all year.

It is hard to say which of these mask stories would support a mood-based analysis taking in complementary views of what is happening indicatively (on the one hand) and what is to be done imperatively (on the other). But from a standpoint of basic language functions, it is probably better to stay clear of belief clashes unless we can see more objectively how people's views of things in the present interact with their wishes for how things might be in the future.

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Appendix [J]. The text ‘Reporting in the corona emergency’

三河だより コロナ禍の取材

「また忘れちゃったよ」。取材先に向かう途中にマスクをしていないことに気付いて駐車場に止めた車に戻ることが頻繁にある。忘れっぽい自分に嫌気が差しながらも取材相手に会う前で良かったとも思う。

外出時にマスクをすることが当たり前になって数か月がたつ。新聞紙面でもマスクをしたままの写真が掲載される例が増えた。

「はい、じゃあ、笑ってくださーい」。通常、取材相手の写真を撮る時によくそう声を掛ける。こわばった笑顔が自然な表情になるまで雑談しながらシャッターを切る。

しかし、マスクをしていると表情が分かりづらい。このごろは、カメラを向けて少しずつ目元がニッコリしてくると、「今いい表情なんだろうな」と考えながらシャッターを切っている。

写真でひととなり分かりづらくなり、いつも以上に記事の表現に気を使っているつもりだ。どういう口調、しぐさだったか、文章の描写で取材相手の雰囲気を知りやすく伝えていきたい。(鈴木弘人)

Appendix [E] English translation

Word from Mikawa Reporting in the corona emergency

“Left it behind again.” On my way to an interview, I realise I’m not wearing a mask and have to return to the car park. This happens quite regularly. But irritated as I am at my own forgetfulness, it’s still a relief that I noticed before getting there.

For several months now, it has been normal to wear a mask when going out. And in the newspaper, the number of photos taken of people with their masks on has increased.

“Riiight! Smiile now!” That’s what I regularly say when taking a picture of someone. Then waiting for the stiff smile to settle into a more natural expression while engaging in small talk, press the shutter.

But with a mask on, the expression is hard to make out. These days, I point the camera and wait for the smile to appear around the eyes, and then, thinking all the while “Must look about right now,” I’ll be pressing on the shutter.

Now that it’s harder to judge someone’s true self from a photo, I aim to go to more trouble over the expressions I use in the write-up. What was the tone of voice? How was the gesture? In this way, I hope to be able to convey an overall sense of the person in a way that is easy to follow. (Suzuki Hiroto)