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【研究ノート】

Distribution of Talk in First Encounter Conversations: A contrastive Study of Japanese and English

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要旨

コミュニケーション・スタイルは言語と文化が出会った産物であるといわれる。本研究ではコミュニケーション・スタイルを形成する要素のひとつである発話量の分布を検証した。会話おける発話量の差異が会話参加者の印象やラポールに影響を及ぼすことは社会心理学でも指摘されている。研究の対象となったデータは日本語母語話者（NSJ）による日本語会話、英語母語話者（NSE）による英語会話、およびNSJとNSEが英語で会話をする異文化間会話の3種類である。異文化間会話の参加者を除いて、会話参加者はすべて初対面であった。30分の会話の発話量を分析した結果、日本語会話では参加者間で発話量に顕著な偏りが見られ、他の参加者よりも多く話す話者（primary speaker）が存在していることが分かった。つまり日本語会話では聞き手と話し手の役割が一貫して固定されていたということである。しかし発話量の偏りは参加者間のラポール形成に影響を与えることはなかった。英語データでは発話量の偏りはみられず、どの参加者も平等に話す傾向が見られた。聞き手と話し手の役割交替が常に起っていたことになる。異文化間会話ではNSJが聞き手の役に徹して会話に参加しなかったとき、NSEはNSJに対してきわめて悪い印象を持つに至った。しかし聞き手に徹したNSJはNSEに悪印象は抱かなかった。英語母語話者同士の会話データのように話者交替が起り、発話量の均衡がとれた異文化間会話ではNSEもNSJもお互いに対して好感を持った。

Key words：talk distribution, English conversation, Japanese conversation, cross-cultural conversation, rapport
キーワード：発話量、英語会話、日本語会話、異文化間会話、ラポール

INTRODUCTION

Clancy (1986: 213) states that communication style is 'one of the most striking meeting places of language and culture'. The notion of 'communication style' as a means to

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explain the communication failures occurring between people of different socio-cultural background appeals to us intuitively, although what it actually refers to varies from a scholar to a scholar. The most recognized style framework may be Hall's (1976 & 1983) high and low context styles. Others include Gudykunst and others' (1988) four styles that are defined along the dimensions of 'direct/indirect', 'elaborate/exacting/succinct', 'personal/contextual' and 'instrumental/affective', and Tannen's (1984) binary categorization of high-involvement and high-consideration styles. FitzGerald (2003) criticized such previously proposed style categorizations as overly focusing on the bipartition of east versus west, when in fact east is meant to refer only to east Asia and west to Anglo-Saxon cultures. She advocated six communication styles and cultural groupings by using descriptors such as 'instrumental/exacting' and 'involved/expressive', which are identified from discourse organizations, rhetoric patterns, turn-taking patterns, distribution of talk and attitudes and expressions of assertiveness, disagreement and conflict. This study will analyze the talk distribution of Japanese and English conversations in first encounter situations. Distribution of talk is recognized as an important factor which influences the impressions of one's interactants in the field of social psychology (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Ogawa, 2003).

In this paper I will first examine how talk is distributed in first encounter conversations of native speakers of Japanese (NSJs) conversing in Japanese and then conversations of native speakers of English (NSEs) conversing in English. This is followed by an analysis of intercultural conversations where NSJs and NSEs are conversing in English. The research questions posed are: 1) Do the English and Japanese first encounter conversation data exhibit a similar pattern of talk distribution among the conversants?; and 2) if there are differences observed between the two languages, how will the differences affect rapport building between the NSJs and NSEs in the case of intercultural situations?

DATA COLLECTION

Three Japanese conversations, three English conversations and two intercultural conversations will be analyzed. Except for the two interculturally-based data, all the participants consisted of those who were meeting for the first time on the day of recording. The conversants in the intercultural data (#3 and #21) consist of two pairs of NSJ and

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NSE acquaintances, but the NSJs and the NSEs were strangers to each other. Table 1 shows details of the data. Conversations #15 (Japanese) and #10 (English) are dyad, and conversations #14, #12, #11 and #20 are three-person conversations. Both intercultural conversations (#3 and #21) had four conversants. All the participants were males with ages ranging from early 20s to late 50s. All the NSEs came from North America, specifically, Canada and the USA.

The data were based upon conversations lasting approximately 30 minutes which were video recorded and then transcribed afterwards. Follow-up interviews were also conducted for each participant individually in a separate room immediately after recording. Participants were asked about their impressions of the conversation in which they participated and also of the other participants in the group.

Table 1 Conversation Data Information

Group code	Number of participants & their native language	Language used	Participant code	Gender	Age
3	4; 2 Japanese, 2 English	English	J4, J5, A4, A5	M	J: 40s A: 40s, 60s
10	2; 2 English	English	A6, A7	M	A: late 30s, early 40s
11	3; 3 English	English	A7, A8, A9	M	A: late 30s, early 40s
12	3; 3 Japanese	Japanese	J13, J14, J15	M	J: early 20s
14	3; 3 Japanese	Japanese	J19, J20, J21	M	J: early 20s
15	2; 2 Japanese	Japanese	J3, J7	M	J: early 40s
20	3; 3 English	English	A7, A11, A10	M	A: late 30s, late 50s
21	4; 2 Japanese, 2 English	English	J28, J29, A12, A13	M	J: early 20s A: early 20s

ANALYSIS

Justification of measurement method

Counting turns does not properly measure the quantity of each participant's talk, unless each turn in the data is similarly equal in length throughout the conversation. The most objective and accurate method to gauge the talk quantity of each person is to measure the actual time of talking. This method, however, would require sophisticated technology; therefore, the number of words were counted for the English data. This is a commonly employed method to measure talk distribution in English.

On the other hand, due to the agglutinative characteristic of the Japanese language and the unique orthographic system which mixes ideograms and phonetic letters, the

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counting of words does not reflect the talk quantity. One ideogram, for instance, may yield syllables ranging from one to several, causing a mismatch between the talking time and the number of words. For the purpose of finding a more accurate description of the talk distribution of Japanese speakers, I arbitrarily set 20 seconds or more as defining a long turn. Such long turns were sometimes interrupted by other speakers' attempts to take over the turn, although they still were counted as a continuation if the speaker nonetheless succeeded in keeping his turn. More often than not, the speaker with long turns received frequent supporting backchannels from other speakers. Turn counts only would make the conversation appear highly interactive, when in reality there is only one major speaker. I use the term 'floor' for these situations where one speaker talks longer than 20 seconds despite interruptions and/or backchannels from others. Accordingly, long floor holding of more than 20 seconds is counted for the Japanese data to compare and measure the talk quantity among the speakers.

Distribution of talk in conversations of NSEs

Figures 1 to 3 below indicate how the talk is distributed among the participants in the dyad (#10) and three-person (#11 and #20) conversations. The vertical axis indicates the number of turns and the horizontal axis shows the number of words in a turn. Turns are grouped into four categories according to the number of words from the shortest of 1~15 words, to the longest of over 76 words. All groups had very similar patterns of talk quantity and distribution among the participants; namely, the shortest turns of 1~15 words were by far the most frequent turns for speakers. The number of longer turns diminishes in all the three groups and there are very few turns over 76 words.

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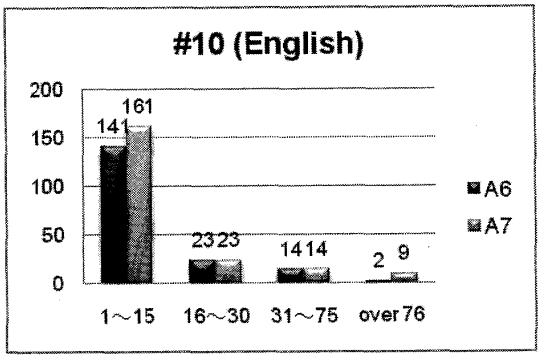

Figure 1 Number of turns of varying lengths for each speaker in #10

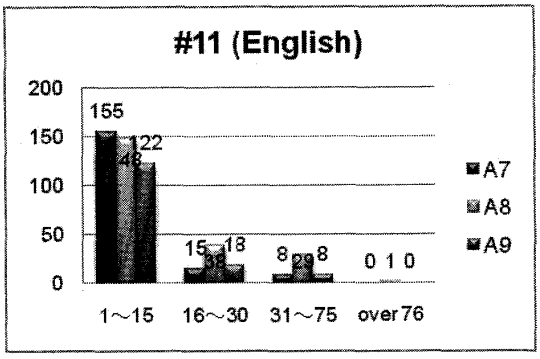

Figure 2 Number of turns of varying lengths for each speaker in #11

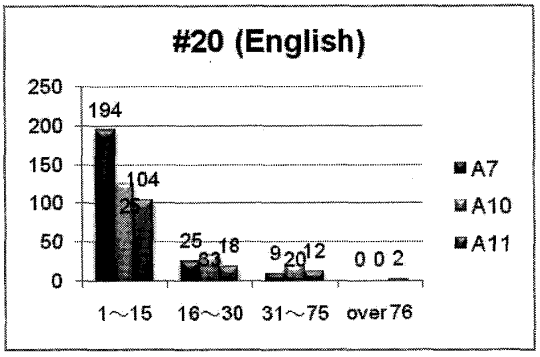

Figure 3 Number of turns of varying lengths for each speaker in #20

This means that when NSEs meet for the first time and converse, they all take short turns and there is no single, primary speaker. Nobody dominates the conversation and short turns are rather evenly distributed among the participants. In follow-up interviews all participants in the three conversations expressed positive feelings towards their interlocutors and considered the conversation either enjoyable and/or successful.

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Distribution of talk in conversations of NSJs

Table 2 below shows the counts of NLT (non-lexical reactive tokens, such as *aa, ee, hai, mm*) turns and LFH (long floor holding) turns in groups #15 and #12. Group #15 is a dyad conversation and #12, a three-person conversation. As explained previously, due to the Japanese orthographic system, the measuring method of turn count based on word numbers could not be employed.

Table 2 Non-lexical reactive token (NLT) turns and long floor holding (LFH) turns in data #12 and # 15

#15	NLT	LFH	#12	NLT	LFH
J3	47	6	J13	12	10
J7	7	16	J14	8	13
			J15	67	3

Note Dark colored lines of J7, J13 and J14 mean that they are identified as primary speakers in the conversation.

What the counts indicate here is that J7 in #15 and J13 and J14 in #12 stand out in terms of the number of LFH occasions, which starkly contrasts with their few NLT turns. This reflects the very one-way communication flows of these conversations in which much of the talk was dominated by these participants. J3's 47 NLT turns as compared to J7's 7 in #15 and J15's 67 NLT turns, as compared to J13's and J14's 12 and 8 respectively, clearly illustrate that they were in the role of listeners. It is evidently the case in these Japanese conversations that both speaker roles and listener roles were fixed throughout the 30 minute course of talking.

Conversation group #14 provides a different picture. The impression one receives upon hearing the conversation is that there is one primary speaker as for the other two groups, but in #14, the turns seemed to be of more even length without anyone having obviously more LFH turns. In order to identify the primary speaker, turns were counted, as described in Table 3. The count of turns for J21 is convincingly more numerous than the others, but as well as the difference of turn counts, what makes J21 the primary speaker is the content of his turns. When J21 spoke, he predominantly imparted new information to the other participants to which other participants made comments or asked questions. The turns in which J21 actually gave new information were termed

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'content turns' in Table 3. There were 86 content turns by J21, as compared to 19 and 12 by J19 and J20 respectively. Therefore in #14 also, statistics support one's impression that J21 took the role of speaker while the others were in the listener's roles.

Table 3 Number of turns and content turns in data #14

#14	No. of turns	No. of content turns
J19	167	19
J20	162	12
J21	260	86

Note The dark color line of J21 means that he is identified as the primary speaker in the conversation.

Despite the presence of primary speakers, in the follow-up interviews every participant stated that they thought their conversation was successful and that they did not mind someone talking much more than the others.

Distribution of talk in intercultural conversations

It must first be noted that the current intercultural data in question are the conversations where English was used as the lingua franca between NSJs and NSEs. The number of turns were counted and broken into four differing lengths to better assess the quantity and distribution of talk.

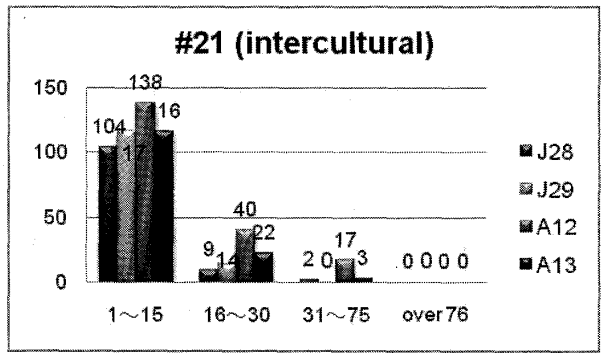

Figure 4 Number of turns of varying lengths for each speaker in #21

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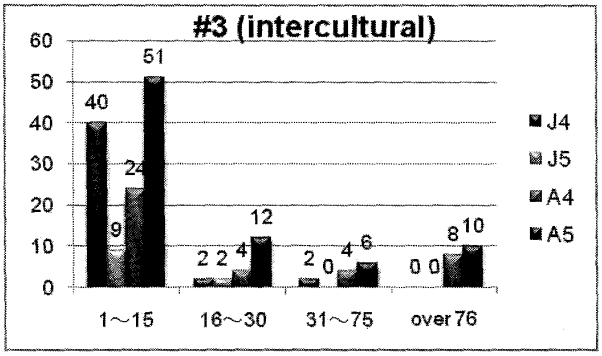

Figure 5 Number of turns of varying lengths for each speaker in #3

We can see very different talk distribution patterns in Figures 4 and 5. Figure 4 more or less follows the same pattern as the other English data observed in Figures 1, 2 and 3, where all participants took mostly turns of the shortest length with few longer turns. There were no turns of over 76 words in data #21. The follow-up interviews revealed that everyone enjoyed the conversation and the success of rapport building was clear from the frequent laughter during the course of the conversation, as FitzGerald (2003: 20) claims laughter as evidence for rapport.

Data #3, however, provides a different picture. There are two striking features in #3. One is the taciturnity of J5. He only took 9 short turns and 2 turns with word counts of 16~30 during the entire period of conversation. The other feature is the 8 and 10 turns of over 76 words by the two NSEs, A4 and A5. The extremity of their long turns is shown by the further breakdowns of their long turns shown in Figure 6.

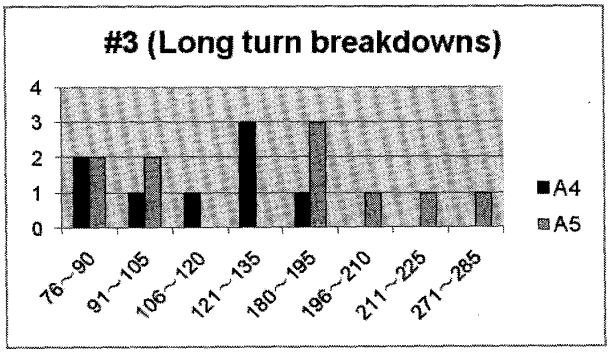

Figure 6 Details of turns of over 76 words by the two NSEs

In Figure 6 we can see there was even one turn of over 271 words. The timing of these

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long turns is notable, as they all occurred in the latter half of the conversation and towards the end. By this time, it was clear from the DVD that the two NSEs had given up trying to involve the two NSJs into conversation and started talking more among themselves.

Neither A4 and A5 formed a good impression on the two NSJs. In particular, one conversant stated that he would not like to associate with a person like J5 in reality because he thought that J5 was not cooperative and could not carry on a conversation properly. The NSJs, on the other hand, did not have particularly bad impressions of the NSEs. This is probably attributable to the fact that as learners of English, the NSJs were content to be mostly listeners and did not mind the NSEs talking away by themselves. This was in fact what they acknowledged they were doing in the follow-up interviews. Asked what he was writing down during the conversation, J5 answered that he was jotting down English words he did not know so he could look up the meaning in the dictionary later.

Discussion and conclusion

It was discovered that Japanese conversations and English conversations show very different talk distribution patterns. In the English data, talk was fairly evenly distributed among the participants. In the Japanese data, there was a skew toward specific speakers. In all three Japanese data, whether a dyad or three-person conversation, there were identifiable primary speakers, who did much more talking than others. NSJs, in other words, at least in first-encounter conversations seem to assume speaker roles and listener roles, which once established do not change during the course of the conversation. What is important is that such uneven talk distribution did not hinder rapport building. It is probably safe to say that for NSJs, there is no expectation that a good conversation is one in which turns are divided as equally as possible among the conversants, so that everyone speaks in similar quantities. It is, however, the ideal of successful interactions for NSEs that no one should dominate the floor.

This was the most likely reason why intercultural conversation #21 was successful in terms of impressions participants had of the conversation and of the other participants. They enjoyed the talk in data #21 because everyone actively took part in talking and nobody was relegated to acting only as a listener. The exact opposite happened in inter-

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cultural conversation #3. Despite the repeated attempts by the NSEs to encourage the NSJs into talking more, the NSJs happily accepted listener roles, the consequence of which was the very poor impressions formed of the NSJs. The NSEs operated according to English conversations rules and the NSJs operated by Japanese rules leading to a clash of cultural expectations.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to propose what NSJs and NSEs should do to avoid such miscommunication. This paper highlighted how some unconscious rules for conversations relating to turn-taking and talk distribution can nevertheless be a factor that powerfully influences intercultural communication. More empirical studies must be carried out, not only on the pragmatic workings of the people of different cultural background, but also on the physical nature of conversation, such as turn and talk distribution and the different expectations people have regarding these factors. We cannot develop amicable relationships if each party insists on playing by their own rules. One must find or negotiate a place or point of concession somewhere in order to ensure successful communication.

NOTE

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