Conversational Styles of Japanese: When participants get their speakership

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Abstract: This paper focuses how each turn is connected by each participant in English conversations and Japanese conversations in a mono-cultural setting. Especially, the end-turn signals or the end-speakership signals are focused. According to the data analysis, the followings are clarified. Speakers start to talk after they confirm they can initiate to talk. Participants start to be listeners when they notice one particular participant use speakership initiator cues. Speakership holds some subject matter, such as a completed narrative story and they usually completed it with a termination cue, which include self-reflection. Other participants wait the current speakership holder will give a termination cue that shows his or her talk is completed. Thus, Japanese conversation might be consisted of round-talk conversational style.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine how conversation is keep going in Japanese and English Conversation, respectively. Especially, the end-turn and end-speakership signals in Japanese conversations are focused. The turn-taking systems have been widely investigated. The widely read classics by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and other papers by the authors initiated the research field of conversation analysis and still the chaos of conversation is too complicated activity to clarify what it is. Moreover, it may create misunderstandings and breakdowns which must be avoided in any cultural settings as well as in intercultural settings.

2 The background

This paper is a part of a collaborative project of Politeness Research Group of JACET (Japan Association of College English Teachers) Chubu. The project has focused intercultural misunderstandings from various perspectives. The project collected three or four video taped natural conversations every year and now has obtained 19 data. The data include pair conversations and group conversations by adult males of mono-cultural and intercultural settings.

Our data analysis have revealed differences between Japanese and English; for example, what English speakers talk about and what Japanese speakers talk about, what rules English speakers have in mind and what rules Japanese speakers have in mind during conversations, when English speakers start and finish their turns and when Japanese speakers start and finish their turns, how English speakers show politeness toward listeners and how Japanese speakers show it toward listeners in conversations, or essentials of politeness differs in English conversations and Japanese conversations.

The latest stage of our project is to investigate conversations in mono-cultural settings to reaffirm the result in linguistic literature. The project in 2009 analyzed the data from five different perspectives. They are interpersonal functions of *desu/masu* in Japanese, discourse organization, speakers' initiation cues and

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  Received Sept. 14, 2009

termination cues, topic choice, topic development and humor in Japanese and American English conversation and gaze and rapport building in Japanese interaction.

In the project, Mami Otani (2009) examined the differences of the discourse organization between Japanese and American English and claimed Japanese native speakers followed monologue and duet organization as compared to interactive organization which English native speakers use. In her definition, in monologue organization Participants do not exchange information interactively. Moreover, the roles of a speaker and a hearer are fixed. In this type of interaction, the speaker offers information, and the hearers offer back channeling or emphatic responses. As for the fixation of speaker and hearer, Shigemitsu (1989) also claim that speaker and hearer's role are fixed according to the hierarchy or the participants.

3 Aims

The research question of this present paper is how a fixed speaker's role is handed over to a different participant. This paper would like to clarify how Japanese participants know the current speaker is going to talk in a certain amount of time and when the talk will terminates. Shigemitsu (2009) shows that English speakers tend to add information, reform what they have said, expand the previous utterances by giving more details and give their opinions and short responses more often than Japanese speakers do. They exchange opinions and have question-answer adjacency pairs. On the other hand, Japanese speakers tend to give minimal responses, repeat the previous speaker's utterance, co-construct the previous speaker's fragments and laugh together. Based on these findings, it is also claimed that when focusing on rapport building, native English speakers and native Japanese speakers use different devices to keep conversations going. Native English speakers use verbal devices to other participants. However, native Japanese speakers use meta-messages and meta-pragmatics to keep conversations. These differences may create conversational breakdowns in intercultural settings.

It is assumed that certain initiation cues and termination cues might exist. The research questions are:

1) How do Japanese speakers cue when they want to get their speakerships and abandon their speakerships?

2) How do Japanese speakers realize those cues?

The term 'speakership' is a state of speaking by one particular speaker. The speakership holder talks about some subject matters, some information, adds information, modifies previous information, gives precise descriptions and illustrations, and gives their opinions. In our data, it is observed that in the English conversation, most of every turn contains those contents and talk collaboratively. So it is not appropriate to use the term of speakership. However, when observing Japanese data, which participant initiates to talk at a certain moment and terminates to talk at a certain moment is distinctive, as if we see an orchestra score.

4 The data

The data this paper analyzes are three participants' conversations. Data #12, 13, 14, and 17 are selected for the analysis (See Table). All data were recorded in 2009. The participants are all males who are older than 22 years old. As for a reference, data of North American conversation are introduced. Each Conversation was video-taped for 30 minutes. Topic was not given to the participants so they talk spontaneously. All of the participants agree that their talk will be released.

The reason why three participants' conversations are employed for this paper is that the amount of talk by each participant cannot be the same especially in multi-participants conversation. In conversations

by three or more participants' conversations, the differences of amount are thought to be greater than two participants' conversations.

Table (J=Japanese native speaker, E=English native speaker)
Politeness Research Group of Japan Association of College English Teachers has collected 19 data since 2003. Among them, this paper analyzes the following data.

Group	Language used in each conversation	Native language & no. of speakers	Total numbers	Participants Code in each session
#11	English	English-3	3	John, Steve, Chris
#12	Japanese	Japanese-3	3	J13, J14, J15
#13	Japanese	Japanese-3	3	J16, J17, E18
#14	Japanese	Japanese-3	3	J19, J20, J21
#17	Japanese	Japanese-3	3	J24, J25, J26

5 Analyses

Following excerpts from conversational data contains typical examples which can be found repeatedly in all data. Excerpts (1), (2), (3) are self-introduction part selected from #11, #12, and #14 which appears in common.

(1) #11 (three North American, John, Steve and Chris)

1	John:	OK. So, I think Chris
2	Steve:	Uh-huh
3	John:	you said Steve, yeah. I am sorry what was your last name?
4	Chris:	Armstrong.
5	John:	Armstrong. Okay. I'm John Westby.
6	Chris:	John Westby, okay.
7	Steve:	And I am Steve Kwasha.
8	Chris:	Okay, nice to meet you.
9	Steve:	Nice to meet you.

In (1), John starts to check the name of the other participants. From the turn 1 to 9, participants check each other's name. After that, they end this introduction session with typical greeting formula 'nice to meet you'. The excerpt (1) is followed by the excerpt (2).

(2) #11 (three North American John, Steve and Chris)

10	John:	I've seen your name all the time,
11	Steve:	Right.
12	John:	Of course on the, on the class list.
13	Steve:	Yeah.
14	Chris:	You teach here?
15	Steve:	Uh, yes, I taught part time here for 3 years,

16	Chris:	Okay.
17	Steve:	but I think it is going to finish this year.
18	John:	Okay.

(2) shows that the three of the participants are trying to relate themselves each other while questioning and answering. They emphasize their common background and knowledge with giving precise description on his teaching.

On the contrary, one's self introduction requires a certain number of turns in the Japanese conversations. Excerpt (3) is a sketch of the introduction session from Japanese Data 12. This section can be roughly divided into four parts as follows.

(3) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)

Turn 1-6.	To seek agreement of order for turn-talking
Turn 7-47.	J14's self introduction
Turn 49-89.	J13's self introduction
Turn 90-93.	J15's self introduction

It is interesting that each of the participants need several turns to introduce himself. (3) illustrates that, from turn 7-47, J14 introduces himself and other two participants gives back channeling. Each session, of course, has turn exchanges with hearers, who give backchanellings. It is interesting the participants never identify their names in this session. Actually, they never tell their names all through the data. This phenomenon is seen in the most of the Japanese data we have collected.

(4) is also a rough sketch of self introduction part from #14. It also have the similar patter as shown in (3).

(4) #14 (three Japanese, J18, 19, J20)

Turn 1-5	Talking about their major
Turn 6-24	J20's self introduction
Turn 25-85	J21's self introduction
Turn 86-96	J19's self introduction

From turn 1 to turn 5, J21 is asking the other two of their major in the university. But J21 is never asked by the other two. (4') is the conversational data of turn 1-5.

(4') (three Japanese, J18, 19, J20)

1		J21	*Yappa, ofutari, senko wa* (See, you two, major?)
2		J19	*Boku wa Chiri desu* (I major in Geography.)
3		J21	*senko* (major)
4		J20	*A, shakai gaku, kenkyu* (Uh, Sociology, research)
5		J21	*A, Shagakuka, mezurashi*, (Uh, Sociology, Minority)
6	→	J20	（Laughter）*Sore ja mazu jikoshoukai shinai to* (Then, first, we must introduce ourselves)
7		J21	*Aa* (Uh)

(5) is the conversational data of turn 1-6 in (3) which has been already shown above. The comments on the right show the speech act of each turn.

(5) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)
1   J14   *Jaa* (well)←starter
2   J15   *Aa* (Yeah)←no intention to hold speakership
3   J14   *Mazu*(First)←initiation cues
4   J15   *Aa, douzo* (yeah, go ahead)←agreement for J14 to hold speakership
5   J14   *Iwasete moraimasu yo* (let me say)←confirmation to initiate speakership
6   J15   *Un, hai* (yeah, yes)←agreement for J14 to hold speakership

As you can see, participants negotiate metalinguistically who will start. As Suwako Watanabe mentioned in 1993, Japanese tend to negotiate who starts first in the beginning of a conversation, sometimes metalinguistically and implicitly. .

After that, J14 initiates his speakership gradually by saying 'a*no, ichioo, ano*' (well, to tell the truth, well) as in (6)

(6) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)
7   J14 *Ano ichio ano shusshin wa* (well, just to tell you, well, my hometown) ←Initiation cues (proposing a topic about the hometown where he is from)

In the beginning, such process is required to get the speakership. J14's speakership continues to turn 26. J15 gives a minimal response like '*aa, un*' J13 does not say anything during J14's speakership holding. At turn 26, J14 terminates his speakership by saying as shown in (7).

(7) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)
26   J14 *konna yama nanka attari attari suru naatte iu huuna sonnanowa yappari ichiban hajimeni kita toki wa inshou tsuyokatta desu ne* (I was surrounded by these mountains. It is, it was very impressive things)
27   J15   *Aa* ←No intention to speak
(pause)

Then J15 says '*aa*' again which shows no intention to speak as shown in turn 27 in (7). However, in utterance 26, J14 self-reflects his talk with saying 'It was very impressive' in turn 27, J14 concludes his monologue. By giving this cue, he terminates his talk. In turn 28 in (8), J15 initiates his talk by saying '*ano*' but he terminates this his turn 'i*nshou arimasu ne,ee* (That what I was impressed yes).'

(8) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)
28   J15   *Ano* (well) *insho arimasu ne, ee* (That what I was impressed yes) ←termination cue

This concluding remarks and '*ee*' cues J15's utterance will not continue. So J14 initiates his speakership at next turn in (9). But here he does not intend to talk any more. He repeats similar termination cues, and J15 repeats his cues for no intention to talk. Thus, they confirm that J14's introduction session has finished.

(9) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)

29   J14   *soudesune* (That's right) (…) *omottari*(I think so sometimes and)

30   J15   *Aa* (yeah) ←no intention to talk

The same pattern can bee seen again in (10).

(10) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)

47   J14 *daibuchigauna to omoimasu ne* (it is very different, I think)←termination cue

48   J15 *Un* (Uh-huh)←no intention to talk

(pause)

There is a noticeable pause after the J14's and J15's exchange. As for the findings on pauses, see Shigemitsu 2005, 2006 and 2007a, 2007b. Then J13 realizes that he can initiate his introduction session at this moment. He begins his utterance as shown in (11).

(11) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)

49   J13   *Boku wa ano- ichiban kanjita no wa Osaka no tennouji ni sunderu n desu kedo* (I felt that most, actually I live in Osaka)

50   J15   Aa hai hai (Uh yes yes) ←no intention to talk

J13 says that he lives in Osaka and in Osaka he smells odd smell from some factories. However, J 13 frequently uses some pseudo termination cues as you can see in (12). He says 'that's what I experienced' in utterance 59, and 'Yes, that is what I felt' in utterance 62, J14 tries to initiate his story. However, judging from the content of J13's talk, J14 knows that J13 has not completed his introduction, so J14 just adds his similar experiences or gives similar illustration to support J13.

(12) #12 (three Japanese, J13, J14, J15)

59   J13   *Shimashitane*   (that's what I experienced) ←termination cue

60   J15   *Aa* (Uh) ←no intention to talk

61   J14   ⌐*Yappari* (I know)←initiation cue (failed because of overlap)

62   J13   └*hai souiuno o kanji mashita* (Yes, that is what I felt) ←termination cue

61   J14   *Yappari* (I know)←initiation cue (succeeded)

    To summarize, Japanese speaker initiate their talk with discourse markers which are used to ask agreement to start to talk and then continues their statements. The variation (13) to (17) is chosen according to the formality and other contextual factors.

(13) *Jaa* (So)+ New information (statement)

(14) *Maa* (Well)+ New information (statement)

(15) *Aa* (Uh)+ New information (statement)

(16) *Demo* (But, all the same)+ New information (statement)

(17) *Soudesune* (Right)+New information (statement)

Slow initiator markers are also seen. (18) can be seen at the place where participants check whether he or she can initiate their speakership.

(18) 'ano (well) eeto (well)'

Compared to the English data, Japanese tend to monologue because they will talk his or her own story. Other participants wait the story will be completed without asking questions. There is only one English data, so I will leave English data analysis for future research, but I would like to say that American English speakers use question answer adjacency pairs interactively. There are 48 adjacency pairs in the English data, whereas there are only 6 in Japanese data. And it is tentatively observed in Japanese question-answer pair is not used for interactively.

The followings are rough summaries of typical termination cues which denotes self-reflection, conclusion, and summary of the story-telling which has been talked. If they end with discourse markers such as *ee, hai, un,* laughter, it is clear that their speakership terminates at this moment.

(19) *Sou omoimasu ne, hai(ee)* (That is what I think, yes.)
(20) *Sou desune, hai* (That is it, yes.)
(21) *Sorega XX nandesu yo ne* (That is what I (some verb))
(22) Some concluding remarks (e.g. I was happy at that time) + *Ee, aa, hai*, laughter

6 Conclusions

This paper examines conversations in which native speakers participate in one language. The paper specifically looks into Japanese conversations from a perspective from conversation management strategies. In conclusion, since Japanese conversation consists of round-table style talk, such as monologue type or duet type and speakerships are handed over among the participants. Following characteristics of Japanese conversation are clarified:

> Speakers start to talk after they confirm they can initiate to talk.
> Participants start to be listeners when they notice one particular participant use speakership initiator cues.
> Speakership holds some subject matter, such as a completed narrative story and they usually completed with termination cues, which include self-reflection.
> Other participants wait the current speakership holder will give termination cues that show his or her talk is completed.
> Thus, Japanese conversation might be consisted of round-talk conversational style.

So Japanese share these conversation norms. It is important to talk about a certain completed story which has introduction, development, turn, conclusion sometimes with climax and others should wait for someone's story telling is finished. If there is violation of this norm, for example, asking questions, giving comment each by each, they feel annoyed and do not feel rapport to the other participants. This conversational style of Japanese is different from other languages. So this study should be applied to the language teaching for intercultural communication.

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Appendix

This paper is based on the presentation 2009.   Speakership Initiation Cues in Japanese Conversations and American English Conversations. In the Symposium of *Rapport Development Strategies in Japanese Conversation: Why does intercultural communication succeed or fail?* organized by Sanae Tsuda. In The 11th International Pragmatics Conference, Melbourne, Australia. July 9-16.