"Listenership" in Japanese face-to-face interaction: the contribution of laughter, especially in its interaction with nodding and verbal backchannelling

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Abstract

In relation to the listener's behaviour, there have been no empirical studies of laughter as it exists in Japanese conversations. Laughter is an important factor for determining the listener's role in Japanese interactions. This study focuses on interactions that involve verbal and non-verbal behaviours, specifically those that incorporate laughter with nodding and backchannelling; it also specifically investigates listener responses. Concerning "listenership" – meaning "what is expected of the listener" in Japanese conversations – this paper deals with the collaboration between the verbal and the non-verbal using sequential organisation in Japanese conversations. It further explores the correlations that exist between the listener's activities and various social factors, and how these interconnections influence Japanese listenership. The current paper first defines listenership, then addresses research design, and concludes with some samples of analysed data.

## 1.	Introduction

The listener's behaviour, which includes both verbal and non-verbal activities, contributes deeply to characterising the communicative style of Japanese people. Despite the contributions of a listener's behaviour, its empirical studies in Japanese interactions such as laughter have not been thoroughly examined. Laughter activities are also crucially important in determining the listener's role in Japanese conversations. In order to look at the listener's response activities, it is crucial to clarify how various verbal and non-verbal behaviours interact with one another and how this collaboration contributes to the listener's activities in Japanese communications.

Moreover, considering the role of the listener in Japanese society, some studies have clarified that the Japanese listener uses backchannels and nodding more frequently than other listeners (Mizutani, 2001; Maynard, 1986; 1989; 1990; Clancy et al., 1996; Kita, 1999; Iwasaki, 1997; Kita and Ide, forthcoming). In order to discover reasons why the Japanese listener tends to employ certain response activities more frequently than others (like the American English listener), the issue of listenership might go beyond an exploration of the listener's role; it is crucial to investigate how "listenership" – meaning "what is expected of the listener" – functions in Japanese conversations.

This study aims to explore the concept of listenership in Japanese conversations in the light of empirical data analysis, in order to clarify the contributions of laughter to listenership in Japanese conversations, and to explore existing relationships between listenership and various social factors in Japanese culture. It looks at how differences involving intimacy (a first/non-first encounter), generation (seniors/juniors), and power (teachers/students) influence Japanese listenership. In terms of the first goal, it is necessary to formulate a theory of listenership both generally and within the Japanese language, while in the second goal it is necessary to interconnect three responsive behaviours' – laughter, backchanneling and nodding – and to examine the sequential organisation of conversations drawing on conversation analysis. The third goal for this project involves looking at correlations between social factors and listener behaviour through the perspective of pragmatics, specifically politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978 (1987)).

This paper first defines listenership, and then describes several research designs including data collection and analytical methodology. The study also discusses some samples

of analysed data with regard to laughter sequences from two studies: qualitative and quantitative.

2.   Defining listenership

Although some researchers (McCarthy and Carter, 2000; Tannen, 1989; Sunakawa, 2002) have noted and discussed listenership vis-à-vis conversational observation, no one has explained and defined listenership itself. With this situation in mind, this study defines listenership in terms of what "being the listener" means and with regard to those expectations that are placed on the listener in relation to the joint action[1] (Clark, 1996) that is achieved in face-to-face interactions. Thus, this study first deals with the multiple dimensions of the listener's role as observed from her/his appropriate behaviour such as laughter in its interaction with nodding and backchannelling, and then discovers how these dimensions demonstrate listenership.

3.   Data

Data consist of 130 minutes of a videotaped corpus,[2] which include conversations by 24 Japanese female dyads. The data were collected at the Japan Women's University in Tokyo, 2004. Two types of dyads were then used: two university students who were friends (12 dyads), and a teacher and university student who had never met previously (12 dyads). The participants were Japanese native speakers living around Tokyo. Based on these two types, I considered three issues: (1) whether or not there was a difference in intimacy between a first/non-first encounter, (2) whether or not there was a difference in power between teachers/students (between teacher-student and student-student), and (3) whether or not there existed a difference of generation between seniors/juniors (between senior-junior and junior-junior). In each conversation, participants talked about a surprise in their daily life for five minutes. The aim governing these types of dyads was to investigate whether or not any social factors such as intimacy, power, and generation related to laughter activities by the listener in Japanese interactions. The process of data collection was as follows: (1) two participants were sitting in a room (in front of them was a videocamera), and a director asked them to talk about a surprise in their life for five minutes (the participants had been informed that the topic was "a surprise in their life" before this data-collection), (2) during their talk, there were no individuals except the participants in the room and they could keep talking freely, (3) after five minutes, the directors came back into the room and asked them to stop talking.

4.   Analytical methods

Analytical methodology in this study rests upon both qualitative and quantitative analyses, drawing upon frameworks of both conversation analysis and pragmatics. As I mentioned before, two types of dyads are conducted: (1) the teacher and student dyad in the first encounter, and (2) the students' dyad in the non-first encounter. With respect to the former dyad, this study further divides it into two types: the teacher (listener) and student (speaker) dyad, the teacher (speaker) and student (listener) dyad. Adding the students' dyad above, I conduct three dyads in total. Additionally, this study attempts a qualitative analysis in order to look at the sequential organisation of laughter, as well as at relationships between laughter activities and the story-telling structure that draws upon conversation analysis. On the basis of findings derived from this analysis, a quantitative examination is then conducted.

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[1] According to Clark, a joint action means "an action by an ensemble" (Clark, 1996: 18). For instance, Clark illustrates that playing a duet is a joint action, while playing solo is an individual action. Moreover, participants involved in a joint action should play a particular role in conversation, what he calls "activity roles" (Clark, 1996: 33). Clark points out that the roles in a joint action might be, for example, narrator and audience. Following the author's explanation, the role upon which I will focus in this study is that of speaker and listener.

[2] The data in this study has been collected through the project of "Practical and Theoretical Studies on Culture, Interaction, and Languages in Asia" (Project No. 15320054) funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture. It consists of conversation, narrative, and talk during a goal-oriented joint task in English, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. The representative of this project is Sachiko Ide, a professor at Japan Women's University.

After using both methods, the project finally attempts to interpret these results based on the politeness theory.

With these additional details in mind, the first purpose of qualitative analysis is (1) to discover how the listener generally organises laughter sequences in interaction, (2) to examine whether the three types of dyad perform the organisation differently, (3) to investigate how laughter activities involve story-telling structures and how laughter interacts with other non-verbal/verbal responses (nodding/backchanelling) in relation to the story-telling structure, and (4) to seek whether there is any difference in the patterns created by the dyads. Secondly, quantitative analysis aims to elicit exact differences of frequency in the dyads and to find the factors responsible for those differences. If any differences of frequency in the dyads are found, it might substantiate various inter-connections between laughter and the social factors mentioned above. At the same time, such findings might also convince us that in addition to the basic patterns of laughter activities by the listener, another factor might influence the response activities and listenership involved in Japanese conversations. Thirdly, moving on to interpretation, if any differences in frequency are found among the dyads, then this study further attempts to interpret where the difference comes from, how and why laughter activities and social factors interact with one another, and how they finally contribute to listenership in Japanese interactions.

The following section will describe (1) the sequential organisation of laughter (Jefferson, 1979; Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff, 1977), and the story-telling structure (Sacks, 1974), (2) various details regarding quantitative analysis, and (3) the contribution of politeness theory to an interpretation of any findings.

4.1   Qualitative analysis
Sequential organisation of laughter

Drawing on the sequential organisation of laughter (Jefferson, 1979; Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff, 1977) – invitation, acceptance, declining, volunteered and unison (simultaneous) laughter – this study attempts to observe some patterns of laughter sequences in Japanese conversation:

Pattern 1: Laughter invitation-acceptance/declination sequence
(1) The speaker laughs in the middle of her talking (invitation).
(2) Following the invitation, the listener also laughs (acceptance).
Otherwise,
(1) The speaker laughs in the middle of her talking.
(2) Though there exists an invitation, the listener does not laugh (declination).

Pattern 2: Voluntary laughter sequence
(1) Motivated by the previous speaker's utterance, the listener voluntarily laughs.
(2) Triggered by the listener's laughter, the speaker also laughs (acceptance).
Otherwise,
(1) Motivated by the speaker's utterance, the listener voluntarily laughs.
(2) The speaker does not laugh (declination).

Pattern 3: Simultaneous laughter sequence
Following the speaker's previous utterance, the participants simultaneously laugh.

In sum, this study investigates how each listener distinctively constructs these sequences through his/her interaction with the speaker. In relation to other response activities, such as nodding and backchannelling, this study focuses first on laughter alone and then shifts to the other activities such as nodding and backchannelling. Finally, the study attempts to discover relationships among these three response activities in connection with the issue of listenership. A sample data analysis of the sequential organisation of laughter will be provided later.

Relationships between laughter activities and the story-telling structure

Drawing on Sacks's story-telling structure (1974) – preface, story, and comment – this section investigates how laughter activities combine with other responses such as nodding and backchannelling and how they relate to each part of the story-telling structure. To be more specific, this study picks out variables from the listener's laughter activities according to the three types of dyads that I have outlined above. The study then considers how the participants employ these responsive variables in each structure. Additionally, in terms of the order used to look at the response behaviours, the study first examines laughter, and then moves on to nodding and backchannelling. Following these observations, it deals with how each response activity influences the concept of listenership.

4.2 Quantitative analysis

Based on the qualitative analyses above, this section further determines the frequency of variables in the sequential organisation of laughter and in the relationships constructed between laughter activities and the story-telling structure.

Sequential organisation of laughter

The study compares the frequency of variables in the laughter sequential organisation from the three types of dyads (in total 24 dyads). If there exist any differences in frequency for each type of dyad, it will be possible to seek some correlations between laughter activities and social factors, and to then address the issue of listenership in Japanese. A sample data analysis will be conducted later.

Relationships between laughter activities and the story-telling structure

I compare the frequency of variables of laughter activities including nodding and backchannelling in two parts of the story-telling structure: story and comment, as taken from the three types of dyads. The variations are only laughter, laughter plus assessments, laughter plus continuers, laughter plus nodding, and laughter plus assessments/continuers plus nodding. Likewise, the sequential organisation of laughter will be addressed as outlined above, if we can find any differences in the frequency of each dyad, it will enable us to explore some correlations between laughter activities and social factors, and to then clarify listenership in Japanese.

4.3 Interpretation

On the basis of both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, this section interprets the interconnection between laughter response activities and various social factors in terms of politeness theory. It also discusses both universal and Japanese-specific laughter response behaviours, and finally attempts to contribute towards defining listenership in Japanese.

Linguistic politeness

The notion of "face" (Brown and Levinson, 1978 (1987)) derives from Goffman (1967). According to Brown and Levinson, "face" is defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). Triggered by Goffman's perception, Brown and Levinson note that "face," as a concept, seems tied in with being embarrassed or with being humiliated, i.e. with "losing face." Sometimes a participant's act threatens another's face (or 'public self-image' as described above), with what is called a "face-threatening act" (FTAs) (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60). Thus, "face" is a concept that relates to emotion and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced through individual interactions. Based on these descriptions of face, Brown and Levinson define two types of face where positive and negative politeness function in social interactions:

(1) Negative face: the want of every "competent adult member" that his actions be

unimpeded by others.
(2) Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62)

Given these descriptions of face, the authors provide some strategies in relation to FTAs, or negative and positive politeness. In the context of the mutual vulnerability of face, the authors claim five possible strategies for enacting FTAs: "without redressive action, baldly," "[with] positive politeness," "[with] negative politeness," "off record" or not at all. First, doing an act "baldly or without redress," means to do an act in the most direct and clear manner. As the second and third manners, mentioning positive and negative politeness, positive politeness concerns "the positive face of the hearer, the positive self-image that he claims for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70), while negative politeness deals with "partially satisfying (redressing) the hearer's negative face, or his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70). Moreover, an actor might proceed to the fourth indirect strategy, "off record," which may have "more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent (i.e., there is just one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur)" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69). The final approach is not to do the FTA at all.

On the basis of understanding linguistic politeness as described above,[3] I am concerned with how the above framework might contribute to my research. Returning to FTA strategies as offered by Brown and Levinson, it is the "off record" strategy that might be particularly relevant here as it involves seeking interconnections between laughter and the social factors mentioned above. Taking into consideration the interpersonal relationship between the participants, the participants in the first-encounter might employ the "off record" strategy to avoid practicing FTAs against their co-participants. In the course of employing this particular strategy, this study sheds light on how laughter response activities by the listener relate to the strategy itself. By drawing on the theory above, the study explores correlations between laughter and social factors, and concludes by clarifying listenership in Japanese interactions.

According to these theoretical backgrounds, the next section will try to discover some sample data from laughter sequences using two analytical approaches: qualitative and quantitative.

5. Sample data analysis

This study intends to locate problems for laughter activities in relation to listenership in Japanese conversations, as well as to design a method of organisation for such future research. Using qualitative analysis, it employs Conversation Analysis in order to investigate general sequences of laughter in Japanese conversation. At the next stage, quantitative analysis examines whether or not there are significant differences of frequency in terms of the laughter patterns above, and examines whether or not these patterns involve with social variables. As significant differences may be discovered, the study further discusses any possible correlations between laughter activities and social variables.

5.1 Qualitative Analysis

This section tries to determine the general organisation of laughter in Japanese interactions. It deals with (1) invitation, (2) voluntary laughter and (3) simultaneous laughter. The first format is an invitation-acceptance sequence:

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[3] Brown and Levinson's politeness theory relies on universal applications. Some scholars, however, have criticised this approach. For instance, as motivated by a non-Western perspective, Hill et al. (1986), Matsumoto (1988; 1989) and Ide (1989) claim that none of these frameworks can adequately take into account their universal application from major linguistic devices for politeness such as honorifics in Japanese.

(1) Invitation-Acceptance: J20 (speaker: student (R), listener: student (L))
Location: Japan Women's University
Time: April 2004
Participants: undergraduate students (R and L). Both are females. They are friends.
The narrator: R, the listener: L
Situation: the non-first encounter
Contextual background: After L narrates her surprising story, R starts to tell a new surprising story that R's friend suddenly told her the friend has a boyfriend.

```
                              [R]
1R:   ato          ha     [na|
      another      TP     FP
      "another surprise"

                              [L]
2L:       [ato         h|a     [hahaha
          others       TP      laughter
          "another surprise  hahaha"


3R:                         [ano,  huhuh  are,     huhuh  shiran    uchi     [ni
                            uh     that   unknown  laughter unknown  moment   in
                            "well huhuh um, huhuh without (my) recognition,

                                                                              [L]
4L:                                                                           |un
                                                                              yeah
                                                                              "yeah"

              [R]
5R:  tomodachi  ni|   kareshi   ga    iru   to    wakatta   [koto
=>   friend     to    boyfriend S     be    QT    found     thing
   (my surprise is) 'the thing that I found my friend have a boyfriend'"

                                                      [L]              [L]
6L:           [L]                            [haaaa  bikk|uri  da   yo   ne|
=>                                           oh      surprise CP   FP   FP
                                             "haaaa, (that's) surprising, isn't it?"

                                                      ((L claps her hands))
```

(1) is an example of a laughter invitation-acceptance sequence. This case represents an invitation within speech by the first speaker. From lines 5 to 6, R announces her surprise with laughter and invites L to laugh, "tomodachi ni kareshi ga iru to wakatta koto (the thing that (I) found my friend has a boyfriend)." Following the invitation, listener L accepts with laughter deriving from part of R's utterance "koto (thing)."

In contrast to the sequence above, the next sequence is a declination found in the teacher (listener) and student (speaker) dyad:

(2) Invitation-Declination: J17 (Speaker: S, Listener: T)
Location: Japan Women's University
Time: April 2004
Participants: university teacher (T) and undergraduate student (S). Both are females.
The narrator: the student, the listener: the teacher
Situation: the first encounter
Contextual background: The participants are discussing surprises in their lives. Before this excerpt, the teacher talked about the surprise that she experienced from the Hanshin earthquake in 1995. Following her serious story, the student also gives her serious story that she has not succeeded in her job search. After the story, they are going to share similar feelings because both stories are mentally serious.

```
1S:   nichi jou tekina   koto    da    to:,    sugoi,   nanka,      iya,
      daily              Thing   CP    when    very     something   no
         "when talking about my daily life, (it's) very, something like, well,

kore    mo     chotto    omoi    kamoshirenai    n    desu    kedo: =
this    also   a bit     heavy   might           N    CP:H    but
this might be a bit serious though"
```

```
                                   [T]
2T:    =un
       yeah
       "yeah"
                                              [S]
3S:    ima,      shuushoku katsudou    [shitete,
       now       job hunting            doing: and
    "now (I)'m engaging in a job hunting and"
                                              [T]
4T:                                           [da,       a
                                              uhhuh     ---
                                              "uhhuh"
                                   ((T moves her body up to down))
5S:    shakai   ni    deru    koto    [no
       society  to    go      thing   DP
       "like, (I) am surprised that finding work is
                                   [T]         [T]
6T:                                [un   un,   [un    un
                                   yeah  yeah  yeah   yeah
                                   "yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah"

7S:                              [taihen sa    ni    bikkuri shita  [tte  iu    ka   ahaha
=>                               seriousness  to    surprised      QT    say   Q    laughter
                                 so terrible ahaha"
                                                    [T][T][T]     [T][T]
8T:                                                 [aa
=>                                                   uhhuh
                                                    "uhhuh"

9S:    sugoi,    aa,    amakatta    naa,    mi [taina
=>     very      oh     was sweet   FP      like
       "(I thought) like '(the reality) is severe'"
                                   [T]         [T][T]
10T:                               [n,         d, aa =
=>                                 uhhuh       uhhuh
                                   "uhhuh uhhuh"
```

Speaker S tells of her surprise that she realised her job search is seriously hard from line 1 in (2). Focusing on line 7, S laughs after talking about the surprise, "taihen sa ni bikkurishita tteiuka ahaha (like the seriousness made (me) surprised.)." Despite S's laughter, listener T does not laugh and declines S's invitation. Thus, after line 9, laughter does not occur.

In considering whether or not the listener accepts or declines the speaker's invitation in these three types of dyads, we might ask: are there any differences that contextualise the occurrence of a particular response? If so, it might be possible to interpret the reason for either acceptance or declination from those social factors that operate in relation to particular dyads. I will deal them using quantitative analysis later.

The next excerpt is an example of a voluntary laughter sequence.

(3) Voluntary laughter: J7 (speaker: T, listener: S)
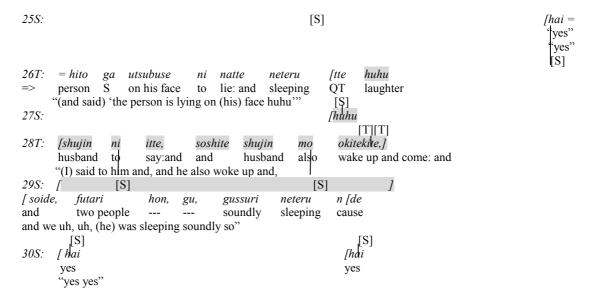Location: Japan Women's University
Time: April 2004
Participants: university teacher (T) and undergraduate student (S). Both are females.
The narrator: teacher, the listener: student
Situation: the first encounter
Contextual background: After the student's telling a surprising story, the teacher narrates her surprising story that one day, an unknown person was sleeping in the entrance of her house.

```
                                                            [T][T][T]
24T:   = hi,   hito   ga    neteru,   genkan   ni,   anou,   kutsu   wo   nugu   tokoro [ni
         ---   person S     sleeping  entrance to    uh      shoes   O    take off place  to
       "(I said) 'an unknown person is sleeping in the entrance, like the place to take off the shoes'"
```

7

```
25S:                                                      [S]                                          [hai =
                                                                                                      "yes"
                                                                                                      "yes"
                                                                                                      [S]

26T:  = hito    ga    utsubuse     ni    natte    neteru      [tte   huhu
=>      person   S    on his face   to   lie: and  sleeping    QT    laughter
        "(and said) 'the person is lying on (his) face huhu'"   [S]
27S:                                                            [huhu
                                                                      [T][T]
28T:  [shujin      ni      itte,     soshite    shujin     mo      okitekite,]
        husband     to     say: and    and      husband    also    wake up and come: and
        "(I) said to him and, and he also woke up and,
29S:  [        [S]                          [S]              ]
[ soide,    futari      hon,   gu,   gussuri    neteru     n [de
  and       two people   ---    ---   soundly    sleeping   cause
  and we uh, uh, (he) was sleeping soundly so"
     [S]                              [S]
30S:  [ hai                          [hai
        yes                           yes
        "yes yes"
```

T keeps telling her surprising story from lines 24 to 26 in (3). From lines 24, she tells an incident in which an unknown person was lying face down in the entrance to her flat. Triggered by part of the utterance "hito ga utsubuse ni natte neteru (an unknown person is sleeping)," listener S voluntarily laughs at the point of "tte (a quotative marker)" as uttered by T. Following the initiated laughter by S, T also laughs.

Moving to the third type, the following excerpt is an example of a simultaneous laughter sequence.

(4) Simultaneous laughter: J20 (speaker: R: listener: L)

```
                            [R]
1R:   ato        ha     [na
      another    TP     FP
       "another surprise"

                                   [L]
2L:              [ato       ha    [hahaha
                 others     TP    laughter
                 "another surprise  hahaha"

3R:                        [ano,   huhuh    are,      huhuh    shiran    uchi      [ni
                           uh      that     unknown   laughter unknown   moment    in

                           "well, huhuh um, huhuh without (my) recognition,         [L]
4L:                                                                                 [un
                                                                                    yeah
                                                                                    "yeah"
                  [R]
5R:   tomodachi   ni,    kareshi    ga    iru    to    wakatta   [koto
      friend      to     boyfriend  S     be     QT    found      thing
      (my surprise is ) the thing that I found my friend have a boyfriend"
                                                          [L]              [L]
6L:              [L]                             [haaaa    bikkuri   da   yo   ne,
                                                oh        surprise   CP   FP   FP
                                                "haaaa, (that's) surprising, isn't it?"
                                                        ((L claps her hands))

watashi    mo    sore    atta
I          also   that    had
"I had a same thing too"

7L:   [ahahahahah]   sugoi,    hee,    shikamo,    chotto    kakusarete   te       [ahahaha],
=>    laughter       very      wow     further     a bit     being covered: and    laughter
       "ahahahahah (I said ) 'what?' Moreover she uncovered it to me and ahahaha,
8R:   [ahahahahah]                                                                 [ahahaha]
=>
```

8

suguni   ittekunnaku tte   hehehe
immediately   not to be told: and   laughter
"(she) didn't tell me immediately and hehehe"

Speaker R talks about her surprise when hearing that her friend has had a boyfriend for a long time from lines 1 to 5 in (4). Triggered by this reflection, the listener also shares R's experience and shows her empathy to R in line 6 "haaaa bikkuri da yo ne (haaaa, (that's) surprising, isn't (it)?)"; she then also confesses to having had the same experience, "watashi mo sore atta (I had the same thing too)." Triggered by a laughable "watashimo sore atta (I had the same thing too)," R and L start laughing twice on line 7 at the exact same time without any pause or signal. The first instance of simultaneous laughter occurs at the initial turn, and the next one occurs after the utterance by L: "shikamo, chotto kakusarete te (moreover she covered it (for a while) and)." When comparing invitation and voluntary laughter with simultaneous laughter, it seems that the former two patterns possess some signal to laugh that is given by either another participant, or by the listener her/himself; the simultaneous laughter between participants in pattern 3, however, might have been achieved without such signals by the participants.

When considering the possibility of having simultaneous laughter, we might ask if any differences in occurrence exist between those terms that are inherent to the three types of dyads. If so, are they involved with any social factors relevant to each dyad's type? The following quantitative analysis will concern these issues.

5.2   Quantitative analysis: laughter sequences

Based on the qualitative data analysis above, this section deals with frequency in terms of the speaker's invitation, the listener's acceptance, the listener's declination, the listener's voluntary laughter, and the simultaneous laughter between the participants. Table 1 shows distributions for turn-shapes in 24 Japanese dyads. The left box indicates the teacher as listener, the middle box represents the student as listener, and the right box is equal to the student-student conversation.

Table 1: Distribution for turn-shapes in 24 Japanese dyads

	S=>T(12)	T=>S(12)	S=>S (24)
Sp's invitation	9	10	21
Li's acceptance	6	10	22
Li's declination	7	2	12
Li's voluntary laughter	8	10	22
Simultaneous laughter	2		7

S: student, T: teacher, Sp: speaker, Li: listener

The speaker's invitation

The speaker in all three types tends to laugh in the middle of talking (the student's invitation: 9/12; the teacher's invitation: 10/12; the student's invitation to the student: 21/24).

The listener's acceptance

The listener in all three types tends to accept the speaker's laughter and to laugh in response. There is a slight difference between the teacher (speaker) and student (listener) dyad, and the teacher (listener) and student (speaker) dyad. In the case where the teacher is talking, the listening student tends to accept the laughter (the amount of acceptance: 10/12); in the case where the student is talking, the listening teacher tends to decline the invitation more than the listening student (the amount of acceptance: 6/12). By contrast, most of the students' dyads have accepted the invitation (the amount of acceptance: 22/24).

The above findings evidence that the listener in student dyads of the non-first encounter, tends to accept the invitation by the speaker. At the same time, it is clear that the

listening teacher in the teacher and student dyad and in the first encounter tends to choose acceptance or declination quite flexibly, while the listening student tends to accept the invitation by the teacher more regularly. It might be possible to examine these differences with reference to social variables such as contrasts in generation and in power between seniors and juniors or between teacher and student.

The listener's declination

The result shows that there is a significant difference between the teacher (speaker) and student (listener) dyad, and the teacher (listener) and the student (speaker) dyad. The listener teacher could decline the invitation more than the listener student (the teacher's declination: 7/12; the student's declination: 2/12). On the other hand, half of the students in the students' dyads decline the invitation (the amount of declination: 12/24).

From the above results, it is also clear that while the teacher listener tends to flexibly accept or decline the student's invitation, the student listener seldom declines the invitation from the teacher. Moreover, the findings show that the student listener in the student's dyad has the flexibility to choose whether to accept or decline the friend's invitation. In the teacher and student dyad, the differences in generation and status, such as senior/junior or teacher/student likely influence the findings above. By contrast, the students' dyad might not involve these issues because the conversationalists have already established their interpersonal relationships as friends. Consequently, these laughter sequences seem to involve social factors that lie in their relationships, such as a senior and a junior, a teacher and a student, and a first encounter and a non-first encounter.

The listener's voluntary laughter

The listener in all three types of dyads tends to voluntarily laugh (the student: 8/12; the teacher: 10/12; the student to the student: 22/24). It appears, therefore, that there is little difference of occurrence in terms of the listener's voluntary laughter in the three dyads.

Simultaneous laughter

Although simultaneous laughter has not occurred as frequently in these dyads as I had expected, it reveals that there is a difference between the teacher and student dyad, and the students' dyad. The students' dyad tends to simultaneously laugh more often than the teacher and student dyad (the students' dyad: 7/24; the teacher and student dyad: 2/12).

The above result could be interpreted to mean that the degree of familiarity or shared knowledge between the participants causes a difference between the students' dyad and the teacher and student dyad. That is, the participants in the student's dyad are based on the non-first encounter and friendly conversations, thus they can easily establish their shared knowledge, and this establishment might cause them to produce the simultaneous laughter; on the other hand, the participants in the teacher and student dyad might be hard to establish it immediately because of the first encounter and their power difference. Accordingly, though the issue requires further investigations, it might be worthwhile to discuss the possibility that the occurrence of simultaneous laughter depends on the degree to intimacy between the participants and their social power relationships.

5.3   Summary

This sample data analysis has clarified the general sequential organisation of laughter in Japanese conversations, and observed the frequency of variables in the sequential organisation of laughter (invitation, acceptance/declination, voluntary laughter and simultaneous laughter). It seems that there were some differences in their frequencies. This study has also discovered several possibilities for discussing how some variables of the laughter sequence might involve relationships between the participants in terms of social factors such as power, generation, and solidarity. I do not think that this result can confirm a strong correlation between social factors and laughter activities. However, if I can find any further evidence in the future research, the results might corroborate my hypothesis involving

the interconnections between laughter and social factors, and might also facilitate a discussion on the issue of Japanese listenership.

6.   Conclusion

This paper first provided an overview concerning listenership studies and then defined those studies in relation to the listener's role. Based on the definition that the overview provided, this paper then described research design, including information on data collection and on analytical methodology. The paper also provided some data samples regarding laughter sequences in order to find any results that might reveal a correlation between laughter activities and social factors.

Transcribing conventions

[ ]: one nodding
[: verbal overlap
a gray square: length of laughter
= : latching

Abbreviations
CP: various forms of copula verb BE
CP: H: honorific forms of copula verb BE
DP: dative particle
FP: final particle
N: nominative
O: object particle
ON: onomatopoeia
Q: question particle
QT: quotation particle
S: subject particle
TP: topic particle
(Hayashi, 2003)

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