

## CONTEXTS AND MEANINGS OF JAPANESE SPEECH STYLES: A CASE OF HIERARCHICAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG JAPANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### Abstract

Interactants' non-reciprocal use of Japanese speech styles, i.e., the addressee honorific *masu* form and the non-honorific plain form, is frequently treated as the salient feature constituting speakers' hierarchical identities. The hierarchical identities in question in this study are *senpai-koohai* 'senior-junior' relationships among Japanese college students. The paper presents analyses that demonstrate that the construction of these hierarchical relationships depends on context. The data derive from nine hours of audio recordings of dyadic and multiparty interactions among college students at the meetings of an extracurricular club. Conceptualizing on-stage and off-stage as frames of talk that function as context in this data set, the study finds that hierarchical identities are not foregrounded during on-stage talk, but can be foregrounded during off-stage talk when the participants' club roles are not foregrounded; the use of non-reciprocal speech styles that lead to hierarchical identity construction is observed in this situation. On the other hand, hierarchical identities are backgrounded during on-stage talk when the participants' club roles are foregrounded. The use of the addressee honorific *masu* form in this situation indexes that the speaker is engaged in a club role, such as discussion leader or participant.

**Keywords:** Indexicality; Japanese speech styles; identities; context.

### 1. Introduction

Hanks (2001) characterizes indexicality as "the pervasive context-dependency of natural language utterances" (119), such that the interpretation of a word requires contextual information. Furthermore, according to Silverstein (1976), the meaning of a word is specified with the help of relevant contextual features. These views entail that a linguistic form may be interpreted differently in different contexts. In the case of Japanese speech styles, when one speaker replies to another's non-honorific question with an addressee honorific *masu* form, it is widely considered to show the speaker's polite attitude toward the other, which further indexes the speaker's lower social rank in relation to the other (Mizutani and Mizutani 1987; Nakane 1972; Niyekawa 1991; Shin 2004). On the other hand, analyses of naturally occurring data in different contexts reveal that a speaker's use of the so-called addressee honorifics is not necessarily related to polite attitudes (e.g., Cook 2008a; Ikuta 2008). What are the natures of such contexts that change the meaning of the speech style use? This study aims to illustrate

how and why a speaker's use of certain Japanese speech styles can be related to hierarchical identities of the speakers in one context, but not in another context, by highlighting different meanings of the so-called addressee honorifics, the *masu* form. This paper addresses the following research questions: What are the meanings of the *masu* form in different contexts? And how do they relate to, or not relate to, the construction of hierarchical identities between the speakers?

This paper will examine both reciprocal and non-reciprocal uses of the *masu* form among members of a college club at a Japanese university. The analyses demonstrate how the use of the *masu* form variably indexes hierarchical respect between younger and older students or the enactment of an institutional role in meetings.

## 2. Japanese speech styles

The speech styles, the focus of these analyses, involve two distinctive clause-final forms marked by the presence or absence of so-called addressee honorifics, which I refer to as the *masu* form and the plain form,<sup>1</sup> respectively, in this paper. Aside from an incomplete form, the *masu* and plain forms are the only options to end a clause with predicates. For example, suppose that two students are looking at the last piece of pizza on the table. When one student asks the other if she will eat the piece by uttering (1), the other student has two basic options to reply positively, shown in (2a) and (2b).

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| (1) <i>taberu?</i>    | 'Are [you] going to eat [it]? <PLAIN form>' |
| (2a) <i>taberu.</i>   | '[I] will eat [it]. <PLAIN form>'           |
| (2b) <i>tabemasu.</i> | '[I] will eat [it]. <MASU form>'            |

While (1) and (2a) use the plain form of *taberu* 'eat', (2b) uses the *masu* form<sup>2</sup> of *taberu*, that is, *tabe-masu* 'eat'. The morpheme *masu* is considered a type of addressee honorific. As suggested by the identical translation of (2a) and (2b), the difference between the plain and the *masu* form does not lie in the referential meaning, but is social. The common interpretation is that the *masu* and plain forms represent speakers' polite and casual attitudes, respectively, toward the addressee (e.g., Niyekawa 1991). Therefore, the form in (2b) is considered the speaker's expression of respect toward the addressee, who is the speaker of (1). Since the utterance in (1) lacks an addressee honorific, the utterance in (2b) creates a gap in terms of respect toward addressees. A common view is that this gap further indicates status differences: The speaker of (1) is higher in status than the speaker of (2b) (Ide 1989; Niyekawa 1991; Shibatani 1990). In other words, the use of the *masu* form is commonly interpreted to mean that, when the speaker's status is lower than the addressee's, the speaker is expressing socially required respect toward the other speaker by using the *masu* form, while the other, higher-status speaker is not required to show an equal degree of respect toward the lower-status addressee. Following Okamoto (1997), this paper calls this pattern of speech style use by two interactants the non-reciprocal use of speech styles. In contrast, the reply in (2a) does

<sup>1</sup> Other terms for the *masu* form include the "*desu-masu* form" and the "polite form." The plain form is also called the "casual form" and the "*da* form."

<sup>2</sup> For a complete picture of both *masu* and plain clause-ending forms, please refer to Cook (2008a: 36).

not constitute such a gap, meaning that there is no expression of status difference between the speakers of (1) and (2a). The pattern of contrastive use of reciprocal and non-reciprocal speech styles has given rise to the assumption of a connection between Japanese speech style use and interactants' hierarchical relationships in prescriptive grammars and linguistics literature (e.g., Martin 1964, 2004), Japanese language planning guidelines (*Bunka Shingikai Kokugo Bunkakai* [The Subdivision on National Language of the Council for Cultural Affairs], 2007), and Japanese language textbooks (e.g., Mizutani and Mizutani 1987).

Is this prescriptive use of speech styles consistently observed in practice? In a study by Dunn (1996), a Japanese sophomore student contended that she had used the *masu* form toward a junior student consistently, but both the junior student and the researcher who observed their interactions reported that this was not the case. This episode exemplifies the point raised by some researchers (Cook 2006; Dunn 1996; Okamoto 1997) that speakers' self-report of their speech style use is not valid data for research on actual language use. Therefore, recent developments in studies on Japanese speech style use are built on analyses of naturally occurring data (e.g., Cook 2006; Dunn 1996, 1999; Ikuta 2008; Maynard 2008; Okamoto 1998). These studies show that lower-status speakers sometimes use the plain form when talking to a higher-status interlocutor and yet maintain and support their hierarchical relations (Cook 1997, 2006, 2008a; Geyer 2008a, 2008b; Ikuta 2008; Okamoto 1998, 1999). In an example of shifting identities within a situation, Cook (2008a) demonstrates that, during a plain-form based interaction, some host parents use the *masu* form when they teach Japanese culture to an exchange student. Therefore, the assumed connection between non-reciprocal speech style use and two interactants' hierarchical relationships does not hold.

The question that Cook's data raises is what social meanings of the *masu* form can point to the teaching role. To answer this question, Cook (1997, 2008a) utilizes Ochs's indexicality framework (1990, 1993, 1996) in which social meanings, including identities, are indexed with the mediation of context, and proposes that the central meaning of the *masu* form is self-presentational stance, that is, an affective stance that indicates "the self which presents an on-stage display of a positive social role to the addressee" (Cook 2008a: 46). The self-presentational stance is what Japanese would call *shisee o tadasu* 'to hold oneself up'; this is literally the posture elementary school pupils are disciplined to take before class starts. The speaker's self-presentational stance may mean that the speaker is in charge of the situation, such as a parent at home, a teacher in the classroom, or a presenter on a TV show. All of these social identities are constructed in part via self-presentational stance because the display of a self-presentational stance is "indicative of a responsible or good social persona in Japanese society" (Cook 2008a: 47). For example, pupils at an elementary school use the *masu* form when they present their opinions during a *happyoo* 'presentation' activity (Cook 1996b), but when they are "out-of-role," they use the plain form. Simultaneously, when a speaker uses a self-presentational stance, it can index that the speaker's role is spotlighted in a sociocultural context of "on-stage" (Cook 1996a, 2008a, 2008b). This analysis is in line with others' findings about the meanings of the *masu* form, such as that it is indicative of *omote* style, which is a "disciplined, socially aware style" (Dunn 1999); of psychological distance (Ikuta 2008); or of a speaker's awareness of being heard (Maynard 1991). Geyer (2008a) investigates the function of the *masu* form as used in a faculty meeting, and finds that it often draws the boundary of topics, such as when a discussion leader uses

the *masu* form to introduce a new topic. In my interpretation, this is compatible with Cook's (2008a) proposal, in that the discussion leader is "in-role" when setting the boundaries of topics.

In terms of the plain form, which appears in contexts that range from written newspaper articles to oral disputes between two interactants, Maynard (1991) points out that the plain form functions differently with and without interactional particles, and observes that interactional particles add meaning to the plain form. She claims that the plain form with interactional particles is used when the speaker's stance is deliberately addressed to the listener in conversation. Based on Maynard's observation, Cook (1998, 2002, 2006, 2008b) utilizes Ochs's indexicality framework to consider interactional particles as affect keys to index various affective stances, which relate to the speaker's mood and emotion. Together with affect keys, the plain form "foregrounds the speaker's affecting stance toward the addressee or the content of talk" (Cook 1998: 104). Besides interactional particles, affect keys include prosodic features (e.g., pitch use and vowel lengthening), and form variations such as coalescence (shortened form of speech; Cook 2006) and postposing<sup>3</sup> (Dunn 1999). Cook (2002, 2006) calls the plain form accompanied by these affect keys the "non-naked plain form," and the plain form that lacks such keys the "naked plain form." Because the non-use of affect keys with the plain form is devoid of affective stance, the naked plain form directs and foregrounds the referential content of an utterance, and it can be a highly detached speech style. In consequence, the naked plain form is used in the enumeration of items in a list (Cook 2008b), in newspaper articles, and in the presentation of information subordinate to a larger information structure (Makino 2002). The above findings suggest that the non-reciprocal use of speech styles is not only the *masu* form versus the plain form, but the *masu* form versus the "non-naked" plain form.

### 3. Identity construction and context

A series of works on indexicality (Ochs 1992, 1993; Silverstein 1985) supports the notion that certain linguistic forms indicate particular identities in society through ideological links between the linguistic forms and social identities (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Borrowing Peirce's (1955) analogy, indexicality is analogous to the phenomenon of "smoke meaning fire," where smoke (an index) is associated with fire (an indexed meaning) even though there is no visible fire in its vicinity. As Duranti (1997: 17) interprets the analogy, "the actual smoke is connected, spatio-temporally and physically, to another, related, phenomenon and acquires 'meaning' from that spatio-temporal, physical connection." According to Silverstein's (1976) categorization of indexicality functions, the "deference indexes of speaker-hearer relations," which are most closely related to this study of hierarchical relationships and Japanese speech styles, can be categorized as non-referential, creative indexes. It's a non-referential index because it does not have concrete meanings that are inherent to the word, and it's a creative index due to its heavy dependency on context in meaning creation. The meaning of a deference index is established not only by the interaction taking place, but also by "the social relations of the individuals in the roles of speaker and hearer, speaker and

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<sup>3</sup> This is the postposing of grammatical elements. For example, if an OVS sentence is used in an SOV language it shows the post-positioning of the subject.

audience, or speaker and referent” (Silverstein 1976: 36). Silverstein also emphasizes the need for analyses based on naturally occurring data, especially for “nonsegmental, non-referential, relatively creative formal features, which have no metapragmatic reality” for native speakers (49). This is in line with the established view of recent qualitative studies that speakers’ identities are fluid and emergent from interaction, which is built upon social constructionist theories that view our reality as socially constructed (Burr 1995). Identities, or situational identities in Zimmerman’s (1998) term, may constantly be shifting “both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 606).

In the indexicality framework, what specifies the meaning of a form is context (Hanks 2001). As Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 3) describe it, context means “a frame (Goffman 1974) that surrounds the event being examined and provides resources for its appropriate interpretation.” For Goffman (1974: 11), a frame is the “organization of experience,” by which participants’ understanding of what is going on is influenced during any moment or period of an event. When we view context in this sense, it includes the physical situation of the event, shared knowledge among the participants, previous related events, and co-occurring features (linguistic or non-linguistic), among other elements. As various features that constitute context are taken up in interaction as relevant, the contexts are constantly shifting moment by moment, and different participants can view different contexts in one scene. This entails that the concept of context here is dynamic and fluid in nature. There are multiple layers of contexts in any one scene, and one context may be foregrounded while others are backgrounded through interaction at any one moment.

Cook utilizes these frames of talk (Goffman 1974) that serve as context to investigate the meaning of the Japanese speech styles as linguistic forms within Ochs’s indexicality framework (1990, 1993, 1996). Cook (1996b, 2008a) categorizes contexts as on-stage and off-stage talk, which are parallel to Geyer’s (2008a) official and unofficial talk. In Geyer’s (2008a) work, the analyses of multiparty interactions at faculty meetings in Japanese secondary schools reveal how the type of interaction is crucial for the meaning of styles, because their meanings are strongly influenced by the context, which is defined by the meeting procedure. According to Geyer, “official and planned talk is transactional in nature (i.e., expressing ‘content’), and its content is likely to appear in the agenda or minutes of the meeting. Unofficial and spontaneous talk is interactional in nature (i.e., expressing social relations and personal attitudes), and its content is peripheral” (46). She argues that it is not the linguistic forms themselves that determine official or unofficial talk, but the constellation of relevant features, which includes speech styles along with other elements such as the content of the utterance and the tone of voice.

What links a linguistic form and the indexed meaning is *discourse*, “a set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating language to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and making sense out of language in context” (Ochs 1990: 289). For example, a linguistic form may evoke situational dimensions of social rank, as if they are connected with “chemical valence” (Ochs 1996: 417); the link is created and enforced through a history of usage of the form and the cultural expectations of the community as expressed through discourse (Ochs 1996).

The discourse of Japanese relationships, including those among young speakers, can be characterized as hierarchical (e.g., Nakane 1972). Most studies that deal with

hierarchical relationships among Japanese students have observed that such relations are based on different class standings, and once such relations are built between a pair of people, the relations are considered to remain salient and stable across different situations beyond school (Nakane 1972; Niyekawa 1991), although there are no studies that examine college students' dyadic or multiparty interactions in terms of their hierarchical relationship building. Dunn's (1996, 1999) study is the first work to examine naturally occurring data of participants' interaction in order to investigate college students' hierarchical relationships. As part of a comparison study, her data include recordings of monologues from an English speech and debate club at a college. Clubs are for extracurricular activities at Japanese colleges, and are considered the major site for practicing hierarchical relations based on class standings, because, in Japanese colleges, the mixture of different class standings is not common in classes. Dunn's (1996) analyses of college students' data aim to illustrate how students build solidarity and hierarchy by utilizing two speech styles in two situations: English speech at debate club meetings and conversations at a casual pizza party. To expand on Dunn's (1996, 1999) observation that college students realize hierarchical relationships in monologic speech, this paper uses college students' dyadic and multiparty interactions as data. It is the first work that takes the social constructionist view (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Gergen 1985) in investigating the status of hierarchical relations among college students. This view conceives of social meanings as emergent from interactions. Speakers not only claim their identities but also must negotiate their claimed identities with others throughout interactions. Therefore, dyadic or multiparty interaction data are indispensable for this study.

#### 4. Data and method of analysis

The student club in this study is a movie club at a large Japanese university in an urban area of Japan. The club was established several years before the period of fieldwork by a graduate student, Okada-san.<sup>4</sup> Among the various club activities, the most significant is their own annual movie event (hereafter the "movie event"), which is like a small film festival during which several movies are shown over a period of four days, along with entertainment and talks by invited speakers. In order to prepare for the event, small working groups as well as the whole club hold meetings beginning several months prior to the event date. The data of this study consist of approximately nine hours of audio recordings of three consecutive meetings at the college movie club, recorded with digital and cassette recording devices. The researcher, myself, was present to record interactions and to take field notes during all recordings. The recordings include interactions from the in-session discussion and short breaks, as well as one-to-one interactions between the researcher and participants in the form of casual conversations, from which I gathered information such as participants' major fields of study and reported summaries of previous email communication among members. Of the three meeting sessions that I attended and recorded, the second session was the general

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<sup>4</sup> All names are pseudonyms, which have been chosen to reflect participants' ways of addressing or referring to each other. For example, the graduate student was consistently called by his family name plus the suffix *-san*. Therefore, for him I use a pseudonymous Japanese family name, *Okada*, with the suffix *-san*.

meeting, which all club members could join, while the first and the last sessions were meetings for the sales section, which I refer to as Sales Meeting 1 and Sales Meeting 2 in the analyses. There were sixteen members at the first session, twenty-three at the second session, and twelve at the last session.

All recorded data were transcribed in the Hepburn system of romanization with minor modifications. I follow Cook's (2008a) transcription conventions and abbreviations for the word-for-word translations, with some modifications. Word segmentation is based on the CHAT system for CHILDES (MacWhinney and Oshima-Takane 1998).

## 5. Results

The analysis will begin with examples of how hierarchical relationships are constructed, followed by cases in which no hierarchical relationships are constructed, among students with different class standings, in order to illustrate the prototypical use of the *masu* and the non-naked plain forms that index hierarchical relationships among the speakers. Next, the first kind of context, on-stage talk, is introduced. The analysis reveals that the use of the *masu* form indexes the on-stage presentation of official roles. The other kind of context, off-stage talk that allows both hierarchical and non-hierarchical relationships, is then discussed. Finally, examples of frequent shifts between on- and off-stage talks are presented to exhibit how different meanings of the two speech styles are achieved dynamically in interaction and influenced by the different contexts.

### 5.1. *Senpai-koochai* relationships among college students

Central to this study is the discourse of the Japanese notion of *senpai-koochai* 'senior-junior' relationships.<sup>5</sup> The *senpai-koochai* relationship is dominant and omnipresent across Japanese society, and it contributes to building a web of hierarchical relationships within the society (Nakane 1972). The meanings of *senpai* and *koochai* are commonly explained through the way they are written in the Chinese characters used in a Japanese orthographic system, as shown in FIGURE 1 below (Niyekawa 1991; Rohlen 1991).

sen	pai	koo	hai
先	輩	後	輩

**FIGURE 1: Japanese writing of *senpai* and *koochai***

*Senpai* is written with two Chinese characters in Japanese, *sen* and *pai*, and means "a person who proceeds or leads, with the implication that those that follow are his or her companions in the same pursuit, career, or institution" (Rohlen 1991: 21), while *koochai* is a compound of *koo* 'behind' and *hai* 'companion', thus "companion that is behind,"

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the various systems of romanization used to transcribe Japanese, *senpai* can be spelled *sempai*, and *koochai* can be *kochai* or *kōchai*.

and it is “the other half of the *senior-junior* relationship” (Rohlen 1991: 21). The parties’ membership in a community is indicated by the second Chinese character, the one shared by *senpai* and *koochai* (FIGURE 1), which is *hai* and its phonological variant, *pai*. The element of community membership in the *senpai-koochai* concept entails that a person’s *senpai* may not be his or her *senpai* in another community or context. Therefore, *senpai-koochai* is a context-oriented relationship.

The following example shows how the *masu* form contributes to the construction of *senpai-koochai* relationships in the way that a senior member of the club consistently uses the non-naked plain form to another member who is junior to him, while the junior member replies only in the *masu* form. This type of interaction conforms to the general belief that non-reciprocal use of speech styles relates to hierarchical relations. The *masu* form in this case indexes the junior member’s sense of respect toward the senior member, which is not present in the senior member’s utterances. The example derives from a chat during a break, when participants are waiting for the meeting to begin. Two members, Okada-san (the graduate student) and Takatoshi (a sophomore student) talk about a past event, an informal gathering. The plain forms in the example are underlined with a single line, while the *masu* forms are marked with double underlines. Non-naked plain form endings are consistently observed in Okada-san’s utterances. In contrast, Takatoshi chooses the *masu* form (with an arrow), which indexes a respectful stance toward Okada-san.

Excerpt 1 (Sales Meeting 1):

- 1 Okada        nee nee, (        ) kon aida        itsu        kaetta?  
 hey hey                    the other day        when        return-PAST  
 ‘Hey, hey, ((unclear utterance)) when did [you] leave the other day?’
- 2 Takatoshi → boku        desu        ka?  
 I[MAS]        COP        Q  
 ‘Me?’
- 3 Okada        un,        itsu        no        ma        ni        ka        inakatta        no,        tonari        ni.  
 yeah when LK duration P Q exist-NEG-PAST NOM next P  
 ‘Yeah, [you] disappeared [from the seat] next [to me], without [me] knowing when.’
- 4 Takatoshi → hachiji:        sugi        gurai        desu        yo  
 8 o’clock past about COP P  
 ‘[It was] a little past 8 o’clock.’

In reply to Okada-san’s question in the non-naked plain form with a rising intonation pattern (Line 1), Takatoshi had the choice of answering either in the plain form *boku?*, or in the *masu* form *boku desu ka?*, both of which translate as ‘me?’ As seen in Line 2, his choice was the *masu* form. Similarly, Okada-san’s question in Line 3 is in the non-naked plain form, with the nominalizer particle *no* and a postposing phrase *tonari ni* ‘next [to me]’, to which Takatoshi again replied in the *masu* form, *hachiji: sugi gurai desu yo*, instead of in the non-naked plain form, *hachiji: sugi gurai da yo*. This is a





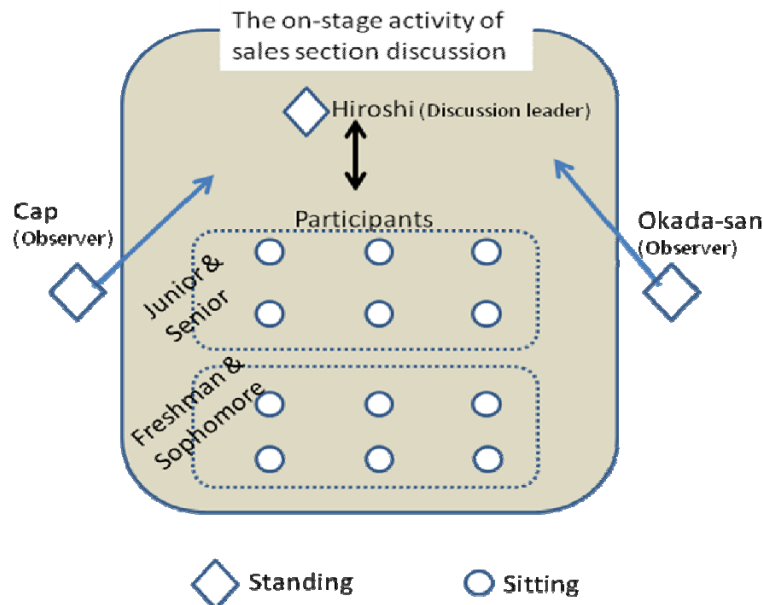
The utterances by Shoo and Takatoshi are in the non-naked plain form with affect keys (Line 2 with coalescence of *kochira*, Line 6 with a particle *no*, and Line 7 with coalescence of *wakaranai*); other linguistic and non-linguistic features, such as Shoo's use of the vulgar first singular pronoun *ore* 'I' (Sturtz Sreetharan, 2006) in Line 6, and Shoo's laid-back posture, demonstrate a casual stance that is not typical in these meetings. Although both Takatoshi and Shoo are appearing to join the discussion, sitting and responding to Cap by raising hands, their participation in the discussion is not sincere. When Cap asks other participants if they can join on the 17<sup>th</sup> (Lines 1 and 3), Takatoshi picks up Shoo's hand and raises it (Line 5). Although it appears that Takatoshi is assisting Shoo to join the meeting, Takatoshi does not know Shoo's availability on the date Cap asked about, as evidenced by his reply to Shoo, *wakannai* '[I] don't know' in Line 7. Therefore, this is Takatoshi's act of playing with Shoo, who is reluctant to join the meeting. The interaction between Shoo and Takatoshi creates a side-sequence that is outside of the Cap-led discussion.

The two examples above are in line with the prototypical uses of the *masu* and the non-naked plain forms that contribute to constructing hierarchical and non-hierarchical relationships. In both cases, the content of the conversation is not "official" in the sense that it is not part of the meeting agenda. In the following section, "official" discussion is introduced to show a contrast in the use of the speech styles.

## 5.2. On-stage talk with the *masu* form

Meeting sessions in this data exhibit two distinctive contexts, i.e., on-stage talk and off-stage talk. On-stage talk is characterized as types of talk in which the content is part of the agenda of the event, or, "on the record." The indexical connection between on-stage talk and the use of the *masu* form is evidenced by the co-occurrence of the two. In other words, *masu* form use indexes that the speaker is "in role" for the discussion, which makes the *masu* form characteristic form of on-stage talk. This is the function of the *masu* form that indexes a presentational stance of self (Cook 1996a, 1996b, 1997). The discussion roles in the current study are assigned based on the participants' roles in the club.

In sales section meetings, there are two supervisors, who stand outside of the discussion frame, as shown in the schematic illustration of the meeting participation structure in FIGURE 2. The two supervisors are Okada-san, a male graduate student and the founder of the club, who stands on the right side of the on-stage activity of the sales section discussion in FIGURE 2, and Cap, a female senior student and the representative of the club, who stands on the left side, outside of the on-stage frame of talk.



**FIGURE 2: Schematic illustration of participation structure in the sales meetings**

While the discussion is happening in the center of the figure (i.e., “the on-stage activity of sales section discussion,” highlighted in gray), Okada-san and Cap do not join the discussion as other participants do, but supervise the discussion from outside in the capacity of *senpai* to the whole group. Their special status as *senpai* of the group is evidenced by their distinctive posture and their participation styles. Both Okada-san and Cap are standing (indicated with diamonds in the figure) on the sides of the meeting room, facing toward the discussion leader, while other participants are sitting (indicated with circles in the figure). Their participation style is not influenced by the discussion, because they communicate with the discussion leader, irrespective of the meeting procedures. Therefore, the two supervisors stand in the off-stage frame of talk.

In contrast, within the frame of “the on-stage activity of the sales section discussion” (FIGURE 2), other participants join the discussion through the discussion leader’s nomination using the *masu* form. I hereafter call these participants’ role “Participant,” to distinguish it from the cover term for all participants in the data, which includes supervisors and discussion leaders. There are two groups of Participants: Freshman and sophomore Participants who sit in the back of the meeting room, and junior and senior Participants who sit closer to the discussion leader in the front of the room. While freshman and sophomore Participants barely speak during the meeting, the rest of the Participants actively participate in the discussion.

Finally, a male junior student, the discussion leader (hereafter DL) Hiroshi, is the representative of the sales section. He is standing and facing toward the Participants, in front of the whiteboard at the front of the room. During the other type of meeting, the general meeting, the participation structure is identical except that Cap becomes the DL, Hiroshi becomes a Participant, and Okada-san becomes the only supervisor.

Two types of interaction, the interaction between the DL and Participants versus the interaction between the DL and the supervisors, are distinctive in my data, due to their distinctive frames of talk. In order to describe these two types of interaction, I utilize Goffman’s (1974) notion of frame, and consider the first type to occur in the frame of on-stage talk and the second type to occur in the frame of off-stage talk.

On-stage activities are practiced in accordance with a pre-set agenda. The DL controls the discussion procedure during on-stage talk, and all participants know what to do in order to fit into their discussion roles. The DL opens the discussion, and introduces the agenda that the DL has set prior to the meeting. When the discussion starts, the DL nominates Participants to invite them to share their opinions. After the participants express their opinions, the DL puts the item to a vote, and proceeds to the next item on the agenda. Occasionally, the DL invites a person who has been nominated as a sub-discussion leader, the nominated DL, to physically stand in the position in which the DL usually stands. In this case, the nominated DL plays the role of the DL until the point of the vote is reached. Finally, the DL closes the meeting.

In the following excerpt from my data, DL Hiroshi (male, junior) nominates a Participant, Yoohee (male, junior, no title), to present his opinion about a weakness of the club. This topic is a part of an activity to plan for the movie event; therefore, it is an on-stage frame of talk. The two junior students use the *masu* form when they are acting in accordance with their discussion roles, as the DL and a Participant. Their indexed identities are not *senpai-koochai*.

Excerpt 3 (Sales Meeting 1):

- 1 Yoohee → *ano kontentsu ga yowai n ja nai desu ka.*  
 um content S weak NOM NEG COP Q  
 ‘Um, aren’t [our plans on] contents [of the event] weak?’
- 2 Hiroshi → *(.) yoku yutte kuremashita.*  
 well say give-PAST  
 ‘Well said.’

Yoohee presents his opinion in the *masu* form (Line 1), to which Hiroshi gives positive evaluation in the *masu* form (Line 2). *Kure* (Line 2) derives from a donatory verb *kureru* that adds the meaning of speaker’s appreciation directed to the other interactant (Makino and Tsutsui 1989). Therefore, Hiroshi’s positive comment on Yoohee’s opinion is presented in the capacity of Hiroshi’s DL role, expressing the DL’s appreciation for Yoohee’s contribution to the discussion.

More evidence that the *masu* form indexes being “in role” is that DLs and Participants generally use the *masu* form for greetings. Opening and closing greetings are typical examples of Geyer’s (2008a) official talk. In my data, participants’ interaction shifts in and out of the on-stage frame of talk with more frequency than in Geyer’s (2008a) discussion data, and it is also more informal in nature. Due to the participants’ status as students, rather than employees as in Geyer’s (2008a) study, and the participants’ voluntary membership in the club, there are many cases where participants engage in back seat chat, which is sometimes not taken up by the floor. Due to the less hierarchical nature of the participants’ relationships, their off-stage talk is often in the non-naked plain form. When a DL uses the *masu* form to start the meeting, the speech style stands out from participants’ off-stage talk, characteristically conveyed in the non-naked plain form. The presence of the *masu* form in greetings during on-stage talk evokes an official context of the situation. In the next example, the DL Hiroshi prepares for the meeting, writing the meeting agenda on the whiteboard, and other participants chat in low voices. Then, the DL officially opens the sales section

meeting, which is the first activity on the agenda. Both the DL and Participants' greetings are in the *masu* form. In the transcript, no underlining at a phrase-ending indicates utterances with an incomplete ending.

Excerpt 4 (Sales Meeting 1):

- 1 Hiroshi ((finishes writing and faces Participants)) *zentai kaigi o, @ jaa eto,*  
 general meeting O well then er  
 'General meeting, well then, er,'
- 2 Some Participants @
- 3 Hiroshi *eegyoo kaigi o*  
 sales meeting O  
 'Sales [section] meeting'
- 4 Takatoshi *yatchatta*  
 do-unfortunately-PAST  
 '[He] made [an error] unfortunately.'
- 5 Hiroshi → *hajimema:su. onegai shima:su*  
 start request do  
 '[We] will start. Greetings'
- 6 Participants → *onegai shima:su.*  
 request do  
 'Greetings.'

Immediately after finishing writing, the DL Hiroshi faces the Participants and starts the opening greeting with *zentai kaigi o* 'general meeting' (Line 1), which is a speech error for the sales section meeting. He laughs (Line 1), and then other participants laugh (Line 2). Hiroshi restarts the opening greeting in Line 3. Although Takatoshi, a male sophomore student, follows up the joking atmosphere by providing a teasing comment *yatchatta* '[he] made [an error] unfortunately' (Line 4), it is not taken up by the other Participants. Hiroshi then completes the opening greeting in Line 5, by adding a verb *hajimema:su* '[we] will start' to complete the sentence from Line 3, followed by the formulaic opening greeting *onegai shima:su* 'greetings'. In response, Participants greet him back (Line 6), which is the common exchange for opening an event. No *senpai-koochai* relationship is linguistically constructed in this excerpt. Hiroshi acts as the main DL, and the participants in Line 6 act together as Participants in accordance with the DL's initiation of greetings. The joking atmosphere with laughter and Takatoshi's comment are treated as a side sequence, and the participants' attention is redirected to the official setting with the formulaic initiation of the meeting in the *masu* form.

### 5.3. Off-stage talk with the non-naked plain form

In the meeting context, off-stage talk is a deviation from on-stage talk in terms of procedure; the content of these interactions typically does not appear in the agenda or the minutes. As the content of Excerpts 1 and 2 does not involve items on the agenda, these excerpts are examples of off-stage talk. Excerpt 1 takes place during the break, and the content of the conversation is about a dinner gathering that has no relation to the discussion agenda. Excerpt 2 takes place during the meeting, but the content of the conversation about the excursion is not on the agenda. As the two excerpts suggest, both *senpai-koochai* and equal relationships can be indexed by speech style during off-stage talk. The characteristic form of off-stage talk is the non-naked plain form that indexes that the speakers are out of their discussion roles. The *masu* form in this frame of talk is an index of the speaker's respectful stance toward the interactant; therefore, its use contributes to the construction of *senpai-koochai* relationships.

During meeting sessions, the two supervisors sometimes initiate a conversation with the DL to give the DL advice. The content of this type of interaction is not related to the meeting agenda per se, which makes it characteristically off-stage talk, but it is an act of the supervisors to show the DL a good way to conduct a meeting. The exceptional positions of the two supervisors allow them to override the main DL's authority to lead the discussion, which results in constructing their *senpai* identities in relation to the DL outside of the discussion frame. There are no cases in my data of any other participant taking over the DL's role in this way. In such instances, the supervisor's use of the non-naked plain form and the DL's use of the *masu* form enhance their hierarchical relationships. In what follows, I will introduce a type of these instances: The supervisor's intrusion into an interaction, which leads to off-stage talk in the middle of on-stage talk. The graduate student Okada-san often self-selects his turn in the middle of on-stage talk led by DL Hiroshi, and initiates a side sequence. His utterances characteristically have a non-naked plain form ending, which contrasts with Hiroshi's response with a *masu* ending directed to Okada-san.

Excerpt 5 (Sales Meeting 2):

- 1 Hiroshi      *k-kyoosankin no chiimu, no genjoo*                      *o, ma hookoku shite,*  
                  sponsor fund LK team    LK current situation    O um report do  
                  'c-, current situation of the sponsor fund team, um, [can you] report,
- 2                    *donna kanji desu tte yuu, kakunin*                      *o chotto ima, suimasen ga,*  
                  how feeling COP QT PR identification O a little now sorry but  
                  '[so that we can] identify how things are, now, [I] am sorry, but,'
- 3 Okada →      *hiroshi sa, dakara sore wa dame da tte.*  
                  [FIRST NAME] P[COLLOQ] so that TOP no good COP QT  
                  'Hiroshi, so, that's no good [as I told you].'
- 4 ((brief silence. The sound of a watch signaling time))
- 5 Some participants      @

- 6 Okada      *dakara kyoo* ↑*yaru koto yatchai na? kakunin ja nakute*  
so today do thing do-finish P identification NEG  
'So, finish things to do today, OK? Not identification [of current situation].'
- 7 Hiroshi      *hai, wakarimashita. (.) jaa*  
yes understand-PAST well then  
'Yes, understood. Well then'
- 8 Okada      *oi zenzen meeru imi nai desho*<sup>6</sup>  
? at all Email meaning not exist COP  
'[Because exchanging] Emails [before the meeting becomes] totally meaningless.'
- 9 Hiroshi *ichiban wa okadasan no chikara ni yori, owari to yuu koto de*  
number 1 TOP [L. NAME]-san LK power according to finish QT PR thing COP  
'[The item] number one [=identification of status quo] is decided to be done, due to the power of Okada-san.'
- 10 Okada      ↑*ato da tte ato*  
later COP QT later  
'Later, [I] said later [we deal with identification].'

As the DL, Hiroshi conducts an official initiation of the discussion with the *masu* form (Line 2), and he highlights the official nature of the on-stage talk by following a request with *suimasen ga* '[I] am sorry, but' (Line 2). Okada-san's intrusion into Hiroshi's move is initiated from Line 3. Okada-san's lines are characteristic off-stage talk with a forceful stance, starting from Line 3 when he addresses Hiroshi by his bare first name, along with a casual particle *sa*, and the non-naked plain form, that is, *dame da* 'no good' with a quotative marker *tte*.<sup>7</sup> The negative tone of the evaluation *dame* is reinforced with the plain form copula *da*. With *dakara* 'so', the quotative *tte* indexes Okada-san's previous instructions to Hiroshi about the same content (i.e., do not start the meeting with identification of the current situation). Okada-san's sudden intrusion causes an awkward pause on the floor (Line 4), which is saved by the watch's signal (Line 4) and the participants' laughter (Line 5). Okada-san gives a further command in Line 6 in the non-naked plain form, that is, the coalescence form *yatchai*, originally *yatte shimai* 'finish doing', along with *na*, the abbreviated form of the command ending *nasai* (Martin 2004), and post-posing of *kakunin ja nakute* 'not identification'. Hiroshi, in return, accepts Okada-san's command with the *masu* form *wakarimashita* 'understood' (Line 7). Hiroshi's use of the *masu* form here is not as the DL, but as a *koohai* responding to Okada-san, because he is directly communicating with Okada-san. Although Hiroshi shifts back to his DL role with *ja* 'well then' (Line 7) and the official closure of the topic in Line 9, Okada-san continues his turn in Lines 8 and 10. The off-

<sup>6</sup> Although it is technically a *masu* form, I exclude *desho* from the *masu* form in my analysis because *desho* is an epistemic stance marker that "assumes that the listener knows or should know a certain fact, and thus sounds somewhat imposing or presumptuous" (McGloin 2002: 148). This is the reason that it is used toward an interactant of either lower or equal status with the speaker.

<sup>7</sup> Technically, there is an omission of a sentence ending (such as *itteru n da* '[I] am telling you') following the quotative *tte* (Lines 3 and 10). But I consider these as the plain form with an affect key *tte* because *tte* here has a grammaticized function of making a command.

stage talk between Okada-san and Hiroshi has not concluded until Okada-san finishes his lines, which indicates that the person in control during this off-stage talk is not Hiroshi, but Okada-san. Okada-san's follow-up in Line 10 is accompanied by a quotative *tte*, as in Line 3, and the post-posed *ato* 'later', which is an emphasis by repetition.

In Excerpt 5, the participation of the supervisor Okada-san leads to a dyadic interaction of off-stage talk despite the on-going activity of on-stage talk. Okada-san overrides Hiroshi's authority as the DL, and takes the entire floor outside of the on-stage discussion frame. The DL's use of the *masu* form responding to Okada-san is not indexing his "in role" stance, but his respectful stance directed toward Okada-san. Therefore, Hiroshi's use of the *masu* form contributes to their *senpai-koochai* relationship.

#### 5.4. Shifts between on- and off-stage talk

Finally, I introduce a case where two interactants use non-reciprocal speech styles, but their identities are non-hierarchical. In this case, the meanings of speech styles reflect different contexts that co-exist in one string of talk. In the following excerpt, a nominated DL answers a participant's non-naked plain form question with the *masu* form. The nominated DL uses the *masu* form to index that she is in the role of DL, even in the middle of spontaneous off-stage talk. Prior to this excerpt, the nominated DL Ishi is leading a discussion on classic movies as if the selection section members have already decided to show classic movies for the annual movie event. But she later confesses that there had not been consensus among the selection section about the issue. Hearing the participants' expression of surprise at the chaotic situation of the selection section, Cap, the main DL, takes over the DL role as she questions the selection section members, including Ishi, in order to investigate the situation; this is where Excerpt 6 begins. The main interest in this excerpt comes at the end in the interaction between Takatoshi (male, sophomore Participant without title) and Ishi (female, sophomore, the selection section representative, nominated DL).

Excerpt 6 (General Meeting):

- 1 Cap *te yuu ka, meega no koto hanashi atta toki toka;*, (.) *doo datta?*  
 QT say Q classic movies LK thing talk each other-PAST time etc. how COP-PAST  
 'Um, when [the section] discusses the issue of classic movies, etc., how was [it]?'
- 2 *nagashitai, mitaina kanji ga a, ((getting no response)) are?* @  
 show-want like feeling S ah oh  
 '[Was there] the sense like [the members] want to show [them], ah, oh?'
- 3 Male participant from the selection section *sore nakatta kedo;*,  
 that not exist-PAST PR  
 'That, [there was] none'
- 4 Some participants @



- 5 Cap            ↑maji?  
really [COLLOQ]  
'Really?'
- 6 Ishi            nakatta  
not exist-PAST  
'[There was] none.'
- 7 Cap            nakatta        no?  
not exist-PAST P  
'[Was there] none?'
- 8 The male participant        tabun.  
perhaps  
'Perhaps.'
- 9 Ishi            te ka, yukkuri hanashi atte        nai    n        desu yo.  
QT Q slowly talk        each other NEG NOM COP P  
'Rather, [we] did not spend much time on discussing [this issue].'
- 10 Another male participant outside of the section        e:?  
what  
'What?'
- 11 Takatoshi → sonna ni    koo, maki    de    hanashi    atta        no?  
that way this    in haste COP talk        each other-PAST NOM  
'Did [the section members] discuss in haste like that?'
- 12 Ishi →        maki    deshita    ne.  
in haste COP-PAST P  
'[It] was in haste.'

The content of this string of interaction—why the section's discussion was problematic—indicates characteristic off-stage talk, because this content is not part of the agenda. Starting from Cap's non-naked plain form question *doo datta?* 'how was [it]?' with a rising intonation pattern (Line 1), the interaction becomes spontaneous, proceeding without the DL's nomination of speakers. Ishi once responds in the naked plain form *nakatta* '[there was] none' in Line 6, mirroring another participant's response in Line 3, *sore nakatta kedo.*; 'That, [there was] none'. Following another participant's response in Line 8, Ishi rephrases and initiates another string of explanation with *te ka* 'rather' (Line 9). This time, Ishi moves away from the subject of Cap's original question in Lines 1 and 2 (whether the selection committee members wanted to present short movies), and provides new information about the cause of the problem. The nominalizer *n* functions to present the content as a matter of fact (Aoki 1986), which makes her claim "on the record." Here, the content of the conversation is not merely the atmosphere of the selection committee, but the problem in the committee, which is expressed as information relevant to the meeting agenda, a criterion of on-stage talk. With Ishi's use of the *masu* form, she indexes her role as the person who is responsible for the issue, the leader who must explain why there was no consensus about the issue. In Line 11, Takatoshi raises a follow-up question, without Cap's

nomination, asking if the discussion was in haste. *Maki* ‘rolling’ (Lines 11, 12) is a jargon term of the movie industry that means completing a job in haste. The content of the interaction returns to the status of the discussion, rather than the problem of the discussion. Together with the spontaneity of the responses in Lines 10 and 11, the foregrounded context of the interaction becomes off-stage. Takatoshi’s choice of speech style in *hanashi atta no?* ‘did you discuss?’ in the non-naked plain form with a nominalizer particle *no* presents characteristically off-stage talk. In reply, Ishi uses the *masu* form, *maki deshita ne* ‘[It] was in haste’ (Line 12). Again, Ishi is speaking in the role of the section leader who is responsible for what has happened in the section. While the two sophomore students, Ishi and Takatoshi, converse in non-reciprocal speech styles, their indexed identities are not hierarchical in this case.

As seen in Excerpt 6, interactions can shift frequently between on-stage and off-stage talk, which influences the status of participants’ identities. This is because multiple identity constructions occur at each moment. Even during on-stage talk where *senpai-koochai* relationships are not foregrounded, the passive participation of quiet freshmen and sophomore participants and their position seated in the back of the room indicate that they are *koochai* in relation to the other students. It is not that *senpai-koochai* relationships disappear during on-stage talk; they are only backgrounded. In other words, the discussion roles are foregrounded and dominant during on-stage talk. In addition, the status of the frames of talk is not necessarily stable at any particular moment. As Excerpt 6 illustrates, it is possible that one participant stays in an on-stage frame of talk while others are in an off-stage frame of talk. The coexistence of distinctive frames of talk is a consequence of the dynamic process of interaction during which multiple layers of contexts can be indexed.

Based on the data I have collected, the identities of *senpai* and *koochai* constructed in these data are not transferrable identities (Zimmerman 1998) that endure across all situations. However, identity construction in general is context-dependent in a broader sense. I cannot assert that the *senpai-koochai* relationships described in this paper are representative of those in all college clubs in Japan. Types of college clubs range from sport clubs to humanities-oriented clubs. Different activities resulting from the nature of a club may construct identities differently. Other factors such as the genders of the club members may also influence how members construct their identities. Further research on other types of college clubs would expand our understanding of the construction of *senpai-koochai* relations.

## 6. Conclusion

This study illustrates that the indexed meaning of the *masu* form is not fixed, but context-dependent. It may variably index hierarchical respect or the enactment of an institutional role depending on the context. There are two contexts identified in this study: On-stage talk that follows the meeting agenda and off-stage talk that deviates from the meeting agenda in content. During on-stage talk, the participants’ club roles are foregrounded, which puts less focus on their *senpai-koochai* identities. The characteristic speech style of on-stage talk is mutual *masu* form use, indexing the speakers’ “in-role” stance in accordance with their club roles. Therefore, the speakers’ use of the *masu* form does not lead to their *senpai-koochai* identity construction. On the

other hand, off-stage talk is the deviation from on-stage talk, including chat during the break, back seat chat, and side sequences happening during the meeting. During off-stage talk, the interactants' identities are less influenced by their club roles, and this situation allows more freedom for other identities, both hierarchical and non-hierarchical, to be constructed. *Senpai-koohai* relationships can be foregrounded during the context of off-stage talk. The non-naked plain form that accompanies affect keys is the characteristic talk of off-stage talk. In that case, the participants' use of non-reciprocal speech styles may lead to construction of *senpai-koohai* identities, where the speaker's use of the *masu* form indexes a respectful stance toward the other interactant.

#### APPENDIX A: List of transcription conventions

(.)	unmeasured micropause
( )	unclear utterance
(( ))	commentary
:	sound stretch
WORD	loudness
-	cut-off
?	rising intonation
,	continuation of tones, such as slightly rising intonation
.	falling intonation (full stop)
↑	high pitch
@	laugh
<u>kimasu</u>	the <i>masu</i> form (double underline)
<u>kuru</u>	the plain form (single underline)
→	focus of analysis

In translations, square brackets, [ ], are used to indicate omitted elements.

#### APPENDIX B: List of abbreviations used in word-for-word translations

COLLOQ	colloquial term
COP	various forms of copula verb <i>be</i>
LK	linking nominal
MAS	masculine form
NEG	negative morpheme
NOM	nominalizer
O	object marker
P	particle
PR	pragmatic marker
PAST	past tense

Q	question marker
QT	quotation marker
S	subject marker
TOP	topic marker
VULGAR	vulgar form
?	unclear meaning

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