

CONCEPTUALIZING THE JAPANESE AND AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL MEETING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRAGMATIC USAGE OF ENGLISH AND JAPANESE DISCOURSE MARKERS “OH” AND “ATT”

KAORU AMINO

Faculty of Languages and Cultures, Kyushu University, Motooka, Nishi-Ku, Fukuoka, Japan

ABSTRACT

The discourse marker “oh,” which prototypically shows strong emotional state as surprise, fear and or pain (Schiffrin, 1987), has additional functions such as “repair (the process by which a speaker recognizes a speech error and correct it)”, or to request clarification. However, these identified functions can change depending on context of pragmatic function as morphological unit related by human interaction in discourse.

On the other hand, studies on genre analysis is based on the idea that both concepts of communicative event and communicative purpose actualize the “field (the institutional focus)” or “speech event” into “genre” (Swales, 1990).

Here, I would like to argue how a difference in “genre” can vary depending on language or country, by examining the functions of English discourse marker “oh” and its correspondent marker in Japanese language. The intention is to clarify the difference in “genre” of occupational meeting between Japan and the US. Thus, this study aims to clarify how the concept of “occupational meeting” and its purpose varies in ordinary conversation in the US and Japan, and how the role, obligation, and interaction is affected by the concept of “meeting” as a communication event, in accordance with “genre” as linguistic feature.

As the linguistic feature to be examined, the Japanese discourse marker “att,” an interjection usually uttered as the marker of “surprise” or “notification,” is compared to the English “oh” as its counterpart.

Based on utterance of 500 turns from Japanese and American corpus, the markers “oh” and “att” are extracted, respectively, then divided into next six categories based on Schiffrin (1987): 1) show strong emotional state as surprise, fear and pain; 2) repair; 3) request for clarification; 4) reaction to response; 5) sympathetic response to received information; and 6) collocation with answer.

This shows that the frequency of those markers shows the parallel that means though the American “oh” tend to be used more in meeting than ordinary conversation, however the Japanese counterparts “att” used more in the ordinary conversation. In addition, it is clarified that English “oh” has a preference for the information management functions such as repair and clarification, especially in occupational meetings, though Japanese “att,” which functions to show emotional state, and is mostly a reaction to response, just marks the flow of discourse.

This paper attribute these results to: 1) the difference of possible speech norm in American and Japanese meeting; 2) the perception about politeness and hierarchy; and 3) preference for the pragmatic level of each markers.

KEYWORDS: *Discourse Marker, Information Management, Repair, Request for the Clarification, Pragmatic Function, Epistemic Stance & Collocation*

Received: Jul 06, 2019; Accepted: Jul 27, 2019; Published: Dec 19, 2019; Paper Id.: IJCMSFEB20201

1. INTRODUCTION

Variation studies in socio-linguistics have been focused on some variation within language, while that for syntax or second-language acquisition must generalize a language for the convenience of research design. One variation which has been recognized as the setting and occasional focus is “Institutional” talk, which Goffman (1983) argues defines the conversational interaction in the macro-social institution in the relation with obligation and interactional right.

One variation study includes the “genre” study by Swales (1990), in which he insists that both concepts of communicative event and communicative purpose actualize the “field (the institutional focus)” or “speech event” into “genre.” Here, I would like to present the concept of linguistic “genre” of occupational meeting between Japan and US, and demonstrate how the concept of communicative event and purpose varies in ordinary conversation. By clarifying the variation of each communicative event, how the role, obligation, and interactional right is affected by the concept of “meeting” as a communication event, in accordance with “genre” as linguistic feature.

Especially, the examination of the discourse marker reveals some genre of “meeting” between Japan and US, because the discourse marker usually serves to connect two sentences uttered by two participants in conversation, and the core meaning of the marker’s function should be negotiated by participants (Fraser, 1999). In other words, the pragmatic interpretation of the marker represents participants’ role as the reflection of obligation, institutional order, and right in “meeting” as a communicative event.

Thus, the pragmatic usage of marker “oh” is examined as the microsocial representation in order to clarify the different concepts of “meeting” between Japan and US, for the further implication for fixing the misunderstanding.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Discourse Marker and Pragmatics

Usually discourse markers in English take the form of particle, filler, conjunction or interjection, such as “so,” “well,” “oh,” “OK,” and others that take phrase form (e.g., “you know,” “you see,” “I mean”) or adverbs (“actually”). Discourse markers have been considered syntactically independent from the main sentence, and often appeared in conversation rather than written text.

Schiffrin (1987) analyzed the functional pattern of 10 discourse markers and the interjection “oh.” Through a sequential analysis of interactions between several participants, Schiffrin (1987) stated that the discourse marker “maybe be pragmatic or interactional units rather than strictly linguistic units of morphemes and sentence” which offers the viewpoint that pragmatic function as morphological unit relates to human interaction in discourse. The discourse marker also caters to exchange structures by sequentially defined turns (Briggs, 1992). Discourse marker is also connected to the concept of turn and turn-taking, in the form of turn-taking or topic changing strategy, by signifying the shift of speaker or topic.

2.2 The Function of “oh” in Japanese and US English

In the examination of “oh” in Schiffrin (1987), six functions are identified:

- Show strong emotional state as surprise, fear, and pain
- Repair

- Request for clarification
- Reaction to response
- Sympathetic response to received information
- Collocation with answer

Schiffrin (1987) especially emphasizes the preference for using “oh” for information management, which incorporates every function of this discourse marker. Regarding the pragmatic level, Schiffrin (1987) implies that the usage of discourse marker “oh” as, 1) “show strong emotional state” is most semantic of the six, while 6) “collocation with answer” is the extreme opposite.

Example 1: Request for Clarification and Reaction to Response

01Freda: Sometimes he got a notice for staying out past curfew.

02Recently. In August, that was.

03Val: Oh curfew? What’s curfew?

04Freda: A certain time that children have to be in.

05Val: Oh, your children. Oh, I see. Oh, it’s personal. Oh I-... I

06thought there might be police or something.

In line (01), Freda discusses “curfew” and the meaning of this utterance is not received by Val correctly (03), which prompts her to ask for clarification of “curfew” as polyseme. Then in (05), Val uses “oh” again to indicate that she has correctly understood the meaning of ambiguous “curfew” based on the previous information provided by Freda in (04). At the same time, it is related to the shift of information status. As implied in (06), in which the recognition of “curfew” as “police or something” related is taken place by that as “your children” related one. The inductive function of “oh” as an epistemic stance focuses on the information status, if it is shared by both speaker and doesn’t appear in the most pragmatic usage of it as next.

Example 2: Collocation with Response

01 Irene: How can I get an appointment to go down there t’ down there t’ bring my son on a tour?

02 Debby: Oh, I didn’t even know they gave tours! I’m not the one t’ ask about it.

As this example shows, “oh” is sometimes accompanied by a response to previous question. This exchange means that Debby did not know the information of the event and that Irene’s question introduced the information. In this case, “oh” works as collocation with response, but still focuses on the epistemic stance of teach speaker.

Thus, the “oh” functions to mark the phrase or words that can potentially be the focus of debating or misunderstanding related to the speakers’ epistemic stance. This occurs when speakers co-construct the conversation by checking the each one’s informational states in American English.

2.3 Japanese Counterparts of Discourse Marker “oh”

“Oh” in the Japanese context is an exclamation used to express moved emotions caused by the out stimulus, though at the same time it works as an interjection to show response or compilation, according to Sanshodo Japanese-Japanese dictionary (Kenbo et al., 2013). Tomosada (2006) divided the function of Japanese “*att*” into the five main categories:

- Acknowledgment
- Surprise
- The feeling of obliged (toward the person in higher hierarchy)
- Show courtesy
- Turn initiation (Turn-taking strategy)

He summarized the usage of 1) and 2) as focuses on the new information, though the stance to the new information itself has not decided yet on the time point of utterance (Tomosada, 2006).

The uses expressed in 3) and 4) are only found in Japanese, and both are affected by the interpersonal hierarchy between speakers.

Example 3

- (Show courtesy)

“*Att, hai. Wakarimashita* (toward the boss) (Oh, yes. I understood.)”

- (Politeness)

“*Att, ohayougozaimasu.* (Oh, good morning.)”

These two examples are very specific to Japanese and imply that the main usage of Japanese “oh” still relies on the emotional move. This is an extended application of prototypic usage, if the emotional move can express the inner humbleness of speaker.

Category 5-Turn initiation- refers to the comprehensive usage of all of functions, because most of the time, the marker is used independently from the syntactic element, according to analysis of English counterpart (Fraser, 1999).

According to Sacks et al. (1974), the turn is defined as the unit of utterance beginning when one speaker starts to speak to when they finish. “Turn-taking” is defined as the process of turns being exchanged from one speaker to another.

Following these definitions, if a speaker started her/his turn with the discourse marker, it becomes an initiation of a turn. Depending on the context, the adequate turns are selected as part of the turn-taking strategy.

The examples of “oh” in English are located at the beginning of each speaker’s new turn. English “oh” also can be said to serve as turn-initiation or a turn-taking strategy. However, Schiffirin (1987) might not consider it as just a turn-initial marker, but rather as having more meaning on every “oh” in English discourse.

Here, I would like to argue that Japanese “att” can be the counterpart of English “oh” in many contexts. Firstly, the most semantic usage of both is to show “Strong emotional state”, including surprise. It also can be said to include the moved inner emotional state as one of Japanese “att’s” prototypical functions.

Besides this function, the marker used to focus on the epistemic stance of shared information plays an important role both in Japanese and English. Schiffirin (1987) divides the function of this marker into several categories inside this epistemic stance based on context. It means that the sentence uttered after “oh” is the key to deciding each function and detailed categorization of pragmatic usage, as shown in Example 1).

Example 1: Request for Clarification and Reaction to Response

01Freda: Sometimes he got a notice for staying out past curfew. Recently. In August, that was.

02Val: Oh curfew? What’s curfew?

03Freda: A certain time that children have to be in.

04Val: Oh, your children. Oh, I see. Oh, it’s personal. Oh, I-...I thought there might be police or something.

In (02), the detailed function of information management in “oh” is decided by the utterance “what’s curfew,” which itself can be perceived as a phrase requesting clarification. The “oh” in (05) is an example of how this discourse marker is located on the turn of Evaluation or Feedback in the turn-exchange structure as the act of “acknowledgment” (Coulthard & Brazil’s, 1992). So “oh” can collocate either on the second adjacency pair or the third turn in the exchange structure, which partially means that it shares the same turn-initiation function Tomosada (2006) suggested. Moreover, the classification as “collocation with answer” would be a more detailed way to pragmatically explain the turn-initial function depending on the specific context.

The argument about matching Japanese “att” and English “oh” is based on the different levels, so as to make some layers. At the emotional level, Japanese “att’s” function of showing surprise could correspond to English “oh’s” function of showing strong an emotional state as surprise. At the informative level, Acknowledgment that focus on the epistemic stance in Japanese “att” would be relevant to “oh” ’s function of repair, Request for clarification, reaction to Response, sympathetic response and collocation with answer, as said before, the difference is whether the view is deductive (Japanese) or inductive (English). At the third level, the politeness level, the attitude of utterance following the interpersonal hierarchy is solely introduced only in Japanese, and this function could cover both emotional and informative levels at the same time. The final level is the turn-taking level, which is applicable to all functions in Japanese and English, as far as the markers are located on the initial position in a turn.

So, it is quite hard to classify one “att” or “oh” into only one categorization, and most of the time it is possible that one marker contains several functions. Though those differences in categorizing functions of “oh” and “att” into one category, the counterpart of “oh” can be identified similar to “att,” especially, those shared functions at the emotional, informative, and turn levels.

As the final argument of both markers’ agreement could be the question, which language or research’s classification standard or view this study should employ. Since the turn-initial function applies to all functions and the

usage to show politeness can be specific to Japanese, these perspectives will be argued occasionally with the actual example utterance based on context. So, the focus of this research is on the emotional and informative level, especially the latter function of Japanese counterparts related to epistemic stance, will be more examined in detail following the classification standard of English counterparts.

3. SPEECH EVENT (COMMUNICATIVE EVENT) OF “OCCUPATIONAL MEETING”

3.1 “Meeting” as an Institutional Setting

Since the purpose of this study is to examine the concept of linguistic “genre” of occupational meeting between Japan and US, and the how the concept of the communicative event and purpose varies from ordinary conversation, the definition of “meeting” is important here. Especially, the occupational meeting would belong to “institutional talk,” which is said by (Drew and Heritage, 1992) to be used in a more restricted environment, where (i) the goals of the participants are more limited and institution-specific, (ii) restrictions on the nature of interactional contributions are often in force, and (iii) institution- and activity-specific inferential frameworks are common. In contrast, “ordinary conversation” is “a term that has come to denote forms of interaction which are not confined to specialized settings or to the execution of particular tasks” (Heritage, 1998). The difference of those two speech events is mainly whether the setting could require the goal or purpose of setting, which affects the interactional pattern of the conversation defined by the specific frameworks of institution and activity.

Following this definition, the data equivalent to the setting of institutional “occupational meeting” are extracted from the data of this study.

3.2 The Detail of Data and the Recognition as Speech Event “Meeting”

As the data of both Japanese and American English, the corpus is used. For Japanese, the CD type corpus called “*Dansei no kotoba/ Syokubahen*” (The male’s speech in working place) is used. These data are taken from 21 workplaces, including pharmacies, universities, and companies. Utterance taken place in a workplace is tape-recorded three times per a day (morning, meeting, and break). Each script also follows each speaker’s background information, for example gender, age, original birthplace, occupation, occupational status. There are two inferences about these data: 1) even though the data is titled “male’s speech,” it actually includes various female speakers at the same time, though there is slight preference for male’s speaker’s portion; and 2) even though utterances are tagged as “morning,” the speech event of this tag includes both of meeting and break.

As for the American corpus, MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English) is used as a source of subject data. All utterances in this corpus are taken from the campus, and each utterance can be browsed by tag, which are classified by speakers’ attributes (position/language), speech event type, academic division, and interactivity rating.

There is a browsing of “meeting” in tags of “speech event type,” making it easier to define and extract the “meeting” in this corpus. Since the speech event “meeting” belongs to institutional talk, purpose varies from ordinary conversation, and the data’s adaptability as “meeting” or “ordinary conversation” should be examined regarding whether the purpose can be found. This means that whether the consistency of topics related to their occupation can be found or not can be the key to define the speech events.

Table 1: Japanese Meeting

Transcript ID (turn)	Setting	Topic	# of Participants
1264-1292 (22)	Sales department of advertising company	Meeting about previous arrangement of budget, cost, size of material for an event) Previous arrangement for Celine Dion’s new CD packages	2
1729-1857 (128)	Sales department of advertising company	The presentation of marketing planning. The explanation of Christmas cake with small plate as promotional item. The reporting of campaign with care for eye lotion	6
3040-3134 (94)	Company worker (Sales department)	The routine morning meeting. Some objection is submitted to the supervisor’s explanation about using up the stock	5
7351-7414 (63)	Hair salon	The discussion between six staff members about what they noticed recently. One female speaker cast the debate about the hygiene of salon space	6
7799-7991 (193)	Insurance Company	The issue about the renewal of motor insurance, and how to cope with the occasion the accident happened.	5

These speech events take place in an occupational setting. In addition, almost all submitted topics are related to the business issue. Thus, these speeches are considered to belong to the institutionally “occupational meeting.”

Table 2: Japanese Conversation

Script ID (500 turn)	Setting	Topic	# of Participants
1501-1717 (217)	Sales department of advertising company	Lunch time conversation about next possible overseas trip, for example Argentina or Paris. The topic about the new version of watch by a brand.	4
3791-4057 (145)	Company worker (Sales department)	Lunch time conversation about Soccer league, second-language learning in undergraduate programs. Topics about the foreign languages, which they still remember with lot of jokes.	5
8939-9076 (138)	Library	Lunch time conversation about the accident that happened in the library.	6

The topics in these data are all related to recreation or narratives about past experiences, which are not related to occupational purpose. Therefore, these speeches are categorized under “meeting.”

Table 3: American Meeting

Transcript ID (turn)	Setting	Topic	# of Participants
MTG400MX008 (500)	Forum for international educators meeting	Workshop during summer targeting international students. Some unsuccessful recruitment of Iranian students by MELAS testing. Possible challenges that could be encountered next semester. The internship program and visa issue. The information by department which shows the current trends of applications or submissions for scholarships. The process for recruiting new stuff.	11

Table 3 presents the conversational data from MICASE, which is viewed by selecting the speech event as “meeting.” This coding process showed six different occasions and “the forum for the international educators meeting” is one alternative among six lists. Almost all of the topics in this event are related to working with international students, though there are various sub categories inside it. This consistency of topic could result in the consistency of purpose of this occasion being considered enough to be recognized as the concept of “meeting.”

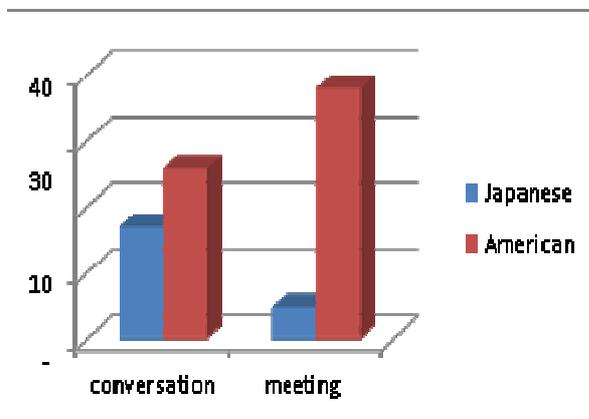
Table 4: American Conversation

Transcript ID (Turn)	Setting	Topic	# of Participants
SGR999SU146 (500)	Senior Thesis Study Group	Complaint about assignment, professor, credit issue about thesis writing. The experience of tutoring a teenager. The hip café in Chicago. The missing student at the senior dinner	4

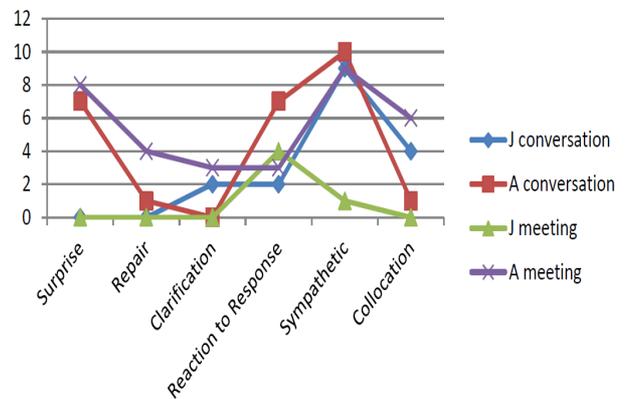
In contrast to “meeting,” there is no “ordinary conversation” tag in MICASE, because all the conversation there is supposed to be related to “academic spoken English.” The “study group” option in the speech event list contains some casual and ordinary conversation that does not have purpose. However, enjoying the conversation itself seems to be the purpose itself. In the “senior thesis study group” conversation, students exchange their complaints or worries about thesis writing; however, the latter half of conversation turns to personal narratives about tutoring, trips, and university events. Thus, this data shares the characteristic of “ordinary conversation” rather than “meeting,” which means that this “ordinary conversation” between students was taken place somewhere at a university. Thus, the agreement of speech events has been decided, and 500 turns each from those data are extracted randomly for the further extraction of the discourse marker “att” and “oh,” referring to six functions which Schiffrin (1987) stated for consider the microsocial element appeared there.

4. STATISTICAL RESULTS

An examination of the number of each marker was conducted, and the number of “att” and “oh” was extracted from 500 turn from both of speech event, and those markers are further divided into six categories depending on each speech event: 1) show strong emotional state as surprise, fear, and pain; 2) repair; 3) request for clarification; 4) reaction to response; 5) sympathetic response to received information; and 6) collocation with answer.



Graph 1: "Att" and "oh" in Each Speech Event.



Graph 2: Marker Divided by Functions.

At first, the results of classification by speech event show that the frequency of these markers shows the parallel which means though the American “oh” tend to be used more in meeting than ordinary conversation, however the Japanese counterparts used more in the ordinary conversation.

Such static result could be summarized as next;

- American “oh” has a preference for information management functions such as repair and clarification, especially in meeting. This is aligned with its Japanese counterpart, which presents the lowest preference of this function in meeting.

- From an emotional aspect, “att” in Japanese, ordinary conversation shows the highest frequency in all functions and speech events. This shows the huge contrast to the few appearances of “att” in meeting. However, in American “oh,” its frequency does not change much according to the speech event.
- Overall, the collocation with a “turn,” which does not have specific state rather it just marks the flow of discourse, seems to have a preference for Japanese “att” in both settings, as the highest frequency of “reaction to response” in Japanese meeting.

In the next chapters, some phenomena that lead deductive features from some function are discussed through an analysis of actual utterances.

5. THE PRESENTATION OF EMOTION IN AMERICAN “OH”

5.1 Strong Emotional Status in American Corpus

At first, demonstrating emotions such as surprise, fear, and pain, or sympathetic response seems to be obviously different in US English and Japanese.

Example 4: Show Surprise in American Meeting

- 01 01 R1: Yeah oh, he’s there
02 S4: oh, are you still in the co-op Rita? (R1: yeah)
03 S5: I used to live there for years that’s why I know
04 R1: oh really? That’s how you know Pat?
05 S5: Pat Clein was there, from eighty, (R1: he’s like the longest) (oh) eighty-five
06 (S4: oh) he’s been there
07 S4: Oh, my lord.

Though “oh” in the American meeting has the function of focusing more on the information management task, those in (04) and (07) are used as idioms, by collocations with “really” and “my lord.” Thus, “oh” shows the high frequency in showing surprise, most of which is in the form of “oh gosh/Oh my lord/Oh my lord” to show surprise, and “oh, Ok/ Oh sure/Oh see/Oh that would be great” to show speakers’ empathy. Thus, the emotional function does not seem to be restricted by US speakers in both ordinary conversations and meetings. In contrast, the dimension of speech events shows a great difference in Japanese “oh,” which is mostly used in conversations and is seldom used in meetings. So, this emotional function is only allowed to be obvious only in ordinary conversation.

5.2 Preface for Response, Concept and Purpose of “Meeting”

In addition to the function of showing emotional state, the largest preference in American “oh” would be the information management aspect.

Example 5: Repair in American Corpus

- 01 01 S9: I have a question how is, the issue related to the affirmative action,
02 you know the uh (xx)

- 03 SU-2: oh uh the reason that I made that comment was that un, I um, and this is just my
 04 assumption um, I'm assuming that um the Office of the General Counsel may be
 05 being especially um, careful about anything to do with preferences to a group because
 06 of the pending lawsuit that that's kind of brought all of that into focus.
 07 S9: okay.
 08 S8: but you're just guessing (SU-2: oh, I'm just) that there's a connection, you
 09 weren't told that specifically.
 10 SU-2: oh no. no I'm sorry I didn't mean to (xx) I didn't mean to give that impression no I
 11 was just (S8: for the record) yes for the record. <laugh> this was just in my head,
 12 you know, so. But no I mean I'm assuming that then they're kind
 13 of looking twice at anything that (SU-f: sure) could be interpreted as a preference.

In Example 5, as a response to S9 asking if SU-2 knows the specific case and issue about affirmative action, SU-2 replied that the reason of raising this issue is just an assumption, which has not been actualized, by starting with "oh," which accompanies "no" afterwards. This "oh" focuses on the difference of assumption between S9 and SU-2, which is misunderstood. However, S9 further investigates that even if it is not "assumption" but "guessing" exist in SU-2's mind about specific case. The discourse marker "oh" indicates the misunderstanding between them. This is an example of having a "repair" function that focuses on correcting the difference of cognitions in the process of negotiation between speakers. Besides this example, "oh" also accompanies "I didn't mean that."

5.3 The Concept of "Meeting"

The frequency of "oh" as an information management marker actually stands for the concept of "meeting" in American English, because negotiation is usually achieved through comparing and adjusting, reconciling their stance in exchange of utterances, without the priori-assumption previously shared together with all of participants. However, the opposite situation, which belongs to the genre of "presentation" or "reporting", seems to be more dominant in Japanese meetings than negotiation.

Example 6: Introducing New Idea

- 01 D: *ChottoAnone, Yononaka-gaKurisumasuninarumae-ni, YoyakuChumon-wo suru-node,*
 (Well listen to me, Before Christmas comes, we open order (just for staffs), so I think
 02 *ano-Ikken-ne, wakari-zuraku-nacchau-to omoun-ndesu-yo. Nanode-, ano, ochikaku-no-*
 (seemingly it seems to be hard to understand (how to order), so, ah... (you guys)staying)
 03 *kata.*
 (near the site...)
 04 A: *Hai*
 (Yes, I am)

05 D: *Ezara-dake-demo ne, nanbyaku-en-ka suru-youna kanji-no mono-desu.*

(This decorative plate (as a novelty) itself seems to be expensive as few hundred yen.)

06 J: *Sore waikko de- #####*

(One plate of this item is #####)

07 D: *Rokuman-ko desu. ee- keikaku-warokumanko-nanode-, itten 60-ko-no chumon.*

(60000 items. Ah...The original plan is, and 60 items are ordered per a store.)

08 *att*, *Kee:ki ha [The name of shop]-de tuku-tte-rukee:ki nano de.*

(Oh, the cake is made in [The name of shop].)

09 B:#####

10 D: <laugh>

11 B:[The name of shop]-*tte dame-da-ne, Kihonteki-ni.*

(The shop is socks, basically.)

12 D:[The name of shop] *de tuku-tta-kee:ki.*

(Cakes are made in [The name of shop].)

13 B: *Sara-gahoshii-na, sara-ga.*

(I want to have the plate.)

14 A: *Sara ii-na.*

(The plate seems nice.)

15 D: *Haya-kumoushiko-nde. Maji ninasan-moushiko-nde-kudasai-ne.*

(I recommend you order soon. This is serious, please order it.

(Data ID: 1781-1799, Sales department of advertising company)

(*## stands for the inaudible. : stands for the prolonged vowel)

Example 6 presents typical patterns in a Japanese meeting. Speaker A explains his current on-going work on the Christmas campaign. The style of explanation by presenter D in form of narrative can be seen in 01, 05, 08, 10, 12, and 15. This style of presentation can also be found in other data, such as in a morning meeting in hair salon before opening, in which everyone has to say something about she/he noticed or give the alert. The other speaker usually responds in acceptance, question, comment, or requests additional information, as can be seen in 04, 06, 11, 13, 14. However, not so much exchange of opinion or negotiation of each other's view is found in these settings. Actually, "oh" can be seen in 08 also this data, but the function of "oh" is solely adding some more information speaker D remind, and functions as introducing new idea which function is found frequently in Japanese meeting, and those "oh" is actually categorized to the classification into "collocation with other utterance" in Schifrin's category in this study.

Thus, the concept of “meeting” seems a little different in Japanese, as it tends to avoid possible collision between participants, and simply becomes a report of some priori agenda or preparation. Following this concept, “oh” can also be observed as occurring drastically less in meetings, compared to conversation in Japanese. Even if found, most of Japanese “*att*” does not focus on repair or request for the clarification but mark the flow of conversation by collocating with next utterances.

6. DISCUSSION CORRELATED TO POLITENESS AND SOCIAL NORMS

Thus, the difference of information focused on in US meetings, and the preference for the pragmatic marker to signal the flow in Japanese has been discussed in the previous chapters. Here in chapter 6, the hierarchal aspect surrounding “*att*” is discussed through the detailed examination of discourse with the hierarchical information around participants.

Furthermore, the relationship of the “*wakimae*” principle in Japanese conversation and the level of pragmatic usage is focused varies depending on the formal, and casual setting, as indicated by the examination of contrastive connective “but.”

6.1 Hierarchy in Conversation and Negative Politeness

The next example of “*att*” shares the same elements, as for the speech event “meeting.”

Example 7: “*att*” in Japanese Meeting and Hierarchal Background

01 A: *Are, ###san-chi, raigetsuiku-no?*

(Do you go to ###’s place next month?)

02 G: *A-, sousousou sou. Denwa-gahai-tte-kita-n-dayo.*

(ah... yes yesyesyes. She/He called me.)

03 A: *Att, hai-tte-ki-ta.*

(oh, they called)

04 G: *E::tone,[nickname]chan-ga ore-n-ch, hachi, 7:45 ni #####*

(well, [nickname](suffix to the familiar person) will come to my home at 8, 7:45 #####)

(Data ID: 7986-7990, Insurance Company)

In Example 7, G (company president) holds the higher hierarchy than A (shop owner), and “*att*” in line (03) is a response to (02), which is originally a response to the question initiated by A in (01). So, it is categorized under “feedback”, but at the same time, it seems to be based on the meaning that information is transmitted from G to A, who did not share this information. So, the information is held by the higher hierarchy.

However, in next data, the hierarchical setting concerning “*att*” is controverted.

In (08), “*att*” is used in a Japanese meeting. Concerning hierarchal background, C’s status of chief is higher than subsection chief, which is held by D.

01 D: *Asso:*, *uchidashi-temo*, *soryaii:yo*. *Kedomaniawa-nai*.

(Really? It's OK with me to print out (it). But it will not on time.

02 C: *Kyo:yu:offisu-no bun-tte*, *ore-no tokoro-ni-shikahai-tte-nai-n-chay-n?*

(I think only I possess the sharing (Microsoft) office, right?)

03 D: *ee:* <laugh> *kyoyu:offisu-nante dare-demo mo-tte-masu-yo*.

(eh... <laugh> Everybody has sharing office.)

04 C: *att*, *zennin-de hai-tte-iru-no*.

(oh, everybody possesses it.)

05 D: *Kyo:yu:*, *ano:*

(Well, it's called “sharing”)

06 G: *Me:ru-ga mi-re-rya:*

(As far as one can check mail)

07 D: *Dare-demo tuka-e-masu-yo*.

(Everybody can use it)

(Data ID: 3128-3132, Company worker, Sales department)

(*## stands for the inaudible)

In this example, C holds the highest hierarchy as the section chief, however, “att” is used in (04) by C. As for the function, similar to the previous example, it can be categorized as reaction to response, following the initiation in (02), and response in (04), though maintaining some information management function that old assumptions are replaced with new information. This observation focuses on the function of filler “ano:” in line (05) uttered after (04), which shows the hesitation of D toward C's position. This means that noticing new information or new perspectives to change each other's assumption is not supposed to be done lower in the hierarchy. Such instruction or request for recognition must interfere this negative politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987), and this is the reason why D as a sub-chief must hesitate when pointing it out. So, the additional politeness here implied the potential demand, as to balance the possible face threatening. As well, it could suggest that certain norms exist at the micro-social level of “meetings” in Japan. Still then, the statistic shows that “att” occurred just five times in the meeting data, which is drastically lower than 17 times in Japanese ordinary conversation. These findings are quite different from the American English meeting data, which show in Example 6, where members never stop to peruse their investigation about doubtful and ambiguous expression used by other participants, and hedge is not used, and the function is focused totally on the repair.

6.2 The Pragmatic Usage to Mark Conversational Flow in Casual Setting

Contrast to the “oh” that has the preference for information management, that fall into the function as repair or the request for the clarification, the Japanese “att” especially at the meeting has the most pragmatic usage as a marker to signal the flow of conversation, which categorized into the “collocation with answer” in this study.

Example 9: Pragmatic Function of “att” in Japanese Ordinary Conversation

01 M: (The soccer game)*ya-tte-mashi-ta-yo*.

(They broad casted (the soccer game)).

02 *Yonaka-no ne:, ichi-ji han-ka, niji-hangurai-kara*<laugh> *Oki-te-n-na-chuu-no,*

(from the 1 o'clock and half, or around 2 o'clock. <laugh> Don't keep stay up,

03 *Yopparai-ga*<laugh>

(the dunker (for himself) <laugh>)

04 A: *a, dakedo Nanami benchi-ni-mohai-tte-naka-tta.*

(oh, but Nanami didn't appeared even in bench)

05 M: *Un, nanka stamen, de-te-masen-deshi-ta-ne. Stamen ni-wa de-te, de-te-naka-tta.*

(yes, somehow, he wasn't selected as start member. He wasn't selected.)

06 A: *Iya, kyou-sa:, kyou-nankanyu:su-deya-tte-tara-sa, nanka, benchi-ni-hai-tte-naka-tta.*

(but according to this morning's news, somehow, he didn't appear even at the bench)

In this data, as implied by the polite form “*mashi-ta*” in (01), and “*deshi-ta*” in (05), uttered by A, M holds the higher hierarchy in this working place than A. M introduced the story about soccer game and woke up too late to see the international game. In (04), A introduced the subcategory topic of the “soccer game,” saying that Nanami, a star soccer player did not appear to play as a team member during that game. The marker “a” is almost similar to “att”, though the latter carries stronger emotion and functions to introduce a new sub-topic. This kind of function is frequently observed in Japanese ordinary conversation, so it could be said that Japanese conversation has a preference for pragmatic usage, also found in another marker, such as “but”. Iwasawa (1985) analyzed that this marginal usage was far from the prototype meaning of Japanese “but.” Iwasawa (1985) also concluded that the marker tends to have the usage to mark the flow of a sentence rather than to show the semantic “contrastive” meaning is dominant in “casual” setting, and implied that the situation is controverted in the setting of “meeting,” where the preference is on the semantic meaning.

That also explains that “att” found in Examples 7 and 8, which hold the setting of “meeting” the marker still maintain the meaning of information focused task; it seems to lose it in Example 9. That is, the social norm in “formal” setting would be required in Japanese meetings, whereas, the ordinary conversation is supposed to belong “casual” setting.

So, the different paradigm that governs the pragmatic function of this marker seems to exist in Japanese, where the hierarchy or politeness that is considered adequate in each setting. In contrast, formal or casual do not seem to be key factors, which the micro-social aspect of conversation has to follow, rather the institutional purpose and the logical function could be more focused in US counterparts. From another perspective, language is used to exchange meanings between participants. In achieving the purpose of those negotiations in American concept of “meeting,” the language is further required to follow the social norms of a “formal” setting, where each is supposed to behave according to the hierarchical level inside that conversational group.

This study analyzed the statistical and qualitative examination of American English and Japanese markers that stand for the strong emotional state and surprise in the prototype meaning.

An examination of “oh” based on an American English corpus shows that it used as strong emotional state, collocating with other words, such as “oh, god/ oh my lord/ oh my gosh. Phrases such as “Oh, OK/ Oh, sure / Oh see/ Oh that would be great” are used to show sympathy in any speech events. Such semantic meaning and emotional emphasis are not catered so much in Japanese meetings.

As for the information management factor in American English meetings, repair and request for clarification are used to negotiate the difference of cognitive state or misunderstanding and achieve some agreement between participants. Whereas, the collocation with the following utterance, such as a reaction to a response or a collocation with an answer, is mainly focused in Japanese meetings, which lacks the function to correct mutual misunderstanding and to commit a potential face threatening. As for the pragmatic level of each function, as the speech event becomes more casual, the marginal usage, such as to mark the flow, becomes obvious, whereas the semantic usage seems strong in “meeting” which is considered to belong more formal speech event.

This study argues the reason for these results could originate from 1) the difference of possible speech norm in American and Japanese meetings; 2) the perception about politeness and hierarchy; and 3) preference for the pragmatic level of each marker.

As Matsumoto (1980) and Hill et al. (1986) suggested, the concept concerning the recognition of politeness vary depending on each culture, for example the individual right is esteemed in US, thus the strategies on the mutual interaction is focused in each setting. In contrast, “wakimae” principle, which means the politeness based on the social custom is esteemed in Japan. This “wakimae” principle could also influence the politeness due to the interpersonal hierarchy in Japanese meetings. The existence of this politeness affects the few frequencies of information management tasks of the Japanese marker that could result in negative politeness in their occupational hierarchy.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the concept of a communicative event like a “meeting” is different, due to the difference of purpose, and the meaning of markers negotiated by participants tends to constructively differ along with the possible social norms and adequate linguistic behavior in each event in each culture. The examination of “oh” clarified the anthropological aspect of the culture where each language is spoken, and it also showed the catered concept that affects the usage of language, such as the obligation, the institutional order and right in speech in Japan and the US.

REFERENCES

1. *Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson (1987) Politeness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*
2. *Goffman, Erving (1983) Interaction order. American Sociological Review 48, 1–17.*
3. *Bueraheng, N., & Laohawiriyanon, C. (2014). Does learners’ degree of exposure to English language influence their collocational knowledge. International Journal of English literature, 4(3), 1–10.*

4. Hill, Beverly, Sachiko Ide, Shoko Ikuta, Akio Kawasaki, and Tsunao Ogino (1986) *Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 10, 341–371.
5. Iwasawa Naomi (1985) *Gyakusetsu no Setsuzokushi no youhou (Function of Contrastive connectives)*. *Nihongo kyouiku (Teaching Japanese as a foreign language)* 56, 39–50.
6. Taghieh, M. R. *The language poets heart and though with a different language and culture*.
7. Matsumoto, Yoshiko (1980) *Reexamination of the universality of face*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12, 403–426.
8. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) *A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation*. *Language* 50(4), 696–735.
9. Adejumo, A., & Bade, N. O. (2014). *A Practical approach to word formation Processes in English*. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature (IMPACT: IJRHAL)*, 2(11), 49–58.
10. Schiffrin, Deborah (1987) *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: CUP.
11. Hadidi, Y. A. S. E. R., & Nazerfar, R. O. G. H. I. Y. E. H. (2014). *Comments on the system of lexical cohesion in a sample of English fiction*. 2014.
12. Swales, John (1990) *The concept of genre In Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 33–67.

AUTHOR PROFILE



Dr. Amino earned her doctorate in Comparative Social and Cultural Studies from Kyushu University in 2009, after which she was appointed as Faculty Fellow at Dalarna University. From 2013 to 2015, Dr. Amino researched institutional talk as a visiting scholar with Georgetown University, which was later followed by a grant from the Japanese government in 2016–2019 to research neo-gerontology. Her current projects include work on institutional talk with respect to dementia discourse, university-industry and international liaison efforts, and contextualizing AGI with the collaboration of informatics, which is selected as a featured workshop supported by Japanese Scientific Agency in 2019.