Indexing epistemic primacy: Agreeing with the stand-alone *deshoo* in Japanese conversation

Category: discourse/pragmatics/sociolinguistics

When participants in conversation offer evaluations of particular states of affair, they must manage their relative epistemic rights to knowledge and information about the states of affair, and that their management of these rights is indexed by their practices of speaking (Heritage, 2002, 2011; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Stivers, 2005; Stivers et al., 2011). This means that "even within sequences of action designed to achieve agreement (which are preferred) participants can become involved in complex negotiations concerning the management of their epistemic rights to knowledge and information" (Raymond & Heritage, 2006: 684). Prior conversation-analytic studies have shown various practices of speaking (e.g., negative interrogatives, '*oh*'-prefaced agreements, and modified repeats) through which participants index, or claim, their relative epistemic access to knowledge and information while they evaluate particular states of affair. These studies have also revealed how these participants manage their relative epistemic rights to evaluate the states of affair.

In the case of Japanese talk-in-interaction, as far as I am aware, very few studies have attempted to describe how Japanese speakers utilize different practices of speaking through which they manage their relative epistemic rights to knowledge and information (Hayano, 2011; Morita, 2002, 2005). These studies focused on the use of final particles such as *yo*, *ne*, and the combination of *yo* and *ne*, which are deployed in assessment sequences. They showed that these particles are resources to claim the speaker's various epistemic stances about particular states of affair being assessed, relative to his or her co-participant. Of these studies, Hayano (2011), who exclusively concentrated on the use of the final particle *yo*, has argued that the *yo*-marked assessment is one of the resources to claim epistemic primacy from second position.

Employing conversation analysis, I show that there is another grammatical resource by which the speaker who responds to a prior assessment claims epistemic primacy. The resource discussed in this study is a sentence-final expression, *deshoo*. More specifically, the study focuses on the use of *deshoo*, which is produced singly, or stands alone, without any additional elements in a single turn-constructional unit (TCU). To my knowledge, no studies have systematically investigated this particular resource from a conversation-analytic perspective. Based on the repeated observations of video-recorded naturally-occurring conversations, I demonstrate that the stand-alone *deshoo* emerges based on two specific types of sequential environments. One environment in which the use of the stand-alone *deshoo* becomes relevant is when a prior speaker has assessed a particular state of affairs by the use of the very same assessment term that the *deshoo*-speaker had utilized in the preceding talk. The second environment is when the prior speaker used the very assessment that had

previously been indicated by the *deshoo*-speaker in the preceding talk. In both cases, using the stand-alone *deshoo*, the *deshoo*-speaker appears to claim epistemic primacy in a way that he/she confirms or validates what is being assessed by the prior speaker. At the same time, the *deshoo*-speaker appears to indicate that the prior speaker's mind is now perfectly attuned to the *deshoo*-speaker's. This can be explained by the structure of the stand-alone *deshoo* completely parasitic to the prior turn and by the fact that the stand-alone *deshoo* uniformly expresses the speaker's (often strong) agreement, unlike the *yo*-marked assessment, which frequently expresses the speaker's disagreement (Hayano, 2011).

References

Hayano, K. (2011). Claiming epistemic primacy: *Yo*-marked assessments in Japanese conversation. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 58-80). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heritage, J. (2002). Oh-prefaced responses to assessments: a method of modifying agreement/disagreement. In C. E. Ford, B. A. Fox & S. A. Thompson (Eds.), *The language of turn and sequence* (pp. 196-224). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heritage, J. (2011). Territories of knowledge, territories of experience: Emphatic moments in interaction. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 159-183). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heritage, J., & Raymond, G. (2005). The terms of agreement: Indexing epistemic authority and subordination in talk-in-interaction. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 68*, 15-38.

Morita, E. (2002). Stance marking in the collaborative completion of sentences: Final particles as epistemic markers in Japanese. In N. Akatsuka & S. Strauss (Eds.), *Japanese/Korean linguistics* (Vol. 10, pp. 220-233). Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Morita, E. (2005). *Negotiation of contingent talk: The Japanese interactional particles ne and sa.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Raymond, G., & Heritage, J. (2006). The epistemics of social relationship: Owing grandchildren. *Language in Society, 35*(5), 677-705.

Stivers, T. (2005). Modified repeats: One method for asserting primary rights from second position. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 38*(2), 131-158.

Stivers, T., Mondada, L., & Steensig, J. (2011). Knowledge, morality and affiliation in social interaction. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 3-24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.