CONVERSATION MANAGEMENT IN CONTRAST:

Listener Response in Japanese and American English

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This paper proposes a methodological framework, C(ontrastive) C(onversation) A(nalysis) within which some of the listener back-channel expressions in Japanese conversation are analyzed in contrast with those observed in American English. Back-channel expressions examined are limited to "uh-huh"s and the like, brief comments, punctuated head movements and laughter.

After analyzing data consisting of 40 dyadic casual conversations videotaped in Japan and the United States, it is concluded that in Japanese casual conversation, listener's response such as brief comments and head movements occur far more frequently than in comparable American situations. Relevant contexts for listener back-channels in each speech community are found to differ significantly. In Japanese, grammatical completion, sentence-final particles and speaker's vertical head movement provide the relevant context while in English grammatical completion provides the single most significant context.

The results of the contrastive study are evaluated and assessed in light of the potential problems of CCA, with the issue of "equivalence" being the most serious and problematic. Additionally, as a step beyond CCA, four intercultural conversations by American and Japanese speakers are examined.

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1. Introduction

This paper introduces a method in contrastive study which analyzes conversational discourse. Given this purpose, a brief review of contrastive analysis is in order. The field of Contrastive Analysis recognizes two different trends: (1) Contrastive Analysis in applied linguistics, primarily subscribed to and later criticized and, in some cases, abandoned by scholars in the United States and (2) Contrastive Linguistics or Contrastive Study, primarily conducted by European linguists. Since the appearance of Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures* in 1957, a great many publications have appeared in America advocating the use of Contrastive Analysis in language instruction. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, however, Contrastive Analysis came under severe attack. The attack came primarily from applied linguists who have held unfair expectations of Contrastive Analysis to predict language learners' errors. The general atmosphere of doubt and disappointment in Contrastive Analysis is expressed by Wardhaugh (1970: 123) when in 1970 he wrote that "a period of quiescence is probable for contrastive analysis".

The American predicament, however, does not represent a universal approach to how contrasting different languages should be conducted. In fact, as Fisiak (1980) states, the situation has been entirely different in Europe. The research area called Contrastive Linguistics has attracted many European linguists from a number of countries who have made theoretical contributions to contrastive studies since the 1950s. To these linguists, Contrastive Linguistics may be defined as "a subdiscipline of linguistics which is concerned with the comparison of two or more languages (or subsystems of languages) in order to determine both the differences and similarities that hold between them" (Fisiak (1980: 1)).

Among studies which contrast various aspects of Japanese with those of English – for example, Kleinjans (1958), Kunihiro (1974), Kokusai Kooryuu Kikin (1976), Monane and Rogers (1977), Kenkyuusha (1978), Azuma (1981), and Higa (1982) – some of the earlier works have included stronger pedagogical implications. Recent studies contrasting Japanese to English have had a weaker pedagogical orientation in general, with less emphasis given to the theme of error prediction. For example, contrast-oriented studies, such as Ikegami (1981a,b), Kageyama (1981), and Kuno (1982), are conducted without pedagogical applications in mind.

Earlier contrastive analysts concentrated on phonology, morphology, and lexicography, with moderate interest in syntax and semantics. In more recent years, a host of studies has emerged in which languages on a level beyond the individual sentence are contrasted. For example, Gleason (1968) contrasts the narrative structure of the Kate text to its semiliteral English translation. More recently, Hartmann (1978, 1980) introduces the term 'contrastive textology', through which he aspires to develop a discourse-based contrastive study.
James (1980) explores the possibility of Contrastive Analysis on the macro-linguistic level, including both written and spoken discourse. Special attention is paid to the conversation analysis in Ventola (1980) in which Finnish and English conversational interaction is analyzed.

2. Toward Contrastive Conversation Analysis

With increasing interest in discourse and conversation analysis in several speech communities, I find it necessary to turn our attention to a methodological framework within which the results of conversation analysis may be more accurately contrasted and evaluated. In this paper I explore the method 'Contrastive Conversation Analysis', or, CCA. As a case study of this methodology, a contrastive analysis of listener response behavior in Japanese versus American English is discussed. As a step beyond the proposed CCA proper, toward the end of the paper the contrast of listener response behavior between Japanese and Americans as observed in English casual conversation by native (American English) and nonnative (Japanese) speaker pairs is discussed.

In contrasting conversational strategies across languages, data often consists of a few conversational interactions collected in non-controlled sociolinguistic environments. For example, in Ventola (1980) recordings of casual conversations conducted by two Finnish and two English speakers are used. Unfortunately, the English data analyzed is produced by a nonnative speaker of English (herself) and a native Australian English speaker. In terms of adequate representation of English casual conversation, her data is less than ideal. The CCA framework is proposed as a possible improvement to completely ad hoc data collection, and as a framework in which the contrasted results may be appropriately assessed and re-evaluated.

Among various aspects of conversation that may be contrasted, this study focuses on interactional management, specifically, some of the listener back-channel responses observed in Japanese and American English casual conversation. The research areas available for potential CCA include a contrast of macrostructures such as (1) thematic structure, (2) narrative structure, (3) 'preference organization' (Pomerantz (1984)), and (4) conversational goals and functions as well as a study of the interrelations among macrostructures. Among primarily local phenomena, the speaker's illocutionary acts or 'moves' (as suggested by Edmondson (1981) and Stubbs (1983)) and 'adjacency pairs' (Schegloff and Sacks (1973)) are useful for contrastive purposes. Conversational maxims and implicatures as proposed by Grice (1975), as well as a variety of strategies for performing speech acts constitute interactional aspects worthy of investigation. A contrast may be made in terms of the interactional management of the conversation, such as strategies for turn-taking, usage of
back-channel expressions, on the one hand, and what Tannen (1984) calls 'conversational style' on the other. Although this area has not been explored until recently, the variability in conversation management provides an interesting area for Contrastive Conversation Analysis.

In CCA, the first step requires data collection in two contrasting speech communities. First, the data to be contrasted must come from the same genre. In this study the genre under discussion is what is normally called casual conversation. When deciding which conversational data to analyze, it is important to choose a type such that collection procedures may be replicated in both communities. Since conversation occurs in a specific context, the social situation must be predetermined – for example, sex, age, social status, relationship between subjects, number of participants, and the setting in which actual conversation takes place. The type of conversational data selected in one speech community must be comparable to the data chosen from the second speech community. Moreover, the method for data collection must be applicable to both speech communities.

The second step is data analysis. Even when comparable data is collected from two contrasting speech communities, it is logically impossible to contrast two different facts without postulating a common framework in which the actual contrast is performed. An appropriate research design is such that two languages are analyzed by an identical procedure. In the third step the results of data analysis are brought into focus.

The fourth step involves actual contrast and comparison between the analyzed results. Following the initial preliminary contrast, it is important to assess and interpret the results in light of linguistic and sociocultural idiosyncrasies of the speech communities under investigation (the fifth step of CCA). Even when the same methodology is applied, the subject matter being analyzed may bear different significance in different societies. By concentrating on pre-selected linguistic and interactional strategies, for example, the researcher may overlook seemingly unrelated devices which in fact serve similar or nearly equivalent functions in the contrasted speech communities. Too narrow an assumption of what the research will yield can result in a wealth of useful information going completely unexamined. This point should be noted and taken into consideration when assessing the results at this final stage of CCA. This final step also requires re-evaluation of the quality of data analyzed, the accuracy of analysis made as well as of the adequacy of conclusions drawn.

3. On the 'equivalence' for contrast

The single most critical notion in CCA is the issue of 'equivalence'. In earlier studies, 'equivalence' was sought in the semantic 'equivalence' of words.
Contrast was often made on the basis of translation, whose semantic equivalence was either assumed or specifically displayed through an identical deep structure. When Gleason (1968) introduced the notion of discourse-level contrast, rendering useless the concept of the common deep structure, he turned to a text of one language (Kate) and its semi-literal English translation. ZydatiB (1982), on the other hand, analyzes a German text and its published English version. James (1980:117) suggests that in a bilingual society, ‘paired text’ may be available. Although such text should ideally be equated texts, that is, independently produced texts of two languages, James suggests that normally there is evidence of translation. In Maynard (1983) an analysis of relative clauses in written text in Japanese and English was made on the basis of data consisting of the published Japanese and English translations of two short stories, one originally in Italian and the other in Spanish. These published texts were translated by speakers of Japanese and English, the rationale for their choice being to avoid the translation of original Japanese or English works into English or Japanese. This is expected to avoid or at least to minimize the unnecessary influence on or prejudice of one of the languages for or against the other. Chafe’s (1980) project analyzes oral narratives produced by subjects after they viewed a common film. The assumption here is that a common visual stimulus creates almost identical situations for subjects of different languages.

In the present study, equivalence is sought in the sociolinguistic context in which the conversational data is produced. That is, in both Japanese and American English, the social context has been defined and structured so that the participant behaves in a specific manner, thereby rendering the data obtained not only genre equivalent (casual conversation) but also type equivalent (dyadic casual conversation between same gender speakers, and so on).

However, I must mention that there are several unresolved issues regarding the equivalence in the present work. For example, variables such as choice of discourse theme, and ethnic and regional differences among subjects were not controlled. Depending on the type of themes discussed, discourse is more or less prone to produce argumentative or supportive discourse interaction, which is likely to influence listener back-channel behavior. Likewise, as suggested by Tannen (1984), ethnic differences within a speech community are likely to bring forth different conversational styles including listener back-channel strategies. However, on the level of national speech community, all our American subjects identified themselves as native speakers of American English and they are fair representatives of American speakers with expected diversities.¹

¹ In selecting American subjects, only those whose parents were native speakers of American English were considered. All subjects had no (or only minimum) exposure to foreign cultures and identified themselves as native speakers of American English. Regarding their ethnic background, the subjects answered in their demographic questionnaires as follows. The question asked was:
4. Data

The data used for this study consists of 40 videotaped dyadic conversations taped in Tokyo and New Jersey, in May and February, 1985, respectively. The pairs selected were of the same sex (10 female and 10 male pairs in each country) and were all college students. Subjects identified each other as friends and they had had so-called casual conversation on numerous occasions. At both locations, an unattended video camera was used and the subjects were left alone in a room after being instructed to talk as naturally as possible about anything they liked. So as to minimize the degree of subjects’ awareness of being filmed from being reflected in our data, the initial two-minute segments were categorically excluded and the following three-minute segments were selected as data relevant to this study.

5. Defining listener back-channel expressions

Within the proposed framework of CCA, we examine listener responses – or what Yngve (1970) refers to as back-channel expressions – in Japanese and American English. Before discussing the specifics of back-channel expressions, however, the concept of back channel itself must be clarified. In the present study back channel is defined strictly in the context of turns within the turn-taking system and refers to occurrences of listener behavior where an interlocutor, who assumes primarily a listener's role, sends brief messages and signs during the other interlocutor's speaking turn. Beyond verbalized uh-huh's and brief comments, various aspects of nonverbal behavior may be called back-channel expression. In the present study only clearly visible punctuated

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Do you consider yourself to belong to a specific ethnic group in the United States? If your answer is Yes, please comment.' Out of 40 subjects, 25 responded with 'no'; 9 indicated they were Jewish; 4, African American; and 2, Irish American.

2 For further discussion regarding the characteristics of data used for this study, see Maynard (1989).

3 The assumption that speakers grow accustomed to being recorded and that unnatural speech decreases with time is shared among conversation analysts in general; cf., for example, Duncan and Fiske (1977: 37).

4 Yngve (1970: 568) states that back channel is observed "when the person who has the turn receives short messages such as 'yes' and 'uh-huh' without relinquishing the turn". In the present study, in order to identify when the state of 'in-the-turn' starts and ends, the following definition of turn is adapted. Without this definition it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify some of the back-channel-like utterances observed in the conversation-in-progress. Turn is a fundamentally solo-speaking unit recognizable by participants as carrying some referential and/or functional meaning. Moreover, for an utterance to be considered a turn, both talking and non-talking participants must recognize that the taker of the turn says something and thus his/her activity is recognized as such while the non-talking partner assumes a complimentary listener's role.
vertical and horizontal head movement is examined.\textsuperscript{5} Laughter is another utterable frequently observed in our data. As suggested by Schenkein (1972) laughter plays an important role in communication and we identify the listener's laughter during the other interlocutor's turn to be a case of back channel.

The back-channel behavior among Japanese – commonly known as \textit{aizuchi} – has been noted by more than a few scholars. (See for example, Mizutani (1983, 1984), Clancy (1982), and Miller (1987).) Of the studies that analyze Japanese \textit{aizuchi} in contrast with American listener response, Mizutani's (1983, 1984) works are most significant to the present one. Mizutani (1983, 1984) analyzes \textit{aizuchi} (brief utterances only) in one radio and two television programs, totalling approximately 34 minutes, with one interaction lasting over 20 minutes. Four speakers participate in one television program while two speakers participate in two other interactions. Although interesting, I find Mizutani's work lacking in some aspects. First, Mizutani does not raise potential problems of analyzing both dyadic and multiple-participant conversations as homogeneous data without making distinctions. (How did she analyze (almost) simultaneous \textit{aizuchi} (which I suspect actually occurred) sent by multiple listeners to one prominent speaker?) Second, there is no analysis of non-verbal \textit{aizuchi}, although head movement is clearly a prominent part of the \textit{aizuchi} strategy. Third, although she points out the difficulties of non-native (English) speakers of Japanese learning how to send \textit{aizuchi} – due to the differences of listener responses between Japanese and English speakers – the listener response among English speakers is merely anecdotally commented. The present study attempts to resolve some of these points within the proposed CCA framework.

\textsuperscript{5} Vertical head movement is defined as a clearly visible vertical head movement which accompanies at least one occurrence of lowering the head immediately followed by a movement of raising the head approximately back to the starting position. Horizontal head movement is defined as movement which involves turning the head either left or right immediately followed by a movement turning back to the starting position. Excluded from this analysis are head raising, head lowering and other subtle movements. This exclusion was made due to the difficulties of accurately identifying some of the more subtle non-verbal signs on the videotape. Obviously this does not mean that the non-verbal behavior excluded in this study is not functionally significant; in fact the reverse may be true. As suggested by an anonymous reviewer (to whom I am thankful), some of the more subtle signs may be more significant than the ones I examined in this study. Such analysis, however, must await future study.

Head movement was counted and recounted before we positively identified it as such. First, the researcher identified cases of head movement. Approximately six months later, the researcher viewed the tapes again, this time with an assistant (a non-linguist native speaker of Japanese who was coached to point out clearly identifiable head movement as defined in this study). When faced with disagreement as to whether or not head movement occurred, the researcher and the assistant discussed the issue and reached agreement.
6. Analyzing listener back-channel response in Japanese

Having identified what is investigated in the present study, let us turn to the examination of data set (1), a 17-second segment.⁶

(1)
1.A: Dakedo/
   but
   ‘But’
2. are atsuryoku ga tsuyoi n da yo ne hora/
   that pressure S strong NOM BF FP FP you-see
   ‘there’s great pressure,’
3. hoogakubu jan./
   law-school TAG
   ‘cause (I’m graduating from) Law School.’
   H H H
   (B: 1 Aa soo ka hoo ka uun)
   oh so Q so Q uhhuh
   ‘Oh, I see, I see.’
4. dakara/
   so
   ‘so,’
5. mottainai to ka iwarete sa./
   wasteful QT Q say-PASS-and FP
   ‘I’m told that it’s not good enough for me.’
   H H
6.B: A mawari kara ne./
   oh surrounding from FP
   ‘You mean (you hear that) from people around you.’
   (A: 1 H)

⁶ The following abbreviations and transcription symbols are used.
/ recognizable pause
. utterance final contour
H indicates vertical head movement
BE copulative verb, be
FP final particle
LK linker (linking nominals)
NEG negative
NOM nominalizer
PASS passive morpheme
Q question marker
QT quotative marker
T theme marker
TAG tag questions including jan, ja-nai, etc.
7. Oya kara sureba kodomo ga sureba iya/ LAUGH H
parent from do-if child S do-if no
'From your parents' view, if the child does ...'

H H H
(A: 2 Soo soo soo soo)
yeah yeah yeah yeah
'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.'

8.A: Demo oya oya wa ne moo saikin soo mo/
but parent parent T FP any more recently so even
'But nowadays parents don't'

(B: 2 Soo)
so
'I see.'

9. iwanaku-natta kedo /H
say-NEG-become but
'say those things.'

(B: 3 H H)

10. tomodachi toka wa sa mottainai yoo toka sa/
friend or T FP wasteful FP or FP
'The way my friends look at it, they say things like, "It's not good enough for you."'

H
(B: 4 Uun)
uh huh
'Uh huh.'

In data set (1) 4 tokens of B's back channel are found during A's turn, and
2 instances of A's back channel during B's turn.7 Some back-channel devices
are strictly verbal as in the case of B's back channel (B: 2), soo 'I see'; some
are strictly nonverbal as in A's back channel (A: 1).8 Some listener back-
channel behavior combines verbal and nonverbal signs as in B's short
utterance (B: 1), Aa soo ka hoo ka uun 'Oh I see, I see' accompanied by three
repetitious head movements. In analyzing back-channel behavior, we focus on
its two aspects, namely, frequency and discourse context.

7 The reader may argue that A's back channel (A: 2) does not occur during B's turn and should
therefore not be included in our analysis. I included, however, back channels that occur
immediately after the current speaker stops talking and are followed by a pause before the next
turn starts. This decision is reached because such back-channel response gives the impression that
it is the listener's response to the current speaker during his/her turn and it occurs before a turn
transitional period starts. Back-channel-like utterables during prolonged inter-turn pauses and
turn-internal lapses, however, are excluded, since their primary function seems to be that of fillers.
8 See Maynard (1987) and (1989) for a detailed analysis of head movement in Japanese
dyadic conversation, which discusses some head movement functioning as back-channel
response.
The overall frequency of back-channel expressions (as defined in this study) across 40 Japanese speakers totalled 871. Out of the 871 cases, 703 were identified as back channel occurring in the immediate neighborhood of recognizable pauses or breaks in tempo made by the current speaker. The most frequently occurring types among all back-channel expressions found in our data were brief utterables such as un 'uh-huh', honto 'really', and soo 'I see', which totaled 70.49%. Head movement accompanied these brief utterables 62.87% of the time. In the second most frequent category, vertical head movement (which does not accompany verbal expressions), accounted for 18.83%. Head movement occurred either independently or with verbal back-channel in 63.15% of all back-channel expressions.

Let us now focus on the context in which back-channel behavior occurs. First, in the majority of occurrences, listener back-channel behavior is near or at speaker pauses. Second, these pauses are marked by frequently occurring linguistic devices. One such device is the final particle. For example, in data set (1) the particles ne and sa each occur twice while yo occurs once at or near the pause. Ne, which Uyeno (1971) calls a ‘particle of rapport’, solicits listener response – either as a back channel or as a request to change the turn. The particles sa and yo which appear in data set (1) also serve to solicit listener response but do so less overtly than does the tag-question-like ne. Sa and yo function as emphatic markers in part and mark phrasal or clausal boundaries that are likely to be followed by a short pause.

Particle endings in general signal, together with the pause itself, the moment where some manner of feedback may be relevantly performed. In fact, particle endings marked 40.84% of all instances where back-channel expressions occurred near or at identifiable pauses. Auxiliary verb endings also function similarly to final particles. Auxiliary endings glossed as TAG, such as deshoo 'isn’t it right?' and ja-nai 'isn’t it?', marked 54 locations. The discourse context in which listener response was overtly solicited by final particles or auxiliary verb forms characterized 48.69% of back-channel expressions.

Thirdly, even when no particles are attached, pauses occur at the major clausal and sentential junctures – such as at the juncture of subordinate clauses as in (1.9.). Another utterance ending often observed is that of the gerundive -te form of the verb. The -te forms which appear without stress and with falling intonation also function as grammatically complete points. Out of all locations where back channels occurred, 51.02% occurred at major grammatical junctures, some accompanied by sentence final particles and/or head movements.

Data set (1) also reveals an interesting nonverbal behavior on the part of the speaker at the point where back channel is observed, namely, head movement that co-occurs at or near the final syllable of the speaker's utterance. For example in (1.6) a case is observed where back-channel devices follow the speaker's head movement. Similar cases of head movement are
observed quite frequently across all Japanese data examined. Out of all the back channels, 38.08% occur in the context of the speaker's head movement.

One point should be noted here. The present study does not address the predictability of back-channel occurrences, given the discourse contexts identified above as providing 'cues'. We have only observed actual occurrences of back-channel expressions and the characteristics of their discourse contexts.

7. Analyzing listener back-channel expressions in American English

Based on identical methods, back-channel behavior (specifically, *uh-huh*s and the like, brief comments, head movements and laughter) among Americans was analyzed. In data set (2) given below, a 47-second segment taken from our data, four cases of back channel are found, two utterances each by speaker A and B.

(2)

1. A: I ordered some escargots/
2. ...and got me a coke./
3. ...I was like/
4. B: I have never been to K. Miller./
5. A: I don't know just like/
6. ...strikes me as being very pseudointellectual./
7. ...Don and I were walking past (?) going to that little shop
8. ...past it's open only three days or something./
   (B: I Um hum)
9. ...you know the one I bought my uh
10. ...dice bag.
11. B: Yeah I think I know what you mean./
    (A: I Yeah)
12. A: And we were going there and this guy came out of K. Miller because he notices us looking at the menu and he goes/
13. ...Hey, Babe, want a drink? Come on inside I'll pay for you./
    (B: 2 LAUGH)
14. ...And we were like "Oh go away"./
15. B: Weird/
    (A: 2 Yeah)
16. ...No I heard the food's actually good though./
17. A: All I know is Polly offered me a slimy little escargot and I said thank you but no. LAUGH/
18. B: Oh I like escargot./
19. A: I don't./
20. ...I I just keep on thinking slime/
21. ...sledge/
22. ...sea bottoms, you know./
After examining three-minute segments of 20 American pairs, we observe a total of 428 cases of back channels, 373 of which occur near or at an identifiable pause. In terms of frequency, the American pairs produced far fewer back channels. The lowest frequency of back-channel near or at the pause was observed in an American male pair (6 times), while the highest frequency was found in a Japanese female pair (55 times). Although there are instances among the American pairs in which more back-channels are observed than the least frequent case among the Japanese pairs (18 times), the difference between the means of the two groups is highly significant (the t-test for two sample means, with p value less than 0.001, two-tailed test), and, therefore, there is reasonable evidence to conclude that Japanese send more back channels (those investigated in this study) than do Americans in casual conversation.

The most frequently occurring back-channel strategies among the American pairs were brief utterables such as uh-huh, yeah, and right, which resulted in 50.23%. Head movement accompanied these brief utterables 50.70% of the time, somewhat less frequently than in the Japanese data (62.87%). As for head movement (which does not accompany verbal cues), American pairs engaged in this form of feedback 150 times (35.05%), while the Japanese pairs did so 164 times (18.83%). The laugh category was observed 63 times (14.72%) among American pairs as compared with 93 times (10.68%) among Japanese pairs. In terms of contexts for back-channel strategy in American English, the devices similar to those examined in Japanese were focused on, namely, grammatical completion, phrase ending markers such as you know, or what Bernstein (1962, 223) calls “sympathetic circularity sequences”, plus tag questions and head movement. 82.84% of back channel in the American data occurred at the point of grammatical completion. Sympathetic circularity sequences provided context in only 6.97%, while head movement occurred in only 7.77%. In English, then, the grammatical completion point is the single most powerful context for back channel; other criteria appear to mark only marginally the points of relevance for back channel.

8. Assessing and re-evaluating the results of analysis

Up to this point, the first four steps of CCA have been performed. Now the fifth and final step. In assessing the observed differences in listener back-channel behavior in Japanese and American English, we must note the following. First, the observed difference is partly a function of the language itself in that certain devices are available only in one of the languages contrasted. It is sometimes suggested that Japanese final particles function similarly to English tag questions. Although in Japanese such particles can be placed within the sentential boundary, in English the tag question is used at
the end of the full sentence only – its usage being much more restricted. While in the Japanese data final particles are used a total of 863 times, in the American data there is a total of only 67 cases of sympathetic circularity sequence.\(^9\) This means that the availability of linguistically marked environment where potentially the listener may send responses differs in these two languages.

Second, although the continuous flow of brief utterables and head movements suggest that Japanese interactants possess a strong inclination for mutual monitoring and cooperation, this does not mean that American English lacks in listener back-channel responses per se. It is possible in English that other speaker behavior and listener back-channel strategies that we have not investigated, such as eyegaze and subtle shifts of head, for example, are used for similar purposes. We can only conclude that the frequent back channel monitoring through abundant brief utterables and head movements is characteristically Japanese (in contrast with American English).

Third, although care was taken in selecting genre- and type-equivalent data in the two contrasted speech communities, other variables were not adequately controlled. In future studies, variables such as choice of discourse theme, type of verbal text, and ethnic and regional differences among subjects must be carefully addressed before we draw any final conclusions. Additionally, in the future, inquiry should be made as to which functions of back-channel expressions are characteristically associated with the discourse context in which they occur. Naturally, whether the results of the present study based on dyadic casual conversational discourse are applicable to other genres awaits further study.\(^10\)

9. An examination of intercultural discourse

As a step beyond CCA proper, I made a preliminary examination of English conversations produced by four pairs (2 female and 2 male) of American/Japanese speakers. The results discussed above suggest that – since Japanese tend to send brief utterables and head movements more frequently than do Americans – perhaps this difference will be made manifest in intercultural communication. The data analyzed consists of four dyadic casual conversations videotaped in New Jersey in March, 1987 with the same method as used for the collection of American conversations described at the beginning of this paper. The subjects were all college students of ages ranging between 19 and

\(^9\) While 49.48% of Japanese final particles occurred clause-internally, no case of sympathetic circularity sequence in the American data appeared within the clause boundary.

\(^10\) For example, in an argumentative discourse the primary function of back channel may be an expression of disagreement. Different discourse genres may foreground specific functions of back channel and background others.
28. The Japanese students had studied in America between 7 months to 3 years, and all ranked approximately at the lower to middle intermediate levels of English language proficiency.

From each videotaped conversation, the first two-minute segment was excluded to preclude any initial awkwardness from being reflected in the analysis. Starting after the two-minute segment, the first two speaker turns lasting longer than 15 seconds were selected for each speaker and the listener response behavior (as defined earlier in this paper) during these long turns was examined. The total occurrence of back-channel response sent by Japanese toward American speakers was 68 times in 193 seconds, while back-channel response sent by Americans toward Japanese speakers was 31 times in 184 seconds. In all cases, Japanese listeners sent a back-channel response within a shorter span of time than did the American listeners. On average, Japanese listeners sent one listener back-channel response per 3.00 seconds, in contrast with American listeners who sent one back-channel response per 6.16 seconds.

The types of back-channel responses sent by Japanese and American listeners were similar, both Japanese and American speakers used brief utterances and head movements. The major difference was in the frequency and the discourse contexts in which back channels occurred. Among Japanese listeners there were more repetitious back-channel responses (as punctuated vertical head movements repeated up to four times consecutively) and these back-channel strategies frequently overlapped with the American speaker’s utterance. Back channels sent by Americans were almost exclusively limited to occurrence during intra-turn pauses.

We observe here that listener response in actual Japanese (nonnative speakers of English)/American (native speakers of English) intercultural conversations is conducted in such a way as to reflect the result of CCA based on native/native interaction. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be pointed out that many further questions remain to be addressed in analyzing native/nonnative interaction; for example, the nonnative competence level, types of conversation topic, which language is chosen during interaction, and so on.

10. Concluding remarks

To conclude, this paper has explored CCA – the concept of contrasting linguistic and interactional strategies in conversation across speech communities, based on the analysis of genre and type equivalent data. We also observed in the preliminary examination that actual intercultural communication between native/nonnative speakers is created in such a way as to reflect the result of CCA based on native/native interaction.

However, as we have seen, the CCA method is not without its problems,
the most serious and difficult being the issue of 'equivalence'. Although unresolved issues remain concerning CCA, this methodology provides a framework within which more careful examination of conversation management strategies can be conducted and within which a meaningful contrast can be made by scrutinizing the actual verbal text produced by speakers in comparable social situations. As exemplified by the case study reported in this paper, the CCA approach makes it possible to avoid unnecessarily careless *ad hoc* and anecdotal accounts of conversation management in contrast.

**References**


