1. Introduction

Starting in the 1960s, a number of studies (Falk 1980; Ferrara 1992; Lerner 1991; Ochs et al. 1979; Ono & Thompson to appear a, b; Sacks 1965-1971; Schegloff 1984) have highlighted the collaborative nature of the production of syntactic units in English discourse. In particular, these studies have shown that English conversation is rich with examples of the construction of syntactic units by more than one speaker (co-construction):

(I) M: are they teaching any more lambada at uh
   J: school? (Ono & Thompson, to appear b)

It has often been noted that Japanese is a language which places particular importance on collaboration among speakers for the achievement of successful conversational interactions (cf., Maynard 1990). This suggests that we should find examples like (I) in Japanese conversation, and in fact, there have been claims which support this

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suggestion (e.g., Mizutani and Mizutani 1987).

In order to determine the validity of this hypothesis, we decided to look at Japanese conversational data. We examined 19 transcripts of spontaneous informal conversations between two to five male and/or female speakers. Each of these conversations is 2 minutes to 20 minutes long, totaling approximately 100 minutes of data. English examples in this paper are taken from Ferrara 1992, Lerner 1991, and Ono & Thompson to appear.b. For the purpose of this project, co-construction is defined as a syntactic unit (i.e., phrase, clause, and sentence) produced by more than one speaker, in which the utterance by the first speaker is taken by the second speaker as a part of his/her unit.

2. Analysis

Our examination of these data reveals that co-construction of syntactic units is not very common in Japanese. We found approximately 20 cases of co-construction in the data. These co-constructions are found in fewer than half of the transcripts. Most of the transcripts which exhibited co-construction had only one or two cases; two transcripts are responsible for most of the instances. This suggests the importance of the individual factor in the use of co-construction. The few cases of co-construction in our data seem to reflect the special syntactic and pragmatic features of Japanese.

2.1. Syntactic Characteristics

In this section, using English data as the basis of comparison, we will first illustrate the syntactic characteristics of Japanese co-constructions.

Japanese has postpositions instead of prepositions. Therefore it is not possible to produce co-constructions like (1) or (2):  

\[ (1) \text{Misato 85} \]
\[ M: \text{Shibuya no sa Ichimarukyuu [no mae de sa Shibuya of PTCL Ichimarukyuu of front at PTCL} \]
\[ \text{nanya sarechatta]} \]
\[ H: \text{approach was done:AUX} \]
\[ \text{[no mae de of front at} \]
\[ \text{nanya sarechatta]} \]
\[ \text{approach was done:AUX} \]
\[ M: \text{"Ichimarukyuu in Shibuya [in front of (it) (I) was approached"]} \]
\[ H: \text{[in front of (it) (I) was approached"]} \]

Second, Japanese is known to be a strict verb-final language. Accordingly, it is possible for the second speaker to express the verb for a clause started by the first speaker. The following are some examples of this type:

\[ (4) \text{Taka 7 the speakers discuss how inevitable it is to have politics as long as humans are involved) \]
\[ R: \text{poritikkusu o nakusu toiu koto wa politics DO eliminate QUOT NOM TOP getting rid of politics,} \]
\[ \text{dooshite mo ne ningen ga kyooodoode} \]
\[ \text{any way EMPH PTCL human SUB collaboratively} \]
\[ \text{as far as people together} \]
\[ T: \text{un yattekaba muri} \]
\[ \text{BCH do:go: if no way} \]
\[ \text{work, there is no way} \]
\[ (5) \text{Gossip 21} \]

The transcription of these examples were regularized for ease of reading.

Our preliminary investigation of other types of data, including spoken narratives, reveals that the speaker factor seems to play a large role in the use of co-construction. Further investigations are necessary to settle this issue.

In the examples, the square brackets indicate overlaps.

\[^{2}\text{Both of the speakers are directly quoting the same speech, therefore the subject if T in both cases (see Example (19).)} \]
R: T-san wa nanka dishjon mitai no o
T-san TOP DM decision like NOM DO
T, like decision,
itsumo hito ni always person to
always to people

H: yudaneru
leave
(he always) leaves (it to them)

In examples (4) and (5), the first and the second speakers construct a clause together. We have found that this type of co-construction is extremely rare. That is, we have found that clauses are rarely co-constructed in Japanese. Notice that in English it is not possible to produce co-constructions like (4) and (5) because English is not a verb-final language.

Third, the main clause normally follows the subordinate clause in Japanese. We have found a few cases of co-constructions which follow this order:

(6) Surprise 2 (M and K talk about how easily they forget their friend S's birthday)

M: natsu da kara sa
summer COP because PTCL
since (it) is summer

K: un inai koto ga ooi no yo ne
BCH exist: not NOM SUB many NOM PTCL PTCL
(we) are often not (here)

(7) Fuji 1 (H and T are recalling the teacher X's behavior)

H: ikkai shawaa abite ne
once shower take PTCL
having taken a shower

T: un
BCH
huh

H: modotte kuru no ka to omottara
come back come NOM Q QUOT think: if
although (I) thought (he) would come back

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T: nechatta mitai
slept: AUX appear
(it) appears (that he) went to bed

(8) Oyama 4

H: yojikan ijoo yatteta n janai ka na
four: hours more was doing NOM COP: not Q PTCL
(I) wonder if (we) weren't playing for more than
four hours

soide kakete yatte sa
and be do PTCL
and (we) were betting and

O: makerannee jan ka ja
lose: can: not COP: not Q then
(you really) don't want to lose then

Several studies (cf., Ono & Suzuki 1992) have shown that in spoken language the subordinate clause often follows the main clause within a single speaker's turn. We have found a similar phenomenon across speakers in our data:

(9) Wakai 3 (they talk about the fact that the pictures naturally come out nicely in California)

R: Kariforunia de toru shashin tte
Kariforunia at take photo QUOT

mitna yoku torechau mon
all well is: taken: AUX NOM
pictures taken in California all come out good

F: akarui kara ne
bright because PTCL
because it is bright

(10) Taka 5

T: gojihan o sugite shimatta
5:30 DO pass AUX
it's past 5:30
We have examined cases such as these as instances of co-constructions since the utterances by the two speakers can be argued to form a syntactic unit 'sentence'. However, if the second part of these cases can be shown to constitute a syntactically independent utterance, they are not cases of co-construction. In fact, very often in these cases, expressing the second part before the first part by switching the order would produce odd readings. This suggests that the two utterances may not actually belong to each other syntactically. For this reason, we excluded cases such as (9)-(11) from our consideration.

To recapitulate this section, our data reveal that the shapes of the few cases of co-construction in Japanese are determined by the syntactic characteristics of the language.

2.2. Pragmatic Characteristics

Continuing our discussion of English data as the basis of comparison, in this section, we will examine pragmatic characteristics of co-constructions in Japanese. We will see that pragmatics is one major factor which is responsible for the rarity of co-constructions in Japanese.

In general, to Japanese speakers, it seems impolite to finish another speaker's sentence or to provide additional information unexpressed by the first speaker. In contrast, in English, providing additional information for the purpose of clarification has been pointed out as one of the common types of co-construction (Ferrara 1992). For example, the second speaker may add a because-clause to a clause produced by the first speaker:

\begin{verbatim}
(11) Super 2
Y: bokutachi no uwasa o kilte ne
we of rumor DO hear PTCL
hearing a rumor about us
nde konaku natta toka
and came: not became or
(she) did not come or something
T: henna yatsura ga orude toka itte
strange people SUB exist QUOT saying
saying there are strange people (there)
\end{verbatim}

Speaker G adds to speaker D's utterance, even though G is not directly involved in the described event. Co-constructions like (12) are frequently found in English.

\begin{verbatim}
(12) D: I don't have any time for basketball
G: because you're working twelve hours
(Ono & Thompson, to appear b)
\end{verbatim}

It is structurally possible to produce a Japanese version of (12), but it would sound slightly rude. This may be due to a pragmatic constraint which normally prohibits the discussion of information pertaining to a person's "private territory" except by him/herself (Kamio 1994; Suzuki 1989). Kamio (1994) calls this exclusive territory "the speaker's territory of information" and describes it as following:

\begin{verbatim}
(13) the speaker's territory of information is a conceptual category
which contains information close to the speaker himself/herself
Suzuki (1989) describes a similar category as:
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
(14) yokkyuu, ganboo, ishi, kanjoo, kankaku nodo kojin
fukaku kakawaru ryooikki [such domains as need, desire, intention,
emotion, feeling, etc. which are deeply related to an individual
identity]
\end{verbatim}

In Japanese, there seems to be a constraint against another speaker intruding on this type of territory. We argue that this pragmatic constraint is responsible for the rarity of co-constructions in Japanese.

Our Japanese conversation data support this constraint regarding "private territory". Whereas speakers often discuss the first speaker's internal feelings using co-construction in English as in (15)-(17), this type of co-construction is rare in Japanese:

\begin{verbatim}
(15) M: now most machines don't record that slow. so I'd wanna when I
make a tape
\end{verbatim}

6In her paper, Suzuki discusses the listener's private territory (i.e., the speaker is prohibited from asking about things belonging to the domain of the listener's private territory), which is an apparent counterpart of the so-called speaker's territory defined by Kamio. However, in co-construction, the second speaker always produces an utterance based on the first speaker's utterance and it is the first speaker's territory that these studies would suggest the other speaker can not intrude on. In other words, the territory which both Kamio and Suzuki are dealing with is that of the speaker who contributes the first part of co-construction. In order to avoid confusion, in our paper, we use the terms 1st speaker and 2nd speaker to refer to the participants who contribute the first and the second parts of the co-construction respectively.

\begin{verbatim}
(16) M: you didn't finish your breakfast.
G: I didn't have time to eat.
M: seen, you must have been rush hour.
G: yeah, because it's rush hour now
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
(17) M: I don't have time for basketball.
G: because you're working twelve hours.
\end{verbatim}
Due to the generic nature of the comments by the second speakers, they do not cross into another speaker's "private territory".

Another feature of the co-constructions in our data is that both the speakers sometimes talk about an event which they experienced together. In such cases, they seem to constitute the "private territory" together:

(7) Fuji 1 (H and T are recalling the teacher X's behavior)

H: ikkai shawaa abite ne
once shower take PTCL
having taken a shower

T: un
BCH
huh

H: modotte kuru no ka to omottara
come.back come NOM Q QUOT think:if
although (I) thought (he) would come back

T: nechatta mita
slept:AUX appear
(it) appears (that he) went to bed

(18) Misato 11

H: are datte Herupu owatte kara sa
that because Help end after PTCL
after Help is over

acha shite kaeroo ka te yatte sa
tea do go:home:let's Q QUOT say PTCL,
(we) said, "shall (we) have tea and go home" and

M: soo soo soo
so so so
yes, yes, yes

ne nanka yonaka ni nacchatta no yo ne
PTCL DM middle.of to became:AUX NOM PTCL PTCL
the.night
(it) became the middle of the night

In (7), the speakers are remembering the commonly experienced event in which the teacher left and never came back. In (18), the two
that she ended up bragging about it at work and is quoting what she actually said then. Since it is something which has been repeatedly mentioned in the discourse prior to the above example, H attempts to provide a finish to M's quote at the same time as M's own finish even though H did not hear M's actual utterance.

Sometimes even information pertaining to a speaker's real private territory (e.g., feeling) can be co-constructed if it has been repeatedly mentioned in the prior discourse and established as shared information:

(20) Gossip 18

H: soo yuu chuutohanpana kanji de
so say by.halves feeling in

koo yaacchatta te i no ga boku wa
this did:AUX QUOT say NOM SUB 1 TOP

(he) did (it) by halves, I

S: ikenai to omou
bad QUOT think
think (it's) bad

In this conversation, H and S have been talking about a single man who failed to discourage a married woman who developed an interest in him. Later her husband found out about her feelings and started harassing the single man even though nothing had happened between his wife and the other man. Prior to (20), H had been saying that the single man should have either rejected the wife from the beginning or should have dealt with her as his future wife. In (20), S is expressing how H feels about this man's behavior. H has repeatedly expressed this feeling and that seems to warrant S expressing it even though strictly speaking H's feelings belong to his private territory.

Another type of co-construction is found when the second speaker completes the first speaker's utterance by turning it into a question with rising intonation:

(21) Misato 7 (M is trying to explain how a picture was taken)

M: koo ohune no hesaki no yoona
uh ship of bow of like

ano Ichimarukyu o bakku ni
that Ichimarukyu DO back at

that Ichimarukyu (which is) like the bow of a
H: to totta no? took PTCL (you) took (a picture)?

(22) Oyama 2 (H is telling O where the place he went skiing is located)

H: Morioka kara mata densha ni notte Morioka from again train on ride
ichijikan gurai no tokoro one:hour about of place
from Morioka, riding on a train again, a place which is about one hour (away)

O: itta no? went PTCL (you) went (to)?

(23) Gossip 6

H: sekinin moritai ni natte kitara responsibility problem to become come:if if (it) became the problem of responsibility
a warukatta tte itte oh was bad QUOT say saying (I) was bad
boku ga zenbu sekinin o ou toka itte I SUB all responsibility DO take QUOT say saying like I will take all responsibilities

S: de Gaimushoo tsuihoo sareari toka and Foreign.Ministry expel is.done:or or
shite mitari toka suru? do see:or or do
and would (you) let (yourself) be expelled from the Foreign Ministry?

In (21) and (22), even though the second speaker did not share the experience of the first speaker, s/he can still ask about it, and in (23), S asks about inclinations or intentions which are in H's private territory. A similar observation was made by Kuroda (1973) regarding other linguistic resources indicating internal feelings such as tai 'want to' and hoshii 'want' in Japanese.

Thus we have examined several features of co-constructions in our data. None of these features seems to violate the pragmatic constraint against intruding on the speaker's 'private territory'.

3. Collaboration through Other Means

In the preceding sections, we have seen that, contrary to our initial hypothesis, co-construction (construction of syntactic units by more than one speaker) is rare in Japanese conversation. This result, though, should not be taken as showing that Japanese speakers do not collaborate in conversation; it only means that collaboration is rare at the level of syntax. In fact, our data confirm earlier observations that Japanese speakers collaborate by frequent backchannels and by repeating part of what is produced by the first speaker (Clancy et al. 1993; Maynard 1989; Makino 1980; Mizutani and Mizutani 1987).

4. Summary

To sum up, the present study suggests that co-construction of syntactic units is rare in Japanese conversation; there is not much collaboration at the level of syntax, but it is found in other parts of the language. This suggests that collaboration in conversation needs to be re-examined, taking different levels and types of linguistic resources into consideration. It also shows that the rarity of co-construction can be accounted for partly by pragmatics. In particular, it shows that the structural and pragmatic properties of a language are reflected in the ways in which syntactic resources are brought to bear on conversational interaction.
List of Abbreviations

AUX Auxiliary
BCH Backchannel
COP Copula
DM Discourse marker
DO Direct object
EMPH Emphatic
NOM Nominalizer
PTCL Particle
Q Question
QUOT Quotative
SUB Subject
TOP Topic

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