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An examination of the process of developing a Corpus of Spoken Japanese: Implications for the development of conversation teaching materials

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1. Introduction

With an aim toward exploring the implications of the analysis of Japanese natural conversation data for the development of conversation teaching materials, the COE language pedagogy group (Research Coordinator, Usami Mayumi) set out to make a comparative analysis of several discourse behaviors in both Japanese natural conversations (hereafter the 'Corpus of Spoken Japanese') and in the Japanese skits from the TUFS dialogue module (hereafter 'Japanese D-module'). As the data for this analysis, we assembled a corpus of spoken Japanese using 187 conversations (totaling roughly 643 minutes of transcribed data) from the natural conversation data accumulated in Professor Usami's laboratory, and we also selected the conversations containing the 40 discourse functions (Yuki 2003) in the D-module.

The purpose of this research is to outline the process of building a corpus of natural conversation materials for research purposes, and to examine the problems that arise from it. In this paper, we examined development of a collection of natural conversational data for a certain purpose. Through this study, our aim is to outline what is involved in working with a collection of natural conversational data.

2. Natural conversation material used in the development of the Corpus of Spoken Japanese

The natural conversations data accumulated in Professor Usami's laboratory were collected and transcribed following to the method outlined by Usami (1999, 2001). Before summarizing the data used in the present study, we will first explain our methods of data collection, transcription and ensuring the privacy of the participants used in the accumulation of the natural conversation data.

2.1 Using natural conversation data as transcription material

The data in this study are audio or video recordings, however, while analyzing spoken language data itself by using the audio or videotape recorded data is important, it is also very essential to analyze the situational factors surrounding the tape-recorded conversation, such as the relationship between the participants of the conversation, or the settings of the conversation. In order to deal with these variables, Usami (1999, 2001) stresses the importance of controlling for such factors when setting up interviews. She also points out the importance of using questionnaires that ask about the characteristics of the participants before the interview, as well as

follow-up questionnaires that ask the participants about their impression of their interlocutor after the interview session.

Before collecting conversation data, in order to highlight a particular factor such as sex that influence conversation, other factors are controlled for as much as possible. This is necessary so that changes in language use can be attributed to particular factors. This is also useful in data collection, as one can continue to increase the number of data samples by adhering to the controls, even after the initial data collection. It is also possible to replicate studies by other researchers using the same control situations. The control factors fall largely into two types. One is personal factors about the participants in the interview, and the other is the setting of the conversation. The former are, for example, sex, age, birthplace, social status, type of language typically used, etc.. The latter are, for example, the number of participants in the conversation, the relationships between the participants, topics of the conversation, the place of conversation, etc.. In addition, number of the conversation (e.g. first, second, third) is also an important factor, especially when examining things like the differences in language use between men and women in a specific language activity.

The transcriptions for this study are based on the BTSJ (Basic Transcription System for Japanese), developed by Usami (1997, 2003). Oftentimes, because of listening mistakes caused by the assumptions of the listeners as well as typing mistakes, transcriptions made by different individuals may be somewhat different even though they worked with the same tapes. In order to avoid these mistakes, the BTSJ strongly recommends having the same transcript checked more than three times by more than two persons. Next step is the calculation of the degree of agreement by using Cohen's kappa. This step is conducted to confirm that the segmentation of the utterances is not the result of one person's subjective view but rather an objective result which is enough to establish the validity of the segmentations. (more detail see Nishigoori (2002)). In general a kappa of more than 0.85 is usually considered sufficient to establish interrater reliability (Bakeman and Gottman, 1986).

Finally, it is important to protect a participant's privacy when preserving the data and making them available to the public as a corpus. With this in mind, we first, we requested that the participants sign letters of permission in which it was made clear that the interviews are to be used for research purposes only and may be made available to the public with the stipulation that their anonymity would be protected. To protect their privacy, any identifying information about the participants is blacked out during making transcription. It is true that we need access to this personal information to understand the meaning of the conversations, but we must also protect the privacy of our informants when we make the data public. In order to solving this dilemma, Usami (2003) proposes an idea for protecting privacy without losing the basic personal information (more detail see Usami(2003)).

So far, we have discussed the basic procedure of data collection, transcription and privacy protection. It is necessary to maintain these consistent and multi party control procedures when making a large scale corpus of natural conversation data. Also, by controlling for factors such as the participants' social status or the conversational setting, it is possible to determine the conversation type, and, by following a uniform transcription system for the purposes of a quantitative analysis, natural conversation data collected from a variety of sources can be used for a single study.

2.2 Summary of natural conversation data used in the present study

To make a spoken Japanese corpus we used natural conversation data from Prof. Usami's laboratory at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). In her laboratory, there are large amounts of conversation data of various

persons in various settings. As the aim of this research is to compare the TUFSD modules with naturally occurring data, we focused on conversations between two native Japanese speakers. As outlined in Table 1, we analyzed 186 conversations totaling 643 minutes. When we selecting the data, we did our best to choose data that reflects the various characteristics of the natural conversation data in Prof. Usami Laboratory. Most of the conversations are chats or idle conversation, and others are examples of praising (complimenting) and requesting. The participants are either meeting for the first time or are close friends. Their ages range from the teens to the seventies, although the majority are in their twenties.

Table1: Basic outline of the data

No	Year	Content	Relation-ship of the participants	Age	Social status	Sex of the participants	Number of the conversation	Time (minutes) of the transcription
1	1994	Chat	First meeting	20-40 s	middle class company employee	female-female	9	27
						female-male	9	27
2	2002	Chat	First meeting	20-40 s	middle class company employee	male-male	9	27
						female-male	9	27
3	1999	Chat	First meeting	20 s	Students	female-female	3	15
						female-male	3	15
4	1999	Chat	First meeting	20 s	Students	female-female	2	20
			Close friends	20 s	Students	female-female	2	20
5	2000	Chat	Close friends	20 s	middle class company employee	female-female	4	60
						male-male	4	60
						female-male	4	60
6	2001	Chat	Close friends	teens	High school students	female-female	5	50
						male-male	5	50
				50-70 s	Middle age	female-female	5	50
						male-male	5	50
7	1998	Compliment	Close friends	20 s	Students	female-female	18	15
8	2000	Compliment	close friends	20 s	Students	female-female	15	20
						male-male	15	20
9	1998	Request	acquaintances	20 s	Students	female-female, male-male, female-male,	60	30
Total							186	643

3. Examining the process of maintaining a Corpus of Spoken Japanese

The COE language pedagogy group used the above mentioned natural conversation data to create the D-module separated into 40 discourse functions. Here, we will discuss how we selected the conversations, and we will examine the criteria for the 40 functions for coding.

3.1 Method

Selecting the conversations for each of the 40 functions of the TUFFS D-module means coding the conversations for those 40 functions. In other words, the 40 functions are items for coding. The 40 functions of the TUFFS-D module were selected with reference to a series of research projects in the language laboratory of TUFFS in 2002 (Matsumoto, 2003). The functions are indicated only by their titles and not explained concretely. Therefore, we need to define each function for the purposes of coding in this research.

After coding, we usually check whether the coding is significant or not, and we calculate of the degree of interrater reliability by using Cohen's kappa. In the case of the present research, in order to determine if the selected conversations correspond with the aforementioned functions, it is necessary to establish interrater reliability for about 10% of the data.

In the next section we will describe the process of this work concretely and consider the adequacy of the method.

3.2 Items for analysis

There are two of items under analysis in this section: the 40 functions of the TUFFS D-module, and the representative linguistic forms of these functions. The relationship between these two falls into one of three categories (to be discussed below).

3.3.1 An examination of the individual functions in the TUFFS D-module

Two steps were involved in selecting the conversations with the 40 functions set in TUFFS D-module from natural conversational data. Ifirst, we divided the 40 functions into sets of 4 -6 and assigned each set to a researcher. The conversations were then selected according to the criteria that each researcher set by him/her. After the first round of selection, we discussed the criteria and the conversations selected based on those criteria. This discussion allowed us to define each function operationally. In the second step, we used the operational criteria to reevaluate the data and reselect conversations.

Here we will discuss the process of defining the individual 40 functional criteria of the TUFFS D-module. First of all, there are two types of functions in the TUFFS D-module, functions that allow for selection based only on the function heading, and functions that do not. "Compromising" is an example of the latter type. Each researcher can imagine situations in which compromising occurs; however, in conversations such as small talk, it is difficult to identify utterances displaying the aforementioned functions. Therefore, we focused our attention on the representative linguistic forms of those functions. In determining the representative linguistic form, we referred to the representative forms given in the D module scripts, and to those that occurred frequently in the first round of selection. For example, we defined "-temo ii(desu)" as the typical linguistic form of the function "compromising."

Additionally, different researchers who were assigned to work with different functions set quite similar criteria. This is an inevitable result because we did not define each function before the first selection. Examples of this are "Directives / Imperatives" and "Demanding." for which the researchers set the criteria as "a conversation in

which agents tell others to take a particular action," and "a conversation in which agents demand others to take particular action," respectively.

To summarize, this research seeks to examine natural language data with a focus on idle conversation in which there is no particular conversational goal. As such, one must make use of the context and linguistic forms when attempting to identify a particular function. That is, it is necessary to operationally define each individual function, rather than relying on the headings of the 40 functions in the D-module. In other words, after determining examining the data in the first round of selection, it was possible to the define each individual function. For the purposes of the present study, we first defined the functions, then added the linguistic forms that can be considered to be representative of those functions.

3.3.2 Coding of the selected conversations

By focusing on the aforementioned functions and their representative examples, we came across a new problem in determining the definition for each function. For the function "apologizing," for example, a large number of conversations containing the form "sumimasen" were selected. However, among those, there were several in which it seemed just as appropriate to say "arigato (thank you)." That is, there may be a linguistic form that can be considered to be the representative form for a given function, but it is not always the case that it is used exclusively to perform that function.

At this point we considered which linguistic forms were representative of the given functions and proposed the classification given in Table 2, below.

Table.2 criteria classifying discourse behaviors into 4 types

		Attributed function	
		Yes	No
Typical linguistic form	Yes	Type 1	Type 3
	No	Type 2	Type 4

As indicated in Table 2, utterances in which the representative linguistic form of a given function appears *and* the utterance can be considered to carry out that function are Type 1. Utterances in which the representative linguistic form of a given function does *not* appear but the utterance can be considered to carry out that function are Type 2. Utterances in which the representative linguistic form of a given function *does* appear but the utterance can *not* be considered to carry out that function are Type 3. And finally, utterances in which the representative linguistic form of a given function does not appear, *nor* can the utterance be considered to carry out that function, are Type 4. For the purposes of this study, we will exclude Type 4 in order to focus on conversations that do exhibit one or more of the 40 functions in the D-module.

Example 1. Type 1: Function 7 'saying good-bye'

[BF08 (Female)] borrows a handout in class from her younger classmate [YF07(Female)]

Line No.	DS No.	DSC	Speaker	Utterance
15	14-1		BF08	<i>Ja, kopi^ shite sugu ni modotte kuru kara.,</i> So, I'll make a copy and will be back right away,
16	15	*	YF27	<i>Hai.</i> OK.
17	14-2	*	BF08	<i>Chotto matte te.</i> Just a second.
18	16	*	YF27	<i>Hai.</i> OK.
19	17	*	BF08	<i>Gomen ne.</i> Sorry.
20	18	*	YF27	<i>Do^zo, itte kudasai.</i> Here it is, ##.
21	19	*	BF08	<i>/chinmoku /kopi^ ni itte iru aida./arigato^.</i> /silence (while making a copy)/ Thanks.
22	20	*	YF27	<i>A, ite, <do^ itashi mashite> {<}.</i> You're welcome.
23	21	*	BF08	<i><warai> {>}.</i> <laugh>
24	22	*	BF08	<i>Ja, mata ne.</i> See you.
25	23	*	YF27	<i>Hai, sayo^ nara.</i> Good-bye.

In lines 24-25, [BF08 (female)] says 'ja, matane <See you>,' and then her classmate [YF07 (Female)] responds by saying 'hai, sayonara<Good-bye>.' These expressions are the typical linguistic forms of the function 'saying good-bye.'

Example 2. Function 12: 'Asking for information (time)'

After an exchange about their places of residence

Line No.	DS No.	DSC	Speaker	Utterance
104	100	*	SF01	<i>Kekko^ kakari masu yo ne, fujisawa kara da to ne.</i> It's quite a long way, from Fujisawa.
105	101	*	JBM01	<i>Iya, 2jikan han desu kara.</i> No, it's only 2 and a half hours.

106	102	*	SF01	<i>2jikan han desu yo ne.</i> Yes, It takes 2 and a half hours.
107	103	*	JBM01	<i><hyu / /> {<}. Well.</i>
108	104	*	SF01	<i>< / /> watasshi gyaku ni> {>} shigoto de, mo fujisawa ni sunderu kuta^kuta^no toki ni (hai) tazunete itta toki (hai), nantonak, kibun tosite wa higaeri shuchcho te iuku... <warai>. when I went on business to visit someone who lived in Fujisawa, at that time, I felt it was rather a small journey for me. <laugh></i>

In line 104, [SF01 (Female)] succeeded in obtaining the information about her addressee's commute time, so we can assume that this example carries out the function of 'asking for information (time)'

Example 3. Function 26: 'Giving a reason'

[BM12 (Male)] borrows a 'how-to-write-a-dissertation' book from his friend [SM4(Male)]

Line No.	DS No.	DSC	Speaker	Utterance
1	1	*	BM12	<i>E-to, senshu^ no, nandakke, sotsuron no shippitsu tebiki mitai na sasshi atta desho?.</i> Um, last week, what was it, something like a how-to-write-a-dissertation book, you know?
2	2	*	SM44	<i><Un> {<}. Yeah.</i>
3	3	*	BM12	<i><sore-> mo, ima motteru? {>}. Do you have it now?</i>
4	4	*	SM44	<i>A, motteru yo. Yeah, I do.</i>
5	5	*	BM12	<i>Ja, sore, chotto kushite kan nai?.</i> Can I borrow it for a little while?
6	6	*	SM44	<i>A, ii yo. Okay.</i>
7	7	*	BM12	<i>Chotto nakushi chatte, kopi- suru kara.</i> I lost mine. I'll make a copy.
8	8	*	SM44	<i>A, wakatta. Oh, OK</i>
9	9	*	SM44	<i>Sore ja, kasu yo. Here it is.</i>
10	10	*	BM12	<i>Un, arigato^.</i> I appreciate it.
11	11	*	BM12	<i>Ja, kondo atta toki kaesu kara.</i> I'll return it when I see you next.

12	12	*	SM44	<i>A, yoroshiku.</i> That's fine.
13	13	*	BM12	<i>Un, arigato.</i> Ok, thanks.

In this example, the representative linguistic form carries out an exceptional function. Taking into account the selected discourse behavior, it is reasonable to suppose that the typical linguistic forms of the function "stating an opinion" would be '~to omoi masu <one thinks that...>,' or 'ii/warui desune <that's nice/bad>.'. However, in a conversation in which a single opinion is stated, there are utterances that contain the representative forms as well as those that do not, and for this reason it makes no sense to classify the utterances into types from the viewpoint of the form-function relationship. Hence, we did not classify the types for the function 'stating an opinion.'

Finally, as regards interrater reliability, due to the large amount of data we were not able to examine the extent of the agreement between coders by using Cohen's kappa in our limited amount of time. However, in the same manner that we check our transcriptions, we did have the selected conversations analyzed twice by other persons.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Results from the type analysis

The classification of the corpus of the spoken language corpus is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 : Results obtained by classifying the type-combinations of selected discourse examples, based on functional criteria

Function No.	Functions	Type 1	Type2	Total Frequency
1	Greetings	40	0	40
2	Expressing Thanks	18	2	20
3	Drawing one's notice	14	0	14
4	Introducing Oneself	39	0	39
5	Apologizing	20	0	20
6	Giving something to someone	6	5	11
7	Say goodbye	4	0	4
8	Asking about prices	3	1	4
9	Asking for information(experience)	5	12	17
10	Stating plans	1	1	2
11	Asking for information (degree)	6	6	12
12	Asking about time	24	1	25
13	Asking for information (figures)	13	0	13
14	Talking about doing something with something	8	0	8
15	Asking about skills and ability	12	25	37
16	Asking about existence and location	26	23	49
17	Asking for information (attribution)	30	0	30

18	Stating an opinion	/	/	32
19	Talking about likes and dislikes (things)	18	1	19
20	Talking about likes and dislikes (activities)	15	0	15
21	Sequencing events	21	0	21
22	Asking how someone is doing	4	0	4
23	Stating conditions	43	0	43
24	Comparisons s (comparatives and superlatives)	56	0	56
25	Making suggestions	3	2	5
26	Giving a reason	15	0	15
27	Making requests	59	2	61
28	Giving an example	15	1	16
29	Compromising	6	0	6
30	Asking for permission	4	0	4
31	Asking about responsibilities (obligations)	0	2	2
32	Stating prohibitions	3	0	3
33	Directives / Imperatives	7	0	7
34	Telling someone not to do something	5	4	9
35	Asking about responsibilities (non-obligation)	0	0	0
36	Invitations	0	0	0
37	Giving advice	5	2	7
38	Demanding	3	1	4
39	Expressing hopes/wishes	28	0	28
40	Introducing someone	0	0	0
Total		(579)	(91)	702(670)

The talk used by this research exhibited 37 out of the 40 functions as shown in table 3. The 3 functions that did not appear are "Asking about responsibilities (non-obligation)" (function number 35), "Invitations" (function number 36), and "Introducing someone" (function number 40). Also, because it is difficult to classify this function according to type, in the present study, we do not classify "Stating an opinion" (function number 18) according to type, and only the total frequency is shown. In the discussion that follows, we will examine the classifications according to the type for the remaining 36 functions.

Type 1 examples corresponded to 35 functions and there were 579 individual examples of this type. That is, type 1 to be heaping an attributed function on and for the typical linguistic form to appear at it appears in most function. Next, type 2 examples were seen with 17 functions and the number of examples was 91. From the examples of type 2, it is clear that, even if the typical linguistic form doesn't appear, the attributed function is carried out through reference to the discourse level context.

It should be noted that examples of the functions of "Asking about responsibilities (non-obligation)," "Invitations," and "Introducing someone" did not appear due to the characteristics of the conversation data used. In other words, those functions did not appear because small talk deals mainly with conversations between 2 persons.

Type 3 examples were seen with 13 functions. That is, even if the linguistic form is representative of a certain function, it is possible for it to achieve a different function depending on the context and the status of the utterance. It is possible to say that type 2 and type 3 utterances can be best understood by considering the actual conversation dynamically at the discourse level.

Table4: type 3 functions

5	Apologizing
15	Asking about skills and ability
16	Asking about existence and location
19	Talking about likes and dislikes (things)
21	Sequencing events
24	Comparisons s (comparatives and superlatives)
26	Giving a reason
29	Compromising
30	Asking for permission
32	Stating prohibitions
33	Directives / Imperatives
34	Telling someone not to do something
39	Expressing hopes/wishes

Type1 is characterized by typical linguistic forms, and its discourse behavior is functional. So for functions that are exclusively Type 1, the discourse behaviors found are functional with the typical linguistic forms, such as in the cases of "Saying goodbye" and "Introducing oneself." On the other hand, functions with both Type 1 and 2 discourse behaviors are functional even without the typical linguistic forms, such as in "making requests." Functions with Type 1 and 3 discourse behaviors result from typical linguistic forms not functioning in the usual way, depending on the contexts.

4.2 Discussion

As we show table 3, type 1 discourse was found for 36 functions. This is because we set the typical linguistic forms of the attributed functions in the operational criteria of the 40 functions of the TUFs D-module. We attempted to set particular linguistic forms as cues for the second round of selecting the conversations for the ease of selection. So, the attributed functions are easy to understand if they appear with the typical linguistic forms of the functions.

We also found some functions that occurred without their typical linguistic forms. For example, the utterance 'sumimasen' in example 4, line 21, is indeed an expression of apology, but it also expresses thanks in a certain sense, because this utterance occurs immediately after receiving some benefit. 'Sumimasen' is the typical linguistic form of apologizing, but it is also used to 'draw one' notice' or to 'express thanks.'

Example 4: 'apologizing' with multifunctional typical linguistic forms

Line No.	DS No.	DSC	Speaker	Utterance
8	6	*	OF30	<i>So^ ieba,senshu^ ano nanka,e-to,so^so^,atawashii hanashio,e-to,sekai de ichiban nan dakke,sekai de ichiban utsukushii e,kana,nanka so^ in purinto ga atta to omou.</i> Well, last week, Let me see, Oh yes, something new, Yes, the best what in the world? The best painting in the world? I had a paper on something like that, I think.
9	7	*	OF30	<i>Un,atta kana.</i> Yes, I did have that, I feel.
10	8	*	BF08	<i>e-.</i> yes
11	9	*	BF08	<i>Chotto ano-kari tai n desu kedo....</i> If so, I would like to borrow it for a little bit...
12	10	*	OF30	<i>Hai.</i> Sure.
13	11	*	BF08	<i>A, ii desu ka?</i> Oh, can I borrow it?
14	12	*	OF30	<i>Ii yo.</i> Yes, OK.
15	13	*	OF30	<i>Ima, motteru kara.</i> I have it now.
16	14	*	BF08	<i>A, chotto ima, sukoshi jikan arimasu ka.</i> Oh, just a... Do you have just a second now?
17	15	*	OF30	<i>Hai,arimasu,hai.</i> Yes I do. Yes.
18	16	*	BF08	<i>A,ja,ano-kopi- shite kurin de,isoide kopi- shite kurin de, chotto kashite morae masu ka?</i> Then, let me go and copy it right now, please. So, can I borrow it for a second?
19	17	*	OF30	<i>A,iyo<warai>.</i> Certainly. <laughing>
20	18	*	OF30	<i>Ja, do^zo.</i> Here, you are.
21	19	*	BF08	<i>A,sumimasen,sugu modotte kimasu kara.</i> great. I'll be right back.
22	20	*	OF30	<i>Hai.</i> OK.

Here we see that, although we set up our analysis to examine the existence of typical linguistic forms and their attributed functions, the two do not necessarily correspond, as in example 4, where the expression of apology is also an expression of thanks. It is difficult to determine if the discourses with typical linguistic forms have their attributed function or not, as it depends on the situations of the conversations, contexts of the utterances, and so on.

5. Conclusion

In this research, we showed how to set up and accumulate the transcripts of natural conversation data concretely. After that, we described the process of the Corpus of Spoken Japanese using the natural conversation data accumulated in the Usami Laboratory. These consist of excerpts extracted from natural conversation data, which have all of the 40 functions instituted in the Japanese D-Module. Through the process of making the Corpus of Spoken Japanese and its results, we found some implications that appeared at the discourse level, indicating that the typical linguistic forms of particular functions depend on the contexts.

Natural conversation data can become the analyzable data for a specific analysis to develop through a systematic method, and it is a very important process in discourse analysis. It is for this reason that we focused on examining the process of developing data in this paper.

Appendix / Key to Transcription Symbols

Line No.	Line number
DS No.	Discourse sentence (Usami2002) number
DSC	Discourse sentence (Usami2002) completion marker

Among the symbols used in BTSJ, only those relevant for this paper are listed here.

- . (period) At the end of a single discourse, a period(.) is used if it is narrative, and if it is interrogative or seeking information, a quest mark(?) followed by a period(?.) is used. However, even if the final particle indicating interrogation is missing, (?) is also used at the end of sentences in which intonation makes it clear that a question is being asked or confirmation being sought.
- ,
- Commas are used where they are conventionally placed to facilitate reading inside a complement sentence.
- „
- The mark „ is used when the conversation partner's utterance comes at the end of a mid-sentence phrase, for example, to indicate that the discourse is not yet complete. Then a new line is made and the partner's utterance is recorded. After the insertion of partner's utterance, another line is made, the continuing discourse is recorded, and(.)or(„)is used at the end of the sentence.
- ...
- Used when word endings are muddled or mumbled, or when a sentence is grammatically cut off in the middle.
- ?
- Interrogative sentence. In discourse which is shown to function interrogatively by a rising intonation, even though the sentence is not marked by an interrogative particle, ? is used at the end of the sentence. Likewise, ?, is used when required in mid-sentence because of an inverted question of phrase with such a function. Furthermore, the question marker is the character for indicating a phrase's interrogative function, but does not necessarily indicate a rising intonation.

As for intonation, ↑→↓ are used to indicate special stress that is out of the ordinary, etc., only on words and phrases requiring special notation.

- = No or shorter-than-average pause between sentences.
- < >(<) When utterance occur simultaneously, both of the overlapping parts are enclosed in< >. After < >, {<} is attached to the utterance that is overlapped by the other.
- < >(>) Likewise, After < >, {<} is attached to the utterance that overlaps the other.
- () Short interjections with no special meaning are enclosed in parentheses in the position that is closest to the actual utterance within the speaker's discourse.
- < > Explanations of discourse spoken while laughing, as well as other laughter, for example, are enclosed in < >, such as <while laughing>, and <both laugh>. In the event that laughter itself functions as reply to something, for example, it takes its own line. Otherwise, it is generally noted at the end of the most recent discourse line.
- (< >) When laughter overlaps with the partner's discourse while she or he is talking, it is recorded in the same way as short interjections:(<laugh>).
- 「 」 「 」 are used when they enhance understanding by visually setting of a word or a phrase, such as the explanation of a kanji reading or the title of a book. Also, names and other proper nouns are rendered, for example, as 「person's name 」 or 「man's name 」 so as to protect the privacy of subjects.
- # This symbol is used when a portion of the discourse is inaudible. The number of # signs corresponds to the estimated number of syllables in that portion.
- [] Paralinguistic and non-verbal information. In order to best understand the situation surrounding a certain discourse, special vocal characteristics will be noted, such as that thought to require special mention(e.g., accent, intonation, high or low voice, loud or quiet voice, speed),as well as non-linguistic information. Furthermore, “↑→↓”are used to indicate rise, no change, or fall in intonation.
- [[]] When the 2nd speaker's utterance starts before the 1st speaker's utterance is completed, and as the result, the 1st speaker's utterance was finished.

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