Paraphrasing the "Other": Connecting Participants in Japanese Conversation

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1. Introduction

Japanese speakers frequently and spontaneously comment on and react to each other's utterances while having a conversation. One of the most noticeable examples is repeating what the other speaker has said (Machi 2012, 2014). Others include questioning, co-construction of a sentence, and giving agreement tokens and minimal responses. Moreover, the paraphrasing of other participants' statements is often observed in conversations, especially between close friends. The frequent occurrence of paraphrase along with the other above-mentioned linguistic devices suggests that the participants' utterances are intertwined with one another and that Japanese speakers do not mind or even prefer such a collaborative style of conversation. While we vaguely recognize that the paraphrasing of other participants' statements contributes to the highly collaborative conversation style in the Japanese language, most of its process and details remain unclear. In order to elucidate what paraphrasing accomplishes in conversation and how, this paper examines two types of paraphrase in triadic conversations in Japanese, that is, 1) paraphrase of shared information and 2) paraphrase of new, unshared information. The study presents several differences regarding the functions of paraphrase, the paraphraser's attitudes, and grammatical structures of the two types of paraphrasing. The study also shows that despite the differences, both types of paraphrase contribute to a better mutual understanding of the participants' points of view and ideas due to the sharing of and commenting on each other's statements. It also demonstrates that the use of paraphrase displays the participants' attentiveness and sympathetic attitudes towards each other, often allowing them to confirm their closeness, which consequently connects the participants in conversation.

2. Previous Studies

There are two main perspectives in paraphrase studies: language acquisition and communication. Paraphrase, as well as repetition, plays a key role in both first and second language learning/teaching (Koch, 1984; Kamada and Nishina, 2014). Koch (1984: 256) states, "they (paraphrase and repetition) provide data about possible choices, or, to use a familiar term

for the structure of choices in language, about the paradigmatic axis." While paraphrase in this context is quite important in the field of language acquisition, this study concerns the latter perspective of paraphrase, namely, the communicative perspective.

The functions of paraphrase in actual conversation have been observed by Koch (1984), Bublitz (1988), and Tabensky (2001). Koch (1984) examines spontaneous self-paraphrase in conversation. According to her, self-paraphrase works not only as self-correction but also as rhetoric to get or keep the floor in conversation while helping to create a better understanding for the participants. She also demonstrates how paraphrase creates a shift in perspective both pragmatically and semantically. While there are significant differences between self-paraphrase and the paraphrasing of others' statements, the creation of a better understanding is relevant to the kind of paraphrase that we analyze in this study. Moreover, Koch's emphasis on the importance of paraphrase for the generation of language in discourse is also notable.

Examination of others' paraphrasing, on the other hand, can be seen in the works of Bublitz (1988) and Tabensky (2001). Bublitz focuses on the interactional function of paraphrase, claiming that it is one type of speaker contribution that supports[1] the primary speaker. He demonstrates that by uttering generalizing sentences, conclusions, frequently used aphorisms, and stereotyping extensions, i.e., paraphrasing, participants adopt their conversation partner's position and thus commit themselves to stand by it. Bublitz also states that such paraphrasing could have also been added to the primary speaker's contribution by him- or herself, often following a linking expression *in other words*.

In his study of gesture and speech rephrasings in conversation, Tabensky (2001) regards paraphrase (he prefers to use the term "rephrasing" in the same sense) as a means by which participants co-construct meanings in conversation. Quoting Vion (1992), who remarks that elaborated forms of rephrasing play a role in the negotiation of content and therefore contribute to the construction of meaning, Tabensky stresses that rephrasing thus entails the participants' involvement in the process of discussion. Other characteristics of paraphrase include displaying understanding and agreement and showing that the participants are attentive to their partner's speech (Tabensky, 2001).

The previous studies presented above cover various important functions of paraphrasing in conversation. What seems to be lacking, however, is as detailed examination of what kinds of utterances made by one speaker are paraphrased by another and in what manner (i.e., attitudes and grammatical structures) the paraphrase is produced. Furthermore, because those previous studies are based on the examinations of English conversations (and partly French conversations in Tabensky (2001)), it is likely that the Japanese data in this study present some different or additional functions of paraphrase in conversation, especially in

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[1]   In Bublitz's (1988) sense, "support" here means that the speaker endorses, approves of, and even shares the primary speaker's position, such as his assumptions, assessments, and attitudes (247).

terms of the participants' interpersonal relationships. Building upon the previous research on this topic, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how paraphrase plays an important role in promoting mutual understanding between the participants and thus connects them—both their statements and themselves—in Japanese conversation.

3. Data and focus of the analysis

The data analyzed in this study were taken from a Japanese TV show called "*Bokura no Jidai*" ["Our Generation"][2] . This is a weekly talk show that is broadcast on Sunday mornings. Three guests are invited to talk freely about what is on their minds without a set format. No host or interviewer is present to control the conversation. The three guests talk freely in a relaxed setting—usually a café or a restaurant—while sipping on a beverage. For this study, three episodes were selected for analysis. Episode 1 is between three young male actors, ranging in age from 28 to 30 years. Episode 2 is between three middle-aged men—two are comedians and one is a script writer—from 40 to 42 years of age. Episode 3 is between three young female announcers/TV performers, who are all 30 years old. In all three episodes, the three participants acknowledge each other as close friends. All conversations are carried out in a friendly atmosphere. Each conversation lasts approximately 22 minutes, and they were transcribed by the author.

The focus of this study is paraphrasing of the other participant's utterance. Paraphrase is sometimes hard to distinguish from repetition—in fact, as Tannen (1989) and Koch (1984) point out, paraphrase is a form of repetition. They are similar in a sense that they are both reiterations of the previous utterance; what distinguishes them is the scale of fixity. This study concerns cases where one participant's utterance is restated by another participant in his or her own words, or is at least lexically modified from the original utterance, and where a semantic congruence between the original and paraphrased utterances is observed. While it is difficult to make a clear boundary, repetition with slight changes, such as transforming a question into a statement or simply adding a sentence-final particle such as *ne* and *yo*, do not count as paraphrase in this study.

4. Analysis

The data in the present study demonstrate that paraphrase in Japanese conversation is classified into two types, that is, paraphrase of shared information and of new, unshared information. We will examine each type closely in the following sections.

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[2]   Episode 1 was aired on September 5th, 2010 and featured Osamu Mukai, Ryuta Sato, and Kenta Kiritani. Episode 2 was aired on March 20th, 2016, featuring Kazuhiro Ozawa, Yoshimi Tokui, and Soshi Masumoto. Episode 3 was aired on November 27th, 2016, featuring Mio Matsumura, Minami Tanaka, and Marie Ueda. The show was produced by Fuji TV.

4.1. Paraphrase of shared information

In conversations between close friends, where participants share information and backgrounds to a large extent, the paraphrasing of each other's statements occurs frequently. In our data, there are many cases where the participants paraphrase shared information regarding their common feelings and knowledge as well as one participant's individual experiences and inner states. Most of such paraphrases not only display agreement and understanding to the primary speaker as Tabensky (2001) suggests but also supportively reinforce their statements. In consequence, they contribute to creating a bond between the participants.

(1) Part-time job
    01 Ken: ⋯*Ano nanka okane harau toki ni[, a kore kinou no, [sanbun no*
           'Like, when you pay money, you think it is yesterday's three⋯'
    02 Ryu: *[Un.*
                            'Yeah.'
    03 Osa: *[Sanjikan bun toka*
                             'Like, '(it's) the same as three
        hours (of workload.)"
=> 04 Ryu: *Soo,* **nan jikan bun tte yuu kangae kata suru yo <u>ne</u>** *{laugh}*
        'Right, **we tend to think it's the same as how many hours of workload, right?**'
    05 Osa: *Soo {laugh}*
        'Right.'

In (1), three participants—Ken, Ryu, and Osa—discuss the importance of experiencing working part-time. That is, when they worked part-time, they would convert money into their workloads and realize its value, and therefore they really appreciated the experience. In 04, Ryu paraphrases what Ken and Osa have said previously in a tone of agreement and sympathy. Note that he slightly modifies Osa's expression from *san jikan bun* 'three hours of' to *nan jikan bun* 'how many hours of.' In terms of this modification, Ken and Osa's idea becomes generalized, as if to say "This is what we all tend to do." A similar observation can be seen in the work of Bublitz (1988: 245), who states that paraphrase serves to reflect the other speaker's point of view in a generalizing, often stereotyping and labelling way. By rephrasing the previous speakers' words in well-formulated, easy-to-understand expressions, Ryu's paraphrase clears the point of the discussion and facilitates the participants to achieve a mutual understanding. It therefore establishes a bond in the triad.

In order to display agreement and reinforce the primary speaker's statement, metaphors and analogies[3] are often used while paraphrasing. In the following excerpt, the paraphraser draws an analogy while paraphrasing.

(2) "The reason I became a comedian."

01 Oza: *Saikin tokuni soo omoun dakedo, moto yuuto hajimeta kikkake ga, neta yaritai toka omoshiroi koto yaritai de hajimeta wake jan[, dakara syoshin wasureru-bekarazu janai kedo[, iya sore ga yaritakute[, hajimeteru noni[, yaranai no wa wake wakan-nee jan to [omotte yatteru dake dakara*

'Recently I really think that the reason I became a comedian is that I wanted to do something funny, right? So it's kind of like "never lose your initial enthusiasm." I wanted to do something funny, so it doesn't make sense if I don't do it. That's how I feel when I do comedy.'

02 Tok: *[Un*
                                                                                                 'Yeah.'

                                                  [Un   *[Un*   *[Un*
                                                  'Yeah.'   'Yeah.'   'Yeah.'
                                                   [Un
                                                   'Yeah.'

=> 03 Tok: **Dakara kodomo ga suki de hajimeta, nanka, sakkaa toka o, zutto imamo, saisho ni sakkaa tanoshiina tte omotta kimotchi de zutto yatteru no yo _ne_**
            '**So he's doing it like a little kid who starts playing soccer because he loves it, and keeps playing even when the kid grows up without losing the initial pleasant feeling.**'

Here, Oza—a famous comedian—explains the reason that he still writes his own comedy materials although he is already popular and frequently appearing on TV. When he finishes, Tok, who is also a popular comedian, sympathetically paraphrases Oza's utterance using an analogy: He compares Oza's passion for comedy with a little boy's joy for playing his favorite sport. While mentioning a third, non-existing character, Tok's utterance never digresses from Oza's statement. Rather, by drawing a familiar analogy, Tok reinforces Oza's motive for writing his comedy materials and simultaneously summarizes his point. Note that Tok's paraphrase is much shorter than Oza's original utterance while their contents are almost the same. This is because Tok condenses Oza's idea into simple, easy-to-understand expressions. This paraphrase also strengthens the bond between the participants, as it indicates that Tok truly understands Oza's innermost thought.

The next excerpt shows a similar case, where a paraphraser uses a metaphorical expression.

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3   Similarly, Bublitz (1988) points out that paraphrasing contains frequently used aphorisms, which we cannot find in our data.

(3) "Walls around her."

    01 Mina: *Dakedo moo ichinen kurai daretomo te mo tsunaide nakereba[, gohan mo futari de ittakoto nai, itte nai*

        'I haven't held hands with anyone nor gone out for dinner for a year.'

    02 Marie: *[Hoo*

                                         'Oh.'

    03 Marie: *A, soo nan da*

        'Oh, is that so.'

    04 Mina: *Un*

        'Yeah.'

=> 05 Mio: **Gaado ga sugoku kataku[te[, kou kabe ga ne[, tatteru no, Minami no mawari niwa**

        'She's really protective of herself. There are walls around her.'

    06 Mina: *[Un*   *[Soo soo soo soo*

                          'Yeah.'   'Yeah yeah yeah yeah.'

    07 Marie: *[Sugoi [{laughter}*

                          'Wow.'

(3) is extracted from a conversation in which the three women—TV announcers/performers—talk about dating, marriage, and motherhood. When Mina is asked about her recent love life, she confesses that she has not been on a date for a year. Hearing this, Mio, who is a close friend of Mina's, produces a paraphrase. "Walls around her" is a metaphor for Mina's protective state, that is, not holding hands or going out for dinner with anyone. By means of this metaphorical paraphrase, Mio not only shows agreement to and understanding of Mina's statement but also successfully summarizes her point and, as Bublitz (1988) states, promotes the third party's—in this case, Marie's and the viewers'—comprehension. Mio's paraphrase also signals the closeness between Mina and herself because, as in the previous excerpt, only close friends are allowed to metaphorically describe each other's private lives and states of mind. In other words, by paraphrasing Mina's original utterance while adding a precise metaphor, Mio sends a meta-message that says, "She and I are close enough to supplement each other's private stories."

    Lastly, we will see another similar example of metaphorical paraphrase, which shows a paraphraser's fine sense of humor. In (4), the same triad as in (3) discuss how often Mina is criticized by the media when she unconsciously behaves in a cutesy way.

(4) Cutesy gesture

    01 Mina: ... *Futsuu ni uuun* {doing a cutesy gesture[4]} *tte kangaeru koto tte nai?*

        'Don't you just think like this?'

02 Marie: *Kon-nano [shinai yo ne*

         'We don't do that, right?'

03 Mio: *[Nn*

         'Yeah.'

04 Mina: *Yatteru yo, Mio toka yatteru yo=*

         'You do it, Mio, you do it.'

05 Mio: *=Yatteru?=*

                 'I do?'

06 Mina: *=Yatteru, [zettai yatteru, gohan*

      taberu toki toka, uuun {with the cutesy gesture} *tte yatteru-n dakedo[, Mio wa*

      torishimarare nai wake

      'You do, definitely, like when you have a meal, you do the cutesy gesture, but

      they don't crack down on you.'

07 Mio: *[Ussooo*

                            'Really?'

                            [Un

                            'Yeah'

08 Marie: {laughter}

09 Mio: *Torishimari?*

      'A crackdown?'

10 Mina: *Watashi [sugu sore de, uuun* {doing the same cutesy gesture} *toka yaruto,*

      sugu iware [chau, sugu

      'But as soon as I do the gesture, they criticize me, immediately.'

11 Mio: *[Un un*

      'Yeah yeah.'

=> 12 Marie: **[Nannkai mo taiho sareta yo <u>ne</u>** {laughter}

      'You've been arrested many times, right?'

This excerpt is interesting because the participants use police terms as a metaphor in a frame of play. Instead of directly describing the media's criticism, Mina in 06 uses the word *torishimari* 'crackdown,' as though she had violated the law by acting sweet and innocent. When Mina says in 10 that she easily becomes a target of criticism every time she does the cutesy gesture, Marie paraphrases it in 12. Catching on to Mina's metaphor, Marie also uses the police term *taiho* 'arrest' as a metaphor for criticism. Like other paraphrases in the previous excerpts, Marie's paraphrase displays and facilitates the participants' closeness by agreeing with and reinforcing Mina's statement. In addition, it contributes to the creation of a

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4   Here, Mina puts her hand on her chin and slightly tilts her head.

bond by being playful, specifically by maintaining the play frame started by Mina. Coates (2007) points out that the use of metaphors is one of the strategies participants use to create solidarity in playful talk. This is because maintaining the play frame by means of metaphorical language demonstrates, to borrow Coates's (2007) expression, how "well-tuned" the participants are to each other. Thus, Marie's paraphrase plays an important role in terms of the participants' interpersonal relationship on several levels: it 1) supports Mina's statement by agreeing and reinforcing, 2) maintains the play frame started by Mina through the use of the police metaphor, and 3) adds a humorous touch to the dialogue by selecting a funny yet spot-on word, "arrest."

What these examples in this section demonstrate is that in conversations Japanese speakers often paraphrase shared information regarding their common feelings and knowledge as well as one participant's individual experiences and inner states. Because of their shared nature, these paraphrases are often accompanied by the particle *ne*, which indicates that the information in question is to be interpreted with sharedness (Cook, 1992; Kamio, 1990) or directly indexes feelings that are shared between the participants (Cook, 1992). In our data, out of 18 paraphrases of this type, 14[5] (77.8%) are accompanied by the particle *ne* (12 of them are in the sentence-final position and two are in mid-sentence as in (3)). Another characteristic feature of this type of paraphrase is that because the contents are already shared and/or common, the speakers paraphrase them with confidence and certainty. This paraphrasers' attitude is grammatically characterized by close to no hedges or discourse markers that indicate vagueness, such as *nanka*, *toiuka*, and *mitaina*, in the paraphrases. While those hedges and discourse markers are often seen in the other type of paraphrase (i.e., paraphrase of new information), when shared information is paraphrased, the paraphrasers' tone is usually straightforward with no doubt or indecision. The frequent use of the particle *ne* also seems to reflect the paraphrasers' confident attitude. This particle not only marks the shared quality of the information and feelings that are conveyed between participants but also works to elicit *aizuchi*[6] (Kita and Ide, 2007) and solicit agreement or confirmation (Maynard, 2005) from the conversation partners. It is similar to an English expression, "Am I right?" which suggests that the speaker assumes what he or she is saying is correct. Because of these grammatical elements, the paraphrasing of shared information gives the impression that the paraphraser is being confident and certain when producing the paraphrases, which, as a result, signals that the participants are in a close relationship and feel safe about sharing and commenting on

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[5]   One of these paraphrases is accompanied by the particle *na*, as in *densha no norikata toka wakarahen mon na, chicchai koro* 'you don't know how to take a train as a child, right?' The particle *na* is a kansai dialect and often performs a similar function to the particle *ne*. (Makino, 2009)

[6]   While *aizuchi* is often interpreted as back-channeling, nodding, and a continuer, Kita and Ide (2007) interpret it as "a sign of emotional support for the turn-holder."

each other's statements.

4.2. Paraphrase of new information

Although much information and background are shared between close friends, there are also many places in conversations where new, unshared information is brought up. Even in such cases, Japanese speakers often paraphrase each other's utterances spontaneously. The functions of such paraphrasing, however, are different from the paraphrasing of shared information that we examined in the previous section; here it is meant to test the paraphraser's understanding of the primary speaker's statement. In other words, participants paraphrase new ideas and facts that are introduced by their conversation partners while incorporating their interpretations and confirm whether they understand the original intention correctly.

(5) Meaning of the job

01 Tok: *Saikin nanka, jibun no kono nanka, shigoto o yatteru[, sonzai-igi*
toiuka[, tte nan-nan-yaro na tte kangaeru toki ni[, arushu ussura to shita
kotae ga ikko dete[,
'Recently, when I think like "what is the meaning of doing this job?" I've kind of found one vague answer,'

02 Mas: *[Un*
                               'Yeah'

         [Un un un un un
         'Yeah, yeah⋯'
               [Oo
               'Wow.'

03 Oza: *[Nn*
                               'Yeah'

         [Nn
         'Yeah'

04 Tok: *Shigoto toka ni tsukareta OL san toka ga, zangoo toka shite, -----omission-----*
chotto koo, tsukarete kaette kimasu, hitorigurashi no heya ni. Patto akari tsukete,
fuu, hitoiki. -----omission----- Terebi demo miyoo kana, patto tsukeru, soko ni koo
shin-ya bangumi ka nanka ni ore ga detete, sono ore no nanka, shabetta koto toka
yatta koto de, moo nandemo eekedo, kusuri to[, kusutto demo shite kuretara[,
moo, sonde moo, honmou yana toyuuka=
'(For example) a female office worker, who is tired from working extra hours---omit---, comes back home, where she lives alone. She turns on the light, then lets out a breath---omit---. She feels like watching TV, so she turns it on, then

there I am, appearing in a late-night program or something. And if she chuckles
at what I say or what I do or anything, I am quite satisfied.'

05 Mas: *[Aa*
                                                          'Ah.'

        [Naruhodo
        'I see.'

06 Mas: =*naruhodo naruhodo*
                                                'I see, I see.'

=> 07 Mas: **Yoshimi[7] ga nanika koo, kyoojiteru koto ga[, <u>nanka</u> mune no naka ni
       ochireba iina**

       'You hope that, like, your being amusing could touch her heart.'

08 Tok: *[un*
                                                       'Yeah'

09 Tok: *Nanka bakushoo o toritai nante osoreooi kara sa, moo honma kusutto demo, kusutto
       shite itadake tara moo, arigatoogozaimasu, tte kanij*

       'Like, it's presumptuous for me to I say I want to provoke a great laughter. If she
       gives a small chuckle, I'm like "Thank you so much!"'

In (5), Tok unfolds his revelation about the meaning of being a comedian. His relatively long
explanation of what makes him satisfied in 04 is paraphrased by Mas in 07. Judging from
Tok's scrupulous explanation and Mas's attentive reaction *aa* 'ah' and *naruhodo* 'I see,' it can
be considered that Mas has not shared Tok's thought beforehand. Nevertheless, Mas
paraphrases and summarizes it using his own words—which are efficiently organized—to test
his understanding.

     Another example below shows a similar case. Here, three men talk about how Ryu and
his wife started dating.

(6) Friends or a couple
     01 Osa: *Demo kekkoo tsukiatte nagakatta desu yo ne*
            'But you two were dating for a long time, right?'
     02 Ryu: *Nagai no [kanaa*
            'I wonder whether it was long.'
     03 Osa: *[Un, [nagaku wa nai xxx*
                   'Yeah, not long?'
     04 Ryu: *[San-nen-han[, tsukiatte kekkon desu ne=*
                        'We dated for three and a half years, then got married.'

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7   Tok's first name.

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05 Ken: *[Nn*   *=Aa*
                                           'Oh.'   'Ah.'

06 Osa: *A, san-nen-han kaa*
     'Oh, it was three and a half years.'

07 Ryu: *San-nen-han, a, shiriatte kara sugoi nagakatta kedo[ne, un*
     'Three and a half years. Although, it had been really long since we got
     acquainted with each other, yeah.'

08 Osa: *[A, soo, soo desu yo ne*
                                                     'Oh yeah, that's right.'

09 Ryu: *Tsukiatte kara[⋯*
     'Since we started dating⋯'

=> 10 Ken: *[Aa, naruhodo ne, **tomodachi tyuu[ka, sooyuu kikan ga atta,** aa*
              'Oh I see, **there was some time that you two were, like, just
              friends, or something like that.**'

11 Ryu: *[Sore wa sugoi nagakatta, un*
                                               'Very long time, yeah.'

At first, Osa and Ken think that Ryu and his wife had been dating for a very long time before
they got married. When Ryu clarifies that it was only three and a half years, which is not so
long, Osa is slightly taken aback. Then, Ryu provides additional information, stating that they
had known each other for a long time before they started dating. Ken paraphrases the
statement in 10 while incorporating his interpretation and clarifies that they had been friends
for a while before they became a couple.

Because the content of this type of paraphrase is new to the paraphraser, the act of
paraphrasing shows that the paraphraser is being attentive—you cannot paraphrase others'
statements unless you pay attention to them. As Tabensky (2001) states, "the rephrasing of
the partner's words in conversation shows that participants attend to their partners' speech,
not only by listening to it but also by appropriating, to some extent, part of what they hear
(216)." In addition, those paraphrases also show the paraphraser's supportive attitude. In both
excerpts (5) and (6), the paraphrasers encourage the primary speakers to make their points
more clearly by providing well-organized versions of the original utterances. At the same time,
the paraphrasers also test their own understanding of their partners' statements as if to say, "I
expect what you're saying is this⋯?" As a result, the primary speaker's point is clarified for
everyone, including the primary speaker him- or herself. (7) below provides a similar example.

(7) Brown eyes
     01 Mina: *Ato wa, me ga chairoi hito ga suki*
          'And I also like men with brown eyes.'

02 Mio: *[Me ga chairoi hito?*

　　　'Men with brown eyes?'

03 Marie: *[Ee, sugoi [komakai*

　　　'Oh, that is really detailed.'

=> 04 Mio: **[Chotto shikiso usui, [_mitaina_ hito?**

　　　'Men with less pigment (in his iris**) or something?'**

05 Mina: *[Soo soo soo soo*

　　　'Right right.'

In (7), the same female triad as in (4) talks about Mina's ideal man. In 01, Mina states that she likes men with brown eyes, which is not common for Japanese people. Hearing that, Mio produces a paraphrase using the scientific term *shikiso* 'pigment' to clarify what Mina means. Mio's paraphrase is uttered in an upward intonation, which means she not only clarifies Mina's point but also asks for Mina's confirmation of Mio's understanding.

Contrary to the paraphrasing of shared information, this type of paraphrasing concerns new, unshared information, such as the primary speaker's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Because of this, we can often see uncertainly and hesitation in the paraphraser's tone. The element of uncertainty and hesitation is also reflected grammatically, especially in the use of hedges and fillers. When we look at this type of paraphrasing, we come across expressions such as *nanka*, *toiuka* (or *toyuuka*), and *mitaina*, as in (5), (6), and (7)[8]. Although each of these expressions has a variety of grammatical and interactional functions, they all function as a headge or discourse marker that indicates uncertainty and vagueness. According to Uchida (2001) and Suzuzki (2000), *nanka* implies the speaker's hesitating and uncertain attitude to or judgment of a vague statement that follows *nanka*. Suzuki (2000) also indicates the function of *nanka* as a filler, which indicates that the speaker has something to say but cannot immediately formulate an appropriate expression. With regard to the expression *toiuka*, Maynard (2004) and Harada (2015) demonstrate that it is used when an utterance is made with doubt, uncertainty, and hesitation, and it conveys a meta-message that the speaker is uncertain about his or her utterance. Moreover, Harada shows that *toiuka* is replaceable with the self-questioning expression, *toittara iika* 'I wonder if I should say like this.' As for *mitaina*, Maynard (2004) and Satake (1997) remark that it is an expression that avoids an assertion. Similarly, Hoshino (2009) and Koyano (2013) state that *mitaia* softens the directness and preciseness of the statement as well as expressing the speaker's attitude of hesitation.

While simultaneously expressing uncertainty and hesitation, Japanese speakers still spontaneously paraphrase new, less familiar information that is presented by their conversation partners. This type of paraphrasing indicates that the paraphraser is being

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[8]　These expressions are underlined in the excerpts.

attentive to the primary speaker's utterance, and even helpful and supportive in encouraging the primary speaker to make their point clearly. Moreover, the fact that the participants feel free to produce paraphrases even when they are not absolutely certain about the content shows that they are indeed at ease and feel safe with each other in the place of conversation.

5. What does paraphrasing accomplish in Japanese conversations?

The previous section has presented the two types of paraphrasing in triadic conversations in Japanese. Despite several differences regarding the functions of paraphrases, the paraphraser's attitudes, and the grammatical structures, they both contribute to a better understanding of the conversation partner's points of view and ideas. The data in this study have shown that paraphrasing strengthens the participants' bond, regardless of whether they share the information and background that have been brought up in the process of talking. This is because by restating their partner's ideas in their own words while incorporating their own interpretation, the participants play a supportive role in getting their partners to make their points clearly. They also actively display their attentive and sympathetic attitude, which helps to create a bond between the participants.

Bublitz (1988) contends that paraphrases could equally well have been added by the primary speaker to his own contribution, often following the linking *in other words*. His assertion holds true when people are content with simply relating individual stories to each other. Restating one's own utterance would not be much different from allowing the other speaker to paraphrase it. However, if the participants expect more than that in a conversation, for example, to share their experiences and thoughts sympathetically and to feel connected with each other as in our Japanese data, paraphrasing each other's utterances is significantly different from restating one's own. It shows the participants' spontaneous desire to achieve a mutual understanding and even to achieve a sense of sharing, as shown in excerpts (1) to (7). It also allows the participants to confirm their close relationship in the course of the conversation, and in this sense paraphrasing is a sign of closeness. In addition to the negotiation of content and the joint construction of meaning suggested by Tabensky (2001), we can say that paraphrasing in Japanese conversation serves a more interpersonal function. It works to promote mutual understanding regarding the participants' backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, thoughts, and ideas by sharing and commenting on each other's statements, and consequently it connects the participants in a conversation.

6. Conclusion

The present study has shown how the paraphrasing of others' statements occurs in triadic conversations in the Japanese language. It has presented the two types of paraphrasing, namely, the paraphrasing of shared information and of new information. In the case of shared information, paraphrasers sympathetically display agreement with and understanding of the

primary speaker's statement and reinforce it by generalizing or summarizing his or her point, sometimes with the use of analogies and metaphors. Because the content of the paraphrase is already shared or common between the participants, speakers produce this type of paraphrase with certainly and confidence, which is grammatically reflected in the frequent use of the particle *ne* and close to no hedges or discourse markers that indicate vagueness. The paraphrasing of new, unshared information, on the other hand, functions not only to test the paraphraser's understanding of their partner's statement but also to support him or her to make their point clearly. Paraphrasing of this type also shows that the paraphrasers are being attentive to their partners. In contrast to the former type, because the content of the paraphrase is not familiar to the paraphraser, we can see that there is some element of uncertainty and hesitation when this type of paraphrase is produced, for example, the use of hedges such as *nanka, toiuka*, and *mitaina*. Regardless of these differences, the study has shown that both types of paraphrasing in Japanese conversation create a better mutual understanding of the participants' stories by providing a well-formulated, easy-to-understand version of the original statements.

Instead of listening quietly and passively, Japanese speakers often spontaneously paraphrase each other's utterances. As a result of sharing utterances, what originally belongs to each participant respectively, such as their experiences, ideas, and thoughts, becomes open and accessible to both, and together the participants unfold a story. After all, sharing is about connecting. It was also revealed that the act of paraphrasing is a sign of closeness between participants in a conversation because it indicates how well they know each other and how safe they feel to access and restate each other's statements. While the question of where this highly collaborative and easily accessible style of conversation stems from requires further consideration—from both cognitive and ontological perspectives—this study has offered some insights into how paraphrasing operates in Japanese conversation. It not only contributes to the negotiation and creation of meaning but also affects the participants' interpersonal relationships by helping to create better mutual understanding. Paraphrase, as well as repetition, plays a key role in allowing Japanese speakers to create a bond and a sense of sharing with each other while developing a conversation collaboratively.

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