

# Co-creation of merging discourse in conversation between friends<sup>1</sup>

Kishiko Ueno

**Key words:** merging discourse, induce-fit utterance, take-over, repetition, addition, overlap

## 1 Introduction

People create feelings of closeness by conversing with friends (Tannen 1984; Otsu 2004). Particularly, sharing personal experiences in conversations enhances mutual understanding and bonding, thus providing the joy of togetherness. Furthermore, story sharing is a process in which the storyteller and the recipient co-create the meaning of stories. As a response, the recipient's reaction displays his or her appreciation and understanding of the story told by the storyteller. Accordingly, reciprocally shaped stories allow the teller and the recipient to reflect on their relationships.

This paper will demonstrate the process of story sharing observed in Japanese conversations between friends which will be referred to as “merging discourse” (Ueno 2016, 2017). Merging discourse is a particular type of *kyowa* or cooperative speech (Mizutani 1993) in which the storyteller and the recipient enter a merged relationship and speak as if they share a single mind while improvising a story. Conversational devices recurrent in merging discourse are called “induced-fit utterances,” which are realized by mutual induction of the adjacent utterances. They include repetition, take-over (i.e., an utterance that finishes the other's sentence), addition (i.e., an utterance that adds something strongly relevant to what the other has said by taking the other's perspective), and overlapping (Ueno 2016, 2017).

Section 2 begins with a brief description of *kyowa* (Mizutani 1993) or cooperative speech. Section 3 introduces the data for this study. Section 4 is a

discussion on the analyses of merging discourse. Finally, the findings of this study will be discussed in Section 5.

## 2 *Kyowa*

Among the most influential studies that examine differences between Japanese and English conversational styles are those of Mizutani (1993, 1995). Mizutani coined the term *kyowa* “cooperative speech” to refer to a conversational style in which the speakers cooperate in making an utterance, in contrast to *taiwa* “dialogic speech” in which each speaker completes his or her own utterances (1980). For Mizutani, cooperative speech is characteristic of Japanese conversation, whereas English conversation is marked by the use of dialogic speech. The following are examples of *kyowa*:

[1]

A: きのうは上野へ花見に行きましてね

*kinoo wa ueno e hanami ni iki mashi te ne*

“Yesterday (I) went to see the cherry blossoms at Ueno,”

B: ええ

*ee*

“Uh-huh.”

A: 時期が時期だから混むだろうと覚悟はしていたんですが

*jiki ga jiki dakara komu daroo to kakugo wa shite ita n desu ga*

“(It) is the high season, so (I) expected that (it) would be crowded, and...”

B: ええ、ええ

*ee, ee*

“Uh-huh.”

A: そりゃもう大変な人出でしたよ

*sorya moo taihen na hitode deshita yo*

“(It) was extremely crowded.”

(Mizutani 1995:5)

(English translation is mine)

In the example [1], the listener B frequently sends backchannels, even before the speaker A completes his/her sentence. By so doing, the listener B

shows understanding and encourages the speaker A to continue. In the example [2], the listener B anticipates what is about to be said and completes the speaker A's sentence.

[2]

A:きのうは上野へ花見にね

*kinoo wa ueno e hanami ni ne*

“Yesterday, to see the cherry blossoms at Ueno...”

B: ああ、いらしたんですか

*aa, irashita n desu ka*

“Oh, (you) went (there)?”

(Muzutani 1995:5)

(English translation is mine)

As shown in the examples above, in *kyowa*, cooperation among speakers is particularly important; they frequently send backchannel signals to display understanding and agreement, even anticipating and saying what the other is about to say. This type of conversation cannot strictly be called *taiwa* or dialogic speech, in which one speaker completes his or her utterance while the other listens, and they alternate with each other in speaking and listening. Mizutani (1993) illustrates the patterns of conversational development of *kyowa* and *taiwa* with the line figures below:

*Kyowa*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Taiwa*

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1 *kyowa* and *Taiwa*

As Figure 1 shows, in *kyowa*, one utterance is likely to overlap another, and it is as if two speakers co-create a single stream of speech, while in *taiwa* conver-

sation develops in such a way that two lines flow independently.

Ever since Mizutani (1980) introduced the concepts of *kyowa* and *taiwa*, many researchers (Maynard 1993; Horiguchi 1997; Yamada 1990, 1997) have claimed that listeners in Japanese conversation play a more active role than those in English conversation. Yamada (1997), for example, wrote that Japanese conversation is characterized as Listener Talk, in which *sasshi*, or anticipatory guesswork, is crucial to fill out utterances reciprocally, while American conversation can be labeled as Speaker Talk, in which saying pays tribute to the individual's right to choose and own. Moreover, the data demonstrated that Japanese speakers are likely to take short turns and continue to distribute turns relatively evenly among participants no matter who initiates a topic. This turn-distribution pattern motivates Japanese speakers to organize topics more interdependently (Yamada 1990).

Those studies suggest that the *kyowa* type of conversation often observed in Japanese is characterized by communal exchanges between participants.

### 3 Data and Analytic Focuses

The data examined in the current study consist of thirteen Japanese conversations between two students who are close female friends in the Mister O Corpus<sup>2</sup>. All the participants belong to the same university in Tokyo, ranging in age from twenty to twenty-two (average: twenty-one). Each pair discuss the topic, "What were you most surprised at?" for about five minutes.

Since the pairs are asked to talk about experiences in which they were surprised, conversations are likely to proceed in such a way that one of the pair relates her story and the other listens. I refer to the person who tells a story as the "storyteller" or "teller," and the other person who listens to it as the "story recipient" or "recipient."

The transcripts are analyzed in order to identify the recurrent patterns in which a story that has been told is shared between the teller and the recipient. The special attention is paid on conversational devices that constitute the process of story sharing whereby the teller and the recipient attain mutual understanding and thus build closeness between them.

## 4 The Process of Story Sharing between Friends

### 4.1 Merging Discourse

The distinct phenomenon in conversation is that when the recipient shows her understanding and sympathy toward the storyteller, and in turn the storyteller responds to this, another story can be collaboratively improvised. At that time, we can observe a conversational phenomenon which I label “merging discourse.” In this phenomenon, the storyteller and the recipient enter a merged relationship and speak as if they share a single mind in creating a story. An example follows.

[3]

A: なんだろ、カラスぐらいおっきいと、けっこう

*nan daro, karasu gurai okkii to, kekkoo*

“How should (I) put this: with something as big as a crow, (it’s) quite...”

B: びびるよね

*bibiru yo ne*

“Scary, isn’t it?”

A: なんだろ、うん、人間ぽいとは言わないけど、動物って感じだった

*nan daro, un, ningen poi to wa iwanai kedo, doobutsu tte kanji datta*

“How should (I) put this: yeah, (I) won’t say (it was) like a human being, but (one) felt (it was) a living animal.”

B: しかも黒いしね

*shikamo kuroi shi ne*

“And also (it is) black, so...”

The example of merging discourse presented above is a verbal exchange between A and B that occurred after A brought up her experience of encountering a dying crow on the street. Although this is made up of four different utterances produced in turn by two speakers, when the entire conversation is given with speakers not labelled as below, it is difficult to tell which utterance was made by which speaker.

なんだろ、カラスぐらいおっきいと、けっこう、びびるよね、なんだ

ろ、うん、人間ばいとは言わないけど、動物って感じだった、しかも黒いしね

*nan daro, karasu gurai okkii to, kekkoo, bibiru yo ne, nan daro, un, ningen poi to wa iwanai kedo, doobutsu tte kanji datta, shikamo kuroi shi ne*

“How should (I) put this: with something as big as a crow, (it’s) quite... scary, isn’t it? How should (I) put this: yeah, (I) won’t say (it was) like a human being, but (one) felt (it was) a living animal, and also (it is) black, so...”

Utterances from the both sides converge in a single stream as if the teller and the recipient had a single mind. The distinction between the two speakers becomes blurred, and it does not matter from whom a given piece of information comes. In this sense, merging discourse is an extreme and special form of *kyowa*, cooperative speech (Mizutani 1993).

#### 4.2 Conversational Devices that Constitute Merging Discourse

The conversational devices that are prominent in merging discourse are provided below, with accompanying examples.<sup>3</sup>

##### (1) Repetition

Repetition is an utterance which repeats the other’s words or phrases. Moreover, there are cases in which speakers repeat their own words or phrases.

##### (1-1)

A: 怖い

*kowai*

“(It’s) scary.”

B: 怖いよね、普通に

*kowai yo ne, futsuu ni*

“(It’s) scary, isn’t it? Just plain (scary).”

##### (1-2)

A: びっくりするよ[ね

*bikkuri suru yo[ne*

“It’s surprising, isn’t it!”

B: [びっくりするよ

*[bikkuri suru yo*

“(You) bet it’s surprising!”

## (2) Take-Over

Take-over is an utterance that takes over the other’s utterance and finish her sentence. It results in two speakers co-creating one proposition.

### (2-1)

A: なんかねー、パンク系なの

*nanka nee, panku-kei nano*

“Well, (he’s) the punk-rock type.”

A: [でね、すごく

*[dene, sugoku*

“And, see, totally”

B: [イメージ変わっちゃった

*[imeeji kawacchatta*

“(Your) image (of him) changed.”

### (2-2)

A: で、旦那さんは親戚とすわってて=

*de, danna san wa shinseki to suwatte te=*

“And the groom sits over with (his) relatives,”

B: =目立つよね

*=medatsu yo ne*

“Stands out, doesn’t it?”

## (3) Addition

Addition is an utterance that adds something strongly relevant to what the other has said. It does not intend to elaborate or develop the other’s utterances dialogically from a different perspective but rather to expand the other’s utterances by taking her perspective. When an utterance is added onto a prior

utterance, they are connected together so that they will sound monologic.

(3-1)

A: ふん、光が丘やばいね

*fun, hikarigaoka yabai ne*

“Yeah, Hikarigaoka is nasty, right?”

B: うん、やばい、鳩もいるし

*un, yabai, hato mo irushi*

“Yeah, it’s nasty: like, there are pigeons...”

A: 人住みすぎなんだよ、絶対

*hito sumisugi na n da yo, zettai*

“There are too many people living there, definitely.”

(3-2)

A: カフェにいないも[んね、ふつう

*kafe ni inai mo[n ne futsuu*

“(Brides) don’t come to cafés, usually.”

B: [カフェ

*[kafe*

“Cafés!”

B: しかも、あ、アイスコーヒーで、とか

*shikamo, a, aisukoohii de, toka*

“And (they) even (go), ‘Oh, an iced-coffee,’ like that!”

(4) Overlap

Overlap is simultaneous talk by two participants.

(4-1)

A: イメージ[変わっちゃった

*imeegi [kawacchatta*

“(Your) image (of him) changed.”

B: [そう、すごい派手な子だから

*[soo, sugoi hade na ko dakara*

“Yeah, (he’s) a really flowery guy.”

(4-2)



- A: 偶然会って、[で、あ、久しぶり、ぜ  
guuzen atte, [de, a, hisashiburi, ze  
 “By coincidence, (I) ran into (them), and (we said), “Oh, it’s been a long time!”
- B: [すごい偶然でびっくりするよね／  
[sugoi guuzen de, bikkuri suru yo ne/  
“(It’s) really a coincidence, so (in such a case) one is surprised,  
isn’t it?”

These conversational devices, i.e., repetition, take-over, addition, and overlap, are what I collectively label “induced-fit utterances,” because these are realized by mutual induction of the adjacent utterances. That is to say, the preceding utterance induces the following utterance so that they mutually fit, as if they are in a key-and-keyhole relation. The idea of “induced-fit” is based on Shimizu (2003, 2004), who discusses a mechanism of co-creation of an improvisational drama by multiple actors.

In the following, I will examine one set of conversation containing a phenomenon of merging discourse where the storyteller and the story recipient co-create one story.

### 4.3 The Story of “A Crow on the Street”

In the story of “A Crow on the Street,” a part of which was presented earlier at the beginning of this section ([3]), the storyteller (T) talks about how she was surprised when she encountered a dying crow on the street. The teller told her story as follows:

Excerpt 1

- 01 T: なんか、おととい  
nanka, ototoi,  
 “So, like, two days ago,”
- 02 R: うん  
un  
 “Uh-huh.”
- 03 T: 学校来るときに=

*gakko kuru toki ni=*

“When (I) came to school,”

04 R:                   =うん

= *un*

“Uh-huh.”

05 T: 目白通りあるじゃん／=

*mejiro doori aru jan/=*

“Mejiro Street, you know?”

06 R:                   =うん [うんうんうん

=*un* [*un un un*

“Uh-huh, yeah”

07 T:                   [普通に歩いてたの=

[*futsuu ni aruiteta no=*

“(I) was walking along as usual.”

08 R:                   =うん

=*un*

“Uh-huh.”

09 T: そしたら、カラスの鳴き声がしたのね

*soshitara karasu no nakigoe ga shita no ne*

“Then (I) heard a crow crying.”

10 T: だから、あ、なんだろう、カラスがいるの [かなと思って

*dakara, a, nan daroo karasu ga iru no [kana to omotte*

“And, wondering, “What was (that)? Is there a crow there?”

11 R:                   [うんうん

[*un un*

“Uh-huh.”

12 T: ちょっとよけてみたの、したら、普通カラスが上にいると思うじゃん／

*chotto yokete mita no, shitara, futuu karasu ga ue ni iru to omou jan/*

“(I) stepped aside a bit. Then — usually one expects a crow to be overhead, y’know?”

13 T: したら、下にいて、カラスが、で、ひっくり返ってて

*shitara, shita ni ite, karasu ga, de, hikkuri kaettete,*

“But here (it) was down below, the crow, flipped over on (its) back...”

14 R: えー、ひっくり返っ[てたの／

*ee, hikkuri kaet[teta no]*

“Wow, did (it) flip over?”

15 T: [で、死にそう、だったの

*[de, shinisoo datta no,*

“And about to die, (it) seemed.”

16 R: へえ

*hee*

“Wow.”

17 T: で、なんだろう、虫が死にそうなのと違って、カラスっておっ

[きい、でしょ／

*de, nan daroo, mushi ga shinisoo nano to chigatte, karasu tte o*

*[kkii, desho]*

“And then, how should I put this: unlike when a bug is about to die — a crow is big, right?”

18 R:

[うんうんうんうん

*[un un un un*

“Uh-huh, yeah.”

19 T: で、真っ黒じゃん／＝

*de, makkuro jan/ =*

“And jet-black, y’know?”

20 R:

＝うん＝

*=un=*

“Yeah.”

21 T:

＝で、ひっくり返って、上向いてカーカ

ー言ってて、すごいびっくりした

*=de, hikkuri kaette, ue muite kaa kaa ittete,*

*sugoi bikkuri shita*

“And flipped over on (its) back going “Caw! Caw!” so (I) was really surprised.”

22 R: うわー、何それ {笑い}

*waa, nani sore{laugh}*

“Yikes, what are (you talking) about?”

23 T: 気持ち[悪かった {笑い}

*kimochi [warukatta {laugh}*

“(I) was disgusted.”

- 24 R: [気持ち悪い {笑い}]  
*[kimochi warui {laugh}]*  
 “Disgusting!”

- 25 T: なんか、えー、1人だったから、びっくりしたけど、声とか、あ  
 っとか言えば  
*nanka, ee, hitori datta kara, bikkuri shita kedo, koe toka, a toka ieba*  
 “And like, umm, (I) was alone, so (I) was surprised, and if (I) had  
 raised (my) voice and gone, like, ‘Oh!’”

- 26 R: うん=  
*un=*  
 “Uh-huh.”

- 27 T: =少し、緩和するけど=  
*=sukoshi, kanwa suru kedo=*  
 “(It would have) taken the edge off (my unease) a little bit...”

- 28 R: =うん  
*=un*  
 “Uh-huh.”

- 29 T: なんか、うっ、てな [ったから  
*nanka, u, tte nat[ta kara*  
 “But (as it was I could only) go like “Ugh!” and...”

- 30 R: [うん  
*[un*  
 “Uh-huh.”

- 31 T: すごい、なんか苦しかった  
*sugoi, nanka kusushikatta*  
 “(It) was super, like, unpleasant.”

- 32 R: ああ、もう、ドキドキだね、それ  
*aa, moo, dokidoki da ne, sore*  
 “Wow, that makes (our/your) heart beat faster.”

- 33 T: それが一番びっくりしたこと  
*sore ga saikin ichiban bikkuri shita koto*  
 “That’s what surprised (me) the most recently.”

- 34 R: {笑い} 最近び、カラスか

{laugh} *saikin bi karasu ka*

“(What) surprised (you) recently — a crow, huh?”

35 T: カラス、だって、死にそうだ [から、あがいてるんだもん  
*karasu datte shinisoo da[kara agaiteru n da mon*

“A crow, (I)’m telling (you): (it) was about to die, fighting for its life!”

36 R: *[死にそうなの初めてみ、[聞いた*  
*[shinisoo na no hajimete mi [kiita*  
 “(This) is the first time (I) ever saw  
 — heard about something about to die.”

From line 01 to line 33, the teller recounts her experience, and the recipient listens while frequently sending backchannels. When the teller describes her feelings that she had when encountering a dying crow, like *sugoi bikkuri shita* “(I) was really surprised” in line 21, *kimochi warukatta* “(I) was disgusted” in line 23, and *sugoi nanka kurushikatta* “(It) was super, like, unpleasant” in line 31, the recipient reacts sympathetically by sending an expressive response (line 22), repeating the same word (line 24), and interpreting and paraphrasing the teller’s feeling (line 32), respectively.

After the teller concludes her story in line 33, saying *sore ga saikin ichiban bikkuri shita koto* “That’s what surprised (me) the most recently,” the recipient actively participates in the talk. Lines 33 through 35 show immediate repetitions, and the adjacent utterances are tightly linked. More precisely, in response to the teller’s concluding remark in line 33, the recipient in line 34 displays her surprise at the topic the teller chose, “a crow on the street,” by laughing and saying *saikin bi* (the initial sound of *bikkuri*), *karasu ka* “(What) surprised (you) recently — a crow, huh?” The recipient seems to find the teller’s choice of topic unexpected. In line 35, the teller immediately repeats the word *karasu* “a crow,” and defends her choice of topic, saying, *karasu, datte shinisoo da kara agaiteru n da mon* “a crow, (I)’m telling (you): because (it) was about to die, fighting for its life!” The recipient in line 36, largely overlapping the teller’s utterance in line 35, repeats *shinisoo* “dying” and says *shinisoo nano hajimete mi, kiita* “(This) is the first time (I) ever saw — heard about — something about to die.”

*Mi, kiita* “saw — heard about” in line 36 is understood to occur because the



Receiving the recipient's display of acceptance of the story (line 36), the teller gives a big nod saying *un* "yeah" in line 37. Then she goes on to say, *sugoi ne, nan daro, karasu gurai okkii to, kekko* "amazing isn't it? How should (I) put this: with something as big as a crow, (it's) quite...", with her arms extending forward to outline a round shape. Then the teller instantly gets stuck for a word maintaining that gesture. While listening to this, the recipient repeatedly nods gazing at the teller. And then catching a short pause after the last word, *kekko* (quite), which is an adverb that should accompany an adjective, the recipient utters in a whisper voice, *bibiru yo ne* ("scary, isn't it?") in line 38. I call this phenomenon "take-over," where one anticipates what the other has in mind and says what the other is about to say, finishing the sentence. Since the recipient is not actually a witness of the scene, she adds *yo ne* (literally, "isn't it?") to *bibiru* (scary) so as to elicit the teller's approval.

Take-over is a phenomenon often referred to as "co-construction," and a number of studies have examined it in terms of syntactic units (e.g., Hayashi and Mori 1998; Ferrara 1992). Fujii (2012) categorizes what I call "take-over" as one variation of interactive co-constructions and names it "mono-clausal co-construction." As a result of her comparative analysis of Japanese and American English task discourse in the Mr. O Corpus, Fujii reveals that ten out of twelve Japanese pairs use this device, whereas only five out of eleven American pairs use it. This result reflects a tendency of Japanese communication to use devices that induce or require responses from a conversation partner.

Let us go back to analyze Excerpt 2. The recipient's take-over, *bibiru yo ne* "scary, isn't it?" in line 38 seems to be brought out from her sympathetic attitude toward the teller's feeling depicted in the preceding narration, such as *kimochi warukatta* "disgusted" (line 23) and *kurushi katta* "unpleasant" (line 31). The teller, latching onto the last part of the recipient's take-over, *bibiru yo ne* "scary, isn't it?" (line 38), repeats her own earlier word, *nan daro*, "How should (I) put this." And this is followed by *un*, "yeah," which is clearly pronounced and sounds like full approval of *bibiru yo ne* "scary, isn't it?" (line 38). The teller then says, *ningen poi to wa iwanai kedo, doobutsu tte kanji datta* "(I) won't say (it was) like a human being, but (one) felt (it was) a living animal" in line 39.

It becomes apparent that what the teller actually had in mind when she made a round shape with her arms was that the dying crow was like a *doobutsu* (a living animal). Thus, what the recipient's take-over delivered in line 38 does not seem to be quite to the point. As seen in this case, take-over, i.e., saying what the other is about to say based on anticipation, can be risky because one is never able to tell exactly what the other really has in mind. However, especially noteworthy here is that even if the content of the take-over is not exactly 'right' in this sense, the teller in line 39 does not turn it down; on the contrary, the possible gap between the teller and the recipient seems insignificant, and the teller naturally accepts the recipient's take-over so that the possible gap is woven into her utterance.

Subsequently, in line 40, the recipient says with laughter *shikamo kuroi shi ne* "and also (it was) black, so..." which also reflects the recipient's sympathetic attitude toward the teller's feeling described in her earlier narration (*makkuro jan*, "jet-black, y'know?" in line 19). Importantly, the recipient says *shikamo kuroi shi ne* (and also (it was) black, so...) in such a way that she "adds" her utterance on to the teller's previous utterance (line 39). This is what I call "addition." Addition is not an elaboration of a prior utterance or a supplement of new information from a different perspective, but it can expand the storyline maintaining the perspective so that the adjacent utterances sound seamlessly joined to it, as if the whole had been produced by a single person.

Let us look at the subsequent part.

### Excerpt 3

40 R: {笑い} しかも黒いしね=

{laugh} *shikamo kuroi shi ne*=

"And also (it was) black, so..."

41 T: =黒いし、すごい、でもね、可哀そうだった、やっぱ、死 [にそうだと、カラスだけど

にそうだと、カラスだけど

=*kuroi shi, sugoi, demo ne, kawai soo datta,*

*yappa, shi* *[nisoo da to, karasu dakedo*

"(It was) black, super (black), but anyway, (it) was pitiful, with (it) about to die — (I) mean, (it) was a crow, but..."



- 42 R: [あー、んー、ん、カラスだけど  
[aa, nn, n, karasu dakedo  
 “Ah, hmm, (it) was a crow, but...”
- 43 T: {笑い} 可哀そうだ  
 {laugh} *kawai soo da*  
 “(It) was pitiful!”
- 44 R: そうだったんだ  
*soo datta n da*  
 “Was (it) now.”

The teller in line 41 repeats the final word of the recipient's addition, *kuroi shi* “black” (line 40), accompanying it with an adverb *sugoi* “super (black)” in such a way that she shows a strong acceptance. At this moment, the teller and the recipient gaze to each other and nod simultaneously. Then the teller continues to say, *demo ne kawai soo datta yappa shinisoo da to karasu dakedo* “but anyway, (it) was pitiful, with (it) about to die — (I) mean, (it) was a crow, but...,” while the recipient listens incessantly sending nods. Then the recipient in line 42 largely overlaps and shadows the teller's utterance *karasu dakedo* “(it) was a crow, but...” as if she is mirroring input out loud. While doing so, the recipient still keeps nodding, and the teller also gives a big nod just as the recipient says *karasu dakedo* “(it) was a crow, but...”

In line 43, reacting to the recipient's prior utterance *karasu dakedo* “(it) was a crow, but...” (line 42), the teller says with laughter *kawai soo da* “(it) is pitiful!” repeating *kawai soo* “pitiful,” which she herself said in line 41. The recipient in line 44 shows acceptance of it. In this way, the teller and the recipient co-create and share the idea “even though it was (only) a crow, it was pitiful.”

## 5 Co-creation and Communion of Empathy

We have seen the process of story sharing between the teller and the recipient who are friends. When the teller recounts her experience, the recipient listens while frequently sending backchannels, sometimes expressive responses, repeating the same word, and paraphrasing the teller's feelings. After the teller concludes the story, the recipient more actively participates in the conversation which leads to merging discourse. In merging discourse, the teller

and the recipient co-create one flow of storyline through induced-fit utterances, such as repetition, overlap, take-over, and addition. In this phase, the distinction between the teller and the recipient is likely to become blurred, and utterances from both sides get interwoven. Because of this, the source of a given piece of information becomes immaterial.

A conversation has traditionally been viewed as an act of exchanging information based on the speakers' intentions (e.g., Shannon and Weaver 1949; Reddy 1979; Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987; Sperber and Wilson 1986). This view assumes "the rational nature of conversational activity" (Levinson 2000) and regards a speaker as a rational agent who bears "intention recognition" and "certain rational capacities, in particular consistent modes of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends" (Brown and Levinson 1987). Although it is argued that such traditional views can obfuscate conversational phenomena and distort their explanation (e.g., Sugawara 1996; Sadanobu 2015; Ueno 2017), they are still commonplace, even deemed self-evident. However, the phenomena of merging discourse observed in the data in this study cannot be properly explained by the traditional view of conversation since most of the induced-fit utterances do not deliver substantial information nor do they take the appearance of intentional information exchange. That is, they seem to be neither intentional nor rational.

How can we account for merging discourse? One of the possible clues to uncover its logic can be found in Tannen's (1989) claim. According to Tannen, the metamessage of rapport can be accomplished by repetition and overlapping, and at least some part of repetition and overlapping is automatic. Citing some neurolinguistic research (Gibbs 1986) as evidence, Tannen (1989) emphasizes the automaticity of repetition. Importantly, repeating what is heard with a split-second delay while inevitably overlapping the other's utterance is most demonstratively automatic. Such a repetition does not grow out of a pre-formed mental image but rather is automatic.

Tannen's (1989) claim provides significant implication to what is observed in the data. Repetition and overlap are part of induce-fit utterances pervasive in merging discourse. For example, the repetitions in line 36 in Excerpt 1 and line 42 in Excerpt 3 show the closest proximity to the preceding utterances, largely overlapping them. Those are not carefully choreographed negotiation

and do not seem to be made by speakers' intentions or rationality. Rather, they look like more autonomous response that is triggered by entrainment (Kendon 1970), as an outcome of a series of induced-fit utterances, which are often accompanied with mutual nods. Speakers in this phase rhythmically resonate and automatically entrain with each other's nods. In other words, speakers are in the state of corporeal sharing and conveying of rapport or sharing of feelings.

What the teller and the recipient are doing in merging discourse is not an exchange of information based on intentions, but rather co-creation of meaning based on "communion of empathy" (Ueno 2017). They enjoy sharing feelings associated with the teller's past event while generating comfortable atmosphere. By doing so, they enhance closeness and promote oneness.

## 6 Conclusion

This study demonstrated "merging discourse," in which the storyteller and the recipient co-create one flow of storyline. Merging discourse is a special form of *kyowa*, cooperative speech (Mizutani 1993) that happens at pivotal moments of heightened resonance and empathic connection between speakers. In conclusion, the logic of the co-creation of merging discourse is primarily one of pleasure or "communion of empathy."

### Notes

1 This paper is based on the fifth chapter of my doctoral dissertation.

2 'Mister O Corpus' is a cross-linguistic video corpus collected under a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (No. 15320054, 18320069, directed by Sachiko Ide, and 20320064, 23320090, directed by Yoko Fujii). It consists of three types of interactions — conversations, narratives, and problem-solving tasks — of languages of Japanese, American English, Korean, Libyan Arabic, and Thai. The data were collected at Japan Women's University in Tokyo, Japan in 2004 and 2007 (for Japanese, American English and Korean), in Libya in 2008 (for Libyan Arabic), and Thailand in 2012 (for Thai). All the processes and interactions were DVD recorded.

3 Transcription conventions are as follows:

- [ speech overlap
- / rising intonation

=	latching without perceptible pause
{laugh}	laughter
...	noticeable pause
■	repetition
---	addition
—	take-over
~~	overlap

## References

- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson, 1978. "Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena." In *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*, ed. by E. N. Goody, 56–324. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferrara, Kathleen. 1992. "The interactive achievement of a sentence: joint productions in therapeutic discourse." *Discourse Processes* 15 (2): 207–228.
- Fujii, Yoko. 2012. "Differences of situating self in the place/*ba* of interaction between the Japanese and American English speakers." *Journal of Pragmatics* 44: 636–662.
- Gibbs, Raymond W. Jr. 1986. "Skating on thin ice: literal meaning and understanding idioms in conversation." *Discourse Processes* 9 (1): 17–30.
- Hayashi, Makoto, and Junko Mori. 1998. "Co-construction in Japanese revisited: We do finish each other's sentences." *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 7: 77–93.
- Horiguchi, Junko. 1997. *Nihongo Kyooiku to Kaiwa Bunseki* [Japanese Education and Conversation Analysis]. Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.
- Kendon, Adam. 1970. "Movement coordination in social interaction: some examples described." *Acta Psychologica* 32: 101–125.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 2000. *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge: A Bradford Book.
- Maynard, Senko. K. 1993. *Kaiwa Bunseki* [Conversation Analysis]. Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.
- Mizutani, Nobuko. 1980. "Gaikokugo no shuutoku to komyunikeeshon [Foreign language acquisition and communication]." *Gengo Seikatsu*: 28–36.
- Mizutani, Nobuko. 1993. "Kyowa kara taiwa e [From *kyowa* to *taiwa*]." *Nihongogaku* 12 (4): 4–10.
- Mizutani, Nobuko. 1995. "Nihonjin to dybeeto: kyowa to taiwa [Japanese and debate: *kyowa* and *taiwa*]." *Nihongogaku* 14 (6): 4–12.
- Otsu, Tomomi. 2004. "Shitashii yuujin dooshi no kaiwa ni okeru pojtitibu poraitone-

- su: 'asobi' to shite no tairitsu koodoo ni chakumoku shite [Positive politeness in conversation between close friends: focusing on communication behavior in playful conflict].” *Shakaigengo Kagaku* [The Japanese Journal of Language in Society] 6 (2): 44–53.
- Reddy, Michael J. 1979. “The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language.” In *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by A. Ortony, 284–324. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Sadanobu, Toshiyuki. 2015. “Komyunikeeshon genri: gengo kenkyuu kara no nagame [Principles of communication: view from linguistics].” *Fundamentals Review* 8(4): 276–291.
- Shannon-Wiener, C. E., and Warren Weaver. 1949. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana.
- Shimizu, Hiroshi. 2003. *Ba no Shisoo* [Philosophy of *Ba*]. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai.
- Shimizu, Hiroshi. 2004. *Jiko ni kansuru Kagakuteki Kenkyuu* [Scientific Study of Self]. Tokyo: Ba no Kenkyuusho.
- Sperber, Dan, and Deidre Wilson. 1986. *Relevance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Stephens, Greg J., Lauren J. Silbert, and Uri Hasson. 2010. “Speaker-listener neural coupling underlies successful communication.” *Proceeding National Academy of Science USA* 107 (32): 14425–14430.
- Sugawara, Kazutaka. 1996. “komyunikeeshon to shite noshintai [Corporeality in communication]. In *Komyunikeeshon to shite no Shintai* [Corporeality in Communication], eds. by Sugawara, K. and M. Nomura, 8–38. Tokyo: Taishuukan Shoten.
- Tannen, Deborah. 1984. *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk among Friends*. Norwood, NJ: Albex.
- Tannen, Deborah. 1989. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ueno, Kishiko. 2016. “Yuugooteiki danwa no ‘ba no riron’ ni yoru kaishaku [An interpretation of merging discourse in terms of *ba* theory].” *Taiguu Komyunikeeshon Kenkyuu* 13: 18–34.
- Ueno, Kishiko. 2017. *Speaking as Parts of a Whole: Discourse Interpretation from Ba-based Thinking*. Doctoral dissertation, Japan Women’s University.
- Yamada, Haru. 1990. “Topic management and turn distribution in business meetings: American versus Japanese strategies.” *Text* 10 (3): 271–295.
- Yamada, Haru. 1997. *Different Games, Different Rules: Why Americans and Japanese Misunderstand Each Other*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

