

# The Japanese Negative Interrogative *ja nai*? and Insubstantial Identity of Japanese Self: On the Basis of Buddhism Philosophy\*

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## 1. Introduction

Recently there has been much criticism from linguists, anthropologists, and philosophers for applying an ideological framework of “modern” western languages in order to understand Eastern language practices (Nishida 1987; Suzuki 1997; and a panel of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference convened by Scott Saft, Sachiko Ide, and William F. Hanks<sup>1)</sup>). One of the most significant discussions held was that between linguistic anthropologist, Michael Silverstein, and Japanese linguist, Akiho Yamaguchi (2007), who argued that the history of western linguistics can be considered an instrument of logic and reason whose practice is owed to the influence of “modern” western ideas of enlightenment, such as those presented by the Baconians. The Baconians’ central belief was that rhetorical linguistic expressions such as metaphors were obstructions in the pursuit of scientific truth, and they sought to discover universal principles through focusing on logical and coherent aspects of discourse. As a result of this method, a number of important aspects of language practice (namely, the practical and social aspects of language) have been neglected. In the same discussion, Akiho Yamaguchi claims that such “modern” western ideas became the main stream of Japanese linguistic analysis, a fact that is evidenced in the example of the “nominative case” *ga*, which, as every Japanese speaker knows, does not always function as a “nominative” marker in Japanese contexts. Tsurumi and Ikimatsu (1968) also emphasize the importance of emic perspectives of analyses, and suggest that every cultural outcome — including languages, religions, and lifestyles — includes the inhabitants’ perspectives on their social world, so that their own philosophy — which is cultivated within the context of their specific society — is immanent within those cultures. Such criticisms remind us of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which points to the interrelated and interactional connections between languages and their socio-cultural world.

This paper is an attempt to support the claims of such criticism. Through reexamining the Japanese communicative practice of the negative interrogative from its emic perspective, I will reveal what is missing in the previous studies, most of which have employed the western framework. Specifically, I will first present an interpretation of self in the “modern” western paradigm, providing an overview of previous surveys of the literature. Next, I will conduct practical analyses of *ja nai* in task-management discourse, and show how the participant attunes herself to her interactant by

supporting the interactant's point of view in a way that could be seen to abnegate her identity. Lastly, in discussion, I will argue that this tendency to self-abnegate or to insubstantiate the self may be linked with the Japanese consciousness of self and other, which may be grounded in Buddhism philosophy.

## 2. Preliminary discussion

### 2.1 Previous studies on negative interrogative

The Japanese negative interrogative *ja nai?* (COP + NEG?) is an oral contraction of “*de wa nai ka* (COP + P + NEG + Q),” whose comparable English forms (i.e., “Don’t you ~?”) indicate the speaker’s assertiveness (Heritage 2002; Koshik 2005). According to Ikeda (1967), who found a similarity to the English phrase, the function of the Japanese negative interrogative is almost exactly the same as its affirmative meaning, despite its structure having an interrogative form. That is, the negative interrogative shows the speaker’s high degree of assertiveness and certitude regarding what he/she is stating. In this sense, it differs from the basic function of most interrogative forms, which is to ask the hearer for information. Similarly, Kawanishi (1994) points out that the negative construction *ja nai* attaches to the information about which the speaker is most sure. She thus names *ja nai* a non-challengeable modal. What is common in those previous studies is that they are greatly affected by the results of English analysis, and regard the function as speaker’s property.

Moreover, Miyazaki et al. (2002) point out that, in the case of the Japanese negative interrogative, the speaker asks the hearer for an agreement on the information about which he/she is most confident. Here again, they focus on only the speaker’s attitude to his/her proposition, thus offering no challenge to Kawanishi’s (1994) argument. We can infer from these previous studies that they consider the negative interrogative from a dichotomous distinction of speaker and hearer, and conceive it only from the speaker’s perspective, rather than from that of the interactant. Namely, they apply an English dichotomous methodology of speaker and hearer even in analysis of Japanese practice, so that they are simply aware of what the speaker — that is, the speaking subject — believes. We can thus assume that their focus is only a single point of “self” which is revealed on a surface of communication.

### 2.2 Western and Japanese structures of self

In the western paradigm, the speaker is the one and only center of language practice (Nishida 1987; Machida 2003; Shimizu 2006). According to the discussion between Silverstein and Yamaguchi (2007), the speaker is the *cogito*<sup>2)</sup> in which semantic thought is identified as an existence of socio-cultural interaction. Here, the *cogito* consists not only of nominatives in a semantic or referential sense, but also includes the speaking subject in the socio-cultural dimension. In other words, the semantic or referential dimension defines the socio-cultural dimension where the former covers on the latter. The Silverstein and Yamaguchi’s (2007) discussion demonstrates that the speaker’s self in the western world is a pivot of communication — i.e., it is foregrounded and identified as an inde-

pendent entity from everything and everyone outside of it. Kopf (2001), also addressing the relationship between this *cogito* and self-consciousness, writes:

While Descartes greatly contributed to philosophical discourse when he thematized self-consciousness and formulated the self-reflective and self-conscious “I” as the methodological starting point of the philosophical enterprise, I think his formulation reveals three fundamental weaknesses: First, He reifies the experiential “I” as thinking thing; second, he equates the *cogito* and the self; and third, he fails to distinguish between the *cogito* as “consciousness of” and self-consciousness as “consciousness of itself.” (Kopf 2001: 40) (underline mine)

This supports the claim that the concept of self is foregrounded, and is thus regarded as an independent entity in the western structure of consciousness.

Japanese philosophers and linguists (Nishida 1987; Machida 2003; Yamaguchi 2004; Shimizu 2006), in this sense, point out the dangers of adapting this western mode for thinking about Japanese communicative practices. They claim that each language is unique in structure, since each is based upon a particular way of thinking (a claim which may recall again the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). My idea, therefore, is that the Japanese understanding of the self and of consciousness is fundamentally different from that of English-speaking peoples, and this difference in understanding has profoundly affected the Japanese language on a structural level.

A number of studies on the Japanese language have been conducted which, by using a dichotomous framework of speaker and hearer, demonstrate the degree of the speaker’s certainty about his/her own statements. Such analyses certainly help pin down for us the exact functions of the negative interrogative *ja nai*. However, these explanations are not satisfactory when applied to real-life conversations. In the following sections, I will demonstrate the ways in which the Japanese ways of thinking about self and other are unique. Also, by reexamining practices of the Japanese negative interrogative from an ethnographical point of view, I will show how the ideas of consciousness are structured.

### 3. Data

The data consists of sixteen transcriptions of a task-management discourse between Japanese female native speakers<sup>3)</sup>. Pairs of informants were asked to rearrange fifteen picture cards as shown below in Figures 1 and 2 to create a natural story. The original work by Lewis Trondheim (2003) is the story of a main character who, faced with the challenging task of leaping over a cliff, is unable to successfully complete the task after a number of ludicrous attempts. We asked, however, that the informants continue their task until they finally agreed with each other that there was no correct answer. Their negotiations were videotaped by researchers. We arranged for two different types of groups, which varied depending on the level of intimacy displaced between participants.

The first group, or “in-group,” consisted of participants who were recognized as friends. The second group, or “out-group,” consisted of participants who had never met before. The total length of the data employed in this paper took about 126 minutes, and approximately 8 minutes were spent on each pair<sup>4)</sup>.

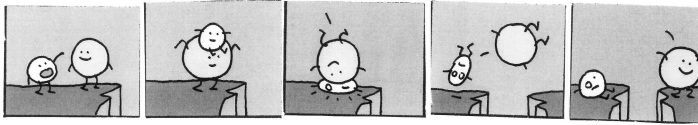


Figure 1. Sample of picture cards (“in-group”)

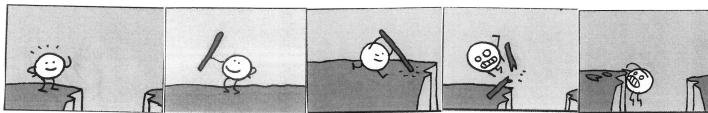


Figure 2. Sample of picture cards (“out-group”)

#### 4. Analysis

The data illustrates that the Japanese negative interrogative *ja nai* has the primary function of expressing an indeterminacy in the speaker’s recognition, rather than assertively requesting the hearer’s agreement. *Ja nai* allows for the speaker to entrust the termination of the procedure to the interactant, and allows for the speaker to not have to emphatically insist on the accuracy of her own statement.

Example 1<sup>5)</sup> is a conversation between “in-group” participants that occurs in the beginning of the negotiation. L in line 1 asks which of the three characters on the picture cards will come in first place.

[Example 1]

01 L: *Dare o saisho ni suru?*

who OBJ first P do

‘Who do (we) put first?’

02 R: *Kore da yo, kore.*

this COP FP this

‘This one, this one.’

03 L: *A, honto da.*

oh true COP

‘Oh, (that)’s right.’

->04 R: *Kore ja nai?*

this COP NEG?

05 R: *De::*

and

‘Aaand’

06 L: *De::, tanima ga [at-te::*

and gorge TOP exist-LK

‘Aaand there is a gorge.’

07 R: [*Tanima ga at-te::*

gorge TOP exist-LK

‘There is a gorge.’

In line 2, R proposes an answer to the interactant’s question. The proposal is preferably acknowledged by the interactant in line 3, but she uses a negative interrogative in line 4. We should not understand this negative interrogative to be R’s request for an affirmative expression from the interactant, because L has already expressed such agreement in line 3. Otherwise, she would not continue her utterances in line 5 until she receives a comment from the interactant.

What is happening here is that, she leaves room for further suggestions to be offered from her interactant by showing her feeling of uncertainty through the use of negative interrogative, even though she knows she is getting the addressee’s consensus. Conversely, she never imposes her opinion upon the interactant, but rather modestly approves of the interactant’s interposition as if to leave the decision-making to her addressee by dint of demonstrating indeterminacy toward her proposal. This is the point most worthy of mention — indeed, more so than those points emphasized in previous studies. In addition, what can be inferred from this negotiation is that the negation marker *nai* can play an essential role for creating indeterminacy: it allows for the addressee to feel enough at ease to repeat the negative form, so that the speaker defers from the stated opinion. Thus, as this example indicates, the speaker attempts to settle it as an opinion produced by both participants, through the means of showing her modest attitude toward the proposal. In other words, both participants share and consent R’s idea as expressed in line 4. As a result, in terms of evidentiality, they seem to perceive the source of the proposal as belonging to the common space of both participants’ consciousnesses, rather than only to that of their individual self’s or other’s recognition. This is also shown by the fact that the interactant L permits R to carry on her with her turn, without expressing any disagreement, and to take over the story as in line 6. Here, we cannot recognize the speaker’s identity. Even though her idea is accepted by the interactant, she still shows indeterminacy and attempts to abnegate her individual identity by not disclosing her evidentiality. Therefore, R’s proposed and L’s approved information exists in the common space of the two participants’ ideas, so that the phrase *ja nai* both enhances the attention paid to the interactant, and attunes each other’s recognition.

Example 2 below is a sequential organization of “in-group” participants, where the negative interrogative *ja nai* serves as an answer to a question-answer adjacency pair. While *ja nai* has been dealt

with in terms of the speaker's viewpoint — that is, asking for confirmation (Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyusho (Ed.) 1960; Hasunuma 1995 etc.) — this explanation has several limitations when applied to Example 2, in which *ja nai* serves as the addressee's utterance by showing her in agreement with the questioner.

Participants are talking about how they will tackle the given task. R takes a hint from L's utterance in line 1 that some cards look similar, and suggests in line 2 that it may work if they collect similar cards together. The R's suggestion is preferably acknowledged by L. L then takes part in collecting similar cards as in line 4. From this point on, the conversation seems to carry on smoothly within a sealed consensus.

[Example 2]

- 01 L: *Nan- kore to kore, onaji yoona mono da to omou kedo,*  
 what this and this same like thing COP P think CONJ  
*kore dooshita no tte kanji da yo ne.*  
 this what's-happening Q LK like COP FP FP  
 'Like- (I) think this and this look similar, but it is like "what's happening?" here.'
- 02 R: *Tashikani, zenbu koo yat-te matome reba i:: n da yo, onaji yatsu dake.*  
 right all this do-LK collect CONJ good N COP FP same thing only  
 'Right, (it) works well if (we) collect the same cards all together like this.'
- 03 R: *Kore, [desho::*  
 this COP+AUX  
 'This will goes with (the one I focus on).'
- 04 L: [*Kore<sup>a</sup> to, kore<sup>b</sup> mo da yo ne.*  
 this<sup>a</sup> and this<sup>b</sup> too COP FP FP  
 'This<sup>a</sup> one goes with this<sup>b</sup> one, right.'
- 05 R: *Kore<sup>c</sup> mo kore<sup>d</sup> da to omou?*  
 this<sup>c</sup> too this<sup>d</sup> COP P think  
 'Do (you) think this<sup>c</sup> one goes with this<sup>d</sup> one?'
- >06 L: ***Ja nai?*** =  
 COP NEG?
- 07 R: =*Kore-ppoi ne*  
 this-like FP  
 '(It's) likely.'

Here, I would like to pay close attention to lines 5 and 6. Questioner R starts the first pair part of the adjacency pair in line 5, and L answers with "*Janai?*" in response to it. It is obvious that *ja nai* here works by showing agreement to her interactant's question, rather than by asking in the form of a question for information (as is the usual case with the interrogative). This is also proved by

R's immediate utterance "*Kore-ppoi ne*" in line 7, where the final particle *ne* signifies a condition in which both participants share information (Cook 1990). Now, one question arises: why did the answerer not clearly state "yes" based on conditional relevance (Schegloff 1972) if she had agreed with the interactant? Let us compare an alternative expression — "Yeah, that's what I'm thinking" — which may be a plausible answer in English conversation. With this statement she would be able to display that her thought totally matches the interactant's opinion by showing that they have reached a consensus. At the same time, however, it could also convey the speaker's epistemic authority (Heritage 2002) — i.e., that she had already known it before the interactant proposed the question. It thus creates an individualistic atmosphere as if her thought should be distinguished from another. On the other hand, by using a negative interrogative form, she succeeds in encouraging the interactant's epistemic authority without revealing the individualistic atmosphere in making use of an up-rising question form.

Furthermore, such a response would display the answerer's harmonious attitude in support of the interactant. In order to recognize why *ja nai* is able to show the feeling of agreement without epistemic authority, it will help to consider the function of the negative interrogative, which has been pointed out in the previous studies. According to Miyazaki et al. (2002), the negative interrogative is a device used when the speaker requests the hearer to admit that the proposed information is appropriate — that is, when the speaker is confident of his/her own information. Although the addressee L in the adjacency pair does not ask R for confirmation from speaker's viewpoint, she is confident of the accuracy and appropriateness of the information preceding *ja nai*. Therefore, she can convey the affirmative message with *ja nai*.

It is particularly worth noting that the answerer takes over a part of the questioner's utterance. By simply saying "*Ja nai?*," she acknowledges the preceding information (i.e., 'this one goes with this one') while at the same time attuning herself to the questioner. We can infer from this negotiation that the answerer immediately grounds the questioner's information in her consciousness, thus finding a common ground. In other words, the information proposed by the interactant is promptly recognized and shared in both participants' common space of consciousness, as is expressed in L's harmonious reply in line 6. We can thus regard this L's behavior as an abnegation of self or of individual identity, so that she seems to behave as if both participants were one person. There is essentially no distinction between the self and the interactant.

From these examples, it is possible to see the Japanese conception of self as, in a sense, "insubstantial," since no clear boundaries between self and other are evident in either example. The participant in Example 1 conveys the feeling of uncertainty regarding her proposition — even after being approved by the interactant — and she attunes herself to the other while backing off from insisting on her original idea. Besides Example 1, the participant expresses her agreement to the questioner by using a negative interrogative, thus immediately establishing a common ground between the two. *Ja nai* thus succeeds in sharing presented information with the interactant by respecting the proposer's epistemic authority. Consequently, the information seems to belong to both participants'

common space of consciousness rather than their individual self's or other's recognition. Here we notice that the distinction between self and other seems beyond separation in terms of their communication, so much so that the conception of the Japanese self can be wholly abnegated or made insubstantial in their negotiation.

## 5. Discussion

My analysis has hopefully demonstrated that the Japanese negative interrogative *ja nai* indicates the speaker's adjustable attitude to the interactant by showing uncertainty toward her own proposition even after being approved, and by encouraging the interactant's epistemic authority, all the while taking over a part of the questioner's utterance in the question-answer adjacency pair. We can infer from these practices that the Japanese participant's recognition is apt to regard one's idea as that of both participants, rather than individualizing each thought and assigning ownership. In other words, they seem to share a common space of consciousness, so that they will not go on to the next step until the idea is shared in that space. Here, we cannot find a clear individual self, and the Japanese self therefore appears to be an insubstantial entity.

What can be grounded in this insubstantiality of Japanese self? I would like here to introduce a notion of self as understood in Buddhism philosophy. According to the precepts of Japanese Buddhism, the self is conceived as inherently insubstantial, or as an entity that "falls off into Nothingness" (Izutsu 1977). In other words, the "relative" self — which is always judged in comparison with something else — is not admitted (cf. Suzuki 1997). Izutsu (1977) gives us a noteworthy explanation on the self as understood in the native Japanese religion, Zen Buddhism:

The 'self' itself, the real subjective subject which goes on searching after itself, remains always beyond our reach, eluding forever our grasp. The pure subjectivity is reached only when man steps beyond the ken of the dichotomizing activity of intellect, ceases to look at his own 'self' from the outside as an object, and becomes immediately his own 'self.' (Izutsu 1977: 4-5)

What he points out is that the self is never a dichotomous part of object; in other words, distinctions such as "I" and "you" or "speaker" and "hearer" are not necessary to explain our behavior or the real world. Namely, the self itself is a more intricate entity, and is thus beyond such dichotomous distinctions — so much so that the independent self is not even recognized in Japanese conversation. I should point out that Buddhism does not deny the entities of "I" and "you" or "speaker" and "hearer"; rather, it holds such distinctions are never presented as final entities of the real world, but exist only as processes of non-intentional consciousness. In other words, the dichotomous distinctions such as "subject" and "object," "I" and "you," or "speaker" and "hearer" may exist only for the sake of expedience. Ultimately, however, this manifestation "regains its own original unity" (Izutsu 1977), which is the intrinsic state of the Japanese self. We can infer here that all things are beyond sepa-



ration in Buddhism philosophy.

Some may say that Buddhism is subtly imprinted in Japanese people. Upon closer examination, however, we can see that Buddhist phenomena are actually embedded in many facets of ordinary Japanese life, so that the Japanese are in fact well accustomed to its major tenets. Buddhist folkloric events are one example, among which is an annual event held in summer called “*Obon*,” in which family members and relatives invite their ancestral spirits to the home to be honored. When the holiday comes, they all assemble at the house where they and their ancestors were born, and spend time together with their ancestral spirits. Furthermore, Japanese are intimate with holding a folkloric Buddhist event named “*Hoji*,” which is a periodic memorial service for ancestors. Again, not only the family members but also the relatives participate in the events in order to wish happiness upon their ancestors in the afterlife, and to tell them that the living family members are all in good health. Since Japanese people frequently partake in such folkloric Buddhist events in their daily life, and conceive of them as ordinary ritual events, Buddhism philosophy can be understood as being “unintentionally” rooted in the Japanese consciousness. This is why it is often inferred that the Japanese share a similarly Buddhist conception of self, which serves as a sort of communal “common sense idea” (Hanks 2005).

We can find evidences of the Japanese insubstantiality of self in other linguistic features. The first evidence is that of the unmarked subjects in Japanese. As a number of studies have already indicated (cf. Ide 2002), subject marking is not obligatory in Japanese language practices. It is already clear from Examples 1 and 2 as well. Below is another example that clearly shows the unmarked behavior of Japanese subjects.

[Example 3]

01 L: *A, wakatta, saisho*

oh understand first

‘Oh, (I) understand, first’

02 R: [*Un*

yes

‘Yeah.’

03 L: [*Kono chicchai no de =*

this small N with

‘With this small one’

04 R: =*Un*

yes

‘Yeah.’

->05 L: “*Pyo:n*” to *ikoo to shitara, tsuburechatta n jan?*

*Onomatopoeia* LK go P do have-been-mashed N COP+NEG

‘(He) tried to go like “*pyoon*,” but (the small one) has been mashed.’

06 R: *Aa::*

oh

‘Oh.’

Example 3 is a negotiation of “in-group” participants where three different characters appear in their cards. After L attracts R’s attention in line 1, she starts to describe her idea in lines 3 and 5 as ‘With this small one, (he) tried to go like “*pyooon*,” but (the small one) has been mashed.’ Here, we recognize that two subjects in each clause are unmarked. Moreover, those unmarked subjects refer to two different types of characters — the main character “he” and “the small one” — in their cards. Nevertheless, interactant R has no difficulty in understanding what those references are, so that she expresses her acknowledgement in line 6. What is happening here is that she is recognizing those references depending on their contexts or “*ba*” (Shimizu 2006), which is the unintentional space for making expression<sup>6</sup>). Since she is fully embedded in the space where there stands no intention or consciousness between participants, it implies that both participants seem to share a single “*ba*,” i.e., the common space of consciousness, as we argued in the above section. This can be related to Ide’s (2002) discussion that Japanese speakers have an insider’s viewpoint — that is, that they are embedded in the contexts.

Another instance is the grammatical feature of the negation marker, which is posited at sentence-final slots. Such grammatical binding enables the speaker to turn her affirmative opinion into a negative sentence, depending on her interactant’s behavior or reaction at each successive moment. The example from “out-group” participants shows:

[Example 4]

01 L: *Nanka kore-tte saisho, ni, mitsukete torini ikut-te kanji, [ja nai, desu ka ne::*

like this-LK first P find get go-LK like COP NEG HON Q FP

‘It looks like, maybe he finds out (the stick) first, and, like, go get (the stick), or maybe not...’

02 R:

(reluctantly) *[soo desu ne::, kore wa, tabun,*

so COP FP this TOP maybe

‘Maybe so..., this one.’

In line 1, L embarrassedly states her opinion with frequent pauses. After saying ‘It looks like... maybe he finds out (the stick) first, and... like... go get (the stick)...’ she perceives her interactant’s reluctance in line 2, at which point she turns her affirmative statements into a negative — or at least an indeterminable stance — by saying ‘or maybe not’ at the end of the utterance. Here, the negation marker *nai* at the sentence-final slot encourages the speaker to mend her attitude before deciding whether or not to make the sentence affirmative. Consequently, she succeeds in attuning herself to her interactant, who may be uncertain of the proposal. This evidence illustrates the reluctance on the part of the speaker to willingly distinguish themselves from others, and thus shows

the insubstantial identity of the Japanese self.

## 6. Conclusion

The hope of this paper is to shed light on the elements neglected in the previous studies, most of which have applied modern western frameworks. We have observed from the emic perspective that the negative interrogative *ja nai* serves the function of attuning the speaker to the interactant by creating indeterminacy, rather than by showing the speaker's assertiveness or certainty regarding its proposition, or by requesting from the hearer an expression of agreement. Participants avoid clarification in order to make their independent identity inconspicuous, and to become merged with the interactant. In other words, even though one's proposition has already been approved, she does not continue to the next negotiation until the idea is shared in both her and the interactant's common space of consciousness. This illustrates that the Japanese concept of insubstantiality in practice serves to abnegate, or at least diminish, individual identity. We also demonstrated that *ja nai* was not always the speaker's property, but rather that it also played a role for the hearer, as was demonstrated in the question-answer adjacency pair shown in Example 2. While in the previous studies, *ja nai* is regarded as only the speaker's property, here we find that this is not always the case. Moreover, this supports the fact that distinctions such as "speaker" and "hearer" are not always necessary in Japanese negotiations — in fact, such distinctions between "speaker" and "hearer," "I" and "you," or "self" and "other" are inherently beyond separation. Because such distinctions are often precluded in Japanese conversation, it can be said that the Japanese concept of self is itself rather insubstantial, and participants behave as if they were indeed one single entity.

We then discussed that this insubstantiality had originated in the concept of Buddhism philosophy. According to the Buddhism philosophy, the self is inherently insubstantial so that there is no distinction between self and others. This insubstantial identity of Japanese self is not only a property of Japanese negative interrogative, but also of other Japanese linguistic features, such as the unmarked subject or the negation at the end of the sentence. And from observing the ritualistic, folkloric events of Buddhism — such as *Obon* or *Hoji* — we can conclude that the philosophy of Buddhism may be unintentionally grounded in the real world so that it is an embodiment of a "common sense idea" (Hanks 2005), which is immanent in Japanese people who share the common world-view of Buddhism.

## Notes

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference (Göteborg, Sweden), 8-13 July 2007.

1) The name of this panel is "Toward an emancipatory pragmatics: Culture, language, and interaction in cross-linguistic perspectives." They pointed out the dominant influence of western frameworks as follows:

Most, if not all, of the influential theoretical perspectives and analytic frameworks falling under the

label of pragmatics [...] have developed within western academia and have been predominantly applied to Euro-American languages. Despite occasional concerns about the application of these perspectives to non-western contexts, they nonetheless continue to be dominant in textbooks on pragmatics and language usage. (Conference *Abstract* p. 216)

- 2) As Kopf (2001: 40) indicates, “the *cogito* became a philosophical entity with Descartes whose declared project it was to find an indubitable ground of philosophy and of human knowledge.”
- 3) The data is collected under a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, for the project on “Empirical and theoretical studies on culture, interaction, and language in Asia” (No. 15320054, directed by Sachiko Ide at Japan Women’s University).
- 4) Although there are different aspects in the data that depend on familiarity of the participants, this study mainly focuses on language practice of Japanese negative interrogative.
- 5) Transcription conventions are as follows:
  - :: indicates prolonged sounds
  - [ indicates overlapping i.e. participants speak at the same time
  - indicates word spoken haltingly
  - = indicates latching i.e. participant starts speaking without perceptible pause
  - ( ) indicates word supplied to make English translation grammatical or intelligible
  - AUX = auxiliary, CONJ = conjunction, COP = copula, FP = final particle, HON = honorifics,
  - LK = linking word, N = nominalizer, NEG = negation marker, OBJ = objective marker, P = particle,
  - Q = question marker, TOP = topic marker
- 6) The similar concept of “*ba*” (Shimizu 2006) can be an indexical field, or the place or space where socio-cultural interactions are conducted on the basis of *origo* (cf. Silverstein and Yamaguchi 2007). It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to present the full-fledged discussion.

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