

# Talk and Body: Negotiating Action Framework and Social Relationship in Conversation

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## 1. Introduction

This paper presents a single case analysis of a Japanese mother-daughter interaction using the methodology of conversation analysis. It illustrates elaborate usages of body as an interactional resource in relation to the talk, specifically focusing on one sequence in which the body and talk are engaged in two separate sequences in order to negotiate the action framework of ongoing sequences. It will be argued that the practice is an embodiment of speakers' orientations to the micro context in which the ongoing interaction is managed and to the macro context in which interactants' long-term relationship is constantly negotiated, created and recreated.

## 2. Framework for the study

### 2. 1. Adjacency pair: the basic organization for coordinating action sequences

The adjacency pair is the most basic sequence of conversation, by reference to which parties to interaction coordinate and organize actions (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). An adjacency pair consists of two successive turns: a speaker produces an action in the first turn (first pair part, henceforth FPP) that makes it relevant for a next speaker to produce a certain responsive action in the following turn (second pair part, henceforth SPP). A FPP and SPP are coherently tied to each other according to the action framework that is specified by the FPP: a question makes an answer relevant; a request

makes a granting or denial relevant; an offer makes an acceptance or rejection relevant. By producing a relevant SPP, its speaker shows his or her understanding of the previous FPP, while moving the interaction forward. Thus, an adjacency pair is a minimal sequence of coordinated and coherent social conducts, which constitutes the foundation of intersubjectivity and sociality (Schegloff and Sacks 1973, Heritage 1984: 254–256).

In a simple case, a single action is performed in a FPP, and another single action is performed in a SPP. However, as Schegloff notes (Schegloff 2007: 9), more than one action can be performed within one turn as well. One such case is when one action functions as a vehicle for another action. For instance, one can ask a question which functions as a request or an offer (e.g., “Do you have the time?”), and an assessment can be a vehicle for a compliment in one context (e.g., “Your presentation was excellent,”) and for a complaint in another (e.g., “My neighbor is noisy,”). In this paper, I examine another way in which multiple actions are performed in a single turn. I focus on a case in which two modalities are employed to produce two different actions that belong to two independent action frameworks. The analysis demonstrates that the simultaneous deployment of body and talk is a resource to negotiate the action framework of the ongoing sequence, as well as the social relationship between participants.

## 2.2. Multimodality of face-to-face interaction

The fact that face-to-face interaction is inherently multimodal adds another layer to the organization of conversation (see Stivers and Sidnell (2005) for an overview of relevant literature). Researchers demonstrate various ways in which such modalities as talk, body, gaze and prosody are consequential to interaction. For instance, prosody is relied upon as an important resource for successful turn-taking (Schegloff and Sacks 1983, Ford and Thompson 1996) or for indicating the speaker’s stance (Sacks and Schegloff 1979, Local 1996). The body can perform an action with or without an accompanying verbal message: Passing the salt can, by itself, constitute a SPP to a request for salt. Kendon (1995) shows that gestures can enhance or modify the action that talk is conducting. It is not only the current speaker’s body that is relevant to the interaction, but also is recipi-

ents'. Goodwin (1981) illustrates how a current speaker modifies and shapes his utterance according to recipients' gaze and body orientation.

All these findings suggest that analysts as well as parties to conversation cannot grasp the full sense of what is happening if they take a single modality out of its context. Different modalities are relevant in face-to-face interaction, and to attend to them constantly is an essential aspect of our interactional competence.

This paper illustrates another way in which different modalities are deployed in conversation: how the body is used to launch a new sequence while talk is engaged in another, on-going sequence. It will be shown that the occurrence of the two parallel sequences is a strategic practice to modify and negotiate the action framework.

### 3. Data

Data for this paper are drawn from a video recorded conversation between D(aughter), her M(other), and her A(unt). D got married and moved out of M's house nine months prior to this conversation. M and A are visiting D. M brought D lots of food including a watermelon. A brought D teacups she made as gifts for D's American acquaintances. The relevant configuration during the segment on which we will focus (Segment 2) is shown in Figure 1. The teacups are not drawn here, but they are in front of

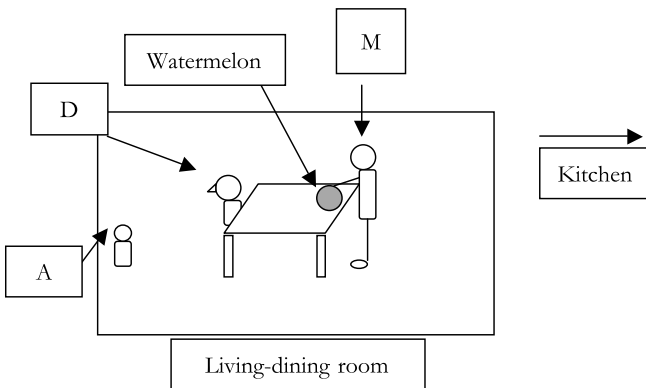


Figure 1: Contextual configuration

D on the table, occasionally held in her hands. A is off the screen, seated on the couch. At the beginning of Segment (2), D is sitting at the dining table, but her body is facing where the camera is placed so that she can talk to A.

Shortly after they arrived at D's apartment, M started to sort out the food. When D saw the watermelon, she complained that it was too big for two people (D and her husband) especially because her husband doesn't like watermelons because of the seeds. Then M offers to cut the watermelon into pieces so they would fit into D's refrigerator, and starts to do so on the dining table. At this point, M asks for a cling wrap as shown in (1);

(1)<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

M: rappu o dashi na; suika o watte ageru kara.  
cling wrap O take out FP watermelon O cut give because  
*Get me a cling wrap, because I will cut the watermelon for you.*

However, after an extended intervening exchange, M's directive for a cling wrap remains neglected and is forgotten by the time the segment (2) starts.

(2)

1 D: nihon no okashi toka ohashi toka mottette mo  
Japan LK snack etc. chopsticks etc. bring if  
*"taking Japanese snacks or chopsticks,"*

2 heibon daroo na to [omotte.  
ordinary CP FP QT think  
*"(I) think (it would be) ordinary."*

3 A: [n: : : :  
*"I see."*

[points at the melon —

4 M: [(h)s:- tane nai tane nai(h).  
seed no seed no

*"(There is) no seed no seed."*

[D gives her gaze toward M

[M steps toward the kitchen



- 5 [(0.8)
- [M turns back at D —
- 6 D: .hh ee doo shi yo demo-[e- kore wa yunomi ka.  
oh how do VOL but oh this TP teacup Q  
*"Ob how do-, but, oh, this is a teacup."*
- 7 A: un.  
*"Yes."*
- 8 M: <rappu>  
*"Cling wrap."*
- 9 (0.3)  
[M steps to the kitchen
- 10 [(0.5)
- 11 D: ra<sup>o</sup>ppu  
*"Cling wrap."*
- [D steps to the kitchen —
- 12 → .hh nanka, [watashi no kicchin o sa: wa(h)gamono  
like I LK kitchen O FP oneself's  
*"My kitchen,"*
- 13 → no yo(h)oni tsukawa naide [ne],  
N like use not FP  
*"Don't use (it) as if yours."*
- 14 M: [ehhe[hhe] =
- 15 = hhehhehhe .sss nanka urusai wa nee. hhhe  
like nagging FP FP  
*"(You are / She is) kind of nagging."*
- 16 .sshh hhe
- 17 (1.8)
- 18 M: sonna chicchai no shika nai no;  
such small N only not FP  
*"You only have such a small one?"*
- 19 [(0.8) ((D walks back to the dining room, gives M the cling wrap))
- 20 D: [urusa:i n da ke[do, hh  
nagging N CP but  
*"You are / She is nagging (but)."*



- 21 A: [ehh  
 22 M: .hh hh

#### 4. Analysis

Roughly speaking, three action sequences are found after line 3 in Segment (2): 1) a directive sequence in which M communicates her need for a cling wrap and D gets it; 2) a complaint sequence on the use of the kitchen; 3) a complaint sequence on the cling wrap. In what follows, I show how these three sequences are formulated through body and talk, and demonstrate that they are interrelated to one another, with special focus on D's turn at lines 12 and 13, where her body and talk are engaged in two separate sequences. Before we start to examine Segment (2), it is crucial to register some contextual contingencies.

Note that D has not responded to the utterance (1) (reproduced here as (1)') by the time Segment (2) begins. The way (1) is formulated and the fact that it was not responded to provide us with an insight into D's and M's relevant concerns that lead to the development of Segment (2).

(1)'

M: *rappu o dashi na? suika o watte ageru kara.*  
 cling wrap O take out FP watermelon O cut give because  
*Get me a cling wrap, because I will cut the watermelon for you.*

The first "turn constructional unit" (Sacks et al. 1974, henceforth TCU) (*rappu o dashi na?* ("Get me a cling wrap")) can be characterized as a soft directive that tells D to get a cling wrap.<sup>4</sup> However, the next TCU offers an account for her prior directive (*suika o watte ageru kara* "because I will cut the watermelon for you"). This TCU provides an additional framework for this turn. By indicating that she needs it not for herself but for D's sake (auxiliary "*ageru* (give)" explicitly marks D as the beneficiary), M embeds an offer in the directive. In this way, M "offers" to handle the watermelon for D, presupposing D's acceptance of it. Therefore, if D complied with this request and got M a cling wrap, she would implicitly accept the offer as well.

For D, allowing M to use her kitchen and being made to help M in it

could threaten her status as an independent housewife. D undermines this by not responding to (1), which then puts M in a difficult position. The daughter's refusal to accept the offer to cut the watermelon as well as to comply with the directive threatens M's "face" as a mother (Brown and Levinson 1978). M has to formulate her pursuit of a response to her directive to get the cling wrap carefully if she wishes to keep the conflict relatively covert.

With these delicate contingencies still up in the air, their exchange over a cling wrap resumes at line 5 in Segment (2). By the end of line 3, M has cut the watermelon. Although she seems to want a cling wrap at that particular moment, M does not simply repeat the earlier directive. Instead, she waits for the possible completion of the previous sequence between A and D and says "*tane nai tane nai* ((There is) no seed, no seed)", pointing at the watermelon (line 4). Then the moment D shifts her gaze to M, she makes a few steps toward the kitchen (line 5), and stops soon to look back at D. This coordinated use of talk and the body seems to be intended to draw D's attention to M and to the watermelon and thus may remind D that M needs something from the kitchen, i.e., a cling wrap.<sup>5</sup> However, when M looks back, she finds that D has already redirected her gaze to the teacups and starts to talk about them again (lines 6–7). M's second attempt to get D to bring her the cling wrap failed.

For her third try, M makes a more explicit move; she says "*rappu* (cling wrap)" (line 8). This utterance indicates her need for a cling wrap, but does not convey if she is reminding D to get it, asking where it is, or wondering where it is in a monological way without addressing D. Regardless, it is not formulated as a polite request. Here again, D shows resistance to meet M's need; she raises her gaze slowly and directs it at the watermelon and then toward M, while remaining silent (line 9). M takes this delay of response as D's unwillingness to comply (see Pomerantz (1984) and Sacks (1987) for the organization of preferred/dispreferred responses) and steps to the kitchen again. M's body movement is very communicative; it displays that she has dismissed the possibility that D will get the cling wrap and that she is going to look for it herself.

What happens in lines 11–13 involves an elaborate coordination of body

and talk. Here at line 11, D officially acknowledges M's need for a cling wrap for the first time by repeating M's previous turn ("*rappu*"). Then she sanctions M with the utterance, "*nanka, watashi no kicchin o sa: wagamono no yooni tsukawa nai de ne* (Like, don't use my kitchen as if yours)". At the same time, she begins to walk to the kitchen (lines 12–13). Although an inserted laughter token adds a somewhat joking tone to this utterance, it still sounds challenging and direct. Thus, D accomplishes two different actions through her body and talk in this turn: with her body, she starts to move to comply with M's directive by walking to get the cling wrap. Simultaneously, through her talk, she makes a complaint about M's prior action by verbally objecting to M's move to get the cling wrap herself.

To put it differently, this turn (lines 12–13) is a continuation of an ongoing sequence while launching another. Jefferson describes such turns as "pivotal". A pivotal turn that Jefferson illustrates has relevance to the ongoing topic and to a targeted next topic at the same time, and thereby, it can be exploited in order to bridge two topics in a "stepwise" manner (Jefferson 1984, as well as Holt and Drew 2005), and as a result, it makes less visible the fact that the previous topic is closed. The pivotal turn in the current case is different from those for topic transition in that it involves two modalities. Nonetheless, what the turn achieves is "pivotal" bridging two action sequences; D responds to M's directive (SPP of the ongoing directive sequence) and launches a new sequence (FPP of a complaint sequence) within the same turn. Consequently, it obscures the fact that she is starting to comply with M's directive, which resolves the dilemma she has been facing. She complies with M's directive, but at the same time, she is objecting to having M behave like the housewife in her home.

The directive sequence has not come to completion yet. The actual SPP to the directive is to give the cling wrap to M. When that is about to happen, M launches another complaint sequence. At line 18, when D has gotten a cling wrap and is about to hand it to her, M makes a complaint to D about the size of the cling wrap. It has the same effect as the pivotal turn at lines 12–13. That is, it makes it invisible that D is complying with M's directive. Thus, the action framework initially suggested by M in (1), i.e., directive-compliance sequence within which an offer-acceptance se-



quence is embedded, is challenged, negotiated and then altered throughout (2).

### **5. Negotiating action framework and social relationship: Intersection between micro and macro**

The previous section illustrated how parties to face-to-face conversation strategically utilize their body and talk in order to modify and negotiate action frameworks after the production of first pair parts. D launches a new sequence while responding to M's directive with her body, which allows her to reject the action framework suggested in the FPP by M.

The case can be better understood if we refer to a larger social framework in which the interaction occurred. I suggest that D and M were so concerned with negotiating the action framework because how they behave in the particular sequence in the particular interaction is consequential to their longer-term social relationship.

In her discussion on "holon" as an approach to language, Ide (2006) emphasizes the advantage of considering an entity (be it a speaker or a sentence) to be simultaneously a "holos" (the whole) and "on" (a part). She further claims that Japanese grammar orients its speakers to the whole and a part by requiring them to choose non-propositional markers. An utterance can be seen as a whole if we focus on its propositional content, but at the same time, it is a part of the context in which the utterance is produced. The interactional practice illustrated in this paper embodies the participants' simultaneous orientation to the whole and the part. They are concerned to manage the particular interaction as a whole with its own goal (to get cling wrap and handle the watermelon). However, if they were oriented to this goal alone, the exchange would not have been so complicated. It is their orientation to seeing the occasion as a part of their larger social relationship that accounts for the motivation underlying their elaborate conduct.

Moreover, "holos" and "on" interact with each other. Participants' conduct in an interaction is shaped by their social relationship, and at the same time, their conduct shapes their social relationship (see Heritage (1984: 241–244) for a discussion on the dual contextuality of social conducts).

The daughter and the mother in our data are in the transitional phase where they redefine and recreate their relationship after the daughter's marriage. Thus, such issues as who is the one to order, request, or offer what to whom, who has the right to whose kitchen are sensitive matters to be negotiated in turn-by-turn interaction and are consequential to the nature of their future relationship. The simultaneous deployment of talk and the body can be seen as a resource for them to attend to the interaction as a part of their social relationship while handling the occasion as a whole.

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#### Notes

1 The data were transcribed following the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (Atkinson and Heritage 1984). Symbols used are as follows:

- [ starting point of overlapping talk/  
nonverbal activities co-occurring with talk
- :: lengthened syllable
- , continuing intonation
- . falling intonation
- ˆ semi rising intonation
- (0.0) length of silence in tenths of a second
- hh audible outbreath
- .hh audible inbreath
- .ss audible dental inbreath
- = latched utterances
- °word° quiet/soft voice
- glottal stop
- <word> slowed/ drawn out
- words relatively stressed
- (words) words that do not appear in the original data but are supplied to make English translation grammatical or intelligible

2 The following abbreviations are used in transcriptions of this paper: CP =

copula; FP = final particle; LK = nominal linking particle; N = nominalizer; O = object particle; Q = question particle; QT = quotative particle; TP = topic particle; VOL = volitional.

3 In the transcription, the numbered lines represent the phonetic representation of utterances. The line above the numbered line is occasionally given to indicate relevant non-verbal activities occurring during the utterance. The line just below the numbered line is a word-by-word gloss, and the line below the gloss is English translation.

4 The final particle *na* in the sentence “*rappu o dasbi na*” (Get (me) a cling wrap) is described as a directive marker in a dictionary (Koojien), but it sounds softer than other directive markers such as *ro* or *nasai*, especially with the rising intonation as is the case with (1).

5 M’s turn at line 5 is also oriented to the fact that D is appreciating the teacups A brought her while having complained about the watermelon, and is not paying further attention to it. Claiming that the watermelon doesn’t have seeds, which is the reason why D’s husband doesn’t like watermelons, M seems to be attempting to win D’s appreciation for the watermelon. It is also interesting that M repeats the sentence twice (*tane nai tane nai* “(there is) no seed no seed”). Stivers (2004) reports cross-linguistic tendencies that multiple saying of a linguistic element like this utterance is used to suggest that the prior sequence should be closed. In our example, M produces a multiple saying even though their exchange about the watermelon happened quite a while ago in the conversation. Thus, it can be seen as M’s attempt to make her retopicalization of the watermelon sound as if it were the natural continuation of the previous talk, rather than an abrupt interruption.

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