Discourse-Pragmatic Functions of Repetition: An Analysis of Affirmative Token *hai* in Japanese Conversation

Maki Shimotani — **University of Wisconsin-Madison**
Yumiko Konishi — **University of Wisconsin-Madison**

In Japanese conversations the frequent uses of affirmative response tokens (e.g. *hai, ee*) are well-known. It is also commonly understood that they are often found as a repetitive chunk (e.g. *hai hai hai*) in casual conversations. Yet, the repetition of response tokens tends to be treated simply as a variation of single versions because it is generally assumed that such repetitions function only as emphasis. This paper focuses on the multiple-use of *hai* (i.e. multiple *hai*) in casual conversations; we demonstrate that the recurrent patterns of multiple *hai* are considerably different from those of the single-use of *hai* (i.e. single *hai*). We also argue that the discourse-pragmatic functions of multiple *hai* are remarkably unique compared to those of single *hai*.

First, regarding the distributional patterns of *hai* in our data, unlike single *hai* frequently occurring in sequence-closing positions (McGloin, 1998), none of multiple *hai* occurred as a sequence-closing device. Instead it occurred in other sequential positions, particularly it occurred to indicate that the speaker identified a specific object or a certain situation that another speaker is describing in his/her extended talk. Further, it occurred in sequence-initial positions as a response toward another speaker's story preface. In the following example, in response to A's story preface (line 1) (Jefferson 1978), B displays his understanding using multiple *hai* (line 2).

Multiple *hai* as a preface to the interlocutor's extended talk **(A and B talk in *da*(casual)-form)**

1.	A:	なんかゼミでさ：：,小学生のさ：：,ボランティアみたいなのやってんのね?
2. ⇒	B:	はいはいはい.
3.	A:	なんか.
4.		(0.8)
5.	B:	え- [ボランティアって何する系? =
6.	A:	[なんか. =なんかね:: 子供たちと遊ぶ系なんだけど,(continues)

These observations show that multiple *hai* does not merely serve as an acknowledgment, but it also serves as the speaker's 'display of understanding' *reflecting on his/her experiences/background knowledge*. Specifically, multiple *hai* can demonstrate the speaker's willingness to accept the new move just as single *hai* does (McGloin 1998). It can also show the speaker's expectation/anticipation of the interlocutor's further talk based on the speaker's own experiences. Hence, multiple *hai* indicates the speaker's strong 'involvement' in the current talk (Tannen 1989), which is frequently characterized by its prosody. Finally, we argue that 'repetition' is not simple emphasis but is firmly associated with the speaker's experiences and organization of knowledge. Therefore, collaborating with the roles of single *hai*, multiple *hai* plays an independent role in conversation.

References

Jefferson, G. (1978). Sequential aspects of storytelling in conversation, In J. Schenkein(ed.), Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction, pp. 219-248. New York: Academic Press.

McGloin, N. H. (1998). Hai and Ee: An Interactional Analysis. In Noriko Akatsuka, Hajime Hoji, Shoichi Iwasaki, Sung-Ock Sohn and Susan Strauss (eds.) *Japanase/Korean Linguistics*, Vol.7. pp. 105-119, California: CSLI.

Tannen, Deborah. (1989). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

List of Technical Terms

Involvement: According to Tannen (1989), mutual participation in sense-making activity generates 'involvement' by creating images. 'The particularity and familiarity of details [in talk] make it possible for both speakers and hearers to refer to their memories and construct images of scenes' (p. 135)