DISPLAYS OF CONCESSION IN UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEETINGS: CULTURE AND INTERACTION IN JAPANESE

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Abstract

In light of the tendency in studies of Japanese discourse and communication to account for patterns of social interaction in terms of cultural concepts such as wa ("harmony"), omoiyari ("empathy"), and enryo ("restraint"), this report sets out to demonstrate how much of an endogenously produced, local achievement social interaction can be in Japanese. To do so, the techniques and principles of conversation analysis are employed to describe how a particular social action, the expression of concession to statements of opposition, is produced by participants in a set of Japanese university faculty meetings. Although it is suggested that the very direct and explicit design of the concession displays could be explained in terms of concepts such as wa and/or enryo, it is nonetheless argued that the interactional significance of this action can be best understood by undertaking a detailed, sequential analysis of the interaction. The analysis itself is divided into two parts: First it is demonstrated that the concessions are products of the participants' close attendance to and monitoring of the details of the unfolding interaction; second it is shown that instead of turning to pre-determined cultural concepts to account for the trajectory of the interaction, it is possible to understand the concession displays by situating them within the flow of the interaction itself.

Keywords: Japanese discourse, Conversation analysis, Concession displays, Culture, Institutional talk

1. Introduction

Within research on Japanese discourse and communication, there has been a significant emphasis placed on culture. Most commonly, culture has been treated as consisting of a set of already existing concepts, such as wa ("harmony"), omoiyari ("empathy"), and enryo ("restraint"), that directly influences, or even causes, Japanese speakers to adopt certain patterns of interaction. For example, a number of researchers have posited that both wa and omoiyari are responsible for the frequent use of short listener responses (termed aizuchi

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2 Wierzbicka (1991) presents a much more comprehensive list of "core cultural values" that supposedly exert an influence on Japanese discourse.
in Japanese and often referred to as back-channels in English) in casual conversation (Iwasaki 1997; Locastro 1987; Maynard 1986, 1989; White 1989; Yamada 1992). As Locastro has written about wa, “the emphasis on maintaining group harmony ... would probably cause speaker-listeners to use more aizuchi (“back-channels”) to show willingness to co-operate in the conversation and to show support ...” (1987: 110). Concerning enryo, Goddard and Wierzbicka (1997), referring to earlier work by Smith (1983) and Mizutani and Mizutani (1987), have drawn direct correlations between this notion and the propensity of the Japanese to adopt indirect speech styles. As they state, “enryo inhibits Japanese speakers from saying directly what they want, and it also makes it culturally inappropriate to ask others directly what they want” (1997: 237). As these quotations suggest, cultural concepts have served as convenient ways of accounting for particular trajectories of Japanese social interaction, in particular, the tendencies to be cooperative, nonconfrontational, and indirect. And not only have these concepts provided ready-made explanations for patterns of Japanese interaction, they have also made it possible to juxtapose Japanese communication styles with those of people from western cultures, where the use of language is supposedly driven by completely different cultural values such as independence and rugged individualism (e.g. Barnlund 1987; Lebra 1976; Watanabe 1993; Yamada 1992, 1997).

Recent research on Japanese by scholars employing the framework of conversation analysis (henceforth, CA) has, however, begun to question the wisdom of using cultural concepts to account for the flow of Japanese social interaction (e.g. Lerner and Takagi 1999; Mori 1999; Tanaka 1999, 2000). These researchers have not by any means tried to deny the importance of concepts such as wa (“harmony”), omoiyari (“empathy”), and enryo (“restraint”) to the Japanese and Japanese culture, but they have suggested that attempts to explain interaction in terms of underlying cultural concepts can prevent analysts from seeing how intricately ordered Japanese social interaction can be. Rather than looking to correlate patterns found in the interaction with supposedly underlying cultural concepts, these conversation analysts have set out to probe the locally produced details of Japanese interaction itself, yielding results that have not necessarily supported the idea that Japanese and western ways of speaking are greatly disparate. For example, Tanaka (1999), in her investigation of turn-taking in Japanese, found the basic procedures used to take and allocate turns at talk to be strikingly similar to those implemented by speakers of English. Likewise, Mori (1999), in an analysis of sequences where participants negotiate agreement and disagreement, noted that the shapes of turns used to deliver disagreements in Japanese bear a strong resemblance to the dispreferred turns in English that were described by Pomerantz (1984).

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3 As the basis of her comparison, Tanaka used the Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) model of turn taking.

4 To be completely accurate, it should be noted that while Tanaka (1999) and Mori (1999) found similarities, they also suggested a number of places where the organization of Japanese and English conversation diverge. However, instead of suggesting that these divergences be explained in terms of culture, they stressed that they be viewed in terms of the relationship between grammar and interaction.
Following the CA tradition, this set of emerging studies has been emphasizing that instead of turning to cultural concepts, the key to gaining further insight into the organization of Japanese interaction lies in the detailed, turn-by-turn description of the actual practices through which social actions are accomplished in natural contexts of interaction. In other words, these conversation analysts are beginning to recognize a need to treat social actions as local achievements at the level of interaction, as opposed to phenomena that need to be explained in terms of exogenous and supposedly underlying factors such as culture. In addition to the works mentioned above by Mori (1999) and Tanaka (1999), this line of inquiry has already produced detailed descriptions of how participants in Japanese interaction collaboratively produce talk (Hayashi 1999; Hayashi and Mori 1998; Lerner and Takagi 1999; Tanaka 2000), how they accomplish repair (Fox, Hayashi, and Jasperson 1996; Hayashi 1994) and how they construct disputes and arguments (Saft 2000; Takagi 1999). As these studies are beginning to make clear, the CA commitment to studying the minutiae of talk holds great potential for furthering our understanding of not only the complexities involved in the organization of Japanese interaction but also the social competencies possessed by speakers of Japanese.

In this paper, I hope to contribute to this emergent line of research by describing how a particular social action, namely, the expression of concession to statements of oppositions, is accomplished in a specific social setting, Japanese university faculty meetings. Concession, I will show, is accomplished in the faculty meetings in a very direct and explicit manner. Although I note that it would be possible to account for the explicit design of concessions in terms of pre-theorized cultural concepts such as wa or enryo, I nevertheless argue that it is necessary to treat the concession displays, in line with the principles of CA, as locally produced, interactional achievements on the part of the participants. In order to make such an argument, I divide the analysis into two parts. First, by concentrating on two features of concession displays, partial repetitions of prior turns and the linguistic item *aa* ("oh"), I underscore the degree to which the participants were monitoring the details of the unfolding interaction. The analysis in this part will show that the participants' close attendance to their own talk enabled the accomplishment of the action of concession in an orderly fashion. In the second part, I will situate the concession displays within the general flow of the meeting's interaction, showing that they served an important function in terms of allowing the participants to proceed with their basic agenda. Doing so will make it possible to develop an account for the action of concession not in terms of cultural concepts but instead in terms of the participants' need to attend to the work of the university.

Important to especially the second part of the analysis is recognition that the interaction is occurring in a specific institutional setting. Researchers of talk in institutional settings have stressed that social interaction in institutions can be especially designed so as to allow the participants to deal with and accomplish institutional prerogatives (e.g. Boden 1994; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992; Hutchby 1996). By presenting a description of some basic organizational features of interaction in the faculty meetings, I hope to suggest that the explicit design of the concession displays can be best explained by emphasizing the amount of work it allowed the participants to accomplish within the interaction.
2. Introducing the data and the action of concession

The data used in this study are taken from a set of monthly departmental faculty meetings at a private four-year university in Japan. For a period of fourteen months, from January 1998 through February 1999, thirteen meetings were tape-recorded. At the time of the recordings, I was serving as a full-time lecturer (sennin kooshi) at the university and was a participant in the meetings. I have thus far transcribed, with the help of native speakers of Japanese, nine of the meetings in full, yielding a total of approximately fourteen hours of interaction. These fourteen hours serve as the basis for the analysis presented in this study.

The meetings were attended by all eleven members of the International Department, a pseudonym for the department to which I belonged.5 As monthly occurrences, these faculty meetings provided the members of the department with a forum for exchanging information about many of the issues related to the general administration of the department, including the class schedules, the structure of the curriculum, the selection and admittance of students, and personnel matters concerning the interviewing and hiring of new faculty members. Typical of most university departments in Japan (and perhaps throughout the world), the International Department was composed of faculty members of different ranks and ages. Although Japanologists have long recognized the importance of hierarchies based on rank and age to Japanese society and also Japanese communication (e.g. Nakane 1970; Smith 1983), I will incorporate into my analysis only very little information about the ranks and ages of the participants.6 My decision to do so does not stem from a belief that they are not significant. Rather, it follows from a desire to concentrate the analysis on the sequential structure of the interaction, an analytic move that will, I believe, make it possible to underscore just how much of a local, endogenous achievement displays of concession were in this set of faculty meetings.

Interaction between the meetings' participants was by no means argumentative in nature, but, as I have described in a larger body of work (Saft 2000), it was not out of the ordinary for participants to produce statements of oppositions and for co-participants to pursue the point(s) of contention in subsequent turns by offering counterarguments, contradictions, refutals, etc. Excerpt (1) presents an example of how opposition was sometimes exchanged in the faculty meetings. It begins as Tanaka is in the process (lines 1-3) of explaining the procedures to be used for judging prospective students who will come to the university for an interview.7

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5 In addition to departmental names, all of the names used to refer to people in the transcripts are also pseudonyms.

6 In addition to social rank and age, gender is another social variable which reportedly has a profound influence on Japanese communication. However, I did not mention gender here because it turns out that all eleven members of the International Department were men.

7 Following other conversation analysts who work on Japanese (e.g. Mori 1999; Tanaka 1999), the transcriptions are organized according to a three-leveled system. I include the romanized Japanese in the first line, a word-for-word gloss in the second line, and then a rough English equivalent set off by single quotation marks. The transcription conventions and the abbreviations used in interlinear gloss can be found in the appendix.
In line 4 it can be seen that the Chair enters the interaction to oppose the proposal just made by Tanaka; he tells Tanaka that they will not be able to adjust the students’ scores. Tanaka, after a brief false start in line 6, responds by pursuing the opposition in lines 6-8. He counters the Chair’s by emphasizing that the adjustment of scores is important and that it will be done in a meeting called the kyooshitsu kaigi (lit., “classroom meeting”). In line 9 it briefly appears as if the Chair will concede the point, but, before this can be confirmed,
we see that he further pursues the opposition by expressing another opposition in lines 11-13.

But even though the participants in excerpt (1) are seen to be exchanging oppositions about a particular matter, such sequences, where participants initiated and then pursued opposition, usually did not last for an extended period of time in my data. There are some exceptions (I will present and discuss one exception in section 4), but it was very often the case that participants, instead of pursuing points of contention and creating extended arguing sequences, would react to statements of opposition by making a clear display of the fact that they are conceding the point. For example, as the continuation of excerpt (1) shows, Tanaka makes a move to concede the point soon after the Chair's opposition in lines 11-13.

(2) 1-22-98

14 Tanaka:  
\[ \text{hantei kaigi no toki (.) aa soo ka} \]  
decision meeting LK time oh that Q

15 Chair:  
\[ \text{nyuushi nyuushi wa nyuushi wa sono kaijoo} \]  
entrance exam entrance exam TM entrance exam TM that site

16 \[ f(*) \]  
'for the entrance exam, we do the grading at the site'

17 Tanaka:  
\[ f aa aa soo da soo da soo da motomoto soo \]  
oh oh that COP that COP that COP originally that

18 \[ datta soo da soo da \]  
COP that COP that COP

19 Chair:  
\[ jaa ii desu ne dotchi ni shite mo kotoshi ninzuu \]  
then okay COP FP either did even this year numbers

20 \[ sukanai kara amari shinakute ii to yuu koto ni naru \]  
few because very not do okay QT say thing become

21 \[ to omou n da kedo (.) eeto hai sensei ato wa QT think NOM COP but SF yes teacher after TM \]

22 \[ hookoku nai n desu ka \]  
report not have NOM COP Q

then, it's clear, either way, this year the number of interviewees will be few so I don't think we will have so many to judge, but (.) um, yes, Professor Tanaka, are you finished with your report?"

In response to the Chair’s pursuit of opposition in lines 11-13 (shown in excerpt (1)), Tanaka first repeats in line 14 part of the Chair's prior turn and, after a micropause, utters the phrase \textit{aa soo ka} (“oh, yeah”). Then, following further elaboration by the Chair in lines 15-16, Tanaka continues in lines 17-18 to make a very explicit display of the fact that he agrees with the Chair. I say “very explicit” because Tanaka states the phrase \textit{soo da} (“that's right”) three times and next uses the past tense in the phrase \textit{motomoto soo datta} (“that's the way it has always been”), before stating \textit{soo da} (“that’s right”) two final times. That this agreement is understood to be a concession is evident by the Chair's response in lines
19-22. Using the phrase *ja a ii desu ne* (“then, it’s clear”) to preface his turn in line 19, the Chair displays his understanding that Tanaka’s concession has brought conclusion to this point. And taking this brief arguing sequence to be finished, he then moves in lines 21-22 to ask Tanaka if he has any other pieces of information to report. With multiple expressions of agreement, the concession display by Tanaka in (2) is more exaggerated than most instances in my data, but it nonetheless is indicative of the direct and explicit way that concessions to statements of opposition are generally accomplished in this set of faculty meetings. Excerpt (3) provides another illustration. This excerpt begins as Tanaka is in the process of explaining the need to devise some method for dividing first-year students into English classes according to ability.

(3) 7-8-98
1  Tanaka: *dakara sono nooryokubetsu ni yaru sono nooryokubetsu*
   thus that divided by ability do that divided by ability
2  no yaru: ano: konkyo wa nani nani ni motte (ku)
   LK do SF basis TM what what bring
   ‘thus dividing (the students) by ability, in order to divide by ability, we need some basis for doing so’
3  Chair: *iya sore wa maa zenki no seiseki ka nanka ni:*
   no that TM SF first semester LK grades Q something
   ‘no, well, you could use the first semester’s grades or something’
4  Tanaka: =*iya ano: sore wa ano: ichinen wa ii kedo iya ichiban*
   no SF that TM SF one year TM okay but no first
5  saisho no (*) wa komatchau n da yo=
   first LK TM become problematic NOM COP FP
   ‘no, um about that um after one year it is okay but for the first (*), it will be problematic’
6  Chair: =*aa i-ichinen no ichiban saisho no (wa) soo da ne*
   oh one year LK first first LK TM right COP FP
7  nanika [iru n da ne
   something need NOM COP FP
   ‘oh, the first semester of the year, that’s right, something is needed isn’t it’
8  Tanaka: [soo soo da kara kangaeta no wa
   right right thus thought NOM LK
9  jitsuryokutesuto de wakereba ii no ka na
   aptitude test by if divide okay NOM Q FP
   ‘right, right, that’s why I have thought that a proficiency test might be a good way to divide them’

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8 Later in the analysis, I will discuss the importance of reports (*hookoku*) to interaction in the meeting.
It is not clear that the participants have actually exchanged opposition in this excerpt; the Chair's utterance in line 3 begins with the linguistic item *iya* ("no"), which can often be followed by a statement of opposition (Saft 1998, 2000), but his immediately subsequent utterance *sore wa maa zenki no seiseki ka nanka ni* ("well, you could use the first semester grades or something like that") would seem to be more of a suggestion rather than a statement opposing Tanaka's prior spate of talk. Nevertheless, it can be seen that Tanaka in line 4 does react to the Chair's suggestion by opposing it; he notes that it would not work for classes held in the first semester. As soon as Tanaka finishes uttering the word *komatchau* ("it is a problem"), the Chair produces an utterance in lines 6-7 which makes his concession visible. Like Tanaka in excerpt (2), he uses the deictic expression *soo* ("that") (as a part of the expression *soo da ne nanika iru n da ne* ("that's right something is necessary")) to display the fact that he agrees with the prior statement of opposition. But unlike Tanaka in excerpt (2), the Chair does not use multiple expressions of agreement. Still, his display is apparently just as effective in terms of the action of concession; Tanaka in lines 8 and 9 takes the Chair's concession as an opportunity to go ahead and propose his own idea for making the class divisions.

In excerpts (2) and (3), participants displayed concession to statements of opposition by making their agreement visible. Yet, the point should be made that it was not always the case that participants used agreement to display concession. Excerpts (4) and (5) illustrate this point. Excerpt (4) shows an instance where a participant reacts to an opposition by explicitly expressing that he has "understood" the point and excerpt (5) an example where a participant uses an apology as part of his concession. In both of these excerpts it is clear that the participants have not exchanged opposition, which is indicative of the tendency in my data of participants to react to statements of opposition with explicit displays of concession rather than with refutations, counterarguments, and other moves that might lead to an extended arguing sequence.

(4) 2-12-98
1 Kato:  *kyooikuteki (*) tte yuu to: jakkan no kono: (;) choose* educational QT say if few LK this adjustment 2 *tte yuu no wa: (;) yappari ano (.8) atte mo ii na tte* QT say NOM TM indeed SF have even good FP QT 3 *yuu kangæ mo arimasu kedo* say think also have but 'if we are talking about the educational (*), I think it would be good (;) to have a few adjustments (;) surely, um (8) one way of thinking is that it would be good to have them' 4 Tanaka: *iya sore wa sore wa hora (*) wareware no* no that TM that TM look our LK 5 *shinsa no dankai de tsukuru wake da kara (;) un da kara* check LK stage make reason COP because yes thus 6 *ooyake ni shite shimatta ato kara* official to make completely later from 7 *kawaru koto toka nai wake da kara* change thing and the like not have reason COP because 'no, about that, about that (*), we will prepare it at the stage when we make our own judgement (;) so after we have made it official, there will not be any changes'
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8  Kato:  "aa soo ka soo ka"
oh that Q that Q
‘oh, yeah, yeah’
9  Tanaka:  "kyooshtsu kaigi  [de yaru wake da kara=
classroom meeting  do reason COP because
‘in the classroom meeting, we will do that’
10 Kato:  "hai:
‘yes’
11 → Kato:  "hai wakarimashita
‘yes I understand’
12 Chair:  "jaa katoo-sensei ato hookoku wa ii n desu ka
then Prof. Kato after report TM okay NOM COP Q
‘then, Professor Kato, are you finished with all of your report’
13 Kato:  "hai
‘yes’

(5) 1-22-98
1  Chair:  "nigatsu no (.5) nan dakke (.5) nigatsu no tooka (.5) no sanji
February LK what COP Feb. LK 10th LK 3:00
2  desu kokusai kono heya de yarimasu emu no kyuu ni yon
COP International this room in do M LK 9 2 4
3  (.5) de kore wa (.5) tabun suuji no retsu ga narandete (1)
in this TM maybe number LK column S line up
4  ue kara toreru kazu shika torainai n desu kedo maa
top from can take number only not take NOM COP but SF
5  tonikaku zenin inai to mazui n de (.5) yoroshiku onegai
anyway all not here if bad NOM COP good favor
6  shimasu
do
‘February (.5) what was that (.5) Feb. 10th (.5) at 3:00,
in the International Dept., in this room, M924, we will (.5) do it
and (.5) probably all the numbers will be arranged in one column,
starting from the top, we can only take as many as they tell us to
take, anyway everybody has to be here (.5) and so I will
appreciate your attendance’
7  Tanaka:  "iya dakara so- sore wa sotsugyoo hantei [kaigi
no thus that TM graduate judge meeting
‘no, that is the graduation judgement meeting’
8 → Chair:  "aa aa sotsugyoo
oh oh graduation
9 →  hantei kaigi gomen nasai kore wa dakara nigatsu tooka wa
judge meeting sorry this TM thus Feb. 10th TM
nyuushi hantei kaigi desu yo ne yarikata
entrance exam judgement meeting COP FP FP way of doing
10

wa chigaimasu yo ne tonikaku daiji na kaigi desu
TM different FP FP anyway important LK meeting COP
11

no de atsumatte kudasai (.7) de moo hitotsu hokoku
because gather please and more one report
12

jikoo arimasu ga...
matter have but

‘oh, oh, the graduation judgement meeting, I am sorry, this, so
February 10th is the judgement meeting for the entrance exam (not the
graduation judgement meeting) the procedures used for those two
meetings are different, aren’t they, anyway it is an important meeting
and so please don’t miss it (.7) there is more piece of information to
report’

In both of these excerpts, it is the same participant, Tanaka, who produces an utterance
opposing the prior speaker’s statement (lines 4-7 of excerpt (4) and line 7 of excerpt (5)).
In response to Tanaka’s oppositions, it can be seen that in (4), Kato uses the expression of
understanding hai wakarimashita (“yes, I understand”) in line 11 and in (5) the Chair
employs the apology gomen nasai (“I am sorry”). Like excerpts (2) and (3), the participants
themselves interpret these explicit displays of concession as bringing closure to the point
of the opposition. In (4), the Chair in line 12 understands Kato’s current point to be
finished by asking whether he has any additional matters to report, and in (5), the Chair in
lines 11-13, after reminding the participants not to miss the meeting, moves on to the next
part of his report. Thus, while the particular moves used to accomplish these concessions
varied, they were all apparently equally effective. They made it explicitly clear that the
participants were doing a particular kind of action, that is, expressing concession to a
statement of opposition.

Even though Japanese communication styles are commonly described as indirect
and vague, the explicit and direct nature of these concession displays could, potentially at
least, be easily explained in terms of Japanese cultural concepts. Considering the context
in which these concessions are delivered, namely, in response to statements of opposition,
their direct and explicit character might be accounted for by positing an underlying desire
to maintain or restore harmony or, just as conceivable, a desire to exhibit the virtue of
restraint. In other words, they could be accounted for by invoking an already existent
cultural concept such as wa (“harmony”) or enryo (“restraint”). After all, as I just
suggested, concession displays are moves which prevent participants from pursuing points
of contention with each other (or, to put it another way, allow them to display their restraint

9 Tanaka’s oppositions in excerpts (4) and (5) could probably be subsumed under the concept of
other-initiated repair. Such a categorization may be true, but the point should be made that these kinds of
corrective utterances sometimes engendered oppositions in subsequent turns. For example, in excerpt (1),
the Chair’s initial opposition soo yuu no wa dame nan desu (“we can’t do that”) in lines 4-5 is a similar type
of corrective utterance that elicits from Tanaka another opposition. Other-initiated repairs were, in other
words, one kind of utterance that could lead into an arguing sequence.
in not pursuing opposition). In addition, the tendency for participants to react to statements of opposition with explicit concession displays rather by pursuing the opposition into extended arguments could seemingly be easily linked to underlying cultural concepts that stress harmony and restraint.

However, without eliminating the possibility that culture is an important aspect of the interaction (a point I return to in the conclusion), I want to begin demonstrating that accounting for this particular pattern found within the interaction in terms of pre-determined cultural categories fails to capture just how much of an achievement these displays of concession are at the local level of interaction. I do this by first taking a closer look at the organization of the concession displays themselves and emphasizing just how much the participants were monitoring the details of the unfolding interaction.

3. Participants’ close attendance to the details of interaction

In order to underscore how much of an interactional achievement these concession displays were in the faculty meetings, I want to return to the excerpts of data shown in the above section and focus on two features, partial repetitions of prior utterances and the linguistic item *aa* (“oh”), that figure prominently in the explicit displays of concession in my data. To begin, I note that partial repetitions commonly occurred in my data in two interactional environments. One is in utterances that, like those found in excerpts (2), (3), and (5), are produced at sequential locations which are just prior to the expressions of agreement, understanding, and apology used to accomplish explicit concession displays. The relevant aspects of these three excerpts are reproduced below. In the first reproduced excerpt (labeled “Partial reproduction of excerpt (2)”), I have included a part of excerpt (1) as well in order to show which part of the Chair’s prior utterance is being repeated by Tanaka.

Partial reproduction of excerpt (2)

11 Chair:  *tsuke-iya tsukerarenai n da yo tensuu wa moo*  
   do no can’t do it NOM COP FP score TM already
12  *uchidasarete dete kuru n desu kara hantei kaigi*  
   come out go out come NOM COP because decision meeting
13  *no toki*  
   LK time
   ‘grad- no we won’t be able to grade them, the grades will be decided and merely handed to us, (what you are referring to is) the time of the judgement meeting’
14  *Tanaka: hantei kaigi no toki (.) aa soo ka*  
   decision meeting LK time oh that Q
   ‘at the time of the judgement meeting (.) oh, yeah’
15 Chair:  *nyuushi nyuushi wa nyuushi wa sono kaijoo*  
   entrance exam entrance exam TM entrance exam TM that site
   ‘for the entrance exam, we do the grading at the site’
16  *Tanaka: faa aa soo da soo da soo da motomoto soo*  
   oh oh that COP that COP that COP originally that
In these three excerpts, it can be seen that prior to their explicit statement of concession, the participants repeat part of the immediately preceding statement of opposition. In (2) Tanaka repeats (line 14) hantei kaigi no toki (“the time of the judgement meeting”), in (3) the Chair repeats ichinen no ichiban saisho no (wa) (“oh, the first one of the first year”), and in (5) the Chair reproduces (lines 8-9) sotsugyoo hantei kaigi (“oh, oh, the graduation judgement meeting”).

The other interactional environment where these partial repeats commonly appear is within utterances which make it visible that participants, instead of conceding a point, are going to do just the opposite, namely, pursue the point of opposition. Excerpt (6) provides an example. It begins at a place where Yamada and Kida have already exchanged
opposition concerning a proposal by the university administration that will result in some faculty members moving out of the department and leaving it with a depleted number of faculty.

(6) 4-15-98
1  Yamada: ...gakusei ga wakaranaku nattara komarimasu kara
   students S not understand if become problem because
   ‘... it will be a problem if the students do not understand’
2 → Kida: gakusei ga wakaranaku nattara komarimasu kedo mo:
   students S not understand if become problem but
   it will be a problem if the students do not understand, but'
3  Yamada: hai
   yes
   ‘yes’
4  (;)
5  Kida: mondai wa soko ja nai n desu yo:
   problem TM that place not NOM COP FP
   ‘that is not the ultimate problem’
6  Yamada: hai
   yes
   ‘yes’
7  Kida: mondai wa: wareware no futan ga ookiku narisugitara
   problem TM we LK burden S big become too much
8  gakusei no sewa ga dekinaku naru deshoo
   students LK care S can’t do become COP
   ‘the problem is if our burden becomes too large, we will be unable
   to take care of the students’
9  Yamada: hai
   yes
   ‘yes’
10 Kida: jugyoo no kazu mo herasanakucha ikenaku naru shi...
     classes LK number also have to decrease become and
     ‘we will also have to decrease the number of classes’

After Yamada suggests in line 1 that it will be a problem if the students do not understand, Kida begins line 2 by repeating part of Yamada’s prior utterance. Yet, unlike the repeats in excerpts (2), (3), and (5), Kida in line 2 adds the contrast marker kedo mo (“but”) to the end of his repeat, a move which, as the subsequent talk suggests, has a significant effect on the flow of the interaction. Kida’s repeat plus kedo mo elicits the acknowledgement token hai (“yes”) from Yamada, which passes the turn back to Kida and allows him to continue on to produce an explicit contradiction in line 5 in the form of the phrase mondai wa soko ja nai n desu yo (“that is not the problem”). In short, then, Kida’s inclusion of the contrast marker kedo mo seems to have displayed to his co-participant that he is just beginning his
point, in other words, that he is going to continue on and utter an opposition. Yamada, I believe, orients to this fact by producing in line 3 the acknowledgement token hai and allowing Kida to go on and make his point.

In contrast, in excerpts (2), (3), and (5), where concession was displayed soon after the repetitions, the repetitions have not had this effect. In excerpt (2), for example, we can see that Tanaka's repeat in line 14 has seemingly had the opposite effect. Instead of employing an acknowledgement token to prompt Tanaka to continue, the Chair (the participant who had just finished uttering an opposition) uses Tanaka's repetition as an opportunity to take another outright turn in line 15 and elaborate on his point. In the case of excerpt (2), then, the partial repeat by Tanaka, rather than displaying a desire to go on and formulate another opposition, provides a sequential location for the Chair to proffer further support for his own point. We can therefore say at this point of the analysis that unlike partial repetitions that end with kedo mo (“but”), the partial repetitions found prior to explicit displays of concession are not treated as indications that the participant is getting ready to produce an opposition.

We can add to this analysis by noting that Tanaka's repetition in line 14 of excerpt (2) is followed by first a micropause and then the phrase aa soo ka (“oh, yeah”). Indeed, in addition to repeats, it is very common for utterances that precede explicit displays of concession to include this phrase or, at least, the linguistic item aa (“oh”); in addition to excerpt (2), we can see the use of aa in excerpts (3) (by the Chair in line 6) and (5) (by the Chair in line 8) and the use of aa soo ka in excerpt (4) (by Kato in line 8). Tanaka (1999), in her analysis of turn taking in Japanese, has considered aa in terms of Heritage's (1984, 1998) description of ‘oh’ in English as a change-of-state token. This likening of aa to ‘oh’ in English is useful for understanding the accomplishment of concession displays in the faculty meetings. As a change –of-state token, aa allows participants to display to their co-participants that they have undergone, or are in the process of undergoing, a change in their understanding. We could take this a step further and say, more specifically, that when used in response to an opposition, aa makes it possible for a participant to display at least the

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10 In my dissertation (Saft 2000), I have referred to the kind of utterance made by Kida as an “acknowledgement preface” and suggested that even though acknowledgement prefices often contain some expression of agreement, they are treated by the participants as only the beginning of a longer utterance that will be used to express opposition.

11 One reader of this paper noted that the flow of the interaction in excerpt (6) might be understood by making reference to the social ranks and ages of the participants. Specifically, it was suggested that Yamada's willingness to pass the floor back to Kida in (6) and thereby let Kida develop his point would naturally follow if Yamada were younger and of lower rank than Kida. However, even though I do believe that further consideration of the identities of the participants could potentially shed light on parts of the analysis, the relationship of social ranks and ages to the talk in this particular excerpt is quite complex. It turns out that although Kida is a full professor who occupies a high ranking position within the university, Yamada is the oldest member of the department, also a full professor, and has in the past held various high positions throughout the university. Accordingly, if it were the case that Japanese people acted strictly according to social hierarchies, then we would have expected Kida in this particular episode to show respect and deference to Yamada (and probably not oppose what he says). As I have discussed further in Saft (2000), although I have found some places where invocation of the ages and social ranks of the participants add to the analysis, I have at the same time found that consideration of these social factors, on the overall, does not make it possible to account for the details of the interaction.
beginning of an acknowledgement or acceptance of a co-participant's opposition. Okamoto (personal communication) has also suggested that when used as a part of the phrase *aa soo ka*, it could signal that the participant has remembered or recalled that the opposition being advanced is correct.\(^{12}\)

If we can accept the possibility that *aa* ("oh") serves as at least a display of the beginning of acknowledgement of a co-participant's point, then it is not surprising that *aa* plus partial repeats in my data never co-occurred with the contrast marker *kedo mo* ("but"). In fact, we might say that the inclusion of *aa* is an important way of distinguishing a partial repetition from a turn that is going to contain a contrast marker and be followed by an expression of opposition. Unlike a partial repeat –plus-contrast marker, which can indicate that a participant is going to continue on to produce an opposition, the use of *aa*, as a display of the beginning of acceptance, makes it visible that the participant is not going to go on and pursue the opposition.

Observation of how participants in subsequent turns responded to turns that contained either *aa soo ka* ("oh, yeah") or *aa* ("oh") alone will highlight its interactional significance as a change-of-state token. Excerpt (3), part of which is reproduced below, offers an illustration.

Partial reproduction of (3)

4 Tanaka: *tya sore wa sore wa hora (*) wareware no* no that TM that TM look our LK
5 *shinsa no dankai de tsukuru wake da kara () un da kara* check LK stage make reason COP because yes thus
6 *ooyake ni shite shimatta ato kara* official to make completely later from
7 *kawaru koto toka nai wake da kara* change thing and the like not have reason COP because 'no, about that, about that (*), we will prepare it at the stage when we make our own judgement () so after we have made it official, there will not be any changes'
8 Kato: *aa soo ka soo ka* oh that Q that Q 'oh, yeah, yeah?'
9 → Tanaka: *kyooshitsu kaigi [de yaru wake da kara= classroom meeting do reason COP because* 'in the classroom meeting, we will do that'
10 Kato: *[hai: yes* 'yes'
11 Kato: *=hai wakarimashita yes I understand* 'yes, I understand'

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\(^{12}\) The English translation "oh, yeah" has been chosen for *aa soo ka* in order to the suggest that a participant has experienced a "remembering" that the opinion being advanced is correct.
Kato in line 8 responds to Tanaka's opposition with the phrase *aa soo ka soo ka* ("oh, yeah, yeah"), a move which apparently prompts Tanaka to take a full turn in line 9 in order to further elaborate the point of opposition he had begun making in lines 4-7. Indeed, in my data, the linguistic item *aa*, either by itself or as apart of the phrase *aa soo ka*, was, when uttered in response to oppositions, commonly taken as opportunities by the participants who had made the original oppositions to occupy a next turn and elaborate their points. As a change-of-state token, *aa*, while not itself an explicit expression of concession, gives the co-participant the encouragement to offer further support for their points. That the participants were sensitive to the linguistic item *aa* as a resource which allowed them to make that elaboration suggests that they were closely monitoring the sequential details of the interaction as it unfolded turn by turn. Closer inspection of the brief arguing sequence shown in excerpts (1) and (2) above will further demonstrate the degree to which the members of the department were attending to each other's talk.

Combination of excerpts (1) and (2)

1. Tanaka: *shinsa o suru wareware kyoogi suru naka de ee su-judge o do we discuss do within SF*  
2. *kono sanjutten da keredo mo sanjyugoteni chikai are da*  
   this 30 points COP but 35 points near that COP  
3. *toka kedo chossei shimasu*  
   and the like but regulate do  
   ‘as a part of judging the students, um, we might find that although we gave them 30 points, the students are closer to 35, so we can adjust that’

4. Chair: *[soo yuu no wa dame nan]*  
   that say NOM TM bad NOM

5. *[desu] COP*  
   ‘we can’t do that’

6. Tanaka: *[so- iya iya un- sore wa so- sore wa kyooshitsu]*  
   no no that TM that TM classroom

7. *kaigi ni suru n da kara (. ) daiji nan da (. )*  
   meeting do NOM COP because important NOM COP

8. *datte sonoba tensuu tsukeru wake desu*  
   that place score mark reason COP
   ‘so-no, no about that, as for that, we can do it during the classroom meeting (. ) it is important (. ) because we will be grading them at the interview’

9. Chair: *aa tensuu=*  
   oh the grades  
   ‘oh, the grading’

10. Tanaka: *=ee=*  
    yes  
    ‘yes’

11. Chair: *=tsuke- iya tsukerarenai n da yo tensuu wa moo*  
    do no can’t do it NOM COP FP score TM already
Much like Kato's expression *aa soo ka soo ka* ("oh, yeah, yeah") in excerpt (3), Tanaka's utterance *aa soo ka* ("oh, yeah") in line 14 is used as an opportunity by the Chair to take the next turn (line 15) and add more information to his original opposition. The Chair uses this sequential position as a chance to tell Tanaka in lines 15-16 that grading at the site will take place at the time of the entrance exam (*nyuushi*). The Chair is able to use this point of the interaction - after Tanaka's repetition and use of *aa* - to take the next turn and elaborate his point precisely because he has been paying close attention to how the talk is unfolding. Tanaka, by constructing his utterance the way he did in line 14, has not given any indication that he is about to pursue the point of contention; he has, on the contrary, by using a partial repetition and the change-of-state indicators *aa soo ka*, indicated that he is, if anything, in the process of understanding or even accepting the Chair's point. Such a move by Tanaka thus makes the next position available to the Chair for his elaboration.

To offer one additional piece of evidence that will emphasize the extent to which the participants were monitoring the interaction, we can, once again using the brief analysis
of partial repetitions of prior oppositions and the suggestion that \textit{aa} ("oh") serves as a change-of-state token, go back and examine another part of the excerpt just offered. In line 9, the Chair, in response to an opposition from Tanaka, produces \textit{aa} and then a repeat of the word \textit{tensuu} ("the score") which Tanaka included as a part of his opposition in line 8. Tanaka then appears in line 10 to treat the Chair’s \textit{aa tensuu} ("oh, the score") as a move toward concession by producing the item \textit{ee} ("yes"). We, of course, have no way of knowing what else, if anything, Tanaka was going to say in this turn (before it was latched onto by the Chair), but his use of \textit{ee} ("yes") suggests a positive response to the Chair’s utterance \textit{aa tensuu}.  \footnote{\textit{Ee} ("yes") is one item that often functions as an acknowledgement token (\textit{aizuchi} in Japanese), an observation which suggests the possibility that Tanaka in line 10 was merely acknowledging the Chair’s utterance and passing the turn back to him. I believe, however, that such an analysis is not correct. Tanaka, and many of the participants, do often use acknowledgement tokens in responding to co-participants’ talk, but in my data it was always the case that Tanaka used the item \textit{un} ("uh-huh") and not \textit{ee} ("yes") to acknowledge an utterance and prompt a co-participant to continue. While quite speculative, a more viable analysis of Tanaka’s \textit{ee} in line 10 is that he was welcoming the Chair’s \textit{aa tensuu} as the possible beginning of a concession and that he (Tanaka) was preparing to elaborate more on this point. Such an analysis would be consistent with the idea that the item \textit{aa} plus partial repetition, as used by the Chair in line 9, serves to signal a participant’s acceptance of the point being advanced by a co-participant.} But before any kind of concession can be confirmed, the Chair in line 11, by latching onto Tanaka’s utterance in 10, makes it visible that he will not, after all, concede the point. After a false start, the Chair proceeds to reopen the argument by producing \textit{iya} ("no") and opposing Tanaka’s previous point (through line 13).

Thus, even though it might be true that Tanaka does make an exaggerated display of his concession in lines 17-18 of this excerpt, it cannot, I would stress, be considered just an automatic expression of agreement, somehow motivated by or easily explained in terms of pre-existing cultural concepts. Instead, it is the outcome of a closely monitored interactional sequence, in which the participants not only attend to the finest details of the talk but also display to one another their understanding that these details are crucial to the talk. Any invocation of a cultural concept such as harmony or restraint to account for the flow of the interaction would make it difficult to grasp the complex orientations shown by the participants in making these concession displays. In particular, use of cultural concepts as a gloss for this pattern of interaction would render it virtually impossible to see the intricate ways that seemingly trivial details of the interaction, especially repetitions and the linguistic item \textit{aa} ("oh"), serve as important resources for interpreting each prior turn and for ultimately accomplishing the concession displays in an orderly fashion.

4. Explicit displays of concession and the work of the institution

I have in the previous section attempted to demonstrate how much of an interactional achievement concession displays can be in the faculty meetings by describing some of the features involved in their accomplishment. In this section, I continue to demonstrate the need to treat concession displays in the faculty meeting as locally produced phenomena by describing some general organizational features of the meetings’ interaction. Doing so will make it possible to situate concession displays within the basic flow of the interaction and, in turn, understand the explicit design of the concession displays in terms of the
participants' need to attend to university business.

4.1 Some general features of interaction in the meetings

The first point to be made is that interaction in this particular set of faculty meetings centered on reports, which participants referred to as hookoku jikoo (“matters for reporting”) in Japanese. More specifically, the faculty members would bring with them specific pieces of information, which had typically been relayed to them as part of their participation on different committees throughout the university, to report to the rest of the members of the department. As was explained to me by other participants in the meeting (and as I came to understand through my participation), the general purpose of this particular faculty meeting was the exchange of information about matters pertaining to the administration of the department.

The job of eliciting reports from the faculty members fell on the shoulders of the Chair of the department, who in addition to giving his own report, also served as the general moderator of the meeting. As part of his job as moderator, the Chair would allocate “reporting spaces” to particular participants, prompting them to begin their reports. As designated participants begin reporting information, it was always the case that the interaction, to make use the concept of participation framework (e.g. Goffman 1981; Goodwin 1981; Heath 1984; Kendon 1982), would be organized in terms of what can be called a “reporting framework”, with one participant providing information to ten recipients. As excerpt (7) indicates, the ten recipients would remain basically silent as a part of this reporting framework. This excerpt begins as the Chair allocates in lines 1-2 a reporting space to Suzuki. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the excerpt into three parts, (7a), (7b), and (7c), according to the three pieces of information that constitute the report.

(7a) 1-20-99
1 Chair: ee shunin no hoo kara wa konna tokoro nan desu ga: SF chair LK side from TW that entent place NOM COP but
2 (1) kyoomuinkai
   Assistant to the Chair’s meeting
   ‘that is about all from my side, but (how about the) Assistant to the Chair’s meeting?’
3 Suzuki: eeto desu ne ga::kubunai ryuugakuse::i no SF COP FP within the School exchange student LK
4 desu ne () harugakki: () ee ukeire: ga sa::nin iru n COP FP fall semester SF take in S 3 people exist NOM
5 desu kedo mo: kokusai: ka:nkei de wa desu ne(). eeto COP but international relations in TM COP FP SF
6 hitori:() eeto Xdai no:(.) hoogakubu hooritsu one person SF X university LK law school law
7 gakka kara kuru: ee joshi gakusei de Satoo Fumiko san department from come SF girl student COP Ms. Sato Fumiko
8 tte yuu no ga():kimasu () sorede: ee:to ko:chira de
well, about the students coming to study in our School from other universities, for the fall semester, there are three that will be taking in connection with international relations (.), there is one from X university's (.5) law department, a female student by the name of (.5) Fumiko Sato (.5), and concerning us here (in this department) (1), she will not be taking Psychology of Information 1, but she will be taking Oral Communication (1) and (.8) Theory of International Relations (.) um (2) and after that, in relation to general education classes (.6) she can take Social Psychology, Thinking about War (.4) and a few English classes and the like (.4), so since that kind of person (.4) will be (.4) coming, I was told to inform you'

(7b) 1-20-99 (Continuation of above)

Suzuki: sore kara jikanwari no ken wa desu ne ano: kotchi no that after schedule LK matter TM COP FP SF here LK yooboo tsuatemashita (.4) de ee:to: issatsu ni matomete wish told and SF one page gather hishii tte yutta n desu kedo mo (.8) genkoo shinekiri want QT said NOM COP but manuscript deadline wa sorezore (.4) barabara de desu ne jikanwari toka TM each random COP FP schedule and the like saigo made kimara:nai: to yuu koto de: issatu wa chotto end until not decided QT say thing and one page TM little muri na wake: (1) da to yuu koto ni nari:mash:ita impossible LK means COP QT say thing became no de (.4) ee: ichioo gohookoku made because SF for the time being report as far as

'next, about the class schedule, um I told them about about our
request (.) um I told them we wanted to put it together as one document but (.8) but the deadline of the manuscripts are all (.)
random and so since the schedule will not be decided until the end, so because of that, one document is impossible (1) and that is what became of our request (.) and so I report it to you here’

(7c) 1-20-99 (Continuation of above)
23  Suzuki (1) sore kara ne: (1) ato wa chotto ano: ato de (.) nan
   that after FP after TM little SF later NOM
24  desu ga(:) saigo ni cho-chotto jikanwari o ima (.8) tsukatte
   COP but last chotto schedule O now make
25  mimashite desu ne(.) ee hijoo ni (.8) yayakosshii n desu
   see COP FP SF extremely complicated NOM COP
26  kedo (.). de ee: kono jikanwari wa rainendo wa mi-
   but SF this schedule TM next year TM
27  sanwari desu (1) yoo suru ni (.8) ano kyuukyuu kart
   three portions COP in short SF old old curriculum
28  to [kyuukari to ]
   and old curriculum and
29  Chair: [((laughter )) ]
30  Suzuki: yonensei no desu
   fourth year students one COP
31  (.). de chotto: ima konyuu o hajimeteru n desu kedo
   and little now this fill in O am starting NOM COP but
32  mo ano ato de chotto sekkaku atsumatteru no de
   SF later little gone to the trouble gathered because
33  kakunin o shitai [(desu)]
   confirm O do COP
   ‘next (1) we could do it a little later (.). but(.) as the final point, I have now (.8) tried to assemble (nex year’s) class schedule (.). but it is very (.8) complicated (.). and um next year’s schedule is divided into three parts (1) basically (.). the old-old curriculum and the old curriculum and the one of the fourth year students (.). and now I have begun to fill in the class but, um, later since we have everybody gathered here together, I would like to confirm (your classes)’
34  Chair: [ sore saigo ni?
   that at the end
   ‘at the end?’
35  Suzuki: ee
   yes
   ‘yes’
36  Chair: hai (1) ja kyoomuin kara: sonna
   yes then Assistant to the Chai from that extent
37  tokoro da to yuu koto desu kedo (1) ato: (.) nanika
   place COP QT say thing COP but after something
As these fragments indicate, Suzuki uses linguistic markers that neatly divide the report into three different sets of information. First, in lines 3-15, he informs the other faculty members about students coming to study in the department from other universities. Then, using the connective phrase sore kara (“and then”) in line 16, he goes on in lines 16-22 to report that although he had stated the desire of the department to put the schedule all on one page, this request had been denied. And once again using the connective phrase sore kara, in line 23, he continues on to his third point, reporting in lines 23-33 that he is currently drafting the class schedule for the department and at the same time asking the faculty members to confirm their schedules with him. Throughout Suzuki’s report, there is one burst of laughter from the Chair in line 29, but it can be seen that Suzuki moves through these three points with virtually no feedback, interruptions, assessments, acknowledgement tokens, etc. from the other participants in the meeting. This is to say then that throughout the report the interaction remains organized in a reporting framework. The Chair does take a turn in line 34 to ask a confirmation question, but it can be seen that the Chair in lines 36-38 treats this as the conclusion of Suzuki’s report and as an opportunity to move on to the next hookoku jikoo (“matters for reporting”). This move by the Chair is thus seemingly consistent with his job as the meeting’s moderator; he needs to control the distribution of turns in order to allocate reporting spaces to different participants.

With one participant dispersing information to recipients who remain generally silent, a reporting framework is seemingly well suited to allowing reporting participants to work through and accomplish their reports. Yet, while the three fragments in excerpt (7) represent one manner through which reports were sometimes accomplished in this set of faculty meetings, it was not the case that participant reporting spaces were always constituted by only a reporting framework. One prevalent aspect of the meeting’s organization is that listening participants would, in order to do such things as ask clarification questions, elaborate on pieces of presented information, make corrections, and utter oppositions, interject talk into the middle of reporting spaces that were designated for specific participants. Excerpt (8) shows an instance where a listening participant interjects clarification requests into a reporting space. It begins as the Chair first announces the completion of his own report and, like excerpt (7), designates Suzuki to be the next reporter.14

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14 To a certain extent, reports in the meeting followed a specific order. First the Chair would give his report, next the Chair would designate as the next reporter Suzuki, who occupied a position referred to in Japanese as kyoomuin (“Assistant to the Chair”), and then the Chair would open the floor to other participants. Typically, participants with pieces of information to report would signal their desire to be allocated a reporting space either by raising their hand and/or by uttering a statement such as hai Xten hodo arimasu (“I have about X items to report”).
Chair:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

(8) 4-15-98

1 Chair:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

2 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

3 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

4 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

5 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

6 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

7 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

8 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

9 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

10 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

11 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

12 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

13 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

14 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

15 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

16 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

17 木崎:

ええと、今日は木崎さんの報告についてです。

会場ではそろそろ次の係長の報告までですね。

報告はいまのところどうですね？

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grasp not do NOM S exist seems NOM COP FP FP
‘from the Culture Department there is one student taking an
International Department seminar class that they cannot seem to find’

18 Kida: *hai wakatta*
'yes understood'

19 Suzuki: *de: (.) nitenme wa: jikanwari kankei desu ga: ...*
‘and (.) the second point TM class schedule relationship COP but
‘and (.) the second point is related to the class schedule, but ...’

After Suzuki conveys in lines 4-10, as the first item of his report, a request from Professor Maeda of the Culture Department, Kida enters the interaction to request two pieces of specific information; he asks for the year of the student in line 11 and then asks what kind of third year student it is in line 15. As the transcript shows, Suzuki promptly responds to both of these questions by providing the requested information.

In terms of the organization of the interaction, it can be noted that Kida's clarification requests in excerpt (8) necessitate that Suzuki shift temporarily away from a reporting framework and engage in a two-party conversational exchange with Kida in order to provide him with the necessary information. This is indicative of what often happens in the interaction. Reporting spaces always begin in a reporting framework, but utterances that are interjected into reporting spaces by listening participants commonly prompt the reporter to shift the participant framework of the interaction. They move away from one kind of a participant framework, a reporting framework, and into a different framework, a conversational one.

In excerpt (8), it can be noted that the conversational exchange between Suzuki and Kida does not last for an extended period of time. After Kida explicitly states in line 18 that he has understood the clarified information, Suzuki reinvokes in line 19 the reporting framework in order to go on to the second item (nitenme) of his report. Indeed, although it was quite common for utterances interjected into reporting spaces to incur a shift from a reporting framework into a conversational framework, it was always the case that, like Suzuki in line 19, the participants would move to reinvoke the reporting framework. In fact, it was only by reinvoking the reporting framework that the participants could be able to continue making their reports and thereby proceed with the meeting.

In excerpt (8), then, the shift into a conversational framework does not amount to

15 Although I do not have the space to discuss this point in the main text, there is an important parallel between excerpt (8) and the concession displays shown in Section 3. Although Kida in excerpt (8) is not responding to a statement of opposition, his expression of understanding in line 18 *hai wakarimashita* ("yes, I understand") plays an important role in allowing Suzuki to shift the interaction back into a reporting framework so that he can continue reporting information to the entire set of participants. This observation anticipates the basic argument being constructed in this section, namely, that explicit concession displays allow participants to move away from oppositions and potential arguments and ultimately accomplish their reports.
much of a ‘diversion’ in terms of Suzuki being able to accomplish his report. However, especially when participants interject statements of opposition into a reporting space, there exists the possibility, if reporting participants decide to pursue the points of opposition, that an extended arguing sequence can result. As I noted in Section 3 extended arguing sequences were not particularly common in my data, but they sometimes did occur. Excerpt (9) provides an example. It begins with Tanaka’s interjection into Suzuki’s reporting space. Prior to this interjection, Suzuki was informing the participants, in a reporting framework, about his own proposal concerning the writing of syllabi for the seminar classes that all faculty members in the department were required to teach. As he explained, because of a change in the basic university curriculum, it became possible that the faculty would have to write four different syllabi, two for their third year seminar (one for each semester) and two for their fourth year seminar (also one for each semester). But instead of writing four syllabi, which apparently was going to place a considerable burden on the faculty, Suzuki proposed that they write only one syllabus, including in the syllabus an explanation of the material that would be covered in both the third and fourth year seminars. Tanaka, beginning in line, expresses his opposition to this proposal.

(9) 1-22-98
1 Tanaka: demo ne: so-soo suru to gakusei ga hora rishuutodoke o but FP that do if student S look registration form O
2 dasu toki ni shirabasu o mite (.5) sono enshuu no ichi= hand in time syllabus O see that seminar LK 1 ‘but if we do it that way, the students, when they hand in their registration, will look at the syllabus (.5) and that seminar 1’
3 Suzuki: [ee yes
4 Tanaka: =t-wareware wa ichi ka ni ka tte yutteta deshoo we TM one or two Q QT were saying COP ‘(before) we were saying either 1 or 2, right’
5 Suzuki: ee: yes ‘yes’
6 Tanaka: un kokusai enshuu yes international seminar ‘yes, International seminar classes’
7 Suzuki: [ee: yes
8 Tanaka: de sono ichi mo ni mo nakute: (. ) sono: (. ) u-u- shirabasu and that one also two also not have that syllabus
9 mita toki sono (. ) kamokumei ga (. ) enshuu dake tte yuu

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16 I put the term diversion in scare quotes because it is apparent in my data that the kinds of moves I am describing as interjections into reporting spaces are not reacted to in a negative way by the reporting participants. As I will be noted later in the analysis, even when listening participants interjected oppositional statements into reports, reporting participants did not treat them as violations.
look time that class name seminar only QT say
no wa (.) okashii (.) tsumari samensei de are suru
NOM TM strange basically 3rd year student that do
no to yonense to toozen chigaimasu yo ne:
LK and 4th year student and naturally different FP FP
‘and without either 1 or 2 (.) that (.) when the students look at
that syllabus (.) and the class name, (.) only seminar is strange, (.)
basically what we do in third year (seminars) and fourth year (ones) are
of course different’
12 Suzuki: tashika ni ei no ichi toka
for sure A LK 1 and the like
‘for sure, (we will use) A1 and the like’
13 Tanaka: un=
uh-huh
‘uh-huh’
14 Suzuki: =soo yuu katachi de rishuu sasenai to naranai
that say form by means register have to make do
/N desu kedo no
NOM COP but
‘we will have to make them register in such a way, but’
16 Tanaka: /un un
uh-huh uh-huh
‘uh-huh uh-huh’
17 DA: bunka to wareware de wa moo sude ni
Culture Dept. and us TM already already
jikan no zure ga aru=
time LK gap S have
‘between us and the Culture Department there is already a time
gap’
19 Tanaka: /un
uh-huh
‘uh-huh’
20 Suzuki: =wake desu yo
reason COP FP
‘that’s what has happened’
21 Tanaka: un
uh-huh
‘uh-huh’
22 Suzuki: bunka wa kakunen saikuru o sur[u to yuu koto ni natte=
Culture TM every year cycle O do QT say thing become
‘the Culture Department works on a specific cycle every year’
23 Tanaka: /un
uh-huh
‘uh-huh’
24 Suzuki: =wareware wa sono opushon de yaranai to yuu koto ni
we TM that option not do QT say thing
is becoming because
‘such a cycle is not an option we make use of’

Tanaka: un
‘uh-huh’

Suzuki: sono hen de moo sude ni (. ) mukoo wa mitsu kaku ka mo
that area already over there TM three write

shirenai de kotchi wa futatsu toka (. ) zurete kuru wake
maybe and here TM two and the like skew come reason

desu ne (. ) soo yuu imi de wa gakubukan de tootitsu
COP FP that say meaning by TM within School unify
do QT say meaning by TM anyway seminar O put together

kaite (.5) de sono ei ichi ni tte yuu no aku made
write and that A one two QT say LK to the end

rishuu toorokujoo no (. ) soochi ni shitai to yuu
registration enrollment LK device want to make QT say

(. ) kangae nan desu yo
idea NOM COP FP
‘and, if already (. ) they are going to possibly write three and we will
write two or something like that (. ) it will be skewed to avoid that, it is
important to unify things within the School (. ) so at the least, putting
the contents of the seminar together and writing one (.5) and leaving
the A-1 and 2 as merely a registration (. ) device is what we have been
(. ) thinking of’

Tanaka: demo ne
but FP
‘but’

Suzuki: ee
‘yes’

Tanaka: sono toki ni gakusei ga sanensei wa ne
that time student S 3rd year student TM FP
‘at that time the students, 3rd year students’

Suzuki: ee
‘yes’

Tanaka: rishuu o shinkoku suru toki ni wa:
registration O hand in do time TM
‘when they hand in their registration’

Suzuki: un
‘uh-huh’

Tanaka: kamokumei iwanakya ikenai kakanakya ikenai shori suru
class name have to say have to write handle do

(no ni )
NOM in order to
'they have to say the class names, they have to write them in order
to take care of (their registration)'

42 Suzuki: ee
'yes'

43 Tanaka: sore o shiji shinakyaikenai
that o instruct have to do
'we have to instruct them (about that)'

44 Suzuki: sore moo ga[ndansu
that also guidance
'there is already guidance (for that)'

45 Tanaka: [tsumari gakusei wa: kokusai ichi no
basically students TM International Dept one LK

46 ichi no ee ichi tsumari ichi toka ichi no ichi
one LK A one basically one and the like one LK one
toka ichi no ni toka tte no wakaranaku
and the like one LK two and the like QT LK not understand

48 natchau
become
‘basically students, with all these titles, like International 1-1 and A-1
basically 1 and the like 1-1 and the like 1-2 and the like, will not be
able to understand (how to do it)'

As soon as Tanaka interjects in lines 1 and 2, Suzuki begins in line 3 providing
acknowledgement tokens (lines 3, 5, and 7). As I have argued elsewhere (Saft 2000,
2001b), acknowledgement tokens, because they enable Suzuki to establish himself as the
primary recipient of Tanaka's interjected talk (leaving the other nine participants as
listeners to this two-party exchange), help create a shift in the participation framework
away from Suzuki's reporting framework to a conversational exchange between Tanaka and
Suzuki. Tanaka makes use of this conversational framework to tell Suzuki through line 11
that Suzuki's one syllabus proposal will be confusing to students, who will be using the
syllabi as the basis for deciding on and registering for their classes. Suzuki in line 12 does
not move to reinvoke the reporting framework. Instead, he begins responding directly to
Tanaka's opposition. He does acknowledge in lines 12 and 14-15 that the actual
registration process will be quite complicated, but he then continues through line 33 to
defend his proposal, explaining that writing only one syllabus will allow the department to
maintain some semblance of symmetry with another department (the Culture Department)
to which it is closely related. Throughout Suzuki's defense of his proposal, Tanaka
frequently uses acknowledgement tokens (lines 13, 16, 19, 21, 23, and 26), moves which
constantly reconfirm the fact that Suzuki and Tanaka are directly engaging each other as
a part of a conversational framework.

As Tanaka's reaction in lines 34-48 indicate, he remains unconvinced of the merits
of Suzuki's proposal; he responds in line 34 by maintaining that the proposal will cause
problems for students. Tanaka's pursuit of this point through the end of the excerpt is again
spurred on by Suzuki's acknowledgement tokens (lines 35, 37, 39, and 42), indicating that
the participants are maintaining the conversational framework in order to argue over this issue. Thus, although prior to Tanaka’s interjection Suzuki had been using a reporting framework to address the entire set of participants, we see in this excerpt that Tanaka’s interjection has shifted the interaction into a conversational framework which was extended by both Tanaka and Suzuki as they exchanged opposition over this point. This particular argument about the writing of syllabi, in fact, turned out to be the longest example of arguing in my corpus, as it spanned over 15 minutes of time.

That argument sequences such as the one shown in excerpt (9) could develop was an important aspect of the organization of the meeting’s interaction. As (9) suggests, interjections and the arguments that occasionally developed were not treated as violations of the interactional norms in this particular set of faculty meetings. The fact that participants would sometimes readily react to statements of opposition with acknowledgement tokens (rather than claim that such moves were intrusive) suggests that interjections and the conversational frameworks which resulted were treated as normal aspects of interaction in the meeting. Moreover, that participants were able to interject utterances into reporting spaces and invoke shifts in the meeting’s participation framework allowed the participants to be able to discuss and even argue about issues, such as the writing of syllabi, that were very important to the administration of their department. This suggests that in addition to conveying information, another purpose of the meeting was to discuss, when necessary, the information being presented (see Saft 2000 for further discussion concerning the goals of the meeting).

However, the point still remains that extended argument sequences, despite their treatment by the participants as normal aspects of the meeting, prevented participants designated with reporting spaces from being able to proceed with their reports and bring them to completion. That this can be problematic is suggested by excerpt (10), which occurred just after the conclusion of the argument over the syllabi writing proposal.

excerpt (10) 1-22-98
1 Chair: *ima no wa hotondo shingi jikoo ni natchaimashita*
   now NOM TM almost discussion matter became
2 *kedo mo (.) ato sore to moo ikko ato nan [(desu ka)]*
   but after that and more one after what COP Q
   ‘what we just did could almost fall into the category of discussion matter but (.) your other point is what’
3 Suzuki: *[ee de: ] =
   yes and
4 Chair =*ato ni hun*
   after two minutes
   ‘you only have two more minutes’
5 ???
   (laughter)
6 Suzuki: *hai ano: ((goes on to report on his second point))
   yes SF
   ‘yes, um, ....
With the utterance *ima no wa hotondo shingi jikoo ni natchaimashita kedo mo* (“what we just did could almost fall into the category of discussion matter”), the Chair displays in the first two lines an orientation to the fact that something extraordinary just occurred. The category of talk *shingi jikoo* (“matters for discussion”) is not a regular part of this particular faculty meeting but is sometimes invoked at the end of meetings to refer to items that the participants know from the outset will require a lot of discussion.\(^{17}\) The Chair next notes in line 2 that Suzuki is still not finished with his report and then asserts in line 4 that he only has two minutes remaining. This comment refers to the fact that Suzuki had made it clear at the beginning of his report that he needed to leave the meeting early; specifically, he had said that he needed to leave in twenty minutes. Thus, in this particular case, the fact that the first matter of Suzuki’s report, because of the moves made by the participants to extend the discussion framework and argue over the matter, took over fifteen minutes to accomplish has put Suzuki in the difficult predicament of presenting the second and final item of his report in a limited amount of time. To be sure, it was not normally the case that participants in the faculty meetings were under time restrictions in terms of presenting and finishing their reports. Yet, excerpt (10) does accentuate the central role played by reports in the meeting. Even though the argument lasted for an extended period of time and even though it allowed the participants to argue about a matter that was important to the administration of their department, it did not bring Suzuki any closer in terms of finishing his report. Participants cannot finish their reports until they have reported all of the pieces of information they have brought with them. Likewise, the Chair cannot allocate a reporting space to a next reporter until the current reporter has finished. And, furthermore, the meeting itself cannot end until the participants have reported all the items they have prepared.

It is within this greater social organization, where there exists a need to bring closure to one reported matter in order to proceed to the next one and in order to move on with the meeting’s basic agenda, that explicit displays of concession play a crucial role. As I show in the next subsection, explicit concession displays serve as convenient devices which make it possible for the participants to move away from conversational frameworks and reinvoke reporting frameworks, which in turn allows them to continue with and accomplish their reports.

### 4.2 Explicit displays of concession and the reinvocation of reporting frameworks

In order to show the significant role played by explicit concession displays in reestablishing reporting frameworks, I first return to two excerpts shown in Section 3 and focus on the flow of the interaction immediately following the participants’ concessions. Excerpt (11) below is an extended version of excerpts (1) and (2). The excerpt begins as Tanaka is in the middle of reporting about an upcoming test for prospective students.

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\(^{17}\) For example, after it became apparent that the number of students applying to enter the department was decreasing, the category of *shingi jikoo* was invoked in the meeting in order to brainstorm about procedures that could be used to attract more students.
Culture and interaction in Japanese

1 Tanaka: shinsa o suru wareware kyoogi suru naka de ee su-judge o do we discuss do within SF

kono sanjutten da keredo mo sanjuugoten ni chikai are da this 30 points COP but 35 points near that COP
toka kedo choosei shimasu and the like but regulate do
‘as a part of judging the students, um, we might find that although we gave them 30 points, the students are closer to 35, so we can adjust that’

4 Chair: /soo yuu no wa dame nan that say NOM TM bad NOM

COP
‘we can’t do that’

6 Tanaka: /soo iya iya un- sore wa so- sore wa kyooshitsu no no that TM that TM classroom

kaigi ni suru n da kara(.) daiji nan da(.) meeting do NOM COP because important NOM COP
datte sonoba tensuu tsukeru wake desu that place score mark reason COP
‘so-no, no about that, as for that, we can do it during the classroom meeting(.) it is important(.) because we will be grading them at the interview’

9 Chair: aa tensuu= oh the grades
‘oh, the grading’

10 Tanaka: =ee= yes
‘yes’

11 Chair: =tsuke-iya tsukerarenai n da yo tensuu wa moo do no can’t do it NOM COP FP score TM already

uchidasarete dete kuru n desu kara hantei kaigi come out go out come NOM COP because decision meeting

no toki LK time
‘grad- no we won’t be able to grade them, the grades will be decided and merely handed to us, (what you are referring to is) the time of the judgement meeting’

14 Tanaka: hantei kaigi no toki(.) aa soo ka
decision meeting LK time oh that Q
‘at the time of the judgement meeting(.) oh, yeah’

15 Chair: nyuushi nyuushi wa nyuushi wa sono kaijoo entrance exam entrance exam TM entrance exam TM that site

(*)
‘for the entrance exam, we do the grading at the site’
After Tanaka displays concession in lines 17-18, the Chair comments in lines 19-20 that the issue is not such an important one and then, after asking and receiving confirmation from Tanaka in lines 21-23 that he is finished with his report, goes on to ask in line 24 whether any other participants have reports to make. It is important to stress that the Chair's question to Tanaka in lines 21-22 "are you finished your report?" is not asking whether the participant is finished with his current report. Rather, the Chair's question, because it inquires as to whether Tanaka has any other items to report, treats the explicit display of concession as having brought closure to a prior item and as an opportunity to allocate a reporting space to another participant. The Chair's move to solicit reports is consistent with his job as moderator, and the fact that he is able to use
this particular sequential location to move on to other participant reports is because Tanaka has made his concession clear. Tanaka's clear, even exaggerated, concession display in lines 17-18 has thus made it possible for the Chair to shift the interaction away from the conversational exchange between himself and Tanaka and subsequently continue to solicit reports from the participants. As the transcript shows, the Chair is able in lines 25-28 to prompt a different participant, Yamada, to begin making a report. Excerpt (12), a longer version of excerpt (3), provides another example.

(12) 2-12-98

1 Kato: kyooikuteki (*) tte yuu to: jakkan no kono no:(.) choosei
educational QT say if few LK this adjustment
2 tte yuu no wa:(.) yappari ano (.8) atte mo ii na tte
QT say NOM TM indeed SF have even good FP QT
3 yuu kangae mo arimasu kedo
say think also have but
‘if we are talking about the educational (*), I think it would be
good (.) to have a few adjustments (.) surely, um (8) one way of
thinking is that it would be good to have them’
4 Tanaka: tya sore wa sore wa hora (*) wareware no
no that TM that TM look our LK
5 shinsa no dankai de tsukuru wake da kara (.). un da kara
check LK stage make reason COP because yes so
6 ooyake ni shite shimatta ato kara
official to make completely later from
7 kawaru koto toka nai wake da kara
change thing and the like not have reason COP because
‘no, about that, about that (*), we will prepare it at the stage
when we make our own judgement (.). so after we have made it official,
there will not be any changes’
8 Kato: aa soo ka soo ka
‘oh, yeah, oh, yeah’
9 Tanaka: kyooshitsu kaigi [de yaru wake da kara=
classroom meeting do reason COP because
‘in the classroom meeting, we will do that’
10 Kato: /hai:
‘yes’
11 Kato: =hai wakarimashita
‘yes, I understand’
12 Chair: jaa katoo-sensei ato hookoku wa ii n desu ka
then Prof. Kato after report TM okay NOM COP Q
‘then, Professor Kato, are you finished with all of your report’
13 Kato: hai
Yes
Like excerpt (11), it can be seen that the Chair takes advantage of an explicit display of concession to move forward and prompt a different participant to begin his report. Following Kato’s concession in lines 10 and 11, the Chair, after first confirming that Kato has no further items to report on, allocates a reporting space to Sasaki in lines 14-15. As line 16 suggests, the Chair’s move has allowed the organization of the interaction to shift back into a reporting framework; Sasaki informs the other participants about his recent trip to Shizuoka (which was done in an attempt to persuade high school students to enroll in the university).

These last two excerpts, therefore, highlight the greater significance these explicit displays of concession have in terms of the basic organization of the interaction and also in terms of accomplishing institutional work. They constitute a particular practice which provides the participants with an efficient way of moving away from opposition and potential arguments and proceeding with the different items of university business that need to be reported and discussed as part of the meeting. Excerpt (13), the last excerpt of data to be presented, shows that the participants themselves, especially the Chair, treat concession displays as opportunities to “return” to a reporting framework.
it (.) um for Mr. Suzuki (.) it will be easier to construct a plan and so even if you just leave the money nothing good will happen, you can't transfer it over to the next year (7) (*) but people who can use the money should use it (.5) if you don't, the amount will be reduced next year'

8 Kida: iya iya so- sore wa nai sore wa nai sore wa chotto no no that TM not have that TM not have that TM little

9 aya mari desu yo [ano: jisseki ni: oojite rainen no yosan o= mistake COP FP SF results meet next year LK budget O 'no, no, th- that is not true, that is not true, that is a mistake, um they do not base the budget on'

10 Chair: /iya-

11 Kida: kumu koto wa arimasen kara: (.) ano sore wa tashika form thing TM not have because SF that TM certainly ni: soo yuu huu ni shimasu kara yaku sukou shimasu kara that say way do because promise do because

12 muri shite tsukau hitsuyoo wa arimasen(.) ano: overdo do use need TM not have SF

13 narubeku yuukoo ni tsukatte kudasai as much as possible efficiently use please 'the results of the previous year (.) I am certain that is the way it is done, I promise you and so there is no need to just use your money (.) please use it as efficiently as possible'

14 Chair: aa sorya soo desu yo muda na mon tsuka-muda na mon oh that that COP FP useless LK thing useless LK thing wa (**) (.) eetto sore kara jaa modorimashite TM SF that from then return

15 Kida: desu ne: hookoku jikoo no nitenme nan desu ga: COP FP report matter LK 2nd point NOM COP but 'oh, that is true, useless things, as for useless things (**) (.) um, then, returning to where we were, I will move to the second item of my report'

In this excerpt, even though the Chair seems ready in line 9, when he utters iya (“no”), to oppose Kida's point in line 7, he ultimately responds in line 14 by first using the utterance aa sorya soo desu yo (“oh, that's right”) to explicitly agree with a part of Kida's message, namely, that funds should be used as effectively as possible. Then, after this display of concession, the Chair in line 15 makes an immediate move, actually using the term modorimashite (“return”), to reinvoke the reporting framework and move on to the second point of his report.

This last excerpt differs from the previous two presented in this subsection in two important ways: First it is the Chair's own report that is interjected into; and second, the Chair is in the middle of his report rather than the end. These two points highlight the important function being performed by explicit displays of concession in the meetings. The
Chair's explicit concession in excerpt (13) has made it visible to Kida, and all the other participants, that he is accepting Kida's point (in fact, he reinforces Kida's point about using the funds appropriately), which in turn makes it possible for him to make a smooth transition back to the reporting framework and go on to the second item of his report (line 17). In other words, the Chair's own explicit display of concession facilitates his ability to continue relaying information to the rest of the faculty members.

The explicit character of the concession displays would seem, therefore, to be deeply related to the role they play in the interaction. Because they are accomplished in a direct and straightforward manner, using clear expressions of agreement (i.e. soo da (“that’s right”)), understanding (wakarimashita (“I understand”)), and/or apology (gomen nasai (“I'm sorry”)), the concession displays make it clear that participants are not attempting to pursue a point of opposition or do some other action that might make it difficult for the participants to proceed with the reports. Especially for the Chair, since he is responsible for allocating reporting spaces, the explicit design of concession displays enables him to perform his job in a relatively efficient manner; it facilitates his ability to recognize sequential locations that can be used to shift the organization of the interaction back into a reporting framework.

Thus, while the analysis presented in this subsection does not rule out the possibility that culture applies to the interaction at some level (I talk more about this in the Conclusion), it does suggest that the particular interactional pattern examined in this report, explicit displays of concession, can be understood in terms of the basic social organization of the interaction. In other words, when situated within the sequential flow of the interaction, it is possible to “see” the significance of the explicit design of concession displays. In this particular interactional situation, where participants bring with them various pieces of information to report to the entire set of participants, explicit displays of concession serve as discursive methods for managing interaction in the faculty meetings in such a way that allows the faculty members to attend to and ultimately accomplish their work.

5. Conclusion

Using an analysis of concession displays in a specific interactional context, Japanese faculty meetings, I have attempted in this paper to emphasize the necessity of closely inspecting the details through which naturally occurring interaction is produced in Japanese. Although by doing so I did not intend to challenge the idea that cultural concepts such as wa (“harmony”), omoiyari (“empathy”), and enryo (“restraint”) are important aspects of Japanese society, I used the analysis to maintain that the practice of glossing patterns of interaction in terms of supposedly underlying cultural concepts does not begin to appreciate either the finely organized details of the interaction or the extent to which those patterns serve the participants as resources in specific interactional occasions. As I tried to suggest, accounting for concession displays in the faculty meetings in terms of already existing concepts would have made it difficult to explicate, in the first place, the role played by interactional features such as partial repetitions and the linguistic item aa (“oh”) in accomplishing concession displays and, in the second place, the larger significance these concession displays played in making it possible for the faculty members to proceed with
their meeting and exchange information pertaining to the administration of their department.

In addition to suggesting the disadvantages of using cultural concepts to account for interactional phenomena, the analysis also raises, I believe, a general concern regarding the conception of culture that is sometimes incorporated into studies of Japanese communication and discourse. For example, even though I purposely avoided using cultural concepts to describe the interaction, I nonetheless would like to believe that I have been describing in this report aspects of the Japanese culture. More specifically, the practices used by the faculty members to accomplish the action of concession and also attend to the business of the department, including the implementation of partial repetitions and the linguistic item *aa* (“oh”), are practices that result from the interpretations of members who are recognizably participating in an event in a particular culture (the Japanese culture). Therefore, regardless of whether they are easily linked to pre-existing core cultural values, these practices should be considered “cultural” just as much as other patterns of interaction, such as indirect statements and back-channels, that have received considerable attention because of their supposed connections to already specified aspects of culture. In fact, one of the great advantages of the CA framework is its ability to describe in detail how the members of a particular culture use certain practices to accomplish different social actions, a point that conversation analysts themselves have sometimes made (i.e. see Hester and Eglin 1997; Lynch 2000; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1992). In a recent review of CA, for example, Lynch has written that it is in their commitment to describing the organization of social actions that “conversation analysts thus become methodologists of ordinary culture” (2000: 523).

Recognizing CA’s potential in terms of enhancing our understanding of actual cultural practices does not entail rejecting the existence of core cultural values that are significant to the Japanese, but it does suggest that the need for more detailed accounts of how social actions are actually accomplished in various interactional situations by members of the Japanese culture. Research on Japanese discourse and communication will undoubtedly continue to emphasize the importance of cultural concepts (and perhaps rightly so), but I hope the analysis of concession displays presented here has made a case for including in future investigations more descriptions of the sequentially produced contingencies involved in the accomplishment of naturally occurring social interaction.

References


Appendix

Transcription Conventions
[] the point where overlapping talk begins
] the point where overlapping talk ends
(0.0) length of silence measured in tenths of a second
(.) micropause
underline indicates some form of emphasis, which may be signaled by changes in pitch and/or amplitude
:: lengthening of previous syllable
- cut-off of the preceding sound
= “latched” utterances—indicating no usual interval between end of a prior unit and the beginning of a next utterance
? rising intonation
(difficulty) unsure hearings
(*) unintelligible stretches of talk—each * represents .5 of a second.
(( )) author’s comments—not part of the content of the transcribed talk

Abbreviations appearing in the Interlinear Gloss
Cop: various forms of copula verb be
Cop-tent: various forms of copula verb be in its tentative form
FP: final particle
LK: linking nominal—occurs between two nouns
NOM: nominalizer
O: object marker
S: subject marker
TM: topic marker
Q: question marker
QT: quotative marker
SF: speech filler