

## VOCATIVES: A DOUBLE-EDGED STRATEGY IN INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS

Elizabeth Axelson

### Abstract

This paper takes a critical interactional sociolinguistic approach to examine the construction of *interculturality* (e.g., Nishizaka 1995; Mori 2003) through the use of vocatives in the discourse of a multi-cultural graduate student project group at a large American university. Interviews and descriptive information contextualize the analysis to demonstrate that the use of vocatives achieves a tight linking of inclusion but also inequality in the group talk that involves the Japanese member. The group's vocatives show a shared interest in bringing the Japanese member into the interaction, but they also construct unequal rights to the floor. They contribute to an interculturality of subordination and an artificial sense of intimacy, characteristics consistent with the institutional setting of the group and attitudes members held about each other. In this environment, the status quo of power identities and a deficit view of the Japanese member goes largely uncontested and limits the ability of American members to learn from their Japanese partner.

**Keywords:** Vocatives; Intercultural communication; Interculturality; NS-NNS interaction; English for academic purposes; Co-construction of identity.

### 1. Introduction

As group work has become a common pedagogical practice in higher education in the U.S., and as international enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities has continued to grow, student interactions in the conduct of group projects have increasingly become sites for the social construction of 'interculturality'. In small groups and teams, students develop discourses that thread the boundaries of their differences (Kramsch 1993) and at the same time construct those differences. Moreover, universities appear to hope that through such encounters, domestic students will enlarge their sympathies and understandings, becoming better global citizens (e.g., Cantor 2000).

This paper reports on one aspect of a case study of a multi-cultural graduate student project group at a large mid-western university (Axelson 2003), which investigated how a less fluent non-native speaker (NNS) from Japan was constructed over time as a group member and participant in the discourse of the group. Here, I focus on one discourse strategy, vocatives, that emerged over the 18-month period of the group's life, to illustrate how strategies that constructed the Japanese member of the group as a member and contributor also created him as unequal. While some studies have suggested that interculturality can be used to create "comity" (Aston 1993), and that speakers do not always orient to interculturality in their talk (Mori 2003), others

have suggested that stereotyping and marginalization of minority members, such as NNS, by majority members, native speakers (NS), may be likely (Leki 2001; Lindemann 2001; Morita 2004). By contrast, this analysis highlights the way in which the vocative system that developed within the case study group was double-edged in its effects, simultaneously creating inclusion and a sense of common ground, but also inequality, ultimately limiting the ability of the American members to learn about and from the Japanese member. The results confirm that, given member attitudes, imbalances in power, and the lack of institutional structuring that might bring accepted identities-in-talk into question, interculturality does not necessarily entail “the ultimate form of intercultural cooperation” (Koole & ten Thije 2001: 585). Rather, an intercultural group may develop the means to communicate well enough to perform its tasks and to construct diverse members as at least partial contributors, without ever achieving the greater benefits in learning and productivity that differences can afford.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

This study both builds on and reacts to interactional sociolinguistics as established by Gumperz (1982, 1992). In this analytical framework, heterogeneity among participants in interaction is taken to be the norm, and “no assumptions about sharedness of rules or evaluative norms” (Gumperz 1982: 6) are made. The goal is to understand how “situated interpretation” is constructed in face-to-face encounters when participants’ systems of understanding and expression differ. As such, it provides an appropriate starting point for a study of intercultural discourse.

However, traditional interactional sociolinguistics has been criticized for reifying cultural and linguistic difference as a static and unitary quality of participants in interaction, ignoring effects of contextual factors beyond those observable in the talk itself, such as length of contact and inequalities of power. Meeuwis and Sarangi (1994: 311), for example, state that “categories such as ethnic identity, cultural attributions, and cultural differences are not so much pre-determined structures but are in fact themselves constructed in, and thus outcomes of, intercultural discourse.” In other words, culture is not a kind of “transcendental personality” determining individual identities (Day 1994: 332), but is actively accomplished discursively by interlocutors. Furthermore, Shea (1994: 357), reporting on conversations of Japanese graduate students with Americans, also criticizes the ‘Gumperzian model’ for slighting “the mediated character of interaction,” that is, the way views of interlocutors about each other influence the strategies they use, thereby defining and perhaps limiting the role the other can play. In other words, traditional interactional sociolinguistics tends to obscure “discriminatory social attitudes and practices which unfairly marginalize NNSs.” The effects of speakers’ prior attitudes and assumptions on interaction between American and international students have been documented by Lindemann (2001) and Leki (2001) as well. These studies show that pre-textual factors such as power relations and attitudes shape intercultural encounters and the identities of participants in them, a dynamic that is missed by the traditional interactional sociolinguistic approach.

Looking from a critical interactional sociolinguistic perspective, then, this paper will examine a graduate student project group’s use of vocatives, which functioned as a contextualization cue in interaction. The purpose of the analysis is to show how vocatives were used differently by the various members of the group, how this pattern

of use contributed to the construction of the Japanese member as a subordinate or marginal member, and how these ways of 'doing being intercultural' relate to the attitudes expressed by the members in interviews, to the larger structure within which their project took place, and to their learning. I will first discuss the method of the study, then the context of the group work, the participants in it, and their attitudes towards working together, and then the analysis of their use of vocatives, relating this discourse feature to the context and participants.

### 3. Method

The case study method is adopted here, because, as Merriam (1988) has noted, case studies are *particularistic*, building from what a specific case reveals to "what it might represent" (1988: 11); *descriptive*, including as many variables as possible from different viewpoints to show "how all the parts work together to form a whole" (1988: 16); *heuristic*, providing insight into how things got the way they are; and *inductive*, a process of discovery emerging from data grounded in context.

In addition, the research began, as Spradley (1979: 14) recommends, with "informant-expressed needs." In interviews, the Japanese group member, Hideki<sup>1</sup>, offered repeated and powerful expressions of his determination to contribute to the group's work, both in meeting discussions and in the group's products - their proposal, final report, and presentations. For example, he said that he wanted "to contribute as much as possible in my situation. Being quiet in discussion is not good. I need to speak something in each discussion" (interview, 3/20/97)<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the intent to contribute meaningfully, the Japanese member aimed to learn his group mates' "experiences and knowledge in the United States" (interview, 11/24/97). He disparaged the notion of working on an individual thesis, as other international students had done, saying that everything would be easier, "but the achievement level might be lower", and that he could have accomplished such a thing "in my country" (interview, 11/24/97). These comments illustrate two dominant themes, Hideki's desire to be a contributing member, and his desire to learn from an intercultural experience. Other members, too, expressed interests and expectations that were somewhat compatible with Hideki's goals, at the same time indicating a view that Hideki was less able than they, due to "factors to do with language, with culture, with different personality" (Geoff, interview, 5/21/97). Thus, the larger study focused on how the Japanese member claimed or was given interactional space in the group's meetings, the extent to which he was constructed as a contributing member and how that was achieved, and the extent and nature of the group's talk about their cultural differences. Here, I will consider the coupling of opportunity and constraint in the way he was constructed as a participant through vocatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of the group members and others mentioned in the data are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> In his desire to be an active participant, Hideki sounds like Lisa, a participant in Morita's (2004) study of graduate student construction of identity and positionality in class. Lisa, unlike Hideki, however, was afraid to make mistakes, whereas Hideki's attitude was, "it can't be helped" (interview, 5/21/98).

Data for the study come from audio and video recordings of 31 hours of group meetings, as well as repeated, audiotaped interviews and playbacks with the participants, begun in February, 1997, and concluded in August, 1998. To see how Hideki was constructed as a participant and contributor in the meetings, I selected for analysis the stretches of talk in which he was a participant, excluding almost two-thirds of the taped meeting time, in which he played no part. To make the selection, I made structural maps or tables of all the meeting tapes to reveal the “sequential evolution” (Green & Wallat 1981: 162) of the meeting conversations, identifying what was happening at any given point by noting the time elapsed, the speakers, the topic and apparent function, and an outline of the turn-taking. In this way, I chunked the discourse into “topical and/or functional episodes” (Edelsky 1993: 212) as shifts in the talk occurred<sup>3</sup>. The episodes included in the study totaled just over 11 hours and 15 minutes, or approximately 36%, of the total taped meeting time. Within these selections, I then looked for the “rich features” of the discourse, those that “point to the relation between a text and its context” (Barton 2002: 23). Of these, one of the most salient and interesting features that emerged in the analysis was vocatives, which, while possibly “scarce elements” (Ostermann 2000: 180), nevertheless play a significant role in shaping the relationships of interlocutors (e.g. Zwicky 1974; Biber et al. 1999).

Analysis of the selected episodes was guided, as well, by the stories and comments of the participants, who I interviewed repeatedly during their project. These open-ended interviews included playbacks of some, but not all, of the episodes presented here. Thus, the members’ texts and mine were intertwined. As a ratified participant and (largely unaddressed) recipient in group meetings, and as an interviewer, I had some hand in shaping events. Moreover, my identity and particular situatedness in the affairs of the SNR group influenced my analysis. Vocatives, for example, were not of interest to the group members. Julio complained that Geoff and Martin patronized Hideki, for instance, but did not identify their use of Hideki’s name as a part of this process. In focusing on this feature, I am asserting my perspective. In considering what the various uses of vocatives mean, I have used the members’ interview comments to ground and triangulate. Nevertheless, as Becker (1995: 72) notes, the “linguistic observer is a particular observer, full of biases he or she is never fully aware of - the biases of his or her own language and his or her understanding of that language. Like the horse’s hoof and the prairie grass, the observer and the text co-evolve.” Thus, as Behar (1996) would say, I am located in my own text.

Before discussing how vocatives were used by the graduate student group, I will sketch out the context of the group project, who the members were, and the views they expressed about working together that have helped to shape the analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> Gumperz (1982: 102) notes that transitions between events in talk are marked by a “co-occurring set of cues.” Accordingly, I looked for a concatenation of contextualization cues to identify transitions. These included (1) flurries of transition markers and empty turns, (2) pauses, (3) explicit transition devices and meta-comments, (4) changes of speaker, and (5) changes of function and/or topic. Having identified episodes, I then sorted them according to the extent of Hideki’s participation, selecting for transcription and analysis those in which he participated more than minimally. Since the demarcation between one episode and another was often “fuzzy” (Levinson 1979: 368), I drew boundaries that were as inclusive as possible, including complete ‘transition zones’ in the selections.

#### **4. Context and participants**

The participants in this study were members of a Master's thesis project group, who collaborated over the course of a year and a half, 1997-1998, to complete a joint Master's thesis project in the School of Natural Resources (SNR) at a large Midwestern university. University reports from around this time stressed the importance of students learning to "work collaboratively, and to interact with a diverse set of people and ideas ... to become engaged with others across boundaries and in diverse, ever-changing contexts" (Cantor 2000). They also recognized that the ability to "learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment" depends on engagement in a curriculum "that deals explicitly with social and cultural diversity" (Gurin 2000: 4), so that students become mindful of their diverse social world. International students constituted over 24% of graduate enrollment at this university in 2000. One might expect, therefore, that programs, courses, or other offerings would exist to engage international and domestic graduate students in becoming mindful of each other. No such supports existed, however, for the group in this study.

In 1997, when the Master's thesis project group was formed, international enrollment in the SNR was just 8.5%, or 17 students. At that time, the School's website made no mention of international admissions or of any particular international focus in the curriculum. International students had to meet tough financial pre-approval standards for admission and, according to the faculty member who taught the course in which Master's thesis projects were initiated, Prof. Yarrow, "the language thing" was a concern of faculty (interview, 12/3/00), who were "cautious" about international admissions. Prof. Yarrow acknowledged that there was not much of a "support system" for international students in the School.

As for the purpose of the Master's thesis projects, they were "simulated activities", to prepare students to "work in teams in group settings" after graduation. They provided an opportunity for students to act as consultant or sub-contractor teams for a client on a real world project. Thus, the SNR shared the university's goal of preparing students for teamwork, but without much attention to achieving the benefits of diversity. Faculty advisors were "somewhat responsible" to address "group dynamics issues as well as substance", although there was a general acceptance that "all groups have some trouble functioning at some point ... and some are very dysfunctional" (Yarrow, interview, 12/3/00)<sup>4</sup>. To assist projects, the SNR provided a project development course, in which groups were formed, project proposals written, and faculty advisors secured. In the course, students circulated short CVs and met together to find a best fit among individuals and projects. This process contributed to positive attitudes among the members of the group studied here, both about the nature of their project and about the prospects for working together. They saw their previous experiences and backgrounds as complementary and they felt they could work together. Their project, conducted for a non-profit community organization, was to use existing research data to assess the feasibility of restoring a channelized river to its original

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<sup>4</sup> Since the time of this study, the Master's project course has added sessions focusing on group dynamics, as well as mid- and final project evaluations of group process. The group studied here, however, had no such support for an exploration or evaluation of their group process. Only one of them had taken a course in group dynamics.

meandering configuration, weighing costs and benefits, and pointing to areas in need of further research.

The five members of the group were the Japanese member, Hideki, a Guatemalan, Julio, and three Americans, Geoff, Martin, and Betty. This group, which at first consisted of the four men, began meeting together in January, 1997, and completed their project with a final presentation in April, 1998, and submission of a written thesis in August of that year. Betty joined in May, 1997, when they had just completed their project proposal.

Hideki had arrived in the United States for the first time in June, 1996, with his wife and two children, and had taken a seven-week intensive English program before beginning the Master's degree course work. A somewhat hesitant and limited speaker of English, he continued to take English courses throughout his program. While all the group members had work experience before beginning the Master's program, Hideki had the most relevant experience, having worked for the environment department of his prefectural government for 13 years. He chose this project because it addressed a problem similar to ones arising in his prefecture, a developed area with a variety of competing land use priorities. He saw his special areas of expertise as useful to the group and he felt welcomed by the other members. Nevertheless, he regarded himself as a "burden" to them because of his low English language proficiency and his lack of familiarity with ways of working in the U.S. He greatly appreciated the other members of the group, who, in his view, might understandably have ignored him, "but they never did" (interview, 5/21/98)<sup>5</sup>. In addition to the "kindness" of the Americans, Hideki valued the presence of Julio, the other international member of the group, who Hideki felt understood his situation.

Julio was a fluent English speaker who had spent considerable time in the U.S. and was married to an American. Like Hideki, he had chosen this group at least in part on the basis of the personalities of the members. Another project actually interested him more, but it had "a lot of pushy people" (interview, 5/27/97). He was eager to work with Hideki, to see Hideki's English improve as his own had done when he was first in the U.S., and he thought he might learn some Japanese and spend a couple of years in Japan when the project was finished. Later, Julio was disappointed that Hideki had not become particularly fluent, although he acknowledged that Hideki's situation was different than his had been as a 17-year-old intensive language learner.

Geoff and Martin were the dominant members of the group. Both were graduates of a small college in upstate New York, where they had worked on a project together, and both had worked for environmental consulting firms after graduation. Martin first heard about the community project that the Master's thesis project addressed. He talked about it with Geoff, and the two of them laid the groundwork for the project before the project planning course began. Thus, they were, as Betty put it, "co-owners" of the project (interview, 10/13/97). Both Geoff and Martin were interested in working with Hideki. Martin said, "Hideki is the first Japanese person that I've really met", and "it's just a neat experience for me too, to just get to know him better and just to learn about ... Japan and Japanese culture a little bit more" (4/25/97). In addition,

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<sup>5</sup> Hideki's sometimes rosy gloss on his experience in the group could have been occasioned by the fact that he was talking to me - a university lecturer and an American of the same race and class as the Americans in his group. His ongoing nostalgia for his "precious experience" at the university, expressed in a recent visit, however, seems to attest to his sincerity.

Geoff thought they might have something to learn from Hideki that would benefit the project. He said, "I would love to find out, you know, what he knows about these types of situation, working with people at the local level on issues such as we're covering, cuz, you know he's a scientist who's been put in the position of working more with people on these issues and for more years than any of us have, ten years for his government" (interview, 5/21/97). Both felt Hideki was limited by language and lack of familiarity with the U.S. As Martin expressed it, "He's definitely going through more of a learning curve than the rest of us" (interview, 4/25/97).

Betty, as noted, joined the group after the proposal was written. She accepted the project as designed, although she disagreed with the approach the group was taking, because she needed to be taken into the group in order to complete this crucial degree requirement. Betty was from the area of the project site. In addition to contributing more work power, which the small group needed, Betty felt that the client group would be more comfortable with her because she was a more local presence, whereas "the foreigners, the easterners, will be leaving" (interview, 10/13/97). In a sense, then, for her, all the other members were foreign. Although she thought that working with the international members would be "fun", she also saw them as something of a liability. While she identified with Hideki to some degree, noting that she and he were similarly hampered by being slow to think and speak in meetings, she felt that he was sometimes in "over his head" (interview, 5/20/98) and needed more direction from other members.

As these brief profiles of the members indicate, Hideki and the others seemed to agree that Hideki was limited by language and lack of experience in the U.S., and that these lacks made him less capable than the others. For the most part, they shared a disability model of Hideki as a NNS; only Geoff expressed any notion that Hideki might know something the others should learn from him for the good of the project. Nor did Hideki himself identify having the others learn his experiences and knowledge in Japan as a goal. Instead, he strove not to "break our dynamics" (interview, 11/24/97). In the analysis that follows, we will see how these views relate to the vocative system developed by the group.

## **5. Vocatives**

Levinson (1983:71) defines vocatives as "noun phrases that refer to the addressee, but are not syntactically or semantically incorporated as the arguments of a predicate." Biber et al. (1999: 1112) identify three functions of vocatives: "(1) getting someone's attention, (2) identifying someone as addressee, and (3) maintaining and reinforcing social relationships." As for the last of these, Zwicky (1974: 796) has noted that "vocative NPs in English are almost never neutral: They express attitude, politeness, formality, status, intimacy, or a role relationship, and most of them mark the speaker," characterizing him or her in relation to the addressee. Others have observed how vocatives are used as markers of power and solidarity (Hook 1984), in-group status (Brown & Levinson 1978; Wood & Kroger 1991) or pseudo-intimacy (McCarthy & O'Keefe 2001), equality (Troemel-Ploetz 1994), or condescension (Wood & Kroger 1991); as conversation initiators and topic change contextualization cues (Ostermann 2000); and as redressive action for face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson 1978; Ostermann 2000). Thus, vocatives identify participant roles and modulate politeness and positioning within the discourse. In the discussion that follows, we will see how many

there were, who used them and how, and what relationships were instantiated in the process.

### 5.1. Overview of the SNR group's vocative use

There are 87 vocatives in the SNR study data. Of these, Hideki used 43, or half. Of the 44 spoken by other members of the group, 31, or 70%, were addressed to Hideki. That is, 74, or 85%, of the 87 vocatives in the study data were either addressed by or to Hideki<sup>6</sup>. Thus, although vocatives account for only 5% of Hideki's own turn openings, vocative use by the group appears to be a very Hideki-centered phenomenon. Moreover, Martin and Geoff spoke 24 of the vocatives addressed to Hideki, or 77% of them. So, the Hideki-focused vocative use in the group was primarily a means of mediating between Hideki and the two most powerful members of the group.

In the study data, on average, a vocative occurs every eight and a half minutes. It is somewhat difficult to tell if this rate of occurrence is frequent or not. Biber et al. (1999: 1113) contend that vocatives can be "extremely frequent in multi-party dialogues," perhaps because of discourse management problems, but without saying how frequent that might be. Studies have found frequencies ranging from one every nine minutes in Ostermann's (2000) interview data<sup>7</sup>, to 1 every 17.5 minutes in dissertation defenses (Swales 2004). A review of student study group and lab group meeting transcripts in the MICASE corpus<sup>8</sup> shows wide variation in frequency of vocatives, from zero to one per 8.5 minutes, a frequency like that of the SNR group. Beyond turn-management in multi-party talk, the nature of the task and the characteristics and relationships of the participants may well account for significant variation in the use of vocatives in group interaction. In the SNR group, whether vocatives are comparatively frequent or infrequent, they are significant because Hideki seems to have driven their use, either as speaker or as addressee.

All but three of the vocatives used by the SNR group were first names. First name use is typical of student-to-student discourse in the U.S. As Biber et al. (1999: 1110) explain, first names "have an important social role in showing the recognition of individuality among participants in a conversation." In Brown and Levinson's (1978) terms, using first names, as opposed to titles and last names, for example, is a positive politeness strategy, emphasizing closeness and belonging. It is not hard, however, to think of examples in which use of a first name would underscore social distance, highlighting the different status of the participants. Moreover, the comparatively frequent use of Hideki's name, a foreign name in an American context, may show interlocutors' continuing orientation to him as Japanese, and positioning of him as foreign.

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<sup>6</sup> One additional instance includes him, but is not addressed to him exclusively. Julio's "okay dudes", on 4/20/98, was addressed to all the members.

<sup>7</sup> As already mentioned, she calls them "scarce elements" (2000: 180).

<sup>8</sup> The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), a corpus of 1.8 million words is available on-line at [www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase).



The vast majority of vocatives used by this group were in utterance-initial position (77 of 87, or almost 90%). In fact, all of Hideki's vocatives occurred in his turn beginnings<sup>9</sup>. Biber et al. (1999), analyzing a large corpus of British and American English conversation, found that only 10% of vocatives were utterance initial, and these were associated with the functions of attention and identification, while 70% were utterance final and were associated with the functions of identification and social maintenance. McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2001) suggest, however, that vocative position may be sensitive to other exigencies of the situation. They found that while vocatives tended to occur utterance-finally in a casual conversation corpus, there was a preference for utterance-initial position in a corpus of radio call-in data. Vocatives in initial position would meet the needs of the SNR members for explicitness, by clearly identifying and securing the attention of a listener before delivering a message, and by providing a contextualization cue to identify the participant frame. Nevertheless, to identify utterance-initial vocatives as turn/topic management devices and utterance-final vocatives as modulators of social relations seems too simplistic. Rather, both turn/topic management and issues of politeness and social relations appear to be addressed by the use of utterance-initial vocatives in the SNR group. We will first consider the functions accomplished by Hideki's use of vocatives, and then by those of the others.

## **5.2. Hideki's use of vocatives**

For Hideki, vocatives performed multiple functions. These are summarized in the following table, along with a count of the vocatives in each category. Since a single vocative fulfills multiple functions, the total count below will be greater than 43. As the table suggests, Hideki was relatively effective at getting a turn by using a vocative. In fact, he was just slightly less effective claiming a turn with the use of a vocative than he was overall, being cut off 7% of the time as compared to 5% of the time, the average for all his turns. This may be due to the fact that he sometimes used them in highly competitive conversation, perhaps after trying some other strategy to get a turn. This can be seen in the following example, where he attempted to take the floor

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<sup>9</sup> A possible explanation for Hideki's exclusive use of utterance-initial position lies in the use of vocatives in Japanese. According to Maynard (2001: 685), vocatives "occur frequently in Japanese discourse" and "they appear most frequently at, but not limited to, the sentence-initial position" (2001: 688). Moreover, Taniguchi (2001: 4) has observed about English language instruction in Japan, that "instructions on how address forms of the target language are used in an appropriate situation are not usually given." Thus, it may be that Hideki transferred a practice from his native language to his usage in English, and was not likely to have acquired a special use of English vocatives in the EFL classroom. Maynard also argues that vocatives in Japanese are used to create an "alignment of perspectives in terms of participants and in terms of what the participants talk about" (2001: 685), foregrounding the speaker's emotion toward the addressee. In particular, personal names without particles appear as vocatives "frequently" (2001: 689), so the form of first name address would not be strange to Hideki. Taniguchi cites other researchers, such as Loveday (1986: 15), who have found that first names are generally used in Japanese between "equal intimates." These patterns of use in Japanese seem quite compatible with the uses Hideki makes of vocatives in SNR interactions and may have contributed to his adoption of the vocative as a discourse device, as well as to his preference for initial position.

with a discourse marker, *so*, failed, and tried again with a vocative, but was still cut off by Geoff<sup>10</sup>.

**Table 1: Functions of Hideki's Vocatives**

Function	# of Uses	Percentage of Uses
Gets a turn	40	93%
Is cut off	3	7%
Changes topic	27	63%
Brings self in after a gap in own participation	10	23%
Starts a one-on-one conversation	19	44%
Secures listener for a contribution or 'gift'	17	40%

(1) 3/27/97

**Julio** /six times in a year . and there are people who go there and put their money /there/ <H. /so:/> that's /like/ <H. /s-/> six times in a year

**Hideki** **Julio** wh-

**Geoff** yeah but we don't know who's XX

The table also shows that in 63% of Hideki's uses of a vocative, he introduced a topic change. That is, vocatives functioned for him as contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982; Ostermann 2000), signaling his communicative intention to redirect the conversation. Topic shift is illustrated in example (2), below.

Prior to the exchange in (2), Martin, Geoff, and Hideki were discussing meeting the following Monday, and a series of workshops both Hideki and Geoff were planning to attend. Hideki was active in this discussion, describing the workshops for the other two. As the excerpted conversation began, Geoff summarized the meeting plans, and Hideki and Martin confirmed them. Then, after a seven second pause (line 8), Martin and Geoff shifted to the topic of what to call their group. Hideki tried using the conjunction *and* at a possible turn transition point to get back into the conversation (line 14). When this failed, he used vocatives, naming both Martin and Geoff, to bring the conversation back to the Monday meeting schedule, the fact that he might be a little late, and so would need directions to the room which was not yet assigned to them. He got a prompt uptake from Geoff, "yeah", and both Geoff and Martin were active in response.

In this example, the vocative seems to perform a positive politeness function as well as a turn management function. Hideki was making a request, and perhaps creating a reminder of a previous meeting at which the group moved off to another room without

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<sup>10</sup> Vocatives are highlighted in these excerpts in order to make them easy to see. The transcript conventions are given at the end of the paper.

leaving a note for him. The request also brings to mind his fear that he could misunderstand meeting times or places and so waste his effort. As he put it, “I’m sometimes afraid I don’t get some important information. I’m usually afraid I’m doing something unnecessary or not related at all. So I always confirm many kinds of things to my friends or professors. Otherwise, many my jobs are too risky” (interview, 3/20/97). Hideki’s anxiety to have correct information is expressed in his use of the imperative, “write”, which here is preceded by the repetition of “please please” (lines 17-18), intensifying the importance of the request, but also adding an element of pleading, as though it were an imposition to ask to be notified of a room change. The imperative and the use of “please please” seem to open the distance between him and the other two, bespeaking inequality. At the same time, the use of names may invoke common ground in order to license and mitigate Hideki’s request.

(2) 4/4/97

- Geoff** [to H] Mon- Christy’s gonna- Martin will email Christy and she’ll set aside a room for us ? <H. yeah yeah I X> but we’ll meet at Monday at 4:30 ?
- Hideki** 4:30 , yeah . at the usual room ?
- Geoff** yeah . we’ll meet outside of 1046 an- or unless /otherwise/ <H. /okay/ okay> [3]
- Martin** so 4:30 , to , 6:30=
- Geoff** =sure [M clears throat] [7]
- Martin** [to G, reading what G has written] so that’s to say that we don’t wanna be called meandrs ?
- Geoff** yeah , it should be the dowagiac .
- Martin** [laughing] I think it might be too late but we can try . dowagiac river project group
- Geoff** sure <H. and> or dowagiac watershed
- Hideki** **Martin Geoff** u:m <G. yeah> on Monday I have a class u:h until until just before 4:30 <G. okay> so I’m afraid u:h I will not be able to u:h st-be here uh just on /4:30/ <M. /okay/> <G. /okay/> <M. that’s fine> so please please write information on the blackboard <M. /okay/> <G. /okay/> <M. okay>
- Geoff** yeah we’ll let you know , where we’ll be

While in example (2), Hideki changed the topic in an episode in which he had already been an active participant, Table 1 shows that he also made use of vocatives to bring himself back into the conversation after some period of non-participation. This occurred 23% of the time. In these cases, either by using the name of the current speaker, or of the person who last spoke on the topic he was raising, Hideki laid claim to interactional space and attention, which was granted verbally in 15 of the responses to his 43 vocatives with a *yeah* or *yes*. In addition, others were likely to join in the response; the actual answer to a question he asked might be provided by someone other than the person named. Having successfully raised an issue, Hideki might in fact leave it to the others to discuss it, while he returned to a less active role. This pattern is illustrated by example (3).

**(3) 2/20/97**

- Hideki**        **Julio** , is it- , u:h . it sounds , very good idea but , forecasting changes mean , means , kind of assessment ? <G. yeah> <J. yeah> (2) yeah . [laughs] , very , very difficult [3]
- Geoff**        mhm
- Julio**        yeah that would be the bo- , that would be /the:/  
**Geoff**        /yeah/ this is the challenge
- Julio**        the key , exactly . that would be the the key of our . and that's when Pat West comes and plays and that's when , all of our , big shot economists <G. mhm> come and plays , i- if we want to get , deep into one of those aspects . that's the other question how deep do we wanna get , how broad do we wanna <M. /mhm/> <G. /mhm/>

This exchange followed nearly 12 minutes in which Hideki was silent while Geoff, Martin and Julio each took relatively long turns to express their views on the research products their work should produce, based on meetings with their client group and feedback from their advisors. Julio emphasized the centrality to the project of forecasting changes that would result from intervention in the watershed. The conversation then moved to a discussion among the three of the size of the area to be studied. While Martin looked for a map, Hideki entered the conversation to return to Julio's topic of forecasting, using Julio's name to get in. He expressed a reservation about the task of forecasting changes, saying it would be "very, very difficult". Hideki's use of Julio's name may have softened the potential face-threatening act of negative assessment. Note that he also began with a general compliment, further mitigating the force of the criticism. Although Hideki's comment was explicitly addressed to Julio, it was Geoff who made the first response and partnered with Julio to affirm forecasting as a "challenge" facing the project, difficult but necessary. It does not appear that Hideki wanted to engage only Julio in discussion. Rather, Julio's name functioned as the contextualization cue that re-established Hideki as a participant and signaled that he might well change the topic. It also acted as a gesture of solidarity or redress for offering a doubt.

In addition to enabling Hideki to re-enter the conversation and direct the conversation to topics of concern to him, vocatives were also a means by which he initiated one-on-one conversation with individual members of the group; 19 of his uses, or 44%, are of this type. They were especially frequent in conversation that framed the meetings, either before the business was underway or after it was concluded. Even in meetings in which he played little part in the business, Hideki actively engaged with the others in these individual conversations. In eleven of these cases, simultaneous conversations were occurring between other group members. Thus, the vocative helped to overcome the difficulty of competing against sometimes very loud conversation. Here's an example:

**(4) 1/12/98**

\* [M and G's conversation continues between the asterisks, but is not transcribed.]

**Martin**        [to G] we're gonna meet on Friday <G. yeah so> wanna \* ...

- Hideki** Betty . when , will we meet ? .  
**Betty** o:h hh- . oh . yeah /since/  
**Hideki** /it's/ , depends on your schedule [2]  
**Betty** we:ll why don't we , think about doing it after this meeting [5]  
**Hideki** this , uh after this meeting ?  
**Betty** yeah: cuz I'll try to , get it- uh postponed week , you know , because otherwise it's gonna be way too tight ?/\* <H. mhm> so yeah so after this meeting <H. /uhuh/> /then/ <H. okay> let's just plan on that <H. okay>  
**Martin** [to G] actually will we need a computer ?

In this interaction, at the end of the meeting, Martin and Geoff began arranging to meet to write a part of the report together. Hideki followed suit and initiated talk with Betty to schedule a meeting to prepare the interim project presentation, which they were to give. Betty's response was less than enthusiastic, and Hideki eased the way by deferring to her. As in the previous examples, we can see multiple functions for the vocative in this case. First, it gets Betty's attention in the face of the competing conversation. Second, it is an act of positive politeness which may mitigate the fact of Hideki's taking the initiative in scheduling a meeting. Since the vocative helps Hideki to start this interaction, it enables him to play a role as an assertive and constructive group member, taking charge of scheduling a meeting and thus propelling the group's work along. In this way, his power as a group member is enhanced, a shift which he accompanies with deference and an appeal to solidarity.

While in some of these one-on-one conversations, Hideki asks questions to improve his understanding and to guide him, either with the group's work or with other school-related issues, often he uses them in some way that is good for others, for example, to provide something the other wants, offer a favor, give a compliment, or apologize for the omission of some such generous act. These acts or contributions occur in 40% of his vocative-initiated turns. Brown and Levinson regard such "gifts" as acts of positive politeness, since they offer redress directly "by fulfilling some of [the hearer's] wants" (1987: 129). For instance, on 2/27/97, while Geoff and Julio were talking together, Hideki offered Martin a ride home after the meeting.

(5) 2/27/97

- Hideki** uh **Martin** <M. yes> u:h , how how how do you go to your apartment, I- I have a car today  
**Martin** okay . um . I actually drove today <H. today ?> yeah <H. ah okay> okay [laughing] . um , because of the rain ? <H. uhuh> an , I was pressed for time <H. okay> I , drove to the commuter lot <H. uhuh> and then I took a commuter bus <H. oh> a:nd <H. commuter bus ?> yes , and it saved me twenty minutes coming in  
**Hideki** uhuh . /yeah/ <M. /so/> u:h , today I . uh I- I parked I am parking my car <M. okay> u:h at the parking <M. oh /in the parking garage/> /over there/ so so I can , uh take you to your /apartment/  
**Martin** /o:h/ well thank you  
**Hideki** so  
**Martin** um , but , I hafta go get my car <H. uhuh> so: , maybe some other time <H. okay> okay ? <H. /okay/> /thank/ you though [laughs]

In this exchange, Hideki has difficulty formulating his offer and he appears to miss Martin's first two refusals. The episode is not easy for Martin either, who ends up laughing. Nevertheless, Hideki shows himself as game to venture to offer the ride, using the vocative to get started. In one-on-one interactions like this one, Hideki constructs himself in a positive social role, establishing interpersonal ties with other members. At the same time, the strategies of politeness in his turns, including vocatives, suggest that participation itself is a sort of imposition best cushioned by deference and appeals to common ground.

In sum, Hideki's vocatives perform multiple functions in his interactions in group meetings. They enable him to enter the group conversation or one-on-one interactions, secure committed listeners, and take control of the topic under discussion. At the same time, they work together with other politeness strategies, such as deference and 'gifts', to mitigate the perceived burden of his participation.

### **5.3. Use of vocatives by the others to address Hideki**

Of the 44 instances of vocative use by other members, 31, or 79%, addressed Hideki. Members varied in their use of this strategy, however. For example, Betty never addressed Hideki by name, using vocatives only twice in the data, once to address Geoff, and once to address me. Julio was also an infrequent user, and his vocatives were unlike those of anyone else in the group. He used them only three times, twice to address Hideki and once to address the whole group, he never used first names, and he always put the vocative in utterance-final position. For example, in an exchange in which Hideki lamented to Julio, "...why , WHY should I , should I have to take my family , twice , to Orlando .", Julio responded philosophically, "well , life is not fair man" (12/11/97). In this response, Julio did not adopt Hideki's point of view, but rather took a more distant stance. This detachment was emphasized by his impersonal term of address, "man"<sup>11</sup>. As this example illustrates, Julio's few vocatives were a device for positioning himself in relation to his interlocutor. Both Scotton and Zhu (1983) and Jaworski and Galasinski (2000) have analyzed the use of marked forms of address, such as those used by Julio, and they agree that "marked address usage is strategic, and that it is an off-record strategy" (Jaworski & Galasinski 2000: 38) by which a speaker can challenge the relative positions of speaker and addressee. This analysis fits the example just given, in which Julio subtly shifted his relationship to Hideki to a less close one.

Of the remainder, I spoke four. Three of these brought me into the conversation, much as Hideki brought himself in from periods of silence by using someone's name. I was an infrequent participant in conversation in the meetings and so this device worked to shift me from non-participant observer to participant. Martin and Geoff, who were most often in the role of meeting facilitator, used vocatives to address other members, including each other. However, as noted, the majority of their uses were to address Hideki. The functions of all the vocatives addressing Hideki are given in the table

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<sup>11</sup> His other terms were, "my friend", in "Welcome to the third world, my friend", a comment about crime in Detroit, in which he positions himself as more worldly than Hideki, and "dudes", which was more affiliative, positioning them all flatteringly as perhaps a bit hip.

below. As with Table 1, here the total number of uses is greater than the number of vocatives, because they sometimes served more than one function.

**Table 2: Functions of the Others' Vocatives**

Function	# of Uses	Percentage of Uses
Changing addressee	13	42%
Roll call	6	19%
Bringing Hideki in after a gap of non-participation	9	29%
Anticipating & mitigating misunderstandings	11	35%
Explaining	4	13%
Ostensible reassurance	4	13%
Topic change	4	13%
Bringing Self In (Elizabeth)	3	10%
Distance/Affiliation (Elizabeth and Julio)	3	10%

The principal function performed by the vocatives used by others was to change the addressee<sup>12</sup>. This occurred in 42% of the uses. Often when Martin or Geoff used vocatives in this way, they were polling the members to see what everyone thought about the current issue under discussion, or getting everyone to report their circumstances, such as travel dates for an upcoming semester break. For example, after an episode of conversation about Julio's prospects for a summer job, Martin addressed Hideki to find out about his summer plans. The topic stayed the same, but Martin shifted the focus from Julio's plans to Hideki's.

**(6) 2/27/97**

**Martin**        **Hideki** , are you working this summer ?  
**Hideki**        u:h , l-last summer, we visited , uh biological center ? <M. mhm> u:h , I-um uh at that time , u:h maybe , uh f- federal depart- fed- federal office of u:h , conservation ? <M. mhm> um I'm not sure the name ...

In close to two-thirds of the instances of vocatives addressing Hideki, he was already an active contributor to the conversation, as in example (6) above, in which he participated freely in conversation with Julio about possible summer internships before Martin shifted the focus to his plans. The remaining near third of the others' vocatives, however, shifted him from the category of participant hearer or even overhearer, that is, from relatively inactive or totally inactive in the conversation, to active as an addressee and potential upcoming speaker. Although this was not the most frequent function, it was a salient and important one for Hideki. Typically, it was Geoff who might say

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<sup>12</sup> This function was not significant in Hideki's use of vocatives. By contrast, although he used them frequently to change the topic, that function is relatively insignificant for the others.

something like, “/m Hi/deki what were you gonna say” (1/19/98), in this case helping Hideki to the floor when he had been unsuccessful in claiming it for himself.

In another example, (7) below, when the group met with Betty to discuss making her a member, Hideki stayed completely out of the sometimes tense conversation for over an hour, at which point Geoff gave him a chance to speak. Hideki used the opportunity to take an extended turn, and to make a number of valuable contributions to the meeting. He framed the group’s possible reservations as concerns for Betty’s satisfaction (lines 2-3, 6-8), clarified the group’s position on educational materials, underscoring his own continued commitment to producing pamphlets or slide shows, though not a complete curriculum (lines 9-13), gave Betty a chance to explain why she emphasized education in her message to the group, supporting her response by active backchanneling (lines 18-22), set a tone that encouraged the others to offer some mitigation of the misunderstanding, and let her accept the current focus of the project. His turn, then, accomplished quite a lot, moving the group toward consensus, even assuming, when he said “after you join our project” (line 14), that the issue was not whether she joined but if she would be happy.

(7) 5/13/97

- 1 **Geoff** Hideki do you have anything you wanted to share ?=  
 2 **Hideki** =um , yeah , u:h . any- anyway I don’t- w- we don’t want to make you uh  
 3 , disappointed , after you join u:h our project so: , today uh we would  
 4 like to ask YOU , about your con- concern and your expectation . so , u:h  
 5 , first uh , first when we received your u:h your message ? uh you said uh  
 6 you had much interest in uh educational aspects , so: , we we were afraid  
 7 that , uh after you join you join our project uh , possibly you , you will be  
 8 disappointed our uh approach to , uh educational aspects ? so uh as I  
 9 mentioned uh , I just mentioned uh , our educational approach is NOT so  
 10 s- strong <B. /mhm/> /of course/ I- I believe u:h pamphlet or slide shows  
 11 are will be very , helpful for uh MEANDRS people but u:h if you ,  
 12 considered u:h educational approach was concerning uh , whole uh  
 13 curriculum , like stuff u:h it’s- , it will disappoint you , so , um , w- we  
 14 hope , after you join our project u:m , you will- you will satisfy uh our  
 15 with your situation , uh in our master’s project <B. m:hm> [2] so we  
 16 need to discuss u:h , discuss enough uh , about y- your concern ? or you  
 17 expectations , to our master’s project  
 18 **Betty** yea:h Julio had told /me that/ <H. /uhuh/> you know , cuz I was going by  
 19 what , you had given at the presen/tation ?/ <H. /mhm/> , and then he  
 20 said that you know , quite a bit of the educational stuff had been /cut/  
 21 <H. /mhm/> since /then/ <H. /mhm/> which of course I didn’t kno:w I  
 22 mean , you know <M. mhm> [B laughs] <M. yeah>  
 23 **Geoff** yeah and un- unfortunately I don’t think we were as clear , on that , /you  
 24 know , IN the presentation , in the first place so/  
 25 **Julio** /uh it was XX- , it was it was- , yeah it was/ it was ne- it was never a big,  
 26 a big part of our thing it was just . ...

That Hideki was so ready with this effective conversational turn was not at all apparent before he took it, given his previous extended silence. Nevertheless, his performance



showed how prepared he was, and how able to play an important role in the group's negotiation and decision-making. In an early interview, Hideki stressed the value to him of being asked, "Are you following?" and "How about you?". He noted, "I have decided to prepare something, something useful before our meeting. I'm afraid my materials are not so useful, but I made my mind to prepare something to them, usually written material." Then, he went on, "Usually one of our members asks me, 'How about you?', so I can turn in<sup>13</sup>, I present my material" (interview, 3/20/97). Geoff, also in an interview, reported that he had consciously begun to ask, "Hideki, do you have something you would like to add?", adding, "And he always does and it's always a worthwhile comment or input" (5/21/97). As these comments show, Hideki's expectation that someone, probably Geoff, would give him the floor, and Geoff's expectation that Hideki would have a useful contribution to make if given a turn, worked together to create common ground and position them both positively. The use of the vocative contributed to this joint construction of Geoff as helpful and in control of the floor, and Hideki as a capable contributor when given a chance to speak. It also, however, creates Hideki as dependent on Geoff.

Three other functions that contrast with Hideki's use of vocatives are: (8) forestalling a misunderstanding or apologizing for one, and softening the blow when Hideki was the butt of a joke; (9) offering an explanation of something they thought he might not know; and (10) ostensibly offering reassurance. Examples are given below.

**(8) Forestalling a misunderstanding or apologizing for one, and softening the blow when Hideki is the butt of a joke**

**(a) 3/27/97**

[M & G discuss meeting to work on a different paper, not the Master's project. Hideki, thinking they are scheduling an SNR meeting, goes to get his calendar.]

**Martin**            **Hideki** , sorry . we were talking about for another class , /another project/ <H. /oh really ?/> yes <H. okay> I'm sorry

**(b) 4/20/98**

**Julio**            ... I don't like the idea of somebody ra:ting me you know just like listening to me talk and say eh okay . whatever . this guy doesn't . speak well whatever /I suppose/

**Geoff**            /uses/ too many . bad words [J and G, grinning, look at H]

**Julio**            yeah [laughs] there're words he says that he shouldn't say [laughter]  
/XXX/

**Geoff**            /**Hideki**/ , I'm giving you a hard time

**(9) Offering an explanation of something they think he might not know, 12/11/97**

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<sup>13</sup> Note how Hideki's use of "turn in" conflates the roles of teacher and member, positioning him in a subordinate role as the student of his partners.

- Geoff** Betty suggested a a potluck , a master- with our group , and our <H. yeah> respective , partners and families and , things [2]  
**Martin** **Hideki** /dyou/ ... know what a potluck is ?=  
**Hideki** =/ye:s/

**(10) Offering ostensible reassurance or rescue****(a) 3/21/97**

- Geoff** ... this is like step one <H. uhuh /system and/> /and step two/ <H. pre-predict> yeah . /which is/ <M. /yeah/> why the- , with the /comma there/ <H. /okay/> you would sort of read it as /two separate/ <H. okay I see/>  
**Martin** it's- , **Hideki** , it's one of the finer points , /of/ <H. /uhuh/> grammar  
**Hideki** uhuh . okay [M and G laugh]  
**Martin** it's it's /difficult/  
**Geoff** /it's very/ stylistic <H. uhuh> also <H. uhuh>

**(b) 5/21/97**

- Hideki** mhm , kay , so [8] so I would like to , w- write down , u:h our , our , u:h how can I say [2] pri- prioritize , our role- tasks , in May . [5] thanks [5] [H moves to the whiteboard]  
**Julio** perfect . what do we have to do [3]  
**Hideki** so=  
**Julio** =I think this is , this is better <H. uhuh okay> <M. mhm. [3]  
**Hideki** thanks [13] [writing on the board]  
**Julio** today's the twenty-first ? <M. yeah> [3]  
**Martin** **Hideki** <H. yep> would you like me to put those up the:re ? and then , while you guys start talking about the first one or /two/ <H. /mhm/ mhm> and then [3] and , that way I can , sort of follow the conversation /too/ <H. /yes:/> and write [3]  
**Hideki** so [5]

In each of these instances, the speaker was showing that, because of Hideki's footing in the interaction as a foreigner or NNS, the speaker thought he might not know what something meant, might misinterpret something in the conversation, might not recognize teasing, or might not be up to performing the task at hand. If the speaker's assessment was right, the move he made was likely to be helpful, and the use of a first name might well redress any distancing created by the acknowledgement of real difference. If, however, the gesture was unnecessary and underestimated Hideki's competence at that point, as some of these did, it might actually constitute a threat to negative face, and the typical solidarity-building effect of first name use instead would become distancing, like the unequal address of a parent to a child, or that of an old-style boss to an employee.

This potential negative effect is clear in the examples in (10) above, and in the following passage (11), in which Geoff addressed Betty and Hideki together by name, offering them a turn in the conversation before allowing Julio to change the topic. Both Betty and Hideki had been silent during the previous discussion. The contrast between

their two responses to Geoff's treatment is revealing. Betty appeared irritated, as evidenced by the completeness of her response and her controlled tone of voice, whereas Hideki did not.

(11) 5/11/98

- Julio** ... [1] no I think it's okay the way it is . think it's okay the way it is . because we assume many- in many other places that development is gonna continue [4] I think that's a [3] that's a [2] huhh- water quality we have to=
- Geoff** =let's not go- was there any other . did you . **Betty or Hideki** did you have questions on- on drainage ?
- Hideki** /no/
- Betty** /n:o/ I didn't have questions on drainage <G. okay> or wetlands <G. and none on wetlands okay> right

Both Hideki and Betty declined the opportunity to raise any issues about the water quality categories in the evaluative matrix they were reviewing, but Hideki did so in a simple, unmarked way, while Betty declined emphatically, lengthening her *no*, and spelling out in detail what she had no questions about. Thus, whereas Hideki apparently took it in good part that Geoff had made room for him in the conversation, even though he didn't want it at that moment, Betty bristled at the same offer, regarding it as condescending. Betty's reaction shows how the politeness of the vocative can vary with the addressee and with the perceived appropriateness of the gesture of inequality it is coupled with, highlighting the fact that inequality is being constructed.

As the examples in (10) show, members sometimes mis-assessed Hideki's needs. In (10b), Martin's offer to write on the board for Hideki silenced Hideki for the next hour. In example (10a), it is difficult to say whether Martin's words, introduced by the vocative, reflected concern for Hideki's needs or for other issues. Martin may have been reassuring Hideki that he didn't need to worry about this grammar issue (whether the preposition *to* needed to be repeated), since anyone would find it a difficult question. He said in a playback that he thought the question might have been beyond Hideki's competence as a language learner. He may also have wished to move the topic off the table, since both he and Geoff found it difficult to explain. Whatever Martin's motivation was, most Americans I have played this tape for find his remark to be condescending. Martin may have underestimated Hideki, who was in fact the best equipped of the three of them to answer the question he had raised, since he had formal education in the grammar of English. Hideki did not press his point, however, and seemed content to let this topic, and Martin's remark, go. In fact, Hideki indicated in a playback that he did not care much about this issue, but was using it as an ice breaker to get him into the conversation and to provide a platform for the next item he wished to raise, a problem of foregrounding the method rather than the object of study in the goal statement. Thus, for him, this topic was a mere first step in a strategy to raise something else. He seemed unfazed by the possible condescension of Martin's remark. Moreover, he observed that, while either too much or too little "kindness" from the others was "not comfortable", "it's difficult" to get it right (interview, 3/20/97).

Hideki's tolerance extended, too, to frequent teasing. Excerpt (8b) above is one example. Eggins and Slade (1997: 156) have found that workplace "humour seems to

enable interactants to speak ‘off the record’, to make light of what is perhaps quite serious to them, in other words, to say things without strict accountability, either to themselves or to others.” In the conversation of the work group they studied, the act of teasing tended to target those who are different<sup>14</sup>. “The dominant Anglo-mates (Harry and Keith) are not teased by other members” (1997: 159). Moreover, they found that workmate teasing can imply “censure”; in focusing on different personal and social behavior, it makes group norms evident and presses for conformity, while disguising the seriousness of the message. In light of this analysis, it is not surprising that the SNR group’s teasing ultimately found its favorite target in Hideki, a focus that became more pronounced in the final months of the project. Moreover, the teasing often ended with some use of his name as a vocative, in mitigation and as reframing.

In all, there were 26 teasing events in the study data and Hideki was the victim in 13 or 50% of them. The teasing typically focused squarely on his foreignness, as the following example (12) shows. In this episode, the group was discussing having a potluck dinner. Geoff had offered to hold it at his apartment, subject to his wife’s agreement, and had mentioned an approximate time, “five six o’clock kind of, range”. Hideki then attempted to confirm the precise time, a move that struck the others as funny.

Martin began the teasing with his remark (line 5) that “Hideki’s bringing chicken”, the start of a spate of contributions targeting Hideki’s generosity and his identity as Japanese - Geoff’s mention of sake, for example, and Martin’s mention of colored pens<sup>15</sup>. The focus on his planning ahead and on the need to clarify the tentativeness of the plan were recurring features of group scheduling conversations that also underscored Hideki’s identity as a non-native speaker and foreigner. The joking was perhaps winding down when Geoff used a vocative (line 15) in what could have been a typical form of apology for teasing, something like, “Hideki I’m giving you a hard time”, as we saw in (8b). His turn, echoed by Martin, was not completed, however, and Hideki added fuel to the tease by mentioning the concert he would be attending (lines 16-17). In what followed, members shifted from addressing Hideki directly as “you”, to referring to him as “he” (line 18), casting him as the subject for a collaborative performance by the others that confirmed their in-group identity while marking him as different and outside the ring of jokers. This performance ended when Martin realigned with Hideki, saying, “some of us’re more organized than others” (line 30). Geoff then once again addressed Hideki by name (line 31), cuing his re-inclusion and the boundary of the teasing.

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<sup>14</sup> Fillmore (1994: 309) similarly notes that being a humorist is “partly a function of power.” In the dissertation defense he studied, the candidate was most often the target of the joke, and was least likely to make humor. The outside member and the youngest member of the committee also did “considerably less joking than Adam and Sherm, the chairman and the oldest member respectively.”

<sup>15</sup> Like many Asian international students, Hideki carried a variety of pens and pencils in a pencil case, and used different colors for different activities in his calendar. No one else in the SNR group did this and it had apparently caught Martin’s eye as another token of the differences between them.

(12) 12/11/97

- 1 **Hideki** /six/ o'clock ? [laughter] XX  
 2 **Betty** [laughing] he's gonna /check/ <H. /yeah/> on it okay ?  
 3 **Geoff** nothing's confirmed I will  
 4 **Betty** yeah I I put mine I in parenthesis you could /do that:/  
 5 **Martin** /six o'clock/ and Hideki's bringing chicken [laughter] <B. yeah>  
 6 **Hideki** six , /six/ <G. /sake/> [B laughs] okay , six o'clock ?  
 7 **Betty** well , he's confirming with his wife  
 8 **Geoff** /that's not/  
 9 **Julio** /you're bringing/ you're bringing the sa- that . okay so it's been agreed  
 10 that you're gonna bring the sake ? and you're gonna be bringing the: um:  
 11 , chicken ? <M. yeah> with that  
 12 **Martin** chicken , and make sure you write it in bright colored pen so you don't  
 13 forget=  
 14 **Hideki** =okay [B laughs] yeah [2]  
 15 **Geoff** **Hideki** <M. /Hideki/>  
 16 **Hideki** /Sunday/ Sunday <J. /and some shrimp . some shrimp dish also/> /on on  
 17 Sunday at four o'clock , I have/ , I have . I have to go to , a- a concert=  
 18 **Julio** =he already knows [laughing] [H laughs]  
 19 **Geoff** /see- I . I don't even ha:ve X/  
 20 **Hideki** /maybe . six thirty is/=  
 21 **Betty** =okay , /six thirty [laughs]/  
 22 **Geoff** /my calendar doesn't even HAVE January in it/  
 23 **Betty** /he's already booked it's already , /XXX six thirty/  
 24 **Hideki** /so/  
 25 **Geoff** /XXX my calendar/ in two weeks  
 26 **Julio** my go:d [B laughing] he already know:s what he's doing in January [2] I  
 27 don't even know my schedule and class schedule you know <B. yeah>  
 28 [laughter]  
 29 **Geoff** kay . he doesn't even e- [laughs]  
 30 **Martin** /some/ <B. /yeah/> of us're more organized than /others/  
 31 **Geoff** /Hideki/ that's- that's tentative <H. okay> that's not confirmed yet [B  
 32 laughing] <H. okay> but yeah pencil it in <H. kay> .

#### 5.4. Summary and discussion of vocative use

To summarize the use of vocatives by the other members of the group, the dominant members, Geoff and Martin, used them the most, primarily to change the addressee in the conversation, often in the context of polling the members, which fit with their roles as group leaders. When addressing Hideki by name, 30% of the time they were bringing him into the conversation, shifting him out of an inactive status and giving him an opportunity to speak, but the rest of the time he was already an active participant. In addition, their vocatives served interpersonal functions, particularly as redress for moves that constructed and underscored differences in their positions, which may or

may not have been accurately assessed by the speaker. Thus, the device that created inclusion also created subordination.

Comparing Hideki's use of vocatives with the use made by others in the group, I have identified several similarities. Both he and they used this strategy to facilitate turn initiation for Hideki, bringing him into the conversation, shifting him from inactive to active. In the study data episodes this appears to have been a common goal, at least some of the time. Moreover, both Hideki and the others used vocatives to acknowledge and mitigate problems they felt arose from Hideki's language and experiential lacks. In Hideki's case, he addressed the burden he thought his participation placed on the others, a concern he commented on in an interview. He noted that including him in the group's interaction was "really time-consuming work, both for me and them", and that "the main reason they didn't ignore me is just because they are, just kind. ... My language is the poorest compared with the others... However, they ... didn't ignore my learning process as well. It's great" (interview, 5/21/98). He added that in other group work at the university, he had been shunted aside for efficiency's sake. Thus, he was grateful to the members of this group for not marginalizing him altogether.

The main social concern the others addressed through vocative use was to soften acts of inequality, and, again, Geoff expressed this concern most directly when he said, "If I was in his position I would want to just be considered one of the group". Moreover, he added, "you don't want to appear like you're belittling his intellectual capabilities, you don't want to feel like, so, did you get that ? Because I mean apparently he's been getting it all along, so but ... then you might be missing times when maybe he didn't get it" (interview, 5/21/98). Nevertheless, he also felt that the "need to stick to the task at hand" (interview, 5/19/98) could override the niceties of finding out what Hideki knew or needed. Hideki, too, seemed accepting of this sporadic, roughly attuned attention. Thus, their attitudes support the shared system of inclusion and inequality at work in their discourse.

Some differences in their use of vocatives are notable, however. For Hideki, his comparatively frequent use of vocatives was a means to control the topic of the conversation, while for the others vocatives were primarily a way to target a new addressee. Thus, Hideki's use of vocatives as a discourse strategy gave him control of an aspect of the discourse the other members were managing by other means, allowing him to direct the conversation to issues that particularly concerned him. Zuengler (1993: 184) notes that a speaker's knowledge about and affective involvement with the topic of conversation affects "conversational dynamics and role taking," giving an edge to a speaker who is knowledgeable about and involved in the topic of discussion. For Hideki, then, this strategy not only enhanced his involvement in the moment, but also contributed overall to his efficacy as a participant, and to the impression that "he's a very dedicated and committed person, and wants to be fully involved" (Geoff, interview, 5/19/98). This impression, in turn, motivated the others to include him, despite the perception that he "can't work at the same pace that we can, or accomplish as much as we can" (Geoff, interview, 5/19/98). Thus, topic control may have strengthened his position in the group. Tannen (1984), however, identifies abrupt topic shifts, without hesitation, as part of a "high involvement style", a feature of closeness or intimacy in conversation. Other group members shifted the topic in this way. The fact that Hideki used the vocative to do so shows him relying less on a shared assumption of closeness, instead making the claim to social intimacy explicit through first name address.

For Hideki, the use of another's name in a more explicit bid for a turn also mitigated the burden of the conversation, topic change, or presumption of equality involved. This contrasting use of vocatives by Hideki and the others is very similar to that found by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2001) in their Irish radio call-in data. In this corpus, the most frequent function of vocatives was in call management, a function not found in the SNR data. Leaving that function aside, however, they found that callers used more than twice as many vocatives as the presenter did. This imbalance is also seen in the SNR group, where Hideki used vocatives much more frequently than any other speaker, his usage essentially equaling that of everyone else. In addition, McCarthy and O'Keeffe found that while callers used vocatives for topic control, turn claiming, and mitigation of disagreement, the presenter, or host of the show, used them primarily for turn management, controlling who spoke. Again, this asymmetry of functions mirrors Hideki's use of vocatives to change the topic, claim the floor, and soften the interpersonal burden of his participation, in contrast to Martin and Geoff, who used them primarily to allocate turns. Moreover, McCarthy and O'Keeffe note that "callers frequently use vocatives at points of topic expansion leading to longer than usual turns" (2001: 16), a use Hideki also made of them<sup>16</sup>.

While radio call-in shows and graduate student project groups may seem rather disparate contexts of use, they do have two features in common that may account for these similarities in the use of vocatives. First, McCarthy and O'Keeffe note that callers and the host do not actually know each other, although they interact as though they do, often discussing intimate topics. As they say, "The use of first-name vocatives in the pseudo-conversational context which the radio discourse creates not only projects an intimate level of relationship, but appears to play a role in creating and sustaining such relations in the interaction" (2001: 1). While the SNR group had a much longer life and more continued interaction than a radio show phone call, it nevertheless may be true of them, too, that they were more like pseudo-intimates than true intimates. That is, they were together primarily, if not exclusively, to accomplish the task of writing their Master's thesis; they constituted a "chronotope" (Bakhtin 1986), a group brought into being for a limited time to do a job, rather than real intimates, whose relationship would be lasting. By contrast, as Leech (1999) observes, in relationships that are mutually assured, such as between a mother and daughter, vocatives may not be used at all. Thus, their presence bespeaks interpersonal work to construct "comity" (Aston 1993) and a sense of intimacy. The closeness generated may be evanescent, and more instrumental than intrinsic. In this context, the use of vocatives helps to define the interpersonal space among group members as that of friends and intimates, creating and maintaining a sense of belonging, and promoting the continued cooperation of the group. That the construction of intimacy is in some sense artificial is supported in the analysis of the SNR vocatives by the fact that there is no evolution in the system over time. That is, the use of vocatives does not decline, signaling that relationships have become more mutually assured, for example. Instead, the system is static, suggesting no greater intimacy is achieved.

The second similarity between the SNR group and the phone-in show participants is that of asymmetry, of inequality rather than equality. As McCarthy and

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<sup>16</sup> On 4/4/97, Hideki used Martin's name three times in 12 minutes of conversation with him, each time as he extended the conversation and changed the topic.

O’Keeffe state, “in reality the presenter and caller are not equal in terms of their rights within the discourse” (2001: 15). Their different use of vocatives as overt means to claim a turn, or grant one, for example, contrasts, in McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s view, with casual conversation, “where there is more democratic negotiation of topic as well as more equal rights to the floor” (2001: 19). Thus, the differences in the use of the vocative reveal the “real asymmetric power semantic between the presenter and the caller in the radio data” (2001: 19). The same can be said for the SNR participants, where although all the members were institutionally equal as students, the American men were dominant, controlling the floor in much the same way as the radio host. And, again, the lack of change in the system of vocative use suggests the lack of fundamental change in rights to the floor. Nevertheless, as Ainsworth-Vaughn (1998: 50) has observed in doctor-patient interactions, less powerful participants also use “a repertoire of discourse moves” to enact their agendas. We can see that Hideki, like the callers, found a means, in the shared system of vocatives as contextualization cues, to claim the floor and control the topic, without contesting the status quo that subordinated him. Thus, vocatives serve the SNR members, as relative non-intimates in unequal interaction, to keep “the delicate balance between discourse control and participant relations” (McCarthy & O’Keeffe 2001: 19).

## **6. Conclusion**

The SNR group’s system of vocative use is one building block in the group’s construction of interculturality, one that simultaneously creates inclusion and inequality for Hideki. That the group did not construct “the ultimate form of intercultural cooperation” (Koole & ten Thije 2001: 585), despite the length of time they worked and interacted together, their expressed good will, and their effort, can be seen as a reflection of features of the institutional setting in which they worked and the attitudes they held about each other. The institution, as we’ve seen, had notions of creating a global citizenry and of giving students experiences that would equip them to work in diverse teams, but provided no structural support to enable participants to question their categorizations of each other and their ways of interacting. Their assignment and the evaluation of it was product oriented, with scant attention to the group’s process. Moreover, the group existed as a temporary chronotope, bounded by time and task, with little incentive to create short-term disruption to negotiate issues that would generate mindfulness of each other and a more equal “third way” (Kramsch 1993) of communicating in the longer term. In this environment, it is not surprising that the status quo of power identities went largely uncontested.

The individuals in the group also all shared a disability or deficit view of Hideki. The asymmetry inherent in their use of vocatives merely instantiated this view that Hideki had the most to learn. Martin and Geoff agreed that although Hideki couldn’t contribute “a whole person’s worth” (Geoff, interview, 5/19/98), his dedication and his appreciation of their efforts to help him made working with him worthwhile. They did not lament what they had failed to learn, being largely unaware that they had much to learn. Nor did Hideki worry that he had not communicated his own ideas about how to run a meeting, draw inferences from data, or modify the product to better suit the client’s needs, although he had views about all these aspects of the project. In his role as learner, he reached a quite nuanced understanding of the other group members, their



standards, ways of operating, and conception of the finished report. They, however, failed to develop their understanding of him much beyond ideas such as the high cost of living in Japan and the hierarchical nature of Japanese work environments.

This analysis points to the importance of contextual, institutional factors and participant attitudes in shaping interculturality at the level of talk. It also suggests a role for educators in enabling groups to construct all their members as equals and learners. Tracy (1995: 205) urges that researchers not only use contextual information, interviews, and participant observation to characterize and explain interactions, but also to begin to conceptualize “how communicative practices actually should be conducted” in order to meet the goals of participants in similar situations. The experience of the SNR group provides a starting point for envisioning how member goals and the goals of the larger community of academia can be more fully realized and how their practices can be improved.

## Appendix

### Transcript Conventions

Adapted from Psathas (1995)

<b>Hideki</b>	in the left column, identifies the speaker; in the text identifies a vocative
,	very brief pause
.	pause of less than a second, with falling intonation
?	pause of less than a second, with rising intonation
[2]	timed pause, in seconds
[info]	factual information or clarification about the exchange
/overlap/	enclosed talk of current speaker overlaps with similarly enclosed talk of the next speaker
<H. mhm>	non-turn utterances of another speaker during the current speaker’s turn
=	latched talk
-	truncated word
:	prolonged sound or syllable
XX	unintelligible talk; each X represents approximately one syllable
CAPS	loud talk
<i>lever</i>	text read aloud or quoted from a written text

**Note:** When long excerpts are given, line numbers have been assigned for ease of reference in the text. These are not intended as measures of timing or of number of turns or utterances.

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