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The Japanese change-of-state tokens *a* and *aa* in responsive units

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Abstract

This paper investigates Japanese particles *a* and *aa* in responsive turns. Although both of these tokens display change-of-state of the speaker's cognitive state, they mark different types of epistemic stance. Through analysis of collocating items and sequential environments, it is shown that by producing an *a*-prefaced response, speakers display a change of state from not-knowing to knowing, receipting the information as new and thereby exhibiting surprise. By contrast, with an *aa*-prefaced response, speakers display a change of state but simultaneously show that they have previous knowledge of some parts of the informing. To demonstrate the knowledge, an *aa*-speaker often extends a sequence by providing a piece of information that has not been mentioned in the conversation. Although infrequently, *a* and *aa* sometimes co-occur in one utterance, in the order of *a* followed by *aa*, working together as resources to register the change of state and display understanding.
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1. Introduction

Since John Heritage's seminal work (Heritage, 1984), studies on change-of-state tokens have been conducted in various languages. Generally, the term change-of-state token refers to a linguistic marker that indicates that "its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness" (Heritage, 1984:299). In his various studies, Heritage analyzed *oh*-prefaced responses to informings (Heritage, 1984), questions (Heritage, 1998), and assessments (Heritage, 2002) and demonstrated the various interactional moves that speakers make when using the given token in each sequential environment.

Research into change-of-state tokens has recently been enriched, particularly in languages that are prolific in varieties of this category. It has been argued that change-of-state tokens have more subcategories than those previously been thought. For example, Golato (2010) compared *ach* and *achso* and discussed their differences in the marking of understanding. According to Golato's analysis, *ach* may mark mere receipt of information without explicitly marking understanding, while *achso* marks understanding of a prior action or of the import of the speaker's own actions, particularly in the third position of repair sequences. Koivisto (2015), who analyzed Finnish *aa* in the third position of a repair sequence, concluded that it marks *now-understanding*; that is, the speaker of *aa* originally had trouble understanding, but has come to understand with the help of the prior talk. The notion of now-understanding is also used in Weidner's (2016) analysis of *aha* in Polish, which states that *aha* indicates now-understanding in the sequential environment of response to

elaborations. In addition to marking understanding, *remembering* has also been discussed in terms of marking in Finnish (Koivisto, 2013) and Dutch (Seuren et al., 2016).

This study investigates Japanese *a* and *aa* in responsive turns and shows that recent studies on change-of-state tokens are of significant relevance to the distinction between *a* and *aa* in Japanese.[1] I argue that, although both are change-of-state tokens and can be used in a similar way in some circumstances, they express different types of epistemic stance. Examples (1) and (2) below show instances of *a* and *aa*. The target items are in bold face. % indicates a glottal stop.

(1) [Hikari bank_CallHomejpn1966_10:02]
01 Ami: a   >nanka   ne<   *Hikari   ginkoo   no   hito   iru   yo:?*
             a   something FP   Hikari   bank   GEN   person   exist   FP
             'a well, there is a person from Hikari Bank ((in my school)).'
02   (0.6)
03 Chie: -> **a%**   *hontoo   nansai   gurai   no   hito?*
             a   really   how.old about   GEN   person
             '**a** really. How old is that person approximately?'

(2) [Gums]
18 Kai: *orenji   toka   guree   no*   [*koo*
            orange   or   gray   GEN   this
            'orange or gray-colored
19 Yu: [*hai.*
                                                         'yes'
20 Kai: <u>*gamu*</u>   *ga   koo   arimashita*   [*yone*
            gum   NOM   this   exist-POL-PAST   FP
            gums were (there), weren't they?'
21 Yu: ->   [**aa** *arimashita ne*
                                                        aa exist-POL-PAST FP
                                                        '**aa** (there) were.'

In Example (1) line 03 above, in using *a*, the speaker adopts the epistemic stance that the information is new and registers the change of state from not-knowing to knowing the information, thereby expressing surprise. By contrast, with *aa* (Example (2) line 21), the speaker shows understanding, adopting the epistemic stance that at least part of the information provided in the interlocutor's turn is previously known to the speaker. Thus, the distinction made by Golato (2010) (i.e., receipt of information vs. marking understanding) and the notions used in Koivisto (2013, 2015) (i.e., now-understanding and now-remembering) are applicable to the functions of *a* and *aa*.

This study is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief summary of previous studies on the grammatical category of interjection in Japanese. Section 3 concerns the methodology and data used for this study. In Section 4, the collocation patterns of *a* and *aa* are examined. In Section 5, a detailed analysis of sequential environments in which *a* and *aa* are used is provided. Section 6 provides an analysis of the linear organization of responsive turns with *a* or *aa*. Section 7 is the summary and conclusion.

2. Previous studies on interjections in Japanese

In traditional and descriptive Japanese linguistics, most particles used in responses have been called interjections, and the various Japanese particles of this type are generally characterized as expressions of the speaker's cognitive state. Takubo and Kinsui (1997) classified such particles into seven groups: (i) response, (ii) expression of unexpectedness/ surprise, (iii) discovery/recalling, (iv) reminding/urging to notice, (v) evaluation, (vi) hesitation, and (vii) exclamation. While category (ii), expression of unexpectedness/surprise, is similar to the cases discussed in this study, neither *a* nor *aa* is mentioned in that group, although *a* and *a%* are classified in (iii) discovery/recalling.

Although it remains common for Japanese linguistics to discuss the usages of interjections based on constructed data, detailed analyses of interjections used as response particles have recently appeared within the framework of Interactional

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[1] Following the terminology in Thompson et al. (2015), I use the term ''particle'' in this study to refer to *a* or *aa*. The term *particle*, however, is usually used for case particles and sentence-final particles in Japanese linguistics. Items such as *a* or *aa* are called *interjections*, or, in Japanese, *kantooshi* (composed of *kan* 'inter,' *too* 'throw,' and *shi* 'particle') or *kandooshi* (composed of *kandoo* 'emotion' and *shi* 'particle'). In this study, the term *particle* is used based on the size of linguistic items, and the term *interjection* is used as the name of a grammatical category.