

# Collaboratively organized stancetaking in Japanese: Sharing and negotiating stance within the turn constructional unit



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## Abstract

Stancetaking is one of the fundamental properties of human interaction (cf. [Du Bois and Kärkkäinen, 2012](#); [Englebretson, 2007b](#); [Goodwin, 2007](#); [Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992, 2004](#); [Jaffe, 2009](#)). It is pervasive, intersubjective, and collaborative, emerging in response to local contingencies in interaction. While a number of studies have investigated stance in English, little has been done in Japanese. Using Conversation Analysis (CA) frameworks, this paper explores how participants in Japanese conversation employ, or exploit, linguistic and multimodal resources to create opportunities for stance negotiation within the formulation of a turn in progress through strategically suspending the progressivity of a “turn-constructional unit (TCU)” ([Sacks et al., 1974](#); [Schegloff, 1996](#)). Rather than treating stance as a static category relating to the speaker, this study views stancetaking as a dynamic, emergent and interactive characteristic of language in social interaction. In this paper stancetaking is conceptualized through the social interactional processes of alignment and affiliation among participants and viewed as an embodied interactive activity.

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## 1. Introduction

In conversations, interlocutors regularly display various stances – including affiliation, affect, evaluation, or epistemic certainty or uncertainty toward the topic of conversation – as they construct talk and negotiate their points of view. Drawing on the analytical frameworks of Conversation Analysis (CA), this study examines how stance operates in conjunction with the sequential nature of talk and is articulated through verbal and embodied actions. Interactants both align with the ongoing course of action and affiliate with each other ([Stivers, 2008](#)) in response to local contingencies in interaction. Stance is shaped by inputs from all participants, and as a result, stance is considered to be situated, intersubjective, and collaborative. Expanding understanding of stance in Japanese, this study examines how participants negotiate stance through the strategic suspension of the progressivity of “turn-constructional units (TCU)” ([Sacks et al., 1974](#); [Schegloff, 1996](#)), which are the building blocks for taking turns in conversation. The study shifts from the common focus on stance articulation at turn boundaries to explicate how segmentation in Japanese contributes to the incorporation of stance display inside a turn as it is built. The findings reinforce that rather than treating stance as a static category relating to the speaker, stancetaking needs to be understood as a dynamic, emergent, and interactive characteristic of language in social interaction.

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Stance has received sustained interest and has increasingly become an important theoretical and analytical term in the study of language and social interaction. Studies of stance have recently been expanding in both analytic perspectives and linguistic scope. Edited collections on stancetaking by Englebretson (2007b), Jaffe (2009), and Du Bois and Kärkkäinen (2012) illustrate how stance has been investigated by various disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, social psychology, education, and sociology; in particular, discourse-functional linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociocultural linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and Conversation Analysis. Within the broad array of ways stance can be understood, this paper adopts CA perspectives for understanding human interaction, recognizing stance as a public presentation of a position (alignment and affiliation) in relation to an unfolding action within social interaction (e.g. Kärkkäinen, 2003; Peräkylä and Sorjonen, 2012; Stivers, 2008; Stivers et al., 2011; Wu, 2004). CA provides analytical frameworks for examining the sequential organization of interaction and views the social actions and activities as the basic building block of intersubjectivity (Heritage, 1984:259). As participants in interaction display their analysis of prior talk, the sequential organization provides empirical ways of understanding how participants themselves make sense of the interaction they are engaged in.

While expanding perspectives on stance, this study also contributes to broadening the scope of stance research. Until recently, the majority of research has been rooted in studies of Indo-European languages, primarily, English (e.g. Haddington, 2004, 2006, 2007; Kärkkäinen, 2003, 2006, 2007; Keisanen, 2006; among many others). However, there has been a growing interest in exploring how stance operates in other languages, including studies of Asian languages such as Chinese (e.g. Lim, 2011; Wu, 2004), Indonesian (Englebretson, 2007a), Korean (e.g. Ju, 2011; Park, 2009), and Japanese (e.g. Cook, 2012; Iwasaki, 1993a; Morita, 2005).

In Japanese, Iwasaki's study (1993a) is a pioneering work, but like most linguistic studies it treated stance as predominantly a matter of subjectivity – the expression of internal states of an individual speaker. He takes a discourse-pragmatic approach, considering “the attributes and the experience of the real speaker” (Iwasaki, 1993a:3). Iwasaki proposes the centrality of the notion of subjectivity and stance in linguistics, examining the speaker as the center of (1) spatial deictic phenomena, (2) evaluation of event and attitude, and (3) epistemological perspective which affects grammar and use of language. Maynard (1989a,b, 1993) also demonstrates the pervasiveness of the speaker's perspective reflected in discourse, but expands to consider interlocutors and intersubjectivity. Mori (1999), Mori and Nakamura (2008), and Nakamura (2009) have also contributed to expanding approaches to stance in Japanese through CA perspectives, but they associated stance with the negotiation of agreement/disagreement and perspectives. They investigated linguistic resources, such as predicate terms, “utterance-final elements” (Tanaka, 1999), connective expressions, and sentence-final particles in relation to stance in Japanese conversation. Building on the previous studies, this paper examines ways that stance contributes to shaping TCUs and unfolding turns in Japanese conversation, and contributes to the increasing shift from speaker-oriented subjectivity to understand stance in terms of the aligned intersubjectivity of all participants.

This study continues the reorientation from the focus on speakers, building on Du Bois's (2007) notion of dialogicality and Goodwin and Goodwin's (2000, 2004) notion of participation framework to understand stance negotiation as a choreography of speakers and recipients. Dialogic perspectives see “the stance act as shaped by the complex interplay of collaborative acts by dialogic co-participants” (Du Bois, 2007:141–142) and contribute to understanding “the collaborative construction of intersubjectivity” (Du Bois and Kärkkäinen, 2012:443). Goodwin and Goodwin's (1992, 2000, 2004) and Goodwin's (2007) notion of participation framework, which refers to “actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk” (Goodwin and Goodwin, 2004:222), also provides an important precedent for approaching stancetaking as an emerging local action that is shaped by, and itself shapes the unfolding talk (e.g. Goodwin and Alim, 2010; Goodwin et al., 2012). Drawing on the perspectives mentioned above, this paper contributes to growing efforts to understand the organization of stance across languages through an investigation of how an unfolding TCU is suspended in order to create a space for intersubjective stance negotiation amongst participants before the TCU reaches possible completion. The findings demonstrate the ways speakers utilize multimodal resources in embodied interactions (Goodwin, 2013; Streeck et al., 2011) to make a recipient's subjective stance locally relevant while the speaker's unit is emerging, illuminating systematic practices of stancetaking within unit construction in Japanese interaction.

I will first discuss unit construction and segmentation in Japanese. Then, I analyze examples demonstrating how speakers create spaces right after or immediately before producing a component conveying the main point of perspective and stance within an unfolding TCU and how speakers incorporate recipient reactions into the design of the unit after resuming the deliberately suspended utterance. The examples demonstrate particular practices within the unit construction that enable emergent forms of participation for negotiating, displaying and incorporating stance.

## 2. Collaborative stancetaking with suspended TCUs

Earlier studies of discourse-functional and interactional linguistics have noted ‘fragmentation’ in Japanese, based on the frequent use of words and phrases that are shorter than syntactically complete clauses (e.g. Clancy et al., 1996; Fox

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