

Title : Consensus Building Conversations in Taiwanese-Japanese Contact Situation :  
A Focus on Advanced Taiwanese Learners of Japanese and Japanese Native Speakers

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When required to make a joint decision, we usually first have a discussion on the topic where we agree or disagree with our conversational partner, and through this interaction a conclusion is achieved. This study calls this type of conversations “consensus building conversations”, and analyzes them in their entirety, from initiating a topic, expressing opinions, discussing with each other, to reaching a consensus. In this study, consensus building conversations are defined as conversations where the interlocutors exchange opinions with each other, and after much thought and consideration reach a conclusion. This means that the ultimate goal of this type of conversation is to reach the same conclusion between the interlocutors. Through focusing on utterance categories, the goal of this study is to clarify the differences and characteristics of consensus building conversations between Taiwanese Japanese learners in a Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) environment and Japanese native speakers.

Chapter 1 presents the background of this study. The technical terms used in this research are defined. In addition, the problems of learners in a JFL environment are pointed out. Lastly, ways in which this study may contribute to language education are described.

Chapter 2 examines previous studies. After an overview of previous research on consensus building, the standpoint of this research is clarified. Furthermore, unanswered issues from previous studies and the subjects of this research are illustrated.

Chapter 3 details the survey and analysis method. An overview of the participants, the survey procedure, the role card, and the transcription method are described.

Chapter 4 is the report of Study 1. Study 1 focuses on the overall structure of consensus building conversations. The use of utterance categories in the consensus building situation by the learner and the native speaker is compared in this chapter. The results suggest that although the learner and the native speaker take on different roles, the conversation is not led by anyone, and consensus is achieved by their cooperation. Some utterance categories are used to display a more active role, and some are used to display a more passive role. In other words, although the learner and native speaker play different roles, neither of them has a passive attitude. Both of them are considered to actively participate in the conversation.

Chapter 5 is the report of Study 2. Based on the results of Study 1, study 2 further examines the specific features of the consensus building conversations. The results of previous studies show that, in order to achieve the objective of consensus building, the consensus is reached not only by expressing opposite opinions, but also agreement. Study 2 examines the agreement expressions in the consensus building conversation. The findings show that, in the case of agreement, both the learner and the native speaker tend to express agreement by only using backchannels. In addition, both show the tendency of using the same agreement expression less often. For example, agreement expressions by a "substantial utterance" are hardly observed in this study. It is suggested that the

learner relies on the previous utterance of the native speaker, and the native speaker uses several agreement expressions simultaneously in order to facilitate understanding.

Chapter 6 is the report of Study 3. Based on the results of Study 1, in Study 3 a specific feature of consensus building conversation was analyzed further in detail. In previous studies it was found that in consensus building conversations the summary utterance plays an important role in reaching an agreement. Study 3 analyzes the summary utterance in consensus building conversations. The results show that, concerning the position of summary utterances, while the learners use summary utterances in the middle of the discourse, the native speakers use summary utterances both in the middle and at the end of the discourse. Regarding the form of the summary utterance, both the learners and native speakers mainly use summary utterances in the form of a decision statement. However, native speakers also have the tendency to use summary utterances in question form. From this it is suggested that the learners seem to conclude more decisively, whereas the native speakers tend to confirm the other's opinion while reaching a conclusion. Overall, the native speakers use more summary utterances which suggests that the native speakers take on a summarizing role.

Chapter 7 is the summary of the thesis. The results of the above three studies are summarized and a comprehensive discussion of the three studies is conducted. Next, future tasks and suggestions for Japanese language education are considered.