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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining the Confluence of Identity and Politeness in L2 Classroom Talk

David Shimamoto
National Institute of Technology, Niihama College, Japan
Corresponding Author: David Shimamoto, **E-mail**: r.shimamoto@niihama-nct.ac.jp

| ABSTRACT
Identity and politeness have received substantial interest in the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis. Despite this, few studies have empirically investigated how they influence each other to shape the subtleties of talk-in-interaction. Such an understanding would be particularly useful to language educators, as it could illuminate the types of interactional practices that learners undertake to legitimize themselves. This paper will explore one such instance in an English as a foreign language classroom at a Japanese university. Conversation Analysis is used to examine a group task in which a student in a subordinated role attempts to project two conflicting identities: a compliant follower and an expert on the discussion topic. The data exhibits how this highly proficient learner seamlessly switches back and forth between the two identities through her acts of politeness rooted in Japanese culture. The findings highlight the complex interpersonal challenges that learners often face in their attempts at self-expression in the language classroom.

| KEYWORDS

Identity, politeness, Conversation Analysis, EFL teaching in Japan, group discussion task

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The individualism-collectivism dimension (Hofstede, 2011) of Japanese society and culture has garnered attention from a range of disciplines. As it concerns language learning, the collective-oriented nature of Japanese discourse has been widely investigated, including the hierarchical dynamics of group discussions (Hazel & Ayres, 1998; Watanabe, 2005), teaching pedagogy and learning styles (Kubota, 1999; Yanagi & Baker, 2016), and reasons behind the silence often observed in English as foreign language (EFL) classrooms (Banks, 2016; Harumi, 2011). These studies are part of an established body of literature that suggests cultural dispositions must be accounted for when analyzing learners and their engagement with a second or foreign language. By identifying the cultural factors that underpin learner behavior, educators can gain insight into the motivations that drive particular tendencies in the classroom.

To this end, the present study will examine the culture-relevant interactional moves that took place within the limitations of a specific EFL task design—a power asymmetrical group discussion in which one student was anointed discussion leader. Conversation Analysis (CA) will be used to dissect the turn-by-turn interaction that arose as one learner attempted to display an expert identity while also showing sensitivity to her subordinated role in the discussion task. To begin, a review of the pertinent literature on identity and politeness will detail how the two manifest in the Japanese context. This will be followed by an analysis of three segments of group discussion data. Finally, a discussion of the findings will suggest how the data presented in this paper can inform classroom discourse, particularly as it relates to English language teaching in Japan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Identity as interactionally achieved

Contemporary linguistic research has refuted the notion of identity as a priori category independent of interaction by asserting that identity be viewed as an intersubjective product of interaction (Hall & Bucholtz, 2005; Kasper & Wagner, 2011; Ochs, 2005; Spencer-Oatey, 2007; Zimmerman, 1998). In establishing how identity is discursively constructed, Ochs (2005) argues that interactants draw on a common set of resources called acts (socially recognized behavior) and stances (socially recognized attitudes) to perform, negotiate, ratify, and maintain a particular identity. Similarly, Hall & Bucholtz's (2005) indexicality principle states that identity is heavily rooted in the ideologies of a particular group and that these ideologies are referenced through the interactional footings, stances, roles, and linguistic forms an individual selects during talk-in-interaction. Furthermore, Young (2008) talks about the identity resources individuals employ as part of co-constructed interactional competence with other present participants.

A large volume of empirical research has borne out the emergent and jointly constructed nature of identity, especially regarding expert identity, which will be of chief concern in this paper. Vickers (2010), for instance, carried out an ethnographic study of a team project between two engineering students: one a native speaker of English and another a non-native speaker. She found that despite both students having legitimate expertise in their respective fields, the non-native speaker's language proficiency was a barrier that prevented him from establishing his identity as an expert in computer engineering. In a more recent study, Yu and Wu (2021) demonstrate the ways in which a caller and a call-taker gradually build up their identities as expert and novice through a multitude of category-bound actions, such as giving unsolicited advice, telling troubles, and explicit advice seeking.

In addition to theorizing how identity is established, research has also classified identity into various distinctions. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) positionality principle claims that identity does not just account for broad demographic categories, such as gender and ethnicity, but it also encompasses interactionally specific roles, such as "joke teller," "engaged listener," and "expert." Brewer and Gardner (1996) outline three different levels of self-identity. The first level is one's personal identity or self-definition as a unique individual. The next level is one's interpersonal identity or bonds of attachment to significant others. The final level is one's collective identity as a member of a particular group. Brewer and Gardner (1996) further note that "these different self-construals may also coexist within the same individual, available to be activated at different times or in different contexts" (p.83).

Turning now to self-identity as it pertains to the Japanese context, Markus and Kitayama (1991) discuss the role of an independent view of self versus an interdependent view of self. They argue that individuals in American society are socialized into an independent view of self, where appreciating individual differences is valued and asserting oneself is prioritized. Japanese society, in contrast, tends to embrace an interdependent view of self. The authors state:

> Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent upon, and, to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227)

Their explanation highlights the value Japanese culture places on controlling and regulating one's personal identity to meet the principal objective of identifying with a certain collective identity. The authors remark that despite an inclination to favor the interdependent view of self, this must also be managed against one's desire to exert an independent view of self.

2.2 Face, Politeness, and their Japanese Conceptualizations

The concept of face first emerged from the sociological work of Ervin Goffman (1967). Like identity, Goffman writes that face arises as a social construct and is attended to within the flow of an interactive event. As Lim (1994) further delineates, face is not strictly one's self-view but the way in which one wants to be viewed by others. Therefore, "face in this sense is different from such psychological concepts as self-esteem, self-concept, ego, and pride, which can be claimed without regard to the other's perspective, and can be gained or lost in private as well as public" (Lim, 1994, p. 210).

One of the seminal works on face has been Brown and Levinson's (1987) universal theories on face-threatening acts and politeness. The two pillars of their argument are the notions of positive face and negative face. The former denotes a desire to have one's goals and self-worth acknowledged by others, and the latter relates to the desire to be free and unimpeded in one's actions. Brown and Levinson claim that politeness is a redressive action used to mitigate threats to either of these two aspects of face. Although their work has paved the way for extensive research on face and politeness, the universality of their theories has been called into question, particularly by those who have been researching non-Western cultures (Gu, 1990; Haugh, 2005; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988). The crux of many of these arguments has been that Brown and Levinson's two conceptualizations of face are built upon individual autonomy and that such formulations, while constructive, are not on their own sufficient measures for cultures that place more value on collective identities.

To demonstrate how the Japanese honorific system diverges from Brown and Levinson's theories on politeness, Matsumoto (1989, p. 415) asks us to consider these three versions of the statement, "Today is Saturday":

1(a) Kyouu wa doyoubi da.
today TOPIC Saturday COPULA-PLAIN

1(b) Kyouu wa doyoubi desu.
today TOPIC Saturday COPULA-POLITE

1(c) Kyouu wa doyoubi degozai masu.
today TOPIC Saturday COPULA-SUPER POLITE

While sentences 1(b) and 1(c) contain honorific markers, these forms of politeness would not be expected based on Brown and Levinson's model, as the statements themselves are not face-threatening acts. Matsumoto provides an abundance of examples to show that politeness in Japan is not predicated on face-threatening acts but is fundamentally governed by one's relevant social position to another. She, therefore, categorizes the use of honorifics, formulaic expressions, and other markers of politeness as "relation-acknowledging devices." In a similar vein, Ide (1989) asserts:

> In a Western society where individualism is assumed to be the basis of all interaction, it is easy to regard face as the key to interaction. On the other hand, in a society where group membership is regarded as the basis for interaction, the role or status defined in a particular situation rather than face is the basis of interaction (p. 241).

Ide further classifies Western norms of politeness as "volitional" and the forms prevalent in Japanese culture as "discernment."

In further support, Haugh (2005) proposes the importance of "place," which he defines as "one's contextually contingent and discursively enacted social role and position" (p. 660). He claims that politeness in Japanese derives from a desire to acknowledge the place of another or make amends for impositions on the place of another. The notion of compensating for impositions on another' place, he argues, should not be conflated with compensating for impositions on another's free will. Haugh elucidates this distinction through an example of a university student asking to borrow notes from a younger classmate. Although the older student uses polite forms to make this request, Haugh contends that this is not driven by a need to soften her imposition on her classmate's autonomy. Instead, politeness stems from the student's acknowledgement of her place as one without the notes relative to her classmate's place as one in possession of the notes.

A central tenet in the arguments put forward by these scholars is that the underlying motivations behind politeness in Japanese have their basis in one's relative social position and, thereby, cannot be adequately accounted for through the individualistic-leaning framework claimed by Brown and Levinson. The present study adopts this view that politeness and face in Japanese interaction result from sensitivity to social position, rank, or place rather than from any impositions on an individual's free will.

A review of the literature thus far has provided a discussion on identity and face and how they can be interpreted from a Japanese sociocultural perspective. In the past couple of decades, scholarship has begun to examine and raise questions regarding the confluence of face and identity (Garces-Conejos Blitvich, 2013; Hall & Bucholtz, 2013; Spencer-Oatey, 2007). While some researchers have empirically investigated these issues in various settings, including an e-mail community (Graham, 2007), Japanese language learning (Haugh, 2007), and ethnographic interviews (Joseph, 2013), the topic has yet to be fully examined from a second/foreign language pedagogical angle. Therefore, the methodology and findings presented in the next sections hope to contribute to a more comprehensive view of how language learners form various identities and how these processes can be influenced by their surroundings and the features of certain pedagogical tasks.

3. Methodology

3.1 Contexts and Participants

The present study was conducted at an English-medium university in Japan. Data was collected in an academic reading class of ten students. In this particular unit, three students were randomly selected to lead group discussions in what were referred to as "Group Leader Discussions" (GLDs). The three group leaders needed to have a thorough understanding of the passage they were assigned and compose a set of comprehension questions and critical thinking questions based on the passage. As a pre-task assignment, the group leaders met with the course instructor to review their questions and talk about how they would facilitate a fifty-minute group discussion. The remaining students were not given any further instructions other than to read the assigned passage prior to class.

These GLDs took place over the course of several weeks during the semester. Each week, a new set of students was randomly assigned to take over the role of group leader. The data presented in this paper comes from the first iteration of the GLDs. In this GLD, students were to read a passage on the shrinkage of the Aral Sea in Central Asia. The passage touched on various environmental issues, including the abuse of natural resources, poor environmental planning, and the economic impacts of environmental destruction.

The data presented in this paper will focus on one of these three GLD groups. In this group, there were three students: Yoshi, Chie, and Tomika (all pseudonyms). Yoshi was assigned as the group leader, so he was in charge of asking questions and directing the flow of discussion. All three students were considered to be highly motivated and proficient language learners who completed at least one semester of English-medium course study and were preparing for a one-year study abroad requirement.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This GLD took place online through the use of Zoom Breakout Rooms. Groups were randomly selected and retained the same members for the entirety of the fifty-minute discussion. The course instructor and researcher moved freely from room to room to observe the groups, but we did not intervene in the discussions. Students were asked to record their group discussions and upload their videos to a shared class folder. A total of 150 minutes of raw video data were collected. Of this, thirty minutes from one group discussion were transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) Conversation Analysis (CA) transcription system (see Appendix A for transcriptions). Because CA prescribes that practitioners allow salience in the data to speak for itself (Wong & Waring, 2010), I did not approach this data with anything other than a general curiosity towards what was happening in the group discussions. Upon analyzing the data, it was clear that one student attempted to establish herself as an expert even though she was not the group leader. Based on this initial salience, I consulted the literature and dove deeper into the data to answer these questions: How did this learner construct an expert identity? And what were the motivations behind her choice of interactional practices for constructing this identity?

4. Results

The group discussion began with Yoshi (the group leader) asking his set of comprehension questions. After a series of question-and-answer sequences, the discussion quickly moved to the critical thinking questions Yoshi had prepared. The first question that he posed was: Why didn't people stop or minimize irrigation before the Aral Sea problem reached a serious situation? Excerpt 1 exhibits Chie's response to this question.

Excerpt 1: Establishing Expertise

Line	Speaker	Talk
10	Chie	=But uh::m before the seri- before the Aral Sea reached the
11		Serious situation, it's difficult to:: uhm (1.0) try to solve <u>that</u>
12		issues for people [and-] like there is a term that (2.0) frog in the
13	Yoshi	[ah::]
14	Chie	hot water=
15	Yoshi	=mm=
16	Chie	=Do you know that story?
17	Yoshi	Frog in the hot water?
18	Chie	Like <<if you put the>> frog into the hot water, the frog uhm
19		(2.0) become uhm surpri:sed and try to get out- get out of the
20		water. But if you put the frog into <u>cold water</u> a::nd (1.0) and make
21		hot water (1.0) <<by- by like>> <u>fire</u> [then] the frog didn't- the
22	Yoshi	[mhm]
23	Chie	frog doesn't realize [the water] is beco- is becoming hot [so::]
24	Yoshi	[<u>AH::</u>] [mm]
25	Chie	this is- this term sometimes used for the situation- used for
26		expressing the situation of climate change [and] this Aral Sea
27	Yoshi	[mm]
28	Chie	situation is the same.

Line 10 picks up in the middle of Chie's turn, as she states that the issues surrounding the Aral Sea disaster were difficult to preemptively address. She expands on her argument by introducing the analogy "frog in the hot water" (lines 12-14). Even though Yoshi's backchannel at line 15 appears to show that he is following Chie's line of thinking, Chie responds with a confirmation check, "Do you know that story?" (line 16). On the surface, this inquiry seems as if it is a way for Chie to gauge Yoshi's knowledge of the story. However, a more subtle and possibly more primary purpose of this turn is for Chie to assert sequential dominance (Itakura, 2001), which would allow her to express her expertise, contingent on Yoshi's prior knowledge of the topic. In the very next turn, Yoshi's rising intonation on "Frog in the hot water?" (line 17) shows his unawareness of the story and, by extension, makes Chie's forthcoming explanation (lines 18-28) a conditionally relevant next turn. While Chie is providing her explanation, we can see the exact moment when her knowledge of the analogy is transferred to Yoshi. In line 24, Yoshi's sudden, loud, and elongated "AH::" serves as a "change-of-state token" in that it signals he has moved from an unknowing to a knowing state (Heritage, 2012). Excerpt 1 concludes with Chie's explanation of how the "frog in the hot water" analogy is relevant to the Aral Sea situation.

In this short exchange, the bearer of the discussion facilitator role changes from Yoshi to Chie. Chie's sequential control of the interaction allows her to select topics in which she has expertise. Her identity as an expert and Yoshi's identity as a novice are then ratified at the moment when Yoshi signals his understanding of Chie's story. What is also salient is the way Chie gently builds up her role as the expert, as opposed to proclaiming her expertise all at once. A critical moment was when Chie decided to seek confirmation— "Do you know that story?" —instead of explaining the story without delay. Because her display of knowledge is not a face-threatening act per se, especially given the open-ended nature of the task, it raises the question as to why she decides to display her expertise in such an indirect fashion. Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 3 will provide some clarity.

In the next excerpt, students are talking about one of Yoshi's critical thinking questions: What are other examples of environmental destruction caused by humans? To clarify Yoshi's question, Chie asks if the group should list some examples, to which Yoshi confirms. Tomika, who has been a largely peripheral participant thus far, brings in her knowledge of the heat island phenomenon. In the next turn, Chie begins discussing the recent wildfires and record temperatures in Australia and California. Chie concludes her explanation with another question directed at Yoshi about the intent of his critical thinking question, which is where Excerpt 2 begins.

Excerpt 2: Overstepping the Boundaries

Line	Speaker	Talk
79	Chie	And (1.0) like, do you want us to answer just
80		environmental destruction or like outcomes of environmental
81		destruction caused by human?
82	Yoshi	uh::m=
83	Chie	=Like because if you want me to answer environmental
84		destruction, then we can only say like $climate change, plastic
85		pollution$ hh
86	Yoshi	mm::
87	Chie	If you want us to think result of environmental destruction caused
88		by humans, then we can say more like climate strike or climate
89		refugee or animals- the decreasing of animals, °so°
90	Yoshi	We want to ask the:: cause of the environmental destruction and
91		the:: (1.0) the environmental destruction's name.
92	Chie	Oh right. Ok (1.0) so:: uhm climate refugees=
92	Yoshi	=mhm=
94	Chie	=because of (2.0), so for example, fire <<in Amazon>> o::r like
95		high temperatures and flooding floo:ding *kouzui* (flooding)=
96	Yoshi	=Yes, flooding.
97	Chie	Flooding. Like in Bangladesh in 2020 (1.0) uh:m (1.0) I forgot.
98		the number, but many people in Bangladesh lost their houses
99		because of flooding and the cause is, of course, climate change.

In lines 79-81, Chie asks Yoshi whether the group is to simply list examples of environmental destruction. In line 82, though it is unclear what causes Yoshi's hesitation, Chie orients to it as a repair initiation and begins clarifying her question. In doing so, the second pair part to Chie's question is delayed (i.e., Yoshi's answer to Chie's question does not come immediately). As a result, Chie's ensuing turn (lines 83-85) becomes an insert expansion. Schegloff (2007) notes that these additional turns between the first pair part and second pair part of a base adjacency pair (such as question-answer) are often a way for a speaker to address a possible trouble source so that the second pair part of a question can be produced. In this insert expansion, Chie speculates that if the group is to only talk about examples of environmental destruction, it limits the range of discussion that may be possible. Chie's laughter at line 85 signals the end of this turn, and Yoshi follows with another hesitation marker (line 86). At this juncture, the second pair part to Chie's initial question is delayed even further, and yet another insert expansion sequence gets underway (lines 87-89). Chie again orients to Yoshi's hesitation as a trouble source and cites a few examples that the group can talk about if Yoshi were to permit it—namely, the issue of "climate refugees" (lines 88-89). After a series of two insert expansions, the second pair part to Chie's question finally arrives in lines 90-91 when Yoshi states that he just wants the group to name examples of environmental destruction. Even though Chie's suggestion was denied, she begins the very next turn by bringing in the topic of "climate refugees." She disregards Yoshi's explicit instructions and begins talking about those who were displaced during prior flooding in Bangladesh (lines 95-99).

In Excerpt 2, it becomes evident that Chie's identity as an expert on environmental issues is at odds with her subordinated role as "member" and not "leader" of the group discussion. Referring back to Brewer and Gardner's (1996) three levels of self-identity, it appears that Chie's urge to display her environmental expertise is linked to her personal identity as a unique individual. However, the restraint she uses to confine herself to her hierarchical status as "member" speaks to her collective identity. In grappling with this conflict, we can see that Chie's place (Haugh, 2005) in the group motivates her choice of sequencing practices. She first asks for Yoshi's permission to bring in topics such as "climate refugees." What becomes apparent at the end of Excerpt 2 is Chie's inquisition is less a request for permission than it is a preface to her intent to step outside the boundaries of Yoshi's question. In other words, Chie seemed predetermined to talk about climate refugees and attempted to politely usher in the topic by first deferring to Yoshi's "leader" status. Moreover, this also sheds light on Chie's "Do you know that story?" from Excerpt 1. In the two Excerpts so far, Chie's expert identity performance is preceded by acts of deference that acknowledge her place and the place of others in the group.

Excerpt 3 comes at the end of the fifty-minute group discussion. Yoshi instructs the group to talk about how humans have suffered from the effects of environmental destruction. This leads to Tomika's comments on air pollution and its connection to rising summer temperatures. At the end of Tomika's turn, Chie interjects and asks a question directed at Tomika, which can be seen below.

Excerpt 3: Chatting up Friend

Line	Speaker	Talk
278	Chie	So Tomika, do you like skiing? (1.0) Or winter sports?
279	Tomika	Uh, actually [I don't] like- I haven't [do it] I want to do it but
280	Chie	[hh] [hh ok]
281	Tomika	I- I haven't do. I've never do that- ski or snowboarding.
282	Chie	Like you have to do it, you have to try it (1.0) [earlier] because
283	Tomika	[hh]
284	Chie	like in 2100 so <<it's really like>> [future] thing but 2100
285	Tomika	[mm]
286	Chie	the average temperature in winter is like twenty- twenty *do*
287		(degrees) hh=
288	Yoshi	=oh twenty=
289	Chie	=Celsius
290	Yoshi	Celsius yeah=
291	Tomika	=mm::=
292	Chie	=In Nagano.
293	Yoshi	Really?=

294	Chie	=Like uh:: hh $I'm not sure$ in NHK they have- they created
295		video of [future] news in 2019, and it said ((searching online))
296	Yoshi	[mm]
297	Chie	(5.0) uhm (4.0) yeah, so they have like future temperature in
298		summer and winter. (3.0) I think this video is quite- very.
299		interesting, so I'll share (4.0) uhm I send the link

Chie's question at line 278 is peculiar in that it is rather personal for an academic discussion. Its markedness seems to signal that there may be some ulterior motive for her inquiry. Nonetheless, Tomika responds by saying that she has never tried skiing or snowboarding (lines 279-281). Meanwhile, Chie's overlapping laughter can be heard in the background (line 280). In the ensuing turn, Chie urges Tomika to try winter sports by saying, "You have to do it- you have to try it." This friendly banter quickly returns to the discussion topic at hand when Chie states that the reason Tomika should try winter sports soon is because rising winter temperatures means there will be no snow in the mountains (lines 282-286). Chie continues her explanation by saying that she found this information from a TV program that predicted future temperatures in Japan. She then searches online for the video and shares its link in the chat box. What becomes clear at the end of this excerpt is that Chie's friendly question to Tomika acts as a pre-telling, which is often used to project further news, announcements, or other types of information (Schegloff, 2007). Similar to Chie's "Do you know that story?" from Excerpt 1, her "do you like skiing?" in Excerpt 2 grants her sequential control of the interaction, which, in both cases, she uses to convey her knowledge of the environmental issues at hand.

Excerpt 3 is significant for a couple of reasons. First of all, it shows a rare moment in the group discussion when Chie chooses to directly address Tomika. Tomika's reticence in the discussion thus far has been one way that she has performed her novice identity. This helps paint a clearer picture as to why Chie decides to engage Tomika with an easy, friendly question to invite her participation. Second, we can see a noticeable shift in Chie's acts and stances (Ochs, 2005). Her sociable inquiry into Tomika's personal life projects a shared identity that she has with Tomika as equal members of the same group. Soon after, however, her earnest and knowledgeable prognosis of Japan's climate reasserts her expert identity back into the discussion. As was the case in Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 2, we can see here that Chie shows recognition of her relative "place" in the group before commencing her display of expertise.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the interactional moves a language learner uses to construct an expert identity in a group discussion. Emerging from the data was a balancing act this learner undertook to exhibit her expertise while respecting the hierarchical nature of the discussion task. The discussion begins with Yoshi assuming the role of leader by directing the discussion and evaluating everyone's answers, while Chie and Tomika are merely members of the group following Yoshi's instructions. Despite their respective statuses within the group, Chie's personal identity as an expert on environmental issues challenges the established social order. In Excerpt 1, Yoshi's unfamiliarity with Chie's "frog in hot water" analogy resets the group's expert-novice orientation. In Excerpt 2, Chie's reluctance to follow Yoshi's instructions to simply list examples of environmental destruction undermines his authority. Finally, in Excerpt 3, Chie overtakes Yoshi's role as discussion facilitator by directly addressing Tomika's comment on air pollution. These excerpts exemplify several ways in which Chie attempts to exert sequential dominance in order to display her expertise.

Though Chie's urge to showcase her knowledge of the environment is strong, what is also evident is that she is acutely aware of her relative status in the group. This explains her tendency to acknowledge her collective identity as a member of the group prior to performing her personal identity as an expert. In this sense, we can see how these acknowledgments of her own and her groupmates' collective identities are what Ide (1989) would call "relation-acknowledging devices." Moreover, speaking to the alternative model of Japanese politeness that Haugh (2005) proposes, Chie's acts and stances strive to recognize the "place" that she and her classmates occupy. For these reasons, Chie's expert identity is less a threat to her classmates' autonomy than it is an imposition on their "place" within the group. Upon examining the entirety of the three data sets, I would like to argue that Chie's choice of sequencing practices to display her expert identity was motivated by a desire to adhere to the collective dimension of politeness in Japanese culture.

The issues of identity, face, and politeness that Chie encountered can more generally be associated with the often conflicting transactional and interpersonal goals of discourse (Kasper, 1990; Leech, 1983; Locher, 2008). While Chie desired to share her knowledge of environmentalism, she was compelled to do so in a way that allowed her to be viewed as a cooperative member of the group. The rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) that Chie displayed poses challenges for language learners, as it requires the interactional competence to juggle the goals of the task, face sensitivities as they emerge, and institutional rights and obligations as learners. Nonetheless, competently negotiating identity is a critical step for learners to legitimize themselves in a

classroom community (Morita, 2004). Bringing attention to the intricate maneuvering that can be required to achieve legitimacy in the classroom has been a primary objective of this paper.

Though advanced-level language learners, like those in this study, may have the interactional competence to take on emergent interpersonal demands when expressing themselves, this may not be the case for less proficient learners. There may be a number of interpersonal roadblocks rooted in students' first culture (C1) that inhibit their ability and/or willingness to interact. It may also be the case that educators, especially those with a different C1, may not notice how these extraneous variables are impacting student performance. The studies that evidence how certain student behaviors are misinterpreted by teachers are diverse and abundant (e.g., Banks, 2016; Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Hancock, 1997; Morita, 2004). In the case of the task design presented in this study, it may be assumed that one reason lower-level Japanese learners are not able to express their knowledge is because of a lack of understanding as to how to do so politely. Alternatively, an inability to assert one's expertise politely may cause unwanted friction in the group. Although addressing how these issues may be confronted is a separate undertaking, I hope that the data presented here can help educators become aware of how cultural factors that lie below the surface influence behaviors that are observed in the classroom.

While this paper highlights an underexplored interactional phenomenon in the EFL classroom, there are limitations of this study that prevent the findings from being generalizable. It should first be noted that this study adopts a micro-level emic analysis of interaction, focusing on how the participants' actions are shaped by their orientations toward each other and through the talk in progress. In this way, such an analysis can inform our understanding of the underlying mechanisms of social interaction in a Japanese EFL setting; however, the observed behaviors cannot be removed from their context and extrapolated to make any wider claims about how other Japanese EFL learners might respond if placed in similar circumstances. Another limitation is that this study dives into the interworkings of a specific speech exchange system. What is observed within the restrictions of this pedagogical task may not be transferable to other task designs. Adjusting the (im)balance of power is likely to influence the interactional practices that learners engage in to meet their self-expressive needs and task objectives.

Moving beyond language learning tasks in a monocultural setting, the present study leads to questions regarding identity construction in intercultural communication. Because identity is tethered to shared cultural ideologies and behaviors, it is possible that the interactional practices found in this study may be misconstrued by those operating from varied cultural backgrounds. Would Chie's acts of politeness be recognized as a deferential element of her expert identity? If not, how might they be interpreted? And how might any potential misinterpretations impact her legitimacy and opportunities for language learning? As English as a lingua franca, interactions continue to expand into various academic and professional domains, raising and answering these questions could provide valuable insight into the obstacles that second language users encounter in their day-to-day communicative endeavors.

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