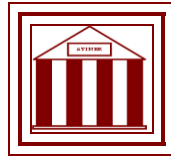


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**Tracking the Features of Japanese
Dialogue through Audiovisual
Materials: A Pragmatic Proposal**

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Tracking the Features of Japanese Dialogue through Audiovisual Materials: A Pragmatic Proposal

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Abstract

Dialogue is a communicative genre that is conditioned by culture. As already described in conversation analysis studies, the rules that underpin it imply not only linguistic abilities in the foreign language, but also an intercultural knowledge that can be cumulatively defined as *sociopragmatic competence*. Nowadays, a great deal of sociopragmatic contents necessary to foreign language learners are deduced from the observation of feature films and fiction. In this short study, we want to emphasise the way this observation develops always on two parallel, though never disjointed, tracks, that is: specific language observation (grammatical, syntactic and lexical features) and the observation of sociocultural conventions as well as of extra- and paralinguistic ones. The overall analysis of such sociopragmatic attitudes turns out to be of fundamental importance for Italian learners, as it clearly reveals how the Japanese speech often acquires characteristics of ‘complementarity’, a spoken word that is often evocative and not always complete from the grammatical/syntactic point of view. In particular, in the case of the Japanese dialogue observed through audiovisual sources, learners have the chance to absorb an operational framework that leads them to interact through spiral structures based on new chronemic strategies which compel them to utilize well defined turn takings and precise feedback strategies.

Keywords: Audiovisual Materials, Sociopragmatic Competence, Japanese Language Teaching, Dialogue.

The Teaching of Pragmatics to Foreign Language Learners

Learning and using a foreign language are not the same thing. In the specific case of dialogue, this difference comes to light through the analysis of actual intracultural conversations and conversations between foreign and native speakers. What is the cause of these gaps? What do foreign learners lack to be able to dialogue in a form comparable to that of native speakers? It is not easy to answer these questions, but in order to explain this phenomenon it is surely useful to recall a few of the disciplines involved in the so-called pragmatics of communication. Pragmatics focuses on language users: it is certainly not limited to the field of pragmalinguistics; it also studies the para- and extraverbal characteristics of conversation, as well as sociolinguistic variables, such as the variations, and sociopragmatic aspects of language. It is thanks to these aspects that speakers perform and interpret communicative acts in accordance with the rules in use in their respective sociocultures.

As Bettoni (2006) reminds, in the case of learners of a foreign language, such as Japanese, the main study purpose is the learning, although learning and use are always inherently interconnected. Nevertheless, the standard of competences to acquire does not necessarily match the norm of native speakers, since pragmatics is often mixed with a complex system of identity issues and values which are not always accepted by L2 or foreign learners (idem, 182). As also the studies of Siegal (1996) confirm, a lack of pragmatic progress might derive from psychological resistance to emulate the behaviour of native speakers.¹ In the case of Japanese, it might also be caused by an insufficient contact with some language registers.² However, recent studies by the author about the interaction of learners with multimodality (Vitucci, 2013 (1), (2), 2014 (1), (2)) underlined the importance of audiovisual products in the learning of Japanese, due to their high motivational power. Video materials, thanks to their multi informative dynamism, constitute an irreplaceable visual dictionary, able to represent with the highest realism and precision many strictly verbal and paraverbal notions (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, prosody) as well as sociocultural and extraverbal elements (gestures, mimic, proxemics, clothes language, object language). With regard to this, several scholars of intercultural pragmatics, among whom Bettoni (2006), pointed out how teaching methods need to be improved with the use of authentic materials, so as to form learners who are able to “interpret” what they see (Bonaiuti, 2010, 87).

¹ The study of Siegal (1996) follows for eighteen months in Japan some western women of middle-high social level between twenty-one and forty-five years of age, all learners of Japanese as L2. It shows that they reject the deferential style of Japanese women, because they refuse to assume their identity.

² This is the case considered in a study by Marriot (1993), who followed for one year in Japan eight Anglo-Australian high school students. The study shows that although the students made progress in the expression of requests in Japanese, they did not develop a fluent use of the high registers of language, regressing in the pragmatic level to the use of honorific forms.

Characterizing Elements of Japanese Dialogue

As stated by Bazzanella (1994), the fundamental elements of dialogue are interactivity and the sharing of beliefs. In this case, sharing is meant as the creation of different communities of interpreters, depending on their experience and on the knowledge made explicit in the dialogue: it can range from the most common cultural knowledge shared by a community to the most specific and idiosyncratic elements known only to the speakers (idem, 1994, 208). Through the concept on interaction, the scholar refers to the basic elements of conversation such as face-to-face communication, the presence of two or more speakers, the alternation of turns, the negotiation of meanings and the intentionality of speakers (based on shared codes, beliefs and goals¹). It can be concluded, therefore, that the genre of dialogue does not simply negotiate the meanings, but rather the whole relationship between the speakers (the “co-authors”), in a process of constant co-construction where conversational and social roles mingle together (idem, 1994, 212).

When analysing audiovisual dialogues in a foreign language, it is inevitable to focus on the basic contextual elements that so strongly influence and constitute the dialogue as a genre, that is to say: 1. The setting of the conversation, 2. The participants, 3. The kind of interaction they construct. It will be quite interesting to observe what shape these elements take in the case of Japanese dialogue. From a sociolinguistic point of view, the setting of a dialogue comprises not only time, space and physical communication channels, but also language registers: in Japanese they play a key role in the organization of the discourse, both in terms of diaphasic variation (formal/informal registers) and diastratic variation (jargons and idiolects). Moreover, it is evident that the speakers, as members of a certain society, intervene in the dialogue carrying their own personal and sociolinguistic peculiarities, thus building more or less symmetrical relationships. In the case of Japanese, for instance, the asymmetry of dialogue is often connected to the philosophic concept of *internal/external*, which regulates human interactions as well as the choice of language register (Bettoni, 2006, Casadei-Vitucci, 2012). The cultural norms of a community influence both the linguistic production and its understanding: consequently, as noted by Bazzanella, in an intercultural situation foreign learners will tend to overlook the pragmatic elements, because there is no visible connection between linguistic forms in the strict sense and their wider cultural and interactional value (idem, 1994, 216).

For what concerns the type of interaction, as previously mentioned, its characteristics are strictly related to the discourse genre of the situation at hand, to its grade of conventionality/institutionalization and to the goal of the whole interaction. In the case of Japanese dialogue, many an author tried to describe its characterizing elements. Balboni, for instance, refers to the metaphor of Baxtin and sustains that although communication genres do present universal

¹ Hasegawa, recalling Kramersch, defines this aspect of interaction as ‘symbolic competence’ (idem, 2012, 220).

constitutive traits,¹ the way in which these elements are realized varies from culture to culture (Balboni, 2007, 114). Therefore, the conversational model proposed by Balboni for Japanese is the famous spiral model, according to which speakers gradually approach the core of the argument through successive approximations. Although from a different perspective, the sociolinguist Okamoto (2008) underlines how such approximations often derive from co-construction: the syntagms used are never complete from a grammatical point of view, thus stimulating the interlocutor to complete them. According to the scholar, this happens because the construction of meaning and the approval towards the contents expressed by the interlocutor develop simultaneously with dialogue itself, through a series of verbal and extralinguistic feedback expressions (idem, 2008, 98). Okamoto also points out that dialogues in Japanese, unlike those in other languages, mostly leave fundamental information unsaid. This is substituted by conjectures and sociocultural elements: consequently, the resulting interaction depends very strongly on the context and its comprehension is quite hard for external participants (idem, 2008, 86-88).

However, gradual approximation and shared co-construction are certainly not the only features of the Japanese dialogue form. Those who teach Japanese know that a key element in the organization of talking turns is “evocativeness” (Vitucci, 2014 (1)), a concept connected to the interdependent conception of the self elaborated by Markus and Kitayama (1991). The two scholars affirm that in the formation of opinions and attitudes, the typically Japanese attention to the social level is focused on avoiding any source of shame for both the speaker and the interlocutor, so much so that Japanese speakers can be characterized as “collaborative conversationalists”.² With regard to this, Usami (2002) and Kádár and Mills (2011) suggest a more pragmatic perspective in the analysis of this phenomenon, also including elements such as the feedback, the change of linguistic register, the use of suffixes, the frequency of changes of topic and the possible presence of introductory sequences, thus reconsidering the concept of “politeness” from a broader point of view, similar to that expressed in the works of Brown and Levinson (1987). In this perspective, it will now be interesting to directly show learners the elements to be considered for an effective conversation, also defining more closely the dialogue dynamics of the Japanese language: the following examples are original excerpts from two audiovisual contributions, an interview taken from a talk show and a job interview taken from a movie.

¹ This affirmation is supported not only by the rich literature on conversational analysis (CA), but also by several studies of communication pragmatics. Among these, Bettoni (2006) affirms that in spite of the regularity of basic conversation structures in different cultures, such regularity is always limited. For example, while the phenomenon of preferred/dispreferred sequences is probably universal, the way in which preference/dispreference is realized always takes different forms from culture to culture.

² The western culture, on the contrary, tends more to an “independent” conception of the self. The “independent self” is more likely to be ready to expose itself and compete, to explicitly criticize and to express unpredictable, personal opinions.

An Example of Japanese Talk Show

As reported by Sawano (2008), Japanese conversations include about fifteen to twenty feedback expressions (*aizuchi*) per minute, and not only in dialogues with two participants. The reason of these frequent insertions, according to Machida-Katō (2004), is to be found mainly in the lack of eye contact and in the consequent need to demonstrate one's attention to the interlocutor.¹ Horiguchi (1988) summarizes the typologies of *aizuchi* as follows: 1. *aizuchi* aimed at showing one's attention towards the interlocutor (e.g. *hai*, *ee*, *uhm*), 2. *aizuchi* aimed at declaring one's comprehension and agreement with the content of the conversation (e.g. *sono toori desu*, *sō desu ne*, *sore wa iemasu ne*, *naruhodo*), 3. *aizuchi* aimed at expressing disagreement (e.g. *ii*, *ie*, *iya*), 4. *aizuchi* aimed at expressing surprise/confusion about the content of the conversation (e.g. *eh?*, *ha?*, *hontō?*, *hontō desuka?*, *ara!*), and 5. *aizuchi* aimed at asking for further information (e.g. *to iu to?*, *to osshaimasu to?*, *dō iu imi?*). The employ of such backchannels is also confirmed by the abundant audiovisual material today available online, used by the author for didactic purposes. A sample of this, a recent interview with the popular Japanese pop singer Atsushi conducted by Kusayanagi Tetsuko² during a famous TV talk show, confirms the above mentioned dialogue praxis, adding interesting details at a pragmatic level (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *Frame Extracted from a TV Interview with the Singer Atsushi*



Before analysing the role of feedback in this excerpt, it is necessary to underline the asymmetrical character of the dialogue, which exceeds the normal limit between interviewer and interviewee and can probably be explained with the fame of the singer and with the equal fame and older age of the host. This is why the guest assumes a deferential attitude, which clearly shows through his body posture (rigid pose with hands crossed), through his tendency to keep his face lowered, avoiding eye contact with the interlocutor

¹ For the same reason, *aizuchi* are pretty frequent also in telephone conversations, where there can be no visual contact between speakers. In this case, the lack of these signals might induce the speaker to suspect a diminution of the listener's attention, or even his or her physical absence from the phone (Machida-Katō, 2004, 128).

² Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kexF2rtMIV4&feature=youtu.be>

(Tassan, 2005) and through his waiting attitude towards every question asked. The asymmetry is also visible at a sociopragmatic level: the host starts with expressions of the honorific register (*sonkeigo*)¹ but gradually shifts to the more common polite register (*teineigo*), so as to create a more confidential interaction with the interlocutor.² On the contrary, the interviewee always expresses himself in *teineigo*.

An analysis of the *aizuchi* used by both speakers reveals that most of them belong to the groups 1 and 2 presented by Horiguchi (1988), with a frequency that essentially matches the percentages given by Sawano (2008) and tends to stay constant for every adjacent pair (question-answer). In detail, in the one minute and fifty seconds of analysed video, as many as thirty-eight feedbacks were individuated, with the following classification (Table 1):

Table 1. *Frequency and Typology of the Feedbacks According to the Classification of Horiguchi*

SPEAKERS	NO. FEEDBACKS	1	2	3	4	5
ATSUSHI (A)	19	12 - hai - ha:: - ha::i	6 - sō desu ne - sō desu ne::	1 -ya:::	0	0
TETSUKO (T)	19	14 - ee - ee:: - he:: ↑ - uhm - uh::m	3 - deshō↑ ne:: - sō desu yo ne - ne:: ↑	0	2 - ah! - sō nano?	0
TOTALS	38	26	9	1	2	0

The data extracted from Table 1 show that both the interviewer (T) and the interviewee (A) use an equal amount of feedbacks of the first group to prove their attention to the speaker, and an equal but lower percentage of feedbacks of the second group, aimed at expressing comprehension and agreement. It is quite interesting to notice that the *aizuchi* of the second group are more frequently used by the interviewee, possibly revealing a typical attitude during interviews: through this behaviour, the interviewee confirms the correctness of the interviewer's questions. This tendency to agreement and involvement is

¹ In the first part of the interview, honorific verbal structures are quite frequent, such as *outai ni naru/ utatte irassharu* (“sing”), *piano o ohiki ni naru* (“play the piano”), *piano o yatte irassharu* (“learn piano”), *piano o ohiki ni nareru* (“to be able to play the piano”), *konsāto o nasaru* (“give a concert”).

² From a linguistic point of view, this register can be easily identified through the use of copulas in the form of suffixes, i.e. *-desu*, *-desu kara*, *-ndesu kedo*, *-desu tte*, *-deshō*, *-desu yo ne*, *-desu ka*. They are also used after verbs in their plain form to sound more agreeable to the listener (...*naru ndesu ka*). For the connection between *sonkeigo* and *teineigo*, see the volume edited by Takahashi (2013) in the bibliography.

fundamental in the Japanese communication (Okamoto, 2008, 99): this is also confirmed by the absolutely negligible occurrence of *aizuchi* of the third group to express disagreement (only one on the part of the interviewee, meant as a specification) and by the scarce presence of *aizuchi* of the fourth group, used to express amazement at the arguments brought forth by the interviewee. There are no feedbacks of explanation (last column right), because in this case the interviewee is extremely precise in his exposition. The replies of the interviewee also include a few fillers, not listed in Table 1 (*anō*, *anō::*, *ma*, *ma::*), always produced in moments of hesitation or when explanations about the treated topics are required.

From a chronemic perspective, it is quite interesting to notice that on the one hand talking turns are clearly determined in the dynamics of the interview, but on the other hand overlaps in speech are pretty frequent. This detail contradicts and confirms at the same time a few beliefs about the Japanese language and the genre of interview itself: it does show the tendency to “speak one at a time”, but also proves that overlaps through “continuers” (Fele, 2007) mostly serve to corroborate the veracity of the speaker's affirmations without interrupting his turn,¹ as they are not always used in a transition relevance place. This kind of “emotional support” (Okamoto, 2008, 99) is particularly evident in the first question asked by the interviewer (T) in this extract, with as many as three overlaps of (A):²

T (1): *nanmannin itemo, hontōni kangaerarenai* [yōna

A (1): [hai

T (2): *nanmannin no tokoro de (.) >konsāto o nasatte outai ni naru
wake* [desu kedo<

A (2): [hai

T (3): <*mō sō iu ::*> *nanmannin iyō tomo hitori* [darō

A (3): [hai

T (4): *sonna mon zenzen (0,5) kankei naku?*³

As the sequence above shows, the overlaps of A have the function to help the interviewer elaborate her question, which is actually preceded by as many as three pre-sequences (T1, T2, T3) and takes a vague interrogative form only in T4. This case surely contributes to validate the spiral conversation model by approximations proposed by Balboni (2007), but also confirms that both complementarity (Okamoto, 2008; Bazzanella, 1994) and evocativeness

¹ See also the studies of Schegloff (1981), who sustains that interviewees avoid to intervene in the places of possible speech completion where transition is pertinent.

² Transcription in Latin characters with the Jefferson system.

³ Traduction of T: “*Sir, you give concerts and sing in places crowded by tens of thousands of people. The number of your fans is really incredible, but does it mean anything to you? That they are tens of thousands or rather...*”

(Vitucci, 2014 (1)) constitute two distinctive traits of the Japanese dialogue. This thesis is also corroborated by the reply of A, which completely inverts the scheme presented above:

- A (4): *iya:::a (0.2) mochiron, ninzū ga ooku nareba,*
kinchō:::suru>ndesu [keredomo<
T (5): *[ee*
- A (5): *demo toki ni yotte, yappari (0,2) <chīsana toko de kō (0,2)>*
T (6): *ee*
- A (6): *[chikakude (.)*
T (7): *[ee*
- A (7): *>kikareru to gyakuni kinchō suru toki*
mo arimasu [shi<
T (8): *[deshō↑ne*
- A (8): *[toki ni yotte desuka ne↑ (.) ha::i*
T (9): *[uhm, uhm¹*

In this sequence, T overlaps with the affirmations of A in lines T5, 7, 8 and 9, this time with the aim to encourage the formation of A's answer, which does not come straight away, but rather in multiple turns and with the intention to suggest images also with the use of gestures. In lines A5 and A6, A evokes the image of physical proximity to his fans in a theatre by putting his left hand in front of the right hand, both at chest height. T's feedback to this gesture in T6 and T7 confirms her comprehension: the feedback consists first in the sharing of A's thought in T8 through the expression *deshō ne* said with rising tone, then in the use of the continuer *uhm, uhm* in T9 so as to prove the complete reception of T's message.

¹ Translation of A: “Of course, the more spectators one has, the more one gets nervous, but... I would say it depends on the times... when one is in smaller spaces and people listen closely, then one gets even more nervous... yes, I would say it depends on the times.”

An Example of Job Interview in a Japanese Film

In order to highlight the pragmatic differences of this example from the previous interview, the following paragraph will concentrate on a passage of a job interview taken from *Tokyo Sonata* (2008), a movie by Kurosawa Kiyoshi.

Figure 2. *Frame Taken from a Scene of “Tokyo Sonata” Representing a Job Interview*



In the considered scene, the protagonist, Sasaki Ryūhei (left in Fig. 2), is interviewed by the young representative of a company who asks him about his qualifications. The asymmetry visible in this dialogue is strongly conditioned by the social level, considering the hierarchical difference between the speakers and the evident age distance, which subverts the usual canons of this typical situation.¹ This asymmetry appears clearly also through the gestures and postures of the characters (Tassan, 2005): the young interviewer leans forward with his bust and keeps his hands on the table, while the interviewee sits in a composed posture with the hands on his laps as a sign of respect. This image is more than sufficient to reveal the feeling of reverence/fear on the part of Ryūhei, contrasting with the extreme self-confidence/arrogance of the young interviewer. At a sociopragmatic level, the scene develops from an initial use of the plain register by the interviewer (*futsūgo*), indicating a light hostility towards the interlocutor, to a strong use of the polite register (*teineigo*) on the part of both speakers, without any occurrence of honorific language (*sonkeigo*), as shown in Table 2.

¹ Ryūhei lost his job, he is desperately looking for another one and keeps being humiliated during job interviews by people who are much younger than him.

Table 2. Typology of Registers in the Sequence from Tokyo Sonata

SPEAKERS	RYŪHEI (R)	INTERVIEWER (I)
<i>futsūgo</i>	0 -	4 - Sasaki san, 46 sai? - Nandemo ja wakaranai na:. - Ee, ima sugu. - Hoka ni wa?
<i>teineigo</i>	4 - Nandemo yaru tsumori desu. - Koko de desuka? - Karaoke toka, sō iu koto deshōka? - ... hito to no kankei o enkatsu ni susumete iku koto ni jishin ga arimasu.	13 - Sasaki san, nani ga yaremasuka? - Anata no nōryoku shiritai desu. - ...misete kudasai. - ...soko o mitai n desu. - ...nani (...) o handan sureba iin desuka? - ...koko ni kita n desuka? - wakarimashita. - karaoke de ii desu. - utatte kudasai. (x 3) - dō shimashita? - karaoke tokui nan desu yo ne?
TOTALS	4	17

The complementary sequences composing this dialogue essentially consist in questions/answers: they fully correspond to the typical routine of formal interviews according to the Japanese sociocultural canons. Since this excerpt comes from a movie, though, the interaction is relatively poor in pauses, discursive signals, insertion sequences, interjections and repairs (both self and other repairs), which strongly characterize natural speech (Bazzanella, 1994). Moreover, an analysis of the quality and quantity of the feedbacks in this scene (Table 3) reveals the absence of *aizuchi* of the second group to express agreement and a scarce occurrence of *aizuchi* of the third and fourth group to signify disagreement and amazement. The most recurring types of *aizuchi* are those of the first and fifth group, used by speakers to show attention and ask the interlocutor for further information (Horiguchi, 1988).

Table 3. Frequency and Typology of the Feedbacks in the Sequence from Tokyo Sonata According to the Classification of Horiguchi.

SPEAKERS	NO. FEEDBACKS	1	2	3	4	5
RYŪHEI (R)	6	2 - hai	0	1 -iie	1 -koko de sugu to iu no wa...	2 - karaoke toka ()? - koko de desuka?
INTERVIEWER (I)	4	2 - ee - uhm	0	0	0	2 - hoka ni wa? - dō shimashita?
TOTALS	10	4	0	0	2	4

As laid out in Table 3, the percentage of feedback expressions is lower by $\frac{3}{4}$ with respect to the previously analysed talk show: this diminution also shows in the complete lack of fillers and “collaborative” overlaps through continuers. These aspects can surely be explained with the dialogue typology at hand, where interaction tends to be extremely formal and asymmetrical and the collaborative intervention of speakers is not required. Therefore, although interaction here can be defined as complementary (Okamoto, 2008; Bazzanella, 1994), it lacks the traits of progressive approximation (Balboni, 2007) and evocativeness (Vitucci, 2014 (1)). In the following passage, for instance, it is evident how the interviewer (I) repeats his question three times in reply to the apparent incredulity of Ryūhei (R) without ever starting the mechanism of progressive approximation seen in T (1), (2), (3) and (4) of the previous interview. For the same reasons, talking turns in this interaction are quite free from overlaps and chronologically well staggered:

- I (1): *anata no nōryoku o shiritai ndesu*
 R (1): *hai?*
- I (2): *anata no tokui to suru mono o koko de misete kudasai*
 R (2): *koko de desuka?*
- I (3): *ee (.) ima sugu*
 R (3): *ehm, sono (0,2) karaoke toka (.) sō iu koto deshōka?*
- I (4): *hhh (0.5) anata ga kono kaisha no tameni (.) dō iu
 nōryoku o teikyō shite kureru noka (.) soko o mitai ndesu.*
- R (4): *demo, koko de sugu to iu no wa (0.5)¹*

Of course, this dialogue is taken from a film context, that is to say, from a text written with the purpose to be dramatized. Nevertheless, its analysis confirms that in the case of an asymmetric interaction, the choice of topics, the succession of turns, the type of discursive signals and the whole purpose of the conversation itself are quite different from those of symmetrical dialogues. In particular, it is clear that the purpose of the interaction is often closely connected to its grade of conventionality and institutionalisation. In other words, this short sample reminds us that the more conventionalised and institutionalised the dialogue is, the stricter its models of linguistic action will be, with more limited contents.

¹ Translation: I (1): *I would like to know your abilities.* R (1): *Beg your pardon?* I (2): *Show me here what you are able to do.* I (2): *What do you mean “here”?* I (3): *Yes, now.* R (3): *Ehm... Things like karaoke? Is that what you mean?* I (4): *I would like to understand what you are able to offer to this company. That is what I would like to see.* R (4): *Ehm, just like that...*

Conclusions

This study originates from a didactic experiment proposed in the academic year 2011-2012 at the Università Ca' Foscari of Venice, organized into an intermediate third-year course of Japanese, containing a module of multimedia didactics, and a master course of Japanese about the interlingual translation of audiovisual materials. From a didactic point of view, these activities aim to improve the oral comprehension of students through their exposure to authentic material,¹ as well as to study in depth the dynamics of intercultural pragmatics through interlingual captioning.

A particularly interesting analysis concerned the differences between the pragmatic aspects of language found in original interviews available online and those found in movie dialogues. As this brief study suggests, although movie interviews are produced in an exclusively intracultural environment, they show a drastic quantitative and qualitative reduction of elements such as discursive signals, repairs, reformulations, pre-sequences, fillers and feedback expressions, if compared to normal TV talk shows. Nevertheless, in a perspective of intercultural teaching, both material typologies prove quite helpful to teachers, to stimulate learners towards a pragmatic dialogue production closer to the sociocultural conventions of the target language, precisely thanks to a qualitative comparison of the audiovisual material at hand. As reminded by Bettoni, in effect, there is a connection between linguistic forms and cultural meanings: a grammatical mistake can be easily excused, whereas a pragmatic error is often perceived as a sign of weird behaviour (idem, 2006, 235).

This paper analysed a few key concepts of pragmatics treated in the literature on this topic and found in the dialogues in Japanese language presented here. There is no intention to stereotype such concepts, nor to interpret them as the only constitutive elements of Japanese dialogue. However, at a purely didactic and intercultural level, it might be quite constructive to point them out to learners, so as to encourage a formative observation, realized through the ideal of “learning by simulating” (Vitucci, 2013 (1), 69). In particular, the concepts emerging from the dialogues analysed in this study can be summarized as follows:

- *circularity*: the ability to proceed gradually in the construction of the meaning, through a series of successive and preparatory formulations of the concepts discussed (Balboni, 2007; Okamoto, 2008);
- *collaborativeness*: the ability to construct the dialogue together (Bazzanella, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991) through a

¹ The material for these courses, following to the principle of “authenticity”, mostly consists in a selection of original dialogues taken from TV or web interviews, newscast services or passages of films interpreted by native speakers and completely unrelated to didactic purposes (Diadori-Micheli, 2010; Balboni, 2007).

reciprocal use of “emotional” feedback (Sawano, 2008; Machida and Katō, 2004) and overlaps, not perceived as “invasions” or “disturbances” of the talking turns;

- *evocativeness*: the ability to recall typical concepts and images of one's culture-language through an interaction which is often syntactically limited, but rich in paraverbal and extraverbal aspects (Tassan, 2005; Okamoto, 2008; Vitucci, 2014 (1)).
- *sociopragmatic attention*: the ability to accurately select the most appropriate language registers (mostly *futsūgo*, *sonkeigo*, *teineigo*) for the conversation setting, the participants and their modality of interaction, according to the typical norms of Japanese politeness (Kádár and Mills, 2011, Ishiguro, 2013, Kondō, 2008).

The aim of this study was to bring to light the above mentioned elements, so as to provide further research material both for the author and all teachers concerned with language didactic activities based on audiovisual material. In the next few years it will be fundamental to confront with the researches carried out in this and in related fields, in order to delve deeper in this matter and refine the teaching methods suggested by research.

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