

## **External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of *Mgr. Halina Zawiszová***

### ***Verbal resources for affective stance display in Japanese conversational interactions***

**Submitted in 2021 at the *Institute of Asian Studies***

#### **I. Brief summary of the dissertation**

Based on the methods of Conversation Analysis and spontaneous informal dialogues between young Japanese adults, the thesis investigates the use of various linguistic means to display affective stance. What emerges from the detailed qualitative analysis of the interactions (mostly spoken) is a complex system of lexical, structural and prosodical resources that the speakers regularly use to share non-propositional aspects of their communication. While Japanese is a language with a particularly rich choice of such resources and also one where they are used frequently and regularly, the thesis makes clear that affective stance display is an integral part of human communication cross-linguistically. Description of the system based on the Japanese data is a unique result of the thesis.

#### **II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation**

The thesis is an impressive achievement in many respects. Perhaps its most remarkable feature is the set of amazingly insightful analyses of the dialogues. The analyses are sensitive to extremely subtle details, related to affective stance and the context. At the same time, the analyses, the text structure and the author's arguments always serve to build and support the overall coherent picture of the system.

The thesis reads like a text of an accomplished scholar, yet very clear and easy to follow. References are provided wherever appropriate, starting from an in-depth introduction and overview of related work, but also quoting various views, opinions and arguments relevant to specific examples and phenomena. At the same time, the author adds many observations of her own, leading to research results based on authentic texts, important from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

#### **III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects**

##### *1. Structure of the argument*

The thesis consists of five chapters, two appendices and an extensive bibliography section, altogether 323 pages plus 6 pages of the front matter. The first three chapters specify goals of the dissertation, a clear and interesting introduction into the topic, the terminological background and related work, the theory, methodology and data behind the analysis, as well as a brief section on the specifics of colloquial Japanese.

Chapter 4, the core of the thesis, lists the types of expressions used for affective stance display. In addition to items subsumed as lexical categories (adjectives, adverbs, mimetics, verbs, nouns), the list also includes types such as demonstratives, particles, person reference

(pronominal-like forms), interjections, connective expressions, “linguistic-interactional practices related to syntactic form” (i.e., structural phenomena such as word order variations), and utterance-final elements. Each type is amply illustrated with real examples, all with detailed comments and analyses. Even the subtle details are presented in a clear and interesting way and lead to conclusions in a smooth and natural way. Like the whole thesis, the structure of the chapter is logical and reasons for organizing the text this way are obvious.

In Chapter 5, the linguistic means for expressing stance display, presented above, are shown as acting in mutual interplay, while a longer conversation is analysed. This is a powerful evidence of the viability and merits of the approach. The rest of the chapter summarizes the achievements of the thesis and shows perspectives. In addition to the convincing list of goals fulfilled, there are some interesting practical implications, including applications to the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language.

## *2. Formal aspects of the dissertation*

Formally, the thesis is virtually flawless, including the language, typography and formatting. The number of typos etc. I could spot is minimal: p.78 sugogu>sugoku, p.81-82: example (1.25) is missing, p.114 ematphise>emphasise?, p.175 In is an example > In an example, p.199 contruction>construction.

## *3. Use of sources and/or material*

The author does an excellent job also in the use of literature and data. As far as I can tell, all relevant sources are properly referenced, as well as all quotes, which are plentiful and very appropriate. Importantly, they often give alternative viewpoints. The conversation transcripts follow the conventions meticulously. Interpretations of all the text data correspond to the goals of the thesis and are based on the sound methodology of Conversation Analysis.

## *4. Personal contribution to the subject*

The thesis is unique in combining the investigation of extensive and rich empirical data with the analysis of linguistic means used to communicate a subtle but pervasive aspect of human interaction. What emerges from the analysis is a complex system of various conspiring linguistic and other resources, from now on an invaluable point of reference for anyone interested in the topic.

## **IV. Questions for the author**

1. Does the definition of ‘resources’ below (p.47) include rule-based systems, such as grammars, beyond mere enumeration of forms and their combinations? Not all combinations of forms can be listed, language is productive, so abstract patterns of prosody, morphology, syntax are also needed. It seems that section 4.7 (Linguistic-interactional patterns ...) assumes an interface not just with a lexicon, but also with a grammar.

On a more theoretical note, I am not sure about the role of langue or linguistic competence in the system that you assume. Would you agree that Conversation Analysis could be seen as

the grammar of parole or performance, complementing the grammar of langue or competence? Parole can certainly have its rules, despite what some generativists believe.

'Resources', as explained by Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2018:29), refer to "substance-based linguistic (and other) forms or entities that can be described with respect to their structure and use" and consist of

single forms of different sizes, including *verbal* forms such as phones and other sound objects, morphs, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and recurrent larger discourse units, and *non-verbal* forms, such as prosodies, gaze, facial/bodily gestures, and bodily position and movement; as well as *combinations* of forms in (construction) formats.

2. p.57, fn.38: "In Japanese, the recoverability rests on the hearer, ..." – could that be otherwise, in any language?

3. p.282: "artificial intelligence and human-computer interaction" are among the potential applications – Would you have some more specific ideas about this? Maybe about how some of the phenomena observed and described in the thesis could be formalized or annotated in order to be useful for these tasks? I am only aware about the NLP task of "sentiment analysis", but that is just a very rough and impoverished version of just one aspect of what you investigate, namely evaluation (2.10).

4. *ibid.*: "foreign language teaching and learning" is another potential application – obviously! Just studying the examples with their analyses must be very enlightening for each student. But did you also think about how to project your findings into the methodologies of teaching Japanese, or maybe of any foreign language?

5. A somewhat abstract/terminological issue: maybe not all "response cries" (p.163) or non-lexical vocalizations are intentional, if so, are they still part of language, or even communication?

6. You mention Mathesius on p. 13, but not when you discuss word order in 4.7.7.1. and in 4.7.7.2., where you mention various alternative explanations of extraposed constituents. Maybe he would still deserve a mention in this specific context. In his Functional Sentence Perspective, there is the concept of subjective order and the related emotivity principle (discussed also in Firbas 1992: Word order and FSP, p. 117-140, CUP), which may be close to what you assume as the main factor, would you agree?

7. You say that displayed affective stance can be genuine or feigned, but I believe that people can misunderstand affective stances, similarly to misunderstanding propositional contents. Would you have some thoughts about how similar or different these two types of misunderstandings are? Are there also ambiguous affective stances?

## V. Conclusion

None of the questions or comments to the author implies a change in my decidedly positive

evaluation of the thesis. I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as passed.

2 November 2021

Alexandr Rosen