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Suppressing laughter in the display of (dis)affiliation

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1. Introduction

It has long been recognized that laughter can be used as an interactional tool to enlist affiliation from co-participants (Jefferson, 1979; Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987). The act of laughing can show appreciation for something that the laugher has deemed amusing, but can also invite further laughter from its recipients. Like other forms of interaction, the meaning of any particular laugh can only be determined through careful consideration of its sequential context.

In this paper we aim to document one practice in which a specific type of “suppressed” laughter is employed to display participant affiliation with a prior speaker’s unfolding stance towards reported ascriptions. Day (1998) lists several ways in which speakers can resist being ascribed membership in an ethnic group, including dismissing the relevance of the category, reconstituting the category and active avoidance. It is hoped that our discussion of suppressed laughter in this paper will identify another resource for Day’s interactional toolbox of ethnic ascription resisters.

In a sequential environment in which a speaker has provided some negative account of a situation or reported speech, a response which is initiated with suppressed laughter projects disagreement with the reported stance, and consequently makes available the laugher’s shared affiliation with the prior speaker’s position. In multi-party talk, such laughter is often followed with more open displays of laughter from other co-participants and may lead to additional agreement tokens. Our analysis provides evidence that this kind of laughter, which is qualitatively distinct from a conventional “ha ha ha”, displays recipient alignment to the emergent stance and has procedural consequences for the ongoing interaction by making relevant further more public displays of agreement from other recipients.

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2. Interactional investigations into laughter

Conversation analysts have long held an interest in accounting for the situated orderliness of laughter within everyday talk. Sacks noted in the mid-1960s that laughter is located immediately subsequent to a turn that contains some “laughable” element (Sacks, 1992) . Jefferson further investigated laughter (Jefferson, 1979, 1984; Jefferson et al., 1987), noting for example the ways in which laughter can make reciprocal laughter relevant, and how speakers can use a turn final laugh particle to invite laughter from their recipients.

Throughout these studies, Jefferson is frequently concerned with the power of laughter to bring about affiliation and disaffiliation between co-participants. Based on the work of Clayman (1992) we will define disaffiliation as those responses which are unfavourable, which express disapproval or derision, and which are used by recipients to disassociate themselves from reported speakers and their views.

In determining affiliation, one sequential issue for analysts and participants alike is the direction of laughter. We will ground our discussion in the *laughing-at* or *laughing-with*⁶ approach originally suggested in passing by Jefferson (1972) and taken up in detail more recently by Glenn (1995). This distinction suggests that laughter has the power “to promote distancing, disparagement, or feelings of superiority; or conversely, to promote bonding, and affiliation (1995:43). Glenn’s sequential analysis aims to determine the laugher’s affiliative status by mapping the trajectory of laughter with respect to four key turns actions: laughable, first laugh, (possible) second laugh, and subsequent activities. In short, during the first turn (or “laughable”) of a *laugh-at* the speaker “appoints/nominates some co-present participant as the butt” (1995:44), making laughter relevant as a next turn action. If someone other than the butt produces the first laugh, it is likely that it is a *laugh-at*. In multi-party talk a second laugh by someone other than the butt reinforces the *laughing-at*. In two party talk, *laugh-ats* are not reciprocated. In other words, if the butt shares the second laugh, it becomes a *laugh-with*. Subsequent talk on topic displays a *laugh-at*.

In our data, the butt (the person who -according to the speaker- produced some ascription) is not co-present. According to the first of the conditions above, by default this denotes the laughter we are looking at as a *laugh-with*, meaning that it indicates affiliation with the participant who produces the laughable turn.

Osvaldsson (2004) notes that most research into laughter has been based on paired talk, and multi-party studies have been rare. Her study however analyzes laughter amongst a group of four or more people, tracking laughter in relation to displays of disagreement. She documents a conversation in which participants use laughter to align against the emergent stance of another co-present participant, and subsequently use this affiliation in the successful argument of their case. The present paper on these studies to explore the affiliative nature of suppressed laughter.

⁶ Glenn does not hyphenate these terms. We have done so here only to improve readability.

3. Data collection and methodology

The data in this study are taken from video recordings of multi-party bilingual (Japanese/English) interaction. The complete data set consists of everyday talk-in-interaction from around a lunch table at an international high school and five focus group sessions facilitated by the first author. The segments included in this paper are taken from two of the focus groups that consisted of multi-ethnic Japanese teenagers⁷. During the sessions, the group discussed various topics related to language practices. The intention was to gather information about the participants' experiences as (so-called) half-Japanese people, so consequently the talk involved a good deal of discussion related to identity, including cases in which they reported ways in which other people treated them. Data were transcribed according to Jeffersonian transcription conventions and Japanese has been translated with the two tiered system used by Mori (1999) and Tanaka (1999). See Appendix 1 for details.

The participants are regular users of more than one language. They all speak at least Japanese and English, though some of them also use a third or fourth language. Naturally this means that when they talk among themselves, they tend to code-switch between Japanese and English. However, as bilingual practices are not the main focus of the present study we made a conscious decision to conduct our investigation along the "language blind" lines suggested by Gafaranga (2001). That is to say that we adopted the view that the participants were using language (not two socially determined languages) and agreed to make the medium of interaction relevant only to the extent that it was demonstrably relevant for the participants in their talk. Indeed, we feel that the fact that these data constitute bilingual interaction strengthens our findings, since the criticism cannot be made that they hold only in (say) an English interactional context.

4. Analysis

While compiling a collection of agreements from our corpus, we noticed that they were often prefaced with a kind of partially withheld laughter that differed from more conventional forms of laughter in that;

1. It was shorter and less audible,
2. It was other-initiated by a single recipient and did not receive further laughter of the same kind from other participants, and
3. It started with a voiceless plosive (such as /t/, /p/, or /k/) and was hearable as a "laughing voice", despite the fact that it usually did not contain vowel sounds like conventional laughter.

⁷ Specifically they were aged between 15 and 18 and had one Japanese parent and one non-Japanese parent. In each case the non-Japanese parent was a native speaker of English, either from the US or the UK. Except for Mia, the non-Japanese parent was their father. Eri and Ullianis' fathers were themselves "half-Japanese", making these participants "quarter", as Ulliani states in excerpt 3, line 21.

For want of a better term, we started to call this *suppressed laughter*. Typically it took on forms such as ts::, pff, khh, hnn or sh:: and its production often had a breathy or nasal quality. In isolation it is difficult to imagine such sounds as laughter, but within the sequential contexts we examined it was viewed by the participants as a kind of pre-laugh that regularly led to further laughter from other participants. Moreover, in examining the turn prior to the suppressed laugh, we found that the “laughable” was often an account of some ascription by someone who was non-present, commonly one that showed a naïve or negative attitude towards the speaker and, by association, the recipients. We came to see suppressed laughter as projecting a participant’s alignment with prior speaker’s unfolding stance towards the view expressed by the non-present butt. In short, the basic sequence can be represented by the following pattern:

- Turn 1: Laughable
Turn 2: Suppressed laughter
Turn 3: (Possible) further displays of agreement, including open laughter

A reasonably clear-cut example is shown in excerpt 1⁸. In this sequence, Nina and others have been collaboratively compiling a list of remarks that Japanese use to position multi-ethnic Japanese as foreign. Due to space limitations the complete sequence cannot be covered here, but for the present discussion it is sufficient to look at this sub-sequence as a prototypical example of the practice we would like to discuss.

Excerpt 1 FG2 5:32 Ohashi

- 01 Nina: *natto taberu* [n da ne:]=
02 Mia: [m::m.]
03 Nina: =*ohashi tsukaeraremasu?*
04 Mick:→ ts[s:.. hh]
05 Mia, BJ: [((laugh))]
06 BJ: *\$iru yo ne.\$*

(Translation)

- 01 Nina: Oh, so you eat fermented beans, [do you?]=
02 Mia: [m::m.]
03 Nina: =Can you use chopsticks?
04 Mick:→ ts[s:. hh]
05 Mia, BJ: [((laugh))]
06 BJ: \$Yeah there are.\$ (people who say that)

⁸ In this case we have chosen to forego the two-tier translation in order to present the clearest possible example of the practice.

Nina produces lines 1 and 3 as two TCUs within the same turn, so we will analyze them both as part of what we are calling the laughable turn. Here Nina produces two questions, which ordinarily would be hearable as the first part of an adjacency pair, but by not providing Nina with a response, the participants instead demonstrate their understanding of these questions as rhetorical. In fact, in this turn Nina is producing what Alfonzetti (1998) refers to as a *virtual quotation*, putting forward an assembled example of the sort of thing certain Japanese *tend* to say to a non-Japanese person, based on her experience. Nina delivers it in a falsetto voice with mock politeness and, in conjunction with a descriptive account she has given in prior talk (not shown), this marks lines 1 and 3 as the hypothetical reported speech of an elderly Japanese woman.

In other words, in lines 1 and 3 Nina is giving an impersonation of the sort of ascription she has heard from some Japanese people. While Nina delivers the turn as a laugh-at, with the unnamed Japanese person as the butt, it is not only humorous. Apart from the first author (Tim), who is acting as the session facilitator, all the participants in this conversation are multi-ethnic Japanese and are therefore implicated as potential targets of the sort of comment Nina is reporting. While she takes a humorous approach to her account, the reported assessment is amusing only in its naivety. Naturally the participants can use chopsticks, since they have lived in Japan all their lives. Moreover, Nina's reported comment makes relevant its recipient's co-membership in the category "non-Japanese", an identity category that they might not necessarily choose for themselves. So turn 1 is not merely laughable, but laughable because it is both ludicrous to the participants and contrary to the way they would categorize themselves.

It is within this sequential environment that Mick produces his suppressed laugh (line 4), in this case a kind of hiss followed by an out-breath. Normally a hiss would be indicative of a negative assessment, while a laugh demonstrates some sort of appreciation. In this case Mick's suppressed laugh seems to be doing the work of both, first showing that he considers Nina's reported ascription unbelievable and at the same time worthy of laughter. In other words he is laughing at the non-present Japanese person by performing a *laugh-with* (Nina), which makes relevant his alignment with Nina's stance and projects further agreement.

And such agreement is indeed forthcoming in subsequent turns, firstly in the form of more audible laughter from Mia and BJ, and then with direct verbal agreement from BJ, which demonstrates that at least three of the four multi-ethnic Japanese recipients can appreciate the comment that Nina has reported, inferring with their agreement that they have experienced the same sort of ascription and affiliating with her depiction of it as absurd. Without Mick's suppressed laughter in line 4, it might be possible to hear BJ and Mias' laughter as merely an appreciation of Nina's performance, without any display of disagreement with the butt's ascription.

Sometimes suppressed laughter can be followed with a bid for confirmation and leads to additional agreement tokens, such as in the following sequence of events in which Ulliani is

telling about her experience of being photographed by Japanese teenagers at a nearby school without her permission.

Excerpt 2 FG6 17:00 They take pictures katteni

- 01 Ulliani: they take pictures *katteni*.
without permission
- 02 (0.4)
- 03 Peter: a:::h soh.
ACK that way
Yeah, that's right.
- 04 Ulliani: *desho?*=
TAG
Don't they?
- 05 Peter =un \$wakaru\$
yeah understand
Yeah, I know.
- 06 Tim: \$honto?\$
Really?
- 07 Eri: un. ((camera gesture)) >*kachi kachi*<=
yeah click click
- 08 Peter: =DW[O : : : h (to)]
((the sound of a large crowd rushing))
- 09 [((looks over shoulder, surprised face))]
- 10 Ulliani: [they're like wa:::: *kacha*]
Ya:::y click
- 11 Benny: huh?
- 12 (0.4)
- 13 Tim: → \$sh sh sh sh shhh.\$
- 14 Benny: ha
- 15 Tim: *shitsurei da ne*
rude COP IP
That's so rude, isn't it?
- 16 Benny: *shiturei da*((nods))
rude COP
Yes, it is.

In this excerpt, the suppressed laughter is produced by Tim in line 15, when he says “sh sh sh shhhh”⁹. The laughable in this case is an account of a reported event, rather than a reported ascription, but it is similar to excerpt 1 in that involves an unpleasant experience for the reporter, that also infers the butt’s behaviour is an implausible and objectionable matter for the participants. Taking a photo of a stranger without asking permission would clearly be inappropriate behaviour if that person were Japanese so the account that Ulliani, Eri and Peter are co-producing (Lerner, 1992) in lines 1-10 is again reporting on a situation in which the participants were treated as non-Japanese, presumably because of their physical appearance. That is to say, in their account, the reported action (having ones photo taken by strangers without permission) is bound to the identity category “non-Japanese”, which they consider to be an inappropriate description of themselves.

Note that since a sub-group has collaboratively told the laughable across a series of turns, their co-membership in the situated membership category “people who have had this experience” is implied (Lerner, 1993). The discussion facilitator (a non-Japanese) demonstrates his non-membership in this category in line 6 by initiating repair early on in the account and the remaining multi-ethnic Japanese participant, Benny, produces a similar bid for repair in line 11¹⁰. This means that Tim and Benny are the only two co-participants who can provide an appreciation for the laughable.

And so it is unsurprising that it is Tim who produces the suppressed laughter in line 13. It seems to express both his disaffiliation with the reported action and his sympathy with Ulliani. To put it another way, this kind of laughter aligns with prior speaker’s position. Although the others are collaborative telling this as a humorous story, as a non-member, Tim’s appreciation is guarded, and he combines it with a display of disagreement, which results in a “hissing laugh” that projects alignment with the tellers’ stance. Benny’s hesitant laugh in line 14 may also be accomplishing a similar stance, and leads to Tim’s upgraded assessment in line 15 “*shitsurei da ne*”, which then receives further on-record agreement from Benny in line 16. The suppressed laugh turn therefore seems to be an initial alignment token that invites more open display of agreement in subsequent turns.

Excerpt 3 FG6 14:59 Kakkoi dake

01 Peter: *ta-tada kak[koi to omou*
 only cool QT think
 They just think it’s cool.

⁹ On paper this utterance appears similar to the one speakers often use when they want someone to be quiet, but on the video recording it is produced as a hissed laugh, somewhat similar to the one Mick delivers in the previous example. That is, the conventional H-initial laugh is constricted in some way with a closed-mouth production.

¹⁰ It is uncertain just what the trouble source for Benny’s repair is in this turn. Since the prior turns are produced in overlap he may simply have misheard them, or misunderstood the real-time onomatopoeic expressions, or like Tim he may simply be expressing his disbelief at such an act of rudeness, which would indicate that the students at the nearby school have never tried to take a photo of him without his permission. Whatever the reason, his bid for repair goes without a response in this case.

- 02 Ulliani: [mezu[ra shi i.]
rare
- 03 Eri:
cool only
- 04 de: mezu[rash]ii [dake,] =
COP-CONT rare only
Just cool and rare.
- 05 Benny: [un]
yeah
- 06 Peter: [un (.) wakarui]
yeah understand
Yeah, I know.
- 07 Ulliani: [jiman]
boasting
- 08 Eri: =[look I have a gaijin boyfriend yo [: : : ↑]]=
foreign IP
- 09 [((points over shoulder, changes voice))]
- 10 Benny: [hm.hm.hn.]
- 11 Peter: [(°yeah°)]
- 12 Eri: =y' know?
- 13 Tim: → kfhhh:
- 14 Eri: aha it's a () y' know?
- 15 Ulliani: EVERry TI:me (.) like my friend introduce(.)me?
- 16 They're like (0.8) [kono ko haafu da sa]
this kid half COP IP
Hey this kid's half.
- 17 [((in another voice))]
- 18 Eri: [(yon)]
- 19 Tim: → [ya-[a:h] ((in a tone of disgust))
jeez
- 20 Peter: [[soh] soh soh soh soh.]
yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah
- 21 Ulliani: [\$[I:]m NOT EVEN HA]lf.[I'm QUARter \$]
- 22 Eri: → [AHA HA HA HA HA ha]=
- 23 Peter: [(so -)]
- 24 Benny: [hhe ha]
- 25 Eri: =((claps))=
- 26 Tim: =ha ha ha ha

In excerpt 3 we find two more reported ascriptions that are met with laughter from the co-participants. This sequence begins with a series of collaboratively produced assessments (lines 1-4, 7) that demonstrates the participants think that some Japanese girls only want to be seen with foreign boys because they are “cool” or “rare”. Note also that agreement tokens in lines 4 and 5 make public that all the multi-ethnic participants share this stance.

In line 8 Eri delivers the first laughable turn by imitating a Japanese girl boasting about her foreign boyfriend. This turn is recognizable as a mocking stance due to the prosodic changes in her voice and accompanying gestures and appears in striking contrast to line 12, in which Eri returns to her own voice. It is obvious that Eri herself does not see anything particularly special about having a foreign boyfriend and indeed to her the fact that someone would boast about such a thing is worth ridiculing.

In lines 10 and 11 Eri receives minimal displays of appreciation and agreement from Benny and Peter in overlap, but at a point at which the end of her imitation is projectably complete. In line 12, Eri returns to her own voice to deliver a tag question that makes further acknowledgement relevant in next turn.

It is at this point that Eri’s laughable turn receives the suppressed laughter from Tim in line 13. What is interesting about this case is that the order of the second and third turns has been reversed. In most of the cases we examined, suppressed laughter came as a first appreciation and led to more open displays of agreement from other participants in subsequent turns, but in this deviant case (Hutchby & Woofit, 1998) Benny and Peters’ agreement tokens come before Tim’s turn. One possible way to account for this is terms of the participants’ actions prior to the reported ascription.

Benny and Peter have already displayed their agreement with the unfolding stance, and have actually been actively collaborating in the interaction that led up to the laughable. In other words, their agreement is not reliant on Eri’s imitation. In contrast, Tim has not provided anything to demonstrate that he agrees with the emerging stance. This may be due to the membership categorization devices (Lepper, 2000; Sacks, 1979) that are being employed by the others in the prior talk, namely age and ethnicity. The multi-ethnic teenage participants are jointly constructing an image of certain Japanese girls who want to have foreign friends (particularly boyfriends) based on appearance and novelty, with the inference being that they have been treated this way at sometime in the past. That is to say, although the participants are Japanese, they are being treated as foreign –a process Iino (1996) terms “Gaijinization”- because they are half-Japanese. Through their co-participation at this stage in the talk, the multi-ethnic participants are attempting to portray themselves as Japanese, not foreign. In contrast, it is difficult for Tim to provide timely alignment on this point owing to his obvious membership in at least two separate membership groups. As a married adult, he cannot claim recent experience of teenage girls’ attitudes to boyfriends, and as a foreigner he cannot claim to understand what it is like for a half-Japanese person to be treated as a foreigner.

By considering this deviant case we arrive at a deeper understanding of the interactional work that suppressed laughter accomplishes. A suppressed laugh cannot just be produced by any participant. It must be produced as a first assessment by a participant who is yet to provide evidence of his or her alignment towards the emergent stance.

Tim's suppressed laughter, however, is hearable as "on the way to affiliation", projecting disagreement with the reported boast from line 8. His next turn is also a semi-verbal disagreement token in line 19 in response to a second reported ascription from Ulliani. In that it is followed by open laughter and agreement, this turn seems to act in a similar way to the suppressed laughter practice we have described, except that in this case Tim's turn delivers a slightly more on-record show of disagreement with the reported ascription and does not initially display any appreciation towards humor of the comment. This is a very different action, which demonstrates Tim's assessment of Ulliani's reported ascription "*kono ko haafu da sa*" is not only negative but also not worthy of laughter.

That is, at this point Tim views this ascription as something that should not be condoned with laughter, an assessment that appears to be in conflict with the other participants in lines 20-24, who respond with agreements, upgrades and public laughter. Such an overwhelming display of agreement may lead Tim to make a bid for affiliation with laughter in line 26. But it is probably too late, and his stance with respect to this matter is on-record as slightly different to that of the rest of the group. This may in turn make relevant his identity as non-member of the membership category “half-Japanese”.

Finally in excerpt 4 we will examine one more sequence in which a series of reported ascriptions leads to subsequent displays of suppressed laughter. Here the group has been discussing the way that other people misinterpret their nationality/ethnicity based in part on their (phenotypically ambiguous) appearance, and inferring that they themselves reject such inaccurate ascriptions. Nina has said that British people viewed her as Chinese and that Japanese view her as American. Mia has just stated that Japanese people often refuse to speak to her in Japanese.

Excerpt 4 FG2 4:10 Japan's in China right?

- 01 Mia: and, they're like Japanese,
02 [Chinese,][what's the difference.]
03 Kate: [(I know)]
04 Nina: [either way (*chiga:u*).]
wrong
05 Kate: \$Hgph\$
06 Mia: Japan's in China right? >heheh< No:..
07 ((gives a quick slurping in-breath))=
08 Kate: =Hhhh [ha ha]:=
09 Mia: [()]

10 BJ: =\$yoku kikakeru.\$
 often ask-PAS
 Yeah, they often ask that.

11 (0.9)

12 Mick: ((clears throat)) gegh.

13 Tim: I had a Japanese guy ask me, (0.5) u:m
14 if Australia is in America.

15 Mia: ((in a tone of disgust)) a::ah

16 BJ: → ts[::°\$soh soh soh]\$ °
 yeah yeah yeah

17 Mia: °[It's so stupid]°

18 Nina: [What's the difference between Chi:nese and Japa:nese?]
19 [((in a slightly "dense" voice))]

20 BJ: → khh.

21 Mick: nyehaheha

22 Nina: It's a different country?

23 (0.7)

24 Nina: [<Why do they all look the same?>]
25 [((The dense voice again))]
26 >Can you tell the *difference between a
27 *German and an *English < [person.]
28 ((thumps table at each *))

29 Mia: [It's ()ling
30 [that's why I usually te]ll them (.) ah Russian.

31 Mick: [D u : : : a h .]

The first instance of suppressed laughter appears in line 5 and is produced by Kate in response to a laughable from Mia (lines 1-2), which takes the form of a naïve reported question from a butt who is some non-present Westerner. Before any further affiliative laughter can occur, Mia self-selects (line 6) to provide an additional performance of the reported ascription in a slightly different theme¹¹, this time performing not only the question but also her response to it- a forced laugh and a disagreement token. The slurped in-breath in line 7 seems to signal the punch line, projecting laughter (appreciation) as an appropriate action in next turn. Indeed this is what transpires, with more open laughter from Kate in line 8 and a verbal agreement from BJ in line 10.

¹¹ This may be because Mia is coming out of competition for turn prior to this segment, including extended overlap with Nina on a similar topic.

Since doing any activity may allow another party to do the same (Sacks, 1992), Mia's performance occasions a second story from Tim, this time a reported question from a Japanese person (lines 13-14). In response to his utterance, BJ and Mia shake their heads in wonder (line 15) and produce almost simultaneous assessments of the naïve ascription. BJ's agreement¹² (line 16) begins with a hissing sound like suppressed laughter. Note that the most audible part of this turn is the hissed laugh, which projects disagreement with the butt. In overlap with BJ's utterance, Mia (line 17) gives a negative assessment of the reported position of the Japanese person who Tim has told them about, displaying her disagreement.

Finally in line 18 Nina self-selects to perform an upgraded reprise of Mia's earlier laughable, this time in a mock dim-witted voice that she answers in her own voice in line 22. The way in which Nina delivers lines 18 and 19 depicts the question (and, by extension, the reported speaker) as ludicrous, making relevant an appreciation that acknowledges not only the amusement valuable of the laughable, but also its inherent stupidity. BJ and Mick accomplish just such an appreciation with various forms of suppressed laughter in lines 20 and 21, aligning with Nina by displaying that they treat the reported question as absurd. Then in lines 24-28 Nina provides a follow-up ascription delivered in the same pattern -question in a dumb voice from butt, answer in own voice from Nina- which serves to upgrade her reported response to such ascriptions, as evidenced by her increased pace and co-produced table thumps, making available her frustrated attitude towards such ascriptions. In turn, in line 31 Mick produces a reprised version of his prior suppressed laugh (line 21), this time without any hint of a laugh token, but instead demonstrating straight derision of the butt, and therefore aligning with Nina's upgraded second reporting by delivering an upgraded second appreciation. In other words, for Mick the reported ascriptions are not getting funnier but stupider. While Nina's performance in this final reporting is the most animated, it receives the least appreciation in terms of laughter from the co-participants, perhaps because it is laboring the point.

5. Discussion

As outlined above, the use of suppressed laughter makes relevant subsequent participant alignments, moment-to-moment co-collaborations of identity performance and temporal membership in the foregrounding of various situated identities. Specifically the act of suppressing laughter projects disaffiliation with a reported ascription (through such displays as disagreements and negative assessments) and consequently makes relevant the laughter's affiliation with the stance of the ascription reporter.

One way to look at the practice of suppressing laughter is to view it as an utterance in which two separate actions -disagreement and appreciation- are displayed concurrently. Disagreement is aimed at the absurd opinion expressed by the non-present butt, particularly in that it ethnifies the

¹² Here BJ's agreement is demonstrating that he has also experienced such naïve remarks from Japanese, not that he thinks Australia is in America.

teller, and by extension the recipients, in some way that they would not choose to identify themselves. Such disagreement tokens, if performed alone might take the form of a tongue click (tch) or an out-breath, and if directed towards a co-present participant might even be considered inappropriate. But when produced in tandem with a “laughing voice” in sequential contexts such as those we have described, the disagreement also provides appreciation for the teller’s performance and the laughable nature of the reported situation and therefore projects alignment, agreement and affiliation with the reporter’s stance toward the ascription. In doing so suppressing laughter can be one way for interactants to demonstrate co-membership in various identity categories, such as “multi-ethnic Japanese”.

Interestingly, we could find no examples of the suppressed laughter practice in a similar focus group conducted by the same facilitator with a group of native-English speaking teachers at the school. We feel this further adds evidence to our contention that this form of laughter is made sequentially consequential after a turn that is laughable yet may have serious implications for co-present participants, such as the reported ascriptions that frequently occurred among the focus groups with multi-ethnic teenagers. The fact that such ascriptions did not appear in the discussion with the teachers may account for the lack of suppressed laughter in that data.

6. Conclusion

This paper has documented what we have termed “suppressed laughter”, one practice that speakers may use for disaffiliating with a reported ascription. Owing to the nature of our corpus, we have focused particularly on ascriptions that ethnify the referent (Day, 1998), but it is probable that the same practice could be used in response to ascriptions related to other forms of participant identities, and indeed even other interactional contexts. Moreover we do not consider that this is the only way that suppressed laughter is used. The consequences for the ongoing talk-in-interaction would undoubtedly alter if, for example, the butt were co-present. Likewise, our study has only examined suppressed laughter in multi-party talk, and it may be handled differently in paired talk. Therefore further research into this interactional practice is needed.

However, our initial investigation has revealed that suppressed laughter can be used as a succinct means of disaffiliating with a reported ascription and projecting recipient affiliation with the prior speakers emergent stance.

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Appendix 1 Transcription Conventions

Data in this paper have been transcribed based on the following conventions developed by Gail Jefferson, as outlined in Hutchby and Woofit (1998), ten Have (1999) and Markee and Kasper (2004). Where Japanese occurs, we have adopted the translation conventions used by Mori (1999) and Tanaka (1999).

SIMULTANEOUS UTTERANCES

huh [oh] I see Left square brackets mark the start of overlapping talk
 [what] Right square brackets mark the end of an overlap

CONTIGUOUS UTTERANCES

= Equal signs indicate that:
 a) Turn continues at the next identical symbol on the next line
 b) Talk is latched; that is, there is no interval between the end of prior
 turn and the start of next turn

INTERVALS WITHIN AND BETWEEN UTTERANCES

(0 . 4) Numerals in parentheses mark silence, in tenths of a second
(.) A period in parentheses indicates a micro-pause (less than 0.1 sec)

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPEECH DELIVERY

hhh hee hah indicate laughter or breathiness.
.hh indicates audible inhalation.
hh indicates audible exhalation.
dog Underlining indicates marked stress.
yes? A question mark indicates rising intonation.
yes. A period indicates falling intonation.
so, A comma indicates low-rising intonation, suggesting continuation.
HUH Capitals indicate increased loudness.
°thanks° Degree signs indicate decreased volume.
\$No way\$ Dollar signs indicate utterance is delivered in a “laughing voice”.
>< Inward indents embed talk that is faster than surrounding talk.
<> Outward indents embed talk that is slower than surrounding talk.

go:::d	One or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound.
	Each additional colon represents a lengthening of one beat.
no bu-	A single hyphen indicates an abrupt cut-off, with level pitch.

COMMENTARY IN THE TRANSCRIPT

((hand clap))	Double parentheses indicate transcriber's comments, including description of non-verbal behaviour.
the (park)	Single parentheses indicate an uncertain transcription.
the ()	Empty parentheses indicate an inaudible transcription.

OTHER TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

→	An arrow draws attention to some phenomenon the analyst wishes to discuss.
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TRANSLATION

<i>ore ja nee</i>	Italics indicate talk is in Japanese.
me COP NEG	Second line gives a literal English gloss of each item.
It's not me.	Third line gives a vernacular English translation in Times New Roman.
	Where the turn has only one Japanese word, the third tier is omitted.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN LITERAL GLOSS

IP	Interactional particle (e.g. <i>ne, sa, no, yo, na</i>)
QT	Quotation marker (<i>-to, -tte</i>)
TAG	Tag-like expression
ACK	Acknowledgement marker

Verbs and Adjectival forms

COP	Copulative verb, variations of the verb <i>to be</i>
NEG	Negative morpheme
CONT	Continuing (non-final) form
PAS	Passive form
POL	Polite form
POT	Potential form