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On Doing Japanese Awe in English Talk

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Abstract:

Based on a collection of cases taken from 12 hours of video-recorded interaction, this study examines some of the ways that Japanese novice L2 speakers of English employ prosodic variations of the information receipt particle “oh” to socially accomplish awe in L2 (English) interaction. “Oh” has been widely recognized in Conversation Analysis as a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984), which speakers use to make an interactional claim to epistemic readjustment, or as Schegloff (2007: 118) explains it, going from “non-knowing” to “now-knowing”. However, in addition to marking such changes in knowledge states, it was noticed that the Japanese participants in the current data set also occasionally produced “oh” in ways that make public the speaker’s affective state with regard to the informing turn. Specifically, an “oh” response that is delivered as “ogh” or “uogh” or “worgh”, was taken by recipients to be conveying “surprise” or “awe”. Unlike the surprised receipts found in L1 English use, these “awed receipts” were delivered with decreased pitch, and their vowel quality and sequential placement identified them as Japanese (L1) tokens. In Japanese, the change-of-state token is usually expressed with “a” (Ikeda, 2007), whereas “ogh” and its variants are more akin to the sort of reactive tokens used to express surprise (see Wilkinson and Kitinger, 2006). Through a fine-grained sequential analysis, the current study seeks to emically account for the way these participants use “oh” in their L2 English, demonstrating that they view it not simply as a change-of-state token, but as a means of “doing being awed”. The chapter will outline several interactional loci, including free-standing ogh, onset-delayed ogh, ogh-prefaced assessments and multiple oghs, all of which work to make public the speaker’s emotional stance toward some aspect of the prior interaction. Although these awed-receipts are fundamentally an element of the speakers’ first-language, the novice speakers of English in this data set do not treat them as marked in anyway, which raises pedagogical questions of whether or not language teachers need to point out such displays of emotion, or indeed whether or not such reactions are teachable. The author’s position is that such reactive displays of emotion performed in L1 are usually inferable within their sequential context, and therefore constitute a point at which the two languages can comprehensibly meld, allowing L2 speakers to retain some of their linguistic and cultural identities while moving toward a multilingual mode of communication.

1. Introduction

The emotion that I would like to focus on in this chapter is not easy to put into words; however I think the best way to describe it would be to call it awe. Awe is an emotion that includes feelings of surprise, astonishment and amazement, but which also encompasses a sense of admiration for the awe-worthy object. This often invokes a form of power difference between the speaker and the object of awe, be it God, the Grand Canyon, or a three-pointer in the closing minutes of a basketball game. Saying that one is in awe of something implies that the awe-inspiring object is somehow better than the speaker. In the past, awe also held connotations of fear, but this is no longer necessarily the case, since the word awesome had come to be synonymous with words like fantastic, spectacular or great.

In his phenomenological study of awe, Pearsall (2007) depicts awe as an infrequently felt yet life-changing emotion—the sort of feeling we get when we realize our infinitesimal place in the universe. However, if we consider the more colloquial sense of “awesome” and the sorts of things it is applied to in everyday interaction, we start to recognize that speakers have a range of ways to express surprise, admiration and astonishment. Naturally, our expressions of awe are most commonly responsive—reactions to something we have seen or heard. They may be formulated as

visceral interjections like “Wow!” or as more syntactically complex assessments, but these initial reactions usually denote a positive stance toward the awe-inspiring object. The awe receipts that we will examine in this chapter therefore can be thought of as a set of interactional practices for “doing being impressed”.

In line with recent work in the fields of conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP) (e.g. Edwards, 1999; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Sennedvig, 2004; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006), this study investigates emotion as an outside-the-head phenomena, limiting its observations to displays of emotion that are available to the recipient (and by extension, the analyst) via the interaction. This is not to say that nothing is going on inside the head, but rather that the only access that people have to another’s thoughts and emotions is via what they make public through what they say and do. Emotion is socially constituted by speakers for each other on specific occasions by and through their interaction and conversation analysis limits its findings to interactionally observable phenomena.

The practices of emotion-in-interaction that we are interested in here are awe-receipts. Since these initial reactions are frequently the sorts of less-than-voluntary tokens that Goffman (1981) calls response cries, it is not surprising that novice second

language learners often produce words like “Wow!” in their first language rather than the target language they are speaking. In the case of Japanese, the awe-token is produced in a way that I choose to render in my transcription as *ogh* or *orgh*,¹ but also includes variations such as *waa*, *worgh* and *horgh*. It is perhaps coincidentally fortuitous that the way that this token is produced in a very similar manner to the English word for the emotion it is intended to impart: “awe”. When Japanese learners produce such tokens in an otherwise English conversation it can give their utterance a decidedly Japanese feel.

Based on a collection of cases taken from 12 hours of video-recorded interaction, this chapter will examine some of the ways that Japanese novice L2 speakers of English employ prosodic variations of the awe-receipt token “orgh” to accomplish doing being impressed in L2 interaction. Some questions that emerged from my unmotivated looking at these video recordings included;

- (1) How do novice Japanese L2 speakers of English manage emotion through the sequential deployment of the Japanese awe-token?
- (2) How are such displays occasioned?
- (3) What actions do they perform?

(4) What interactional consequences do they have?

In order to address these questions, the study undertakes a detailed empirical analysis of key segments from the data. The chapter begins with a discussion of related CA studies on oh-receipts and emotion in talk and then goes on to look at awe-markers in three sequential contexts; free-standing oghs, ogh-prefaced assessments and multiple oghs.

2. Oh or awe?

Despite the similarity in the way they sound, the Japanese *ogh* is not the same as the English *oh*. Heritage's work on the English receipt token *oh* (Heritage, 1984, 1998, 2002) is well known within CA and has sparked a more general interest in epistemics in recent years (Heritage, 2012; Stivers, Mondada & Steensig, 2011). Heritage (1984: 299) notes that *oh* marks a change of state in the speaker's knowledge, information, orientation or awareness, or as Schegloff (2007) puts it, *oh* constitutes an interactional display that the speaker is going from *not-knowing* to *now-knowing*. This English *oh* is at least ostensibly available to Japanese learners of English, as evidenced by their ubiquitous use of phrases like "Oh really?" and "Oh my god!",² although the usage of *oh* itself is rarely (if ever) taught directly in EFL classrooms. Ikeda (2007) observes that

in Japanese, the change-of-state token is expressed with “a”, not “oh” (e.g. as in *ah soh desu ka* ‘Oh really?’), and bilingual speakers of Japanese and English sometimes use both versions of the change-of-state token in the same turn (Greer, 2010).

However, in addition to marking such changes in knowledge state, it was noticed that the Japanese participants in the current data set also occasionally produced “ogh” in ways that make public the speaker’s affective state with regard to the informing turn. Specifically, the English “oh” [əʊ] response that is delivered as “ogh” [ʊə:] was taken by recipients to be conveying “impressedness”. Unlike surprise receipts found in L1 English use (Local, 1996; Selting, 1996), these “awed receipts” were frequently delivered with decreasing pitch, and their vowel quality and sequential placement identified them as Japanese (L1) tokens within an otherwise turn.

Without examining them in their sequential context, it is difficult to obtain a sense of the way ogh is used, so by way of introduction, let’s begin with a case in which the awed-receipt is directed at the embodied action of another participant, and therefore constitutes an affective display of admiration of that person’s ability. Just prior to the start of a video-recorded English oral proficiency test, B is pushing buttons on an

unfamiliar electronic timer, attempting to input five minutes and then press start so the group's test can begin. Each beep indicates a button push.

Excerpt 1: Timer

01 ((Beep))

02 (1.3)

03 ((Beep Beep))

04 (0.4)

05 B: ((nervous laugh)) ↑↑heh-heh-heh

06 ((Beep [Beep]))

07 D: [.hh AH he[hn huh huh

08 B: [huh hah ha

09 (.)

10 B: .HHH

11 ((Beep))

12 (0.6)/((B hands timer to D))

13 B: dekin(h) [ai ko(h)re

do-POT-NEG this

I can't do this.

14 D: [oh okay. Okay okay okay.

15 B: ha ha ha hehn

16 D: eh-[to. ((inputs "500" into timer))

HM

um

17 [((Beep. Beep beep.))

18 B:→ O::::[gh.]

19 D: [tab]un [okay da yo.

Probably COP IP

It's probably okay.

20 B:→ [Wo:::r(g)h.

21 D: Ikima::[s.

Go-POL

Here we go.

22 B: [hn.

23 (0.7)

24 D: Button start. ((Presses start button))

25 B: Let's [start?

26 [((Beep))

After several attempts to input the time, B gives up and hands the timer to D (line 12). In contrast to B's claim of her inability to work the timer (line 13), D gives several repeated 'okays', demonstrating both her confidence and her willingness to take on the

task. When D successfully inputs the time without any further hitches, B produces an extended *ogh* token (line 18) which she then upgrades to the more emphatic *wogh* in line 20 after D confirms that the timer is ready to go. Note that both of these tokens are reactive to something that has just happened (an embodied action and a spoken specification of that action) and that they are essentially Japanese, not English, even though both languages are being used at this point.

So the phenomenon that we will be interested in is related to receipt of knowledge, but it goes beyond simply change-of-state to encompass also what Jefferson (1981) calls newsmarking, or the sort of reactive tokens that are used to express surprise (Wilkinson and Kitinger, 2006). This can become perplexing for Japanese students of English is when the subtle differences between these two actions become conflated due to the way that they map on to the students' first language. As we will discuss in the analysis in this chapter, there is also a related Japanese acknowledgement token, *ohn*, that is used in similar sequential environments and sometimes in conjunction with the *ogh* token, which confounds the situation, and often leads both teacher and students to ignore the use of these Japanese interjections within what is otherwise an English conversation. To adopt a strictly emic stance on codeswitching, if the participants themselves do not orient to the use of another language in and through the talk then it should not be

relevant to for the analyst (Gafaranga and Torras, 2002). However, in this study my position is that the participants orient to *ogh* not simply as the change-of-state *oh*, but as an awe marker, and that this identifies it as a Japanese affect token within their second language interaction.

3. Data set

The analysis in this study is based on a total of approximately 12 hours of data video-recorded during EFL oral proficiency tests in Japan as part of the test-takers term-end assessment in an oral English class. The participants are first and second year Japanese university students. Although the topics vary, the tests are generally open-ended, requiring the test-takers to talk in pairs or small groups of four about the topic. Apart from some initial task-management talk, there is very little input from the L1 English-speaking tester, who is rating the test-takers off camera. Therefore, although a somewhat contrived situation, the talk is indeed very much natural talk within the institutional context of the oral proficiency test, in that the video is first and foremost part of the testing process.

The data we will examine all come from recordings in which groups of four students are seated on three sofas as depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The seating arrangement during the group oral proficiency test

There were a total of ten groups tested on this occasion and the test-takers all came from different classes and departments. They were randomly selected to be tested by a faculty member who was not their classroom teacher and in the vast majority of cases this was also the first time they had spoken with other test-takers in their group. The test was divided into two sections, each lasting six minutes. In the first part the tester randomly selected a topic that the students had discussed in class (such as travel or rental accommodation) and they then spoke about it freely. In the second part of the test, the test-takers were given a stimulus sheet that listed a discussion question they had not encountered in class ('Should [this university] be totally non-smoking?'), along with four sample contrasting opinions attributed to hypothetical stakeholders, such as "a first

4. Form and function

13

11 (0.8)
12 Emi a- I live in Sapporo
13 Aki oh:: hehaha=
14 Gen→ =ohn:::. ((looks at page))
15 °°(girl's turn.)°°
16 (1.0)
17 Gen heh:n.
18 Emi In Kobe:, (.)

In this segment Emi initiates an informing sequence in line 1 and Aki responds with a telling, to which Emi gives an oh-prefaced response in line 3. Notice however that Gen's overlapped OGH in line 4 is louder and longer than Emi's oh in line 3. He seems to be making a claim not only that his knowledge state has changed, but that Aki's telling is somehow newsworthy to him. The reason for this becomes clear in lines 7 and 8 as Gen explains that he has a friend from the same small city. Emi's turn is simply an acknowledgement whereas Gen's enthusiastic ogh leads to a commentary, which is much more affiliatively engaged in the talk (Jefferson, 1993).

As shown in figure 2, both Emi's oh (line 3) and Gen's ORGH (line 4) exhibit similar rise-fall pitch contours, but Gen's OGH turn is delivered with much greater volume.

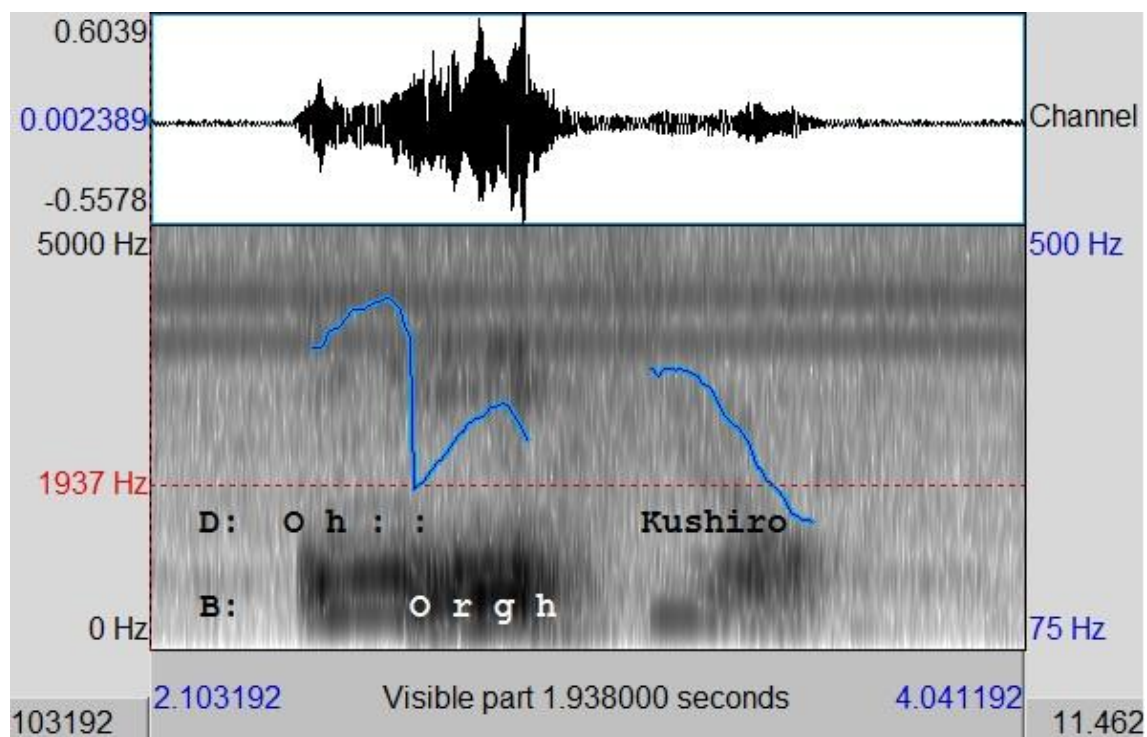


Figure 2: The pitch and volume in lines 3 to 5.

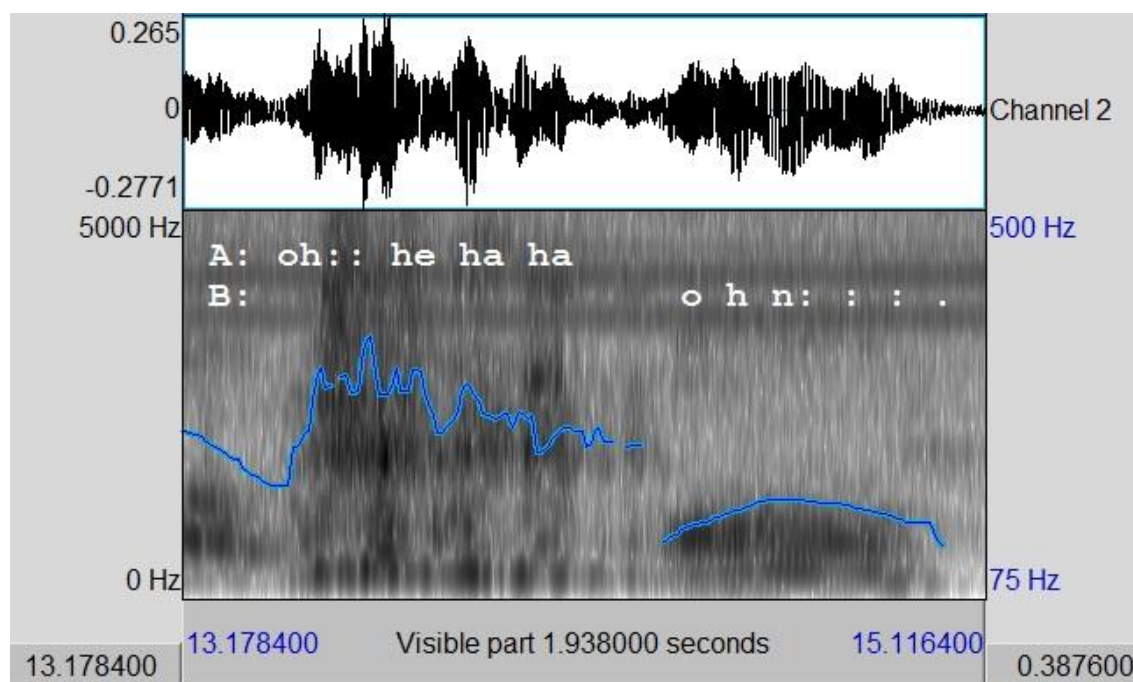


Figure 3: The pitch and volume in lines 13 and 14.

Note also the dramatic difference in Gen's *ogh* receipt in line 4 and the *ohn* he gives to Emi after line 12. *Ogh* occasions more talk (with Gen giving an affiliative account) while *ohn* works to close down the sequence. The *ogh* rises to 2793 Hz and then falls to 2522 Hz (Figure 2) whereas the *ohn*, with its final moraic nasal /n/ and heavily nasalized vowel, is comparatively drawn-out and only rises to 1419 Hz before falling to 653 Hz. The overall impression the hearer is left with is that Gen is far less emotionally involved with the talk in line 14. A variant of *un* ("yes"), *ohn* is to *un* as *yeah* is to *yes*. Both *ohn* and *ogh* are reactive tokens, but the former is purely acknowledgement

whereas *ogh* makes a claim to being impressed that is commonly specified in the ongoing interaction. In fact, coming as it does after Aki's highly affiliative laughter in line 13, Gen's *ohn* borders on disinterested, since it is not accompanied by any laughter and Emi immediately goes on to change the subject (Jefferson, 1993).

4.2 Ventricular voice quality: Harsh or pressed voice

One of the defining features of Gen's *ogh* turn in line 4 is that it is produced with a harsh (or ventricular) voice.¹ Edmondson and Esling (2006) note that harsh voice is when speech sounds (normally vowels) are produced with a constricted laryngeal cavity. Harsh voice uses the false vocal cords (the ventricular folds) to cover the vocal folds and damp the oscillation in a way that is similar to a glottal stop. This results in speech that sounds like the speaker is talking while lifting a heavy load, or clearing his/her throat if the sound is voiceless. In high tone registers the ventricular voice is also known as pressed voice. In the transcriptions in this chapter the harsh and pressed voices are denoted with an exclamation mark (!).

Sadanobu (2004, 2008) notes that in Japanese the pressed (*rikimi*) voice indicates increased attitudinal or emotional involvement, particularly to display suffering (*kyoshuku*) as a form of polite sincerity in dispreferred acts like requests and rejections and to show admiration, such as in positive assessments like *u!mai na!a* (“That’s delicious!”). It is the second of these functions that is most closely related to our discussion of ogh, since the pressed voice quality is an integral element in conveying the speakers admiration, and therefore emotion.

Consider the following example taken from a home video made available in the public domain. Rin³ has just bungee jumped off a bridge. Koh and Ami are watching her from above. Koh is filming the jump.

Excerpt 3: Bungee

01 Koh: Yo:h San ni: ichi
 Ready 3 2 1
 02 ((Rin jumps off the bridge))
 03 Koh: [GO:::::..
 04 [((Rin descends))
 05 (2.5)
 06 [((Rin rebounds and is propelled upwards))
 07 Ami: [YA:::::y

08 ((Rin reaches zenith, close to the bridge))

09 Koh:→ uo!::gh chika!i::

ogh close

Wow, that's close.

10 >heh heh heh heh heh ha<

11 (3.5)

12 Ami: sugo::::i ([])

awesome

13 Koh: wa suge: [na aitsu

wow awesome IP she

Wow, this girl's awesome.

A bungee jump is perhaps a quintessential moment for producing awe-inspired assessments, and indeed awesome ('sugoi') is a word that the spectators both use to describe what they are witnessing (lines 12 and 13).⁴ However, their initial reactions are more visceral interjections, such as Ami's drawn-out *yay* in line 7 that tracks the projection of the jump and Koh's *uo!::gh* in line 9 which is reactionary to the potential danger of Rin hitting the bridge. The pressed voice in Koh's *ogh* token appears again immediately in the same turn in the assessment *chika!i::* (close), extending Koh's

display of emotional involvement into a specification of which element of the jump he finds awe-worthy at that point.

5. Sequential position

Having described the production of ogh and established it clearly as a Japanese interjection rather than simply an L2 speaker's rendering of the English token oh, we now move on to a discussion of the sequential placement of these ogh tokens. Based on a corpus of over 40 of oghs taken from the group oral proficiency test data set, it was found that ogh was most commonly produced as a reactive token in third position. It appears massively in informing sequences, although this is not always the case—as we saw above in Excerpts 1 and 3, ogh can also be used in reaction to various embodied actions. However, for the most part in the data we will look at, one participant initiates a sequence (typically by posing a first pair part question) and another person responds to it with an appropriate second pair part. The ogh then appears in the next available slot. It is delivered by the person who initiated the sequence; however, since this is multi-party talk, other recipients can also self-select to display an awed uptake.

There are a range of possible next actions including positive assessments, displays of affiliation and other receipt-like actions, both verbal and non-verbal, that all work to specify the target of the ogh as awe-worthy. In this section we will examine a collection of cases that illustrate the sequential placement of ogh, including ogh-prefaced receipts, free-standing oghs, multiple oghs and a combined case.

5.1 Ogh-prefaced assessments

As we have already seen from the Japanese data in Excerpt 3, ogh tokens can lead to further same-speaker talk, such as assessments and accounts. In fact, given that the ogh is such an unrestrained yet ambiguous claim of impressedness, a specification of the object or reason for the ogh becomes sequentially relevant in ongoing talk.

In excerpt 4, for example, Hana's second pair part is an informing that tells the group that she is studying dentistry. Yuto treats this as impressive, first with a multiple ogh in line 6 and then by following that up with an assessment in line 8 that specifies the reason for his ogh token.

Excerpt 4: 4ninST10 Dentistry

01 Hana °hu: [:m°
 02 Yuto [how >abou-chu.< ((points to C))
 03 (0.7)

04 Hana ah: (0.2) I:'m studying, (0.6) de-
 05 (0.2) dentistry?
 06 (0.3)
 07 Yuto→ oh:: >oh o!gh:<
 08 Hana °(dents-) °
 09 Yuto (you are) great.
 10 Hana .hh
 11 (0.8)

Here Yuto's specification turn is a positive assessment in English (great) that works together with the ogh token to act as a compliment. The ogh receipt is made up of multiple oghs in the same turn (line 7) and there is a moment in between the ogh and the assessment in which Hana begins to repeat the word dentistry, although she does this so quietly that it appears to be almost self-directed—a hesitant redoing rather than a move to progress the talk. The effect is that there is a gap in between Yuto's awe-receipt and its English specification. Compare this with Koh's "uo!::gh chika!i::" (Excerpt 3, line 9) which was produced entirely in Japanese. There is no repetition of the ogh and no hesitation in producing the assessment.

5.2 "Free-standing" oghs

Free-standing oghs are those that make a claim of noticing that seems designed to be understood alone. Like the basic pattern mentioned above, they come after an informing turn, but there is often also a gap of silence between the informing and the ogh. Post ogh, there is no assessment or other follow-up talk from the ogh-producer, and in fact the speaker frequently disengages gaze. Excerpt 5 is a case in point. In this segment, Emi informs the group of her dream to travel the world, and Gen produces an ogh in overlap with Aki in line 13.

Excerpt 5: 4ninST4: Travelling

01 Gen If (0.6) i:f (1.0)
 02 you ca::tch (0.5) big money?
 03 Emi ohn. [he hah
 04 Aki [heh hah ha hah.
 05 (1.0)
 06 Gen ho::w; do you use. (0.7) This.
 07 (0.4)
 08 Aki ° () °
 09 (0.5)
 10 Emi e::r I::? have a dream.u.
 11 (0.8)
 12 um::;; travelling.u all over the world.

13 (0.3)

14 Gen→ a[ORGH:::]::.. ((turns to Aki, nodding))

15 Aki [AH : ::]. ((nodding))

16 Sho: un. un. ((nods))

17 Gen \$un.\$

18 (0.5) ((B shifts gaze to Aki))

19 Emi [heh heh heh ha]

20 Aki [° () °]

21 (0.8) ((Gen shifts gaze down to page))

22 Emi How about you? ((gaze selects Sho))

Gen initiates the sequence with his first pair part question in lines 1 and 6 and Emi's informing response (lines 10 and 12) is receipted by both Gen and Aki in overlap at lines 14 and 15. At one level this could be seen as a simple sequence-closing third, but it is also delivered in a way that treats Emi's turn as somehow impressive. By comparison, Sho's minimal receipt token 'un un' in line 16 appears far less impressed. Aki and Gen deliver their responses in a louder volume and a more vigorous manner, making them seem more emotionally engaged with Gen's talk than Sho is. In fact, however, Gen comes across as perhaps a little more involved with Emi's response, which is

understandable since it is he who initiated the sequence in the first place and therefore has a greater responsibility to provide uptake (Sacks, 1992). Aki's uptake in line 15 is formulated as *ah*, the Japanese change-of-state token. While it is undoubtedly produced in an enthusiastic manner in this instance, ultimately it is acknowledging the speaker's receipt of new knowledge but not treating it as newsworthy. In contrast, Gen's turn in 14 begins with an *ah* sound that he upgrades to *ogh* mid-turn, making him appear more impressed than Aki.

On the surface the participants treat this form of *ogh* as speaking for itself. It does not lead to further talk, other than minimal acknowledgements and laughter before the topic is redirected to Sho. However, given that this is such an overtly visceral display of impressedness, one would expect that it would lead Gen to produce further on-topic turns such as Koh's specification in Excerpt 3 line 9, which worked as an account for the *ogh* token. It could be that Gen was unable to formulate a timely next turn in English—although there was some minimal intervening talk from other speakers, the gap of silence at line 18 would seem to be a logical slot in which Gen could self-select to produce further talk. However, instead he looks toward Aki, then down at his page (line 21), making further post-expansion from him even less likely.

These sorts of stand-alone displays of awe were not uncommon in my data.

Although on the one hand they could be considered as communicative failure in that the follow up English turn is left unspecified, they do in fact allow these novice speakers of English to become actively engaged in the talk without having to produce a great deal of language.

Moreover, since the ogh is indeed a Japanese token, it stands to reason that the novice speaker must alternate between languages in order to produce follow-up talk in English. This may require a moment to accomplish leaving the floor open for other speakers to self-select. Recall from Excerpt 2 that what initially appeared as a free-standing ogh from the same participant (Gen) was extended with English talk, despite intervening talk from another recipient.

In Excerpt 6, again Gen is able to display his active reciprocity without contributing much to English talk.

Excerpt 6: 4ninST 4B Non-smoker

- 01 Emi I think.u Hokudai, should.o
02 be a completely non-smoking campus.
03 Gen ((turns to Emi, nods)) ah.
04 Emi n, In my hous:e, there are no smokers

05 Aki ((nods)) un.

06 Emi [now.

07 Gen→ [O!:gh

08 Emi Before my fathe::r,

09 (0.7)/((Emi looks to page))

10 Emi was smoker but now,

11 he wa- [he was [non-smoker.

12 [((shaking left hand in air))

13 [((gaze shift to Gen))

14 [(1.2)

15 [((Gen and Sho nod, look to page))

16 [((Aki nods))

17 Emi Because.u: n, When I was born,

18 (1.1)/((Gen nods, shifts gaze to Emi))

19 Emi my father stop [smok[ing.

20 [((shifts gaze to Gen))

21 [((Emi nods))

22 Gen→ Oghh-un.

As in earlier segments, Gen's ogh token wins out over lesser uptake displays from the other participants. Emi's telling in line 4 is receipted by Aki (line 5) with a minimal Japanese acknowledgement token ('un') and then a more enthusiastic newsmarked ogh

from Gen in line 7. Emi goes on to extend the telling, but when Aki disengages her bodily attention by shifting her gaze to the paper, Emi redirects her gaze to Gen, making him the primary recipient by the end of the telling. In line 22 he again formulates an ogh uptake which he follows quickly with an acknowledging un, which signals receipt without making a claim to further talk and therefore negating any obligation to further the talk that might have been implied by the use of ogh. Even though he does not use a lot of English, the emotional stance that Gen is able to convey through the use of the Japanese awe token enables him to become an active participant in the conversation and in fact, in the end he received a better mark in the test than Sho, who produced less reciprocity tokens. He is essentially doing no more than mixing Japanese interjections within an English conversation; however, Gen's ogh tokens evidently left the tester with the impression that he was able to confidently communicate.

5.3 Multiple oghs

Ogh can also appear along with other sorts of reciprocity markers to enact multiple functions within the same turn. Recall from Excerpt 4 that Yuto's uptake consisted of multiple elements that are in the ballpark of what we could call oh-receipts, but which actually accomplish slightly different actions.

Excerpt 7: 4ninST10 Dentistry (reproduced segment)

08 Yuto (you are) great.

Likewise, in Excerpt 8, Yoh's turn in line 8 begins with *wogh*, but he then changes that to *eh* by the end of the turn, leaving the hearer with a slightly different sense of what should normatively come next. Here the group has been talking about club activities they talk part in during high school.

04 Ryu [art club.

05 Yoh [art?]

06 [((gestures "drawing"))]

07 Nao Art. (.) Yes. >heheha.<

08 Yoh → wogh(h) eh::

09 Nao Ah d- did you write-u (1.1) a:[::h]=

10 Ryu? [()]

11 Nao =oil painting?

12 (0.9)

13 Ryu N:o I .hhh war-taa painting.

As Hayashi (2009) has pointed out, the Japanese *eh* token marks a noticing of departure from the speaker's previous knowledge, supposition, expectation or orientation, and therefore represents a non-lexical response token for expressing 'surprise'. By morphing *ogh* into *eh*, Yoh conveys his emergent stance toward the information he has just heard, beginning with amazement and moving to surprise. The fact that the turn is produced as laughed-through also helps shape its orientation to the prior talk. The participants do not treat Yoh's *eh* as an open-class repair initiator in this position, however, since it is in fact forms part of the receipt to his prior initiation of repair (line 5). In other words, it is reactionary without necessarily occasioning further talk. As in other cases we have seen, this Japanese token is positioned smoothly within the English-medium talk and the interactants do not treat it as unusual or marked in the

way they do when one of them uses a Japanese word.⁵ This suggests that these novice L2 users are not aware or not concerned that they are using non-English interjections in their English talk.

6. Observations and conclusion

Finally, I would like to make a few general observations about the way this kind of ogh is used to display emotion by these novice L2 speakers of English and consider some of the implications this may have for nascent bilingualism.

While it can be considered the outward production of an internal realization, the ogh token is first and foremost available to the other speakers through interaction.

Expressing emotion conveys affiliation (and disaffiliation), and such affective displays make public a speaker's current stance toward someone or something that is contextually relevant within a given sequence of talk. In the case of ogh, that stance engenders a display of amazement or impressedness toward some just prior news item, and this in turn becomes procedurally consequent, frequently leading to an unpacking of the reasons behind the interjection. In other words, emotion is not just an individual, psychological notion; it is also an interactional resource that progresses the talk. For novice speakers like the ones in the data set we have examined, it is also a convenient

device for reacting in a timely manner without the need for grammatical processing.

Situating emotion in discourse can lead to new understandings of what emotion accomplishes, both for speaker and recipient.

The ogh token is an example of what Goffman (1981) would call a response cry, a part of speech that interactants treat as “a natural outpouring” of the speaker’s “presumed inward state” (p. 89). However, it also goes beyond that in that it can be used strategically to display awe in a way that Wilkinson and Kitinger (2006) have termed “as-if-visceral”. Like similar interjections that have been the object of CA focus, the ogh token is sensitive to the sequence and the interactional context and can therefore be delayed until a sequentially appropriate slot, meaning that it is not always a direct expression of the speaker’s emotional state.

Yet often the ogh token is simply visceral, an immediate non-lexical response that may or may not lead to further talk. For novice learners of English like those in this study it is perhaps natural that an L1 response cry becomes their first reaction when formulating instant responses like awe and surprise. Given that the others in these tests were also novice EFL users from Japanese backgrounds, the recipients of an ogh token never treated it as unusual or incomprehensible. Even in other data I have examined

which includes a non-Japanese speaker of English, there was no evidence to suggest that she considered *ogh* tokens as problematic. It is likely that even native speakers of English who had never spoken with Japanese before would be able to work out the meaning of *ogh*, or at least its sentiment, through the context of the talk and the embodied displays of emotion with which it is delivered. So even though we must treat it as unremarkable in terms of procedural consequentiality, there is definitely something about the inclusion of the *ogh* token in an otherwise English conversation that contributes to an overall impression of this talk as “non-native”. While equivalent target language tokens such as “Wow!” are eminently teachable (Reber, 2010), they are very rarely taught in English classrooms in Japan. In my experience, Japanese EFL learners are generally familiar with the word “Wow!”, having encountered it informally through the media and pop culture, but they find it inelegant and even ditzzy, and are therefore reluctant to incorporate it into their active English repertoire. Even when they are told that it will help make their English sound more natural, many learners still produce response cries in their first language, suggesting the strong link between these tokens and instinctive emotion. That said, there is certainly nothing wrong with novice speakers talking like novice speakers, and the use of *ogh* could even be seen as an important identity marker by more fluent Japanese speakers of English, who choose to

use it as expression of their roots. In that sense, *ogh* and its variations help shape the innovative nature of L2 English speakers' talk and contributing to the global nature English as a world language (Kachru, 1992).

Displays of emotion through interjections can be just as language specific as other elements like vocabulary and syntax (Golato, 2012). The ability to respond quickly with a target language interjection may be the difference between a good speaker and a great one. The immediate availability of such tokens also allows speakers with limited language proficiency to remain involved in the interaction. Formulating a stand-alone *ogh* can allow for a moment of silence that affords the speaker with precious micro-seconds to come up with a more complicated turn (cf. Wong, 2000 on delayed repair among novice speakers). Generally, the novice speakers in my data rely on embodied or minimal displays of reciprocity, such as "mm," or "uh-uh", and this is often taken as a closing, or at least orients to the other speaker as the primary speaker, and casts one's self as recipient. In contrast, the use of the more emotive *ogh* token makes a claim to a more impressed sort of receipt, and this more active involvement often leads the recipient to obtain a turn at talk. Interestingly, as these data are also from a conversation test, such higher involvement is also likely to leave the tester with a better

impression of the speaker when compared to someone who uses more passive displays of reciprocity.

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¹ Although this rendering does not adhere any of the conventional Romanization systems that exist in Japanese orthography, I feel it best captures the sound of the awe token in that the vowel is closest to that in the English word “or” and the “rgh” conveys a sense of the pressed voice quality. This spelling also helps distinguish the token from *oh*, which has been studied extensively in CA.

² At the time of writing Japan’s most popular morning news program has a regular daily feature called “Oh my New York”, in which they cross live to a studio in New York. The pun in the title of this segment relies on viewer knowledge of the phrase “Oh my god”, an indication of the extent to which the latter is recognizable by the general public.

³ All names are pseudonyms.

⁴ In line 13 Koh’s *sugoi* is produced as *suge:*, which in itself makes use of an additional practice for expressing astonishment or admiration in Japanese. Most Japanese adjectives end in [i] resulting in a diphthong with the preceding vowel, but Kubozono (1999) notes that in casual speech this sound is frequently monophthongized to [e] and then lengthened to the original mora count. In so doing it also denotes a heightened feeling of the speaker’s emotional involvement with the subject.

⁵ For instance in the following fragment, the participants orient to the Japanese word *gakuran* (a military style school uniform) as marked within the context of this English test talk. After a moment’s hesitation at the start of line 1, A produces the try-marked Japanese lexical item, which B initially receipts through repetition (line 5) but then goes on to formulate an approximate English equivalent in line 7. B then B accepts through repetition in line 8, orienting to English as the preferred medium.

01 A → oh. ah::nto. (0.8) [gaku-]gakura(h)n?

02 T? [((cough))]

03 C un.=

04 A =a:[::h.]

05 B [Gaku]ra:n. ahah ha ha.

06 A oh.=

07 B → =Black uniform?

08 A Black [uniform.=