

# Learners' Performance and Awareness of Japanese Listening Behavior in JFL and JSL Environments

Sachie Miyazaki

## 1. Introduction

Japanese listeners actively engage in conversation by sending verbal responses (*aizuchi*) and non-verbal responses (nods) toward the speaker (Kita and Ide 2007; Miyazaki 2007). It is widely accepted that Japanese listener responses are pervasive in their occurrence and have a wide variety of expressions (Maynard 1989; Horiguchi 1997; Iwasaki 1997). To become competent listeners, learners must acquire pragmalinguistic knowledge that involves knowing the linguistic forms and sociopragmatic rules that native speakers of Japanese share about how to provide listener responses appropriately in interactional communicative exchanges within a given social context.

This study investigates the listening behavior (use of *aizuchi* and nods) of learners of Japanese in both Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and Japanese as a second language (JSL) environment and compares it to that of native speakers of Japanese presented in Miyazaki (2007). I first review the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of listening behavior that learners of Japanese need to know and, secondly, analyze learners' performance as listeners and analyze how it differs from native speakers'. Subsequently, learners' awareness of Japanese listening behavior in a JSL environment will be analyzed to provide a piece of evidence for claiming how meta-linguistic knowledge of L2 pragmatics influences acquisition of Japanese listening behavior.

## 2. Background

Listening consists of verbal and non-verbal behavior. Short verbal messages such as *uh-hum* and *yeah* are called backchannels (Yngve 1970) and head nods by a listener during a speaker's turn are considered to be listener responses. This section reviews previous studies on Japanese listening behavior which learners of Japanese must understand to acquire pragmatic features of listener responses.

## 2.1 *Pragmatics of Japanese listener responses*

Definitions of Japanese *aizuchi* vary by scholars in terms of whether they include various short utterances in *aizuchi* (Mizutani 1988; Sugito 1989). Repetitions, clarifications, paraphrases, sentence completions, laughter and nods are also defined as *aizuchi* in a broader sense from their functions in the interaction. Clancy et al. (1996) include backchannels in ‘reactive tokens’ (RTs thereafter), as well as other expressions that are uttered by listeners. They (1996: 136) define a RT as “a short utterance produced by an interlocutor who is playing a listener’s role during the other interlocutor’s speakership.”

Maynard (1989) classified the functions of backchannels into 6 categories: 1) continuer, 2) understanding, 3) agreement, 4) strong emotional response, 5) support toward the speakers’ judgment, and 6) minor addition, correction, or request for clarification. Those backchannels are multifunctional so that a form can have more than one meanings depending on contexts (White 1987). For instance, function 5, support toward the speakers’ judgment, could be vocalic forms such as *hai* ‘yes’ or repetitions of part of the speaker’s utterance. Compared with the primary function of English backchannels, which serve as “continuers” (Schegloff 1982), in Japanese, backchannels have a social function in “phatic communion” (Richards 1982), expressing an emotional or attitudinal stance toward the speakers’ utterance.

Among non-verbal behavior, in Japanese conversation nods are most frequently observed. Maynard (1987) analyzed the frequency and functions of speaker and listener nods and found that nods are used to emphasize the message, to show clause boundaries, and to signal turn-end or turn-claim. Sugito (1989) investigated the relationship between nods and verbal backchannels. The findings show that the frequency of nods that do not accompany verbal backchannels varies among individuals (from 3 to 49 times), but the ratio of nods to verbal backchannels does not vary (76% to 86%). Szatrowski (2000, 2003) examined the relationship among nods, gaze and verbal backchannels and found that these behaviors are interrelated. For example, the “addressed recipient was most likely to respond with an *aizuti* plus a head nod(s) when the speaker gazed directly at her and nodded” (p. 287).

According to Maynard, nods are secondary to verbal backchannels, since they have the same function as verbal backchannels, nods co-occurring with verbal backchannels are redundant. In other words, if nods occur without accompanying verbal backchannels, they can possibly function as non-verbal backchannels by themselves.

It has been pointed out that appropriate listening behavior is difficult to learn for

learners of Japanese because there are rules which govern the use of backchannels and these are not likely to be taught in the classroom. The relationships between instruction and acquisition of Japanese are beyond the scope of this study, however, I claim that formal instruction can influence the acquisition process. Hatasa (2007) examined classroom interactions and office-hour interactions between professors and students and found that learners use *aizuchi* less frequently and have fewer varieties of forms. She claims that the exposure to the target language community in JFL affects and can influence their awareness.

In the present study I will investigate the following questions.

- 1) How do Japanese learners use reactive tokens?
- 2) How does their learning environment affect their performance as listeners?
- 3) How aware are they of Japanese listening behavior?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. *Participants*

26 non-native speakers of Japanese, aged 19 to 25, were divided into two groups: 18 JSL learners in Tokyo and 8 JFL learners taking intermediate or advanced Japanese in California<sup>1</sup>. Intermediate level JSL and JFL students had studied Japanese an average of 2-1/2 years and were at lesson 6 or 7 of *An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese* (Miura and McGloin 1994) when their conversations were recorded. JFL students were those who had never been to Japan or if they had, their experience in Japan was minimum. Those with more than 2 weeks of homestay experience were excluded. Advanced students who had taken Japanese for 3-1/2 years in college were placed in the next level of intermediate at both institutes.

JSL students' length of stay and experience in Japan varied from 4 months to 10 years (but in the latter case, the student was not exposed to Japanese on a regular basis during the first 7 years and had no formal instruction). Eleven of 18 JSL students had lived in Japan less than one year, two of them less than 2 years, and five had been there longer.

---

1. JSL students were those who were studying Japanese at Sophia University in 2007-8 and JFL students were those who were taking Japanese courses at University of California at Davis and California state university of Sacramento in the spring semester of 2008.

Table 1. List of participants

	number	Average age	male: female	Length of stay in Japan
JSL advanced	10	20.4	5 : 5	38 months (4 months – 10 years) Ave. 27 months, if 10 year's stay is excluded
JSL intermediate	8	20.4	4 : 4	10.3 months (6–24 months)
JFL advanced	3	22	2 : 1	0
JFL intermediate	5	22.2	3 : 2	0
	Total	Average	14 : 12	
	26	21.25		

Participants' native languages include English (11), Chinese (6), Russian (2), Spanish (1), German (1), French (1), Tagarog (3), Mien (1). They are all bilingual in L1 and English with varying L1 proficiency levels. Especially, those whose L1s are Chinese, Tagalog, and Mien use their L1 only at home so that they may not have literacy in their L1s. Since it is difficult to control participants' language background other than their Japanese, learners' L1 was not analyzed as a factor which might influence their Japanese performance and awareness.

### 3.2. Data collection procedures

Each participant met with the researcher in a group study room of a university library or in a tutorial room. Each sat at a table facing a video camera which was placed at an angle to the participant. Following greetings, the researcher gave the same instruction on the procedures to each participant. The whole exchange was conducted in Japanese and video-taped and used as conversation data.

The instructions are shown in Appendix. In the actual conversation, utterances were modified according to the participants' comprehension levels. For example, many of the participants did not understand the words, *shakai gengogaku*, 'sociolinguistics'; in that situation, the English equivalent was given by the researcher. When participants (primary listeners) claimed the speakership and took the floor, the researcher let them speak until they gave up the floor and excluded those segments from the data.

After the instructions, participants were asked about what they thought about

listening behavior in general. The interview was conducted in English, unless learners chose Japanese, to ensure that lower level participants did not have any disadvantage in expressing their ideas in the interview. Questions asked of each participant were:

1. Do you know the word, *aizuchi*?
2. Explain what it means.
3. What are *aizuchi*'s functions?
4. Are there any differences in the use of *aizuchi*, or listener responses, in Japanese and English?
5. Have you ever heard of *unazuki*?
6. What is it?
7. How do Japanese use them?
8. Why do Japanese listeners behave that way?
9. Any observations or experiences about listener responses?
10. How did you learn about them?

The interview consisted of open questions and participants could talk about anything related to the topic. Participants did not answer all the questions, but expressed was their meta-linguistic knowledge about Japanese conversation.

The data for analyses consist of the following:

1. Twenty-six video-taped face-to-face conversations (about 2 minutes each) in which participants listen to the same instructions given by the same person
2. Twenty-six video-taped interviews (about 15 minutes each) about Japanese listening behavior.

### **3.3. Data analysis**

In order to define learners' performance as listeners, I use the term of reactive token to express listening behavior such as backchannels and nods (Clancy, et al.: 1996). The term "Reactive Token (RT)" indicates "communicative strategies" that listeners engage in. RTs are not restricted to backchannels; they represent "a more inclusive range of 'non-primary turns'" (Clancy et al.: 357). The reason I have chosen RTs as a cover term is that Japanese listener responses should be interpreted in the broader sense, including not only backchannels, or *aizuchi*, but other expressions such as sentence completions, laughter, and non-verbal expressions, such as nodding. RTs can be used to express many different kinds of tokens that listeners use. In the subsequent sections, I describe the types of RTs analyzed in the present study. The major categories are verbal and non-verbal RTs, each of which is further

subcategorized.

*Verbal reactive tokens*

Verbal RTs are classified into seven types: backchannels, reactive expressions (RE), repetitions, collaborative finishes, laughter, short comments, paraphrases, and resumptive openers (RO). I define backchannels as non-lexical forms that primarily function as “continuers” (Schegloff 1982). Reduplicated forms (e.g. *hai hai*) are also included, but these are counted as one intensified occurrence or as an individual listener’s preference.

- (1)
- a. *hai* ‘yes’ (formal)
  - b. *ee* ‘uhuh’ (less formal than *hai*)
  - c. *un* ‘yeah’ (informal)
  - d. *aa* ‘oh’ (showing surprise, etc.)
  - e. *haa* ‘mhn’ (formal form of *hai*)
  - f. *hoo* ‘oh’ (the user is impressed)
  - g. *huun* ‘uh-hum’ (showing interest)
  - h. *hee* ‘really’ (showing surprise, etc.)

Reactive expressions are defined by Clancy et al. as “short non-floor-taking lexical phrases or words” (1996: 359). These include *sugoi*, ‘great,’ *honto*, ‘really,’ *soo*, ‘it is so,’ a *soo/ soo ka*, ‘is that so,’ and *ii na*, ‘nice.’ Repetitions are defined as cases where “the non-primary speaker repeats a portion of the speech of the primary speaker”. Repetitions reinforce mutual understanding between speakers and listeners or indicate disbelief on the part of the listener.

In Japanese conversations, the speaker’s utterance may be continued and completed by an interlocutor providing syntactic units such as a verb and an object (Ono and Yoshida 1996). The second part of the co-construction when uttered by a primary listener is considered to be a collaborative finish. Laughter is considered to be an RT because laughter often appears in the same context as verbal RTs; in Japanese culture, laughter is a vocal sign expressing the listener’s attitude toward what the speaker says (Maynard 1989; Furo 2001). Laughter that occurs with verbal RTs is counted as a form of RT, but not as laughter. However, laughter associated with nods is counted as laughter because nods are considered as intensifiers of any verbal response.

Short comments consist of lexical elements longer than a word and are comments

by the listener without claiming speakership. These short utterances can be seen as talk-in-progress at non-grammatical completion points. Speakers do not relinquish their turn upon the listeners' utterance but continue their turn. Resumptive openers are reactive tokens that occur at the beginning of new turns claiming "speakership." Lastly, paraphrases are categorized as RTs when listeners paraphrase what the speakers just said to show their understanding, and interest, or for clarification (Mizutani 1984; Horiguchi 1988).

Vertical head movement or nod(s) are considered to be RTs ; they are transcribed as "N" when they are not accompanied by other verbal RTs. When associated with other RTs, they are considered part of the verbal RTs transcribed as n followed by verbal RTs (e.g. n はい, n Yes) since they function to intensify verbal RTs. It is very common for some listeners to nod more than once during a conversation; however, such nods are counted as a single occurrence when they appear continuously in the context. In this study a single occurrence of nodding ends when a recognizable gap appears.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Frequency of reactive tokens

Participants were divided into four groups according to their learning environments and proficiency levels. In order to compare how learners in two learning environments listen to the researcher's instruction, I calculated the average numbers of RTs used by groups over 2 minutes were calculated. T-test results show that the total numbers of RTs used by learners in JSL and JFL settings are significantly different ( $p > .005^{**}$ ).

Table 2 shows the average number of RTs used in 2 minutes by each group. Backchannel type RTs were used most frequently by JSL advanced learners (18 times), followed by JFL advanced learners (13 times), JSL intermediate learners (11 times), and JFL intermediate learners (8 times). Other verbal RTs were used similarly by groups (3-5 times). Nods were used most frequently by JFL intermediate learners (18 times) followed by JSL advanced (12 times), JFL advanced (10 times) and JFL intermediate (9 times).

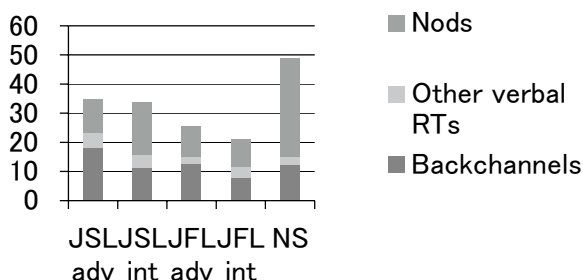
Figure 1 shows the types and frequency of RTs used in 2 minutes by non-native groups (NNS) and native group (NS). NS data was taken from Miyazaki (2007). NS data are comparable to the present data since the speaker and participants' age,

Table 2. Average number of reactive tokens used in 2 minutes by NNS groups

	Backchannels	Other verbal RT	Nods	Total
JSL advanced	18	5	12	35
JSL intermediate	11	5	18	35
JFL advanced	13	3	10	26
JFL intermediate	8	4	9	21

speaker-listener relationship and setting are the same. Also, the instruction given in the conversation was similar. NS' s total frequency of RTs (49 times) is about twice as many as JFL advanced learners (26 times) although the total number of backchannels is close (JFL adv: 16, NS: 15). Overall, NS did not use verbal RTs compared with nods. The most extensive use of nods by JSL intermediate participants can be explained as a strategy to compensate for their inability to send verbal responses while listening.

Figure 1. Average number of reactive tokens used in 2 minutes by NNS groups and NS



#### 4.2. Types of reactive tokens

Next, we will examine types of backchannels used by learners. Figure 3 shows the ratio of backchannel types used by each group. Among the 4 groups JFL intermediate learners used *hai* the most and used English backchannels as well in Japanese conversation as shown in excerpt 1. The L1 backchannel *OK* was used by a learner extensively; however, when learners' proficiency level is not high enough in L2, they use L1 as a strategy to achieve successful communication.

##### Excerpt 1. JFL/Intermediate [language used]

1T: で、えーとですね 今から 私と 3、5分位、日本語で話した後で  
 2S: N 5分位 n うん  
 3T: 英語で質問します いいですか  
 4S: n OK n いいです

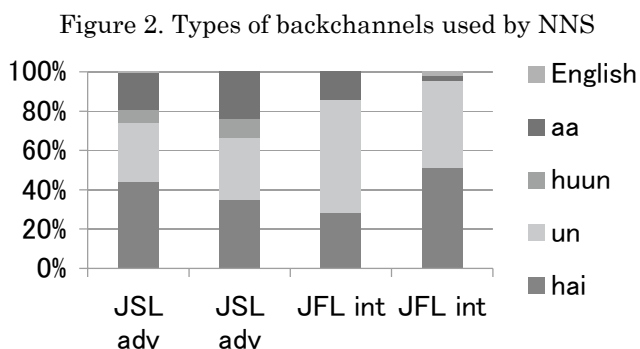


5T : 最初 5 分位日本語で 15 分位英語 @@  
 6S : n OK n OK

Excerpt 1. Translation

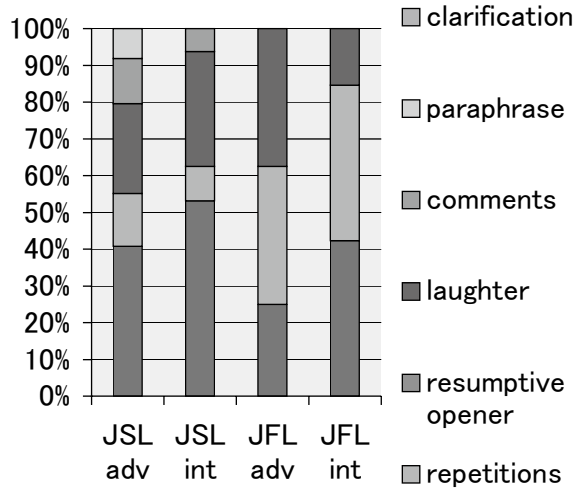
1T : Well, okay, now you talk to me for three five minutes in Japanese, then  
 2S : N five min. nYeah  
 3T : I will ask you questions in English Is that okay  
 4S : nOkay[E] nOkay[E]  
 5T : First five minutes in Japanese 15 minutes in English @@  
 6S : nOkay[E] nOkay[E]

JSL learners used at least four types of backchannels: *hai*, *un*, *huun*, and *aa*. It could be significant that JFL advanced learners had less variety than JSL intermediate learners. *Huun*, which functions as acknowledgement with uncertainty, was not used by JFL learners and *aa* was not used by JFL intermediate learners. There may be an acquisition order for backchannel types and which could be influenced by each learner's proficiency and learning environment.



What other verbal RTs were used besides backchannels? Figure 3 displays the types of verbal RTs other than backchannels.

Figure 3. Types of reactive tokens other than backchannels used by NNS



All participants groups used 3 additional types of RTs: reactive expressions (e.g. *so desuka*, it that right?), repetitions, and laughter. While JSL advanced learners used 5 types of RTs and JSL intermediate 4 types, advanced and intermediate JFL learners used only 3 types of RTs. Repetitions were used more often by JFL learners than JSL. Repetitions can clarify what a speaker said; frequent use of repetitions suggests that they did not know the words or understand the meaning of the speaker’s utterances.

Excerpt 2. JFL/Intermediate

1T : で 私が教えているのは日本語学、っていつて Japanese Linguistics と それから日本語教授法について  
 2S : OK 教授  
 3T : えーとね 教授法っていうのはベダゴジーなんですけど Japanese Pedagogy how to teach Japanese  
 4S : ベダゴジーは nOh n はいはい

Excerpt 2. translation

1T : Then what I’m teaching is called *nihongogaku* Japanese linguistics and (the other one is) called *nihongo kyoojuhoo*  
 2S : Okay[E] *kyooju*  
 3T : um, *kyoojuhoo* is pedagogy Japanese pedagogy how to teach Japanese  
 4S : pedagogy nOh nYesYes

Laughter was used by all participants, but JFL intermediates learners used it the least. Laughter does not occur if listeners do not understand the speaker’s message.

The results suggest that frequent use of repetitions and minimal use of laughter by JFL intermediate learners could result from different degrees of comprehension of what the speaker said in Japanese. The fact that JFL learners exhibit fewer varieties of RT means that they are in the interlanguage process in terms of acquiring RTs.

The results also have an implication about acquisition order of RTs other than backchannels. Since the data are limited to the intermediate level, it is impossible to generalize an acquisitional order of repetitions, laughter and reactive expressions. However, these three types of RTs may be acquired in the early stage.

### JSL/Advanced

#### Excerpt 3. JSL/Advanced

- 1T : でも一つの専門は社会言語学っていう分野で 日本語の男女差  
 2S : うん だんじよさ  
 3T : うん ダンは男、ジョは女  
 4S : あ おとことおんなの差別  
 5T : 日本語には ほら男ことばとか、女ことばってあるでしょ そういう分野を研究しています  
 6S : はい ああ おもしろそうですね はい

#### Excerpt 3. JSL/Advanced

- 1T : But another specialty is a field of study called sociolinguistics (I study) *danjosa* [J]  
 2S : yeah *danjosa*  
 3T : yeah *dan* for men *jo* for women  
 4S : ah discrimination between men and women  
 5T : In Japanese we have male speech and female speech right that's what I'm studying  
 6S : yes ah it sounds interesting yes

Comments, paraphrasing, and clarifications require higher proficiency than other types of RTs. Resumptive openers were not used even by the highest level learners. Resumptive openers are turn initial backchannels used to take a turn from the speaker. Since learners were listening to instruction given by an unfamiliar person, it is reasonable not to use resumptive openers in this context.

### 4.3. Variation of listening behaviour

Miyazaki (2007) found that age and use of nods have a negative correlation in formal settings. Younger participants use more nods and older participants use more

verbal RTs when listening to instructions from a researcher. Participants in the present study seem to have acquired verbal and non-verbal RTs as listener responses, although they may use them in different manner from those of native speakers of Japanese. The style that JSL learners acquire may be similar to the one which is seen in informal conversations in Miyazaki (2007). Figure 1 shows that average frequency of each of the *aizuchi*, other types of verbal RTs, and nods used by groups. The total number of RTs used by NS was greater than that used by any of the non-native speaker groups. However, the total number of verbal RTs does not differ significantly among the 4 groups. The most apparent difference is the number of nods. Miyazaki (2007) reports that the ratio of verbal RTs is influenced by age. Younger participants tend to use more nods and fewer verbal RTs than older ones. Younger participants' choice of nods could be a politeness strategy showing respect and acknowledgement at the same time in formal conversation.

The advanced learners used RTs most frequently among the 4 groups; however, the ratio of nods is unlike that of native speakers. This may result from lack of experience in formal situations, as noted by some participants. Participants were all students so that the formal situations they had been involved in could be limited. For instance, some participants were exposed to everyday life in homestays with Japanese families. But family discourse is not formal even though there are age and power differences among participants since the contexts are *UCHI*, 'in-group' context. The difference between JSL advanced learners and NSs could be evidence that a learner's socio-pragmatic competence is limited due to the limited exposure to variations of Japanese listening behaviour in their daily lives.

#### 4.4. Awareness of Japanese listening behavior

The follow-up interviews revealed what learners know about verbal and non-verbal listening behaviour and how they perceive it. Some learners can explicitly express their ideas as in the following example. Demographics of sex, age, and length of stay are in parentheses. I will present parts of the transcriptions of the same participants to analyze the gap between their awareness and their L2 performance. The following excerpts show how learners answered questions about *aizuchi*, *unazuki*, and their functions and how they actually behaved as listeners while they were engaged in conversation with the researcher. Information in parentheses indicates learners' sex, age, and length of stay in Japan.

Excerpt 4. JSL advanced #6 (male, 20, 6 months)

[The original is in Japanese, the English translation is the author's]

Answering to the question about the meaning of *aizuchi*.

“They are kind of words like *un un un*. It is a response showing that the listener is listening to the conversation. The difference between English and Japanese is frequency of *aizuchi* used in conversation. In Japanese conversation listeners say either *hai hai hai* or *un un un* no matter whether or not he/she agrees with what a speaker says. They could say ‘I disagree with you’ after the speaker finishes talking. In English, if a listener says ‘yes’ to a speaker during the conversation, the speaker probably thinks that the listener agrees what he/she says. But in Japanese, listeners keep saying *un un un* during conversation...I use *aizuchi* recently. Before I came to Japan, I didn't use it often but now I use it quite often. At first, about 3 months ago, I couldn't use it unless I was conscious about using it, but it comes naturally. So, for example, last week I found myself using *aizuchi* naturally when I was talking with my friends.”

Excerpt 5. JSL advanced # 7 (male, 22, 30 months) [translation by the researcher]

“When I go to a *gasshuku* (training camp) of the basketball club I belong to, I have to communicate with other Japanese members by nodding. Even when I don't understand perfectly, I say *oo oo oo* , ‘yeah, yeah, yeah’ (male speech) and *sooka sooka*, ‘that's right, that's right,’ and nod. I do that depending on the atmosphere at the moment. Otherwise, I ruin the atmosphere of the conversation. The speaker may think that, OK, he doesn't understand Japanese and many stop talking to me.”

Overall, JSL advanced learners were able to explain Japanese listening behavior and their observation clearly as shown in Excerpts 4 and 5 above. They were quite aware of their own listening behavior and code switching as well. The term *aizuchi* was not known to most participants. However, many had meta-linguistic knowledge of *aizuchi*, not only of the forms but also of the functions. Some learners as seen in Excerpt 5, could explain the impact of use or misuse of them toward native speakers' emotional aspects. Lower level learners in JSL were not as aware as advanced learners. However, they recognized Japanese listening behavior and tried to describe what they knew as seen in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6. JSL intermediate # 17 (male, 20, 10 months)

“Like an injunction, but I think… in English a lot of times it’s not used for anything as much I think, but I think, in Japanese, there is a kind of a function, like, softening, or preparing the speaker, I mean, like, I might say “ah” in English, but does, because I’m thinking, but, and in Japanese, maybe I will use *aizuchi*…to show I’m following along.”

Following Excerpt 7 and Excerpt 8 demonstrate how participant #6 shown in Excerpt 4 and participant #17 in Excerpt 6 performed while they listened to the instruction given by the researcher.

Excerpt 7. JSL/Advanced/#6

1T: 今から えーと 5~6分 私とちょっと話をしてもらって その後インタビューさせていただきます  
 2S: うん うん N N N N  
 3T: 私は あの 上智短大っていうところで教えているんですけど  
 4S: うん n うん うん  
 5T: 短大は神奈川県の 秦野っていうところ  
 6S: あ 秦野 それわかります  
 7T: 秦野知ってます  
 8S: あ サッカーをしていますので あとで 合宿に行くんですね  
 9T: そこで 私は日本語学と、日本語教授法 外国人の人にどうやって日本語を教えるかというのを教えています  
 10S: n うん n うん N  
 11T: 私の本当の専門は 社会言語学っていう分野で 日本語の男女差を研究しています  
 12S: n うん n うん 社会言語学 n うーん n ああ  
 13T: あの 日本語には男ことばとか、女ことばとかがあってあるでしょ  
 14S: n うん n うん n うん  
 15T: 日本人の人が どういう風に日本語を使うかを 今日みたいに ビデオ@をとって やります  
 16S: N N n うん

Excerpt 7 . English translation

1T : Now well five six minutes you will talk to me and then let me interview you  
 2S : yeah yeah N N N N  
 3T : I well am teaching at school called Sophia Junior college  
 4S : yeah hYeah yeah  
 5T : Junior college (is located) in Kanagawa place called Hadano  
 6S : Oh Hadano I know that  
 7T : Do you know Hadano?  
 8S : Oh I play soccer so I go there for camping later

9T : There I'm teaching Japanese linguistics and Japanese pedagogy, course means how to teach Japanese to foreigners

10S : nYeah hYeah N

11T : My real specialty is sociolinguistics, I'm studying differences between men and women

12S : nYeah nYeah *shakaigengogaku*[J] nYe~ah nAh

13T : Well in Japanese we have male speech and female speech don't we?

14S : nYeah nYeah nYeah

15T : (I study) how Japanese people use Japanese by recording with video camera like today@

16S : N N nYeah

### Excerpt 8. JSL/ intermediate # 17

1T : えーと 今から 私と少し日本語で話して その後で 英語でインタビューをさせていただきます

2S : N NN

3T : で、ええと そうね で 私は 上智短大というところで 教えています

4S : N

5T : 短大は 2 year college で あの四谷じゃなくて神奈川県にあるんですよ

6S : ふうん ふうん

7T : 新宿から一時間くらいかかるんですけど そっちにあります

8S : N N

9T : で 私はそこで 日本語学って行って Japanese Linguistics, と、

10S : N

11T : 日本語教授法っていうのは どうやって外国人の人に教えるかっていうクラスを教えています

12S : N N N N

13T : で あの 短大には留学生はいないんですけどね

14S : N

15T : でね 私のもう一つの専門は社会言語学 Socio-linguistics が専門です

16S : N N

17T : 日本語の男女差 ダンは男 ジョは女 男女差サを研究しています

18S : N N N

19T : 日本語は男ことばとか、女ことばとかあるでしょ

20S : N N n うんうん

21T : 日本人の人たちが どういう風に日本語を使うかを 今日みたいだね ビデオをとって 研究するんです

22S : N N

### Excerpt . translation

1T : Well now you will talk to me a little in Japanese and then let me interview you in English

2S : N N

3T : So um right I'm teaching at a school called Sophia Junior college

4S : N





Excerpt 9. JSL intermediate # 14 (female, 21, 14 months)

“...ah, probably the biggest thing I know, this is that, even if I don't understand something, I still nod my head...OK, one thing I didn't understand well, say, in Japanese, because when I went home for a brief period of time, ah, during my stay here, and I notice that I did the *un* kind of that *aizuchi*, like way more often than I did when I was just staying in America. 'Cause I guess, in America, in English, you don't really do the confirmation that often. We just listen and just stay there, maybe you'll say something, maybe you won't, but the confirmation of that *un un* or I understand or, kind of, even a head nod, you don't even do that, really.

I presented only JSL participants' interview in this section because participants in the JFL setting in this study were not, in general, as aware of Japanese listening behavior as participants in the JSL setting. Although some have their own ideas which they present in the interview, they answered the researcher's questions with short answers, so that their opinions were often fragmented and they failed to explain them. In order to be aware of the characteristics of Japanese listening behavior, JSL environment obviously has a great advantage over JFL, as shown in the next Excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10. JSL intermediate #14 (female, 21, 14 months)

“Maybe, but studying abroad helps you understand a lot, like uh, even if you don't know why, you've just been here for a couple of weeks, you realize that when you speak with a Japanese person, they are doing that *aizuchi*, so you start doing it yourself, too. So, even if you don't know why, you realize that it's important...sometimes, yeah. Actually, lately, lately, I've called on my cell phone and I'm speaking in English, I cover something doing *aizuchi*, *aa* and *un*. That's great. Interesting, what I've done.

## 5. Discussion

We have seen how learners perform as listeners and the kind of meta-knowledge they have about Japanese listening behavior. This section discusses social factors that may influence learners' performance and the relationship between awareness and social factors. First, we discuss the relationship between learner's performance as listeners and social factors influencing learners' awareness. Social factors included in

the present study are learning environment and length of stay in Japan.

JFL learners in the present study had never been to Japan or had visited Japan for less than 2 weeks. Those who had homestays, worked, or participated in any activity which provided an opportunity to be involved in the Japanese community were excluded. JSL learners, on the other hand, had lived in Japan for at least 4 months and were international students taking Japanese at the college level. JSL learners' lengths of stay in Japan varied, since some had prior experience living in Japan and different kinds of exposure to NSs. Length of stay ranged from 4 months to 10 years for JSL learners and 10 days to none for JFL learners. Pearson correlation shows a positive correlation between total RTs used by each participants in 2 minutes and length of stay ( $r=.44487$ ) and total amount of ( $r=.42782$ ). In other words, the longer the stay in Japan, the more backchannels and RTs are used.

The length of stay in Japan was a strong factor in the degree of awareness of socio-pragmatic aspects of Japanese. However, it is not a sufficient explanation for why some learners differed in their awareness of Japanese pragmatics from others who had been in Japan for the same period. The interview revealed that some learners noticed the use and functions of Japanese listening behavior through club activities or other social activities. They said that at first they didn't understand why Japanese people communicate that way, but they realized that they were expected to react similarly to the ways their interlocutors did and found that behaving like their peers helped them to communicate with Japanese. It is reasonable to think that the quality and degree of exposure influences awareness. In other words, learners who are involved in various activities with native speakers of Japanese could use more listener responses in total, especially verbal backchannel types. Exposure to the target language provided opportunities to notice how Japanese communicate as listeners and enabled them to acquire it.

This leads us to the question of how such awareness can be increased. Obviously, learning environments such as JSL are a key factor and the degree of involvement in the target language community is another. Is there any way to raise awareness of learners with little exposure to native speakers of Japanese? One possible answer to this question can be found in formal classrooms. Instruction could provide learners opportunities to understand and notice the difference through minimal exposure to L2 (Hatasa 2007). If it is the case, pragmatic competence can be achieved by raising awareness of second language features, by having a connection to the target language community in the learner's own country, or by classroom instruction to raise

awareness of Japanese listening behaviour, including observation and practice.

## 6. Conclusion

This study provides a piece of evidence about how learners of Japanese in different learning environments perform as listeners in Japanese. JSL advanced learners were able to use RTs most extensively, although the total frequency is less than NSs in similar contexts. JFL learners used a more narrow variety of RTs and could not express meta-knowledge about Japanese listening behavior well compared with JSL learners. Both performance and awareness of Japanese listening behavior seem to be influenced by learning environments. JSL environment has greater advantage for acquiring a target like listening behavior since it provides a lot of exposure to Japanese in everyday situation. However, the results suggest that awareness could also be affected by individual networks with a Japanese-speaking community no matter where they learn. It is beyond the scope of this study to speculate how we can raise the awareness of Japanese listening behavior in JFL environment with limited exposure to the target language communities; the future study will be expected to address this area.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for financially supporting this research under contract #185092 in 2006.

## References:

- Clancy, Patricia M, Sandra A. Thompson, Ryoko Suzuki, and Hongyin Tao. 1996. The conversational use of reactive tokens in English, Japanese, and Mandarin. *Journal of Pragmatics* 26. 355-387.
- Furo, Hiroko. 2001. *Turn taking in English and Japanese: Projectability in grammar, intonation, and semantics*. New York: Routledge.
- Hatasa, Abe Yukiko. 2007. *Aizuchi* responses in JFL classrooms: Teacher input and learner use. Selected Papers from Pragmatics in the CJK Classroom: The State of the Art.
- Horiguchi, Sumiko. 1988. Komyunikeshon ni okeru kikite no gengo kodo [Listeners' ]

- behavior in communication]. *Nihongokyoiku* 64: 13-26. Nihongokyoikugakkai.
- Horiguchi, Sumiko. 1997. *Nihongo kyoiku to kaiwa bunseki*. [Japanese language teaching and Conversation Analysis]. Tokyo: Kuroshio Publishers.
- Iwasaki, Shoichi. 1997. The Northridge earthquake conversations: the floor structure and the 'loop' sequence in Japanese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 28, 661-693.
- Kita, Sotaro and Sachiko Ide. 2007. Nodding, *aizuchi*, and final particles in Japanese conversation: How conversation reflects the ideology of communication and social relationships. *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 1242-1254.
- Maynard, Senko K. 1987. Interactional functions of a nonverbal sign: Head movement in Japanese dyadic casual conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 11: 589-606.
- Maynard, Senko. 1989. *Japanese conversation: Self-contextualization through structure and interactional management*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Miura, Akira and Naomi H. McGloin. 1994. *An integrated approach to intermediate Japanese*. Japan Times.
- Miyazaki, Sachie. 2007. *Japanese Women's Listening Behavior in Face-to-Face Conversation: The Use of Reactive Tokens and Nods*. Hituji Shobo Publisher.
- Mizutani, Nobuko. 1984. *Nihongo kyoiku to hanashi kotoba no jittai* [Japanese language teaching and the reality of spoken language]. In *Kindaichi Haruhiko hakase koki kinen ronbunshuu* [Collected papers in honor of Dr. Haruhiko Kindaichi's 70th birthday]. Tokyo: Sanseido.
- Mizutani, Nobuko. 1988. *Aizuchi-ron* [The theory of backchannels]. *Nihongogaku* 7(12): 4-11.
- Ono, Tsuyoshi, and Eri Yoshida. 1996. A study of Co-construction in Japanese: We don't finish each other's sentences. In N. Akatsuka, S. Iwasaki and S. Strauss (Eds.). *Japanese/ Korean linguistics* 5: 115-119. Stanford: CSLIRichards, J.C.
- Richards, J.C. 1982. Communicative needs in foreign language. *JALT Journal* 4: 1-16.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. 1982. Discourse as an interactional achievement: Some uses of "UH-HUH" and other things that come between sentences. In Deborah Tannen (ed.) *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics, Analyzing discourse: Text and talk*, 71-93. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Sugito, Seiju. 1989. *Kotoba no aizuchi to miburi no aizuchi* (Verbal backchannels and non-verbal backchannels). *Nihongo kyoiku* 67: 48-59. Nihongo kyoiku gakkai.

- Szatrowski, Polly. 2000. Relation between gaze, head nodding and *aizuti* 'back channel' at a Japanese company meeting. *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 26: 283-294.
- Szatrowski, Polly. 2003. Gaze, head-nodding and *aizuti* 'back channel utterances' in information presenting activities. In Patricia Clancy (ed.). *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 11: 119-132. Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information.
- White, Sheida. 1987. Functions of backchannels in English: A crosscultural analysis of Americans and Japanese. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University.
- Yngve, Victor H. 1970. On getting a word in edgewise. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 6:567-578.

## Appendix:

Script 1. Instructions given to participants (R: researcher)

R: *Hajime mashite. Miyazaki desu.*

(Nice to meet you. I'm Miyazaki.)

R: *Kyoo-wa arigatoo -gozai-masu.*

(Thank you for today)

R: *Kore-kara nani-o suru-ka kantanni setsumee shi-masu-ne.*

(Now I'm going to explain what we are going to do briefly, ok?)

R: *Ima-kara watashi-to 5-hun kurai hanashite mora-tte*

(You are going to talk with me in Japanese for about 3 minutes from now.)

R: *sono-ato eigo-de intabyuu sasete kudasai.*

(After that let me interview you in English.)

R: *Watashi-wa nihon-kara kimashi-ta. Tokyo-no tonari-nan-desu-kedo*

(I came from Japan. It is next to Tokyo)

R: *Tokyo-kara ichijikan-kurai-no tokoro-ni aru daigaku-de oshiete-imasu.*

(I'm teaching at college that is located in place where is about one hour from Tokyo.)

R: *Watashi-ga ohsiete iruno-wa Nihongogaku Japnaese Linguisitics-to*  
(What I'm teaching there is *Nihongogaku*, Japanese Linguisitics and

R: *Nihongokyohoo, teaching Japanese-tte-itte do-yatte gaikokujin-no hito-ni*  
(*Nihongokyohoo* called Teaching Japanese, is a course to learn how to teach

R: *nihongo-o oshieru-ka-to-iu jugyo-o oshiete-imasu.*  
Japanese to foreigners, I'm teaching ir.)

R: *Honto-no senmon-wa shakaigengogaku, Socio-linguistics-de nihongo-no*  
(The real research area is *Shakaigengogaku*, Socio-linguistics,

R: *Danjosa, dan-wa otoko, jo-wa onna, sa-wa difference-o kenkyu-shite-imasu.*  
(so I'm studying *Danjosa*, *dan* is men, *jo* is women, and *sa* is difference)

R: *Nihongo-wa otoko-kotoba-toka onna-kotoba-toka aru-desho.*  
(In Japanese there are men's language and women's language, right?)

R: *Dakara nihonjin-no hito-ga do-iu-huni nihongo-o tsukauka-o kyoo-mitai-ni*  
(So I analyze how Japanese people use Japanese by video recording the conversation

R: *video-ni-totte bunseki-shimasu.*  
like today.)

R: *Demo kyo-wa danjosa-janakute nihongo-o benkyo shiteiru hito-ga*  
(But today what I'm studying is not gender differences, instead, I am studying

R: *donna-huni nihongo-o tsukau-ka shirabete-imasu.*  
how people who study Japanese use Japanese.)

R: *Nanio shirabete-iruka-wa ienain-desu-kedo bunpo-no machigai-toka hanashi-no*  
(I can't tell you what I'm studying now, but I'm not checking mistakes in grammar or  
R: *naiyo-toka-wa kankei-nai-desu-kara itsumo doori-ni rivakkusu-shite hanashite- kudasai.*  
content of your speech. So please relax and talk as usual.)