

Categories, Culture, and Context in Mundane Conversation : An Exercise in Single Episode Analysis

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Introduction

In various ways, interaction is fundamental to human society – what Schegloff (1996, 2006b) calls “the primordial site of sociality.” Interaction is a precondition for the achievement of an overwhelming proportion of social activities in human life (e.g., marriage, family, economies, politics, education) and mundane conversation plays a central role in all of them. Thus, the study of mundane conversation is essential for understanding how humans talk and behave in society. In this paper, through analysis of a single episode from mundane Japanese conversation, I demonstrate (a) how the interactants identify themselves as one of the members of some category (e.g., father, husband, office worker) at one moment and identify themselves as a member of some other category in the next moment, (b) how they employ their cultural or membership knowledge in understanding various categories in their talk, and (c) how they demonstrate the relevance of the setting or the context of this interaction. First, I briefly introduce notions of categories, culture, and context from the conversation analytic and ethnomethodological perspective and then present analyses of the single episode.

Membership Categorization

During interaction, participants refer to various things, such as persons (Sacks, 1972a, 1972b; Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996, 2008), places (Schegloff, 1972), time, actions, and so forth. How people choose some term to formulate such referents among alternative terms cannot be explained simply by judging the correctness of the words. The formulation of the referents is shaped by who the recipient of the talk is at that moment. In other words, word formulation in talk is recipient designed (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). However, membership categorization devices do more than simply referring. They are often aggregates of persons or objects, and when they are used, they are often deployed to do actions other than simply referring (Schegloff, 2008).

Membership categorization devices (MCDs) were first introduced by Sacks (1972a, 1972b). They are, roughly speaking, composed of two components: (a) a collection of categories and (b) rules of application.

In conversation, we use categorical terms to describe who we are and who others are. Examples of categorical terms are ‘man,’ ‘woman,’ ‘husband,’ ‘wife,’ ‘teacher,’ ‘student,’ ‘Christian,’ ‘Buddhist,’

and so forth. These categories are not just single aggregates of categories but they make up collections of categories. A collection of categories refers to a set of categories that 'go together': 'husband' and 'wife' make up a collection of a 'married couple,' 'Christian' and 'Buddhist' make up a collection of 'religion,' 'man' and 'woman' make up a collection of 'gender' and so on. If categorical terms such as 'Christian,' 'Buddhist,' and 'singer' are presented together, we get the impression that 'singer' does not fit there. In other words, people do not randomly categorize and refer to people but employ collections of categories when they categorize themselves and others. There are three points to be noticed here. First, some membership categorization devices (MCDs) have alternative collections of categories. For instance, 'age' can be expressed using the cardinal numbers (X year old) or categories like baby, infant, adolescent, elderly, etcetera. Which expression should be deployed depends on who the addressees are and in what context it is used. Next, among the collections of categories, there are ones that can be applied to anybody ('Pn-adequate') and ones that can be applied only to particular persons ('Pn-inadequate') (Sacks, 1972a, 1972b). While any human can be categorized by collections of 'age' and 'sex,' only limited kinds of people can be categorized by collections of 'school grades' (e.g., first grade, second grade) or 'positions in a soccer team' (forward, defense, etc.). Third, some collections make up larger units to constitute team-type MCDs. Collections of categories such as [mother/father/son/daughter] make up a team of 'family,' and [two guards/two forwards/one center] make up a team of a 'basketball team.'

Sacks demonstrated two rules of application in MCDs: 'the economy rule' and 'the consistency rule. The economy rule holds, "a single category from any membership categorization device can be referentially adequate" (Sacks, 1972b, p. 219). To take an example of an MCD of 'age,' just referring to the person as a 'baby' is enough for a given context. On the other hand, the consistency rule refers to the following:

if some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then the category or other categories of the same collection *may* be used to categorize further members of the population. (Sacks, 1972b, p. 219)

Thus, when one of the members in a group is described using a category or categories of a different collection, there may be a special reason for the description. For instance, if someone introduces himself, "I am Taro Kanagawa. I am a second-year student in the faculty of Economics," then the next person will introduce herself, "I am Hanako Hakuraku. I am a third-year student in the faculty of foreign languages" and the following person will also introduce himself with his name, year, and the faculty to which he belongs. If one of the members introduced herself, "I am Keiko Yokohama. I am a daughter of Professor XX," then the other members present would be surprised and wonder why she needed to describe herself in such a way. In addition, Sacks claims that the consistency rule solves two problems related to the use of categories. The first problem is that there is no category that can completely describe a person, and the second problem is that there are always more than two categories that a single person can be applied to. Therefore, it is difficult to decide which category to use to describe a particular person. However, the consistency rule can solve these two problems. If the first member categorizes himself or others using a category or categories from some device's collection, the next member will also choose a category from the same collection to describe himself or others unless there is a special reason for not doing so. This also holds true in the case of a single story or a strip of talk. If several categories are used in a single story or a strip of talk, it is automatically assumed that those categories belong to the same collection device. To take an example from Sacks (1972b), hearing a child's story, "The baby cried, the mommy picked it

up" (p. 216), we presume that that 'baby' and that 'mother' belong to the same collection. Moreover, as discussed above, some collections go together to make up units. 'Mother,' 'father,' and 'baby' can go together to make up a unit of 'family.' Therefore, when 'baby' and 'mother' are mentioned in succession, we assume that they belong to the same family.

Thus, deployment of and understanding of MCDs (membership categorization devices) direct our attention to our presumed common-sense knowledge that people are oriented to in the conduct of their everyday life. In other words, MCDs are made relevant in the talk and other conduct through interactant's use of common-sense knowledge. In order to demonstrate how interactants are indeed oriented to common-sense knowledge and make MCDs relevant in interaction, the talk should be examined from the "emic" perspective (Pike, 1967). The emic perspective in conversation analysis refers to observation or examination of the talk and other conduct from the interactants' perspective (Goodwin, 1984; Have, 1999). Interactants make MCDs relevant either through the production of explicit membership categorizations (e.g., "I am a student") or allusion to categories in indirect formulations. Whether they are actually articulated or not, analysts need to demonstrate in the analysis that their claims do not come from the analysts' preconceived notions but that they are grounded in the conduct of the interactants themselves (Schegloff, 1991, 2006a).

Culture

Membership categories and culture have an inseparable relationship. That is because how people deploy and understand membership categories in interaction is contingent on their cultural resources. What I refer to as 'culture' in this paper draws from the conversation analytic and ethnomethodological viewpoint of culture. In this perspective, culture is a system of common understanding (Moerman and Sacks, 1971/1988) and an apparatus for generating recognizable social actions (Sacks, 1992). In this sense, "the materials of all conversation analysis are inextricably cultured" (Moerman, 1988). Interactants as well as investigators recognize an utterance as performing a particular action (e.g., requesting, apologizing, complaining) through the use of covert native knowledge or culture. Suppose someone said "My husband has been drinking alcohol every single day since we got married." In Japanese and most of Western society, recipients of the utterance would recognize the utterance as a complaint or at least some kind of trouble talk through the use of their common-sense or cultural knowledge. On the other hand, there may be a culture in which people interpret this utterance as a report of good news. Therefore, producing and understanding social actions undeniably mirror the culture the interactants belong to.

Context

As discussed above, in conversation analysis, membership categories are treated as relevant only when the parties in the interaction are demonstrably oriented to them. In the same way, conversation analysts claim the relevance of the context only when the parties make the context relevant in their talk and other conduct. Therefore, analysts refrain from bringing in any pre-supposed external context of the interaction to provide an account for the participants' actions, unless the participants themselves demonstrate the relevance of the context in their interactional practices. Context that is oriented to by participants is constituted on a turn-by-turn or moment-by-moment basis. For instance, conversation analysts have shown

that even in a language classroom, the context of ‘classroom’ and the participants’ characterization as ‘students’ and ‘teachers’ may not be always relevant (Markee, 2005; Richards, 2006). When the context of a particular interaction is claimed to be relevant both for the participants and for analysts, the context should be “demonstrably consequential for some specifiable aspect of interaction (Schegloff, 1991, p. 65). Thus, examination of context requires intensive analysis that requires us to scrutinize what context participants themselves orient to at each moment of interaction

Through intensive analysis of a single episode, this paper discusses (a) in what way the participants invoke and thus make some membership categories relevant, (b) how they display their culture during the interaction, and (c) what context is consequential for their talk.

The Target Episode

The episode to be examined here comes from a videotaped mundane conversation between two ex-coworkers. Hiro works for a well-known beer company and Yume used to work for the same company. The interaction takes place at one of the reception rooms at the company. Just prior to this episode, they had been talking about TV talents. I will first introduce the entire episode below and then divide the episode into three parts for the detailed analysis of each part. The transcript of the interaction is presented in three lines: The first line shows the original Japanese utterance, the second line is the word-by-word translation, and the third line shows the idiomatic English translation. For transcription conventions, see Appendix.

(1) [Hiro-Yume : 10 : 223–11 : 258]

01 Yume : *de dou nan desu ka?* =

and how NR Cop Q

“And, how are {they}?”

02 Hiro : = *nani ga?* =

what Nom

“What?”

03 Yume : = *kodomosantachi wa. sansai to*

children Top three-year-old and

04 *gosai desu ka? =ima.*

five-year old Cop Q now

“*Kodomosantachi*(children). {Are they}

three years old and five years old? Now?”

05 Hiro : *ima<dakara: nisai to>gosai.*

now so two-year-old and five-year-old

“Now, so, two years old and five years old.”

06 (.) ((Yume drinks coffee while nodding))

07 Yume : *nisai to gosai.*

two-year-old and five-year-old

“Two years old and five years old”

08 Hiro : *“kono shigatu ni: hitori rokusai ni*

this April in one six-year-old to

- 09 *naru kedo°*
 become but
 “But one of them will be six years old this April.”
- 10 Yume : *otokonoko.*
 a boy
 “A boy.”
- 11 Hiro : *ue wa ne.*
 older Top IP
 “Older one is.”
- 12 (.)
- 13 Yume : *youchien?*
 kindergarten
 “Kindergarten?”
- 14 Hiro : *uun uchi wa mou zerosai kara*
 no my family Top already age zero from
- 15 *hoikuen °dakara.°*
 nursery school because
 “No, in my family, {children go to} a nursery
 school from the age zero.”
- 16 (.)
- 17 Yume : *n: ah sou ka[: a]*
 Mm oh right Q
 “Mm, oh, I see. Uh,”
- 18 Hiro : *[un]*
 uh-huh
 “Uh-huh”
- 19 Yume : *aa okusama [wa:]*
 well wife Top
 “Well, as for okusama (wife),”
- 20 Hiro : *[un]*
 uh-huh
 “uh-huh”
- 21 Yume : *.tch ano::=*
 well
 “well,”
- 22 Hiro : *= sou ne [futari de hataraiteru] kara.*
 right IP both by working so
 “That’s right. Because both {of us} work.
- 23 Yume : *[suguni hataraki ni]*
 immediately work to
 “immediately for working”

- 24 Yume : *u::n dechat ta n desu nez sensei desu yo nez*
 Mmm go PST NR Cop IP teacher Cop IP IP
 “Mmm, went out right? Sensei(teacher), right?”
- 25 Hiro : *un.*
 uh-huh
 “Uh-huh.”
- 26 Yume : *an.*
 mhm
 “Mhm.”
- 27 (.)
- 28 Yume : *ah tsuzuketerassharu n da. sugoi na.*
 oh continuing NR Cop amazing IP
 “oh, {She} continues {working}. That’s amazing.”
- 29 Hiro : *sou [da ne.ore ga yame] temo mukou wa*
 right Cop IP I Nom stop even if she Top
- 30 *tuzukeru n janai no?*
 continue NR Tag IP
 “That’s right. {She may} keep working even if
 I quit {working}.”
- 31 Yume : [*“kodomo futari mo”*]
 children two even with
 “Even with two children.”
- 32 Yume : *uh[huhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuh]*
- 33 Hiro : [*hhuhhuhhuh sore mo ii ka naa*] *to*
 that also good Q IP QT
- 34 *omotte saikin.*
 think.CONT these days
 “Hhuhhuhhuh. I started thinking it may be
 a good idea. These days.”
- 35 Yume : *hhhh a:[::: sore wa:]*
 Mmmmm that Top
 “Mmmmm, that’s,”
- 36 Hiro : [*an. sasugani*] *juunannen*
 yeah as expected more than ten years
- 37 *mo kaisha ni iru to ne.*
 as long as company at exist if IP
 “Yeah, as may be expected, if you work at
 a company for more than ten years.”
- 38 Yume : *u:::n. u:::n. demo kaisha ni iru to:*
 Mmmmmmm Mmmmmmm but company at exist if
 “Mmmmmmm, mmmmmmm. But if you are at a company,”
- 39 (.)

- 40 Yume : *onnazi kaisha ni*=
 same company at
 “At the same company”
- 41 Hiro : *=un*=
 uh-huh
 “Uh-huh”
- 42 Yume : = *zutto iru ka[r̥a:]*
 long time exist so
 “For a long time, so”
- 43 Hiro : *[un]*
 uh-huh
 “Uh-huh”
- 44 Yume : *are desho. ano sonnani-t- tat ta ki*
 that Tag well that long pass PST feel
- 45 *shi nai desho.*
 do Neg Tag
 “It is that, isn’t it? It does not seem to
 be a long time.”
- 46 Hiro : *.tch dou ka na:*
 how Q IP
 “I wonder {if it is so}”

I divide this episode into three parts according to the three different membership categories the interactants orient to: lines 1–18, lines 19–27, and lines 28–46, respectively. As discussed below, in the first segment Hiro’s being “father” becomes relevant, in the second segment Hiro’s being a “husband” becomes relevant, and in the third segment Hiro’s being an “office worker” becomes relevant.

Target Sequence 1, Being a Father

Here again, the first target sequence is presented.

(2) [Hiro-Yume : 10 : 223–237]

- 01 Yume : *d̥e dou nan desu ka?*=
 and how NR Cop Q
 “And, how are {they}?”
- 02 Hiro : = *nani ga?*=
 what Nom
 “What?”
- 03 Yume : = *kodomosantachi wa. sansai to*
 children Top three-year-old and
- 04 *gosai desu ka?*= *ima.*
 five-year old Cop Q now
 “*Kodomosantachi*(children). {Are they}

- three years old and five years old? Now?"
- 05 Hiro : *ima<dakara: nisai to>gosai.*
 now so two-year-old and five-year-old
 "Now, so, two years old and five years old."
- 06 (.) ((Yume drinks coffee while nodding))
- 07 Yume : *nisai to gosai.*
 two-year-old and five-year-old
 "Two years old and five years old"
- 08 Hiro : *kono shigatu ni: hitori rokusai ni*
 this April in one six-year-old to
- 09 *naruru kedo°*
 become but
 "But one of them will be six years old this April."
- 10 Yume : *otokonoko.*
 a boy
 "A boy."
- 11 Hiro : *ue wa ne.*
 older Top IP
 "Older one is."
- 12 (.)
- 13 Yume : *youchien?*
 kindergarten
 "Kindergarten?"
- 14 Hiro : *uun uchi wa mou zerosai kara*
 no my family Top already age zero from
- 15 *hoikuen °dakara.°*
 nursery school because
 "No, in my family, {children go to} a nursery
 school from the age zero."
- 16 (.)
- 17 Yume : *n: ah sou kaf: a]*
 Mm oh right Q
 "Mm, oh, I see. Uh,"
- 18 Hiro : *[un]*
 uh-huh
 "Uh-huh"

In line 1, Yume initiates a new sequence with "*de dou nan desu ka?* (And, how are {they}?)." Hiro then immediately initiates repair with "*nani ga?* (what?)" in line 2 and Yume repairs her prior utterance by adding a subject "*kodomo san tachi wa* (the children)" in line 3. In continuing this turn by mentioning the category of 'age,' "*san sai to go sai desu ka?*" (= *ima* (three years old and five years old now?)), Yume shows that "*kodomo san tachi* (children)" are indeed children as a 'stage of life' category. Notice that Yume's

utterance in line 3 does not have any possessive pronouns so that it does not linguistically inform whether she is talking about children in general or Hiro's children. However, Hiro's utterance in the next turn (line 5) demonstrates that "children" here is used not only as a 'stage of life' but also as a membership category within a unit of 'family.' That is, he shows his understanding that Yume is asking about his children. In line 5, Hiro answers Yume's question by providing the correct age of his children, "*ni sai to >go sai* (two years old and five years old)." Yume accepts Hiro's correction with repetition in line 7. After Yume's acceptance of the correction regarding the age of the children, Hiro adds further information that one of his children will become six in April. In the next line, Yume asks for confirmation regarding the gender of his children "*otoko no ko* (boy)". In response, Hiro answers, "*ue wa ne* (the older one is)." As the gender consists of male/female, by mentioning that the older one is male, Hiro implicitly indicates the fact that the younger one is female. Then Yume produces another confirmation check, "*youchien?* (kindergarten?)" . Although this utterance by Yume is again missing a subject, Hiro does not show any indication of trouble in understanding, and answers "*uun* (no)". Thus, in this proximate context, it is clear to Hiro that Yume is continuing to talk about his older child. Moreover, Yume's mentioning of "*yochien?*" in this position of the interaction also calls for attention. Hearing that Hiro's older child is six years old, Yume produces this question. This question makes "six years old" not merely an attribute but a categorical term by connecting "six years old" with "kindergarten." This category invokes membership and cultural knowledge regarding the relationship between age and schooling in their society. Categories are "inference-rich" (Sacks, 1972a, 1972b): They are the storehouse of membership or common-sense knowledge that ordinary people in society have about what people are like and how people believe. What is believed about the category is assumed to be so and it needs some effort to block the presumption. In the society Yume belongs to, six-years-old means kindergarten age. In the next line, Hiro rejects Yume's confirmation check and provides an account for blocking Yume's presumptive knowledge. Hiro's account is the alternative to going to a kindergarten for six year olds, "*hoikuen* (nursery school)". In the next line, Yume utters, "*ah sou ka:* (oh that's right)". By producing a change of state token "*ah* (oh)" (Heritage, 1984), which displays the recognition of something in virtue of what one has just heard, and "*sou ka* (that's right)", Yume displays that she has just remembered there is such an alternative in their society.

In this segment, Yume's initiation of a sequence that inquires about Hiro's children invoked Hiro's category of being a father of two children. Throughout the segment, both Hiro and Yume oriented to Hiro's category of being a father. In the following segment, which will be introduced in the next section, the interactants continue to be oriented to 'family,' but their orientation shifts slightly by focusing on Hiro's category as a 'husband.'

Target Sequence Two: Being a Husband

Here is the second target sequence. As demonstrated in Extract (2), up to line 16, Hiro being a father was consequential for the interaction. In the following sequences, although still orienting to the categorical unit of 'family,' Hiro's category as a husband also becomes relevant.

(3) [Hiro-Yume : 10 : 238–11 : 251]

13 Yume : *youchien?*

kindergarten

"Kindergarten?"

- 14 Hiro : *uun uchi wa mou zerosai kara*
no my family Top already age zero from
- 15 *hoikuen °dakara.°*
nursery school because
"No, in my family, {children go to} a nursery
school from the age zero."
- 16 (.)
- 17 Yume : *n: ah sou kaf: a]*
Mm oh right Q
"Mm, oh, I see. Uh,"
- 18 Hiro : *[un]*
uh-huh
"Uh-huh"
- 19 Yume : *aa okusama [wa:]*
well wife Top
"Well, as for okusama (wife),"
- 20 Hiro : *[un]*
uh-huh
"uh-huh"
- 21 Yume : *.tch ano::=*
well
"well,"
- 22 Hiro : *=sou ne [futari de hataraiteru] kara.*
right IP both by working so
"That's right. Because both {of us} work."
- 23 Yume : *[suguni hataraki ni]*
immediately work to
"immediately for working"
- 24 Yume : *u::n dechat ta n desu nez sensei desu yo nez*
Mmm go PST NR Cop IP teacher Cop IP IP
"Mmm, went out right? Sensei(teacher), right?"
- 25 Hiro : *un.*
uh-huh
"Uh-huh."
- 26 Yume : *an.*
mhm
"Mhm."
- 27 (.)

In response to Hiro's report that one of his children goes to "*hoikuen* (nursery school)", Yume displays recognition and then produces a category term "*okusama* (wife)." Then in the following sequences, the

interaction goes on with understanding that the “*okusama*” Yume mentioned is Hiro’s wife rather than anybody else’s. This hearing and understanding comes from what Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992) calls a “collection” of categories. As introduced above, a collection is a set of categories that “go together,” and some collections may constitute “team-type” collections. For example, collections of categories such as ‘goalie, striker, forward,’ etcetera make up a team of a ‘soccer team’ and ‘husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter,’ etcetera make up a unit of ‘family.’ Therefore, as Hiro and Yume were talking about his son and daughter just prior to Yume’s mentioning of “*okusama*,” a team-type collection of ‘family’ has been made relevant in the talk. As Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992) and Schegloff (2006a) argue, if the numeral restriction is met (for example, no more than one husband/wife at a time in Japan), categorizing several persons with categories is likely to be heard as treating them as members of the same team¹; that is, referring to ‘wife’ will be heard as referring to the wife from the same family as the son and the daughter that had been mentioned previously, not wife from one family and a son and a daughter from another. Hearing Yume’s production of “*okusama*”, Hiro immediately produces “*un* (yeah)”, and while Yume is displaying some trouble constructing her turn, Hiro continues his utterance with an account for sending children to “*hoikuen*”, “*soune futari de hataraitte iru kara* (That’s right. Because both work).” From the categorical analysis perspective, this utterance is of interest in two respects. First, Hiro uses the word “*futari* (both/two people)” without articulating who the two people are, making what Sacks (1972b, 1992) calls a “standardized relational pair (SRP)” of ‘husband-wife’ relevant to the interaction. A standardized relational pair is “a paring of members such that relation between them constitutes a locus for rights and obligations” (Lepper, 2000, p. 17). Examples of SRPs are ‘husband-wife,’ ‘mother-baby,’ ‘teacher-student’ and so on. Thus, given that his wife, who is one part of the pair of ‘husband-wife,’ has been mentioned, “*futari*” refers to his wife and himself. Second, this utterance also invokes the cultural and commonsense knowledge regarding “*hoikuen*” in relation to the ‘husband-wife’ SRP. SRPs invoke culturally shared inferences about what might be expected of the members of these categories. By using the fact that both his wife and he work as an account for sending his son to “*hoikuen* (nursery school)”, Hiro resorts to the culturally shared inferences of parents’ rights and obligations. That is, in this culture, parents should send six-year-old children to *yochien* (kindergarten) or, if both parents work, they have obligations to send their children to a nursery school. That Yume does not show any trouble understanding Hiro’s utterance demonstrates that this cultural/commonsense knowledge is shared by the two interlocutors. Although Yume’s utterance in line 23 overlaps with Hiro’s utterance, Yume produces an acknowledgment token “*u::n*” in line 24. In fact, it has been found that interactants are able to hear each other’s utterances even in overlap (e.g., Schegloff, 2000b). After the acknowledgment token, Yume in overlap continues with “*dechatta n desu yo ne?* (went out, right?)”, which is connected back to her prior utterances “*okusama wa* (As for your wife)” and “*sugu hatarakini* (immediately for working)”. She then requests for confirmation “*sensei desu yo ne?* (a teacher, right?)”, which is followed by Hiro’s confirmation, “*un* (yeah)”. Yume’s bringing out the categorical term regarding occupation “*sensei* (a teacher)” as well as the interactants’ talking about both Hiro’s work and Hiro’s wife’s work in this segment leads to the interactants’ gradual shift of orientation. In the following segment, although they are still concerned with the ‘husband-wife’ SRP, Hiro’s category as ‘an office worker’ also becomes relevant.

Target Sequence Three: Being an Office Worker
 Now the final target sequence is presented.

(4) [Hiro-Yume : 11 : 251–258]

28 Yume : *ah tsuzuketerassharu n da. sugoi na.*

oh continuing NR Cop amazing IP

“oh, {She} continues {working}. That's amazing.”

29 Hiro : *sou [da ne. ore ga yame] temo mukou wa*
right Cop IP I Nom stop even if she Top

30 *tuzukeru n janai no?*

continue NR Tag IP

“That's right. {She may} keep working even if
I quit.”

31 Yume : *[“kodomo futari mo”]*

children two even with

“Even with two children.”

32 Yume : *uh[huhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuh]*

33 Hiro : *[hhuhhuhhuh sore mo ii ka naa] to*
that also good Q IP QT

34 *omotte saikin.*

think.CONT these days

“Hhuhhuhhuh. I started thinking it may be
a good idea. These days.”

35 Yume : *.hhh a:[::: sore wa:]*

Mmmmm that Top

“Mhmmmm, that's,”

36 Hiro : *[an. sasugani] juunannen*

yeah as expected more than ten years

37 *mo kaisha ni iru to ne.*

as long as company at exist if IP

“Yeah, as may be expected, if you work at
a company for more than ten years.”

38 Yume : *u:::n. u:::n. demo kaisha ni iru to:*

Mmmmmmm Mmmmmmm but company at exist if

“Mmmmmmm, mmmmmmm. But if you are at a company,”

39 *(.)*

40 Yume : *onnazi kaisha ni=*

same company at

“At the same company”

41 Hiro : *=un=*

uh-huh

“Uh-huh”

42 Yume : *= zutto iru ka[ra:]*

- long time exist so
 “For a long time, so”
- 43 Hiro : [un]
 uh-huh
 “Uh-huh”
- 44 Yume : *are desho. ano sonnani-t- tat ta ki*
 that Tag well that long pass PST feel
- 45 *shi nai desho.*
 do Neg Tag
 “It is that, isn’t it? It does not seem to
 be a long time.”
- 46 Hiro : *tch dou ka na::*
 how Q IP
 “I wonder {if it is so}”

In line 28, continuing to talk about Hiro’s wife, Yume produces “*ah, tsuzukete irassharu n da* (oh, {she} continues {working})”, which shows that by virtue of what has been discussed, she now knows that Hiro’s wife still works. Yume then continues with an assessment “*sugoi na* (That’s amazing)” and attaches an increment² (Schegloff, 2000a, 2001) “*kodomo futari mo* (even with two children)” (line 31). This utterance by Yume demonstrates her cultural and commonsense knowledge that mothers who work (full-time) are considered “amazing”, especially after having given birth to two children. In line 29, in overlap with Yume’s increment, Hiro agrees with Yume’s assessment and adds “*ore ga yamete mo mukou wa tsuzukeru n ja nai no?* ({she may} keep working even if I quit)”. Although Hiro does not directly mention here what it is that he might quit in this immediate context, it is clear that he means “even if he quits working.” This utterance by Hiro triggers Yume’s laughter in line 32 and Hiro immediately joins in the laughter. This shared laughter invokes cultural inferences of the ‘husband-wife’ SRP again. As mentioned above, standardized relational pairs (SRPs) invoke culturally shared inferences about what might be expected of the members of these categories. In the SRP of ‘husband-wife,’ one of the culturally shared inferences is that, traditionally, husbands have obligations to work to make a living for their families, although wives also work to pay for some part of living expenses these days. If somebody from a category appears to breach what is “known” about members of the category in the culture, then people do not revise that knowledge, but see the person as “different” or “phony” (Sacks, 1992). This is what is happening in this sequence. Hiro’s saying that his wife continuing to work while Hiro himself quits working is contradictory to the interlocutors’ commonsense knowledge in the culture, and so they treat Hiro’s utterance as laughable. Following the laughter, Hiro produces an assessment of the hypothetical event (i.e., he quits working while his wife continues working), “*sore mo ii kana: to omotte saikin* (I started thinking it may be a good idea. These days).” Yume’s utterance following this assessment includes features of dispreferred response (i.e., disagreement) (Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007) with some delays such as in-breath and “*a::: (mhmm)*” (line 33). While Yume is still producing “*a::: (mhmm)*”, Hiro produces “*an* (yeah)”, which shows agreement with his own assessment, and he then continues with an account for his assessment: He has already been working for a particular company for more than ten years now. In producing this statement he is not oriented to the husband-wife obligations any more, but rather his orientation is to the fact that he

has been working for the company for a long time. Thus, in this line, he orients to his being not a husband but a (long-term) office worker. In the next line, after producing “*u.....n*” twice, Yume aligns with Hiro’s orientation shift, and from this line the interlocutors’ talk is oriented to working at a company. In lines 38 to 45, Yume requests confirmation that ten years does not seem to be long if one works for the same company for the whole time. In line 46, Hiro does not confirm Yume’s statement but produces an utterance that is disagreement implicative, and hereafter the interlocutors continue talking about work (for further discussion of this point, see Hosoda (2009)). In short, in this third target sequence, the interlocutors’ gradual shift of orientation regarding Hiro’s identity categories, from being a husband to being an office worker, was observed.

Context of the Target Episode

Through this episode, the participants demonstrate relevance and irrelevance of some of the external contextual factors introduced earlier in this paper. The contextual factor that has a direct connection to what happens in this episode has to do with the relationship between the two participants. Their talk demonstrates the following: While Yume is close enough to Hiro to know something about Hiro’s family and work (i.e., How many children Hiro has, what his wife used to do, and which company Hiro works for), the participants had not talked each other or at least had not talked about Hiro’s family or work for a long time before this interaction. The fact that Hiro has been working for the same company for an extensive period of time is also explicitly mentioned by the participants and becomes consequential in their talk. However, the participants do not demonstrably orient to the physical environment in which the interaction took place. As introduced earlier, this episode comes from interaction that took place at a reception room of the company Hiro works for. Where their interaction takes place is not relevant to the participants during this episode.

Concluding remarks

This paper discussed how membership categories, culture, and context can be discussed from the conversation analytic and ethnomethodological perspective and attempted to apply the perspective to the analyses of a single episode. Even though this is just a short episode from mundane conversation, the participants provided us as observers of the interaction with significant information regarding membership categories, culture, and context through their talk. In other words, the participants displayed their public orientation to who they and others are, what cultural and commonsense knowledge they share, and how they might orient to the context of the interaction.

The approach taken in this paper has also been applied to analyses of interaction at various institutional settings (e.g., doctor’s office, courtroom, classroom) in the past two decades. Although the participants’ professional identities and context appear to be more definite in such settings than in ordinary conversation, the analysts’ stance is consistent with the analysis shown in this paper. Whether the data come from institutional talk or mundane conversation, analysts should always examine the data from the participants’ perspective and demonstrate how the participants themselves activate the relevancies of categories, culture, and context in their talk.

Notes

1. There could be a culture where sons and daughters are separated from mothers or fathers and have no relationship at all. In such a culture, a collection of family may consist of different members.
2. One of the fundamental aspects of the organization of conversation is the participants' orientation to "possible completion" of each other's turns. The possible completion can be marked and anticipated usually by grammatical, prosodic, and grammatical aspects of the utterance. However, participants occasionally add an additional element to their talk after they have brought a turn to a possible completion. This additional element is what Schegloff (2000a, 2001) refers to as "increment."

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions for the Analysis of Conversation

Transcription Conventions

[]	overlapping talk
=	latched utterances
(0.0)	timed pause (in seconds)
(.)	a short pause
co:lon	extension of the sound or syllable
co::lon	a more prolonged stretch
.	fall in intonation (final)
,	continuing intonation (non-final)
?	rising intonation (final)
¿	intonation between continuing intonation and rising intonation
CAPITAL	loud talk
<u>underline</u>	emphasis
↑	sharp rise
↓	sharp fall
° °	quiet talk

< >	slow talk
> <	fast talk
hh	audible aspirations
.hh	audible inhalations
(hh)	laughter within a word
(())	comment by the transcriber
()	problematic hearing that the transcriber is not certain about

Abbreviations used in Interlinear Gross

IP	Interactional particle (e.g. ne, sa, no, yo, na)
Nom	Nominative (ga)
Gen	Genitive (no)
Top	Topic marker (wa)
QT	Quotation marker (to, tte)
Q	Question marker (ka and its variants)
Cop	Copulative verb
CONT	Continuing (non-final) form
NR	Nominalizer (e.g. no, n)
Tag	Tag-like expression
ONO	Onomatopoeic expressions
Neg	for marking negation
PST	past
HON	honorific

In idiomatic translation,

{ }	words or phrases which are not explicitly stated in the Japanese versions
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概要

本稿では日本語日常会話におけるある一つのエピソードの中でカテゴリー、文化、およびコンテキストが会話参与者達によっていかに言及され、また相互理解に至っているかについて会話分析とエスノメソドロジーの見地から論じた。まず初めに会話分析とエスノメソドロジーにおいて成員カテゴリー、文化、コンテキストとはそれぞれいかなるものであると捉えるのかについて紹介し、その後日本語日常会話中のあるエピソードの分析を試みた。分析を通して、①会話参与者は会話中である時は自分自身または会話相手がある一つのカテゴリー（父親、夫、会社員）に属するものであるとみなし、またある時はそれとは別のカテゴリーに属するものであるとみなすということ、②会話参与者は自分自身が持ち合わせている「文化」または「常識」というものを駆使して会話の中に言及されるカテゴリー的表現を理解すること、③会話の中で関連する外的コンテキストとはいかなるものなのかということ、を示した。また、本論を通して参与者自身の視点（イーミックの視点）から会話を観察することの重要性を示した。

Key words : categories, culture, context, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, emic perspective, mundane Japanese conversation

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