Pragmatic Function of Japanese Mimesis in Emotive Discourse
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1. Introduction

Mimetic expressions are indispensable for enriching colloquial as well as literary expressions in Japanese language. The exact number of commonly used mimetic words is unknown; however, there are approximately 1200 or more Japanese mimetic words recognized by epistemologists, compared to 267 onomatopoeic English words collected from a standard dictionary. [i]

Regardless of its important pragmatic function, the majority of past research on Japanese mimetic words was limited to its phonological aspects and on morpho-syntactics and semantics (Hamano, 1986; Garrigues, 1995; Kita, 1997; Schourup, 1992). The purpose of this study to explore the pragmatic function of Japanese mimesis in emotive discourse while showing how highly marked affect are encoded in lexical, phonological, semantic and morpho-syntactic level of mimesis within the discourse.

First, this study examines how the frequency of Japanese mimetic words may correlate with the higher degree of affect in emotive discourse, though mimesis permeates across any speech register and genre in Japanese. Secondly, detailed analysis of the breakdown of mimetic taxonomy, as well as phonological, semantic and morpho-syntactical features and their function within discourse data, is also examined. The quantitative analysis is supplemented by the qualitative analysis of the discourse to

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show how mimesis are effectively used in the high-low contrast of the degree of affect. As for contextual variables that are responsible for the intensity of affect, both cultural and pragmatic variables are controlled in the research design.

Niko Besnier (1990) includes onomatopoeia, which is one variant of mimetic words, as one of the linguistic devices to express affect (Besnier,1990:424). The appropriate use of linguistic affect can be approached from cultural constraint and pragmatic context. From cultural perspectives and constraint of affect, it has been found an appropriate linguistic displays of the speakers' emotion under given circumstances in accordance with cultural expectation . (Matsumoto et.al, 1987; Urban, 1988; Arndt and Richard Janney:: 1990; Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990). In terms of pragmatic context that is viable to the intesntiy of affect, Wallace Chafe (1982) observed that interlocutors' involvement is much higher in informal spoken language, which is characterized by frequent use of linguistic affect, whereas the formal writing or oral literature, in the form of Monologue, rarely uses it.

Thus, both cultural and pragmatic contexts are included in the research design of the current study. Regarding cultural constraints on the use of mimesis, indirect complaints, or commiseration between equals are used as a context since it was proved that Japanese mimesis are used most frequently (Baba, 1998)[2ii]. Under the same situational context that triggers commiseration, different registers of oral narrative discourse (i.e, Monologue vs. interactive conversation (role-play) are compared.

Japanese mimesis

The semantic category of Japanese mimesis varies from *gi-on-go* (phonomimes), to an extensive use of *gi-tai-go* (phenomimes) and *gi-jyoo-go* (psychomimes) (Martin 1975:1025). While "phonomimes" are attempts to imitate sounds, "phenomimes" try to describe the manner or look of a situation and "psychomimes" are

intended to express "one's inner feelings or one's physical reactions " (Martin, 1975:1024-1025). Although English also has limited instances of phenomimes such as "zip to the store" (hurry to the store), or psychomimes that refer to someone's personality such as "so and so has a bubbly personality," 3) English phenomimes are limited to certain usage and are not extensively used. In most cases, most of phenomimes and psychomimes are lexicalized in English.

Furthermore, I will demonstrate brifely about from phonological, morpho-syntactic and semantic aspects of mimesis. Later I will show how different linguistic aspects of mimesis are subject to different degrees of intensity of affect in discourse.

The most common phonological feature of onomatopoeia or mimesis is in its reduplication of the CVCV form such as "jingle-jangle," "pitter-patter," or *koro koro*, (rolling state), *gata gata"*(rattling sound)" in Japanese and English (Schourup, 1993:49; Garrigues,1995:366). 5) Shoko Hamano (1998) noticed that Japanese mimesis are good example of sound symbolism. Accordingly, /p/-initial mimetic words account for one sixth of the entire entries of Asano's (1978) dictionary of mimetic words (Hamano, 1998:7). The /p/-initial mimesis and its voiced labial stop /b/ initial counterparts are found to symbolize "abrupt and explosive movement such as hitting and explosion" (Hamano, 1998: 86).

Semantically, Sotaro Kita (1997) claims Japanese mimesis belong to "the affecto-imagistic dimension of meaning, in which language has direct contact with sensory, motor, and affective information" (Kita, 1997: 380). As evidence of the affective nature of mimesis, which is not language proper, he found that mimesis is free from redundancy constraints in both linguistic and paralinguistic domains. Therefore, some of his data show mimesis are used redundently with lexical items that share the similar semantic infoframtion.

Morpho-syntactic categories of Japanese mimetic words are divided into four groups: (1) non-formation,which is the independent use of mimesis with no conjugation, for example, *Basha!* (splash); (2) no conjugated adverbial use of mimesis which is optionally introduced by a complimentizer *to.:* e.g. *basa-tto ochiru* (to drop with thud noise); and (3) verb with the light-verb *suru* "do"-verb such as *sukkri suru* (feel refreshed) and transformed verb: e.g. *bibiru* (reduced form of *biri biri suru* meaning "scared"); and (4) noun and nominal adjective case : e.g. *sara sara no kami* (hair of smooth, i.e, smooth silky hair). Among all of the above categories, Hisao Kakehi (1993) found in his study of Japanese mimesis in dictionary entry that adverbial mimesis are most frequent (Kakehi. 1993: 39).

Still, the questions remain as to how these characteristics of mimesis are actually encoded effectively in an intesified emotive discourse.

Methodology

The data collection was conducted in a semi-controlled manner. The twelve Japanese informants were shown a comic strip sequence and asked first to narrate the story in a Monologue using third person and then told to perform the role-play in which the informants took part of the leading character with the researcher who played the listener's role as their friend.   The story of the comic strip is about a boy on a bike who was almost hit by a reckless driver who ran him off the road, yet, the boy found later that the driver paid the price by having engine trouble in the end.   The informants are told to perform the role-play dialogues as dramatically as possible.

Subjects are both graduate and undergraduate Japanese college students studying in the United States. The ages range from early to mid-twenties. The gender ratio of the subjects is equal: six females and six males. The length of their stay in the United States was 1-4 years.

Results and Discussion

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A total of 81 mimetic words were observed from both Monologue and role-play

transcripts. The number of mimetic words used in role-play outnumbers those of

Monologue by more than four times (Monologue: 16; role-play: 65). Thus, it is made

obvious that mimetic words are more appropriate in use for intensified affect in emotive

interactional communication as shown by Role-Play data. One of the obvious difference

between the Monologue and Role-play the way mimesis is effectively used in Role-Play,

compared with its regular lexicon counterpart used in Monologue.

Examples (12a) and (12b) by the same female speaker best illustrate how

psychomimes are used in Role-Play while they are lexicalized into regular lexicon.

In (12a), the female speaker is objectively describing how the protagonist of the story felt

good when he saw the reckless driver who hit him was in trouble (line 3), and how the

driver looked sour when he saw the boy who looked happy at his misery (line 5). The

former feeling is described simply as "*ii kibun"* (good feeling) and the latter is "*yana

kanji"* (bad feeling).

(12a) Monologue :
```
    de   otokonoko ga
    and the boy    SUB
    and the boy

    sore o  mite
    that-OBJ see-and
    saw it and

    chotto (0.2) I-iikibun     ni narimashita
    a little      good feeling  to became
    he became feeling good

    sore o   mita kuruma no mochinushi wa
    that-OBJ  saw  car     of owner       TOP
    the owner of the car

    yana kanji    ni narimashita
    bad  feeling to became
```

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```
    felt bad
```

Those good and bad feelings (*ii kibun* and *warui kanji*) in Monologue (12a) are replaced

by a series of mimesis in its counterpart in Role-Play data (12b).

(12b) Role-Play:
```
Y:    de   Choo Mukatsuita kara,
      and super irritating  because
      and 'cuz I got extremely aggravated, so

B:    un
      yeah
      uh huh


Y:    dakara nanka    zenzen heiki da yoo ((smiling voice
      so     somewhat  at all okay COP ASST
      so I tried to pretend that I don't care a thing

      mitaina kaoshite,
      like    face-do-and
      that's the kind of look I gave to him and

B:    un
      yeah
      uh huh

->Y: puu-tto    toote      itte,
       MIM-COMP  pass-and  go-and
        I pass by like boom (?)

B:    un
      yeah
      uh  huh



->Y: de, ke?tte   kanji-de     totte kita no,
      and MIN-COMP  feeling-and  pass-came
      and I gave a real contemptuous look to him and passed
      him by

B:    un
      yeah
      huh huh

Y:    soo   demo Choo   itakatta
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        yeah but    super   painful
        yeah but it (my injury) was extremely painful

B:      KawaiSoo. Sorede sonotooki nanka        itteta
        poor thing. and     that time something  said
        oh poor thing. well did he say anything to you?

->Y: butsubutu itteta,
        MIM         said
      he was complaining

        De,    chotto kocchi      o    mite,
        and  little  this way  SUB  see-and
        and he gave me a little look and

B:      un
        yeah
        yeah?

Y:      demo watashi mo    mukatsuita kara,
        but    I       also  irritated  because
        but I got really irritated so,

B:      un
        yeah
        uh huh

->Y:  hun mitaina kanji dee,
        MIM like      feeling and
        I gave him another light contemptous look
```

The expression of phenomime "*puuto*" (line 11) refers to the contemptuous way the subject passed the driver whose car has overheated. The sequence of psychomimes that immediately follow makes it easy for the listener to visualize psychological interaction between the subject and driver. The subject shows on explicit contemptuous look at the driver "*ke?*" (line 13), which aggravates the driver and made him complain "*butsu butsu*" (line 17), yet the subject ignores him with another comtemptuous look "*hun*" (line 22) . Although both "*ke?*" and "*hun*" express contemptuous looks, the former communicates the strong image of almost spitting saliva in a face of the driver and the latter is a pouting and sniveling facial expression. In terms of sound symbolism, /k/ for "*ke?*" has the

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meaning of "intensity" that is extended from the original meaning of "contact with a hard surface" whereas /h/ in /hun/ is a labial fricative in Japanese and "it imitates the sound of breathing", (Hamano,1998: 93), thus showing a leak of the steam of anger from the mouth. Table 2 shows further examples of how emotional descriptions depicted in regular lexicon in the Monologue are replaced by psychomimes in role-play.

Table 2: Other Examples of psychomimes Contrast

Monologue	Role-Play
a. bikkuri shite (with surpirse)	*BiBI*-chatte (get scared)
b. komatte imashi ta (in trouble)	*ira ira* shite ta (get irritated)
c. manzoku geni (with satisfactory air)	*sukatte* kanji (real refreshed feeling)
d. ii kimi da (deserve a bad luck)	hun? tte kanji (with comtemptuous look)

It is interesting to note how these psychomimes create more vivid and intensified expressions to fuel the liveliness of the personal conversation in Role-Play than in Monologue.

As for the breakdown of the use of taxonomy of mimetic words (Table 2), it is found that phenomime is used most often for both Monologue and Role-Play at about the similar frequency (68%). Phonomimes are used moderately for both Monologue and Role-Play, however, they seem to be more appropriate in a story-telling narrative such as Monologue (31%) than in role-play (12%). It is remarkable, however, that psychomimes are used only once (16%) during Monologues, while they are used 13 times (20 %) of the time in a role-play context.

Table 2: Summary of Breakdown between Monologue vs Role-Plays

	Phonomimes	Phenomimes	Psychomimes
Monologue(16)	5/16 (31%)	10/16 (63%)	1/16 (6%)
Role-Play (65)	8/65 (12%)	44 /65 (68%)	13 /65 (20%)
Total	13/81 (16%)	54/81 (67%)	14/81(17%)

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Phonomimes used in both data are limited to the sound of horns, such as "*paa paa,*" "*paan paan,*" "*po::n po::n,*" "*puu puu,*" "*ban ban*," and the sound of the bell for the bicycle which is unanimously the most archaic phonomime "*chirin chirin.*" It is found that phenomimes are used for describing the speed and erratic driving of the driver (e.g. "*ghaa,*" " *bhaa,*" "*byuu tto*") and about the damage of the bicycle itself (e.g. "*boro boro,*" " *gunya gunya,*" " *gusha gusha*") or the way the bike fell off the road (e.g. "*fura fura,*" "*pataa:n*" " *ghaan/to*"), for both Monologue and Role-Play data.

Although phenomimes are used for both Monologue and role-play, some significant qualitative difference in the way they are used is observed. Some phenomimes that are only observed in role-play imply the speaker's psychological state indirectly by describing a certain action. The examples are how the speaker gave a nasty look to the driver by using the mimesis for a long nasty look (*jiightto*) or short contemptuous (*chiratto*) gaze. Thus, not only is mimesis used more frequently in Role-Play, but it is also found that effective use of psychomime and phenomime, either directly or indirectly, reflecting the protagonist's psychological state becomes more salient in Role-Play data as the affective level is more intensified.

In phonological area, not only is the initial consonant /b/ is found to be one of the most frequently used consonants in Role-Play data, it is the only kind that is used across all the mimetic taxonomy: The horn goes "*bun bun*" *(*honk honk), the bicycle becomes "*boro boro*" (messed up), and the speaker gets scared in a way of *bibiru* (scared). With its symbolism of "suddenness" and "forcefulness" the initial /b/ may have immediate here-and-now orientation and show more intense affect, which is more appropriate for Role-Play (Hamano 1997:87).

As for the morpho-syntactic breakdown of mimetic words (Table 3) it is found that the adverbial form is predominantly used for both Monologue (25%) and Role-Play data. However, the independent single use of mimesis is only used in Monologue,

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whereas light-verb construction (11%) and noun/nominal adjectives (9%) exclusively

appeared in Role-Play data.

Table. 3 Summary of Morpho-syntactic breakdown of Mimesis

	Single	Adverbial	Verb	Noun/N.adj
Monologue (16)	**4 /16 (25%)**	12/16(75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Role-play (65)	0/65 (0%)	52/65 (80%)	**7/65 (11%)**	**6/65 (9%)**

 The result verifies what Hisao Kakehi (1993) found earlier, i.e, it is proven that adverbial

mimesis are not only more available but they are also used most often in actual

discourse. It is noteworthy that verb mimesis exlusively observed in Role-Play data

(8%) happened to be only psychomimes in the form of the light verb construction.

Examples are *puri puri suru* (being snappish), *suk-tto-suru*(feel great), *ira ira suru* (feel

irritated), and *hiri hiri suru* (feel hurting). Among those, *suka-tto-suru* and *ira ira suru*

are used by two informants each.

Though the single use of mimesis appears in both Monologue and Role-Play, the

ones appearing in Monologues are exclusively phonomimes such as *chirin chirin*? (ring

ring) and *po::n po::n?* (honk honk) and they are used between sentences as a kind of

sound effect of the story narrative:

(13)
1   ushiro kara ooboo -na   kuruma ga
        behind from arragant   car   SUBJ
        The car with a reckless driver approached me from behind

2   oikosoo   to   shite   kimashita,
        pass by   COMP do-and came
        it tried to pass me over

3   *po::n po::n*
          MIM
        Honk honk

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4       abuNAAit  to        omotte . . .
        dangerous  COMP   thought-and
         I thought it was dangerous so . .
```

As shown in (13), the phonomime *po::n po::n?* (honk honk) which appears in line 3 is totally independent from the story line as merely a sound effect. Conversely, noun and nominal use of mimesis in Role-Plays are used as a part of the predicate such as "*ase mo dara dara*" (sweat is streaming down) as a result of an omission of the final copula *desu* or *da* that follows.

Among all the data, only one female informant uses mimetic redundantly with lexicon of similar meaning, as it is shown in (14a) and (14b).

(14a) Monologue

```
1       kuruma ni notta ojisan             wa
        car    in  rode  middle aged man TOP
        The middle aged man in a car


2       sono otokonoko o     chuui       mo  sezuni
        that  boy       OBJ  attention   EMP do-without
        without paying any attention to the boy


3       supiido o  dashi-te    ba::to       toori-nuke-te,
        speed    OBJ accelerate-and MIM-COMP    pass-over-and
        pass over that boy with a terrible speed
```

(14b)   Role-Play:

```
1       sorede, SuGGOi supiido de tonori BA:::h?tto-toka
        and      terrible speed and next  MIM-COMP   like
        and the car passed by with a terrible speed like
        BOOM


2       hashitte kuru no
        running-come  N
        driving towards me
```

The mimetic adverb "*ba::*" refers to the rapid speed of something moving, so using it with the verb phrase "*spiido o dasu*" in Monologue or the adverbial phrase "*SuGGOi supiido* (awful speed) *de*" are obvious redundancies. Thus, the independent semantic meaning of mimesis may be more salient in actual discourse than what Kita (1997) claims.

Conlusion:

The most obvious finding in this study is that the number of mimesis used are much more frequent in an intensified emotive discourse such as the dramatic display of intensified affect in Role- Play-- more than four times that of the impersonal oral narrative of Monologue. A significant finding here is that mimesis in Role-Play data usually have their regular lexicon counterparts in Monologue data.

As for taxonomy of mimesis, it is found that phenomimes are used most often, in both Monologue and Role-Play. While phonomimes are mostly descriptive and used moderately for both Monologue and Role-Play, it is quite significant that psychomimes are used almost exclusively for role-play. Some phenomimes that are exclusively observed in Role-Play are the ones that imply specific affect of the speaker.

Further contrastive discourse analysis of Monologue and Role-Play data of the same context reveals how psychomimes in particular are effectively used to dramatize the emotive state of the protagonist that is described by the regular lexicon. As for phonology of mimesis, the initial consonant /b/ was used most often for Role-Play. Due to its sound symbolism of "suddenness," "forcefulness' and "intensity" (Hamano,1997), the initial consonant may decode high affect in Role-Play. In the area of semantics, most mimesis is used independently without being redundant with other lexicon of the same or similar meaning. The only example of redundant use of a mimetic word with the lexicon

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of similar meaning within the same sentence occurs in Role-Play data, which is used to intensify the affect further.

In the morpho-syntactic area, the most frequent type of mimesis used was mimetic adverbials for both Monologue and role-play. However, verb and noun/nominal mimesis are exclusively used only in Role-Play data, while the independent use of mimetic words as a background sound effect is only observed in Monologue.

By comparing two kinds of narratives, Monologue versus Role-Play, this study shows how mimesis can index intensity of meta-affect. One of the major findings of this study is the use of the unique variety of phenomimes and psychomimes in Japanese that are effectively used to enrich meta-affect expressions in to dramatize narratives and make them more appealing and interesting for the hearer.

For the future development of this research, other sociolingusitic varibles such as gender, distance and power between interlocutors should be investigated. With the limited number of subjects in this research, the conclusion is still descriptive and not definitive. Therefore, a larger number of subjects is needed to be conclusive. However, I hope this study will shed light on how Japanese mimesis is actually used in discourse as an intensifying device of affect.

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Foot Note:

1 The number indicates the number of mimesis words introduced in *Giongo Gitaig no Dokuhon* (" The readers of Mimetic words") (1991). The mimetics are collected in the dictionary are the standard and include literary expressions. Thus, the writer assumes a much larger number of mimetics are actually used when constantly emerging new ones are introduced through mass media and comics. Also see Sharp and Warren (1994) about English Onomatopoeia.

2 Maynard (1997) observed that Japanese are likely to "vent their anger and frustrations" among intimates (Maynard,1997 :97). David Matsumoto (1996) also found that expressing anger towards stranger or members of outgroup is one of the very few areas that Japanese intensify their emotional expressions because "it solidifies one's role and place within one's ingroup " (Matsumoto; 1996: 86). While their findings are either subjective observation or questionnaire method that do not reflect how the negative emotions are actually used or encoded linguistically, Baba (1998) proved

their claims based on the discourse data collected.

3 The context was determined based on the results from my preliminary
research on Japanese mimesis (Baba 1998). Accordingly, the socio-cultural
context in which Japanese informants shows the most intense emotional expression is
when they are reciting their own unhappy experiences to the researcher. It seems this
kind of indirect complaint may enhance empathy and solidarity levels through the
culturally acceptable act of commiseration. In fact, out of 41 mimetic words observed,
38 are observed to be used in unhappy experiences and only three are used for a happy
experience.

4. The observation about the extended meaning of English onomatopoeia was commented
on by Ms. Nancy Decker in our casual conversation. I greatly appreciated her observation
and comment. May 14, 2000.

5. Schourup (1993) observed English reduplications have vowel-alteration in the second
repetition, such as "jingle-jangle" instead of reapting the same word as in Japanese
counterpart of gata-gata. Carrigues also observed that unlike English, phonological
repetition of words in Japanese mimesis require that the first consonant of the second
repeated word to change as in toki doki (sometimes) sore-zore (each) for example.
(Garrigues, 1995:336).

6. There are five extenders examined yet the last format of variation as in *bikkuri* for
biku biku is not relevant for intensifying affect, so is not discussed here.

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