

how the various politics of belonging will influence each other and transform the seemingly rigid border between “Us” and “Them” within Japanese society.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

THIS KID'S A *HAFU*: ACCOMPLISHING MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY THROUGH REPORTED ASCRIPTIONS

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Introduction

The number of Japanese people entering into marriage with non-Japanese has increased seven-fold during the last twenty-five years, and with over 22,000 multiethnic Japanese children being born each year,¹⁶⁶ issues of identity are receiving unprecedented attention from the families and schools directly concerned. Children with multiple ethnic backgrounds often face difficulty in attempting to fit into the Japanese education system, which has traditionally dictated assimilation and homogeneity over multiculturalism. As a result, many dual-heritage families in Japan opt to send their children to international schools, where they can become part of a multilingual community and are free to cultivate and express a multicultural sense of self.

Yet even in educational environments that value diversity, issues of identity are frequently negotiated, disputed, and asserted—particularly for multiethnic people, who straddle more than one culture. Identity accomplishment is not always overt, and since various aspects of ethnicity can be subtly foregrounded and backgrounded through everyday conversation, it is worth investigating how identities are occasioned, indexed and made relevant during such mundane talk.¹⁶⁷

This chapter is based on data collected during an extensive study of identity accomplishment among multiethnic teenagers in an international school in Japan.¹⁶⁸ In a series of focus group sessions, the participants reported that their multiethnic identities were regularly occasioned through membership category work in commonplace situations. They were well aware of the way that identity categories could be used in interaction with others to relationally construct distinctions

between them and so-called "pure" Japanese. The chapter employs the related ethnomethodological approaches of conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA)¹⁶⁹ to examine two instances in which the participants use categories and category-bound activities as interactional resources to accomplish multiethnic identity in interaction.

Even without specifically using recognizable referents like "hafu" or "Japanese," speakers can cast a member into an identity category by assigning features to them that are associated with that category. During the focus group sessions, the participants reported that Japanese people often attributed non-Japanese characteristics to them, for example, by assuming that they do not have normal Japanese proficiency or fluency. These category-bound activities/attributes (CBAs) often involved reference to competence, either hyper-competence, such as above-average linguistic or athletic ability, or hypo-competence, in assuming a lack of proficiency in Japanese language or common social mores, such as the ability to use chopsticks.

Significantly, in raising these points during our discussions, the participants were not only demonstrating that they were able to recognize when they were being treated as foreign, but also tacitly asserting that this was an inappropriate identity category for them.

Identity Categories from a CA/MCA Perspective

One of Harvey Sacks's major aims in describing how people achieve social order through interaction was embodied in the study of what he called Membership Categorization Analysis. Any disparate group of four people may be arbitrarily termed A, B, C and D, but as soon as we identify them as a collection, for example 'a rock band,' we can assume that there will be certain roles that will be assigned to individuals in the group: vocalist, bass player, lead guitarist, drummer, and so on. Sacks calls such collections of categories Membership Categorization Devices, or MCDs.¹⁷⁰ The members of this group would then be understood to have certain definable proficiencies, activities, and character traits. They would, for example, be assumed to have certain musical abilities and tastes, to perform in concerts, and to make audio and video recordings of their work. Certain assumptions about their lifestyles might also be made, whether favorably, accurately, or otherwise. Sacks identified those activities that can normally be attributed to the members of a certain group as "category-bound activities."¹⁷¹

The same collection of people might equally be assigned the

term "British" if they were classified according to nationality. This would then presume certain features about their upbringing, legal documents they hold, and the way they talk. Any given person can be cast into a wide range of classificatory groups, depending on the MCD being currently invoked. At the same time, having certain characteristics and attributes or performing certain category-bound activities can prompt others to describe an individual according to a particular MCD. In Sacks's famous example—"The baby cried. The mommy picked it up"—it is clearly understood that the person who picked up the baby was the baby's mother, and not someone else's mother, because listeners ascribe the MCDs "mother" and "baby" to the collection "family" and have background knowledge of certain expected actions for each of the category members.¹⁷² Sacks explains the tendency for hearers to categorize this mother and baby as members of the same family according to his consistency rule.¹⁷³ In short this means that once a member of a hearable collection has been mentioned, subsequent members will be categorized according to the same collection. So in the earlier example of the rock band, it would be unlikely that one person would be categorized as the lead vocalist and another as a Liverpudlian. Likewise, Sacks puts forward an economy rule that states that it is sufficient to apply only one category to each member in any specific instance.¹⁷⁴

One particular type of membership categorization device in which the relationship between the two members "constitutes a locus of rights and obligations"¹⁷⁵ is the standardized relational pair, or SRP.¹⁷⁶ These are membership categories that are logically organized in dyads, such as husband-wife, parent-child, and employer-employee. The discursive occasioning of one such paired category can imply the speaker's reference to the other standard relational pair, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. In one example taken from Sacks's counseling data,¹⁷⁷ the interviewer asks the question, "Have you ever been married, Miss G?" In doing so he is invoking the husband-wife SRP through its shared inference to the category bound activity of "being married". Sacks demonstrates that by referring to actions and attributes, the interactants can foreground various aspects of their own or others' identities.¹⁷⁸ The pair of categories that will be of most relevance to the present study will be *Nihonjin-Gaijin* ("Japanese-Outsider"), particularly because multiethnic Japanese people are routinely classified in both of these categories depending on the speaker and the context, and by default can occupy a middle ground that defies and obscures ordinary SRPs.

The way that speakers react to each other, their demeanor towards other speakers, and the level of politeness they use are all reflected in the mechanics of their conversation. "Every turn at talk

is part of some structure, plays against some sort of expectation, and in its turn will set up something for the next speaker to be alive to.”¹⁷⁹ The basic organizational features that make up interaction, such fundamental CA tools as turn-taking, repair, preference, and sequencing,¹⁸⁰ are all influenced by the speaker’s identity-interaction,¹⁸¹ and in turn will affect the way that others view that identity.

Sacks often problematized static identities by prefixing verbs of existence with the word *doing*, in order to focus on the interactional nature of the action, such as “doing being ordinary.”¹⁸² In this way then, this chapter is concerned not so much about *what* multiethnic young people say about their identities as *how* they demonstrate aspects of who they are, or in other words, their ways of “doing being multiethnic”.

Method and Data Set

In the CA/MCA approach the data consist of sequences of unscripted interaction. When we examine the talk in fine detail, aspects of the speakers’ identities are not taken as relevant, except to the extent that the participants themselves orient to them in any particular stretch of talk.¹⁸³ To that end, I will not give a detailed list of the participants’ ages, linguistic proficiencies, or family backgrounds. Suffice to say that the focus groups each consisted of four to five multiethnic Japanese teenagers talking about identity-related topics provided by the non-Japanese moderator (the author). The total data set consists of four focus groups, each lasting around 1 hour, but in this chapter we will only be concerned with two short extracts that exemplify the way reported ascriptions were used throughout the sessions. The content of what the participants reported in these data sessions has been reported elsewhere;¹⁸⁴ the aim of the present study is to look at one socio-pragmatic aspect of what they are doing as they engage in those reports.

Elsewhere I have explored some of the ways that these participants used and reacted to the category label *hafu* in mundane conversation,¹⁸⁵ but the data in the present study are somewhat different in that they are taken from focus groups. Edwards and Stokoe warn that focus groups are not strictly natural interactions, since there are constraints on the turn-taking and topic selection, and therefore it is not common practice among CA researchers to collect data in this way. However, much of Sacks’ original data on which CA’s foundations were built were taken from group therapy sessions that had interactional constraints similar to those in focus group sessions.¹⁸⁶ So while it must be acknowledged that the data

are institutional talk, this does not diminish the fact that the participants’ responses are unscripted and natural.¹⁸⁷

Indexing Non-Japaneseness through Category-Bound Competencies

We will examine two segments of talk taken from the focus group discussions in which competency-based CBAs are accredited to a non-present speaker, and which are ultimately contested and rejected by the participants themselves. Just as speakers can treat the category *child* as pre-competent,¹⁸⁸ the category *hafu* was likewise found to be linked to competence. The category *child* becomes bound to pre-competence by indexing its Standard Relational Pair, *adult*. The category *hafu*, however, invokes the SRP *Japanese/non-Japanese* and holds the potential to index superior or inferior competence by casting the multiethnic person into either of these categories, depending on the category of the speaker.

First we will examine a sequence of talk occasioned by a discussion point that asked the participants to choose which of the two following statements they agreed with more:

“
Most people I meet don’t have any particular
reaction when I tell them I’m *hafu*.
”

“
People are shocked when they find out
my father/mother is not Japanese.
”

The aim of the exercise was not to quantify the participants’ responses, but rather to get them to talk about the middle ground between these two extremes. The excerpt begins at a point in the discussion when Nina has stated that she does not feel people are shocked to find out she is *hafu*, but they still have some sort of reaction. She then proceeds to explicate some of these reactions by giving an impromptu tongue-in-cheek performance that she seems to have designed as a compilation of a variety of ascriptions heard from Japanese people throughout her life, demonstrating her awareness that people were treating her as non-Japanese. Readers who are unfamiliar with CA can find an overview of some of the main transcript conventions in the endnotes¹⁸⁹ and an audio link

to these conversations is available at audio and video section of the www.hapajapan.com website.

EXCERPT 1 FG2 5:32 ohashi

- 01 Nina [they have some] kind of reaction.
 02 Mia [m m m]
 03 Nina [but they still have (initial) s[hock] (voice)]
 04 Mia [not like extre::me]
 05 Kate [()]
 06 (0.9)
 07 Kate smuuzuni ah yappari ne[:::]
 smoothly ah indeed IP
They just say, 'Oh I thought so', quite naturally.
 ((clears throat)) [nghn]
 08 Nina (0.3)
 09 () dakara (0.4) betsuni ()
 10 Kate so particularly
 (1.9)
 11 watashi ni [taishite,] ()
 12 me with respect to
 13 [((clonk))]
 14 [mm. nothing.]
So, they don't say anything in particular about me.
 15 Nina [futusu (.) desho?]
 normal TAG
Normal, right?
 16 random questions.
 17 (0.4)
 18 ne? natto wa? toka
 IP beans TOP etc
Random questions, right? 'How about natto?' and that sort of thing.
 19 BJ ts ☺ soh soh da.☺ kiite kuru [yo.]
 yeah yeah COP ask-CONT come IP
Yeah, yeah they come and ask that.
 20 Kate [sore]
 that
 21 kikareta koto nai
 ask-PAS-PST thing NEG
 22 [n da yo ne.]
 NR COP IP IP
I have never been asked that.
 23 Mia °[watashi aru [wa]°
 me have IP
I have.
 24 Nina >[oji]ichan to obaasan
 grandfather and grandmother
 25 (kekko) iu.< toshiyori kei.
 often say elderly type
Old men and women often say that. Elderly types.

- 26 BJ ny↑A::h|hh. ((an affiliative display))
 27 Nina natto taberu n da [ne::.]=
 beans eat NR COP IP
 [m::m.]
 28 Mia =ohashi tsukaeraremasu?
 29 Nina chopsticks-POL use-POT-POL
Oh, so you eat natto, do you?
Can you use chopsticks?
 30 Mick: ts[s:: hh]
 31 Mia, BJ [((laugh))]
 32 BJ i(hh)ru(h) yo ne.
 COP IP IP
There are people like that, aren't there.
 33 Kate wa[rai sugi da yo]
 laugh too much COP IP
You're laughing too much.
 34 Mick FEEL [sushi toka ku]ttatte
 sushi etc eat-even
 35 nammara bibirareru ssho ((dialect))
 really surprise-PASS TAG
They act real shocked even if you just eat sushi.
 36 Nina: oishii desu [ka::?] ((grandma voice))
 good taste COP-POL Q
"Do you like the taste?"
 37 Mick: [sushi]
 38 BJ: [iya]
 no/yeah
 39 gaijin [rashiku itteru]
 foreigner like say-PRES-CONT
Yeah, they're saying it like they're talking to a foreigner.
 40 Mia: [fohku o tsukaimasu ka]
 fork ACC use-POL Q
 41 fohku?
 fork
"A fork. Would you like a fork?"

In this segment, the participants recall a variety of reported ascriptions that they have experienced in their daily lives. They list several social competencies that are linked to the identity category *Japanese*, including the ability to eat *natto*/fermented soybeans (lines 18, 27) or sushi (lines 34-35, 37), or use chopsticks (line 29). Note that all these activities would be considered unremarkable competencies for members of that category. Therefore, by raising these topics to the participants, particularly in the form of a question, the hypothetically quoted speaker is inferring that the multiethnic participants do not possess competencies that are unmarked for others of the membership category *Japanese*.¹⁹⁰ In other words, the reported speakers are placing the person to whom they are directing their question in some category other than Japanese. Here is where

Sacks's *economy rule* comes into play. As outlined above, this rule states that, "a single category from any membership categorization device can be referentially adequate."¹⁹¹ The speaker is situating the participant in some other category within the MCD *ethnicity*, and the standard relational pair that is being invoked in this instance is *non-Japanese*.

In line 39, BJ makes it clear that he hears Nina and Micks' reported ascriptions as indexing the category *non-Japanese*, by offering an account that names the category explicitly: "*gaijin rashiku itteru*" ("They're saying it like they're talking to a foreigner"). In this way, several instances of category-bound activities have occasioned an instance of the ethnic referent *gaijin* in the talk.

At the same time, the participants also subtly ascribe an identity category to the non-present speaker—the person who has reportedly ascribed an identity category to them. Although it would be obvious to most readers, and to the participants themselves, that the people who are using these CBAs are Japanese, that membership category is not referred to directly in the talk, and does not need to be. We know that the old people who ask Nina if she can eat *natto* in lines 25-29 are *Japanese* old people, not because Nina says so specifically, but because this is the kind of question that Japanese people ask foreigners, and because Nina ridicules the fact that she is being placed in that category.

We can likewise hear Nina's reported ascriptions, such as the questions in lines 29 and 36, as quoted speech from a Japanese source by examining the details of the talk. To begin with, they are delivered in Japanese. This in itself is not firm evidence, as there are many other actions within the sequence that are also performed in that medium and, at any rate, quoted speech in bilingual interaction is not always repeated in the medium in which it was delivered.¹⁹² However, it does facilitate the work of building in-group identity by invoking an image of the person who is reportedly speaking.

This choice of Japanese as a medium allows Nina to make use of politeness as an interactional resource in designing the reported ascriptions. The polite copula in line 36 ("*oishii desu ka*") and her hyperstylized attempt at honorific speech¹⁹³ in line 29 ("*ohashi tsukaeraremasu?*") both indicate social distance between the reported speaker and Nina. Polite speech forms index social asymmetry through the talk, implying that the reported speaker does not equate the recipient (Nina herself) as an equal, that is, someone who belongs to a similar identity category.

In contrast, Mick's ascription in lines 34-35 is delivered very much in his own voice, incorporating elements of the local dialect that contrast with the polite speech that Nina is attributing to the non-present speakers. However, Mick's turn is not designed to be hypothetical reported speech, instead giving a more general account of an ascription. Again, even though Mick does not use a subject, it can be understood that it is Japanese people being shocked at the fact that he can eat sushi, since that is the category that has been sequentially occasioned by Nina.

Iino refers to the kind of ethnification that Nina and Mick are reporting as "*Gaijinization*."¹⁹⁴ He notes that the proficient use of chopsticks or the ability to eat *natto* (the very things that Nina mentions) are "*Japanese identity markers*"¹⁹⁵ and are often invoked by Japanese as a means of reaffirming cultural identity. Because Nina is Japanese, she has access to such cultural codes and knows that they are generally applied only to foreigners. She also realizes that when they are being applied to her, it likewise casts her as non-Japanese.

Obviously the participants do not accept these ascriptions as accurate. The very point in raising them is to lampoon them, and thus challenge their legitimacy. The recipients orient to these reported quotes as intentionally ironic, through a display of disbelief (line 26), suppressed laughter¹⁹⁶ (line 30), open laughter (line 31), and agreement (line 32). It is apparent that most of the participants do not categorize themselves as non-Japanese, at least in this interactional context.

However they are not in complete unison in this regard. Throughout the sequence, Kate's utterances are at odds with the emergent stance of the rest of the group. Just prior to this sequence she has stated that she sees herself as Japanese and that Japanese people do not treat her any differently to other people, a position that she maintains throughout this excerpt. She produces a disagreement after Nina's first reported ascription (line 20-22) and cautions BJ and Mia when they provide affiliative laughter (line 33). These actions serve to demonstrate that Kate's experience with reported ascriptions is not the same as the others (lines 7-14), possibly reflecting the fact that her physical appearance is more Japanese than the others.

Even though Kate claims to have never been asked about *natto* (lines 20-22), she is able to recognize that this is the sort of question that multiethnic Japanese people are often asked. Nina's turn in line 18 "*natto wa toka*," the first occurrence of a reported ascription in the sequence, literally means "how about *natto*? and so on." At this

stage in the talk, Nina has only typified the ascriptions as "random questions" (line 16), but the minimal reference to *natto* is sufficient for Kate to index the *ethnicity* MCD, and to subsequently disaffiliate in deference to her prior affiliation with the category *Japanese*.

In one respect then, Kate's oppositional stance serves to cast herself as Japanese at a point in the talk at which the other participants are parodying those they have placed in that category. Nina, Mick, and the others are noticeably disaffiliating with both the category-bound activities that attribute them with novice (non-Japanese) competencies, and with the Japanese speakers who they have implied said them.

The flipside to this argument comes when multiethnic people are ascribed competencies that are beyond their abilities, or when they are called upon to demonstrate these proficiencies in order to justify inclusion in a certain membership category. The participants reported that this form of ethnification often took place in relation to linguistic proficiency, as typified in the second excerpt by the reported request "*eigo shabette mite*" ("Speak some English"). The full transcript for this can also be found in the endnote.

EXCERPT 2 FG15:50 *eigo shabette mite*

01 Ulliani >kono ko<, haafu da sa.
This kid half COP IP
This kid's a haafu.

02 Tim HA [HA.]
03 Eri [()]
04 Ulliani ()
05 Tim ye:ah.
06 Eri [otohsa]n ameri[kajin yo] kono ko
father American IP this kid
Her father's American, this kid.

07 Peter [demo] [demo]
but but
08 Eri [and we go what?]
09 Peter [ano sa]
IT IP
Um, hey,
(0.6)
10 yeah[(Pete).]
11 Benny? [a-]after yo:u've been talking for
12 Peter about u:m ten minutes of Japanese they ask
13 you i[if you can] [speak] Japa[nese]
14 [ah yeah] [nese].

16 Eri [a(h) hhhn] [heheheh]
17 Tim mm.
18 Peter that's so weird.
19 Tim ☺ [use cho]psticks? ☺
20 Eri [(a:nd)]
21 Peter (and you're) no. if you ah-
22 yo[u can] speak Japanese=
23 Tim [nyeah]
24 Peter =[after I]'ve spoken [Japanē][se.]
25 Tim [oh right] [yeah.]
26 Eri [yeah]
27 Ulliani [hehha]
28 Benny [()]
29 Peter and they- she just (goes)
30 (Pete)-chan. *Nihongo shabereru* n [da.]
Pete Japanese speak-POT VN COP
Hey Pete, you can speak Japanese!
31 Tim ((laughing through nose)) [nng]gh
32 shabette n jan. u[h ha ha]
speak-PRES-CONT VN NEG
I am speaking it.
33 Peter [shabet]te n
speak-PRES-CONT VN
34 j[a:n. (.) °mitai na kan]ji°
NEG like PT feeling
Like, I am speaking it.
35 Tim [u Ha ha ha]
36 Ulliani that's what I [()].
37 Eri [I know]
38 (0.3)
39 Ulliani *eigo shabete mite*
English say-CONT try-CONT
Go on, say something in English.
(That's what [I get])
40 Eri [a:ah.][ah]
41 Tim [but] su]ddenly [the:y]=
42 Ulliani ☺[ahan]☺
43 Benny yeah
44 Peter [i-if y]ou
45 [you sa:y-]
46 Ulliani =[suddenly.]
47 Peter if you say 'yada they jus::t assume you can't.
no
48 Eri soh soh
yeah yeah
49 Tim [ri:ght.]
50 Benny [un un]
yeah yeah

[shabere]nai n desho. shabereru n desho:
 talk-POT-NEG VN TAG talk-POT VN talk
 "I bet you can't speak English." "I bet you can."

As in Excerpt 1, this sequence deals with reported ascriptions that can be hearably attributed to a (non-multiethnic) Japanese person. The excerpt is part of a longer sequence of reported ascriptions in which the ethnifiers have clearly been established as Japanese, in particular Japanese teenage girls from a neighboring school. Just prior to the beginning of this excerpt the participants have noted that such girls like to go out with "American guys" just because they are "kakkoii" ("cool"). This leads Ulliani to provide a story about a situation in which her friends introduced her as *hafu*, for what she implies is its novelty or status value. Excerpt 2 begins in that sequential context, and line 1 "kono ko hafu da sa" ("This kid's a hafu") is a repetition of the reported ascription that has received affiliative laughter just prior to the excerpt.

So it is this interactional environment, in which the participants are disaffiliating with the reported actions of a group of people from a membership category other than their own, that occasions Peter's second story of a similarly absurd reported ascription from the same group of Japanese teenage girls. In lines 12-14, he notes that such girls ask him if he can speak Japanese, even when it should be commonsensically clear that he can, because he is speaking to them in Japanese and has been doing so for some time. In other words, Peter is treating this reported action as illogical, as evidenced by his negative assessment in line 18. It appears that Benny and Eri are quick to recognize where Peter's story is headed, providing overlapped receipt tokens and laughter at a point when the turn-in-progress is incomplete (lines 15-16), which leads to Benny's co-completion of Peter's turn (line 15). There are also further agreement tokens from the recipients after Peter repairs his account by providing a simplified version in lines 21-24, indicating that the other participants had experienced this form of ascription.

This then occasions a reported speech sequence that is collaboratively produced by Peter and Tim in lines 29-35 and serves to further depict the scene that Peter has just described. The sequence is initiated in lines 29-30 by Peter with the utterance, "and they-she just (goes) (Pete)-chan. *Nihongo shabereru n* [da.]." Peter makes use of discourse-related codeswitching to achieve two different voices within this turn. His own, as narrator, is produced in English while what the girl said is delivered in Japanese. After a form of suppressed laughter in line 31 that disaffiliates with the reported

ascription and projects alignment with Peter's emergent stance, Tim produces a response that places him discursively in the role of Peter (line 32).¹⁹⁷ In other words, Tim produces the sort of response that Peter could have given to the girls within the story.

Line 30 ("*Nihongo shaberu n da*"/ "you can speak Japanese") is hearable as a noticing, but one that is presumably misaligned with the talk, since it has come after Peter has reportedly been speaking Japanese for some time (line 13). Were this a real-time conversation instead of reported speech, the sort of action that might come after such a misaligned noticing would be some form of repair-initiating action, such as the one Tim produces in line 32 ("*shabette n jan*"/ "I am speaking it"). In this way, Tim is co-participating in the reported speech by expressing the sort of reaction that someone in that situation might have. Peter signals that this response is an appropriate one, demonstrating his agreement by repeating Tim's utterance in his next turn (lines 33-34), or what Schegloff terms *confirming an allusion*.¹⁹⁸ At the same time this allows Peter to take back control of the story and recast himself as the recipient of the reported ascription.

Like those in Excerpt 1, the reported ascription in line 30 relies on a competency-based CBA, this time linked to linguistic proficiency. Specifically, the reported speaker indexes the MCD *ethnicity* by noticing that Peter can communicate in Japanese. If the girl considered Peter to be Japanese, it would be highly unlikely that she would point out that he can speak Japanese, an activity that is so routinely bound to that membership category as not to warrant mentioning. In fact, by doing an explicit noticing of Peter's Japanese proficiency, the reported speaker is proposing that this is an unexpected activity for the category in which she had placed him up to that point. In other words, the noticing of Japanese proficiency casts Peter not in the category *Japanese*, but in its SRP, *non-Japanese*.

Put differently, the reported speech from line 30 might go something like, "Peter, you have linguistic competency that is linked to an identity category to which I didn't think you belonged." One inference that can be drawn from such a noticing—by Peter in real-time, as well as by the analyst through examining the details of the unfolding conversation—is that there must be some other reason why the reported speaker did not cast Peter in the category *Japanese*. Without having access to what was said in the short time that Peter and the girl were actually talking, the logical assumption is that she considered him to be non-Japanese, or at least multiethnic, based on his appearance. In fact, the

important point to note is that, whether she considered Peter to be foreign or *hafu*, she is attributing non-Japanese characteristics to him by displaying awe at his mastery of an activity that is routine for Japanese people. Moreover, by reporting this account during a later discussion of illogical ways in which multiethnic people are treated, Peter is acknowledging his recognition of the identity work that such a noticing has achieved.

Evidence that Peter and the other participants dispute these categorizations is made visible in the ongoing interaction. As mentioned earlier, the utterance "*shabette n jan*" ("I am speaking it"; lines 32-34), which is produced as a next-turn response to the reported ascription, accomplishes a sarcastic stance by producing an equally ludicrous noticing of a patently obvious CBA. This serves to downplay the note-worthiness of the reported ascription, and by implication assumes that Peter should be equally logically placed in a membership category in which mentioning such linguistic competence should not happen, that is *Japanese*.

Since this episode has occasioned the link between language and ethnicity, Ulliani puts forward another instance of reported speech that is again hearable as coming from a Japanese source: "*eigo shabete mite*" ("say something in English;" line 39). In this case, the hypothetical speaker is not only invoking an activity that is bound to the identity category *non-Japanese*, but also employing it to assess the recipient's appropriateness to that category. This places the multiethnic Japanese person in an interactional dilemma. By complying and actually saying something in fluent English, they are accomplishing a category-based distinction between them and the Japanese person; however, as Peter notes in line 47, to refuse denies them recognition of their true abilities. As Eri acknowledges in line 51, this leaves them open to further interrogation of the kind that will ultimately isolate them from their peers anyway.

Linguistic competency, whether in Japanese or English, can therefore also be invoked as an activity that is linked to various categories in the *ethnicity* MCD. Fluency in English can be used as a "test of credentials" to establish incumbency in the category *non-Japanese*, while noticing or praising Japanese proficiency can likewise evoke the same membership category. Jayyusi notes that naturally occurring categories such as *woman*, *child*, or *black* are treatable as stable incumbencies, while competence categorizations like *blacksmith* or *doctor* imply some special proficiency that has been achieved.⁹⁹ At one level, categories such as *Japanese* or *American* can be viewed as stable, but they also imply certain socially achieved competencies. When a Japanese speaker calls into

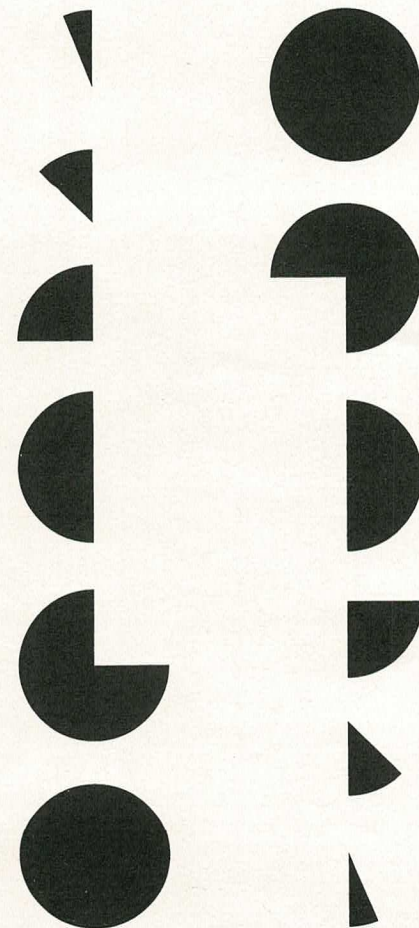
question a multiethnic person's possession of some competency that is commonsensically linked to the category *Japanese*, they are by implication casting that person outside ordinary socially established understandings of Japaneseeness.

Concluding Comments

While Japanese people may acknowledge that multiethnic Japanese people have access to certain Japanese competencies, these abilities may be publicly or perceptually available. By making them accountable for such category-bound competencies, the Japanese speaker is co-participating in accomplishing multiethnic Japanese identity through talk.

Multiethnic Japanese people will no doubt have dealt with similar experiences to the ones reported in this chapter and will most likely have been left with the same sort of reactions that the participants reported. The strength of the application of CA and MCA is that it becomes possible to work up an empirical account of identity ascription based on actual instances of real-time talk. Rather than just decontextualized content, the focus then becomes how identity is made relevant in a certain sequential time and place and how it is used to perform various socio-pragmatic actions. In the cases we have examined in this chapter the act of reporting ascriptions within a narrative sequence allowed the participants to react to them in real-time as a form of audience assessment, demonstrating that multi-ethnic people are aware of the impact of these category-based interrogations within their daily lives.

hapa japan



VOLUME TWO Identities & Representations
EDITED BY Duncan Ryūken Williams

ITO CENTER EDITIONS

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and Culture/Kaya Press
Published by Ito Center Editions, an imprint of Kaya Press
www.kaya.com

Cover design and artwork by spoon+fork
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Printed in Korea
Distributed by D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers
155 Avenue of the Americas, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10013
800.338.BOOK www.artbook.com

HAPA JAPAN: HISTORY (Volume 1)
Edited by Duncan Ryūken Williams
ISBN 978-1-885030-53-5;
Library of Congress Control Number: 2016961884

HAPA JAPAN: IDENTITIES & REPRESENTATIONS (Volume 2)
Edited by Duncan Ryūken Williams
ISBN 978-1-885030-54-2;
Library of Congress Control Number: 2016961884

This publication is made possible by support from: the Japan Foundation; the Shinnyo-en Buddhist order; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Arts, Letters, and Sciences; the USC Department of American Studies and Ethnicity; and the USC Asian American Studies Program. Special thanks to the Choi Chang Soo Foundation for their support of this work. Additional funding was provided by the generous contributions of: Amna Akbar, Jade Chang, Lisa Chen & Andy Hsiao, Floyd & Sheri Cheung, Prince Kahmolvat Gomolvilas, Jean Ho, Huy Hong, Helen Heran Kim, Juliana S. Koo, Pritsana Kootint-Hadiatmodjo, Ed Lin, Viet Nguyen, Chez Bryan Ong, Whakyung & Hong Yung Lee, Amarnath Ravva, Duncan Williams, Mikoto Yoshida, Anita Wu & James Spicer, and others. Kaya Press is also supported, in part, by: the National Endowment for the Arts; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission; the Community of Literary Magazines and Presses; and the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.

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