

Correlating Asian 'Laughters:' An Onomatopoeia Framework

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Asian Linguistic Anthropology
2021, Vol. 3(2): 49-69
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DOI: 10.47298/jala.v3-i2-a4
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Abstract

This study documents onomatopoeia of laughter in Chinese comics and their Japanese translations, by comparing the translation of Chinese laughter onomatopoeia into Japanese laughter onomatopoeia and then by observing and analyzing the sentence-ending particle. The study ultimately seeks to examine the similarities and differences between two languages as their laughter onomatopoeia discourse markers.

The results indicate that the onomatopoeia of laughter is used in both languages to describe social and aggressive laughter as discourse markers that advance the flow of conversation. In Chinese face threatening contexts, speakers use the onomatopoeia of laughter, where in the Japanese context, speakers resort to using a sentence-ending particle in Japanese, so as to alleviate embarrassment.

Keywords: *Laughter onomatopoeia, interjections, discourse marker, face threatening acts, Asia*

Introduction

The act of laughter represents a multimodal performance, bringing together a range of bodily expressions, sounds, symbolisms, and so forth. The writings of most cultures include this concomitance of modalities during transcriptions of laughter. Such laughter onomatopoeia (LO) (Nagasato, 2007)

has become a useful textual apparatus in Asian societies, such as in Japan and China. For example, the Japanese label these writings as Hiragana syllabary, pervasive throughout Japanese anime and literature (Tamori, 2010). In the Chinese context, scholarship has focused on LO, in work such as the analysis of discourse and conversation. Aligning with this, according to Su (2012), objects similar to 'hehe' express disapproval of other conversation interlocutors. Chinese transcriptions of LO differ semiotically to the Japanese, and thus communications between the two contexts are impeded, requiring cultural sensitivity between the two contexts.

In this study, I address conflicts arising during the translation between Japanese and Chinese LO. LO in each of these two languages, which at times have significant similarity. As such, I draw on the functional discourse markers in each of these languages, and observe the critical sentence-final particle functions of onomatopoeic words. For this, I turn to a framework of Conversation Analysis (Jefferson, 1979; Glenn and Holt, 2013).

To develop the comparison of categories of laughter (e.g., sarcastic laughter, spiteful laughter, personal vocalized sarcasm, and so forth) that these words symbolize in various forms, throughout the paper, I put forward the fact that the communicative functions of these words embody a range of emotional properties. The Japanese and Chinese contexts thus contain a pervasive level of these LO, and the languages in the current form are structured on the use of LO.

Context

2.1 Chinese and Japanese LO and Transcription

Work on conversation, that is, Conversation Analysis, initially focused on oral laughter in talk and during general oral interaction (e.g., Jefferson, 1979, 1984). The proponents of these frameworks created a transcription system for laughter, e.g., 'hhehheh,' discovered ways through which to provide metalingual notifications for laughter, developed ways in which to symbolize functional properties beyond the word, such as volume, modulation, and pitch with arrows, e.g., '↑hhah' (Hepburn and Varney, 2013). The scope of work at the time developed ideas of notation, that is, the understanding that notation can effectively represent speech in multiple and at times ambiguous ways. As such, this work pushed forward other work in LO, as a field with potential to expand into its own domain.

The distinction between onomatopoeia and transcription has been one of interest to linguists, and to the field of linguistics beyond, such as in anthropology, semiotics, and so forth. For example, the exclamation 'ha' in Chinese is written as the character '哈' (ha pinyin). The pinyin form is grounded on a traditional Chinese structure, where the consonant precedes the vowel itself as a compound structure. As Triskova (2011) explains, Chinese Pinyin characters rarely combine two of the same consonant in the presence of one vowel, such as 'hha.' However, the opposite may be the case, where the word or character includes one consonant and a diphthong, for e.g., 'hei' (sly smile). Speakers of

Japanese, particularly those of Japanese literature and modern animation, can identify with the extensive onomatopoeia and transcription in Hiragana. Here, for example, the character 'ha' is onomatopoeically represented and transcribed through Hiragana syllabary as 'ハ.' In the same way, Katakana syllabary functions so as to facilitate onomatopoeia and transcription. The character 'は' ('ha') exemplifies this. Nagashima (2006) explains that Japanese can and does contain an extensive amount of onomatopoeia and transcription vocabulary, by adjoining Hiragana Katakana syllabary in a range of permutations. This vocabulary sits within a wide spectrum of possibilities of permutations, where some vocabulary closely represents laughter phonetics and other vocabulary does not resemble laughter. For example 'ehehe'(エヘヘ), and 'ufufu' (ウフフ) suggest irregular or unconventional laughter styles. Similarly, particular styles of laughter mediate the use of particular morphologies. Chinese and Japanese LO each contain an extensive range of LO, and of LO categories. One such category is the recurring syllable. Here, Nagasato (2007) informs that this category elicits conceptions of presence, that is, of being present at the discourse. These reduplications can occur at various levels, such as one or more syllables. One-syllable reduplications, e.g., 'ha-ha' and 'ha-ha-ha' allow for a reduplication of the syllable to any extent. Length of reduplication correlates positively with the intended intensification of the laughter. This repetition, according to Kubozono (2017) emulates the laughter style in Chinese known as 'xiàngshēngcí,' and in Japanese known as 'Giongo.'

Tamori (2010) notes that in Japanese texts, onomatopoeia can include visuals which are silent. In Japanese, these are known as 'gitaigo.' whereas in Chinese these are labelled 'xiàng tài cí.' For example, the two-syllable repetition 'niko-niko' (bright joyful smile) onomatopoeically represents a silent action. This onomatopoeia does not attempt to emulate laughter phonics, e.g., in 'niko-niko-niko,' two syllables repeat. In the Japanese context, two-syllable repetitions contain the 'n' as an onomatopoeia of any of several particular smile onomatopoeia; 'nita-nita' (a creepy smile), and 'niya-niya' (a plausible smile). However, 'kara-kara' and 'gera-gera' imitate a loud laugh, e.g., 'gionngo.' In Chinese, the smile is represented only by forms such as 'xixi-haha,' and not 'xiha-xiha' or 'xiha-xiha-xiha', although other forms also exist.

Despite their limited symbolisms for mimicking laughter, the Japanese Hiragana-Katakana syllabary and Chinese characters are common in literature and comics. Authors of both Japanese and Chinese texts have increasingly resorted to using LO to express textual emotions (Bu and Su, 2011), facilitated by the fact that audiences recognize not only laughter (e.g., 'xixi' snicker, 'hehe' giggle), but also emotions (e.g., 'hahaha' pleasure, 'fun' ridicule, 'heihei' teasing). As a result.

Chinese and Japanese LO as Discourse Markers

Discourse markers, according to Schiffrin (1987), are both cataphoric and anaphoric elements which, while being sequentially dependent, separate particular units of talk." phrases such as 'mmm,' 'look,' 'you know,' 'get this' and 'so,' are discourse markers in English. The Japanese interjections 'aa' (ah.

I see), 'ara' (oh dear), and the conjunctions 'dakara'(because), 'datte'(but),' and 'aruiha' (or) are regarded as discourse markers (Fujii, 2013). The discourse marker framework can be applied effectively to LO, as much LO content serves as a boundary for other talk. Bu and Su (2011), for example, integrate a discourse marker framework to analyze Chinese LO, thus observing and discussing propositions content. This propositional content, Bu and Su suggest, prompts listeners to infer speaker intention rather than becoming a denotative reference.

These markers in Chinese LO can each convey a plethora of symbolisms and hence meanings. Liang (2014), for example, argues for the separation of LO discourse markers into two general categories; 'topic development,' (below) which generally marks the beginning of a statement, and 'response type,' a complement to another statement. For example, 'S' is added as a marker to the beginning of a sentence with a two- or more character conversation, to suggest 'speaker.'

Example Set 1

- 1.1 S1: hehe chén zǒng , jīn tiān tiān qì bù cuò ne!
S1: hehe Mr. Chen, the weather has been really nice lately
- 1.2 S1: xiàn zài de nǚ de dōu tài wù zhì le
S2: hehe
S1: Women enjoy the material comforts now
S2: hehe'
- 1.3 S1: Zhēn méiyǒu, nándào wǒ hái piàn nǐ bùchéng
S2: hehe
S1: I really didn't. Do you really think that I would lie to you? S2: hehe'

In Example 1.1, S1 uses 'hehe' (a gentle laugh) to grab the interlocutor's attention, and as a greeting, similar to 'Hey!' as a gentle, light and friendly laugh communication, 'hehe' makes the S1's tone more humble and polite (Liang, 2014). Bu and Su (2011) point out that 'hehe' can be used alone, or with several connected phrases. In Example 1.2, S1 complained about women getting too physical, S2 responds with 'hehe' (a vague laughter). This becomes a hedge, as it is unclear as to whether the answer is 'yes' or 'no.' 'hehe' can be interpreted as that S2 agreed with S1, and S2 want to avoid saying mean things about women , and hence an indirect response. According to Bu and Su (2011) in most cases, 'hehe' expresses a more relaxed, soothing, casual tone. However, in Example 1.3, a mocking laugh was S2's answer, because S2 didn't believe S1. 'hehe'

In the following examples, 'hehe' becomes a response with which to express either agreement or disagreement (Bu and Su, 2011).

Example Set 2

- 2.1 S1: shēn tǐ shì gé mìng de běn qián ā
 S2: hehe, yīqiè dōu shì fúyún, shēntǐ zuì zhòngyào
 'S1: without a healthy body, nothing is fine.
 S2: hehe everything is fleeting, the body is the most important'
- 2.2 S1: Zuótiān zài xīn shìjiè bàile sāntiáo qúnzi
 S2: zhēnshi yǒu qián rén, hehe
 'S1: I bought three skirts in Shinshijie Department Store yesterday.
 S2: you are so rich, hehe'

According to Bu and Su (2011), the onomatopoeic 'hehe' highlights the affective or emotional component of the speech. As such, 'hehe' (a friendly laugh) in Example 2.1 suggests a positive response. In contrast, the speaker may imply a disagreement rather than a denial. In Example 2.2, a perfunctory 'hehe' at the beginning of the response, ensures that S2 is not speaking forcefully, and hence softens the tone. Conversely, without this LO, the tone remains sharp.

I agree with Bu and Su (2011) in noting that LO assists in the boundedness or mobility of talk, or in the movement from one topic to another. LO in Moreso contains respective and necessary discourse markers to reinforce context in Chinese texts, particularly comics. Here, LO acts to mitigate discourse and communication, particularly aspects of tone, thus lowering awkwardness to alter adverse or heated discursive interactions. In Example Set 3 below, S1 has no desire to talk, and S2 laughs off an embarrassing situation (Liang, 2014).

Example Set 3

- 3.1 S1: Zhège ma.....
 S2: hehe, méiguānxì, jiù bù wéinán nǐle.
 'S1: Well...
 S2: hehe, it's okay, I won't be hard on you '
- 3.2 S1: Zhè gēn nǐ yǒu shé me guānxì a?
 S2: Méishì er xiā wèn wèn bei, hehe
 'S1: is this your business
 S2: Nothing. I was just wondering, hehe'

In Example 3.1, S2 expresses uncertainty as to what S1 is thinking, through the word 'Zhège ma' (well). S2 must complete the conversation even during uncertainty. According to Yael (1998), objects at the lexical level, while signifying a speaker's thought process, become markers of the speaker's

primary discourse. 'Hehe' becomes a highly effective marker, when people seek to leave a conversation. Su (2012) emphasizes that the Chinese LO 'hehe' is not directly linked to speaker intentions, becoming a highly contextualized term which requires an understanding of the larger context.

Xia (2021) studied the pragmatic features of 'haha,' 'heihei,' and 'hehe,' as discourse markers in Chinese comics and their Japanese translation, noting that Japanese versions tend to use interjections to translate LO from Chinese versions when they appear alone in the response. For example:

Example Set 4

4.1 S1: Xiànzài shǒuyào de shì jiějué wǒmen de cáizhèng chīzì duì ba xiǎo liàng
S2: ha...haha

4.2 S1: Ima oretachi ni totte ichiban jūyōna no wa ashita no shokujida-sōdaro Ryō
S2: un... maa souda ne niisan
'S1: Now the first thing is to solve our fiscal deficit.....right? Xiaoliang
S2: ha...haha'

In Example 4.1, Xia (2021) suggests that the initial response 'ha' does not clearly present the attitude of S2, and the ellipsis '...' deepens the speaker's hesitation. The last part 'haha,' however, expresses ambiguous laughter and signals the end of the topic. 'Ha' and 'haha' can be used as discourse markers, as is 'hehe' above (Bu and Su, 2011). In contrast, the response in the Japanese translation comprises interjections ('Un' yup, 'maa' well) and shortened sentences ('souda ne' I agree, 'niisan' older brother). In Example 4.2, S2 approves with 'Un' (yup), after which, S2 expresses a 'reluctant recognition' (Togashi, 2002) by stating "maa" (well), followed by "souda ne" (I agree) as definite affirmation. Through this combination of responses and statements, S2 takes an ambiguous stand. Xia (2021) notes that Chinese speakers explore the subtext and internal rhythms of feelings through LOs, however in Japanese, an LO is not usually considered to be common conversation.

Methodological Framework

This research draws on a long period of working on and conceptualizing onomatopoeia in both the Japanese and Chinese contexts. The ethnographic part of the research emerged from my work in both contexts, that is, in China, and then in Japan, engaging with speakers of both languages in the field of literature, as well as with larger society. The idea of the discourse marker arose from my own interactions with texts and interpersonal interaction, as I increasingly saw boundedness between parts of texts, separated by certain markers. These markers have been described and defined by several scholars, such as Schiffrin (1987).

In the Chinese context, Bu and Su (2011) discuss these discourse markers in the use of Chinese

Onomatopoeia. This work further motivated my interest in developing a corpus of my own data, some of which is empirical, and some of which I have drawn from literary sources. This study also draws on others such as Xia and Wang (2017), who have focused on LO in short interactions between interlocutors, as they have other genres of texts. Work from those researchers and others has motivated a long line of valuable and timely research, which draws parallels between Chinese and Japanese discourse, while also finding incongruencies between the two, largely through an observation of the pragmatic element of LO. Similarly, this scholarly lineage has taken notice of translations between Japanese and Chinese LO, to further understand the parallels or discrepancies between the two contexts. In this paper, I expand on this scholarly work, to understand the pragmatic function in both Japanese and Chinese LO contexts, and to conceptualize the ways in which intercultural mismatches can impede understandings, and how these mismatches can be mitigated through a stronger understanding of the translations of Chinese LO into Japanese LO.

Prior to discussing the function of LO discourse markers in both Japanese and Chinese contexts, I find it crucial to analyze junctures across the communicative function in my data set and laughter onomatopoeia. Here, the communication function refers to the efforts by characters in written texts (anime, comics, illustrated action books) to appropriate LO in dialogue in the Japanese and Chinese contexts. I then move to analyze elements of laughter as both verbal and non-verbal behavior. These non-verbal elements include facial expressions, and other behaviors, as necessary components of LO. Shimizu (2000), Provine (2001), and Glenn (2003) make reference to laughter categories and communicative functions within these categories, while also including in their work the multimodalities embodied in laughter.

In the data for this study, LO mostly appears in the form of monologues and conversations between characters in written texts. To build the data set, I draw on Chinese fictional comic texts and the Japanese adaptations of these texts, the selection of which is guided by the following criteria: The texts reflect general and common conversation in Chinese society, and contain a high level of popular onomatopoeia. Similarly, the Japanese adaptation of the Chinese text must present and be structured on natural, fluent conversation, which adequately accommodates the translation of the pronunciation and semantics of the Chinese text, yet which contextualizes Japanese emotion effectively so as to appear in a popular and well selling book.

The comic texts that I have selected are a resource effective for examining the ways in which, and the extent to which, onomatopoeia flows in written conversation in comic texts. As such, I have selected the following texts: The first of these is the Chinese comic *Yī rén zhī xià*, which holds the Japanese name *Hitori no shita*, 'Under One Person'. The book presents a humorous and philosophical narrative of Taoist priests all with powers allowing them to supernaturally fight evil. The webcomic was first released as a publication in 2015 in China, in the Chinese language. The text has since been published in Japanese, and appears on the web comic site "Shonen Jump +," where it has remained since 2017, while receiving approximately 25 billion views. The second text is the comic with Chinese name *Zhèn*

hún jjiē, labeled Chin kon gai, 'The Rakshasa Street' in Japanese. The narrative includes characters from the top selling text 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms,' housed on the U17 Comic Maker website, having approximately 4.5 billion hits to date. The Japanese version of the text was published in *MAGIA*. The third text is the comic labelled Chù fēng in Chinese and Japanese: Hina bachi, 'B.E.E' in Japanese. The original publication date of the text was 2010. The narrative describes world war sci-fi and military clashes, with the warrior Maiden Mecha defeating the enemy. The text has had approximately a billion hits. The series appears on the U17 Comic Maker website, while the Japanese translation appears in *MAGIA*. The final text is entitled Tiān rén tǒng yī in Chinese, Ten nin tōitsu in Japanese, and (Eng. 'Immortals and humans'). The text comprises modernized elements from the classic 'Journey to the West.' This comic appears as a series of texts on the U17 Comic Maker website, whereas the Japanese version appears on the *MAGIA* website. The Chinese original of the text drew significant popularity in its serial form in the year 2014, receiving awards as second best Feature Comic at the China Animation and Comic Competition Golden Dragon Award, achieving over 100 million hits.

Results

I begin this section by providing a comparison of the selected Chinese and Japanese texts. I expand on the social factors motivating the translation from one language to the other, and the motives for Japanese translators and publishers to alter the texts during translation. These alterations appear as revised LO that aligns, in various ways, with the cultural and linguistic requirements of Japanese audiences.

As LOs in these texts appear either as speech bubbles or together with other phrases having propositional content. For the purposes of simplicity, I have omitted texts outside of these balloons as I do not consider these as significantly inclusive of the conversation. My first step toward arranging the data is to classify the Chinese and Japanese LO into either one- or two-syllable categories or words. A phonetic one-syllable onomatopoeia base (Tamori, 2010) such as 'ha' may reoccur, e.g., 'haha,' and 'ahaha,' The 'a' prefix in 'a-haha' creates a morphology of the base 'haha' (Kadooka, 2005). The two-syllable base form, e.g., 'xixihaha,' contains 'xi' and 'ha.' In Table 1, I list the LO stem syllables in Chinese and Japanese, and the individual and specific counts of each. I collected a total of 272 LOs from the comics, and 203 LOs from the Japanese adaptations. This discrepancy is influenced by the fact that not all the 272 Chinese LOs can be translated into Japanese LOs; 69 Chinese LOs are omitted, and I have needed to use other words as translations. In Table 5, I discuss the translation of these 69 words into Japanese.

Chinese	哈 (ha)	呵 (he)	嘿 (hei)	嘻 (xi)	咯 (ge)	嘎 (ga)	哼 (heng)	吼 (hou)	嘻哈 (xiha)	total
total	117	88	38	18	6	2	1	1	1	272
Japanese	ハ (ha)	フ (fu)	へ (he)	ク (ku)	ヒ (hi)	ホ (ho)	ケ(ke)	カ(ka)	ニヤ (niya)	
total	106	57	12	12	6	6	2	1	1	203

Table 1: Chinese and Japanese Los

As Table 1 indicates, I translated (or located) the Chinese LOs into Japanese, although 'ha' is widely used by Chinese (117 words) and Japanese (106 words) texts. To translate the LO into Japanese, translators take into account two dimensions; phonetics and general and contextual semantics. The phonetics of the syllable to be translated, through the Romanization of Chinese characters or Japanese katakana/hiragana, becomes a mediating device for the transliteration process. The translators consider the semantics of words and context. In Table 2, I list the Japanese translations of the five Chinese onomatopoeia most used for laughing. The left column contains the Chinese onomatopoeia, whereas each additional row contains the Japanese equivalent and count.

Chinese	Japanese							
	ハ (ha)	フ (fu)	へ (he)	ク (ku)	ヒ (hi)	ホ (ho)	ケ (ke)	ニヤ (niya)
哈 (ha)	73	6		1	3	2		
呵 (he)	26	29	1	9		2		
嘿 (hei)	2	12	9	1		1		1
嘻 (xi)	5	5	1	1	3			
咯 (ge)		4				2		

Note. X: -high frequency stems

Table 2: Five Most Commonly Used Chinese LOs Translated into Japanese.

Table 2 describes that one Chinese LO category can translate into several Japanese categories with a high proportion of LOs with ha or fu as the stem. The Chinese 'ha' usually translates into the Japanese 'ha,' while the Chinese 'he' mostly translates into Japanese 'ha' (26 instances), and so forth. I surveyed the frequency of LO syllables (one, two, three, four) in Chinese, through specific formula: I denote the stem syllable with 'S,' the prefix with 'P,' and the suffix with 'X.' For example, 'ahaha,' having one prefix 'a' and one stem 'ha' repeated twice, becomes 1P(a)2S(ha); 'ehehe' becomes 1P(e)2S(he); and 'hihihi' becomes 3S(hi).

In Table 3 below, the left-hand column displays the number of Chinese syllables, and the right-hand

column displays the frequency of Japanese. Most Chinese one-syllable LOs translate into two-syllable Japanese LOs (11 words). Most two-syllable Chinese LOs translate into two-syllable Japanese LOs (42 words). As a result, the two countries vary in their use of LOs with similar pronunciation and syllable numbers.

Chinese	Japanese					
	One syllable	Two syllables	Three syllables	Four syllables	Five syllables	Total
One syllable	7	11X	3			21
Two syllables	3	42□	30	2		77X
Three syllables		2	33X	5	1	41
Four syllables			3	7X	4	14
Total	10	55	69X	14	5	153

Note. X: -high frequency stems

Table 3: Syllable Counts of LOs in Chinese and Japanese

In Example Set 5 above, Xia (2021) describes that when Chinese LOs respond to ambiguity, their translations are frequently interjections ('Un' yup, 'maa' well, 'yoshi' all right!), as discourse markers in Japanese (Togashi, 2002, 2004). Not all Chinese LOs can be translated into Japanese LOs, as shown in Table 1 and Table 4.

Types of Japanese	Examples	Total
Interjections	kora(1), sora(1), horayo(1), e(1), hou-(1), maa(3), un...maa(1), nanka-saa(1), aa(1), sorya(1), ja(3), sokka(1), yoshi(2), iya(1), datthe(1), datte(1), de.de(1)	22
Sentence-Final Particles	yo(8), na(3), sa(2), neekala(1), ne(2), nee(1), ze(1), nda(1), daro(1), mon(1), zo(1)	22
Descriptive Phrases	Shoushi sen ban (1), kosokoso(1), iine(1)	3

Table 4: LOs Translated into Interjections and Sentence-Final Particles

Table 4 presents that those translations rely on a variety of interjections and sentence-final particles to indicate the various functions performed by the LOs. For example, a wide range of interjections can be used to address someone (e.g., 'kora,' 'horayo'), to express the speaker's emotional state, or as a response, such as 'maa' (well...). Izuhara (2003) pointed out that the Japanese sentence-final particle 'yo' usually softens the emphasis, warning, or command. Through this subtext, Japanese people understand a character's underlying thoughts and emotions.

Discussing the data

I now begin to analyze Japanese translations. In this section, I discuss how the difference in the use of LOs becomes a pragmatic function in communication (Xia 2021). When Japanese LOs differ in their functions to Chinese LOs, the Japanese text will not sound natural, and translators use the interjection with a corresponding function. By observing the types of adjacency pairs, interjections, sentence, and final particles, we can distinguish the pragmatic functions of Chinese and Japanese LOs.

Adjacency Pairs

To examine the pragmatic similarities and differences between Chinese and Japanese LOs, I draw on the notion of adjacency pairs (Levinson, 1983); 'question->answer' and 'greeting-greeting' pairs. Hoffer (1994) pointed out that the speaker is more likely to have a smile during conversations or greetings, as did Shimizu (2000), who stressed that greeting with a smile is conducive to reducing the social and conversational distance. LOs in these adjacency pairs can embody this pragmatic function. Su (2012) notes that Chinese LOs can occur in both greeting and response. In my data below, Chinese LOs appear mostly in 'Question-Answer' adjacency pairs, and less in 'greeting-greeting' adjacency pairs:

Example Set 5

5.1 S1: shá ?huì zhǎng nín shuō shá ?wǒ méi tīng qīng !

S2: hahaha ! shì zhe hé wǒ nǚ ér jiāo wǎng ā!

(yī rén zhī xià, 29, p. 6)

5.2 S1: aiiya...kaichou san nani wo itterun desuka? osshatteru imi ga yoku wakara nain desu ga...

S2: hahaha ! uti no musume to tukiatte mi nai ka? toittan da yo!

(hitori no shita, 13, p. 5)

'S1: What? President, what do you mean? I didn't catch it!

S2: hahaha! Try to date my daughter!'

In Example Set 5, S2 expects S1 to be able to date her daughter. The text accurately conveys the S2's laughter. This Chinese LO 'hahaha' aims to imitate a loud laugh, while expressing S2's happiness, while coordinating the dialogue. This aligns with Provine (2001), who notes that laughter coordinates how the conversation proceeds; response, evolution, and relaxation. Bu and Su (2011) stress that LO demonstrates a positive attitude towards the other's speech during a positive response. The 'hahaha' at the beginning of the response can thus create friendliness and familiarity. In Japanese, the Chinese 3S(ha) becomes the Japanese 3S(ha). Both function as emotional expression and convey strategic significance: with laughter, the writer gains control over the continuation of the dialogue, and the

audiences gain a better understanding of the content.

However, many examples exist which, when adapted into Japanese LOs, differ to the structure of Chinese LOs. In Example 6.1, S2 provides a 1S(ha) 'ha' at the sentence onset prior to the response, while Japanese adopts the 1P(a)2S(ha) 'ahaha'.

Example Set 6

- 6.1 S1: chǔ lán ! duì yú nǐ wǒ de tài dù yě shì yī yàng ! jiā rù tiān xià huì ba !
S2: ha , guǒ rán shì zhè jiàn shì me, wǒ zuì jìn hái zhēn chéng le xiāng bō bō !
(yī rén zhī xià, 29, p. 4)
- 6.2 S1: sorankun ! kimimone ! zehitenkakainihaittehoshii !
S2: ahaha...yappari soiu kotone hontoore saikin daininki de koma tchau na-
(hitori no shita, 13, p. 3)
'S1: Chu Lan! For you, my attitude is the same! Join our World Club!
S2: ha, do you really? I've become so popular lately!'

S2 responds by using 'ha,' and comments that he has become too popular. Nikopoulos (2017) suggests that when speakers include LOs, the laugh is often considered strategic. Other than an undeliberated positive emotion, the Chinese 'ha' plays no role in expressing the speaker's positive mood. Instead, Example 6.1 suggests that S2 is upset as he was overly popular despite being invited, where 'ha' indicates a sense of powerlessness.

In these adjacency pairs, the pragmatic function of Chinese LOs show similarity to that performed by laughter in daily conversations. In Example 6.1, S2 responds neither positively nor negatively; 1S(ha) facilitates the conversation by demonstrating understanding (Madden, Oelschlaeger, and Damico, 2002). In Japanese onomatopoeia, a syllable does not directly mimic sounds. Instead, it is a common practice to add such phonological elements as a moraic consonant or a nasal sound (Tamori, 2010). In Example 6.2, the number of syllables increases, and the prefix 'a' marks the onset of the word to reinforce the vivacity of laughter (Kadooka, 2005).

Example Set 7

- 7.1 S1: nǐ yě bú zhī dào zhāng chǔ lán zài nǎ ?
S2: a~heihei.....duì.....duì bú qǐ.....zhēn de bú zhī dào (yī rén zhī xià, 32, p. 11)
- 7.2 S1: ...Anata mo suwae arashi no ibasho shiranai?
S2: a~e he he... mōshiwakenai ga hontōni shiranai ndesu... ha i...
(hitori no shita, 14, p. 24)
'S1: You don't know where Zhang Chulan is?
S2: a~heihei...Yes...I'm sorry...I really don't know'

In Example 7.1, a question surprises S2, which the prefix 'a' signifies. S2 does not answer to S1's question owing to embarrassment. 'heihei' differs from the smaller laugh 'haha.' As suggested by Balandis (2010), people laugh when projecting dignity and control, to reduce stress and to calm themselves. The LO here is quieter rather than happy. S2 uses 'heihei' to relieve his nervousness and to resolve awkwardness. Unable to answer, S2 hopes that S1 does not anger. In the Japanese version, this translates into 1P(e)2S(he) with the prefix 'e.' Examples 6.2 and 7.2 suggest that Japanese people frequently use a vowel as the LO start. The Japanese 'ehehe' is often used by a 'cute' child to describe flattering and embarrassed laughter and when an LO in an embarrassing place must construct good social relations (Glenn, 2003; Provine, 2001).

In Example 8.1, 2S(he) expresses an aggressive laugh, which, when in Japanese becomes 3S(fu). This is similar to Example 8, where the Chinese 2S(hei) becomes the Japanese 3S(he).

Example Set 8

- 8.1 S1: ----Hǎo ba, shuō shuō nǐmen de tiáojiàn
S2: hehe, nín zhème dà de huǒqì wǒ hǎo nán kāikǒu a
(Chú fēng, 1, p. 38)
- 8.2 S1: ...Yokarou hanashi o kikou
S2: fufufu, ikinari donaritsukeru no wa tokusakude wa nai to omouga
(Hinabachi, 1, p. 38)
'S1: OK, tell me about your terms.
S2: hehe, you're so angry, I don't know how to talk'.

Despite the appearance of 2S(he), S1 asks S2 to express their terms, yet S2 uses 'hehe' at the response onset as an offensive laugh, followed by dissatisfaction. The translation of 2S(he) into Japanese diverts from a similar LO. Instead, 3S(fu) expresses an offensive laughter. Convivial and friendly laughter in Examples 6 and 7 differs to aggressive laughter in Example 8, which demonstrates superiority, contempt, and the intention to scare others (Shimizu, 2000). In example 8.1, S2 attacks S1 by identifying a threat, "nín zhème dà de huǒqì wǒ hǎo nán kāikǒu a" (You're so angry. I don't know how to talk), where the LO expands on the ironic sentiment of S2's response, to accelerate the dissolution of the relationship.

Motives for Altering Japanese Comic Texts

In the previous section, I discussed the translation of Chinese LOs into Japanese LOs. When the initiator of the conversation shows anger, the respondent likely uses a Chinese LO, which is then translated into the Japanese sentence-final particle. Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to verbal behavior threatening face as FTA (Face Threatening Act), triggering unpleasant feelings. Consequently, the emotions of participants are twisted and the negotiation collapses.

To repair a damaged relationship, the speaker appears to excuse himself with a laugh such as "I'm sorry, hahaha ..." I thus now discuss the emergence of Chinese LOs during FTA in Japanese. Example set 10 exemplifies the mixed emotions of speakers as and a tense atmosphere. In Chinese, the LO 'heihei' describes a 'worthless laugh,' to increase playfulness (Shimizu, 2000). However, in Japanese, the translator omits the LO and adds the sentence-final particle ('~yo'), absent in Chinese, thus altering the tone. In Example 8, the Japanese 'ehehe' replaces the Chinese LO 'heihei', which I discuss below.

Example Set 9

9.1 S1: Bùyào yòng nà zhǒng díshì de yǎnguāng kànzhe wǒ, wǒ kěshì jiùguò nǐ liǎng cì xìngmìng de rén a. Xiǎng zhīdào yī diàn zhīzǐ de láilì ma? Fàngsōng diǎn, kěyǐ hé wǒ biān pào biān liáo

S2: wǒ zhēn de huì dòng shǒu shā sǐ nǐ

S1: heihei.....de què shì kāi wán xiào

(Chú fēng, 30, p. 14)

9.2 S1: Niramanaide hoshii deesu ne, nikai mo inochi o sukuttan deesu kara eden no ko ni tsuite shiritaideshou? Maa o furo ni tsukarinagara demo

S2: koroshite yaru!

S1: jooku desu yo

(Hinaba chi, 7, p. 15)

'S1: Don't look at me with that kind of hostility, I saved you twice. Would you like to know the origin of Eden's child? You can talk to me in the bathtub.

S2: I really want to kill you.

S1: heihei.....just kidding'

In Example 9, S1 molests S2, by inviting S2 for a bath. S2 is enraged and sarcastically suggests killing S1. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), speakers attack another's face to protect their own. Through embarrassment, S2 loses face, thus deadlocking the conversation. Consequently, S1 shows respect to placate animosity and to continue the conversation. S1 considers S2 as a potential partner, saving S2's life, although S2 still cannot believe that S1 can become a partner.

Glenn and Holt (2013) framed laughter as a resource in handling tricky situations: It directs interaction away from negativity while mitigating effects of discord. S2 felt insulted and furious; however, S1 sought to dispel dissatisfaction with S2 using 'heihei.' The "dí què shì kāi wán xiào" (just joking) emphasizes that S1 had no intention to anger S2. Grammer (1990) noted that laughter may be a ritualized signal, communicating "this is play, don't take it seriously" to ambiguate or placate adverse intentions. Li (2017) emphasizes that 'heihei' can make speech more vivid while creating a casual atmosphere during FTA. Therefore, S1's 'heihei' purports to relieve tension, and carries the implication of 'I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that,' revealing participants' attitudes and directions.

In contrast, the 'heihei' in Example 7 intends to reduce the responder's nervousness, as the person raising the question will not feel dissatisfied despite the negative response. However, in Example 9, S2

feels neither fearful nor anxious. The fact that the joke may anger S1 does not occur to S2. Thus, 'heihei' purports to decrease S1's dissatisfaction. As Hashimoto (1994) argues, the communication function of laughter can be categorized into two types: self-centered and other-centered. Laughter used to express happiness and to relieve tension is self-centered, whereas laughter that alleviates an awkward atmosphere is other-centered. In example 7, 'heihei' acts on the speaker (self-centered), while in Example 10, the 'heihei' focuses on the recipient of that laughter (other-centered).

In Example 9, the Chinese LO 'heihei' and adverb 'díquè' (certainly), for which the corresponding Japanese adverb is 'tashika ni' (certainly), are omitted. The Japanese translation 'jooku desu yo' with the sentence-final particle 'yo' is similar to the Chinese phrase 'dí què shì kāi wán xiào a/o', with the Chinese sentence-final particles 'a/o' that possess an interpersonal function to soften the tone (Lin, 2005). However, the above exemplify the importance of LOs in Chinese communication during FTA. In the absence of LOs, readers perceive the dialogues as too unnatural in Chinese. Instead, the Japanese sentence-final particle '~yo' is potent when used to convey personality, attitude, and feeling. Speakers employ '~yo' to alert the listener to information, which can relax a statement that is used for emphasis, warning or command (Uyeno, 1971; Izuhara, 2003). Consequently, '~yo' can convey an emotional expression similar to Chinese LOs while softening the tone.

As for motives for committing LOs in Japanese, a comparison should be conducted with Example 7. In Example 7, the Chinese LO 'heihei' is translated into the Japanese 'ehehe', where S2 uses 'ehehe' to respond; this action most likely exacerbates contradiction among Japanese speakers. The Japanese LO indicates flattering, shy, or smug laughter, and allows for laughter by mocking others as foolish (Ono, 2007). In Example 8, the Japanese LO 'ehehe' will more likely be regarded as embarrassing, shy laughter. However, in Example 9, S2 is already angry; if S1 uses the Japanese LO 'ehehe', S2 will interpret 'ehehe' as mockery. Therefore, translators have developed a solution; omitting the Japanese LO and, rather than adopting direct translation, using '~yo' to convey feeling.

In Example 10, S2 attempts to repair relations through onomatopoeia twice in Chinese: The first Chinese LO 'haha' is adapted into the Japanese sentence final particle '~daman,' while the second Chinese LO 'heiheihei' is ignored.

Example set 10

10.1 S1: nàme...wǒ yǐjīng shì nǐmen de yī yuánle ba.....

S2: haha! Bàoqiàn~yīnwèi zhè shīgǔ de xiàoguǒ bù shèn lǐxiǎng wǒmen hái bùnéng jiēnà nǐ.....

S1: shénme! Dāngchū kěshì nǐ xiàng wǒ zuòchū chéngnuò de! nǐ xiǎng fǎnhuǐ ma!

S2: nà méizhè! Shéi ràng xiànzài wǒ shì guǎn rénsì de ne wǒ shuō bu háng jiù bùxíng! heiheihei ~nǐ yě yīnggāi zhīdào wǒmen shì yīqún jì bù kào pǔ yòu méi guījǔ de rén ba!

(yī rén zhī xià, 9, p. 3)

10.2 S1: Kore de watashi mo antara no nakama yo ne?

S2: gomen! Muri! Kono shitai yakunitatanakatta nda mon!

S1: ha ~a!? Yakusoku o yaburou tte no!? Usotsuki!!

S2: Jinji tantō wa bokuna nda boku wa dame ttsuttara damena no ~ bokura ga rūru yara shinrai tte kotoba to muen'na no shitterudaro?

(hitori no shita, 4, p. 3)

'S1: So... I am already your companion...

S2: haha! Sorry~ We can't accept you because the effect of the bones is not ideal...

S1: What! You made a promise to me at the beginning! Do you want to regret it!

S2: That's okay! I am in charge of personnel matters. If I disagree, you just can't join! heiheihei~ You should also know that we are a group of unreliable and unruly people!'

In Example 10, S2 disregards S1's request. The first reply begins with 'haha, followed by the word 'excuses,' and ending with rejection. Motivated by frustration, S1 asks again. Despite interlocutor tension, S2 again explains the denial. S2 laughs and placates the situation by lowering his status and increasing his submissiveness. The 'haha' exhibits unclear emotion, despite its description as a loud laugh in Examples 5 and 6. However, 'haha' indicates that S2 intends to continue with a relaxed attitude while considering S1's emotions, aligning with Warner-Garcia (2014), who notes that 'coping' laughter can offer a 'safety valve' during disagreement, which consists of four interactional functions: face-threat mitigation, face-loss concealment, serious-to-nonserious frame switch, and topic transition facilitation. S2 anticipates that, through his refusal, S1 will lose face and disagree. As such, S2 laughs prior to refusing, ambiguating his attitude and placating seriousness.

Li (2017) suggests that the speaker cannot berate other people but uses a subdued way to express dissatisfaction and to blame others. Here, S2 employs the Chinese 'heiheihei' euphemistically as sarcasm. A loud 'haha' laugh by S2, in response to S1's anger, is more likely seen as mocking. As a result, when a speaker realizes that the listener is dissatisfied, the speaker becomes inclined to opt for the 'heiheihei,' to avoid intensifying the contradictions, as Example 10.1. By contrast, in Japanese, the translator avoids enraging S1 through changes made to the conversation. When making interpretations, people are influenced by their cultural background. Japanese people first apologize, hence omitting the Chinese LO 'haha,' then, revealing the reason for refusal. The sentence-final particle '~damon', which conveys cuteness, appears at the sentence coda to soften the speech. The Chinese LO 'heihei' is also omitted when S2 again declines S1's request.

My data suggests that Chinese LOs are often used in conversation during FTA. The Chinese includes the LO in the response, to ease the ensuing embarrassment and anger. Furthermore, these Chinese LOs become essential to fluid conversational interactions. Without an appropriate LO in FTA, characters' lines may quickly appear awkward and cumbersome. In Japanese, it is natural to sincerely apologize on formal occasions. However, if these words damage the face of others, such as through molesting or rejection, an apology with a laugh becomes impolite and angering. When the Japanese read character lines in comics, and LOs appear in FTA, non-seriousness is deepened. Therefore, in Japanese

adaptations of comics, LOs are omitted and sentence-final particles ease tensions.

LOs at the end of the sentence as the conversation initiator tend to be omitted in Japanese. Compared to the LO in the responses in Examples 5 to 10, the focus of conversation initiator is not on the content of the previous statement for selecting the corresponding laugh to express emotions and regulate the pace of the conversation. In Example 11, the Chinese LO 'haha' and 'heihei' are translated into the Japanese sentence-final particle. '~ neekaa,' '~ dane,' etc. when the topic is initiated by S1's laughter to express a ridiculous attitude.

Example set 11

11.1 S1: zhè wèi dào shì ā bí Zhī huǒ! wǒ de zuì ài haha! S2: wǒ qù nǐ de!!
(zhèn hún jiē, 54, p. 5)

11.2 S1: Kono kaori wa ore no sukina abi hi ja nē kaa!!
S2: buttagitte yaru!!
(Chin kon gai, 10, p. 50)
'S1: This smell is Abi's fire! My favorite haha
S2: You are sick!!'

11.3 S1: xiǎng bù dào zài zhè è líng mǎn bù de dì fāng, yě yǒu zhè me hǎo de yáng guāng heihei
S2: hǎo xiào me~?
S1: haha, kāi wán xiào (gān gà)
(zhèn hún jiē, 3, p. 5)

11.4 S1: akuryō-darake demo asa wa kon'na kimochi ga ī nda ne!!
S2: omoshiroi ka?
S1: e? iya...(biku~tsu)
(Chin kon gai, 1, p. 47)
'S1: Unexpectedly, in this place full of evil spirits, there is also such a good sunshine heihei~
S2: Is it funny~?
S1: haha, kidding... (embarrassed)'

In Example 11.1, the Chinese LO 'haha' represents a laughter effected by the sensation of pleasure, as S2 chose not to seriously consider S1's attack "Abi's fire," alleging that Abi's fire is his favorite food. S1 draws on 'haha' to tease S2 as being powerless. Laughter can be used ironically during verbal irony (Gibbs, 2000). The 'haha' in Example 11.1 differs from the happy laughter in Example 5, the ambiguous laughter in Examples 6 and 7, and the 'haha' in Example 10. As an offensive laughter, the 'haha' in Example 11.1 triggers a stronger sense of superiority than 'hehe' in Example 8, where the LO mimics the power of sound, thus qualifying the intensity of the emotion of the speaker.

Moreover, in Example 11.3, S1 suggests, "It feels good in the morning." The Chinese LO 'heihei' expresses a sense of comedy, however, since S1 ironically states that "this place filled with evil spirits would have such good sunshine" prior to laughing, 'heihei' seems to deepen this sense of irony. S1's

first laugh renders the atmosphere clumsy, thereby creating an FTA, where S1 and S2 cooperate. Then, S1 switches the topic by laughing, similar to Example 10. The combination of Chinese onomatopoeia and “kǎi wán xiào” (kidding) is often used as a justification when the speaker experience’s the listener’s anger. LOs reduce such embarrassment while alleviating the tension of the listener, as in Examples 9 and 10.

In the Japanese adaptation, the negative question ‘~ neekaa,’ (right? isn’t it?) appears, although the Chinese line comprises an LO and a positive sentence. Additionally, ‘~ neekaa’ signifies a vulgarized version of ‘~ naika,’ which has a negative particle ‘nai’ (not) and a sentence-final particle ‘~ka’ (question). Here, ‘nai’ as a colloquial form of ‘naides,’ appears at the end of negative sentences, while the negative question ends with ‘naika’ (shortened from ‘naidesuka’), emphasizing emotions (criticism, anger). ‘Ne’ and ‘ka’ with extended vowel sounds frequently accompany speech by upset characters to express arrogance and vulgarity (Kinsui, 2014). In Example 11.4, the sentence-final particle suggests strong offensive nature. Despite being identical to the ‘~ yo’ in Example 9, with emphasis placed on opinions and attitudes, the subject opens facilitate the listener’s feeling of offense using ‘~ neekaa’ ‘~ dane.’ Through the sentence-final particle, the Japanese adaptation stresses the aggressiveness of the speaker.

When the conversation initiator attempts to joke or ridicule, Chinese speakers are inclined to use LOs at the ends of sentences, while the Japanese tend to emphasize the offensive use of the sentence-final particles. This adaptation is related to the location of Chinese LOs as well as to the relationship between the characters, which may even utilize the same LO. In Example 8, in the offensive LO used in the enemy’s conversation, the Chinese LO ‘hehe’ at the beginning of the response is translated into the Japanese LO ‘fufufu,’ whereas the Chinese LO ‘haha’ at the end of the topic initiation sentence is translated into the Japanese sentence-final particle ‘~ neekaa’ in Example 11.1. Moreover, in Example 7, when using the Chinese LO ‘heihei,’ tension is relieved in the response containing the Japanese LO ‘ehehe.’ However, in Example 9, ‘heihei’ intends to placate the awkward atmosphere during the FTA, and is translated into the Japanese sentence-final particle ‘~ yo.’ In Example 11.3, ‘heihei’ at the end of the topic initiation sentence becomes the Japanese sentence-final particle ‘~ dane.’ In Examples 11.1 and 11.3, the Chinese LOs ‘haha’ and ‘heihei’ motivate the emergence of an FTA, and are translated into Japanese sentence-final particles.

Conclusion

As LOs in comics are no longer simply framed as vocabulary imitating laughter, these expressions of pleasure or happiness, maximize their extensive semiotic repertoire at the interactional and hence discursive level. However, this semiotic potency and facility increases during affirmative, ambiguous and negative responses. Through a comparison of Chinese Pinyin with Romanized Japanese, the Chinese ‘haha’ ‘heihei’ and the Japanese ‘haha’ ‘hehe’ exhibit common characteristics. The prosody

however does differ, such as in the number of syllables of LOs in the response. Chinese 1S or 2S LOs often ensure a smooth response to previous statements. However, the prevalence of Japanese 1P2S and 3S LOs suggests that the Japanese require a longer laughter description than the Chinese.

Since two languages that employ LOs vary greatly, the potential interpretations of their messages are infinite. However, Chinese and Japanese people use a variety of LOs to demonstrate pragmatic functions, even within the same context. It is commonplace for LOs to describe social laughter or aggressive laughter, irrespective of whether it is in Chinese or Japanese. Chinese LOs depicting social laughter can promote friendly communication or ease tension in the FTA between collaborators. Jokes and offensive laughter used between enemies to damage relationships are necessary conversations in comics as they imitate sounds of laughter while describing subtextual meaning, thereby promoting the plot.

The communicative function performed by the LO revolves around the "Question" initiator rather than the responder. In the Japanese version, the exercise of LO is often avoided when the speakers are in a cooperative relationship as it can be easily misunderstood as provocative laughter, which may lead to a deadlock in the conversation. To "soften the statement" and reduce tension, a variety of sentence-final particles with functions such as emotional expression and emphasis are added. Moreover, these words will also be translated into sentence-final particles for their offensive emphasis when the "Question" initiator teases or jokes the responder into using LO at the end of the sentence. In the Chinese version, the "Question" initiator uses LO at the end of the sentence with irony and a negative undertone. Here, LO serves to strengthen the role, which tends to reinforce the negativity and offensiveness of the speech. As a result, the "Answerer" is more likely to provide a disaffiliated response. In the Japanese version, sentence-final particles indicate corresponding functions performed by the LO.

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