

Towards a Linguistic Anthropology of Asian Laughters: Correlating two Contexts

Xia Yi Hui

Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, China

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Abstract

Laughter is a pervasive human behavior that is frequently transcribed into written texts as 'laughter onomatopoeia' (LO), to represent the sound of laughter and various emotions within a specific context. Particularly, LO have a rich pragmatic impact on the facilitating of communications (Xia 2021). A such, this study discusses the (LO) of animation in texts in Chinese contexts, and erects a comparison with its translation into Japanese. In particular, the study focuses on the analysis of the interjection and sentence-ending particle as discourse markers in both languages and both cultural contexts.

The results of the study suggest that speakers of both Chinese and Japanese employ various LOs to in their pragmatic application of their respective languages, yet these LOs differ between the two languages. For example, in the Chinese context, LOs depicting laughter in social interaction can signify the intention to maintain friendly relations, or to resolve problematic interactions. In the Japanese context, however, speakers largely avoid LO, as such discourse can increase tensions and antagonism between interlocutors.

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

Introduction

During laughter, the individual engages several modes and bodily expressions, sounds, and symbolisms, which all appear concomitantly. The notation of laughter has long attempted to transcribe such a concurrence, evident in laughter onomatopoeia (LO) (Nagasato 2007). Much scholarly work has emerged on Chinese LO, such as in discourse and conversation analysis. Tamori (2010) describes that texts in Japanese effectively accomplish LO, in the form of Hiragana syllabary, and appear ubiquitously throughout Japanese literature. Yet these Japanese texts differ to the Chinese in several ways, not least of which is the symbolic, creating a disjuncture in communication between the two contexts. The Chinese Japanese and contexts contain a proliferation of LO, a linguistic practice that contributes significantly to the structures of each language.

This paper discusses the disparity and disjunctures in the translation of LO between Chinese and Japanese texts. Here, the LO in each of these two contexts can exhibit significant difference. As such, I discuss functional discourse markers in these languages, such as the sentence-final particle during onomatopoeia. To discuss this LO (e.g., spiteful laughter, personal vocalized sarcasm, and sarcastic laughter), I propose that these words can embody a diverse set of symbolic affordances within their intended symbolic purpose, as entextualized characters. For this, I draw on Conversation Analysis as a useful tool with which to aid my analysis (Glenn and Holt 2013).

I thus structure the paper as follows: In the second section, I introduce laughter as onomatopoeically represented in and transcribed into Chinese characters and Japanese Hiragana syllabary. I also elaborate on the pragmatic significance of LO as a means of communication and a politeness strategy in each of these two contexts. I also summarize prior work to demonstrate the viability of identifying LO as a discourse marker in comic media while arguing that LO texts are inherent in and crucial for current communication in both China and Japan. In the third section, I introduce media, such as comics, which I draw on in my data collection. Here, I discuss my sampling of LO from within this data set. I also discuss my intended methodical framework, and its purpose within such a study. In the fourth section, I unpack the data and apply the analytical framework, to discuss how the two contexts differ in a conversation analysis of LO in Chinese comics translated into Japanese.

Review of Previous Work

LO in Two Cultural Contexts

In this paper I integrate work on Conversation Analysis (CA) to analyze the LO and its sentence final particles. The focus of CA has at times been on oral laughter during conversation (e.g., Jefferson 1979, 1984). These frameworks offered a system to through which to transcribe laughter,

e.g., ‘hhehheh,’ to allow for metalingual notifications for laughter, and to symbolize functional properties beyond the phonetic representation of the laugh, such as pitch with arrows, and modulation, e.g., ‘↑buhaha’ (Hepburn and Varney 2013). This scholarship contributed to our understandings of the notation of laughter in what would otherwise be highly ambiguous text.

Yet, we would do well to distinguish between onomatopoeia and transcription, which has constituted a significant domain in linguistics, anthropology, and elsewhere. As an example, the exclamatory sound ‘he’ in Chinese appears as the character ‘呵.’ The pinyin form, *he*, builds on traditional Chinese, which requires a consonant first and then vowel second sequence. Triskova (2011) notes that Pinyin rarely combines two identical consonants as a diphthong prior to one vowel, e.g., ‘hhe,’ yet a sequence of one consonant and a diphthong is possible, for e.g., ‘hei’ (sly smile). Speakers of Japanese familiar with its Hiragana texts encounter pervasive use of onomatopoeia and transcription (Nagashima 2006), which also occurs in Katakana syllabary within a wide spectrum of LO permutations. Here, some vocabulary closely represents laughter phonetics and other vocabulary does little to resemble laughter. For example, through Hiragana syllabary, the character ‘ha’ onomatopoeically becomes ‘へ.’ Katakana syllabary also facilitates onomatopoeia and transcription, such as in the character ‘へ’ (he English): For example, ‘エへへ’ (ehehe), and ‘ウフフ’ (ufufu), which represent irregular or unconventional laughter styles. Similarly, particular styles of laughter e.g., ‘ドワッハッハ’ (dowahhahha), ‘ムルンフフ’ (murunfufu) require the use of particular morphologies.

Chinese and Japanese both exhibit an extensive amount of LO, which is also categorized extensively: For example, in Japanese, reduplications (c.f. Nagasato 2007) are a category that purport to signify being present during the talk or text. One-syllable reduplications, e.g., ‘ha-ha’ and ‘ha-ha-ha’ can extend indefinitely, yet the size of this reduplication signifies the size of the laughter intensity. This repetition emulates ‘xiàngshēngcí’ and ‘Giongo,’ the laughter styles in Chinese and Japanese respectively (Kubozono 2017).

Tamori (2010) notes that Japanese and Chinese onomatopoeia includes ‘gitaigo’ and ‘xiàng tài cí’ respectively, as silent visual actions. The repetitions ‘niko-niko’ (bright joyful smile) and ‘niko-niko-niko,’ and the repetition niya-niya (a plausible smile) do not attempt to emulate laughter phonics but rather, represent a silent action. In the Japanese context, two-syllable repetitions contain the ‘n’ as an onomatopoeia of any of several particular smile actions; ‘nita-nita’ (a creepy smile), and ‘nima-nima’ (a nasty smile).

In Chinese, the smile is represented only by forms such as ‘xixi-haha,’ and not ‘xiha-xiha’ or ‘xiha-xiha-xiha.’ Here, the most used mimetic words include the Chinese character ‘笑’ (xiào, ‘smile’), and a one-syllable repetition LO. For example, ‘笑哈哈’ (xiào-haha) which represents a smile with an open mouth, and ‘笑呵呵’ (xiào-hehe) which suggests a quiet smiling face.

Despite their limitations in mimicking laughter, the Japanese Hiragana-Katakana syllabary and the Chinese characters appear in literature and comic strips quite pervasively. These texts are increasingly integrating LO to textually represent emotions (see Bu and Su 2011). Here, audiences read the laughter (e.g., 'xixi' snicker, 'hehe' giggle) as well as the emotions within the laughter (e.g., 'hahaha' pleasure, 'fun' ridicule, 'heihei' teasing).

Evidently, comparative studies on LO in these comics have attracted the attention of many researchers, a scholarship which has foregrounded the phonological and morphological characteristics of LO.

Discourse Markers in LO

Schiffrin (1987) informs us that as cataphoric and anaphoric, discourse markers are sequentially dependent, separate units of talk. For example, the phrases 'mmm,' 'look,' 'you know,' 'get this,' and 'so,' are discourse markers. Similarly, the Japanese interjections 'aa' (ah. I see), 'ara' (oh dear), and the conjunctions 'dakara' (because), 'datte' (but), and 'aruiha' (or) are discourse markers (Fujii 2013).

The discourse marker framework can integrate effectively into work on laughter onomatopoeia, in that LO content presents a boundary for larger talk and conversation (cf. Bu and Su 2011 for the Chinese context). Such discourse markers can each convey multiple symbolisms. Liang (2014) separates these LO discourse markers into two general categories; 'topic development' (below), which marks the beginning of a statement, and 'response type,' which is a complement to other statements.

Below, in Example Set 1, 'A1' 'B2' and 'C3' are markers which sit at the beginning of each of the sentences, in a two- or more character conversation. Here, these markers represent both LO and also some adjustment to the larger discourse. In the Example set, I present three medium length examples.

In Example 1.1, A1 employs the LO 'hehe' (a gentle laugh), in order to activate the interlocutor's attention, and as a greeting, which is akin to 'Hey!' as a gentle, light and friendly laugh communication. Here, the LO 'hehe' renders A1's tone more humble and polite, where Liang (2014) suggests that 'hehe' can appear independently, or with other connected phrases. In Example 1.2, A1 complains that China's rising housing prices are caused by the mother-in-law wanting her son-in-law to buy a house. B2 feels that A1's view is extreme, but B2 does not wish to invite controversy to the conversation, and then only employs the LO 'hehe' without any additional information, in order to express a simple statement, with which to invest in the dialogue between the two speakers.

1.1	A1	Hehe chén zǒng, jīn tiān tiān qì bù cuò ne!
	'A1	Hehe Mr. Chen, the weather has been nice lately.
1.2	A1	Zhōngguó de fángjià qíshí dōu shì bèi nàxiē xūróng de zhàngmǔniángmen chǎo chūlái de!
	B1	Hehe
	A1	Those vain mothers-in-laws were responsible for pushing up China house prices!
	B2	Hehe'
1.3	A1	Ai, Zuìjìn gōngzī zhǎng de tài kuài, dōu bù zhīdào zěnme huāle!
	B2	Hehe
	A1	The wages have risen so fast I don't know how to spend it!
	B2	Hehe'

Example Set 1

According to Bu and Su (2011), in most cases, 'hehe' does not allow for the expression of superfluous emotion. The LO can be interpreted as a vague, ambiguous laugh so as to effect a prevarication of the topics the speaker does not wish to discuss. Yael (1998) emphasizes that objects at the lexical level, while signifying a speaker's thought process, become markers of the speaker's primary discourse. As such, 'hehe' here is a highly effective marker, more so at times when people seek to leave a conversation. 'Hehe' is also often used to express feelings of anger, speechlessness, etc. In Example 1.3, A1 could not resist gloating with regards to their high salary. B2 subtly expresses his resistance and aims to stop A1 from engaging in this gloating process.

Su (2012) emphasizes that the Chinese LO 'hehe' does not directly represent the intentions of the speaker, yet is firmly embedded within the context. In my concurrence with Bu and Su (2011), I suggest that LO facilitates the boundedness or mobility of talk, or the shift between themes of talk. As such, LO can mitigate discourse adversity, thus reducing awkwardness for example, heated discussions.

In the following examples, 'hehe' is a response for expressing either agreement or disagreement. The examples are pragmatic, where, their functions, conveyed by LO, are politeness strategies (Bu and Su 2011). According to Bu and Su (2011), the onomatopoeic 'hehe' highlights the affective or emotional component of the speech. Example 2.1 evidences and suggests a positive response. If the listener responds with 'yes' or 'no,' they will develop conceptions of the tone as remaining shaped, while the 'hehe' conveys subjective yet positive affect. In contrast, Example 2.2 suggests a negative response. Here, A1 does not rate B2's son. The response of the parent B2, 'hehe,' is more easily understood as a disagreement to the teacher's statement (Is my son so useless?).

2.1	A1	Shēn tǐ shì gé mìng de běn qián ā
	B2	Hehe, yīqiè dōu shì fúyún, shēntǐ zuì zhòngyào
	'A1	Without a healthy body, nothing is okay.
	B2	Hehe everything is fleeting, the body is the most important'
2.2	A1	Wǒ kàn zhè hái zi xīn sī bù zài xué xí shàng, dào bù rú ràng tā qù xué yī mén shǒu yì
	B1	Hehe
	'A1	I think your kid couldn't pay much attention to studying, and it's better to let him learn a beneficial trade.
	B2	B2

Example Set 2

Xia (2021) studied the pragmatic features of 'haha,' 'heihei,' and 'hehe,' as discourse markers in Chinese comics and their Japanese adaption. In her data, she notes that Chinese LO repeatedly occurred in the self-talk of the character, and in the Japanese adaptation. I present this in the following example set:

3.1	A1	haha! Nǐ shì bù shì yī wéi zì jǐ dào le nà biān jiù néng hǎo guò? Nà xiē rén nǐ shì bù zhī dào hahaha! Nǐ hái shì zhēn gòu shǎ de (yī rén zhī xià, 52, p. 8)
3.2	A1	ahahah! Ura re-rata saki demo tomona seikatsu ga matteru wakene~edarou ka!! Ore no kyaku nanka zen'in do hentaida zo! doko made omedetai yakkona nda omae wa! (hitori no shita, p.17)
	'A1	haha! Do you think you can get better when you get there? All my customers are metamorphosed! hahaha! You are so stupid ...

Example Set 3

Xia (2021) suggests that the LO that appears at the beginning of the utterance serves to instigate the topic, where the second LO works to continuously authorize the speaker to speak. The speaker provides information to the listener, and hence in agreement with the listener, despite having received limited feedback from the listener. Goffman (1981) labels this type of dialogue as 'self-talk.' I also suggest that comic artists also attempt to control the flow of utterance by including many LOs in strategic positions. In Example 3.1, A1 uses the LO 'haha' at the onset of the sentence to instigate the topic and to attract B2's attention. After A1 discusses cruel facts, A1 laughs again and curses B2 for B2's foolishness. The second LO 'hahaha' strengthens the speaker's disdain, and it serves as a connecting link between the preceding and the following talk. In the Japanese

adaption, many LOs can interrupt the smooth flow of the text. As such, the second Japanese LO will be omitted.

In Example 4.1 (above), both the speaker and the listener include LOs. In the Japanese adaptation, the LO of the speaker will be omitted.

4.1	A1	Heihei! Zhè lǎo nǚrén yě gòu lièxìng! Wǒ xǐhuān
	B2	Haha! xǐhuān nà lǎo de nǚ jiù liú xià (yī rén zhī xià, 46, p. 7)
4.2	A1	Hahah! Kono baba ~a konjō aru nē ~ ore wa sukida ze?
	B2	Jyaa soitsu ikashi toite yarou ka!
	'A1	Heihei! This older woman is such a spitfire! I like her
	B2	Haha! If you like the older woman, I'll keep her alive (hitori no shita, 20, p. 17)

Example Set 4

Example 4.1 provides a scene where men speak profanely about women. A1 employs the LO 'heihei' (a treacherous laugh) to summon the topic, and speaks the second LO 'haha' as part of the response. 'Haha' here expresses approval, and is employed as a sign with which to continue the topic, eliciting B2's response. In Example 4.2, the speaker employs the Japanese 'hahah' (offensive laughter) in order to open the topic. Here, the second LO is omitted, and instead, the interjection 'Jyaa' (so) appears, through which, the speaker shifts the topic to the next stage, or otherwise changes the topic of the talk.

As these examples illustrate, Chinese LOs have diversified pragmatic functions in dialogue. In their Japanese adaptations, understanding the differences among the LOs and the ways in which they operate requires a translator who well understands the translation strategies employed. The pragmatic functions of LOs in such linguistic comparisons require an examination of the language and cultural differences between the two cultural contexts, as I attempt to accomplish through my work.

Methodical Framework

This research draws on an extended tenure in the field of the use of LO and laughter transcription, in two cultural contexts, that is, that of Japan and that of China. The tenure included a long term ethnography in these regions, living with and hence engaging with speakers of both languages. Evident soon became the proliferation of idea the discourse marker in both text and talk, as I increasingly saw boundedness between the different parts of texts, which were bounded by these markers. Schiffrin (1987) describes these discourse markers as "linguistic, paralinguistic, or non-

verbal elements that signal relations between units of a talk under their syntactic.” (p. 40), and which include the particles ‘oh,’ ‘well,’ ‘now,’ ‘then,’ ‘you know,’ and ‘I mean,’ and the connectives ‘so,’ ‘because,’ ‘and,’ ‘but,’ and ‘or.’

The work of Bu and Su (2011) further motivated my interest in developing an ethnographically motivated corpus, which is both empirical and secondary data. In addition to this data, I also draw on others such as Xia and Wang (2017), who observe LO between interlocutors. In this paper, I expand on such scholarly work, in order to understand the pragmatic functions of LO in both Japanese and Chinese contexts, and how intercultural mismatches can be mitigated through work on the effective yet revised translations of Chinese LO into Japanese LO.

At this point, I suggest that an initial stage would include the analysis of junctures and disjunctures in the communicative function in my data set and laughter onomatopoeia, that is, the efforts by characters in written texts (anime, comics, illustrated action books) to appropriate LO in dialogue in both cultural contexts. I will then analyze elements of laughter as both verbal and non-verbal behavior, such as facial expressions, as necessary for LO. Shimizu (2000), Provine (2001), and Glenn (2003) discuss these categories and the multimodalities embodied in laughter when making reference to laughter categories and communicative functions.

In my data, LO is largely in the form of written monologues and conversations between characters. This data emanates from Chinese fictional comic texts and their Japanese adaptations, which I selected using the following criteria: The texts provide standard conversation in Chinese society, and comprise significant amounts of onomatopoeia. The Japanese adaptation of the Chinese text present and are structured on natural conversation that accommodates the translation of the pronunciation and semantics of Chinese texts, while contextualizing Japanese emotion to subsequently appear in popular books.

The corpus is ideal for analyzing onomatopoeia in written conversation in comic texts. For this, I have chosen the following texts: These texts are the Chinese comic *Yī rén zhī xià*, with a Japanese name, *Hitori no shita* (‘Under One Person’), the comic with the Chinese name *Zhèn hún jjiē*, called *Chin kon gai* in Japanese (‘The Rakshasa Street’), the comic labelled *Chú fēng* in Chinese and Japanese, as well as *Hina bachi* in Japanese (‘B.E.E’), and the comic entitled *Tiān rén tǒng yī* in Chinese, and *Ten nin tōitsu* in Japanese (‘Immortals and humans’).

The general sequence of data analysis is as follows: I first categorize the language onomatopoeia syllabically, followed by the semantic properties of the onomatopoeia, followed by the pragmatics, and finally I consider the sociopragmatic functionality of the LO, such as its effect on discursive interactions between characters (Tamori 2010). To this, Bu and Su (2011), Liang (2014), Xia (2021), and others, reference the specific communicative function of LO.

Data

I begin this section by comparing parts of the texts in each cultural context. I then discuss social factors influencing the interlingual translation and alteration. Throughout, I provide examples for each observation and analysis.

In Example Set 5 (below), I present LO from Chinese texts, and its corresponding Japanese translations below the Chinese examples. In Example 5.2, the Chinese LO ‘haha’ can be translated into Japanese LO ‘ahahah’ with a similar pronunciation, where the Chinese LO ‘xi’ can also be translated into the Japanese LO ‘haha,’ yet with an altered pronunciation, as in Example 5.4. Not all Chinese LO will be translated into Japanese LO, where, at times, the Chinese LO is omitted altogether. In Example 5.6, the Japanese translation of the Chinese LO ‘xi’ becomes the ‘yoshi’ (all right!), and I omit the Chinese LO ‘xixi’ in Example 5.8. In Examples 5.3 and 5.7, ‘xi’ and ‘xixi’ both contain the stem syllable ‘xi,’ indicating how the stem syllable can undergo reduplication so as to produce new phenomena. In Examples 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4, ‘haha’ and ‘ahaha’ both derive from the stem syllable ‘ha.’ The prefix ‘a’ in ‘ahaha’ is often used as a prefix to enrich the quality of LO (Kadooka 2005).

5.1 **Haha** nǐ shì bùshì yǐwéi zìjǐ dào le nà biān jiù néng hǎoguò? (Yī rén zhī xià, 52, p. 8)

5.2 **Ahaha!** Ura reta saki de matomona seikatsu ga matteru wakene edarouga!! (Hitori no shita, 24, p. 18)
‘**Haha!** Do you think you can get better when you get there?’

5.3 **Xi**, nà wǒ jiù dāng jiǎngjīn shōu xià le (Chú fēng, 29, p. 27)
‘**Xi**, I’ll accept it as a bonus.’

5.4 **Haha**, nja shōkin to shite morattokimasu ka ne (Hina bachi, 1, p. 38)

5.5 **Hehe**, shùjù chūláile (Zhèn hún jiē, 49, p. 7)

5.6 **Yoshi**, dēta ga deta zo!! (Chin kon gai, 9, p. 90)
‘**Hehe**, results of the analyses of this data were revealed’

5.7 **Haha!!** Zhè yě jǐnjǐn shì bàole qiān fēn zhī yī de jiù chóu bàle. xixi... (Tiān rén tǒng yī, 3, p. 12)

5.8 **Haha!** Kore demo sekinen no urami no sen-bun’no ichi o harashita nisuginai... (Ten nin tōitsu, 1, 75)

Example Set 5

Table 1 (below) presents 272 LO from the four comics, and 203 LO from the Japanese adaptations. A simple statistical count of the number of LO in each comic and their adaptations indicates that different translators and translation methods create a difference in the LOs of each comic, and similarly during translation. Yet, not all 272 Chinese LOs can be translated into Japanese LOs. Most of the Chinese LOs (72 cases) collected from *Tiān rén tǒng yī*, are translated into Japanese Chinese LOs (66 cases). However, the Japanese LOs (33 cases) in *Hitori no shita* constitute less than half of the LOs in *Yī rén zhī xià*, that is, the Chinese text (68 cases).

Chinese version	Yī rén zhī xià	Zhèn hún jjiē	Chú fēng	Tiān rén tǒng yī	Total
LO	68	79	53	72	272
Japanese version	Hitori no shita	Chin kon gai	Hina bachi	Ten nin tōitsu	Total
LO	33	56	48	66	203

Table 1: Chinese and Japanese LOs in the four comics

To translate the LO into Japanese, translators consider two dimensions; the phonetics, and the general and contextual semantics. The phonetics of the syllable to be translated, via the Romanization of both Chinese characters and Japanese katakana/hiragana, structure the transliteration process, while translators consider the semantics of words and context and that these semantics align in both cultural contexts. Tables 2 to 4 (below) contain high-frequency Chinese LO, the syllables ‘ha,’ ‘he,’ and ‘hei.’ Table 5 presents the LO with low frequency and their corresponding Japanese LO, as well as Japanese words. The number in brackets indicates the frequency of the words.

I also mark the comics in which LO appear, *Yī rén zhī xià*: [1], *Zhèn hún jiē*: [2], *Chú fēng*: [3], *Tiān rén tǒng yī*: [4]. I describe LO syllables in Chinese, through the following 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).

The Japanese adaptations use 26 types (88 words) of LO. 20 types (21 words) of other words, and eighth words are omitted. In Example Set 4 above, Xia (2021) describes that when the Chinese LOs repeatedly appear in a conversation, the Japanese adaptation will omit the second LO. Also, in Example Set 5, Xia (2021) points that when LO is adopted to shift the topic to the next stage, the translations are frequently interjections (‘jya,’ so) as discourse markers in Japanese (Togashi, 2002, 2004). Not all Chinese LOs can be translated into Japanese LOs, as shown in Tables 2 to 5.

Table 2 (below) presents LO containing widely used ‘ha’ syllables. Here, the data found a total of seven types (117 words). The word type is marked in superscript form at the top right of the

word. In the comics [1] [2] and [3], I use two types of Chinese LO ('haha' and 'ahaha'). However, the types of LO in Comic [4] are more abundant (six types). The syllable 'ha' adds a variety of prefixes, such as 'wa,' 'mu,' 'wuwa,' and 'wu,' and so on. According to the upper right corner number of the Japanese LOs in Table 2, the Japanese adaption employs 26 types to effect a translation of the Chinese LO 'ha.' In addition to 'ha,' 'fu,' and 'hi' syllables, the prefixes include 'buwa,' 'hya,' 'kya,' and others. The syllable 'ha' can produce different types of LO, each with varying numbers of syllables, such as 1S(ha), 2S(ha), 1P(a)2S(ha), 1P(fu)4S(ha), and so on. Additionally, 21 instances of Japanese words used to translate Chinese LOs can be found solely in comics [1] and [2].

Comic	Chinese LO	Japanese LO	Japanese word
[1]	哈哈 haha ¹ (33)	ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (7) アハハ-ahaha ³ (3) ギャハハ-gyahaha ⁴ (1) ガッハッハッハ-gahhahhaha ⁵ (1) ハー-haa ⁶ (1) ホホ-hoho ⁷ (1) フフ-fufu ⁸ (1)	だもん-damon ¹ (1) いや-iya ² (1) つい-tsui ³ (1) ねえ-nee ⁴ (1) そら-sora ⁵ (1) だってえ-dattee ⁶ (1) ね- ne ⁷ (1) ぜ-ze ⁸ (1) だよ-da yo ⁹ (1) さ- sa ¹⁰ (1) よ-yo ¹¹ (1) じゃ- ja ¹² (1) Omitted (6)
[2]	哈哈-haha ¹ (37)	ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (11) アハハ-ahaha ³ (1) ガハハ-gahaha ⁹ (7) フハハハハ-fuhahahaha ¹⁰ (1) ハッハッハッ-hahhahha ¹¹ (1) ガーハッハッハッハ-gahhahhahhaha ¹² (1) ハッハーン-hahhaan ¹³ (1) へへ-hehe ¹⁴ (1) クク-kuku ¹⁵ (1) フフハハ-fufuhaha ¹⁶ (1) フフフ-fufufu ¹⁷ (2)	ぞ-zo ¹³ (1) え-e ¹⁴ (1) ほらよ-horayo ¹⁵ (1) だって-datte ¹⁶ (1) ねえかあ-neekaa ¹⁷ (1) んだ nda ¹⁸ (1) 笑止千 syoushisenban ¹⁹ (1) うんまあそうだね兄さ-unmasoudanenisan ²⁰ (1) Omitted (2)
[2]	啊哈哈-ahaha ² (5)	アハハ-ahaha ³ (1) グハハ-guhaha ¹⁸ (1) ブワッハハ-buwahhaha ¹⁹ (1) ヒヤッハ-hyahha ²⁰ (1)	でで-dede ²¹ (1)
[3]	哈哈-haha ¹ (14)	ハハ haha ² (8) アハハ-ahaha ³ (3)	

		ガーッハッハ-gaahhahha ²¹ (1) フフフ-fufufu ¹⁷ (1) キャハハハハ-kyahahahaha ²² (1)	
[3]	哇哈哈-haha ³ (1)	クハハ-kuhaha ²³ (1)	
[4]	哈哈-haha ¹ (14)	ハハ-haha ² (7) ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (6) オホホ-ohoho ²³ (1)	
[4]	啊哈哈-ahaha ² (8)	ハハ-haha ² (4) ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (1) ワハハ-wahaha ²⁴ (1) ウヒヒ-uhihi ²⁵ (2)	
[4]	木哈哈-muhaha ⁴ (1)	ヒヤハハ-hyahaha ²⁶ (1)	
[4]	姆哈哈-muhaha ⁵ (2)	ハハ-haha ² (2)	
[4]	鸣哇哈哈-wuwahaha ⁶ (1)	ハハ-haha ² (1)	
[4]	唔哈哈-wuhaha ⁷ (1)	ハハ-haha ² (1)	
Total	117	88	29

Table 2: Chinese LO containing 'ha' syllables and their Japanese translations

The following tables, Tables 3 to 5, also follow the same trend. Table 3 shows three types (89 words) of Chinese LO 'he' that are translated into 21 types (71 words) of Japanese LO and 11 other Japanese words. Comics [3] and [4] also prefer to use Japanese LO to translate Chinese LO, similar to Table 2. Compared with the one-syllable 'he' (1 word) or the three-syllable 'ohehe' (2 words), the Chinese two-syllable LO 'hehe' (74 words) are widely used. On the contrary, Japanese LO 3S (21 words) appear more frequently with various stem syllables, such as 'ha,' 'fu,' 'ho,' and 'ku.' Table 4 demonstrates that the Chinese LO 'hei' is divided into two types: 1S(hei) (12 words) and 2S(hei) (26 words). The Japanese adaptation uses 11 types (20 words), mainly comprising Japanese LO 2S (8 words), with stem syllables including 'he,' 'fu,' 'ha,' and 'hou.' Notably, the Japanese translation for 'heihei' in Comic [1] predominantly employs Japanese words (8 words).

Comic	Chinese LO	Japanese LO	Japanese word
[1]	呵呵 hehe ¹ (11)	ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (1) ハあ-haa ³ (1) フン-fun ⁴ (1) フフ-fufu ⁵ (2)	なんかあさあ-nankaasa ¹ (1) まあ-maa ² (1) じゃよ-jayo ³ (1) こら-kora ⁴ (1) だな-dana ⁵ (1) Omitted (1)
[1]	呵 he ² (1)	ホホッ-hohoh ⁶ (1)	
[2]	呵呵-hehe (31)	フハハ-fuhaha ⁷ (1) ハハ-haha ² (2) ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (1) ハッハッハッ-hahhahhah ⁸ (1) ガハハ-gahaha ⁹ (1) フッ-fuf ¹⁰ (2) フンッ-funf ¹¹ (1) フフッ-fufuf ¹² (3) フフ-fufu ⁵ (2) クク-kuku ¹³ (3) ククッ-kukuk ¹⁴ (1) ククク-kukkuku ¹⁵ (3)	な-na ⁶ (1)よ-yo ⁷ (1) よし-yoshi ⁸ (1) そっか-sokka ⁹ (1) ああ-aa ¹⁰ (1) こそこそ-kosokoso ¹¹ (1) Omitted (4)
[2]	哦呵呵-ohehe ³ (2)	グハハ-gahaha ¹⁶ (1) ガハハ-gahaha ⁹ (1)	
[3]	呵呵-hehe ¹ (27)	アハハ-ahaha ¹⁷ (1) ハハ-haha ² (9) クフフ-kufufu ¹⁸ (2) フフ-fufu ⁵ (10) ヌフ-nufu ¹⁹ (1) へへ-hehe ²⁰ (1) ククク-kukuku ¹⁵ (2)	よ-yo ¹² (1)
[4]	呵呵-hehe ¹ (16)	フ-fu ²¹ (1) フン-fun ⁴ (2) フフ-fufu ⁵ (5) フハハ-fuhaha ²² (1) ハハ-haha ² (1) ハハハ-hahaha ¹ (5) アハハ-ahaha ¹⁷ (1)	
Total	89	71	18

Table 3: Chinese LO containing 'he' syllables and their Japanese translations

Comic	Chinese LO	Japanese LO	Japanese word
[1]	嘿 hei ¹ (1)	へへッ-heheh ¹ (1)	
[1]	嘿嘿 heihei ² (19)	へへ-hehe ² (3) エへへ-ehehe ³ (1) へえーhee ⁴ (1) ハハッ hahah ⁵ (1) フッ fuf ⁶ (1) フフ fufu ⁷ (2)	まあ-maa ¹ (1) だろー-darou ² (1) さ-sa ³ (1) だな-dana ⁴ (1) じゃ-ja ⁵ (2) ほおーhoo ⁶ (1) そりゃあ-soryaa ⁷ (1) Omitted (2)
[2]	嘿嘿 heihei ² (2)		ぜ-se ⁸ (1) だね-dane ⁹ (1)
[3]	嘿-hei ¹ (2)		omit (2)
[3]	嘿嘿-heihei ² (2)	ハハ-haha ⁷ (1)	よ-yo ¹⁰ (1)
[4]	嘿-hei ¹ (9)	フッ-fuf ⁶ (1) フン-fun ⁸ (1) フフ-fufu ⁷ (2) へへ-hehe ² (1) へへッ-heheh ¹ (1) ホウ-hou ⁹ (1) ニヤ-haya ¹⁰ (1)	
[4]	嘿嘿-heihei ² (3)	へへへ-hehehe ¹¹ (1)	まあ-maa ¹ (1) よし-yoshi ² (1)
Total	38	20	17

Table 4: Chinese LO containing 'hei' syllables and their Japanese translations

In Table 5 (below), most Chinese LO (8 types, 29 words) that are not frequently adopted in the comics are translated into Japanese LO (15 types, 24 words), and here, six words are omitted. Among these, the 'heihei' is translated into Japanese LO, all of which mainly contain the syllables 'fu,' 'ku,' 'ha,' and 'hi.' With the exception of the Chinese LO 'houhou' and the Japanese LO 'hohhoho,' which both contain the consonant /h/, the Japanese LOs listed in Table 5 do not share the same consonant sounds as their Chinese counterparts. However, similar to the pairs, the Chinese 'gaga' and Japanese 'kaak,' and the Chinese 'gege' and Japanese 'keke,' the consonants /k/ and /g/ have similar articulatory characteristics but differ in terms of their voicing.

Comic	Chinese LO	Japanese LO	Japanese word
[1]	嘎嘎gaga ¹ (2)	カーツ-kaak ¹ (1)	Omitted (1)
[1]	咳 ke ² (1)	ハハ-haha ² (1)	
[1]	吼吼-houhou ³ (1)	ホッホッホ-hohhoho ³ (1)	
[2]	咯咯 gege ⁴ (1)	ケケ-keke ⁴ (1)	
[3]	咯咯-gege ⁴ (5)	グフフ-gufufu ⁵ (1) ヌフフ-nufufu ⁶ (3)	Omitted_(1)
[3]	哼哼-hengheng ⁵ (1)	ククク-kuku ⁷ (1)	
[3]	嘻-xi ⁶ (1)	ハハ-haha ² (1)	
[4]	嘻-xi ⁶ (3)	ヘッ-heh ⁸ (1) ハッ-hah ⁹ (1)	Omitted (1)
[4]	嘻嘻-xixi ⁷ (13)	フン-fun ¹⁰ (1) フフ-fufu ¹¹ (3) クク-kuku ¹² (1) ハハハ-hahaha ¹³ (2) ヒヒ-hihi ¹⁴ (4)	Omitted (3)
[4]	啊嘻嘻-axixi ⁸ (1)	ウヒヒ-uhihi ¹⁵ (1)	
Total	29	24	6

Table 5: Chinese LOs and their Japanese translations

I now draw the following conclusions from the data in the above tables: 1) There are more types of LO in Japanese than in Chinese, where the Japanese adopt multiple types of LO in order to translate the same LO in Chinese. 2) Chinese comics mostly use one-syllable and one-syllable LO, while Japanese comics mostly use two-syllable and three-syllable LO, and the Chinese two-syllable LO are more likely to be omitted. 3) Not all Chinese LO are translated into Japanese LO, and in particular the LO in comics 1 and 2 are largely omitted, where a variety of interjections and sentence-final particles are used to indicate the various functions performed by the LOs.

Discussing the Data

In this section, I will begin to elaborate on the ways in which the difference in the appropriation of LOs becomes a pragmatic function in communication (Xia 2021). At times when Japanese LOs differ functionally to Chinese LOs, the Japanese text may appear unnatural in its sound, and hence, the interjection will appear with a corresponding function during translation. By observing the types of adjacency pairs, interjections, and the sentence final particles, I argue that I can shed light on the distinctions in the pragmatic functions of Chinese and Japanese LOs.

Adjacency Pairs

In this section, I examine the prevalent Chinese LO, including ‘ha,’ ‘xi,’ ‘hei,’ and ‘heng,’ and their Japanese counterparts. Through character relationships, contextual background, and dialogue content analysis, I reveal disparities between syllable types and structures in Japanese and Chinese LOs and their reasons. I utilize the ‘question->answer’ binary within the concept of adjacency pairs (Levinson 1983), and look at LOs as frequently used as the starting point in a response sentence.

Initially, I will analyze the prevalent LO ‘haha,’ which is used to represent laughter in written or online communication. Within a Chinese linguistic context, this LO is often employed to express a state of happiness and to convey the responder’s friendly attitude.

6.1	A1	Nǐ bù huì zhēn yǐwéi zìjǐ xiànzài de shuǐpíng yǒu zīgé juézhú xià rèn tiān shī zhī wèi ba!
	B2	haha! Bǎo jiě, nèitiān nǐ yě kànjiànle, dònglì quán kāi de wǒ qíshí yě bù ruò ba! (Yī rén zhī xià, 27, p. 16)
6.2	A1	Honki de ima no teido de tenshi no za ni idomu shikaku ga aru to omotte n janaidarou ne?
	B2	haha! Bōbō nēsan mo ano tokimitadeshou? Nōryoku zenkai no ore wa yowakunakattajan? (Hitori no shita, 12, p. 2)
	‘A1	You don’t really think your current level can compete for the position of the following master, do you?
	B2	Haha! Sister Bao, you saw it that day. I am not weak when I switch on!’

Example Set 6

In Example Set 6 (above), as B2’s friend, A1 is concerned that B2 can not be awarded the role of next master. Following this, B2 laughs loudly prior to responding. B2 appears to believe that he has the skills to be awarded the position of the following master, despite that the present situation offers reduced optimism. This aligns with Provine (2001), who notes that laughter coordinates the

progress or sequence of the conversation; response, evolution, and relaxation. Bu and Su (2011) stress that LO during a positive response exposes a positive attitude by the listener towards the speaker. The ‘haha’ at the onset of the response can thus create friendliness and familiarity, that is, the ‘haha’ strengthened B2’s more positive response. In Japanese, the Chinese 2S(ha) becomes the Japanese 2S(ha): Both function as an 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 evidence the fact that when adapted into Japanese LOs, they differ to the structure of Chinese LOs. In Example 7.1 (below), B2 provides a 1S(xi) ‘xi’ at the sentence onset prior to the response, while Japanese adopts the 2S(ha) ‘haha.’

7.1 A1 Wèi! Nǐ gànshénme! Hái gěi wǒ!

B2 Xi, nà wǒ jiù dāng jiǎngjīn shōu xiàle (Chú fēng, 28, p. 27)

7.2 A1 Oi, nani o shite iru no, kaeshite

B2 Haha, nja shōkin to shite morattokimasu ka ne (Hina bachi, 3, p. 38)

‘A1 Hey! What are you doing! Give me back!

B2 Xi, I’ll accept it as a bonus.’

Example Set 7

In this scenario, B2 observes A1 engaging in mischievous conduct and, as a form of reprimand, takes A1’s wallet. The laughter expression ‘xi’ encompasses a range of emotions, reflecting both B2’s satisfaction in their disciplinary action and their joy in gaining unexpected wealth. In these adjacency pairs, the pragmatic function of Chinese LOs shows similarity to that action performed by laughter in daily conversation. Haha’ signifies a ‘laugh out loud,’ and hence an expression of a big happy laugh, whereas ‘xixi’ signifies far more complex and diverse laughter, such as a cute laugh, an honest laugh, or a shy laugh. Furthermore, ‘xixi’ represents a sense of mischievousness and light-heartedness (Xia and Wang 2017). Hamano (2005) points out that the number of syllables increases can reinforce the vivacity of sound. Therefore, reducing the number of syllables will lighten the laugh sound. In Example 7.1, the single-syllable word 1S(xi) increases the subtlety of B2’s emotions.

The pronunciation of the Japanese ‘shi’ (シ) is similar to that of the Chinese ‘xi’ (嘻), but it does not have the same meaning in the context of laughter. In Japanese onomatopoeia, the syllable does not imitate sounds directly, but it is common to repeat syllables or to add phonetic elements such as moraic consonants or nasal sounds (Tamori 2010). The repeated syllable ‘shishi’ is associated with the signature laughter of the protagonist, Luffy, in the popular Japanese manga *One Piece*. This

immediately evokes the image of Luffy with his teeth exposed, and laughing in a childish manner with his mouth wide open. Using the Chinese pronunciation in translation may seem unnatural to Japanese readers, as 'xi' in Chinese represents a slight smile, while 'xixi' in Japanese conveys exaggerated laughter. In comparison, the Japanese LO 2S(ha) 'haha' is more universal and was used in Example 7 to emphasize B2's happy emotion. However, the Japanese LO still conveys more subtle emotions, similar to the Chinese LO 'xi.'

Example 8 shows the Chinese 3S(hei) pronounced similarly to the Japanese LO 2S(he), but with fewer syllables, and shifted to the end of the sentence in the Japanese adaptation.

8.1	A1 Kěhèn méi shēng zài nàgè niándài ... Bùrán yīdìng yào xiǎngshòu yīxià zhè wú shòu de gāng měng
	B2 Heiheihe ! jiějiě a ~nǐ zhēnshi dǎzhe dēnglóng dōu nán zhǎodào de húlíjīng ... (Yī rén zhī xià, 7, p. 2)
8.2	A1 Onaji jidai ni meguriaenakatta no ga kuchioshī...!! Kono subarashī chikara o jikani ajiwaitakatta wa...!
	B2 A ... anego tteba honto sokora no on'na to reberu ga chigau ze... hehe (Hitori no shita, 30, p. 24)
	'A1 It's a pity that I was not born in that era ... I want to experience this wonderful power directly ...!
	B2 Heiheihe ! Sister~ You are such a rare vixen'

Example Set 8

A1 regrets missing the chance to date the boss; B2 feels awkward and laughs, then hints at the sister's tendency to flirt with the elderly boss. Chinese LOs at the beginning of a sentence initiate a topic, and attract the listener's attention, while those at the beginning of a response sentence complete the function of responding (Xia 2021). B2 responds with the Chinese LO 3S(hei), indicating embarrassment in response to A1's mention of erotic topics, while also revealing a somewhat flirtatious attitude. The use of the Chinese LO in B2's response transforms it from a potentially offensive statement to a humorous one, thereby preventing A1 from being disgusted.

In the Japanese adaptation, B2 includes an interjection before the formal response, expressing surprise at A1's talk. The Japanese LO 'hehe' in the terminal position is a 'post-completion stance marker,' (Schegloff 1996), as an element positioned as a post-possible completion. The use of 'hehe' indicates the end of the conversation, and conveys an unintentional, nasty laugh. Its placement at the end of a sentence intensifies the ridiculous tone of the phrase, 'You are such a rare vixen.' The Japanese strategy of postposing LO reflects the differing usage preferences of LO in Chinese and Japanese to optimize conversational flow. In Example set 9, the Japanese LO 3S(hei) 'heiheihe' is translated into the Japanese LO 2S (fu)1X(n) 'fufun,' by adding a nasal sound.

9.1 A1 Guàibùdé wǒ de róu jìn zhān bù dào wǒ de jìn lì.....

B2 Heiheihe! Zhīdào nǐ yòu néng zěnyàng ? (yī rén zhī xià, 78, p. 2)

9.2 A1 Dōri de ore no yawara no chikara de inashite mo kōgeki ga atatchimau wakeda

B2 Fufun Wakatta toko de nanigadekiru! (hitori no shita, 30, p. 24)

'A1 This is the reason why I can hit the target even with my weak force.

B2 Heiheihe! Even if you have found the secret, so what.'

Example Set 9

In Example 9.1, A1 and B2 are in a hostile relationship. As suggested by Hashimoto (1994), people laugh at times when they attempt to attack others or at times when they intend to indicate that they have a higher status or a stronger ability. Here, 3S(hei) suggests an unkind laugh that is assertive and indicates B2's belief in his greater power to defeat A1. Both the 'hei' (嘿) and the 'xi' (嘻) suggest a small laugh, but imitate different laughter and are appropriated in a variety of scenes. These are pictophonetic characters, such as the character 'hei' (嘿), which is composed of '口' (mouth), '黑' (black), and '黑' (hei 'black'), which presents the sound and '口' (kou, meaning 'mouth') conveys the meaning. Moreover, with relevance to the semantic formula of 'hei' (嘿), Chinese characters embody an ideographical writing system; when Chinese speakers employ the character 'hei' (嘿) to express laughter, they make an association with the negative words which form '黑' (black), such as 'a black heart' and 'darkness.' Instead, in Example 6.1, the character 'xi' (嘻) is composed of '口' (mouth) and '喜' (xi, meaning 'happiness'), where 'xi' (嘻) encourages a recollection of positive words such as 'happiness' and 'delight.'

Xia (2021) suggests that Japanese LOs with the vowel /u/, such as 'fu' and 'ku,' function as aggressive laughter expressing a sense of superiority, contempt, and oppression. In Example 9.2, the Japanese LO 'fufun' becomes a loud sound made by forcing air through the nose, thereby intensifying the aggressiveness of the laughter, and conveying the speaker's disdain. Example 10.2 demonstrates the use of the Japanese LO 'kuku' as part of an offensive response sentence. Additionally, the Chinese LO 2S(heng) 'hengheng' also has a nasal sound, which, when in Japanese, becomes 3S(ku).

10.1 A1	Xíngshǐ zhè quánlì de shì wǒmen, ér bùshì nǐmen de bàquán zhǔyì. Ér zhè zhèng shì nǐmen zuì bùxiǎng kàn dào de.
B2	Hengheng , wǒ wèibì (Chú fēng, 55, p. 7)
10.1 A1	Kono chikara o kōshi dekiru no wa warewareda. Kisama-ra haken shugi kokkade wanai.
B2	Kukuku sore wa dō ka na (Hinabachi, 1, p. 38)
'A1	We exercise our rights, not your hegemonism, and this is the last thing you want.
B2	Hengheng , maybe I don't think so.'

Example Set 10

A1 emphasizes his greater potency than B2, after which, B2 laughs and disagrees with A1. In Chinese, 'heng' suggests a sudden expression of intense anger and disapproval or disagreement. When 'heng' is appropriated to imitate laughter, it tends to express a feeling of dissatisfaction, and hence, 2S(heng) emphasizes the durability of laughter through a repetition of the syllable 'heng.' In Example 10.2, the Japanese LO 3S(ku) 'kukuku' is used to express an insidious laughter, as the speaker is plotting a conspiracy (Nagashima 2006). The above three example sets thus suggest that while Japanese and Chinese share similarities in terms of pronunciation and structure, the number of LO syllables used in these languages is not always the same. However, it is important to note that they are used as part of the same response in the same contexts.

Motives for Altering Japanese Comic Texts

Above, I discuss the translation of Chinese LOs into associated Japanese LOs, as responses in amicable and hostile exchanges. In Japanese, when the initiator of the conversation expresses discontent, and even upset, the respondent likely employs a Chinese LO, which they then alter to become sentence-final particle, in order to save face. Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced the concept of face threatening acts (FTA), which refers to verbal behavior that poses a threat to one's face, resulting in the elicitation of negative emotions. They suggest that the employment of six fundamental speech acts – orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminders, threats, or warnings – can be perceived as face-threatening, triggering unpleasant feelings. Consequently, the emotions of participants are twisted, and the negotiation fails. To repair a damaged relationship, the speaker excuses themselves with a laugh, and for example, "I'm sorry, hahaha ..."

I now discuss the Chinese LOs during FTA in the Japanese context. Example set 11 exemplifies the mixed emotions of speakers in a tense atmosphere. The Chinese LO 'haha' is used by an adversary to relieve tension, however, in the Japanese context, the translator omits the LO yet adds the sentence-final particle ('~ yo'), which does not occur in Chinese, thus **shifting the tone**.

11.1 A1 Quán xìng de lǚ liáng! Duì ba!

B2 Děng děng děng!! ii Wèi! Yǒurén méiyǒu! Wǒ de tónguǒ chūlái a!iii Nǐ kàn nǐ kàn! Jiù wǒ yīgè rén! **hāhā!** Fàngxīn dǎjià wǒ hěn bù shàncháng! (yī rén zhī xià, 40, p. 1)

11.2 A1 Zen-sei no ryo yo...da na! ?

B2 Ma mama matte! Ō i! Dare ka! ! Boku no nakama yo dete kō i!..... Ne? Bokuhitorida anshin shite **yo** boku sentō toka wa nigatedakara **sa** (hitori no shita, 18, p.11)

'A1 You are Quanxing's Lü Liang, right?

B2 Wait a minute! Hey! Is someone here or not? My comrades, come out! Look, look! It's just me! **haha!** Don't worry, I'm not good at fighting!

11.1 A1 Quán xìng de lǚ liáng! Duì ba!

B2 Děng děng děng!! ii Wèi! Yǒurén méiyǒu! Wǒ de tónguǒ chūlái a!iii Nǐ kàn nǐ kàn! Jiù wǒ yīgè rén! **hāhā!** Fàngxīn dǎjià wǒ hěn bù shàncháng! (yī rén zhī xià, 40, p. 1)

Example Set 11

A1 utilizes a rhetorical question to inquire on B2's affiliation with the opposing group, while simultaneously displaying a threatening facial expression. A1's employment of a threatening speech act results in B2's agitation. Despite calling out to his allies, no one responds. To alleviate the tense atmosphere, B2 emits laughter before expressing his ineptitude to combat to A1. Glenn and Holt (2013) frame laughter as a resource in handling tricky situations, noting that it directs interaction away from negativity while mitigating any effects of discord. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), in contexts involving FTA, speakers may utilize self-deprecating speech acts to alleviate the threat to the hearer's face. In this case, B2 is acutely aware of the challenging situation, and therefore deploys the LO 'haha' to relieve the tense atmosphere and to avoid further deterioration by engaging in self-deprecation.

Glenn and Holt (2013) frame laughter as a resource in handling tricky situations, noting that it directs interaction away from negativity while mitigating any effects of discord. Here, B2 sees herself as insulted and furious; however, A1 seeks to dispel dissatisfaction with B2 by using 'heihei.' The "dí què shì kāi wán xiào" (just joking) emphasizes the fact that A1 has no intention of angering B2. Grammer (1990) noted that laughter may represent a ritualized signal, communicating the notion that "this is play, don't take it seriously," in order to ambiguate or placate adverse intentions. Li (2017) emphasizes that such a 'heihei' can increase the vividness of the speech, while creating a casual atmosphere during FTA. In this way, A1's 'heihei' purports to relieve tension, and carries the implication of "I apologize, and I should not have spoken in that way" In Example 10, the 'heihei' focuses on the recipient of that laughter (other-centered). In contrast, the 'heihei' in Example 9 intends to increase the conflict substantially. Xia and Wang (2017) point out that Chinese LO has multiple meanings; it can imitate vicious and secret laughter

with a negative image, yet can describe honest and lovely laughter with some positive qualities.

According to Sasamoto and Jackson (2016), the same onomatopoeia can occur in various contexts, the interpretation of which is highly context-dependent. As such, it is common knowledge that onomatopoeia must be used in contexts where the interlocutors are specific as to its appropriateness. Wrongly placed onomatopoeia and reactions (laughing, objection, shame) can be perceived as insulting. In Example 11.2, the LO 'haha' is omitted in Chinese, while Japanese employs the sentence-final particle 'yo' to ease tension, contrasting with the Chinese adaptation's lack of sentence-final particles. The Japanese sentence-final particle '~yo' is potent when used to convey personality, attitude, and feeling. Speakers use the '~yo' to alert the listener to information, which can relax a statement deployed for emphasis, warning, or command (Izuhara 2003). Consequently, '~yo' can convey emotion, akin to Chinese LOs, while softening the tone.

Next, I will examine the use of Chinese LOs in response to the speech act appearing in the use of 'reminder' encountered by speakers. In example 12.1, B2 utilizes the LO 'heihei' to characterize laughter that alleviates the awkward atmosphere, despite the fact that 'heihei' was translated into Japanese as 'hehe' and 'fufun' in Examples 8 and 9, respectively. In example 12.2, however, 'heihei' is not employed.

12.1 A1 1 Péi 100? Wǒ de péi lǜ zhème gāo? Wǒ shì yǒu duō bù bèi kànǎo!

B2 Heihei, nà dāngránle, dì yī chǎng de bǐshì nǐ tài lā fēng ma ... (yī rén zhī xià, 72, p. 10)

12.2 A1 Ore wa... tto bairitsu 100-bai!/? Takaku ne? Don dake name rarete nda yo shiritaideshou? Maa o furo ni tsukarinagara demo

B2 Soryaa... omae no ichi-kaisen no ano hadena yatsu mirya naa ... (hitori no shita, 72, p.10)

'**A1** 1 to 100? My odds are so high? How disapproved of me!

B2 Heihei, Of course, in the first match, you were too cool... '

Example Set 12

A1 expresses surprise in that he is not favored by many people, and confirms this to B2, who realizes that if he does not respond adequately, the dialogue may be disrupted. Therefore, B2 laugh, and explains that A1 use irregular means to win the first game. Therefore, many people do not believe that he can win the second game, at which time, B2 uses the ironic word 'lā fēng' (excellent), which seems to be exaggerating A1. It is evident that the FTA in Example 12 is not more serious than that in Example 11, considering the fact that A1 and B2 are strangers and do not have any deep-seated conflict. Therefore, B2 employs a humor-based communicative strategy to salvage A1's face in a potentially embarrassing situation. As Gong (2018) observes, in Chinese culture, which places a high value on face, speakers often utilize humorous or ironic language to imply the

other party's mistake or flaw while simultaneously providing them with some leeway to avoid damaging their face. In this context, the Chinese LO 'heihei' renders the whole response as non-aggressive, which is more likely to be perceived as a humorous remark. Moreover, 'heihei' serves to relieve the tension of the awkward situation and to signal that the response should be taken in a humorous light.

In the Japanese adaptation, the Chinese LO 'heihei' is omitted, and the interjection 'soryaa' appears at the beginning of the response to indicate that the speaker is attempting to explain, such as in the English 'Well, that is to say, ...' As noted by Ogawa (2011), 'sorya' is formed by combining the demonstrative pronoun 'sore' with the particle 'wa,' with the resulting lexical item 'sorewa' undergoing a process of sound assimilation (sore + wa → sorya). It is commonly used in situations where emotions are expressed straightforwardly or when the speaker and listener have a close relationship. Additionally, the speaker uses 'sorya' to express a high level of certainty in what follows. A sentence-final particle '~naa' that can be used to express hope, admiration, and uncertainty, is a method with which to request confirmation from the listener or to add general emphasis. Here the speaker emphasizes his perspective. In example 11.2, the 'naa' is akin to '... isn't it?' or 'you know?' and indicates that a positive response is expected.

I now move to discussing whether the Japanese LO is suitable for the purpose of relieving tension in the FTA. In comparison to Chinese LO, Japanese LO are more dependent on the meaning of LO and are hence not significantly contextual. For example, the Chinese 'heihei' is used in Examples 8, 9, and 12, where each dialogue creates a unique context. In Examples 8 and 9, the Chinese 'heihei' is translated into the Japanese 'hehe' and 'fufun.' The Japanese 'hehe' expresses an unkind or triumphant laugh. The Japanese 'fufu' and its derivative forms 'fufun' and 'nufufu' imitate laughter aggressively, and are often used in conversations describing enemies. In Example 11, in the FTA, 'heihei' is directly omitted. In Japanese discourse, employing various interjections and sentence-final particles to mitigate tension and to salvage the listener's face when face-threatening acts occur evidences a customary linguistic practice in Japanese culture. Instead, the use of LO in Japanese conversations may be perceived as a provoking laugh by Japanese speakers, potentially leading to a conversation breakdown.

In the following discussion, I examine Example 12.1 to explore the use of 'haha' among colleagues. In the Japanese version, the LO 'haha' is omitted, and instead, the interjection 'Datte~e' and sentence-final particle '~desho' are utilized to alleviate the tense atmosphere.

13.1 A1 Nǐ yīzhí nà zhǎng mén dāng kōngqì ma?

B2 **Haha**, Fǎnzhèng tā yě zhǐshì dài zhǎng mén, yòu bùshì jīngcháng lǒumiàn...quán xìng de zhǎng mén gēn bǎishè yǒu shé me qūbié? (yī rén zhī xià, 61, p. 21)

13.2 A1 Tenohira-mon no koto zenzen ki ni tome tenakatta no kai?

B2 Datte~e —... kekkyoku tada no dairidesho? ... fudan kara kao dasanaishi/ zen-sei no tenohira-mon wa imaya shosen okazari jōtai yo. (Hitori no shita, 61, p. 15)

'A1 Didn't you care about a leader at all?

B2 **Haha**, he is just a surrogate leader. He doesn't show up often... The head of the 'quanxing' just for ornament.'

Example Set 13

A1 and B2 share a colleague relationship, however, B2 has doubts about the real authority of their newly appointed leader. Consequently, A1 queries whether B2 considers the leader to be a mere figurehead. B2 laughs and explains that the current leader is only a surrogate leader and has no right to restrain himself. A1 discreetly reminds B2 of the importance of showing respect to their superiors, but B2 disagrees with A1's ideas. The 'haha' exhibits unclear emotion, despite its description as a loud laugh in Examples 5. More so, the 'haha' indicates that B2 intends to continue with a relaxed attitude while considering A1'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.

B2 anticipates that, through her explanation, the conversation may become awkward. As such, B2 laughs prior to expressing a negative attitude, following and consequent to which, A1 is confused as to whether this laughter is mockery, an expression of irony, or an attack. I note that the Chinese LO in FTA seeks to minimize the seriousness of a response. In Example 12.2, the Japanese interjection 'Datte~e' appears prior to the formal response. Mineda and Tayu (2009) point out the function of the interjection 'datte' in discourse. Yet, 'datte' may be used to argue a point or as an excuse. In addition, during criticism or a reprimanding, the victim may plead innocence. 'datte' becomes a practical explanation and is used to illustrate the legitimacy of the motive. Similar to 'sorya' in Example 12.2, the interjections in Japanese avoid aggravating the tension of FTA. Moreover, the Chinese sentence 'Fǎnzhèng tā yě zhǐshì dài zhǎng mén' (he is just a surrogate leader) is affirmative. Whereas the Japanese verb 'desho' (right?) of 'kekkyoku tada no dairi desho' (Isn't he just a surrogate leader) indicates the speakers' doubts. The Japanese 'desho' at the end of the response can also play a role in easing the tone. In the collected data, the Chinese interjection is also used together with LO, In Example 14.1, B2 uses the interjection 'eiyoueiyo' and the LO 3S(ha) 'hahaha.'

14.1 A1 Nà yě bùnéng ná háizi sāqì ya ya ya!

B2 Eiyoeiyo! xiǎoyàng! Hái zhēn jíle ~**hahaha!** (Yī rén zhī xià, 7, p. 1)

14.2 A1 Da to shite mo! Kodomo ni atatcha damedaro! ?

B2 Hohoh ~! Sorya gomottomojana! (Hitori no shita, 3, p. 5)

'A1 Even so, dad can't get angry with the child!

B2 Look at you. you take it too seriously. **hahaha!**'

Example Set 14

Here, the grandson A1 is angry because his father uses himself as a punching bag. Grandpa B2 employs 'eiyoeiyo' to express surprise after hearing the complaints and dissatisfaction of A1 as B2 does not expect that A1 would become as angry as he did. At this point, B2 attempts to appease A1 and finally laughs. In Chinese, 'eiyoeiyo' serves as an interjection conveying pain or surprise, often accompanied by a facetious tone, and can be utilized in humorous or satirical contexts. 'Xiǎo yàng' is a phrase in Chinese dialects that translates to 'little guy,' which can also be seen as a mild insult, but is frequently used as an affectionate term of endearment. 'Hái zhēn jíle' (you take it too seriously) embodies a ridiculous tone. Lastly, a loud 'hahaha' laugh by B2, in response to A1's anger, is more likely seen as mockery. The Chinese LO 'hahaha' not only functions as a 'post-completion stance marker' (Schegloff 1996), but also has the capacity to modulate a humorous and satirical attitude of discourse, sarcasm, and aggression, thus diffusing its response requirements. This argument is in line with Shaw, Hepburn, and Potter's (2013) notion that laugh particles can evoke the 'soft semantics' conventionally associated with such sounds.

In Example 14.2, the laughter shifts to the beginning of the response. As the Chinese 'he' appears at the beginning of Example 7.1, laughter was placed at the coda of the Japanese response. The Japanese adaptation alters the position of the LO, a phenomenon which occurs when translators translate Chinese into Japanese. In the Japanese context, the LO 'hoho' is usually used to describe the laughter of the elderly. 'Hoho' appears before a response, which suggests that B2 is uncomfortable with seeing his grandson as angry, becoming an unexpected and strange mood. As in Example 13.2, the interjection 'sorya' also appears in this sentence. That is, the emotion of explanation, and comfort is expressed through the interjection 'sorya.' The Japanese adaptation minimizes the sarcasm and irony by altering B2's answer 'gomottomojana' (that is right). The sentence-final particles 'jana' is an old man's way of ending an affirmative statement in anime or period drama and is relatively strong (manly).

My data suggests that Chinese LOs are often used in conversations during FTA. The Chinese include the LO in responses, aiming to ease an ensuing embarrassment and anger. In Chinese, this joking or molesting becomes a communication strategy through which to ease the tense

atmosphere. Furthermore, these Chinese LOs are essential to fluid conversational interactions. Without an appropriate LO in FTA, characters' lines may quickly appear awkward and cumbersome. In the FTA, a lowly embarrassing laugh 'heihei' such as in Examples 12 are safer than a ridiculously loud laugh 'haha,' such as in Examples 13 and 14. The use of LO in Chinese discourse is strongly influenced by the nature of the relationship between the speakers, as observed in Examples 13 and 14 where colleagues and family members respectively use 'haha' with slightly teasing language that does not lead to the breakdown of conversation. In contrast, in the response to a sarcastic remark from a stranger in Example 12, a less aggressive 'heihei' is more appropriate. Furthermore, the use of 'haha' by enemies to ease a tense atmosphere is always accompanied by a submissive attitude and a pleading tone. This aligns with the Chinese proverb, 'shēnshǒu bù dǎ xiàoliǎn rén' (not to fight hand smiling face). That is, through Chinese etiquette, one can not become angry in response to an admission of error by the speaker with a desolate smile. Therefore, the relationship between speakers and the content of the conversation strongly influences the choice and usage of LO in Chinese discourse.

In the Japanese context, speakers naturally use more euphemistic ways of speaking during FTA, where an apology with a laugh becomes impolite and angering. At times when the Japanese read character lines in comics producing LOs in FTA, non-seriousness is deepened. Therefore, in Japanese adaptations of comics, LOs are omitted and interjections and sentence-final particles ease tensions. The interjections contain sophistry, such as 'soryaa' in Example 13.2 and Example 14.2, and 'datte' in Example 13.2. Moreover, the sentence-final particles include '~yo,' which in Example 12.2 indicates certainty, emphasis, etc., '~na' implying self-assertion in Examples 13.2 and 14.2, and '~desho' in Example 13.2 having an interrogative tone. That is, the response becomes euphemistic by adding interjections and sentence-final particles.

Conclusion

As LOs in comics are no longer simply seen as vocabulary imitating laughter, these expressions of pleasure or happiness increase their semiotic repertoire. However, this semiotic potency also increases during affirmative, ambiguous and negative responses. Furthermore, as in two languages with LOs vary greatly, the potential interpretations of such messages are extensively diverse. However, Chinese and Japanese speakers use a variety of LOs to demonstrate pragmatic functions, even within similar or identical contexts.

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. This research confirms the role of Chinese LOs in alleviating tense situations, regardless of the relationship between speakers, including adversaries, strangers, colleagues, or family members. The LOs play a vital function in reducing the speaker's anxiety and

in mitigating negative face in the recipient. It is important to note that the interpretation of LOs is highly contextual, and incorrectly placed LOs may be perceived as insulting. Hence, Japanese translators may choose to exclude LOs while including interjections and sentence-final particles to soften the tone. These differences in the use of LOs between Chinese and Japanese languages demonstrate the importance of considering cultural context and language nuances when translating or interpreting these expressions.

Despite these differences, LOs are a common and ubiquitous feature in both Chinese and Japanese comics, films, TV dramas, and everyday conversations. They provide a rich and colorful means of expression that adds depth, humor, and authenticity to the dialogue. As such, the study of LOs in Chinese and Japanese communication not only sheds light on the cultural and linguistic aspects of humor and emotion, but also contributes to the broader field of pragmatics and intercultural communication.

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