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Dynamic Nature of Boundaries of Speech Communities: Learning and Negotiating Codes in Intercultural Communication

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ABSTRACT

Using the ethnography of communication and speech codes theory, this study aims to capture instances in which individuals' views of appropriate conduct and cultural boundaries are undergoing change in intercultural interactions. The paper proposes a way of describing such instances by illustrating Japanese speakers' experiences of encountering unfamiliar codes in problematic situations with English speakers in the United States, recognizing boundaries, negotiating contrasting codes, and revising their perceptions of codes and boundaries as a result of engaging in remedial episodes. The study illuminates the dynamic nature of the boundaries of speech communities and adds an ethnographic exploration of intercultural communication.

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With increasing opportunities for individuals to cross the boundaries of speech communities, there is a growing need to understand the phenomenon in which those who have been deeply immersed in the world of meanings in one speech community go to another one and encounter a different set of meanings that may sometimes be entirely opposite of the ones they were accustomed to. In some cases, the individuals must spend the rest of their lives in the newly encountered web of meanings while still having to visit the speech community of their origin on occasion and maintain good relationships with the members of both communities. They may have to move back and forth between two different speech communities. What would happen to their perception of the resources that they use to interpret their own and others' actions? What would happen to these individuals as "culture bearers" (Philipsen, 1997, p. 147)? What would happen to their views of the boundaries of speech communities? Is there a way of capturing instances of the boundaries being modified? In this study, I explored these questions by analyzing speech community members' talk about their experiences in intercultural interactions.

The phenomenon of individuals' going to another culture has been widely investigated in intercultural communication research (e.g. international students' adaptation to new environments, their experiences after returning to their original culture, acculturation

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of international marriage partners, construction of refugee and immigrant identities). However, there has been no research looking closely at how individuals use their resources to interpret their own and others' actions in situated intercultural interactions and how their taken-for-granted views can change as a result of engaging in such interactions.

This study aims at capturing instances in which individuals' views of appropriate conduct and cultural boundaries are under the influence of change when they encounter different views in intercultural interactions. I propose a way of describing such instances from the participants' perspectives. Specifically, using the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972, 1974) and speech codes theory (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005), I describe, as an illustration, the experiences of Japanese speakers learning unfamiliar codes in problematic situations with English speakers in the United States, realizing the boundaries of speech communities, and revising their views of codes and boundaries as a result of engaging in remedial episodes. In the following discussions, I first describe the ethnography of communication and speech codes theory as the framework for the study. Then, I explain the concept of speech codes and how the boundaries of speech communities have been studied. Third, I discuss how remedial episodes can be a site for observing the codes and boundaries. After describing the in-depth interview as the method of research, I finally present the analysis as an illustration. The study hopes to contribute to the literature by proposing an analytic procedure for studying codes and boundaries that are undergoing revision and offering a case to the ethnographic exploration of intercultural communication.

The Ethnography of Communication and Speech Codes Theory

On the basis of the definition of culture as a system of symbols and meanings (Geertz, 1973; Hymes, 1974; Philipsen, 1992; Schneider, 1976), the ethnography of communication considers a "speech community" to be a unit of culture, defining it as "a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech" (Hymes, 1974, p. 51). Such a definition treats culture not as a group, nation, or people but as a system; the unit that shares the system is a speech community (Hymes, 1974; Philipsen, 1997; for a history and review of the use of the speech community concept in the field of communication, see also, Milburn, 2004). The fundamental concern of the ethnography of communication is "to discover and explicate the competence that enables members of a community to conduct and interpret speech" (Hymes, 1972, p. 52). The assumption is that "there are, in any given place and time, locally distinctive means for, and ways of organizing, communicative conduct, and that these ways implicate a culturally distinctive system of meanings pertaining to communicative conduct itself" (Philipsen & Coutu, 2005, p. 355). The research in this tradition aims to describe "such means and their meanings, in particular cases, and thereby to contribute to a general understanding of how such particulars of communication and culture might be apprehended and formulated in any given case" (Philipsen & Coutu, 2005, p. 355).

Various studies in the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972, 1974) have been conducted in diverse contexts to offer "thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of communication in given speech communities (for reviews and histories in the field of communication, see Carbaugh, 1995, 2008, 2010; Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habashi, 2015; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; Philipsen, 2002, 2010a, 2010b; Philipsen & Carbaugh, 1986; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005). Cross-cultural studies on the basis of these findings have been conducted (e.g. Braithwaite, 1990; Carbaugh, 1989, 1990, 2005, 2017; Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, & Shin, 2011; Fitch,

1994; Katriel, 1985; Philipsen, 1989, 1992) with implications for intercultural communication (e.g. Carbaugh, 1989, 1990, 2005; Covarrubias & Windchief, 2009; Griefat & Katriel, 1989). Suggestions for applied research have been made as well (e.g. Sprain & Boromisza-Habashi, 2013; Witteborn, Milburn, & Ho, 2013). Although it has been less common to analyze actual intercultural interactions or talk about them ethnographically, research has been conducted to make ethnographic descriptions of intercultural communication (e.g. Bailey, 2000; Basso, 1979; Carbaugh, 2005; Chick, 1985; Covarrubias, 2008; Fitch, 2003; Kvam, 2017). Along this line of research, this paper contributes to the ethnographic study of intercultural communication by using participants' talk about their intercultural interactions.

Speech codes theory is a framework, within the ethnography of communication, for describing culture in situated communication practices ethnographically from members' perspectives, placing "speech codes" as the central focus of study (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen et al., 2005).[1] A speech code is "a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct" (Philipsen, 1997, p. 126); it is the specific resource that members of a speech community share for conducting and interpreting speech. A code, as a system, consists of infinite numbers of code elements (i.e. symbols, meanings, premises, and rules). The concept of speech codes is particularly useful in this study for describing people's use of the resources to interpret their own and others' actions and how their views of the resources change in intercultural interactions.

Speech Codes and Boundaries of Speech Communities

In the above framework, the members of the Japanese speech community and those of the English speech community can be assumed to use, essentially, two different sets of speech codes. To be more accurate, however, three characteristics of speech codes must be taken into account. First, at least some shared resources are necessary for engaging in interaction because it is on the basis of some common level of knowledge that the interactants can interpret each other's actions (Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b, 1999). For example, the members of the Japanese speech community and the English speech community at least share the assumption that people greet each other when they meet, though they may differ in their views about what kinds of greetings are appropriate with what kinds of people in what kinds of situations (e.g. bow, handshake, hug). If there is no commonality, communication between them is almost impossible. Thus, although the members of the two speech communities are assumed to use two different sets of speech codes, there must be some shared resources between them for them to interact with one another in intercultural encounters. Second, more than one set of speech codes is used in any given speech community (Coutu, 2000, 2008; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005; Philipsen et al., 2005). That is to say, multiple codes can coexist within the speech community of each Japanese and English speakers. This characteristic of codes is apparent when we consider regional, generational, and other differences within each speech community. Third, codes in a speech community are learned informally through personal contact, rather than determined a priori by social categories (Gumperz, 1982a).[2] In other words, codes "cannot be easily acquired through reading or formal schooling"; instead, "face to face contact in situations which allow for maximum feedback is necessary" (Gumperz, 1982a, p. 209). Speech community members learn, for example, codes regarding how to interpret gestures, facial expressions, pauses, and other paralinguistic signals by engaging in actual face-to-face interactions with members of the

same speech community. Other communicative rules as well are acquired informally in interactions (e.g. when it is appropriate to tell a joke). In sum, the labels "Japanese speakers" and "English speakers" do not necessarily determine the speech codes that these speakers use; rather, it is more accurate to say that those who use the same speech codes are considered to be the members of the same speech community (See Wieder & Pratt, 1990).

Taking into account these characteristics of speech codes, scholars have conceptualized boundaries of speech communities as not fixed but fluid because such communities are defined by the sharing of speech codes. Philipsen et al. (2005) stated:

> Cultures (and, by extension, socially constructed codes) are not fixed … but rather are dynamic, exist in life-worlds in which there are two or more cultures or codes that are used …, and are resources that social actors deploy strategically and artfully in the conduct of communication. (pp. 63–64)

This view of culture as dynamic rather than static and of social interaction as the locus in which it is accomplished was also articulated in the following quotation, which, although it is about ethnicity, is appropriate for culture as well:

> Ethnicity–in its boundaries, its content, and its organization–is not in any place nor for any people fixed and stable. Rather than a thing-like entity, ethnicity is a network of interacting social and historical processes. (Moerman, 1993, p. 88)

With regard to the place to observe this nature of ethnicity and culture, Moerman argued, "Social interaction is the overwhelmingly preponderant locus and form in which culture and society are learned, enforced, enacted, and manipulated" (p. 90).

Accordingly, it can be stated that members of a speech community learn speech codes as a result of their interactive experiences with members of the same speech community, and that moreover, they may manipulate, modify, and update their already acquired speech codes by engaging in social interaction with members of different speech communities. By looking at certain types of social interaction, then, one may be able to illuminate instances in which participants learn, use, and revise their views of speech codes. In such instances, participants' views of the boundaries of speech communities can change. In this paper, I attempted to capture such instances from Japanese speakers' perspectives by focusing on their remedial episodes with English speakers.

The Remedial Episode as a Site for Observing Codes and Boundaries

Remedial episodes are "restorative sequences of behaviour occurring in problematic situations" (Morris, 1985, p. 74) and involve the "negotiation of rules for social interaction" (p. 70). In other words, by engaging in remedial episodes, individuals manage problematic situations by negotiating their taken-for-granted assumptions about appropriate conduct. According to speech codes theory, one occasion in which participants' views of codes are revealed is when the participants violate a code and they or their co-interactants comment on the violation (Philipsen, 1997). Since remedial episodes between participants who use different speech codes inherently involve violations of codes, the talk about such episodes is considered an appropriate site for observing their views of codes. I illustrate Japanese speaking participants' taken-for-granted assumptions revealed in such episodes with English speakers and examine how they negotiated their views of appropriate conduct with their perception of the other speakers' assumptions. I observe how their views of codes and the

boundaries of speech communities may have been affected as a result of engaging in the remedial episodes.

With regard to the boundaries of speech communities, Philipsen and Coutu (2005, p. 368) stated that "how means [of speaking] are used and how they function can define and constitute boundaries and contours of a speech community." One way to study the boundaries, as they recommended, is to attend to "an indigenous pattern of communicative conduct" in a given speech community as "a resource that participants themselves use for defining and constituting dimensions of speech community in the particular case" (p. 369). Such an approach enables researchers to illuminate instances in which participants use their views of codes to exclude practices that are not consistent with their perceptions of appropriateness and, by doing so, reinforce the boundaries of the speech community (see, for example, Boromisza-Habashi & Parks, 2014; Ho, 2006). The approach clarifies how participants use their resources to define and manage borders around them. To further examine the dynamic nature of the boundaries, however, it is necessary to capture instances in which participants' perceptions of the resources and the boundaries are undergoing change.

In this paper, therefore, I propose another approach to studying boundaries, focusing on instances in which participants encountered contrasting codes; realized the boundary; and, as a result, revised their perception of the codes and the boundary. Rather than identify specific codes of a given speech community, I offer illustrations of instances in which the participants' views of the appropriateness were influenced to change upon interacting with members of different speech communities. By taking this approach, I hope to demonstrate a way to gain further insights into the flexible nature of boundaries of the codes and speech communities.

Method

This study was part of an ethnographic project in which I used in-depth interviews as the main method of the research. Analyzing participants' talk about their past problematic situations enabled me to have access to the ways in which they understood different assumptions about appropriate conduct and possibly modified their perceptions in the course of remedial episodes. One of the propositions of speech codes theory is that speech codes are woven into speaking itself; in other words, speaking is "permeated with speech code elements" (Philipsen, 1997, p. 146). Therefore, participants' "words and expressions about communicative conduct" are an appropriate place for looking or listening to find evidence of a speech code (Philipsen et al., 2005, p. 62). By listening carefully to how participants perceived and made sense of their problematic situations, I attempted to explicate their views of codes, their perceptions of the others' views, and how their views were modified.

In the interviews, the participants may not have explicitly stated their views of codes, but their implicit and subtle assumptions were discernable when they came in contact with a different system of premises (Fitch, 2003). I attempted to discover the participants' implicit assumptions that become noticeable in their talk about their experiences of encountering different unstated premises in problematic situations.[3] I also paid attention to how the participants attributed the perceived differences. When the participants made their cultural identities relevant in their explanations of the differences, it could mean that they perceived situations as contacts between different cultural codes. Consequently, the boundaries of speech communities that I address in this paper are the ones that are seen from the participants' points of view.[4]

I interviewed 15 Japanese-speaking participants (five male and 10 female, aged 19–32 with the average age of 25) who had come temporarily from Japan to study at five different universities in a large city in the eastern United States. At the time of the interviews, the participants' lengths of stay in the United States ranged from one to six years, with an average length of three years and three months. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese, which was their native language and mine; each interview lasted approximately two hours. Prior to the interviews, I sent the participants a letter that briefly described what I would ask so that they could think back to their experiences in preparation. In the interviews, I asked the participants to describe experiences in which they had problematic interpersonal events with English speakers. I prepared an interview schedule, but the questions were open ended and unstructured to maximize the participants' freedom to remember and describe their experiences in detail (Denzin, 1989). Since it was necessary to stimulate their recollection, I usually gave them several specific examples (e.g. "Have you had an incident in which your invitation to lunch or a party was turned down, for example?"). Once they remembered their own episodes and began describing them, I asked them to give me the details. I transcribed all the audiotaped interviews in Japanese, compiled approximately 300 pages of transcripts, and translated the significant parts of the Japanese transcripts into English.

In inductively analyzing the transcripts, I first collected episodes that the participants perceived as involving problematic events with English speakers. Then, I formulated the following questions for further analyzing each episode: (1) What was the problematic event encountered by the participants? (2) How did the participants deal with it? Did they confront the other person (i.e. engage in a remedial episode)? (3) If they engaged in a remedial episode, what was their assumption about appropriate conduct? What was their perception of the other's assumption? Did they make their and the other's cultural identities relevant to make sense of the different assumptions (i.e. see it as a cultural difference), or did they understand them as individual differences? How did they negotiate their sense for appropriate conduct with the perception of the others' assumptions? (4) What was the consequence? Did their views of appropriateness or their applicability change as a result? Did their perception of the other change? Did the relationship with the other change?

As a result of the analysis, I found that the participants did not confront the others in many of the episodes that I collected. Because the entire process of this ethnographic project was inductive, I collected the participants' experiences in problematic situations but did not know exactly what direction the analysis of these experiences would take. As a result of this inductive procedure, I found that the Japanese-speaking participants tended to not engage in remedial episodes even though they encountered problematic situations with English speakers, partly because they did not have confidence in their English skills. There were, however, a few cases in which the participants did engage in remedial episodes, which became the central focus of this study. In the following analysis, I look closely at three such episodes.

Learning and Negotiating Codes in Intercultural Communication

The first two episodes illustrate instances in which the participants realized that their assumptions about appropriate conduct were different from their co-interactants'. Masato, in Excerpt 1, was a 25-year-old Japanese male who had been in the United States for five years.[5] When he was a high school student in Japan, he experienced a homestay in the

eastern United States for three weeks during the summer, and since then he had always been interested in interacting with Americans in English. After graduating from high school, he went to an English language program in Japan and then in the United States, both of which are affiliated with a state university where he was a junior at the time of the interview. He majored in sports recreation management. In the following excerpt, he began to describe a remedial episode with his adviser.

Excerpt 1(a)

I: Have you thought about any incident like the ones I described in the letter?

M: … For example, there were exchanges with my adviser for the course I'm taking. Japanese are rather passive than active, aren't they? My adviser knows that kind of behavior to some extent but doesn't really know; neither one of us knew.

Masato had been assigned to find a place to work for his internship. The place had to be one related to athletic or recreational activities that were academic enough to get a grade, such as helping to run a gym. The one Masato found, however, was an international dormitory, where he would serve coffee during the coffee hour and show movies for entertainment. When he met his adviser and told him about the place, the adviser said, "That's not academic at all. What will you learn by serving coffee there?" According to Masato, the adviser was angry with him and said, "You should use the file in the department. I'm telling you this because I'm thinking about you." The adviser gave him suggestions, on the basis of which Masato interned at a community center, where he played with children and taught them Japanese culture, such as origami.

About this episode, Masato stated as follows:

Excerpt 1(b)

M: After all, it was a cultural difference … You have to make an action in this society, whereas in Japanese society, you behave as your surrounding circumstances let you do. I grasped it when I had that incident with the adviser. Like, "Oh I see. He wouldn't accept what I think." In Japan, I would say, "If you give me some ideas, I'll do as you say," but it doesn't work here because it's totally different.

I: Will you explain to me what you mean by totally different?

M: You have to take care of what you have to do here, right? But I expected my teachers and adviser to take care of me in a lot of ways. But it turned out to be wrong, I realized.

I: Like, if the international dormitory is not good, then "How about this?" you expected something like that?

M: Yeah. I expected him to look for a better place for me and say, "There is a place like this," showing me a concrete place and saying, "Why don't you go there" or "I'll talk to the manager." I was stupid to have expected something like that. …

I: Did your relationship with your adviser stay the same after that?

M: I wanted to present myself as a good student. So [after the incident] I said things like, "I worked this much," exaggerating what I did or "I tried but in vain," when I didn't try at all. Then the adviser was like, "OK, that's OK." The relationship got better.

The problematic event Masato experienced was that the way he had completed his assignment did not fulfill the professor's expectation. A confrontation naturally took place when Masato met the adviser. In dealing with this problematic situation, Masato realized the difference between his sense of appropriate conduct and the professor's in the context of

teacher–student interactions. On the one hand, Masato expected his adviser to "take care of" him by suggesting a better place for him. The professor, on the other hand, expected his student to take care of himself. To understand this difference, Masato made his "Japanese" identity relevant, as evidenced by his contrasting students' appropriate conduct in "this society" with that in the "Japanese society." In other words, instead of interpreting the difference as an individual one, Masato attributed it to a "cultural difference" in codes about expected roles of teachers and students in society. His view of Japanese society's code element was that you as students "behave as your surrounding circumstances let you do." His perception of the American society's code element was that "you have to make an action." When Masato "grasped" this difference as a result of engaging in the remedial episode with the adviser, he was made aware of the boundary between him and his adviser. After this incident, Masato presented himself to the adviser as a student who tried hard but could not succeed (Masato's perception of the American code element) instead of waiting passively for his adviser to give him suggestions (his view of the Japanese code element). The relationship with the advisor improved, according to him.

Masato's episode illustrates an instance in which his view of a code element (i.e. wait for his advisor to give him guidance and passively follow it) was violated when he encountered a different code element in the problematic situation. By engaging in the remedial episode, he learned a new code element (i.e. taking care of himself as a student) and realized a boundary between himself and his adviser regarding appropriate conduct of students when they interact with their teachers. Probably because there was a role difference between him as a student and the professor, Masato negotiated the contrasting code elements within himself rather than with his adviser. Nevertheless, the remedial episode served as an opportunity for him to negotiate the contrasting codes. As a result of the episode, he acquired two sets of code elements to address the same type of situation and learned to manipulate them, depending on the person and situation he would be dealing with in future.

The next episode captures a similar instance. Hitomi, a 24-year-old Japanese female, had been in the United States for 3 years and 2 months. She had wanted to be a tour conductor when she was in Japan and decided to study in the United States. She attended an English language school upon arrival in a large city in the eastern United States, then went to a junior college, and finally transferred to the state university where she was a senior at the time of the interview. She was living with her American boyfriend. In the following excerpt, she described an argument between her and her boyfriend in a car. She said that her boyfriend had used the word "Jap" to describe a character in the movie that they had been talking about with two other American friends. Prior to the following exchange, she said she was surprised that her boyfriend had only explained the reason for using the word without apologizing.

Excerpt 2

I: So he didn't apologize after all?

H: Well then, other topics came up, and we started arguing. I said, "But I didn't hear a formal apology from you." In the end, he said, "I'm sorry."

I: In English?

H: Yes. He said, "I'm sorry." Then he said, "But that's a little strange. Do you think it's OK if I did something, something bad, somewhere, whatever I did, if I said, 'I'm sorry,' is it OK with you?" I felt like, no it doesn't sound OK and didn't know what to say. Actually,

it isn't OK. … We started talking about childhood. As kids, we did a lot of things like hitting a neighbor's window with a baseball by accident. He said, "For example, if the window was broken because of the ball I hit, what my neighbor expected was not my saying, 'I'm sorry.' It should be like, 'We were playing, but we made sure that the baseball didn't reach your window. But then this and that happened and because of that, it happened in the end. I will never do it again.' That is more like an apology for me." When I heard that, I didn't know what was right. Both seemed right and wrong. When I think as a Japanese, if someone said, "I'm sorry. I'll never do it again," it's not so important to pursue what happened and how it happened. We don't see it as so important. But he said, "It is much more important to me."

I: Did the other two friends have the same view?

H: They didn't say anything. After that incident, we agreed that if we did something wrong, let's compromise and say, "I'm sorry," first and then give an excuse. It's just between him and me. It doesn't matter what other people do; we just agreed to do so as a result. On his part, he wouldn't feel OK if I didn't say why what happened happened and how it happened.

The problematic event Hitomi encountered was her boyfriend's making an offensive comment about the group with which she identified. Hitomi confronted him. Her view of the appropriate conduct in this situation was to offer a word of regret and make a promise that the same thing would not happen again, without necessarily explaining how it happened. Her perception of her boyfriend's assumption, on the other hand, was that one should explain how the offense occurred, which was much more important than merely offering a formulaic expression of regret. By engaging in this remedial episode, Hitomi found that she and her boyfriend had different assumptions about what was appropriate for an apology.

In understanding the difference, Hitomi made her "Japanese" identity relevant, as evidenced by her saying, "When I think as a Japanese. … We don't see it as so important. But he said. …" In other words, rather than interpreting the difference as an individual one between her and her boyfriend, she attributed it as a cultural difference in codes. Hitomi also stated that she felt that "I didn't know what was right. Both seemed right and wrong," when she encountered the different code. This was an instance in which she wavered between her perceptions of the two contrasting codes. She said that her boyfriend had also felt "a little strange" about her idea of what should have been done. As a result, Hitomi and her boyfriend negotiated the codes and agreed that they would "say 'I'm sorry' first and then give an excuse." She characterized this negotiation as an idiosyncratic one ("just between him and me") rather than a cultural one. Nevertheless, her perception of the appropriate conduct was affected by being engaged in this remedial episode.

Hitomi's episode illustrates an instance in which her view of a code element was influenced to change when her boyfriend challenged it in the problematic situation. By engaging in the remedial episode, she learned a new code element and realized the boundary between her and her boyfriend. The remedial episode was a locus through which she negotiated her views of the contrasting codes with him. As a result of the negotiation, they created a new rule to fit the relational context. It can be said that Hitomi acquired two sets of code elements to address the situation and learned to manipulate them according to the types of relationships or situations that she would encounter. The boundary she perceived between her and her boyfriend was undergoing change through this episode.

In the next excerpt, Masato, the participant in Excerpt 1, described another episode, this time with his classmate. This one is similar to the previous two in that it illustrates

the participant's moment of discovery but is slightly different in that here, Masato found a common assumption, whereas in Excerpts 1 and 2, the participants realized different assumptions between them and their co-interactants.

Excerpt 3(a)

> [My American classmate and I] went to the library by bike from the city and were studying together. Then I got tired, tired of studying, and thought about going home. We were studying on different floors. I looked for him but couldn't find him, so I went home by myself. I thought that he was easygoing and so would figure out that I had gone home and probably would go home by himself, too. … I didn't care much about it, but then I found he was very angry. He said, "It's ridiculous!" … He asked me, "What happened yesterday?" I said, "I went home." He was like, "Why? I was there. I told you to tell me when you go home." He said he couldn't believe what I did. I was like, "Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry." In the end, he said, "That's OK."

When I asked Masato why he went home without telling his classmate, he said:

Excerpt 3(b)

> I thought most Americans are easygoing and don't really care about little things compared with Japanese. So I thought even if I did such a thing, he wouldn't be angry and would go home, but it turned out to be wrong.

When I asked Masato what he thought about this incident, he said:

Excerpt 3(c)

> I learned, "OK, there are sensitive people, regardless of whether they are Japanese or American. There are people who feel lonely everywhere." … So basically, in dealing with people, it's better not to have a stereotype like Americans are this and that.

The offense Masato committed was having gone home by himself without telling his classmate about it. By engaging in the remedial episode when he found that the classmate was "very angry" the next day, Masato realized the boundary that he had assumed to exist between him and his classmate prior to this incident. His statement that "I thought most Americans are easygoing and don't really care about little things compared with Japanese" indicates that he made his "Japanese" identity and his classmate's "American" identity relevant in understanding the appropriate conduct.

The code element he had used was that one should let one's companion know when leaving after studying together; otherwise, the other person will be angry. Before this incident, Masato had assumed that this assumption would apply only to "Japanese." In this remedial episode, however, he realized that the same code element could be applied to "Americans," as indicated by his saying, "There are sensitive people regardless of whether they are Japanese or American." The cultural boundary that he had perceived between him and his classmate before this incident was modified as a result of this episode, as evidenced by his saying, "it turned out to be wrong."

This episode illustrates an instance in which Masato's view of a code element (i.e. one should let one's companion know when returning home after studying together) was illuminated when he violated it in the problematic situation with the American classmate. By engaging in the remedial episode, he learned the wider applicability of the code element beyond the boundary he had assumed to exist. As a result, the code element was reinforced, but the boundary of its applicability was revised and broadened in his perception.

These three episodes illustrate the ways in which the participants either learned a new code element as a resource to address the situation or realized a broader applicability of the code element they already used. As a result, they would be able to address a wider variety of

situations in their future interactions by using the newly acquired resources. The remedial episodes were places in which code elements (and the scope of their applicability) were illuminated, learned, negotiated, and modified. The participants' views of the boundaries were influenced to change during the episodes.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to capture instances in which individuals' views of appropriate conduct and cultural boundaries are influenced to change as they encounter different views in intercultural interactions. As an illustration of a way to analyze such instances, I have described, from their own perspectives, Japanese-speaking participants' experiences encountering problematic situations with English speakers in the United States. When they engaged in remedial episodes to address such situations, they recognized the differing assumptions about appropriate conduct and the boundaries between themselves and their co-interactants. They learned new code elements (or a wider scope of their applicability) and negotiated contrasting codes. As a result, they appeared to have acquired two sets of code elements and learned to manipulate them, depending on the relationships and the situations, for future interactions. Their perceptions of the boundaries of speech communities were under the influence of change during the remedial episodes.

In this study, I could only demonstrate three episodes in which the participants' views of code elements and boundaries were influenced to change because in my data from Japanese speakers, there were only a few cases in which the participants confronted others. Thus, the study should be treated as providing illustrations of cases to be followed by future analyses. More data of various sorts in different contexts and in different speech communities are needed to pursue the analytic procedure proposed here. Despite its limitations, the analysis suggests that talk about problematic situations is a promising site for observing participants' perceptions of appropriate conduct. It further suggests that the remedial episode for dealing with such situations is a locus in which participants may learn, negotiate, manipulate, and update their views of the codes and boundaries of speech communities.

This study contributes to the literature in the ethnography of communication and speech codes theory by proposing an analytic procedure for further illuminating the dynamic nature of the boundaries of codes and speech communities. As I discussed in the introduction, one way to study boundaries has been to focus on specific codes in a given speech community and describe how participants employ them to define the community in particular cases (Philipsen & Coutu, 2005). If, for instance, I had explored the uses of Hitomi's assumption in Excerpt 2 (i.e. one should offer a word of regret and a promise for the future without a detailed explanation after committing an offense) in particular cases in a variety of contexts in the speech community with which Hitomi identified, claimed that the assumption was part of the community's cultural codes, and demonstrated the ways in which the participants used it as a resource for marking the boundary, it would have become a study in this direction.

In this paper, however, I took another approach to study boundaries. The purpose of the study was not to identify and describe the specific communicative practices or cultural codes of a given speech community but to propose a way to describe the instances in which participants' assumptions were met with contrasting code elements and their perceptions of the boundaries were influenced to change in intercultural encounters. I could not and did

not claim that Hitomi's assumption, for instance, was indeed a part of the cultural codes of the Japanese speech community. I only claimed that the assumption was a taken-for-granted one according to which she acted. In her perception, she treated this assumption as a part of the "Japanese" code, in contrast to her view of the "American" code. Such a description was treated as a locally situated instance of the participant becoming aware of contrasting code elements and the boundary that was under the influence of change. The analysis suggests the flexible nature of the use of codes. This type of analysis hopefully complements the first type of approach to studying boundaries by capturing instances of boundaries being activated and modified.

This study also contributes to our understanding of intercultural interactions. In an era when increasing numbers of people cross cultural borders, it is vital to understand, from the participants' perspectives, how their taken-for-granted assumptions can change in intercultural encounters. There has been little research, however, looking closely at how individuals use their resources to interpret actions in situated intercultural interactions and how their views of the resources alter when they engage in such interactions. By using participants' talk about their intercultural experiences, this study adds an ethnographic exploration of intercultural communication.

The participants in this study have spent a certain amount of time in the newly encountered web of codes trying to get along with their important others, such as the academic advisor and the boyfriend. In such contexts, their views of what is appropriate can constantly be tested, as I illustrated here. To function well in the speech community in which they find themselves, they may be required to modify their views of codes and boundaries so that they can fit in there. At the same time, they may want to keep good relationships with members of the speech community with which they identified originally. They may have to live their lives interculturally for a long time beyond experiencing fleeting intercultural encounters as strangers.

The difficulty that members may face in such situations was articulated in Pratt and Wieder (1993) when they described the distinctive practices of Osage speaking:

> Being or becoming a competent member of the Osage speech community requires direct and indirect knowledge of the other members, which can only be acquired through immersion (direct participation) in the life of the community over an extended period of time. … The requirement is clearly consequential for such matters as the preservation of the speech community … and the choice that members face between retaining their competence at *home* and being treated seriously in a dominant society. … (p. 392; italics in the original quote)

Sharing the concerns described in this quote, I have attempted to explore the phenomenon in which those who are accustomed to a code are thrown into an entirely different system of symbols and meanings. Future research could conduct ethnographic investigations into how members maintain balance between two code systems when they need to be competent members not only in a newly encountered culture but also back home. Would it be possible for them to manipulate two sets of codes back and forth to fit the people and situations that they face? Or would these codes be so deeply cultural that they exert a certain pressure on members to ultimately choose one code over the other as resource to interpret their own and others' actions? Further ethnographic studies are expected to explicate how members manage contrasting codes in situated intercultural communication and how it is consequential for the members' perceived competency, for their relationships with others in a long run, and for the boundaries of speech communities.

Notes

1. Speech codes theory offers six propositions on the distinctiveness, multiplicity, substance, meanings, site, and force of speech codes (for details, see Philipsen, 1992, 1997, 2015; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005).
2. Gumperz (1982a, 1982b, 1999) did not use the term "speech codes" to refer to the shared resources that members of a speech community use to interpret each other's actions. Instead, he used such phrases as "background knowledge" and "cultural assumptions" to refer to such resources. Nevertheless, his characterizations of these concepts apply to speech codes.
3. In a way, this approach is similar to Basso's (1979) study, which described, from the Western Apache's perspective, contrasting codes of speaking between them and Anglo-Americans in their joking portrayals of "the Whiteman." In this paper, I describe, from the Japanese speakers' perspective, contrasting codes between them and English speakers in their talk about problematic situations with "Americans."
4. The difficulty or impossibility of drawing a line around the boundaries of speech communities owing to the variations within a speech community, as well as commonalities across communities, has been well documented since Bloomfield (1933/1984) introduced the concept of speech community, although he defined it in terms of linguistic variety, not in terms of rules of speaking as Hymes (1974) did. In this paper, therefore, I address how the participants saw the boundaries, rather than trying to draw a line from an objective viewpoint.
5. I use pseudonyms to protect the participants' privacy.

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Notes on Contributor

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