

# Research on the Use of Echoing Performance on Japanese TV Talk Shows

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## ABSTRACT

**This paper investigates and analyzes the use of echoing performance in Japanese TV talk shows. Based on the dialogues of 17 people aged from 20 to 70, the types, usage rates, frequency and position of echoing performance are analyzed. There are a variety of echoing performances, among which 115 kinds are investigated. The most variegated is the "そう series" and the most frequently used is the "うん series". At the same time, this paper also makes clear the position where the echoing performances appear, and that gender difference will lead to the use of different echoing types.**

*Keywords: communication, echoing performance, listener, gender difference*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In smooth Japanese communication, the verbal behavior of the listener is as important as that of the speaker. The Chinese often use the echoing performance of "嗯" ("yeah"), which can be translated to Japanese as "はい" and "はい". Since "嗯" has similar pronunciation with "うん" in Japanese, the Chinese Japanese learners, influenced by their native tongue, tend to think "うん" can also be used in a dialogue with elders and superiors. Therefore, to avoid this kind of misuse and master the correct echo performance is of great benefit to improve Japanese communication skills.

Large in number and high in frequency, the Japanese echoing performance is one of the major characteristics of Japanese communication. This paper analyzes the types, usage rates, frequency and environment of native Japanese speakers' echoing performance in the hope of providing references for Japanese education.

The study of echoing performance was initiated by A. Miyazi and prospered by Mizutani Nobuko, etc. In the improvement of communication level, not only the role of speaker matters, but that of the listener is equally important. Kurosaki Yoshiaki investigated the relationship between the echoing performance and phase, discussed the age difference, gender difference and the types of echoing performance in conversation. Kiyoshi Sugito investigated how the participants participated in the conversation. Chikako Ozaki discussed the differences in conversation and telephone situations caused by different interpersonal relationships of participants, and the differences in the treatment that varies with time. Polly Sztatrowski discussed the relationship between echoing

performance and conversational strategy in persuasive conversation. Senko K. Maynard, Yang Jing and Kazuko Sakamoto made comparison between that in other languages and Japanese; Mizutani Nobuko, Polly Sztatrowski, Chikako Ozaki, Junko Horiguchi, Matsuda Yoko and Hiroko Ito applied the echoing performance to Japanese education.

## II. DEFINITION, CLASSIFICATION AND FUNCTIONS OF ECHOING PERFORMANCE

There are many characteristics of Japanese echoing performance. In order to apply them to Japanese education, the author first intends to clarify the reality of Japanese native speakers' echoing performance. The research objects include the types and times of echoing performance, the utilization rate and the frequency of use and the occurrence location, etc.

This article collects several Japanese TV talk shows and translates them into texts. There are five episodes of "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe") and 3 of "おしゃれイズム" ("OSHAREISM") in the show. In both shows there are guests talking about topics related to themselves, around which the host extended. "はなまるカフェ" is about 30 minutes each episode, and 90 minutes altogether in 3; "おしゃれイズム" is also 30 minutes each episode and 150 altogether in 5. They take 4 hours in total. There are 17 men and women ranging from 20 to 70 years old including the host, among whom 8 are male and 9 are female.

### A. Definition of echoing performance

There are various definitions of echoing performance in the previous research, without a unified statement. In this paper, "はい", "うん", "ええ", "そう" and other echoing sentences that have the function of

"listening", "understanding", "consenting" and "expressing interest", etc. as echoing performance. Although the nodding and smiling also has the above functions, it is not regarded as the research object because of the insufficient data of non-verbal echoing performance such as nodding in this paper.

### B. Classification of echoing performance

The echoing performance can be classified into mainly 7 types.

- "うん series": うん, うーん, etc.
- "え series": えっ, ええ, etc.
- "はい series": はい, はいー, etc.
- "あ series": あ, あー, etc.
- "そう series": そう, そうそう and そうなんです, etc.
- "はへほ series": は一, へ一, ほ一 and ふうん, etc.
- "Others": あら, なるほど and いえいえ, etc.

あーそうですか and other forms recombined by "あ series" and "そう series" are all regarded as "あ series" that begins with "あ". In addition, some researches hold that the いえいえ in "others" doesn't comply with the definition of echoing performance and should thus be excluded from the scope. This paper considers it belongs to a kind of echoing performance and should be classified into "others".

### C. Functions of echoing performance

In previous studies, the functions of echoing performance can be classified into two major types of "promoting" and "finishing". The echoing performances of "うん series", "え series", "はい series", "あ series" (excluding あっそう, ect.), "そう series" (excluding そうです, そうなんです, etc.) that have short syllables and fixed forms in this paper belong to the "promoting type", playing a role of listening, understanding, reassuring the speaker, and moving the conversation forward. With short syllables, the use of echoing performance of this type doesn't have much influence on the conversation. The "finishing type" includes あっそう, そうです, そうなんです, あら一, なるほど and はへほ series, etc. This type expresses surprise and firm belief, and when used at the end of a sentence, it expresses a certain feeling of the listener towards the content of the conversation or concludes and finishes the conversation.

#### 1) Presentation of the "promoting type":

Male guest: たぶん, それなんですけど (Maybe it is).

Host: ええ (Yeah).

Male guest: みんなで食事に行って (We went to eat).

#### 2) Presentation of the "finishing type":

Male host: よくないと、あんなに将棋強くないので (One cannot be so good at chess without much intelligence).

Host: え一、なるほど (Oh, I see).

Excerpt from "おしゅれイズム" ("OSHAREISM")

## III. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### A. Kinds, frequency, usage rate of the echoing performance from the comprehensive data

In "はなまるカフェ" and "おしゅれイズム", the echoing performances used are "うん series", "え series", "はい series", "あ series", "そう series", "はへほ series" and "others". Through the analysis of the above two programs, the following results are obtained.

Frequency	Kinds
うん series: 38%	そう series: 31 kinds
え series: 21%	あ series: 26 kinds
はへほ series: 14%	others: 19 kinds
はい series: 10%	はへほ series: 12 kinds
そう series: 7%	え series: 10 kinds
あ series: 8%	うん series: 11 kinds
Others: 2%	はい series: 6 kinds

In all of the two shows, echoing performances are used 2038 times, of which the "うん series" is most used, for 801 times all together, with an usage rate of 38%. The secondly most used is the "え series", for 419 times all together, with a usage rate as 21%. The "はへほ series" is used for 257 times, with a usage rate as 14%. The "はい series" is used for 219 times, with a usage rate as 10%. It can be seen that "うん series" and "え series" and other promoting-type echoing performance are used in a relatively high frequency.

The "そう series" has most kinds, 31 altogether. It is followed by the "あ series" with 26 kinds. In terms of frequency and ranks of kinds, the form of "うん series" is relatively fixed, with only a repetitive variation and is mostly used. The "そう series" has the most diverse kinds. Although it is not used much, each of そう, そうです and そうなんです has 3 to 6 variations. As many kinds the "そう series" have, each of them is almost used only once. The "あ series" which ranks second in terms of kinds also has this characteristic, with a low usage rate. The "え series", "はい series" and "うん series" all have forms not changed much, with just the repetitive forms of えーえー and えーえーえ, etc. The survey identified 115 types of echoing performances that Japanese people use accurately depending on the occasion.

### B. The usage rate of echoing performance from the perspective of gender

Next, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the comprehensive data from the perspective of gender. This paper makes gender distinction between the host and the guest. Meanwhile, due to the different broadcast time of the two programs, it is impossible to make statistics through the number of times, so this paper makes use of the ratio to compare and discuss.

Male	Female
うん series: 28%	うん series: 28%
はい series: 26%	え series: 24%
そう series: 18%	そう series: 16%
え series: 12%	はい series: 14%
はへほ series: 12%	

As can be seen from the above data, the usage rates of the "うん series" by both male and female are the highest. The usage rate of "うん series" by hosts is particularly high. Males mainly use the "うん series" and "はい series". Hosts use "うん series" more and guests use "はい series" more because of different treatment. Since the guests participate in the show as visitors, they use the "はい series" in line with public occasion more. On the other hand, since hosts are not so nervous as guests are in their own show, and in order to make their guests relaxed, they specially use the "うん series" to express the intimacy. The "はへほ series" is also an echoing performance often used by male hosts. By use of the "うん series", the hosts show the intimacy to guests, and through the "はへほ series", they show their interest and echo towards the conversation, while the "はへほ series" is rarely used by guests. The roles of hosts as listeners and guests as speakers can thus be displayed through echoing performance.

Whether they are hosts or guests, females mostly use the "うん series" and "え series" to the same degree. The "そう series" ranks the third place in both male and female usage rate, and is mostly used by guests. This is because the host's words are related to the guests, and guests use echoing performances like はい and そう です to show the consistency with their own situation. The あら and まあ, etc. in the category of "others" are not used by any male. In a surprise or strong resonance, females use the echoing performance in "others". While males are in surprise, they choose the "はへほ series".

#### 1) The echoing performance of females in surprise

Male guests: そうですね、わりと誰に対しても何でもじやべちゃいますけど (Well, I can talk about anything with anyone).

Hostess: あらー (Ohhh).

#### 2) The echoing performance of males in surprise:

Female guest: すごく頭いいんです (Really smart).

Host: へえー (Ah)

Excerpt from "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe")

### C. The frequency of echoing performance

The use frequency of echoing performance investigation is based on data of the host in "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe"). Because it is a manual task, it cannot be accurately measured. The number is calculated by dividing the speaking time of the actors by the number of responses.

Hosts:

21 minutes (1260 seconds) ÷ 180 times = 7 seconds/time

20 minutes (1200 seconds) ÷ 196 times = 6.1 seconds/time

19 minutes (1140 seconds) ÷ 183 times = 6.2 seconds/time

Average:

6.4 seconds per/time

Female host:

21 minutes (1260 seconds) ÷ 166 times = 7.6 seconds/time

20 minutes (1200 seconds) ÷ 135 times = 8.9 seconds/time

19 minutes (1140 seconds) ÷ 113 times = 10.1 seconds/time

Average:

8.9 seconds/time

Obviously, the male hosts have a higher frequency of using echoing performance. Previous studies show a higher frequency of using echoing performance by females, which is different from the results of this paper. This may be because the survey did not include nonverbal echoing performance such as nodding. In addition, the questions towards the guests are mainly put forward by male hosts, whose echoing performances are naturally more. When the hostess proposes questions, her frequency of using echoing performance will also increase.

Second, in the previous study on the frequency of echoing performance, the frequency of echoing performance in radio telephone programs averaged 6.1 seconds/time and in TV talk shows averaged 9.1 seconds/time. In the TV talk show in this paper, hosts use echoing performance 6.4 seconds/time and hostess 8.9 seconds/time, which is more frequently used than the previous study. The listener frequently uses echoing performance and actively participates in the

conversation, which promotes the conversation. In addition, the value is obtained by only examining the verbal echo performance. If non-verbal types such as nodding are included, the average time span between two will be shorter.

#### D. Position of the echoing performance

The types, number of times, usage rate and frequency of echoing performance were analyzed above. When is an echoing performance is used and how? Mizutani Nobuko holds that "て", "けど", "が" or "から" usually emerges before echoing performance. In this paper, the "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe") that has the highest usage rates of echoing performance is used as the object to investigate and analyze the word appears before the echoing performance.

Male guest 1	Male guest 2
1. て・で: 65 times	1. ね・よね: 53 times
2. ね・よね: 46 times	2. です・ます: 30 times
3. です・ます: 42 times	3. て・で: 23 times
4. けど・けども: 25 times	4. から: 20 times
Female guests	Comprehensive
1. て・で: 76 times	1. て・で: 164 times
2. ね・よね: 27 times	2. ね・よね: 126 times
3. けど・けども: 25 times	3. です・ます: 85 times
4. です・ます: 13 times	4. けど・けども: 50 times

From a comprehensive analysis of the data in "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe"), it can be seen that echoing performance usually appears after the auxiliary word "て" and "で", that is, in a pause or when the dictation temporarily comes to an end in a sentence, the listener often uses a "promoting-type" echoing performance like the "うん series" and "え series" with short syllables to show "I am listening", "I understand" and promote the smooth process of conversation. In addition, behind the auxiliary word "ね" or "よね" which represent a pause or end often appears the echoing performance as well. This kind of auxiliary word is used to seek the other party to agree, easy to elicit the echoing response of the listener. What's more, at the end of "です・ます" sentence, etc. are often "finishing-type" echoing performance. It can be seen from the above results that at the "て" and other auxiliary words, auxiliary verbs, and at the end of the sentence, especially at the end of "ね" can appear the end of the echo.

Host: ちょっと二宮くん、君も歌いなよってなって、(Ninomiya-kun, you also sing).

Male guest: そうなんですけど (That's true).

Excerpt from "はなまるカフェ" ("Hanamaru Cafe")

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the types, usage rates, frequency and position of echoing performance are investigated and analyzed. The verbal echoing performance including "うん系", "え系", "はい系", "あ系", "そう系" and "はへほ系" are used 2038 times in 115 kinds. The mostly used is "うん series" and "そう series" has the most kinds. The usage rate of "うん series" and "はい series" is relatively high for male, while that of "うん series" and "え series" is relatively high for female. The echoing performances in "others" are not used by any male, indicating that the use of echoing performance is largely influenced by gender. In terms of frequency, hosts use one every 6.4 seconds and hostesses do it every 8.9 seconds. If non-verbal echoing performances like nodding are included, the usage frequency will be higher. In terms of their position, the results of this paper is in line with that of previous studies, that is, echoing performance usually appears after "て" and other auxiliary word and auxiliary verb, and at the end of a sentence, especially after the end auxiliary word "ね". It can be seen from the above that Japanese language has a rich variety of echoing performances and they are frequently used. There are both types that have no variation but are frequently used and those have rich variations yet are less frequently used. The "そう series" have diverse variations and can reflect the subtle feelings of the speaker. Learners can have smoother Japanese communication and improve their ability if they can master the subtle difference between "そうです" and "そうなんです".

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