



# Analysis of Verbal and Nonverbal Usage of *Aizuchi* in a Japanese Reality Show “Terrace House: Opening New Doors”

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the form of *aizuchi* and the verbal and nonverbal communication using *aizuchi* in a Japanese reality show. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the conversational dialogues from a Japanese reality show, Terrace House: Opening New Doors, the first episode which lasts for forty-two minutes. This research used Horiguchi's (1997) theory about *aizuchi* forms and Izumi's (2003) theory about *aizuchi* varieties. The results showed that the form of *aizuchi* from the data source was ninety-eight data. There are fifty-five data of *aizuchishi* form, used for 1) situations of accepting new information, 2) situations of being surprised at or skeptical about the new information, 3) situations of agreeing with your interlocutor, 4) situations of disagreeing with your interlocutor, and 5) situations of praising and giving a modest reaction. There are thirteen data of the *kurikaeshi* form, used for 1) situations of accepting new information, 2) situations of being surprised at or skeptical about the new information, and 3) situations of agreeing with your interlocutor. The *iikae* form consists of three data; all data are used for situations of agreeing with your interlocutor. Moreover, the *sono ta* form consists of twenty-seven data, used for 1) situations of accepting new information, 2) situations of being surprised at or skeptical about the new information, 3) situations of agreeing with your interlocutor, and 4) situations of praising and giving a modest reaction. This research shows that the most common form of *aizuchi* is the form of *aizuchishi*.

**Keywords:** *Aizuchi*, nonverbal communication, verbal communication.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In communicating, Indonesian people have different habits from Japanese people. One example is that Indonesian people will generally be quiet and listen first when listening to their interlocutor speak. In contrast, for Japanese people, a sign that someone understands and hears well is when that person gives a short response and even replies when the other person is speaking. The response given can be verbal or nonverbal. In Japanese culture, this response is called *aizuchi*. These *aizuchi* verbal expressions include *hai*, *ee*, *un*, *sou desu ka*, *sou desu ne*, *hontou*, *naruhodo*, etc. Japanese people often use *aizuchi*, for example, the expression *ee* is often used in informal conversations, and the expression *hai* is often used in formal situations, which means yes. Meanwhile, in familiar environments, the expression *un* often appears (which sounds close to a mumbled "hm"). Apart from that, there is the expression *naruhodo*, which is used more often in informal situations (Edizal, 2010).

Apart from verbally, someone can also respond non-verbally, such as nodding, shaking their head, smiling, etc. The difference in response methods in communication can result in misunderstandings between Indonesians and Japanese. With this problem arising, the researcher was interested in finding out what and in what situations *aizuchi* is often said by native Japanese speakers and how *aizuchi* is used when viewed from verbal and nonverbal communication. This research aims to find out the forms and functions of *aizuchi* verbally and non-verbally in more detail in Japanese reality shows, which are told by Japanese people in natural situations.

## 1.1. *Aizuchi*

*Aizuchi* is a conversational strategy in the form of a response in Japanese, which shows that the other person is listening, paying attention, and responding to the speaker's speech. *Aizuchi* culture according to Maynard (1995), primarily reflects Japanese culture active in communication. Japanese culture does not show such culture as purely passive in communication. The answers given to speakers can be speech or responses related to body movements (Mizutani in Indraswari & Wistri, 2016). Answers are in plain language and occur in specific and general forms of expression closely related to the previous speech material. At the same time, body movements are a typical answer that is easy to understand because body movements are visible and transparent to the relevant speakers.

One study conducted by Simamora (2023) discovered that *aizuchi* is spoken not only verbally but also non-verbally. In the previous study, nonverbal *aizuchi* are facial expressions and body language such as *ojigi*. Also in the findings, Japanese people often repeatedly say *aizuchi* when they bow their heads (*ojigi*), proving that they pay much attention to politeness.

Maynard (1997) defines it as the listener's short verbal and nonverbal expressions when the speaker exercises his right to speak. Further, Horiguchi (1997) summarizes the definition of *aizuchi* as a short-expression or gesture by a listener whose function is to enable the listener to understand and listen to the information shared when the speaker exercises his right to speak. In line with Horiguchi (1997) and Ramadhani, Yudistira, and Anaya (2023) mention that Japanese speakers intentionally pause to wait for a response or "*aizuchi*" from the listener

According to Edizal (2010) and Khotimah and Sasanti (2019), Japanese speakers consider short verbal reactions while the other person is speaking as usual. The Japanese feel comfortable and consider the listener's speech incomprehensible only when there is an *aizuchi* between them to repeat what the speaker says.

## 1.2. *Aizuchi Form*

According to Horiguchi (1997), the *aizuchi* is divided into several forms because many forms of responses can be made during a conversation.

### 1.2.1. *Aizuchishi*

*Aizuchi*'s vocabulary is usually brought up by listeners when the speaker has not finished speaking. Using *aizuchishi* in conversation means that the listener understands the speaker's speech or is less interested in the speaker's speech. This *aizuchi* vocabulary can be "*hai, ee, un, aa, sou, naruhodo*", etc. *Aizuchishi* has four types of *aizuchi* background that appear most often and are pronounced as follows.

- a. *Tandokukei*: *Tandokukei* is a single form of *aizuchi* vocabulary that only consists of one utterance, such as "*hai, ee, un, aa, sou, sokka, naruhodo*".
- b. *Kurikaeshikei*: *Kurikaeshi* is a repetition form of *aizuchi* in the singular form, such as "*hai hai, sokka sokka, sou sou, un un*".
- c. *Fukugoukei*: *Fukugoukei* is a mixture of singular *aizuchi*, such as "*a un, a sokka, a hee, hee sou, hee souka, hee naruhodo*".
- d. *Fukugoukurikaeshikei*: *Fukugoukurikaeshikei* is a mixture of repeated singular *aizuchi* forms, such as "*aa un un, aa sokka sokka, un un sou sou*".

### 1.2.2. *Kurikaeshi*

*Kurikaeshi* is repetition. The repetition in question is that the listener repeats part or all of the speech the speaker just heard.

### 1.2.3. *Iikae*

Listeners use *iikae* or substitute words by changing the form of the speaker's speech into a state of speech that is easy to understand.

### 1.2.4. *Sono ta*

In body language, *sono ta* is often used during speech act events. In line with Horiguchi's classification, apart from verbal *aizuchi* uttered by listeners, there are also nonverbal *aizuchi* such as head nodding, laughing, shaking heads, or other facial expressions (Mizutani & Mizutani, 1991).

Meanwhile, according to Izumi (2003), *aizuchi* (back-channelling) is critical to smooth conversation. In addition to forms, *aizuchi* has five varieties that are used based on the situation. The five basic situations are listed below.

- a. *Atarashii jouhou o ukeireru baai* (When you accept new information)
- b. *Atarashii jouhou o kiite, odoroitari gimon ni omottarisuru baai* (When you are surprised at or skeptical about the new information)
- c. *Aite no iken ni sanseisuru baai* (When you agree with your interlocutor)
- d. *Aite no iken ni hantaisuru baai* (When you disagree with your interlocutor)
- e. *Homerarete kensonsuru baai* (When you are praised and give a modest reaction)

## 2. METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive qualitative method is a method that discusses several possibilities for describing language phenomena by collecting data, arranging and then classifying, then analyzing the data and interpreting it (Sutedi, 2011). Therefore, this descriptive qualitative method was suitable to examine the form of *aizuchi* verbally and non-verbally as the data were in the form of speeches.

The data source used in this study was a conversational dialogue taken from a Japanese reality show entitled Terrace House: Opening New Doors, episode 1, part 1, with a duration of 42 minutes. Since this study only focused on *aizuchi* expressions, the dialogues taken from research data sources were carried out when going to signal back or respond verbally and non-verbally in the drama.

The collected data were then described based on Arikunto's (2011) analysis stages, including the preparation, implementation, and completion stages. Furthermore, explanations and elaborations on the problem under study were provided by using theories about *aizuchi* from Horiguchi (1997) and Izumi (2003).

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the Japanese speakers in the Japanese reality show Terrace House: Opening New Doors Episode 1 used all forms of *aizuchi* with a total of 98 occurrences which consisted of *aizuchishi* (with 55 occurrences), *kurikaeshi* (with only 3 occurrences), *iikae* (with 13 occurrences), and *sono ta* (with 27 occurrences) as can be seen in Table 1.

### 3.1. The Forms of Aizuchi

**Table 1.** The *aizuchi* form in speech of native Japanese speakers in reality shows

No.	Shape	Amount of Data
1.	<i>Aizuchishi</i>	55
2.	<i>Kurikaeshi</i>	3
3.	<i>Iikae</i>	13
4.	<i>Sono ta</i>	27
<b>Total</b>		<b>98</b>

Table 1 shows that *aizuchishi* was used dominantly in the data, followed by *sono ta* and *iikae*. Meanwhile, *kurikaeshi* was used the least with only three data. The explanation for each finding is elaborated below.

#### 3.1.1. Aizuchishi

##### Data 1

Context: Yuudai and Mizuki are in the living room, and it is their first time meeting. They introduced themselves and asked their age.

Yuudai: "*Ikinaride sumimasen. Nansai desuka?*"

Sorry for being so sudden. How old are you?

Mizuki: "*Etto, ni juu roku sai desu.*"

Well, I'm 26 years old.

Yuudai: "*E?*"

**Huh?**

In Data 1 Yuudai uses *aizuchi* "*e?*" which means "huh?" in this conversation. This *aizuchi* is the response to Mizuki's sentence "*etto, ni juu roku sai desu*" which means "Well, I'm 26 years old". During the conversation,

Yuudai is surprised because Mizuki is older than him. Referring to Horiguchi's theory (1997) about *aizuchi* form, the expression of *aizuchi* "e?" is a *tandokukei* because this *aizuchi* only consists of one vocabulary.

### 3.1.2. *Kurikaeshi*

#### Data 2

Context: Yuudai, who had just met Ami, told her about his work and what he was doing.

Yuudai: "*Senmon no hou o yamete, ryouri o ima yattemasu.*"

I quit my professional job, and I am now cooking.

Ami: "*Ryouriyatterun desuka?*"

**Are you cooking?**

In the Data 2 conversation, Ami uses *aizuchi* by repeating some of the sentences Yuudai said. By Horiguchi's theory, the expression of this *aizuchi* is a *kurikaeshi* form.

### 3.1.3. *Iikae*

#### Data 3

Context: Ami and Yuudai tried to get to know each other and asked each other's ages.

Yuudai: "*Jibun wa ima, juu kyuu sai no dai de.*"

I am now 19 years old.

Ami: "*Juu kyuu sai no dai?*"

**19 years old?**

Yuudai: "*Juu kyuu sai desu.*"

19 years old.

Ami: "*Jya, ni ko kudatte koto.*"

**Two years below me then.**

In Data 3 conversation, Ami uses two forms of *aizuchi*. The first *aizuchi* is repeating the phrase Yuudai, which means *kurikaeshi aizuchi*. The second *aizuchi* is *aizuchi* by changing the vocabulary of the sentences Yuudai said. Yuudai said he was 19 years old, and Ami responded with the sentence, "Two years below me then". Even though the response sentence is different, it still has the same meaning. The expression of this *aizuchi* is classified as an *iikae* form (Horiguchi, 1997).

### 3.1.4. *Sono ta*

#### Data 4

Context: Yuudai asked Mizuki about Mizuki's job. Moreover, Mizuki explained her job.

Yuudai: "*Shigoto toka doushitan desuka?*"

What happened to your job?

Mizuki: "*Shigoto toka wa kihon Kankoku ni ite mo nihon ni ite mo.*"

My job is basically in Korea or Japan.

Yuudai and Ami: **(nodding head)**

Mizuki: "*Pasokon gyomu toka dakara.*"

Because this is a job that uses a computer.

Yuudai: "*Aa.*" **(nodding head)**

**Aa. (nodding head)**

Mizuki: "*Anmari shukkin toka shitenakute, motomoto.*"

I do not go to work very often, but originally.

Yuudai: "*Aa.*" **(nodding head)**

**Aa. (nodding head)**

Mizuki: "*Dakara doko ni ite mo dekiru shigotodashi.*"

So it is a job you can do anywhere.

Yuudai: **(nodding head)**

Mizuki: "*Webusaito de kiji o kaku shigoto toka.*"

Like writing articles for websites.

Ami: **(nodding head)**

In the Data 4 conversation, Yuudai and Ami used *aizuchi* nodding as a sign of paying attention to the conversation. Referring to Horiguchi's (1997) and Mizutani and Mizutani's (1991) theory on *aizuchi*, this nonverbal *aizuchi* is classified as *sono ta* form.

### 3.2. The Variety of *Aizuchi*

As for *aizuchi* varieties, this research discovered that all *aizuchi* forms were used in five basic situations as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The *aizuchi* form in speech of native Japanese speakers in reality shows based on the situation

No.	Situation	Amount of Data
1.	When accepting new information	35
2.	When surprised at or skeptical about the new information	16
3.	When agreeing with the interlocutor	40
4.	When disagree with the interlocutor	2
5.	When praised and give a modest reaction	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>98</b>

From Table 2, it can be seen that *aizuchi* based on the situation 'When agreeing with the interlocutor', was used dominantly in the data with 40 occurrences, followed by 'when accepting new information' and 'when surprised at or skeptical about the new information' with 35 and 16 occurrences respectively. Meanwhile, *aizuchi* based on the situation 'when praised and give a modest reaction', was used with only 5 data, and finally, a situation 'when disagreeing with the interlocutor' was used the least with only 2 data. Due to the limited space, the explanation of findings on *aizuchi* varieties only focused on *aizuchi* based on the situation 'When agreeing with the interlocutor' and *aizuchi* based on the situation 'When praised and give a modest reaction'.

#### 3.2.1. When Agreeing with The Interlocutor

##### Data 5

Context: Mizuki, Yuudai, and Takayuki were having a meeting in the living room. Because today was their first day, they wanted to go around the house immediately.

Mizuki: "*Hayaku naka mawaritai.*"

I want to go around immediately.

Yuudai: "*Sounan desuyo.*"

Yes, so do I.

Takayuki: "*Sou sou.*" (nodding head)

Oh yeah.

In the Data 5 conversation, Yuudai and Takayuki used *aizuchi* with the utterances "*sounan desuyo*" which means "yes, so do I" and "*sou sou*" which means "oh yeah". This *aizuchi* was a response to Mizuki's sentence "*hayaku naka mawaritai*" which means "want to go around immediately". Yuudai and Takayuki agreed with Mizuki's opinion and responded by using *aizuchi*. Referring to Izumi (2003), this *aizuchi* expression belongs to the situation when you agree with your interlocutor.

#### 3.2.2. When Praised and Give A Modest Reaction

##### Data 6

Context: Tsubasa was praised by Takayuki because she was an ice hockey player. Then, Tsubasa responded by denying the statement.

Takayuki: "*Jya, zenzen bari-bari.*"

Well then, it is full of energy.

Tsubasa: "*Zenzen zenzen... Sonna.*" (shakes one's head and laughs)

Not at all. . . Not like that.

In the Data 6 conversation, Tsubasa used *aizuchi* with the utterance "*zenzen zenzen... sonna*" which means "not at all... not like that". This *aizuchi* was a response to Takayuki's sentence "*jya, zenzen bari-bari*" which means "well then, it is full of energy." Hearing such praise, Tsubasa immediately responded with the *aizuchi*. This *aizuchi* expression belongs to the situation when you are praised and give a modest reaction (Izumi, 2003).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results showed that the form of *aizuchi* used in the data source was 98 data. Four forms of *aizuchi* occurred in this research. The most frequent form of *aizuchi* that occurred in this research was *aizuchishi* (*aizuchi* vocabulary) with 55 data. Moreover, there were 13 data of *kurikaeshi* (repetition), *iikae* (replacement with other words) consisted of 3 data, and the last one is *sono ta* (another form of *aizuchi* such as gestures and nonverbal) consisted of 27 data. The verbal *aizuchi* that appear most frequently are *un*, *hee*, and *aa*. These *aizuchi* are often used based on the situation when you receive new information and based on the situation when you agree with your interlocutor, which was used dominantly in the data. *Aizuchi un*, *hee*, and *aa* are often used in informal situations like this reality show. Nonverbal *aizuchi* that are often used are nodding the head and laughing. Nodding the head is often used based on the situation when you agree with your interlocutor and based on the situation when you receive new information. Laughing is often used based on the situation when you agree with your interlocutor and based on the situation when you are praised and give a modest reaction. Overall, the research findings indicate that the use of *aizuchi* by Japanese native speakers can be classified as a very high phenomenon in Japanese conversation.

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