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How people interact with each other in public:

Audiences' influence on the host-guest interaction in television talk shows*

Mana KITAZAWA

1. Introduction

This paper aims to reveal how conversation participants interact with one another in public, where they are highly visible. It is critical in communication that real conversational participants understand what the other is saying. When they communicate with each other in public, what is more important is that the audience or the target of the conversation understand the interactions, regardless of the objective of public communication. Previous research on mass communication has mainly focused on conversational style or description variation, pointing out that these elements are influenced by audiences, their social category (Labov, 1966), or the degree of commitment to the conversation (Bell, 1984). In other studies, speakers choose their style based on their communicative goals (Coupland, 1996, 2007; Hernandez-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012; Soukup, 2012). Studies argue that stylistic variation is linked to a speaker's identity work or stance-taking (Johnstone, 1996; 2000; 2009). This paper focuses on conversation as well as stylistic variation. The current study is a pilot study that qualitatively investigates the host-guest interaction in talk show programs. It demonstrated that even if the host-guest interaction appears to be an ordinary dialogue, it reflects the presence of an audience, and various verbal and non-verbal strategies are embedded into the interaction, especially the host's utterances.

2. Previous studies

Speech variation has been discussed from various perspectives over time. Eckert (2012) proposed three waves of variation study: attention to speech (Labov, 1966; 1972), audience design (Bell, 1984), and speaker design (Coupland, 2007). These waves correspond to changing trends, and style variation was previously associated with social group membership, but is now associated with local or situated settings, such as audience, topic, and channel (Schilling-Estes, 2002).

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Labov (1966, 1972) considered stylistic variation to be a kind of social group variation, such as social class, and, depending on the amount of attention to speech, speakers shift their style to standard or nonstandard. They used standard variation associated with the upper social class in formal situations and vice versa. Labov's examination of the global parameter is based on research into the principle and mechanism of style variation. Bell (1984) attempted to explain style variation in more local terms—in other words, in relation to the audience members rather than the large parameter based on social stratification. Bell employs speech accommodation theory[1] (Giles & Powesland, 1975) and proposes "audience design," which refers to "recipient design" (Sacks et al, 1974). It demonstrates how different types of audiences influence stylistic variation (auditors, overhearers, and eavesdroppers). Although the focus is on the speaker's reactive aspect of variation, Bell points out that speakers sometimes decide what style to use on their own, considering the audience with whom they wish to associate.[2] This type of research, which focuses on the agency of speakers, has recently become popular. Coupland (1996, 2007) proposed a "speaker design model" influenced by social constructivism. This model considers not only external elements, such as audience, topic, and familiarity, but also internal ones, such as the speaker's communicative goal and frame, as a stylistic variation factor. The research examines why people use stylistic variation in individual settings based on knowledge gained from a longitudinal study in anthropology or ethnography. Linguistic variation, according to this theory, helps speakers shape their personal identities and establish interpersonal interactions.

Previous research has focused on the speaker's speech style, attempting to uncover the mechanism of stylistic variation by taking audience members or speakers' intentions into account. However, influence is not limited to speech style; rather, the existence of audience and speakers' aims can affect any aspect of communication. Today, where dialogue and interactions between multiple people occur more openly in public, it is critical to examine not only stylistic variation, but also the impact on the interaction itself. Considering the influence of the audience, this paper qualitatively analyzes how the host and guest interact with each other in the talk show program.

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[1] In this theory, speakers adjust their style to their addressee to obtain their approval or intentionally use a different style from their addressee. The former is "convergence" and the latter is called "divergence." The accommodation of the style includes speech rate, accent, content, and pausing (Bell, 1984).

[2] It is called "referee design," which can be seen in mass communication. Speakers initiatively accommodate their style with the assumed ideal or absent reference group (Bell, 1984).

3. Data

The data were collected from the TBS talk show program *Sawakonoasa*,[3] which was broadcast from 2011 to 2021. In this television show, a host and guest talk with each other one on one. The host always asks the guests what song is the most impressive that the guest has ever heard, and what song currently impresses the guest. Thus, the guest tends to talk about his/her previous experiences or how he/she has changed his/her mind regarding music.

The program can be divided into three major sections: beginning, development, and closing. This paper focuses on the beginning part, in which the host introduces the guest to the audience, as well as the development section, in which the guest's information and character are elicited. What transpires during their interactions will be described in detail. This paper also examines how audiences affect their interactions.

4. Analysis

4.1. Interactions at the beginning of the talk

At the beginning of the talk show program, the host, Sawako Agawa (hereafter, A), invites the guest, Ryoko Yonekura (hereafter, Y), into the studio and introduces her by talking about their first encounter. Interestingly, once the guest remembers the event of the first encounter, she begins to participate in the host's talk and co-explain what happened at that time. This is an example of how the host and the guest are obviously conscious of the audience. The awareness of the audience is underlined in the following dialogues accompanied by number.

Dialogue 1: In the beginning, the host introduces the guest with the first-encounter episode, which causes the host to become fond of the guest.

01 A: ano watashi ga yonekurasan ni saishoni horetano wa
well, the first time I crushed on Yonekura-san was
(gaze to the camera)
02 A: horeta tteiunomo nandakedo (1)hajimete oaishitano wa
saying "fell in love with" is weird but… the first time I met her was
03 A: kōhakuutagassenno shinsain wo isshoni yatta toki de
when we were judges for the Kōhakuutagassen
(gaze to the camera)

[3] *Sawakonoasa* is a program that was broadcast every Saturday morning around for a decade. The host Sawako Agawa, who is an essayist and novelist, invites all kinds of famous people in Japan to the program as a guest and just talks with them listening to the music chosen by the guest. The program is 30 minutes long

04 Y: souda oboeteru
yes it was I remember that
05 A: (2)kōhakuutagassenno saigono saigoni hotarunohikari wo utainagara
at the end of the contest singing Hotarunohikari
06 A: minna shinsainnokata mo butai ni agattekudasai tteiu shisutemu
all judges had to go on stage there was a system that
07 A: dattano sonokorowane soshitara nanka
there was such a rule at that time and then
(gaze to the camera)
08 A: purakādo wo motta kireina onēchamatachiga sodekara haittekita tokini
when beautiful ladies holding placards came onto the stage
09 A: butsukattan desuyo sono purakādono onēsan to watashi ga
I bumped into them
(gaze to the camera)
10 A: soshitara ottotto tteitte butai kara ochisōninatta
then I lost balance like "oops" and almost fell off the stage
11 Y: hitoga ippai itene
because there were many people
12 A: soshitara atokara daijōbudesuka tteitte yonekurasan ga watashino
soon after that saying "are you alright" and Yonekurasan me
13 A: karada wo gatto sasaetekurete nante sutekina hito
supported how lovely she is
14 Y: takarazuka no sekai desune
it's like the world of Takarazuka
15 A: souyo mou horetano
that's right well I fell in love with (you)
16 Y: arigatougozaimasu
thank you

(All translations by the author)

After introducing the name of the guest and greeting, the host begins to talk about the day when the host and the guest first met each other. Before saying the details, she maintains that the experience makes her crush on the guest (line 01, *horeta* "crushed on her"). This is the host's subjective evaluation of the guest, and so at this time, the guest as well as the audience cannot seem to understand yet what the guest is going to talk about. Once the host paraphrases *saisho ni horeta no wa* "the first time I crushed on (her) was" into *hajimete oaishitano wa* "the first time I met (her) was" in line 02, the guest comes to understand what the host is talking about, and then she says *souda oboeteru,* "Yes, it was. I remember that." Thus, in line 04, the host and the guest share the subject of the talk. After the agreement on the topic is established, the host

resumes the first-encounter story in line 05, and the guest also participates in the host's storytelling by adding new information *hitoga ippai itene* "because there were many people" in line 11.[4] In line 12 and 13, the host finally says the reason why she had a crush on her and quickly introduces her feelings at that time: *nante sutekina hito* "how lovely she is." The guest also describes the event positively by saying "the world of Takarazuka[5]" at line 14. The host agrees with the description and says *horetano* "crush on (her)" again. Then the guest shows gratitude to the host, and the topic related to their first encounter was over.

In this dialogue, there are many signs of consciousness about the audience embedded into their interaction. First, the host turns her gaze[6] in the direction of the camera[7] several times while talking about the first encounter with the guest. It indicates that her story is directed not only to the guest but also to the public. The use of a formal style is also caused by the awareness of the audience. Although the host talks with the guest casually like *souyo mou horetano* "that's right. Well, I crushed on you," she seems to use a formal style when she cares about the audience. For example, when she introduces what she expects the audience does not know, she does so in a formal style, such as *hajimete oaishitano wa* "the first time I met her" as shown in underline (1). In addition, explaining the details is also one of the signs of consciousness about the audience, because it is not necessary information for the host and the guest who share the knowledge about it. Since the host thinks that the audience will not know the story, the host continues to explain their first encounter story after she recognizes that the guest remembers it in line 04. It is expected that the audience cannot understand why the host crushed on the guest at line 01 and line 02, but based on the host and guest's co-explanation from lines 05 to 13, as indicated by the underline (2), they come to understand the meaning of *horetano* "crush on you" at line 15. Therefore, through the host and guest interactions, the audience can correctly understand not only what their first encounter was like but also their evaluation of the event.

[4] This information added by the guest is accepted by the host because the host continues her explanation without stopping.

[5] Takarazuka refers to "Takarazuka Revue Company," which is an opera company comprised of just unmarried women. Women play both male and female characters. The situation that the guest supports the host who almost falls out is similar to the plot of Takarazuka, so the guest seems to refer to it.

[6] The host's gaze to the camera is shown by double parentheses in the dialogue.

[7] The camera refers to the one on the right side of a stage, not the main camera used for the program.

4.2. Interactions in the development of the conversation

After the host and the guest share their first encounter story and introduce it to the public, the host asks the guest some questions about her latest update or a change of mind. Unlike the beginning part of the talk, in which the host and the guest have the same knowledge about their encounter, in the development of the conversation, there is a discrepancy in the amount of knowledge between the host and the guest. The host, based on general information about the guest, attempts to explore what the guest is like by confirming whether the information is right and sometimes eliciting the guest's reaction to general opinions.

Dialogue 2: The host and the guest talk about the height and its influence on their character.

01 A: karada wa ōkikattan desuka chiisai koro kara
have you been taller since you were a child
02 Y: chiisai tokikara ōkikatta desu
I have been taller since I was a child
(omitted)
03 Y: nanode kisū ninaruto nokorun desune
so I left alone if it [the number of the class] is odd (when making a line)
04 Y: ichiban maeno ko ga zettai tonarino ko ga irundesu yo te wo tsunagu
the student in the front absolutely has a neighbor (so) she/he can hold the hand of the next student
05 A: souka ushironinaru to
oh in the case of the person at the back
06 Y: nokottetari surundesu
has no choice but to remain alone
07 A: (3)hitori amacchattarisuru kara
because a person leaves alone
08 Y: sounandesu dakara nanka itsumo amatteiru tteiu kimochi ga
yes so I always feel kind of left alone
09 A: kouiunotte yappari eikyōshimasu ne jinkakukeisei ni
the experience like this influences the formation of the character doesn't it
10 Y: sugoku eikyōsuru
it significantly influences (the character)

The host introduces a new topic by asking the guest whether she has been tall since she was a child in line 01. The guest replies positively to the question *chiisai tokikara ōkikatta desu* "I have been taller since I was a child" by using the same phrase as the host. The guest moves on

to talk about a bitter episode related to her height, which is omitted in the script because of the typical pattern of the interaction that the guest introduces her experience, and the host shows empathy to the guest. The guest complains that when students had to line up from shortest to tallest in the class, she was always furthest back from the front of the line. And she continues to lament that she did not have neighbors on both sides by employing the example that she did not have a partner to make a pair with when the class had odd numbers. The guest attempts to explain her feelings of sadness by contrasting herself with the student who has a neighbor student with whom to make a pair, whether the number is even or odd, in lines 03 and 04. Before she starts to talk about herself, the host understands what the guest says and refers to the case of the guest who was taller than any other student in line 05, *souka ushironinaru to* "oh, in the case of the person at the back." Before the host finishes speaking, the guest completes the sentence saying *nokottetari surundesu* "(in the case of the person at the back, he/she) has no choice but to remain alone." Next, the host again confirms the reason why the person must remain alone by paraphrasing the guest's utterance, *nokoru* "leave alone" into the verb *amaru* "remain alone" in line 07, and the guest answers in the affirmative in line 08. After completing the explanation about the experience, the guest refers to the influence of the experience on her personality; she is inclined to think that she will always remain alone. The host agrees with the guest and points out the influence on personality formation. Also, the host aligns with the guest by using the same phrase *eikyōsuru* "influences."

The host supplements what the guest says in line 05. This indicates that the host can understand what the guest says, and the host succeeds in showing her understanding to the guest. But, despite being accepted by the guest in line 06, the host attempts to confirm once more whether her understanding about the reason why the guest remains alone is right or not as shown in underline (3). This can be a consequence of the guest attempting to help the audience grasp what the guest says. Understanding the guest's experience without a discrepancy, the audience can understand the guest's feelings, even if they do not have the same experience.

Just as in Dialogue 2, the host first collects the basic information about the guest, in this case about the office that the guest started, and then exchanges opinions with the guest.

Dialogue 3: The host asks the guest about the office the guest opened and exchanges opinions with the guest.

01 A: (4)tada hontōni jimusho no jimushigoto mo
even the desk work in the office

02 A: yonekurasan ga yatteru tteiu
Yonekurasan really does they say
03 Y: soudesu saisho wa hontouni
yes I really did when it first started
04 A: ochūgen oseibo no tehai mo yatte
you arranged mid-year gifts and end of year gifts
05 Y: yatte saikin wa sukettonoko ga kitekuretaritoka shite
I arranged [did] these days assistants come to help me
06 A: jimusho nannin kurai sutaffu irundesuka
how many staff members do you have in the office
07 Y: sannin ni fuemashita kotoshi ninatte kara
the number of staff has increased to three this year
08 A: (5)mou shachō no yaku mo chochoinopa janaidesuka
oh so you can play the character of president easily can't you
09 Y: zenzendesuyo (6)hontōni dakara
no not at all definitely no
10 A: (7)watashi shippaishinai kara mitaina kanji
is it like "I never fail"
11 Y: (8)hontōni zenbu zenbu shippai shitakunai nanode nande
definitely no anything regarding anything I don't want to fail
12 A: shippai shitakunai node
you don't want to fail
13 Y: sou
no

From line 01 to 07, the host seeks to gain information from the guest about the private office, which the guest opened after she became independent from the production company. First, in line 01, the host asks whether the guest really engages in a desk job or not. The guest confirms the fact by suggesting general examples of desk jobs, such as arranging *ochūgen* "a mid-year gift and *oseibo* "end of year gift." The guest also responds positively to it and adds new information that assistants are coming to help her. Then, the host paraphrases *sukettonoko* "assistant" in the guest's utterance of *sutaffu* "staff" and asks how many staff members there are in the office. By the guest replying to it in line 07, the interaction intended to obtain basic information about the guest's office, such as job description and the number of staff members, is completed. From line 08, the host and the guest begin to exchange their opinions. The host evaluates the guest as the boss, saying that the guest works on her job so well that she should be able to play the character of the boss in drama without any difficulty. This evaluation,

however, is negated by the guest. The host praises her work again by employing the famous phrase *watashi shippaishinai kara* "I never fail," which the guest always says in her popular drama. The guest refuses to accept the host's evaluation and says that she does not want to fail. Rejected twice by the guest, the host understands the guest's true feeling, quoting *shippai shitakunai node* "I do not want to fail" within her utterance. The host finally obtains the affirmative response in line 13.

In this dialogue, the host seems to employ the perspectives of the people who know the guest. When the host confirms the information about the guest's office, she attaches the quotative[8] *tteiu* "they say" to the utterance. This utterance, underscored by (4), indicates that the host, who is less knowledgeable than the guest herself, is inquiring about the guest's details based on general knowledge about the guest. Also, it can be thought that the host is conscious of what the audience wants to know about the guest. The host's evaluation observed in line 08 and 10 also seems to be made to elicit true feelings from the guest employing the public image that people have of the guest as the successful actress, as shown in underline (5) and (7) respectively. The guest's negation highlighted by underscore (6) and (8) may indicate resistance to her public image.

Just as in Dialogue 3, the host, based on general information about the guest, confirms that the guest lacks confidence, and maintains that people cannot believe it. The host and the guest achieve agreement about the guest's lack of confidence by co-constructing the sentence *kore yonekurasan no achikochino intabyū de* "In many interviews, Yonekurasan says" in line 02 and *jishin ga nai* "you don't have any confidence" in line 03. Although the host acknowledges the guest's utterances, she says to the guest that no one believes that considering the public image of the guest as indicated by underline (9). The guest admits her public image, but even so, she emphasizes her lack of confidence by accompanying *hontōni* "really" to the utterance, which is demonstrated by (10).

Dialogue 4: The host confirms whether or not the guest does not have any confidence in herself.

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01 Y: hai tteiuka jishin ga ima mo sounandesukedo jishin ga hontōni nai
      yes but confidence I still have no I don't have any confidence
02 A: kore yonekurasan no achikochino intabyū de
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[8] The use of quotatives means that the reference with them is a metarepretantion (Sperber, 2000). It enables speakers to incorporate others' utterances, opinions, and propositions into themselves. Metaknowledge shown by metarepresentations of speakers informs hearers that the knowledge also generally belongs to others (Tanaka, 2019).

about that Yonekurasan (says) in many interviews

03 Y: jishin ga nai

I don't have any confidence

04 A: (9)jishin ga nai bakaride daremo shinjinaizo

You are always saying that you don't have any confidence but no one can believe that

05 Y: (10)demo hontōni sounandesuyo

but in fact I don't I think that I don't

06 Y: jibun ga omocchau hamidashimono datte nanka omoukusega arimasune

I am inclined to think that I am a misfit

07 Y: ikenaitokorodesune　korewa jibunno

this is a bad point　this is my (bad point)

5. Discussion

The qualitative description of the data indicates that the host-guest interaction is similar to an interview in which the host asks the guest some questions and the guest answers them. It looks like an interaction implemented just by the two, and there is no significant stylistic variation as a whole. However, the analysis has suggested the possibility that various strategies to make the audience easier to understand are embedded into their interaction. In the talk show program, one of the media communications, the audience cannot be identified, and the interactions seem to be established based on the assumption that those who listen to their interactions do not have any background knowledge.

The host mainly manages the flow of the talk so that anyone can understand the interaction. At the beginning of the talk show program, in which the guest comes into the studio, the host begins to introduce the guest by talking about their first encounter. After the host broaches the story, the guest participates in the conversation based on the shared knowledge; thus, both the host and the guest together introduce their first encounter story to the audience who do not know anything about it. This is the only interaction in which they explicitly show a consciousness about the audience. After the introduction, the host and the guest begin to interact with each other. Even if the interactions are implemented by just the two, the host constantly cares about whether the audience can understand what the host and the guest say.

The conversation can be divided into at least two parts: confirming facts about the guest and exchanging opinions and thoughts about it. The process is repeated, and information about the guest is accumulated as the program proceeds.

First, in confirming facts about the guest, the interactions in which the host asks the guest some questions and the guest answers them frequently can be seen. The interaction seemingly

belongs between the two persons, but the host uses some strategies to make it easier for the audience to participate. As shown in Dialogue 1, the host looks in the direction of the camera and cares about the public when they introduce what happened in their first encounter. Not only the direction of the gaze but also their manner of speaking seems to be affected by the audience. Although the host talks about the first encounter story in a frank way, she uses a formal style when introducing the guest to the audience. Additionally, after the host knows that the guest can remember the first-encounter story, the host continues to explain the details, even though the guest has already recalled it. The redundancy can be a consequence of consciousness about the audience. Understanding the details of the event enables the audience to understand the host's evaluation of the guest, such as having a *horeta* "crush on" her and getting to know the guest. Moreover, when the guest responds to the guest's questions, the host tends to supplement the utterances or confirm whether she can understand what the guest says by paraphrasing, as shown in Dialogue 2. In Dialogue 3, the host attaches the quotation to the utterance, asking the guest about her recent information. These features seen in the host's utterances, indicate that the host interacts with the guest not only from her own perspective but also from the perspective of the audience. The host attempts to reflect the public's interest in the guest. Even if the host confirms the facts, she moves on to specify the information.

After confirming basic information about the guest, they exchange opinions and thoughts about it. The awareness of the audience can be observed in the process. The host tends to express her opinions by considering general opinions about the guest. In Dialogue 3, for example, employing the public image of the guest that she must be a confident woman just like the character she played in the drama, the host says that the guest will be able to play as the character of the boss easily because she succeeds in her business. But the guest disagrees with the host and maintains that she is different from the character. Her use of the emphatic adverb *hontōni* "really" may indicate that she is against not only the host but also the audience who have such an image of the guest. In Dialogue 4, the host rejects the fact that the guest is not confident, and says that not only the host but also anyone cannot believe what the guest says. The guest also refuses to accept the opinion by attaching *hontōni* "really/in fact" with her utterance *sou[jishin ga nai] nandesuyo* "I don't (have any confidence)," just as in Dialogue 3.

The interactions between the host and the guest in the talk show program are seemingly no different from the usual dialogue, but they are greatly influenced by the audience and its appearance. The host, as the controller of the flow in the program, attempts to use the way of speaking so that the audience can understand the guest, even if they do not have any knowledge

about her. The interaction with the host enables the guest to express exactly who she is or how she desires to be perceived.

6. Conclusion

The speakers' way of speaking, especially stylistic variation, has been thought to be influenced by audience members or by the speakers' intention. Some research has associated stylistic variation with the social category of audience, attention to speech (Labov, 1966, 1972), and the degree of their commitment to the speech (Bell, 1984). Others centered on speakers and maintained that speakers accommodate their style to the target audience to express their own identity and positioning.

This paper, focusing on dialogue, analyzes how the host and guest interact with each other in the program. There is a typical pattern of interaction in which the host asks questions or confirms the facts about the guest, and the guest responds to it. In addition, this paper demonstrated that the host and the guest interact with each other so that the audience can understand what they are talking about by embedding various strategies into their utterances. Their efforts are essential for the audience to follow the development of the talk, which is key to the success of the program.

This paper pointed out the influence on the interactions of the audience who do not participate in the talk. The form of communication that presupposes the existence of the audience, just as the talk show program has become common in the present situation, but there is still little research that discusses what role they play in the interaction. It is hoped that this paper will provide a new perspective for research on pragmatics and mass media communication.

In addition, this paper points out the possibility that not only the speaker's style but also the interaction itself can be influenced by the audience. It is expected that this feature is not limited to the talk show program, but can be applied to any mass communication that has publicity.

This paper is a pilot study and analyzed the only one broadcast; thus, it cannot overgeneralize the features of talk show program, much less public communication. The future research will analyze other media communication and reveal how the conversation participants try to show their understanding considering the audience.

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