Sitting Down and Standing Up as Resources for Reorganization of Participation Framework: Analysis of Preparatory Meeting for Nozawa Onsen Fire Festival

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Abstract
In real-life social settings, especially in open fields or public spaces, people often talk while standing, fluidly changing their posture, position, or spatial formation. Therefore, the participation framework is continually reorganized. This paper suggests that body movements for changing posture, especially sitting down and standing up, can serve as resources for reorganization of participation framework. Sitting down and standing up result in the change of the level of eyesight of participants, which dynamically contributes to reorganization of their interactional space, F-formation.

Keywords: participation framework, posture, body movement

1. Introduction
During conversations conducted in experimental settings or closed rooms, participants usually remain seated. Such stable posture of participants lets them continue to talk at the same place and/or with the same interlocutors. On the other hand, in real-life social settings, especially in open fields or public spaces, people often talk while standing, fluidly changing their posture, body position, or spatial formation. Therefore, the participation framework is continually reorganized. This paper demonstrates the way in which people reorganize participation framework while chatting in an open space, focusing on the change of the participants’ posture, especially sitting down and standing up. When we talk in public spaces, we usually keep standing with our body faced to each other, organizing F-formation in circular arrangement (Kendon, 1990). However, for some reason, we sometimes sit down and stand up again while talking, and such body movements can influence the participation framework, i.e., who attends the conversation as ratified participants, who is supposed to speak, and who is addressed by the speaker (Goffman, 1981). Sitting down and standing up can serve as resources for reorganization of participation framework, since their movements change the level of participants’ eyesight. This paper, by observing excerpts of video-recorded conversation, explicates how the movements of sitting down and standing up make the participation framework reorganized.

2. Data
In this paper we analyze some excerpts from the video recordings of the preparatory work for the fire festival called Dosojin Matsuri in Nozawa Onsen, Nagano, Japan. In Nozawa Onsen village, a group of people, called San’yako, work for the preparation and operation of the fire festival (Figure 1). San’yako consists of almost all the men around 42 years old in the village. The principal members of San’yako are 42 year-old men, who play main roles of

¹ For more detailed information about Dosojin Matsuri and San’yako, see Den (2018).

Figure 1: Organization chart of San’yako.

Figure 2: Participants of the preparatory meeting.
In conversation during preparation of the festival, the participants often go out of and rejoin the conversation for various reasons, e.g. in order to get some stuff relevant to the conversation. Slightly before excerpt 1 (Figure 3, 4), the current chairman (C) had gone out of the conversation, and after a while he came back there. Here we observe how the change of his posture helped him to rejoin the conversation.

In the first part of this excerpt (Figure 3, lines 01-03; Figure 4, #1), AD, SV1, SV2 and VC are talking together. In line 01, SV1 suggests when they want their colleagues to come to help them, saying ichiban.; later, when AD first squatted down and started to drink his coffee, and the SVs followed him, squatting down too.

3. Analysis

3.1 Excerpt 1: Sitting Down and Rejoining Conversation

While SV1 is claiming the conditional suggestion (line 02), C, who had left the conversation in order to get another coffee, comes back and gives it to SV2, who had not got coffee before (lines 02-03; Figure 4, #2). First SV2, noticing C approaching him, turns his face to C, and then C gives the coffee to SV2. Receiving the coffee, SV2 says arigatoo (“Thank you.”) (line 03). Even while SV2 is getting the coffee from and thanking C, SV2’s lower body...
continues to be mainly involved (Goffman, 1963) in the current conversation, in a body-torquetd position (Schegloff, 1998). As soon as he receives the coffee, SV2 turns his face to SV1 again, strongly reorienting to the current interactional space.

Whereas SV2 keeps participating in the conversation with AD, SV1 and VC, C walks to the back of SV2 (lines 03-05), not spatially joining the conversation, that is, continuing to be out of F-formation (Figure 4, #3). In line 04 AD responds to SV1’s suggestion (line 02), ma shigoto dekiru yatsu wa na (“Well, only those who are capable of the work may come.”). Immediately SV2 laughs (line 05), displaying alignment with AD’s strict but laughable comment, and opens his coffee (line 05). After a long gap (line 05), AD says to SV2, who is preparing to drink coffee, osakini itadaite masu (“Sorry but we are drinking coffee already.”), and the topic of the conversation is tentatively suspended.

Afterward SV2 laughingly says konomaes jimukyoku kuru tsuteteta nnda kedo, ita tte shibare nee shi (“The other day our secretariat said that he would come, but even if he comes, he cannot tie the ropes.”) (line 07), thereby retopicalizing the concern which had been introduced by AD in line 04, about who should come to help. At the end of the utterance SV2 brings his coffee to his mouth, when C looks to the snow on the ground. And SV2 drinks his coffee while SV1 is responding to him (line 09) (although the content of his response cannot be clearly transcribed), during which C sits on the snow (Figure 4, #4).

After C sits on the snow, SV2 says iya, sore fujin no ie ite nawa nattero ya ittsu (“‘No, go to the Women’s House and twine the ropes’, we would say to him.’” (line 10), which is a joking statement imaginarily addressed to their jimukyoku (secretariat). From the end of the utterance SV2 again starts to drink his coffee, and AD also drinks his. Subsequently SV2 looks down and puts his coffee on the ground, when SV1 begins to gaze at C, who is sitting on the snow (line 10).

After a rather long silence, in which multimodal conducts by several participants are observed (line 10), overlapping with a long sigh by AD, SV1 asks a question Koodai (the name of the next chairman from Mashin) ga ite iciban shita tte kuro da kke (“Kodai is the next grade, and as for the youngest, is it black?”) (line 12). He does not use any address terms, but SV1 keeps gazing at C, addressing the question to him. Although what he is asking by the question is not clear, in the next turn C answers soo (de)su (“Yes.”) (line 13). In line 14, responding to C, SC1 utters herumetto (“‘Hard hats.’”), which is an increment to his own previous question, and subsequently says a, nara it na, dokomo kabutte nee kara na (“Oh, then you have no problem, because the colors of hard hats of all the grades are different.”). SC1’s question is about the colors of hard hats of San’yaku members, which can be similar and thus confusing between the three grades. Through this sequence C is invited to rejoin the conversation by SC1.

When he came back to the conversation, C was standing outside of the F-formation (Figure 4, #3), and therefore he was not a main participant of the conversation, i.e., neither a speaker nor an addressee, but a side-participant (Clark, 1996). On the other hand, afterward he sat down and his level of eyesight was lowered (Figure 4, #4), which seems to enable him to be directly seen by SV1. The utterance of SV1 was a question which could be answered by either C or VC, as Kodai’s superior, in terms of epistemics. However, interestingly, the addressee was not VC, who had been present in the conversation and kept standing all the time, but C, who just arrived back there. C succeeded in rejoining the conversation by sitting down and being gazed at by one of the participants.

3.2 Excerpt 2: Standing up and Integration of Two Conversations

Excerpt 2 (Figure 5, 6) is a conversation a few minutes after excerpt 1. At the beginning of this excerpt, unlike in excerpt 1, the conversation is separated into two groups, that is, they are schisming (Egbert, 1997). AD, SV1 and VC are talking on the left side of the picture, and C and SV2 are talking on the right side (Figure 6, #1). The first half of the transcript indicates that they are respectively conversing, although much of the conversation is unfortunately inaudible because of the recording condition, especially for C and SV2. Now two of the participants of the conversation on the left side are squatting, but afterward they stand up, and the change of their posture contributes to the transformation from two separated conversations into a single conversation.

In lines 01-03 (Figure 5) AD, who works as a woodcutter, talks about his job during the preparation of this festival, although what he says is not clearly understandable. After saying juuni gatsu ni nitte kara yama (      ) (“From the beginning of December, the mountain,”) (line 01), AD, who has been squatting till then (Figure 6, #1), stands up and says ni kai shika dekite nai (“I have been able to do it only twice.”) (line 03). Responding to him, SV1 nods twice (line 04). At the same time AD slightly steps forward, and then looks to the left, where C and SV2 are talking. However, after two seconds AD returns to the front, thereby reorienting to the current interactional space he is involved in (line 04; Figure 6, #2). In line 05 AD continues to talk to SV1 and VC, kanzenni (gekkyuu nanoni) dare ga (yaru) ka () (“Who does it though monthly paid?”), to which VC responds with laughter (line 06). Subsequently SV1, who works as a woodcutter with AD, also talks about his own job, kyoo yuki furi soo dakara ika nai kedo (     ) (“Today, it is likely to snow, so I won’t go.”) (line 07). During the utterance of SV1, VC slightly steps forward as if he responded to AD’s stepping. At the end of his turn, SV1 stands up, when all the participants are no longer squatting.

While SV1 is standing up, SV2, who has been talking with C, also changes his posture. SV2 turns around and looks back, saying something unclear (Rei) (   ) (line 09; Figure 6, #3). Rei is C’s first name, so SV2 seems to be responding to C’s inaudible utterance in lines 04-07. In the direction to which SV2 attends there is a vast field for the fire festival, where other members of San’yaku are working. After SV2 started to turn around, AD and subsequently SV1 look to the field as well. Through this sequence, the participants, who has been talking separately, come to orient themselves to the same object, that is, the festival field.

After the participants looked to the festival field together, SV2 and SV1 returns to the front again (line 10), when all

2 This is a Japanese idiomatic statement to display politeness toward a senior when a junior does something selfish before the senior do. In this sequence, AD, who is the eldest, is using the idiom as a kind of joke.
interactional space for conversation, that is, a common F
movement and gazes at him. At this moment, all the
left, where SV2 and C are standing. C responds t
1981; Heath, 1986), but AD suspends his turn and turns to
SV1 looks at AD, displaying of recipiency (Goodwin,
looking at SV1 (line 13). Responding to the AD’s action,
multiple orientation looks weakened, but after a long silence
SV1 reorients to the field (line 11). Here the participants’
participants are faced to each other. However, no one

Figure 6: Transition of participants’ posture in excerpt 2.

Figure 5: Transcript of excerpt 2.

Concluding Remarks

This paper suggested that body movements for changing
posture, especially sitting down and standing up, can serve
as resources for reorganization of participation framework.
Sitting down and standing up result in the change of the
level of eyesight of participants, which dynamically
contributes to reorganization of their interactional space, F-
formation.

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6. References


