

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

## 高文脈と低文脈のコミュニケーションにおけるホモ ロガス・トートロジー：異文化間の価値の違い

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## Homologous Tautology in High-Context and Low-Context Communication : Different Values in Two Cultures<sup>1</sup>

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This paper develops in the following sequence: section I, "Anthropologists' Views on Intercultural Communication" introduces difficulties of this kind of communication; section II, "Homologous Tautology (HT)" discusses different attitudes to this phenomenon in two different cultures; section III, "Prevalence and Popularity of HT in Japanese Proverbs" demonstrates HT as a popular form of communication; section IV, "Common Examples of HT" lists some occurrences of popular HT in T. V. commercials, radio shows, and writings; section V, "The Role of HT in Japanese Culture" identifies three important roles of HT; section VI, "Analysis of HT in Context" attempts to show the intricacies of the use of HT; finally, section VII, "Discussion" summarizes the paper and suggests a need of further research.

### I. Anthropologists' Views on Intercultural Communication

Edward T. Hall (1977) categorizes the various cultures of the world according to the degree of personal interaction and the characteristics of their interpersonal communication. There are cultures in which people are deeply involved with each other, and here information that guides one to the normative behavior is widely shared and simple

messages with deep meaning flow freely ; these are categorized high-context cultures. On the contrary, there are cultures in which a high degree of premium is placed upon individualism and people are relatively less involved with each other, and here information of the kind already defined is not widely shared and even simple messages must be explicitly stated ; these are categorized as low-context cultures. His contention is that communication is culture, and vice versa (communication here includes verbal and non-verbal communication ; it is the activity in which one engages consciously and subconsciously).<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is natural for him to refine the foregoing categorizations and emphasize the inseparable relationship between culture and communication in the following way :

A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite ; i. e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (91)

Japanese interpersonal communication is categorized as HC and its American counterpart as LC. We can rephrase the above statement to claim that Japanese communicate ambiguously and Americans precisely ; this corresponds to laymen's observation. Such intercultural communication between the two cultures can develop complementary schismogenesis. The more two people of the opposite tendencies communicate, the more strongly each exhibits his or her communicative characteristics (Gregory Bateson, 1972). Interestingly but unfortunately, Hall, an established anthropologist as is Bateson, has made the statement ; "Any Westerner who was raised outside the Far East

and claims he really understands and can communicate with either the Chinese or Japanese is deluding himself" (2).

However, both suggest as a remedy to the problem of intercultural communication that the two parties involved should strive to become fully aware of their differences. This will take us back to the original question; how do HC and LC communication manifest themselves? The previous definition by Hall might be satisfying for anthropologists but it is not for students of intercultural communication who want to find a concrete difference between the two.

## II. Homologous Tautology

Homologous tautology has the appearance of "X is X." The identical noun or noun phrase is repeated in a sentence or an utterance. We shall limit our discussion to HT, for it has been thought at its worst as "a repetition of the same statement; the repetition (esp. in the immediate context) of the same statement or phrase, or of the same idea or statement in other words: usually as a fault of style."<sup>3</sup> It is worth investigating whether these commonly held attitudes toward HT are applicable to both American and Japanese interpersonal communication.

In semantics, HT has been reported as "semantically empty (vacuous), stupid, silly, meaningless, uninformative."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, those who are habitual users of tautology are reproached severely as tautologists (the author, of course, does not overlook the pragmatic importance of HT that the given noun or noun phrase can not mean anything beyond what it means). The point of emphasis here is that in the West the use of tautology has been reproached severely and avoiding its use became a vital tradition in every day communication.

Using it has been counted as one of thirty-eight dishonest tricks by Robert H. Thouless (1930, 195), who claims that it can not prove any fact.<sup>5</sup> Again, this kind of discreditable reputation has never been attributed to Japanese HT. On the contrary, HT in Japanese interpersonal communication is not treated as tautology; paradoxically, its use has been widely accepted as aesthetic, persuasive, considerate, and full of meaning in the collective conscious of the Japanese. What the two anthropologists proclaimed as the problems of intercultural communication might sound far-fetched; however, in understanding the contrasting values ascribed to HT by each culture they become more comprehensible, and motivates us to make further investigations.

### III. Prevalence and Popularity of HT in Japanese Proverbs

#### Japanese Examples<sup>6</sup>

(1) Sodachi wa sodachi.

(Birth is more important than breeding.)

(2) Yakusoku wa yakusoku.

(Promise is promise.)

(3) Mochiya wa mochiya.

(An expert's thinking, skill, and plans are far beyond an novice's.)

(4) Sonotoki wa sonotoki.

(One should carry out what one wants to do, rather than worrying about consequences.)

(5) Kakonokoto wa kakonokoto.

(Let bygones be bygones.)

(6) Hito wa hito; ware wa ware.

(You are you, I am myself; nevertheless, we should be

- friends.)
- (7) Ki wa ki ; take wa take.  
(One should not let things remain ambiguous and cheat.)
- (8) Ki wa ki ; kane wa kane.  
(the same as (7) )
- (9) Ishi wa ishi ; kane wa kane.  
(the same as (8) and (9). )
- (10) Asu wa asu ; kyoo wa kyoo.  
(One should try to finish today's business and not worry about tomorrow.)
- (11) Kyoo wa kyoo ; asu wa asu.  
(One should let oneself be cared for by the flow of fate, rather than worry pointlessly.)
- (12) Kinoo wa kinoo ; kyoo wa kyoo.  
(What happened before will not necessarily happen again.)
- (13) Nochi wa nochi ; ima wa ima.  
(The priority is what you are facing right now ; think of the future later.)
- (14) Oya wa oya ; ko wa ko.  
(It is not always the case that children will be like their parents ; their characters, talents, and fate may take a different turn.)
- (15) Karasu wa karasu ; suzume wa suzume.  
(Birds of a feather flock together.)
- (16) Kuchi wa kuchi ; kokoro wa kokoro.  
(What one says is not what one thinks.)

English Examples

Of the following, it only seems necessary to clarify the meanings of (2) and (3).

(1) Truth is truth.

(2) Have is have.

(You can not easily remove what others hold once they have it in their grasp.)

(3) Own is own.

(the same as (2).)

(4) Business is business.

(5) Promise is promise.

(6) A bargain is a bargain.

(7) Past is past.

(8) Enough is enough.

First, after investigations into this matter and as would seem probable from an a priori position the occurrence of HT in Japanese proverbs is more frequent than in their American counterparts. Secondly, the former take the form of "X is X; Y is Y," whereas the latter occur as "X is X" (To emphasize the Japanese tendency toward extending this kind of utterance, it may be noted that the author once heard a HT in a form close to "X is X; Y is Y; Z is Z").<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, the Japanese proverbs listed as numbers (1), (3), (6), and (11) have non-tautological forms with the same meanings; "Uji, sujoo wa arasoe nu," "Mochi wa mochiya," "Kimi wa kimi, boku wa boku; saredo naka yoku," and "Kyoo wa kyoo, asu wa asu no kaze ga fuku," respectively. It is interesting to note that the non-tautological forms have not superseded the HT forms. Each of these three observations strongly suggests that in Japanese interpersonal communication HT is much valued, and that being able to use and understand HT makes the Japanese feel that they have a very deep understanding of each other.

One might, however, suspect that proverbs are only the things

of the past, and do not help us to understand any aspects of today's communication. This is not at all the case in Japanese interpersonal communication. On the contrary, HT is full of vigor.

#### IV. Common Examples of HT

The following is a list of HT collected from the Japanese mass media and the novels in recent months.

- (1) Konika wa konika ; iito omou yo. <sup>8</sup>  
(Konika is konika ; I think it is good.)
- (2) Jinrui wa jinrui ; koka koola. <sup>9</sup>  
(Human beings are human beings ; Coca Cola.)
- (3) Boku wa yappari boku desu. <sup>10</sup>  
(After all, I am nobody else but myself.)
- (4) Make wa make. <sup>11</sup>  
(No matter how you describe it, losing is losing.)
- (5) Yoshitaka wa yoshitaka. <sup>12</sup>  
(Do not worry about how others might think of you. Be yourself.)
- (6) Soo yuu hito wa soo yuu hito de aru. <sup>13</sup>  
(Men like that remain the same ; so they should be ignored.)
- (7) Achira wa achira ; kochira wa ... <sup>14</sup>  
(We are not like them, no matter what they do.)
- (8) Miuchi wa miuchi, desu kara ne. <sup>15</sup>  
(Those who are in close relation can never be objective about each other.)
- (9) Sore wa sore ; kore wa kore. <sup>16</sup>  
(This is different from that. Do not confuse them.)
- (10) Shiro wa shiro ; kuro wa kuro.



(Do not get things mixed up.)

- (11) Tsumi wa tsumi, de sho? "

(No matter how small, a crime is a crime, isn't it?)

- (12) Okyaku san wa okyaku san de su.

(One should treat a customer well no matter who he or she is.)

- (13) Ryoori wa ryoori, desu ze.

(No matter how unpalatable it tastes, it is a dish.)

- (14) Oyaji wa oyaji da.

(No matter how you think of him, he is your father.)

- (15) Tomodachi wa tomodachi da.

(No matter how you think of him, he is a friend.)

The examples above are collected by the author of this paper, and their number is seemingly infinite. The point to re-emphasize here, according to Tamotsu Utsuki (1986, 106), is that HT as produced is cherished and used by the Japanese people as effective as non-tautological proverbs since they never acquire staleness associated with clichés. Not knowing the existence and value of HT in Japanese culture, L. J. Morrison (1972) wrote an article, "The Absence of Rhetorical Tradition in Japanese Culture."<sup>18</sup> He imposed his own cultural assumptions on Japanese rhetorical system. Errors of this kind are frequent in the works of those who write of societies other than their own; all of us are the products of our own culture and it exerts a strong ethnocentric influence upon us.

For successful intercultural communication, ethnocentric attitudes are a definite barrier; we must be aware of our differences and understand the value of those differences. The Japanese seem to be satisfied with a notion that they communicate mysteriously, while making every effort to discover the values of other cultures. Such a

tendency will only lead one either to develop a strong contempt for one's own culture or hatred for the cultures of others; at such points no successful communication can occur. In order to appreciate other cultures, one must be able to appreciate one's own. As a small step forward, we shall examine the role of HT in Japanese culture.

## V. The Role of HT in Japanese Culture

One may reasonably consider the use of HT by the Japanese as an exception to what one learns of this unique people from the views expressed in popular writings; these state that the Japanese do not speak to the point. Paradoxically, HT seems too straightforward to match this view of the Japanese. When one examines the more academic works on the subject, one finds that Robert Kaplan (1966) contended that Japanese discourse adopts a spiral development and does not come to the point straight away. This development contrasts with a linear development in English discourse. Following Kaplan, Kyoko M. Oi (1984) undertook a linguistic analysis of English and Japanese prose written by Japanese students and the English prose of American students; she found that what Kaplan concluded was tenable.

It is still true, then, that the use of HT and findings of these two scholars contradict each other. However, the spiral discourse is so engrained in the Japanese that what the hearer retrieves from HT is not just "X is X," but all the points that support it. What makes it possible for the hearer to do this is again culture, HC culture. Because very little information is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message, one has to recover most of the information either from the physical context or from the person

who has internalized it. To employ more familiar terms, the hearer retrieves information through reflection and introspection.

In order to appreciate the value of HT further, we can employ Marshall MacLuhan's (1964) concept of "cool message," "hot message," and "participation." A hot message is prescribed by more interpretative elements than a cool message so that the receiver of the latter needs to participate more, that is, filling in the missing elements to understand it. HT can be regarded as a cool message which allows the hearer an active participatory role even when listening.

First, HT in Japanese culture has the advantage of giving the hearer the satisfaction that he or she came to grasp the truth, rather than the speaker needing to explain it word by word. Secondly, the speaker feels satisfaction at a reduced requirement to code or expatiate on his theme, which is a norm of HC communication. Thirdly, HT is so simple a structure that one can reduplicate it to produce one's own version to express what one has to say; this is still accepted as an objective utterance.

By now some light may have been shed upon the use of HT in Japanese interpersonal communication; however, an incorrect assumption may have been made that HT is used indiscriminately, but this would be quite wrong. Such misunderstandings can be removed by observing HT in context.

## VI. Analysis of HT in Context

In order to observe HT in context, the author will use an excerpt from Kenzo Kitakata's novel (1987, 130-131) "Tomoyo, Shizukani Nemure." Watashi, "I," came to help an old friend, Ryuuta's father, who owns a Japanese-style hotel and happened to

have been imprisoned for carrying a Japanese sword. Ryuuta is merely a grade school boy, who helps his mother in running the hotel.

1) Watashi: Soo ie ba, omae no oyaji wa kookoo no koro, shoosen daigaku ni iku to itte, ojii san to oogenka shita koto ga atta yo.

(By the way, when your father was in high school he had a serious quarrel with your grandfather, saying that he was determined to go to a mercantile marine college.)

2) Ryuuta: Ima datte, oji san no koto o urayamashi gatte masu.

(Even now, you know, my father envies you.)

3) Watashi: Ryokan no shigoto tte nomo, kekko taihenna mon da na. Kinno no kajisawagi o mite, soo omotta yo. Jibun yori mo, kyaku no anzen ga daiji tte koto dakara na.

(The hotel business is harder than I thought. I learned that after watching yesterday's fire. Customers' safety comes first, doesn't it?)

4) Ryuuta: Boku wa dame deshita. Awatete te, shooboosha yonda dake desu.

(I was no good. Not knowing what to do, I could only call a fire engine.)

5) Watashi: Omae yake ni otona butte ru na. Anna toki wa, kodomo no deru maku ja nai ... Oyaji ga hito o koroshite ita to shitara, omae doo suru? Hito goroshi datte, tomodachi wa tomodachi da. Ore ni tottcha soo da.

(You are trying to assume the air of a grown-

up. At a time like that, a kid shouldn't come out. ... What would you do if your father had killed a man? ... Even if he were a murderer, he is still a friend. And for me he definitely still is.)

6) Ryuuta: Chichi wa

(My father is ...)

7) Watashi: Koroshita wake jaa nai. Ore wa fuyukai na tatoe banashi o shite iru dake sa... Omae ga doo omooto, oyaji wa oyaji da

(He hasn't killed anyone. I am just teasing you with an unkind if-story ... However you may think of him, he's still your father

8) Ryuuta: Hito o koro soo to shita nante, omotte masen.

(I don't *dream* of him trying to kill anyone.

9) Watashi: Hamono o furimawashita. Soitsu wa shinjitsu rashii na.

(Carrying a sword with him seems to be a fact, though, doesn't it?)

10) Ryuuta: Nanika, jijoo ga arun da.

(He must have had some reason for that.)

Ryuuta trusts and likes Watashi but does not express it in clear words; and, Watashi likes Ryuuta for being so brave for his age. Ryuuta's feeling toward Watashi can be seen in 2); Ryuuta says that his father envies Watashi for having done what he wanted to do, which implies that he also looks up to him. Watashi's feelings toward Ryuuta can be seen in 3) and 5). In 3), understanding Ryuuta's admiration, Watashi in turn expresses his admiration for Ryuuta's father for undertaking such hard work as the hotel business;

thereby he conveys his praise for Ryuuta, who has taken on the role of his father. In 4 ), understanding what Watashi really meant, Ryuuta humbly refuses Watashi's praise. In 5 ), he gives a warning to Ryuuta but it is actually another praise for his courageous behavior. Then, understanding that Ryuuta is mature enough, for he gives a clear sign that he understands the implications of what is said, Watashi proceeds to a harsher tactic, the unkind if-story. Only after pausing for a while, does Watashi produce an utterance which contains HT. The pause indicates that HT has been used very tactfully, not to silence Ryuuta but to give him enough time to think and gather his thoughts so that he can re-establish his trust in Watashi (see section V ).

In 6 ), Ryuuta tries to say that he believes his father, but is interrupted by 7 ). Thereby Watashi completes Ryuuta's unfinished utterance to show his trust in Ryuuta's father, and to save him from expressing his feelings directly in words (they have been making sure of their solidarity through implications). Then, not to have attention drawn to his motive, Watashi distracts Ryuuta by telling him to think of his unkind if-story as nothing other than that. Again after pausing for a while to allow Ryuuta to think on his own, Watashi uses HT to encourage him to believe in his father regardless of what Watashi thinks of them. Thereby Watashi appears to deny his belief in Ryuuta. The effect of HT can be observed as successful in 8 ) and 10 ), for both are complete utterances and directly show that Ryuuta is determined to believe in his father even if he is alone in doing so.

## VII. Discussion

The author contends that HT in Japanese interpersonal communi-

cation is: 1) full of meaning, 2) very much valued, and 3) used tactfully where tact is required. Such points not being fully recognized, both Americans and Japanese tend to think that Japanese communicate mysteriously; this is damaging to successful communication between these two cultures. The framework of this paper rests upon Hall's distinction between HC communication and LC communication, but the ground covered has by no means exhausted discussion of their characteristics. To quarry further into them will be of importance in aiding mutual understanding between these two different peoples and cultures.

### Notes

I am grateful to the FLS members at the University of the Ryukyus; especially, to Professor Hiroshi Yabiku, Professor Anthony P. Jenkins, and Professor Brant Kresovich for their valuable comments and suggestions for the improvement of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> The term "Homologous Tautology" is invented to categorize the kind of tautology which has the appearance of "X is X," where X is a noun or noun phrase. The term was suggested by Professor Jenkins, but the author judged it to be appropriate and accordingly takes full responsibility for its use.

<sup>2</sup> Hall's contention that culture is communication, and vice versa is widely accepted by scholars of intercultural communication who are interested in communication between Americans and Japanese. Among such are Dennis M. Ogawa, Tsukasa Nishida, Dean C. Burnlund, Michael Prosser, and William Gudykunst, to mention a few.

<sup>3</sup> *OED.*

<sup>4</sup> "Tautology," *The Kenkyusha Dictionary of English Linguistics*

and Philology, (Tokyo : Kenkyusha, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> For this paper, the 1974 Pan Books edition was used as a reference.

<sup>6</sup> For the Japanese proverbs, Shoogakkan's Koji Zokushin Kotowaza Dai Jiten, and Utsuki Tamotsu's Kotowaza no Shinri Gaku were the main sources ; and for the English examples, The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs.

<sup>7</sup> Telephone Jinsei Soodan, Radio Okinawa, 14Aug. 1987.

<sup>8</sup> The commercial catch phrase for the Japanese camera Konika.

<sup>9</sup> The commercial catch phrase for Coka Cola.

<sup>10</sup> The commercial catch phrase for the Japanese credit company Acom.

<sup>11</sup> A Japanese professional boxer, Tsuyoshi Hamada's comment on his lost match.

<sup>12</sup> The name of the hearer is repeated, often as advice.

<sup>13</sup> Shooichi Watanabe, Zoku Chiteki Seikatsu no Hoohoo (Tokyo : Koodanshya, 1979). p. 194.

<sup>14</sup> Shuukan Asahi, 24 July. 1987, p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> Telephone Jinsei Soodan, Radio Okinawa, 21 July 1987.

<sup>16</sup> The examples listed as the numbers (9) and (10) are elicited from a native speaker of Japanese, and accepted as correct by three other native speakers.

<sup>17</sup> The examples listed as the numbers (11) and on are from Kenzo Kitakata's novel Tomoyo, Shizukani Nemure, (Tokyo : Kadokawa Bunko, 1987), p.47, p.41, p.94, p.139.

<sup>18</sup> Mentioned in Cecil A. Blake's article, "Rhetoric and Intercultural Communication," in Handbook of Intercultural Communication, ed. Molefi K. Asante, Eileen Newmark, and Cecil A. Blake, (Beverly Hills : Sage Publications, 1979), p.87.



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— 論文要約 —

高文脈と低文脈のコミュニケーションにおける  
ホモロガス・トートロジー：異文化間の価値の違い

兼 本 円

本稿では、「XはX」(ホモロガス・トートロジー)の発話の持つ異文化間に於ける価値の相違について検討してみた。ホモロガス・トートロジーは、高文脈の日本文化では、低文脈の米国での低い評価とは逆に、美的であり、説得力に豊むコミュニケーションの手段として高く評価されていることが分った。さらに、今後の研究の必要性を説いた。