

Drinking as the Third Space in Social Approach among Japanese Workers

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Abstract. *This research discusses how the activity of drinking becomes a space that differentiates between the home and the workplace, serving as a means of release from hierarchical structures present in the working world. The objective of this study is to understand the role of drinking activities in the lives of Japanese workers. This qualitative research was conducted using the thematic analysis approach. The data for this study were derived from two Japanese dramas titled "Platinum Town" (2012) and "Hanzawa Naoki" (2013), with a focus on scenes depicting social drinking gatherings. Data collection involved identifying relevant drinking scenes, followed by data cleansing and subsequent analysis. The concept of this "third space" serves as a medium for employees in Japan to release status and hierarchy constraints within their work environment. Additionally, this third space also functions as a means of maintaining harmonious relationships in Japanese society, supported by the cultural factors of "Uchi" and "Honne."*

Keywords: *Drinking, Honne, Uchi*

INTRODUCTION

Drinking is one of the accepted methods to initiate formal connections, with the ultimate goal of fostering opportunities for more direct communication (Partanen, 2006: 189). The culture of drinking in the modern era is deeply ingrained in Japanese society, particularly among workers. Going out for drinks after work is a common practice among Japanese employees, often undertaken to alleviate stress or simply engage in conversation with colleagues. Moeran (2005) contends that drinking facilitates a 'wet' nighttime socializing that counterbalances the 'dry' daytime interactions. In this manner, drinking is considered to create an inner sphere (uchi) where individuals can express themselves more openly and freely, juxtaposed against the outer sphere (soto) governed by various formal protocols (reigi) and polite language (keigo). The concept of space within the act of drinking can also be referred to as the Third Place. The Third Place is a communal space situated between the First Place (home) and the Second Place (workplace). Among the eight effects of the Third Place, the sought-after ones currently are "egalitarian" and "informal" (Molasky, 2014).

Firstly, "egalitarianism," or the idea of equality, plays a pivotal role in the context of communal drinking events. The effect pursued within this Third Place is the creation of a space where workers can liberate themselves from hierarchical constraints within the company. Secondly, the "informal" nature of this Third Place allows anyone to join at any time. This aspect can be connected to the concept of (uchi) in Japanese work life. Uchi represents a realm or domain intertwined with the speaker, maintaining an unbroken connection. In other words, uchi constitutes a sphere, such as family, group, company, or any other entity where the speaker becomes a part of it. In this context, Uchi becomes a significant factor in facilitating activities within this Third Place.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the researcher employed a software tool named "Publish or Perish" to search for and sift through various relevant scholarly works pertaining to the theme of the thesis. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) framework was utilized to determine the appropriate literature for analysis. During the exploration of prior research, the researcher employed the keywords "Nomikai" (飲み会), "Honne" (本音), "Tatemae" (建前), and "Uchi Soto." The search was limited to a maximum of 300 results per keyword. Subsequently, a selection process was executed, involving the sorting and elimination of studies that lacked alignment with the research theme, studies inaccessible for review, and studies presenting conflicting discussions. The selection process was further refined by ranking the studies based on accessibility. This culminated in the identification of four suitable research papers. The identified studies are as follows An article authored by Brent McDonald and Kate Sylvester titled "Learning to get drunk: The importance of drinking in Japanese university sports clubs.", A research work by Resya Cahya Nugraha with the title "PERGESERAN BUDAYA NOMIKAI PADA SALARYMAN DI PERUSAHAAN JEPANG.", a paper authored by Dr. Esther Hesline Palandi, M.Pd., entitled "KONSEP HARMONY DALAM PERILAKU DAN TINDAK TUTUR BAHASA JEPANG." and a journal article by Tetsuo Ishii, José Roberto Saravia Vargas, and Juan Carlos Saravia Vargas titled "Breaking into Japanese Literature/Identity: Tatemae and Honne."

RESEARCH METHOD(S)

This qualitative research was conducted using the Thematic Analysis Approach. The data for this study comprised two Japanese dramas titled "Platinum Town" (2012) and "Hanzawa Naoki" (2013). Data collection involved identifying scenes within these dramas that depicted communal drinking activities. Following the process of data cleansing, the subsequent phase involved conducting the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis in this study was conducted by identifying character dialogues that conveyed social interactions during communal drinking. Following the data cleansing process, the subsequent step involved analyzing the identified data. Presented below are the results of the analysis for each dataset from the dramas "Platinum Town" and "Hanzawa Naoki."

Platinum Town

Data 01

Yamazaki encounters Ushijima after work at an izakaya, where they order beer and engage in conversation.



Figure 01. Drinking Scene, Episode 01, at 07:19

Ushijima : ど う だ 最 近 ?

"how's your day"

Yamazaki : ぼちぼちしてとこかな, そっちは?

Not bad, how about you?

In the conversation, both Yamazaki and Ushijima employ informal language, a choice stemming from their status as friends who fall within the concept of Uchi. This is evidenced by their dialogue's utilization of terms such as お前, 俺は, and やめとけやめとけ.

The conversation continues as Ushijima discusses Yamazaki's future career prospects within the company

Ushijima : このまま行けば, 部長にも手が届くだろう

With continued dedication like this, you might be promoted to a director position.

Yamazaki : ま俺は、きょうみないからな

In truth, I'm not interested in that.

Ushijima : まさかお前まだ諦めてないの？発展途上国の開発プロジェクト、やめとけやめとけ、

志は立派だけど、今まで積み上げたキャリアを捨ててまでやることじゃないだろう。

そんな夢は遠い日の花火のようなもんだ

Do not say that you have not given up yet. The developmental project is for developing countries. Come on. Your ambition is indeed great, but it's not worth giving up the career you have built for years. Your dream is like a firework in the past.

In the conversation, Ushijima also expresses his thoughts to Yamazaki through the phrases

やめとけやめとけ 志は立派だけど今まで積み上げたキャリアを捨ててまでやることじゃないだろう

Scene 02

On a different day, Yamazaki encounters Ushijima after work at an izakaya, where they order beer and engage in conversation.



Figure 02. Drinking Scene, Episode 01, at 31.34

Ushijima : 八代さんに突っぱねられたか

Did Mr. Yahsiro reject your idea?

Yamazaki : 笑い事じゃねーよ

That's not a funny

Ushijima: お前は仕事もできるしあまり余計な真似はしてほしくないだよ

You're competent. He doesn't want you to engage in futile tasks.

Yamazaki : でもそれってあの人の性に利用されてるだけだろ

This implies he's merely using me for his promotion.

In the conversation, both Yamazaki and Ushijima utilize informal language, which is attributed to their status as friends falling within the concept of Uchi. This is substantiated by their speech acts, as observed in their use of expressions such as 笑い事じゃねーよじゃねーよ, だけだろ, and お前. Additionally, in the conversation, Yamazaki also conveys his thoughts to Ushijima in the sentence でもそれってあの人の性に利用されてるだけだろ, which corroborates the interconnectedness of the uchi concept with the concept of honne.

Hanzawa Naoki

Scene 03

Tomari, Hanzawa, and Kendo went out for drinks together at an izakaya. Hanzawa, Tomari, and Kendo are friends who joined the bank together but are in different divisions.



Figure 03. Drinking Scene, Episode 01, at 27.46

Tomari : これで浅野さん, 次の移動で 本部に戻って1年後には何らかの 重役 ポストが確定だな, もちろん その裏にはあの人の後ろ盾があつてのことだろうけどね

Now Asano-san was ready to return to the headquarters on the next rotation, and after a year, he would definitely get a promotion to an executive post. Of course if he still had that man's support behind him.

Kendo : あの人の?

That person?

Tomari : 決まってるだろ 大和田常務だよ, その大和田常務と浅野さんは太いパイプで繋がってる。でもまあ 大阪西支店が ここまで来たのもほとんど お前の功績だって噂だよ, これで本復帰も間違いなしだな

Of course, Director Owada. Director Owada and Asano-san were connected by a large vessel. But rumor has it that it was you who made the Osaka Nishi branch office reach this far, so you're sure to get a position at the head office now.

Hanzawa : どうだかな

I don't know

Tonari : おめでとう半沢君また一步 夢に近づきましたね

Congratulations Hanzawa-kun. You're one step closer to your dream
Hanzawa : なんだ
それ
whatever

In the conversation, Hanzawa, Tomari, and Kendo employ informal language. Tomari employs expressions such as *確定だな*, *ことだろうけどね*, and *決まってるだろう*, while Hanzawa responds using informal language in sentences like *どうだかな*, and *なんだそれ*. This illustrates that despite their differing divisions, they remain within the scope of their Uchi, characterized by being friends and employees within the same company. This enables them to converse casually using informal language. Tomari also articulates his thoughts regarding Asano's support from superiors through phrases such as *もちろんその裏にはあの人の後ろ盾があつてのことだろうけどね*, and *決まってるだろう大和田常務だよ、その大和田常務と浅野さんは太いパイプで繋がってる*. The situation in which Tomari conveys his thoughts about Asano represents a Honne on Tomari's part. This is possible due to the supportive Uchi framework stemming from Hanzawa and Tomari's friendship. Furthermore, it is evident that during their drinking session, they are attired in white shirts and do not wear their outer jackets. This differs from their appearance at the office, where they dress more formally by wearing their jackets.

Scene 04

Asano and Higashida, who have been friends since middle school, meet at a restaurant and share sake while discussing business and their objectives.



Figure 04. Drinking Scene, Episode 01, at 00.52

Asano : *順調そうだね ベトナムの新規事業*

Looks like your new business in Vietnam is going well.

Higashida : 特殊鋼の需要は右肩上がりになるはずだ 国税や自己破産の手前にはできねえけどな 俺は必ず もう一旗あげるつもりだ。 たあちゃんも一緒にやろうへんか？
今より影響力 払っとるわ

There is certain to be an increase in demand for specialty steel. Although I can't do it openly given the tax bureau and bankruptcy. I really intend to get even bigger. Why don't you join me, Ta-chan? I can pay you more than what you're getting now.

Asano : 俺はこれでもメガバンクのエリートコースを歩んでるんでね その人生を知ってるつもりはありませんよ

I'm still on the elite track at mega bank. I have no intention of leaving that line. Higashida :
なら気をつけるんだな あの 半沢とかいう男によ
Then you should be careful. With that hanzawa.

In the conversation, Asano and Higashida employ informal language. This is attributed to their shared background as middle school friends, falling under the concept of Uchi. This is evident through the speech acts of Asano and Higashida, manifested in their word choices, such as 俺は, 気をつけるんだな, だけだろ, 俺は, 決まる そうだ, and 順調そうだね. Within the conversation, Higashida also conveys his thoughts to Asano in the sentence なら気をつけるんだなあの半沢とかいう男によ. This demonstrates the interrelation of the uchi concept with the concept of honne. In this situation, it signifies the interconnection of the Uchi and Soto concepts with the concepts of Honne and Tatemaie. As mentioned by Feldman and cited from Trinidad (2014:8), the concepts of honne and tatemaie are strongly connected to the concepts of ura and omote, as well as the concepts of uchi and soto, which are three dominant social concepts in Japanese society. Ura is akin to honne, representing the inner feelings and parts of a person's character shown only to uchi or those within their social circle. On the other hand, omote shares similarities with tatemaie, signifying the exterior appearance presented to soto or those outside their social circle.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the data analysis reveal that this third space holds significance as a domain where Japanese workers can cast aside social hierarchies and engage in social interactions within this space. This third space also serves as a means to maintain harmonious relationships in the social interactions of Japanese workers, supported by the factors of Uchi and Honne. These factors enable them to communicate freely and express their opinions without concerns about the individual's status or hierarchy.

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