TilburgPapers in CultureStudies

Paper 67

Indonesians doing togetherness in Japan

by

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INDONESIANS DOING TOGETHERNESS IN JAPAN

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Abstract

This article examines how a group of people from diverse backgrounds go about doing togetherness through talk in a transnational setting. My empirical focus is the small talk of group of Indonesians who were living and studying in Japan. I identify three ways in which participants go about achieving positive interpersonal relationships. The first is through non-minimal responses and repetition. The second is through social pursuits of sameness, in this case sameness in terms of ethnolinguistic background, and the third was the use of teasing. My analysis of this small talk will also emphasize the multiple and often simultaneous functions of talk. I do this by showing how small talk is intimately tied with other activities, including the categorization of a represented semiotic world and with the social identification of participants as members of a particular ethnolinguistic community.

1   Introduction

Indonesia is reported to be one of the most religiously, linguistically, and ethnically diverse regions of the world (e.g. Bertrand, 2003). Such diversity has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, especially from political scientists, historians, anthropologists and area specialists. For example, much scholarship has gone into relationships between elites of all types from throughout the archipelago (e.g. Anderson, 1972; Elson, 2008; Kahin, 1970 [1952]; Legge, 1961). How social relations are managed in such a diverse country has also been a long-term focus (e.g. Bertrand, 2004; Bruner, 1974; Coppel, 1983; Davidson & Henley, 2007; Goebel, 2010; Hedman, 2008; Hefner, 2001; Liddle, 1970; Purdey, 2006) with much attention being paid to the development of a national language, Indonesian, as one way of handling linguistic diversity (e.g. Alisjahbana, 1976; Errington, 1998; Moeliono, 1986; Sneddon, 2003).

While many of these studies take into consideration post-structural arguments and social constructivist perspectives, their focus on interview, archival, and survey data usually don't provide us with insights into how social relationships form and dissolve though face-to-face talk amongst those of different backgrounds. In this article I want to add to scholarship that looks at the role of talk in the building and maintenance of social relationships amongst Indonesians in general (Berman, 1998; Errington, 1998; Kartomihardjo, 1981; Wolff & Poedjosoedarmo, 1982) and amongst Indonesians from differing backgrounds in particular (Goebel, 2010). More specifically, I wish to engage with the question of how a group of Indonesians from diverse backgrounds go about doing togetherness through talk in a transnational setting. In so doing, I hope to engage with more general discourses about how people do togetherness in difference which has hitherto paid little attention to the talk that enables people to do togetherness (e.g. Ang, 2003; Brettell, 2003; Vertovec, 2007; Werbner, 1997).

Scholars focusing upon the functions of forms of talk have shown us that any instance of talk has multiple functions and outcomes. For example, we know that talk can simultaneously index rapport and report (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Tannen, 2000) or contribute to the simultaneous development of identities and epistemologies (Goebel, 2010; Wortham, 2006). In line with Bakhtin's (1981) and Vološinov's (1973 [1929]) ideas about the multiple meanings inherent in discourse, here I want to add to this literature by teasing out the multiple functions of talk in a particular setting. I will focus on a specific type of talk that is referred to as "small talk" in the literature – especially non-minimal responses and repetition – to show how a group of relative strangers go about building positive interpersonal relations. The idea of "positive interpersonal relations" can be divided into two components. The first relates to whether small talk engenders further talk within a speech situation. The second relates to whether small talk within a speech situation was sufficient to engender

interactions between participants in subsequent speech situations (rather than avoiding future interaction). In this paper, I will focus primarily on the first component, although I will address the second component in my conclusion.

In looking at how small talk figures in the building of positive interpersonal relations, I will also show how this work relates to ongoing social identification and the assigning of meaning to an unknown word. I suggest that the relationship aspect of this talk was especially important because of the need to build and maintain a larger and longer term support network in Japan. In what follows I briefly cover some of the earlier work in these three areas (Section 2), before then providing some background to the types of knowledge participants in this study brought to their interactions in Japan (Section 3). I then introduce the participants, data, and methods (Section 4), before analyzing participants' talk (Section 5).

2   Social identification and rapport

While there has been a plethora of book-length treatments and articles on identity in the last twenty or so years (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Auer, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), Wortham's (2006) work requires special mention. On the one hand, he has shown the utility of tracing participants, signs, and meanings across speech situations. On the other hand, he has shown how social identification is also intimately tied with other activities (such as learning), and circulating ideas about how certain social types speak and act. Such stereotypes are produced and circulated via processes of enregisterment, which can briefly be defined as a process whereby social value is attached to certain signs and where this new constellation (i.e. social value + sign) is recirculated in other social domains (Agha, 2007). Typically, particular constellations of signs and social value (referred to here as a "semiotic register") become more widely known through their association with institutions and experts who both authorize these relationships and who are authorized to

authorize these relationships (Agha, 2007; Briggs, 2005; Inoue, 2006). Here I draw upon these insights to show how the activity of building positive interpersonal relationships is intimately tied with the social identification of participants and the assigning of meaning to a particular linguistic form. These last two activities are enabled via participants' participation in certain processes of enregisterment that I will discuss below.

Focusing on the role of small talk in building interpersonal relationships seems especially salient given the research design of the project and the wider context in which my Indonesian participants found themselves while studying in Japan. While I will discuss this project in more detail below, what is important here is that these Indonesian participants where brought together to view recordings of televised Indonesian comedies. Although most of these participants knew each one another to vary degrees through their involvement in support networks such as the Nagoya branch of the Indonesian Student Union of Japan (PPI Japan) and worship groups, bringing them together in this setting required talk that would (re)produce interpersonal relations as well as talk that would figure in the social identification of participants. For example, this setting contrasts with a typical television viewing frame where participants are oftentimes intimates rather than relative strangers (Hobart, 2001; Ida, 2006; Nilan, 2001). Indeed, this setting resembles more of a cinematic experience where the audience faces the screen rather than being able to engage and disengage with a televised medium, as is characteristic of television in home settings in Indonesia (Ida, 2006) and elsewhere (Ang, 1996: 56).

Each of these practices may also have some stereotypical associations with particular ways of speaking. For example, cinematic type frames may be associated with audiences who do not speak much in face-to-face mode, but rather post comments. When such comments are posted, they may also require different signs to (re)produce positive interpersonal relationships than those found in studies of small talk and rapport building. For example, in a

dark cinema visual signs may be less important than other signs and practices associated with the (re)production of positive interpersonal relations, such as prosody, tempo, silence, repetition, non-minimal responses, teasing, stories, crossing or other types of linguistic pursuits of social sameness (e.g. Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Coupland & Jaworski, 2003; Holmes, 2003; McCarthy, 2003; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Rampton, 1995; Strachle, 1993; Tannen, 1984).

As I will point out in my analysis, when viewed in conjunction with Tannen's (1989) work on repetition, McCarthy's (2003) notion of non-minimal response provides a useful interpretive framework for much of the small talk found in the talk amongst my participants. Of particular importance is the idea that saying more than a single response token often moves the response from one of "showing hearership" to one of "showing engaged listening" (McCarthy, 2003). As a sign of rapport, this type of small talk sits in contrast to other types of talk that are primarily informational or transactional (Tannen, 2000). In essence, this means that any fragments of talk or short utterances (i.e. small talk) and/or signs that go beyond providing an answer to a question, a response to a comment, and so on can be viewed as potentially (re)producing positive interpersonal relations. When viewed over the course of two speech situations, the viewing session and the interview, we get to not only see how positive interpersonal relationships emerge via this engaged listening, but also how it is intimately tied with social identification and other conversational work.

3   Language and ethnicity in Indonesia

Here I want to briefly summarize my earlier work (Goebel, 2010) that focuses on processes of enregisterment in Indonesia as they relate to the construction and circulation of ideologies about ethno-linguistic communities in Indonesia. I focus on the period 1966-1998 because it is the period in which the participants in this study where born and socialized. This period

can be characterized as one of massification whereby there was a large increase in the mechanisms that facilitated processes of enregisterment.

In this case, language planning, the development and implementation of census exercises, schooling, transmigration projects, migration, and transportation and communication networks all facilitated the recirculation and repetition of relationships between linguistic signs and signs of place that had been circulating since the colonial period. During the 1966-1998 period linguistic forms became tightly associated with particular regions and were regularly equated with ethnic social types to the extent that when Indonesians talked of themselves as speaking other languages, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and so on, this also frequently pointed to the same ethnic identity. Similarly, although ethnicity was a taboo topic due to separatism efforts in the late 1950s, people also talked of themselves as being Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and so on, which typically also pointed to an ability to use one of these languages. In a real sense, knowledge of the relationships between linguistic signs, place, and ethnic social types had become part of many Indonesians' background knowledge during this period. As we will see, this knowledge was regularly used to socially identify self and others in interactions during the viewing session that we will look at in the following sections.

4   Methods and participants

The project on which I draw this data from didn't start out as a project that was interested primarily in small talk[1]. Instead I was interested in how Indonesians interpreted and talked about televised representations of ethnicity. Although an anthropological study would have been ideal, my short-term contract in Japan meant that I could not make the long-term time commitment that this type of project would require. Instead, I drew upon work on language attitudes and ideologies in interactional sociolinguistics and social psychology (Lambert,

1986 [1967]; Rampton, 1995; Tannen, 1993) to gain insights into participants' ideologies about sign usage through the use of audio-video recordings. In this sense, my methods differ to that used in much of the work on small talk, which focused on less laboratory-type contexts. Even so, this type of context offers a number of opportunities where studies of small talk are concerned, especially if we wish to focus on how people do togetherness in difference.

More specifically, the seventeen Indonesian participants in this study were all from a highly mobile middle-income population. They were primarily graduate students and/or the spouses of graduate students studying at a university in Nagoya. Many had lived abroad on several occasions starting with their parents when they were younger, while others lived abroad later in life through the pursuit of higher degrees. Most had lived in at least a couple of Indonesian provinces where they had learned a locally specific semiotic system, frequently referred to as a named regional language (*bahasa daerah*). All participants had a trajectory of socialization that included repeated exposure to fragments of these regional languages and their associated signs (i.e. a semiotic register), as well as exposure to a semiotic register which has become associated with a named language, Indonesian. Some of the primary contexts in which this occurred, included interactions with other Indonesians from a different background – thought as I have shown elsewhere this set of semiotic registers is locale specific (Goebel, 2010) – and through their participation in the Indonesian education system from primary school through to graduation in a degree granting Indonesian university between the years 1972 to 1985. As noted in Section 3, this period was one when processes of enregisterment were in full swing in Indonesia and when ideas about ethnic social types and associated signs were recirculated on a massive scale.

These Indonesians all voluntarily responded to an advertisement seeking participants for a study concerned with how people understood representations of people and events in

soap operas. Given what we know about communal viewing practices in Indonesia (Goebel, 2010; Hobart, 2001; Ida, 2006; Nilan, 2001), and with the help of a couple of Indonesian research assistants, we divided respondents into viewing groups of four to five people and invited them to attend four viewing and interview sessions over four weeks. These sessions coincided with the Saturday school for Indonesian expatriate children. Most participants either had children in this school or they were involved in the running of the school. Each viewing session lasted between one to two hours. Sessions started with some informal chatting to participants about the research project and about participants' backgrounds. Following this, a comedic soap opera or a film was screened. These screenings were audio and video-taped. Following the screening, I interviewed participants using a mixture of pre-devised questions and questions that had arisen as a result of participants' talk during the viewing session. What I will present in my analysis is the talk that occurred between participants during the first viewing session. A summary of participant backgrounds is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1   Participant backgrounds

Name	Age	Relationship with other participants	History of mobility[2]		Education	Language ability
			Years	Place		
Desi (S)	35	Familiar	27	Bandung	MA	Indonesian
			3	Solo		Sundanese
			5	Japan		Japanese
						English

Lina	23	Familiar (Slamet's spouse).	8 3 9 1 1.5 0.5	Pekan Baru Jakarta Padang Japan Padang Japan	BA	Indonesian Japanese
Slamet	33	Familiar (Lina's spouse)	21 5 0.5 2 4 0.5	Irian Bandung Jakarta Japan Padang Japan	MA	Javanese Indonesian English
Gun (S)	37	Familiar	19 6 4 8	Cirebon Bandung Jakarta Japan	PHD	Javanese Sundanese Indonesian Japanese English
RA	39	Familiar	27 10 2	Solo Jakarta Japan	BA	Javanese Indonesian Japanese
Me	41	Familiar with RA only.	35 3.5 0.5	Australia Semarang Cirebon	PHD	Indonesian Javanese Sundanese

			2	Japan		English

This group of participants consisted of five people, myself, and an Indonesian research assistant. Diagram 4.1 shows where each participant was seated (all names are pseudonyms). All of these participants knew each other through their interaction within the Indonesian community in Nagoya. However, Slamet and Lina, a husband and wife couple, had only recently arrived in Japan and were not well acquainted with the other participants who had all lived in Nagoya for a number of years. Gun had brought his little boy along, and he sat on Gun's lap or beside him during the screening and subsequent interview. As can be seen in Table 4.1 most participants were highly multilingual. With the exception of Desi and my research assistant they were also rather mobile. Participants were of similar age (except Lina), and were highly educated.

Diagram 4.1
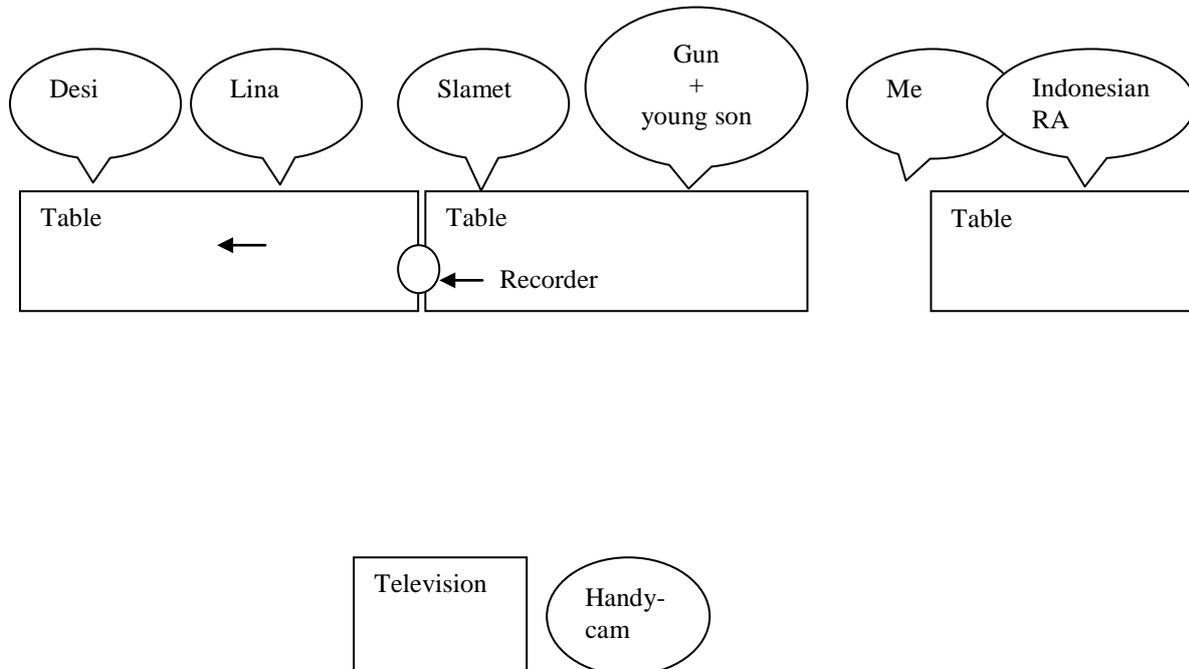
Before looking at this talk I want to provide some background information about the comedic soap which this group of Indonesians watched and talked about. The episode they watched was titled *Cipoa* "Con artist". It was part of the series *Noné* "Young Miss" that was broadcast nationally in 1995 during the mid-afternoon time slot on the commercial semi-educational television station *TPI*. This particular comedic soap is notable because of some characters' frequent alternation between Indonesian and linguistic fragments associated with a regional language, Sundanese, and because of the representation of other signs that anchored the linguistic signs and the story geographically to West Java, an area associated with an imagined community of Sundanese speakers. As Kitley (2000) and others have pointed out, this increased use of local content came about due to a number of factors, including fear of 'Western' content corrupting young Indonesians, a deregulated media market which meant more competition and thus a need for new ways of attracting viewers, and increase in the cost of foreign films and soap operas.

5   Watching and talking

Throughout the viewing of this soap opera the use of non-minimal responses and repetition figured in the (re)production of positive interpersonal relations among this group while also co-occurring with the categorization of participants in terms of ethnolinguistic background and the categorization of the represented semiotic world. The first extract of talk that I analyze occurs after an elderly woman has narrated a letter that is being read by the main character, Dewi. The televised dialogue is one of the first signs that index the language background of the serial and the setting as one stereotypically associated with Sundanese. Even so, as we will see, understandings about the provenance of a linguistic form, the story's setting and so on is negotiated and emergent. The talk in Extract 5.1 occurs after a series of

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images that show a house situated within expansive grounds. (As the analysis proceeds I will introduce transcription conventions).

Extract 5.1   From hearership to engaged listening

Gun (S)

| 1 | vila ya (1.0) vilanya si nike (1.0) | It's a villa yeah? Its Nike's villa. |

Slamet

| 2 | vila (0.8) | [Yes] a Villa. |

Desi (S)

| 3 | kaya rumah di kuningan { laughs | Like houses in Kuningan. |

All

| 4 | { (laugh) = | (Laugh). |

Desi (S)

| 5 | = | |

| 6 | kuningan sih (??? ???) = | [In?] Kuningan (??? ???) |

Gun (S)

| 7 | = heem . ya:: gitu. | Heem, yeah like that. |

About a minute after seeing the images of the house and yard, we see that the topic of residence is ratified by three participants through repetitions (indicated by an underline) of *vila* "villa" and its rephrasing as *rumah* "house" on lines 1-3. We also see that on lines 3 and 6 Desi starts to categorize the represented semiotic world by noting that the house is like those found in Kuningan (which is an area located in West Java). The repetition that occurs on lines 1-3 and 6 is interesting insofar as it appears to signal conversational alignment and hearership and sits in contrast to Gun's non-minimal response on line 7, where he not only

shows that he is aligning and listening to Desi with his first "heem" but that the *ya gitu* repeat this information in a way that suggests "engaged listening". While this suggests a (re)production of positive interpersonal relations, we need to see how the interaction proceeds.

Following the talk in 5.1, participants don't say much until the first commercial break that occurs nearly ten minutes later. Some of the signs that these participants have access to before their next extended conversation include: a taxi, which drives into the driveway of Dewi's newly acquired house; and the exchanges that follow between the taxi driver and the passenger (Susi), Susi and Dewi, and Dewi and the taxi driver. Some of these signs help anchor the linguistic exchange between Dewi and the taxi driver to West Java and by extension to a named language, Sundanese. Shortly thereafter, there are some brief exchanges between Susi and Ucup, Dewi and Ucup, and finally an advertisement before the participants start to talk again (Extract 5.2).

Extract 5.2   From engaged listening to discourses of sameness

Desi (S)

1   <u>apa sih . judulnya . +judulnya apa sih</u> .   <u>So what is the title</u>? <u>So what is the</u>

2   <u>judulnya apa sih</u>+ =   <u>title</u>? <u>So what is the title</u>?

Lina

3   = <u>apa</u> tadi <u>judulnya</u>   <u>What was the title</u> earlier?

4   =

Research Assistant

5   = ci . <u>cipoa</u> =   Ci, <u>Cipoa</u>.

Desi (S)

6   = +<u>judulnya</u>+ =   <u>The title</u>.

13

Me

7   = <u>cipoa</u> =   <u>Cipoa</u>.

Research Assistant

8   =

9   <u>cipoa</u> =   <u>Cipoa</u>.

Desi (S)

10   = <u>cipoa</u> itu apa ya (0.7)   What is [the meaning of] <u>Cipoa</u>?

Gun (S)

11   <u>itu</u> (while turning gaze toward Desi   <u>That isn't Sundanese is it</u>?

12   and smiling) <u>bukan</u> <u>bahasa</u> <u>sunda</u>

13   <u>bukan</u> =

Desi (S)

14   = (while moving body forward   Yeah so what does this [potentially

15   and turning gaze towards Gun) ya apa   Sundanese] term <u>Cipoa</u> mean?

16   sih (0.6) <u>cipoa</u> itu (0.5)

Slamet

17   <u>nggak tahu</u> =   [I] <u>don't know</u>.

Desi (S)

18   = pak gun =   Pak[2] Gun?

Gun (S)

19   = <u>nggak tahu</u>   [I] <u>don't know</u> (the meaning?) of

20   (artinya?) <u>cipoa</u> . <u>cipoa</u> =   <u>cipoa</u>, <u>cipoa</u>.

Desi (S)

21   = (laughs)(2.3)   Laughs.

In the above extract it appears that Gun's earlier attempt at indexing "engaged listening" (Extract 5.1, line 7) is being reciprocated. On the one hand, we see the possible emergence of a type discourse of sameness between Desi and Gun. In particular, we see that while Gun's gaze direction and question left some ambiguity as to whether the question was addressed to the group or someone who he though knew Sundanese (lines 11-13), nevertheless we see that Desi self-selects suggesting that she was the target of the question. In doing so, she moves her body in a way that she can see around Lina and Slamet to look at Gun and ask again what is the meaning of this potentially Sundanese term (lines 14-15). In terms of discourses of sameness, what this interactional work appears to be doing is affirming ethnolinguistic identities. For example, in asking Desi about provenance (lines 11-13) Gun appears to be saying "you are Sundanese and may know" while also implying "you are of the same ethnolinguistic background as me". Taking a sequential view it also appears that Desi ratifies this categorization by checking whether Gun – as against Slamet and Lina who she looks around – can provide a meaning for the term (lines 14-16 & 18).

In this interaction there is also the continued use of repetition, which as with Extract 5.1 shows how participants align with each other on a number of topics (e.g. the title of the serial on lines 1-9, and the meaning of the work *cipoa* from lines 10-20). Although here it does not appear to help add to emerging positive interpersonal relations, as the interaction continues repetition of others' utterances increases in a way that may help solidify emergent relations. The use of repetition in the talk the follows (Extract 5.3) also co-occurs with the activity of determining the provenance of the term, *cipoa*. This talk follows directly on from that represented in Extract 5.2.

Extract 5.3 Linking language with place

 Me

| 22 | tukang bohong apa = | Is it con artist? |

Research Assistant

| 23 | = tukang bohong = | Con artist. |

Me

| 24 | = | |

| 25 | tukang bohong kayanya = | Maybe it's like con artist. |

Desi (S)

| 26 | = +bahasa | Is it Sundanese? ***Really*** (Japanese in |

| 27 | sunda?+ (0.8) ***e::h***? = | bold italics) |

Me

| 28 | = kurang tahu | I'm not sure. |

| 29 | saya (1.0) | |

Gun (S)

| 30 | mungkin bandung mungkin ya . daerah | Maybe its Bandung, maybe. A |

| 31 | daerah sunda gitu' . | Sundanese area, yeah. |

Desi (S)

| 32 | { kayanya nama daerah ya | Yeah, it's like a place name. |

Slamet

| 33 | { settingnya bandung itu . settingnya | The setting is Bandung, the setting. It |

| 34 | (2.0) bisa nama daerah juga ya = | can be a place name yeah. |

Desi (S)

| 35 | = saya | I |

| 36 | kira = | think so. |

Slamet

| 37 | = cipoa = | Cipoa. |

Desi (S)

| 38 | = heeh (0.7) | Yeah. |

Slamet

| 39 | (??? ???) = | |

Research Assistant

| 40 | = <u>nama daerah</u> itu pak . | It's a <u>place name</u> Pak [name of Author]. |

Me

| 41 | oh <u>nama daerah</u> . ya . | Oh a <u>place name</u>, yeah. |

Desi (S)

| 42 | nggak tau tuh | I don't know. |

In the above talk we can see that repetition continues to function as a way of establishing topic (lines 30 to 34). Just as importantly, we also see that although the topic of provenance has been established by Gun and Desi (lines 30-32), Slamet also repeats this information (lines 33-34). This informational redundancy suggests that repetition is doing something else. As with my earlier interpretations of a non-minimal response (Extract 5.1) and discourses of sameness (Extract 5.2), this repetition appears to be part of ongoing relationship building efforts, this time on the part of Slamet who can be seen to be aligning with both Gun and Desi. On line 35-36 we also see that Desi repeats via her agreement earlier series of repetitions which suggests she is reciprocating Slamet's interpersonal relationship work.

It is also interesting to note that in addition to repetition between utterances we also now start to see repetition that does not always immediately follow a preceding turn: that is, it is temporally distant. These instances are indicated by a <u>broken underline</u>. For example,

although Desi who is a doing a Masters in Japanese language uses some Japanese (e.g. the use of "eh" on line 27), her whole utterance repeats what Gun said in Extract 5.2 on lines 11-13. This repetition is also redundant and thus might also be seen as part of ongoing efforts on the part of Desi and Gun to align with each other's stances toward the meaning of the word *cipoa*. In so doing, their alignment adds to their earlier pursuits of social sameness, this time their evaluation of provenance, while also helping to build positive interpersonal relations in this setting.

Just as importantly, this repetition also again foregrounds Desi's claims as someone who is entitled or able to evaluate what is Sundanese and what is not. In so doing, she is also further shoring up her ethnolinguistic identity claims made in Extract 5.2. In this case, something like: "I can evaluate this term's provenance because I am Sundanese". In so doing, she continues to imply that she is also the same ethnic social type as Gun, namely a Sundanese. Before looking at the interview data, I want to take a look at some of the talk that occurs amongst this group before the serial ends. This piece of talk is interesting because it provides examples of non-minimal responses and teasing, which I suggest also help to (re)produce positive inter-personal relations amongst several of the participants. This piece of talk is preceded by talk about the actors' spouses.

Extract 5.4   Establish positive inter-personal relationships through teasing

Gun

1   ini namanya siapa (glancing toward   What's her name?

2   Desi) =

Desi

3   = dian nitami (0.8)   Dian Nitami.

Gun

4   (???) (4.4) suaminya anjasmara nih =   (???) she is Anjasmara's husband, yeah?

Desi

5   =

6   iya . >iya huuh> (0.5) dian nitami (4.6)   Yeah, yes, yes, Dian Nitami.

Gun

7   tapi udah itu kan . udah cerai ini =   But [they] are already, already divorced,

                                            right?

Desi

8   =

9   (looking toward Gun) e:h . ngga::k .   What? No [they] are

10   [masih   still [together].

Slamet

11   [(looking toward Gun) nggak =   No.

Gun

12   = (looks

13   toward Desi) eh masih [(laughs)   Oh still [together].

Desi

14   [awet . awet   Still together, still together.

15   (0.4)

Slamet

16   (after glancing away looks back at

17   Gun) jangan bikin gosip pak =   Don't spread gossip Pak [Gun].

Gun

18   = (looks

19   at Slamet) +hehehe+ [hehe   Laughs.

Slamet

20   [hehehehe   Laughs.

The first instance of a non-minimal response is that found in line 6 where Desi answers Gun's question (line 4) with three "yes" responses. The first seems to be a response signaling hearership, while the second "iya huuh" although appearing redundant may in fact be signaling "engaged listening". Similarly, while both Desi and Slamet answer Gun's question about whether the actress playing Ayu is already divorced on lines 8-11, we also see that on line 14 Desi rephrases her answer. This answer repeats what has already been said ("awet awet" which literally means "to last long", but her meaning something like "still together"). In so doing, her talk is again more than required and invites us to interpret this type of repetition as helping build positive interpersonal relations, this time with Slamet, who has aligned with Desi on the question of whether the actor is divorced or not.

We also see that although Desi aligns with Slamet, Slamet is also quick to try and build positive interpersonal relations with Gun by teasingly accusing him of spreading gossip (lines 16-17). The tease touches on multiple ideologies about gossip and piousness. For example, Gun arrived a little earlier than the other participants and was finishing his afternoon prayer as other participants arrived. Performing his prayers indexed not only his Islamic identity but his pious one insofar as praying is being pious. Engaging in gossip, which is categorized as sinful, is thus part of the joke. The other part is that while gossip can often be meant to reach the person being gossiped about, in this setting the people being gossiped about would be very unlikely to hear this gossip. Gun appears to orient to this joke through his loud laughter (indicated by a "+" surrounding the hehe) and his gaze (lines 18-19). Again given that this sequence is not informational it seems to invite an interpretation of another local strategy for producing positive interpersonal relations.

After this sequence participants don't say much until the end of the serial when Dewi's grandmother makes her fourth and final appearance to give Dewi a warning about people who habitually engage in *cipoa*, which is accompanied by meta-pragmatic commentary which clears up some of the potential meanings of this term for participants. Upon hearing this Slamet suggests that *cipoa* is Sundanese, a point that Desi is unsure about which she backs up by noting that she has been a Sundanese for thirty years but has never heard the term. Just before I move into the interview part of the session Slamet goes onto suggest that maybe the term *cipoa* is an archaic form. In the rest of my analysis I focus on some of the comments made in the interview that immediately followed the viewing session. In early part of this interview Desi takes up the theme of archaicness in a way that suggests alignment with Slamet on a number of levels.

Extract 5.5 It's not Sundanese, it's archaic but maybe in the dictionary

Desi

1	= sebenarnya bukan yang jelas . (starts	Actually, it is not clear.
2	looking at Gun) kayaknya <u>bukan</u>	It appears that <u>it isn't Sundanese</u>,
3	<u>bahasa sunda</u> itu . { <u>kayanya</u> istilah	<u>it appears like</u> a term ...

Gun

4	{ <u>kayaknya</u> (???)	That's what <u>it appears like</u> (???).

Slamet

5	{ kayaknya .	<u>It's like</u>, it's like if we opened the
6	kayaknya kalau kita buka <u>kamus besar</u>	<u>authorative dictionary</u>, it's like the term
7	kayaknya ada itu . cipoa itu (0.5) tapi	*cipoa* would be there. But <u>it's like</u>
8	<u>bahasa yang jarang dipakai kayaknya</u> .	<u>language that is rarely used, so it's not</u>
9	<u>tidak { umum #jadi#</u>	<u>common</u>.

Desi

| 10 | { <u>bahasa karuhun</u> = | <u>Ancestor's language</u>. |

Lina

| 11 | = <u>bahasa tidak</u> | <u>Language [which] isn't</u> |
| 12 | { <u>umum</u> | <u>common</u>. |

Slamet

| 13 | { jangan suka cipoa (1.1) #untuk | Don't *cipoa* to |
| 14 | <u>menutupi kekurangannya</u># (1.8) | <u>cover up inadequacies</u>. |

In keeping with her earlier position on the provenance of *cipoa* (e.g. Extract 5.3 on lines 23-24), Desi reiterates that the term is probably not Sundanese (lines 2-3), a position Gun appears to ratify (line 4). In doing so, she appears to be also identifying Gun as someone with native speaker expertise like herself. When viewed together with earlier instances of repetition, this pursuit of social sameness seems to also add to the building of positive interpersonal relations between these two participants. Slamet, however, does not fully align with this suggestion. Instead, on lines 5-9 he reiterates his earlier position about its probable existence in a dictionary and that it is probably an uncommon or archaic form.

This time, however, his suggestion of being an uncommon Sundanese form is ratified by Desi on line 10. In this sense, it represents an occasion where Desi and Slamet, who have earlier disagreed on provenance, now achieve some common ground. We also see that Lina, who thus far hasn't said much, aligns with this suggestion of uncommonness (lines 11-12). After again re-iterating one of the term's meanings as relating to a negative personal trait (lines 13-14), in the talk the follows immediately afterwards Desi appears repeats her alignment with Slamet and Lina around the "archaicness" or "uncommonness" of the term *cipoa* (Extract 5.6). This repetition seems to be going beyond conversational alignment by

22

repeating the information "we have aligned/agreed on this topic" to do interpersonal relationship work.

Extract 5.6   Its uncommon Sundanese spoken by the elderly

Me

15   jadi ada? . yang bahasa bahasa lain yang   So is there other language from

16   tadi #juga# . mungkin ndak (1.0) { ndak   earlier that maybe [you] didn't, didn't

17   mengerti gitu .   understand, you know?

Slamet

18   { heem   Yes.

Desi

19   mungkin kan . kalau di <u>bahasa sunda</u> itu   Maybe, right, if it is <u>Sundanese</u>

20   pak zane' . ah <u>bahasa sunda</u> itu ada istilah   Pak Zane ah <u>Sundanese</u> has a term

21   <u>bahasa karuhun</u> ya . ><u>bahasa karuhun</u>   *bahasa karuhan* yeah. *Bahasa*

22   itu> <u>bahasa yang tidak digunakan sehari</u>   *karuhan* means <u>a language that isn't</u>

23   <u>hari</u>:: . tapi sebenarnya orang orang tua   <u>used daily</u>, but actually the elderly in

24   di:: . tanah jawa barat itu menggunakan   West Java use it, you know.

25   gitu' .

Slamet

26   { heem   Yes.

Desi

27   { mungkin . generasinya saya . pak gun   Maybe my generation [and] Pak

28   #gitu# tidak begitu mengena::l . (looks   Gun's don't really know the

29   and points open hand at Gun) +eh+   [language or its words]. Oops!

30   ><u>orang sunda</u>> bukan .   [You're] <u>Sundanese</u> aren't [you]?

Gun

31	heem =	Yes.

Slamet

32	= <u>orang</u> { <u>sunda</u> tapi tidak pernah	[He's] <u>Sundanese</u> but rarely lives in
33	di <u>sunda</u> #dia# (said while smiling)	<u>Sunda</u>. (a joke pointing to Gun's near
		decade-long stay in Japan)

As noted in the introduction to this extract, this talk is interesting because of the continued strategies used for building positive interpersonal relations between participants. In particular, we see Desi again pursuing social sameness by literally asking Gun "are you the same as me" through her utterance on lines 29-30 *eh orang sunda bukan* (You're Sundanese aren't you). On lines 32-33 Slamet teases Gun, this time about Gun's ambiguous native speaker credentials given his near decade long stay in Japan. This is yet one further example of how teasing is used to build positive interpersonal relations among a group of relative strangers. We also see that Desi is repeating Slamet's earlier suggestion that the word *cipoa* is old or archaic on lines 21-25 and 27-28. In so doing, she repeats her earlier alignment with Slamet about the archaicness of the form, while repeating Lina's earlier contribution about the form's uncommonness.

In addition to highlighting a return to the activity of working out the provenance of the term *cipoa*, we also see how ideas about place and native speakership fit into explanations about provenance. For example, Desi tries to gain alignment from Gun (lines 28-29), before checking his native speaker credentials (29-30). In doing so, we get to again see the importance Desi's places on native speakership when talking about language. In this instance, it appears that her explanation of the term *cipoa* rests both on the identity that has emerged over interactional time (that is, her identity as a native speaker of Sundanese), and her wish to

have another native speaker (in this case Gun) align with her ideas about why she does not know this term.

6   Conclusions

This article sought to add to scholarship on the role of small talk in the building and maintenance of positive social relationships amongst those from differing backgrounds. In looking at the question of how people do togetherness in difference, my empirical focus was the talk of group of Indonesians who were living and studying in Japan. There seemed to be three ways in which participants went about achieving positive interpersonal relationships in a television viewing session that was unusual insofar as it didn't resemble a television viewing session that would normally occur in a participants' home amongst people they knew rather than in a university classroom amongst those who were familiar but not close (with the exception of the married couple, Slamet and Lina). The first way in which positive interpersonal relations were built was through non-minimal responses and repetition. The second was through social pursuits of sameness, in this case sameness in terms of ethnolinguistic background, and the third was the use of teasing. The talk analyzed in this paper occurred across two speech situations and in a future paper I wish to see whether and to what extent these three practices were used in three subsequent viewing and interview sessions that I recorded as part of this project.

Through my analysis of this small talk we also saw how it was often intimately tied with other activities, including the categorization of a represented semiotic world and of the social identification of participants as members of a particular ethnolinguistic community. In doing so, I highlighted the multiple, often simultaneous, functions of talk. In addition to the above, this study also starts to explore an area of transnational student experience that seems to have been overlooked in studies of international students which have primarily focused

upon institutional support, viewpoints about negotiating new academic expectations, calls for new pedagogies, and so on (e.g. Byram & Dervin, 2008). The study reported here looks at international students' practices outside of class through a talk-based perspective. This perspective would seem especially relevant given talk's central role in the creation and maintenance of social relations more generally. In particular, if viewed in the wider context of these Indonesian's experience in Japan, being able to build and maintain positive interpersonal relations is also key in being able to access support networks that were coordinated and solidified through weekend meetings amongst parents of children in the Saturday school, at monthly meetings of the Nagoya branch of the Indonesian Student Union, at weekly faith gatherings, at national celebration days (e.g. Independence Day), and religious celebrations (e.g. end of the fasting month, Christmas, etc).

Notes

2.   "Pak" is literally "Mr." but interactionally is typically used as a kin term and has

        indexical relationships with ideas about fatherhood and respect elders.

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