

Aizuchi by Native Speaker and Foreign Speaker on Online Media

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
aizuchi, japanese, native speaker, foreign speaker	This work aims to describe the form and function of aizuchi that appears in Miku Real Japanese's youtube video. This is an interview between Japanese native speaker and Japanese foreign speaker about learning Japanese. The type of this study is a descriptive qualitative study with aizuchi form theory according to Horiguchi Sumiko and aizuchi function theory according to Kubota Mayumi. The technique to collect the data was conducted through listening and note-taking techniques to calculate the frequency of the appearance of aizuchi then analyzed to describe the form and function of aizuchi. The results found that there were 341 aizuchi appearances consisting of 199 from native speaker and 142 from foreign speaker of Japanese. The forms of aizuchi spoken by speakers include aizuchishi, kurikaeshi, iikae, and sonota. On the other hand, the functions of aizuchi spoken by both speakers include sign of listening, sign of understanding, sign of agreement, sign of denying, sign of expressing feelings, sign for connecting pauses, sign for adding, correcting, and asking information.

INTRODUCTION

Learning language encourages to participate in learning the culture of speech like a native speaker. One of the cultures in Japanese is *aizuchi*. *Aizuchi* is known as a short utterance spoken by listeners as a sign of listening without the intention of interrupting the conversation. In English known as backchannel. Backchannel in linguistics refers to the listener's verbal and nonverbal actions to show signs of understanding or confusion over the speaker's speech (Atkinson, 2010). Backchannel can occur either face-to-face or with media such as telephone in response that the speaker's message has been received. The response can be a vocal reaction such as saying well, yes, etc., or a silent reaction in the form of a smile, nodding, facial expression, etc. (Pipek, 2007). In contrast to the listening culture in Indonesia, a person can be considered impolite if he does not listen to the end and interrupts the conversation (Chaer, 2010). The intonation and stress spoken by Indonesian speakers tend not to provide an opportunity for listeners to backchannel or *aizuchi*. Backchannel in English and *aizuchi* in Japanese have a notable difference. The backchannel is placed in a gap that allows a change of turn, but the listener shows an attitude of not wanting to take over the conversation, instead signaling the speaker to continue the speech. While *aizuchi* can be placed in the middle of a conversation and can be interpreted as emotional support (Hanzawa, 2012). According to the *kokujiten* dictionary, the definition of *aizuchi* is as follows,

「相手の話の調子に合わせ、その合間に同意や同感の意味を込めた返事を短く返すこと、」

Adjusting the intonation of the speaker's story and responding with short utterances of approval or sympathy (*Kokugojiten*, 2022).

While *aizuchi* according to Kubota is,

「人が話している時に聞き手が相手調子を合わせてうなずいたり、「ええ、ええ」などと「あいづちを打つ」ことを示します、」

When someone is speaking, listeners will try to provide synchronous feedback either by nodding, throwing *aizuchi*, or responding with an “ee-ee” (Kubota, 2001).

Aizuchi can be classified by function and form. According to Kubota, the functions of *aizuchi* are divided into seven, including 1) a sign of listening, 2) a sign of understanding, 3) a sign of agreement, 4) a sign of denying, 5) a sign of expressing feelings, 6) a sign for connecting pauses, and 7) a sign for adding, correcting, and asking for information (Ambarwati, 2014). While *aizuchi* according to Maynhard in Cutrone is divided into four, including 1) listening sign, 2) understanding sign, 3) supportive sign, 4) approval sign, 5) feeling expression sign, and 6) mild additional sign (Cutrone, 2014). On the other hand, according to Horiguchi (1997) the form of *aizuchi* is divided into four, including 1) form of expression, 2) form of repetition, 3) form of paraphrasing, and 4) other forms (Ambarwati, 2014).

Previously research has been written by (Dityandari, 2020; Hanazawa, 2012; Khotimah, 2019; Yuniastuti & Nila Sepni, 2019). Dityandari (2020) focuses on the use of *aizuchi* by native speaker in everyday life which is analyzed based on the form and function of *aizuchi*. The data source was obtained from a TV series entitled *Inaka Ni Tomarou!*. This study counts the number of *aizuchi* based on their form and function, and concludes that in a minute Japanese people can say 16 *aizuchi*. On the other hand, the research conducted by Khotimah (2019) focuses on the use of *aizuchi* by foreign Japanese speaker when living in homestays and is assessed based on the form of *aizuchi*, situation or context, and errors in the use of *aizuchi*. Sources of data were obtained from 3 youtube videos set in homestays in Japan. This study found that there were errors in the use of *aizuchi* by foreign speaker due to intonation errors, the occurrence of blanks, and the inaccuracy of *aizuchi*.

Based on the description above, what distinguishes this research from previous research is the focus and research subject. There are only a few researchers who focus on the comparison of the number of uses of *aizuchi* between native and foreign speaker. Therefore, this study intends to describe the frequency of occurrence of *aizuchi* between native speaker and foreign speaker based on the topic of conversation, as well as to describe its form and function. Meanwhile, the purpose of this study was to determine the frequency of *aizuchi* appearing in a Japanese interview conducted through online media.

METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data source comes from Miku Real Japanese's youtube account in a video interview with Alex, the owner of *Learn Japanese Pod*. Data were collected by listening and note-taking techniques. First, the video is watched to observe the form and function of the *aizuchi* that appears, as well as to understand the content of the conversation. Second, the speech was transcribed to record the number of *aizuchi* and categorized based on its form and function. Third, the data were analyzed using the theory of *aizuchi* form according to Horiguchi Kumiko and the theory of *aizuchi* function according to Kubota Mayumi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, 341 data were obtained from *aizuchi* for 28 minutes of conversation. The results are classified based on the topic of conversation, as well as the form and function of *aizuchi* from native speaker and foreign speaker. In one *aizuchi* can consist of 3 forms of *aizuchi* with one function.

Table 1 Number of *Aizuchi* Appearing

Theme	Duration	Native	Non-native
Advice on learning Japanese	0.53 -- 5.34	38	24
Intensity of using Formal Japanese	5.38 -- 9.56	30	23
Preparation before going to Japan	9.57 -- 18.15	59	42
Importance of learning Kanji	18.17 -- 25.40	49	40
Japanese book	25.41 -- 29.20	23	23

Table 2 Form and Function of *Aizuchi*

Aizuchi's form	Native	Non-native
Short utterance / <i>Aizuchishi</i>	96	125
Repetition / <i>kurikaeshi</i>	5	4
Paraphrasing / <i>iikae</i>	4	2
Others / <i>sonota</i>	202	113

Aizuchi's function	Native	Non-native
Sign of listening	123	74
Sign of understanding	27	10
Sign of agreement	23	49
Sign of denying	2	3
Sign of expressing feelings	18	2
Sign for connecting pauses	8	7
Sign for adding, correcting, and asking information	19	5

Form of *Aizuchi*

In the video between Alex and Miku, forms of *aizuchi* emerged include 1) short utterance, 2) repetition, 3) paraphrasing, and 4) others such as looking up or biting the finger.

1. Short Utterance or *aizuchishi*

Aizuchi in short utterance has a function as a sign of listening (data 1), a sign of agreement (data 2), and a sign of expressing feelings (data 3)

Data 1

M: 「どうやって そんなに 日本語がペラペラになった? (A: うん) 今 日本語を べんきょう してる人にペラペラになる こつを 教えるとしたら (A: うん) どんな アドバイスをする?」
 “dooyatte sonna ni nihongo ga pera-pera ni natta? (A: un) ima nihongo o benkyoushiteru hito ni pera-pera ni naru kotsu o oshieru toshitara (A: un) donna adobaiso o suru?”
 “How did you become fluent in Japanese? (A: hm) if you give tips to be fluent in people who are currently learning Japanese (A: hm) what would you suggest?”

The context is Miku (M) asking Alex (A) about his proficiency in Japanese and tips for Japanese learner. In the middle of Miku's speech, Alex chimed in with *aizuchi* in the form of a short utterance *un* indicating that Alex listened to Miku's question completely and then answered it directly without starting with *aizuchi*.

Data 2

M: 「なるほどなるほど。でも私もそれしてた。(A: うなずき) 英語で(A: うん) ドラマをみて(A: うん)、いちいちストップして(A: うなずき) その人のまねをする。(A: うんうんうん)」
"naruhodo naruhodo. Demo watashi mo sore shiteta. (A: unazuki) eego de (A: un) dorama o mite (A: un), ichi-ichi stoppu shite (A: unazuki) sono hito no mane o suru. (A: un-un-un)"
" I see. I used to do that too. (A: nodding) I watch (A: yes) a TV series (A: yes) and stop every time (A: nodding) and mimic the person. (A: Yes-yes-yes)"

The context is Miku's tips when learning English. Miku watches dramas and does shadowing to get rid of the Japanese accent. Alex's response to these tips was a short repeated utterance of *soo-soo-soo*, followed by smiling face and nodding, indicating that Alex agreed that Miku's way is recommended to learn language.

Data 3

A: 「『けど やっぱり ちょっとアレックスの日本語 ていねいすぎるよ。ちょっと きよりかんを かんじたよ。』と言われたよ。(M: へええ) そうそうそう、ぶっちゃけな話し…」
" "...kedo yappari chotto Arekkusu no nihongo teenee sugiru yo. Chotto kyorikan o kanjita yo." to iwareta yo. (M: heee) soosoosoo buccchake na hanashi..."
" "...but your Japanese is too formal. I felt a bit of distance." I was told (M: eh?) Yes-yes-yes Honestly speaking...."

The context is the intensity of Alex's use of formal language in Japan. Alex mentioned that coworker once talked to him for using too formal Japanese in the office, so his co-worker felt the distance. That way Alex only uses formal Japanese at certain times such as writing emails, not when talking to colleagues. Hearing the story, Miku was surprised and made a short utterance *heee* to indicate surprise that at work Alex was actually reminded for being too formal in Japanese.

2. Repetition or *kurikaeshi*

Aizuchi in repetition has a function as a sign of understanding (data 4)

Data 4

M: 「さいしょ (A: うなずき) まじで私の英語 日本人の英語 (A: うなずき) だった。(A: -うなずき -うんうん) 『ディス イズ ベリー インタリスティング』 (A: あ! 『ディス イズ ベリー インタリスティング』 とか、) うん、『ディス イズ ベリー インタリスティング』 (A: -うなずき-うん、そう) って言った。(A: そう) マジで!」
"saisho (A: unazuki) majide watashi no eego nihonjin no eego (A: unazuki) datta. (A: -unazuki-unun) 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' (A: A! 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' toka,) un, 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' (A: -unazuki-un, soo) tte itteta. (A: soo) Majide! "
" At first, (A: nodding) seriously my pronunciation was (A: nodding) the typical Japanese-English. (A: nodding- Yes yes) 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' (A: Oh! 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu') Yes, I said 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' (A: nodding- Yes yes). (A: Yes) Really! "

The context of the conversation above is Miku explaining her experience with a Japanese accent when speaking in English. For example in the sentence *this is very interesting*, Miku used to say it with 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' which shows her Japanese accent. In the middle of Miku's speech, Alex repeated Miku's sentence 'dhizu izu berii intarisutingu' which indicated that Alex understood the Japanese-English accent that Miku was referring to and added the word *toka* which means "other" referring to examples of Japanese-English accents other than the sentence such as *Makudo Naruto*, *Hairaito*, etc. In this conversation, Alex's

repetition seems inappropriate because Miku doesn't seem to lower intonation as a gap for the interlocutor's *aizuchi*, so Miku repeats the sentence that was cut off and finished with a *majide* as an emphasis on information and a gap for the interlocutor to take over the conversation.

3. Paraphrasing or *iikaeshi*

Aizuchi in paraphrasing has a function as a sign of understanding (data 5)

Data 5

- A: 「あー さんせい しないけど たいへんだけど ちょっとわかったなー と思うと、 ちょっとシチュエーションが おちつくと思う。(M: なるほど。ちょっと楽になるよね 自分の気持ちも) らく...で別に日本人になる必要はない。」
"aa sansee shinai kedo taihen dakedo chotto wakattanaa to omou to, chotto shichueeshon ga ochitsuku to omou. (M: naruhodo. Chotto raku ni naru yo ne jibun no kimochi mo) raku... de betsu ni nihonjin ni naru hitsuyou wa nai."
'if you think "Well I don't agree but I get it.", then the situation calms down. (M: i see. I think you feel more ease. Your feeling wise.) Yeah. And there is no need to become a Japanese person.'

The context is Alex's advice on preparation before coming to Japan. Alex believes the importance to learn Japanese language and culture. According to him, someone will definitely experience culture shock and when that happens thing need to do is think about other people's feelings and understand them. If that's the case, at a certain time will be able to think that "I don't agree but I can understand" so that culture shock can be overcome. Alex said *chotto shichueeshon ga ochitsuku* means "things will become calmer" to describe the situation of people experiencing culture shock. Hearing this Miku said a sentence with a similar meaning in the form of *chotto raku ni naru yo ne* which can be interpreted "(the situation) becomes a little easier" when dealing with culture shock. Miku's retelling by paraphrasing indicates that she understands Alex's message with a shorter and more expressive vocabulary. Alex focuses on the situation, while Miku focuses on the condition of someone who is culture-shocked.

4. Others or *sonota*

Aizuchi in other forms has a function as understanding signal (data 6) and expressing feelings signal (data 7)



Figure 1 Miku's looking up and biting fingers.

Data 6

- A: 「あのう、 おもいやり という ことばを 勉強したほうがいい。(M: 一上に見る一) と思う。」
"anoo, omoiyari to iu kotoba o benkyoo shita hooga ii (M: -ue ni miru-) to omou."
'I think it's good to learn the word "Compassion" (M: looking up).'

The context of the conversation above is Alex's suggestion about learning the term *omoiyari*. Miku shows a thoughtful expression by looking up and putting her finger to her mouth as if biting her finger to indicate that Miku understands the term *omoiyari* that Alex is referring to and digests Alex's suggestion that before coming to Japan people who study Japanese should also learn the terms and concepts of *omoiyari*. . Not long after Miku looked back at Alex and listened to Alex's speech.



Figure 2 Miku's surprised face.

Data 7

A: 「… けど やっぱり ちょっと アレックスの日本語 ていねいすぎるよ。 (M: 一驚いた顔)」
“...kedo yappari chotto Arekkusu no nihongo teenee sugiru yo. (M: -odoroiita kao-)”
“But your Japanese is too formal.” (M: surprised face)’

The context of the conversation above is that Alex shared his experience of being reprimanded by a colleague for using Japanese too formally. Miku responded by pulling her face back while raising her eyebrows and mouth condition as if to say *aizuchishi hee* silently to indicate a surprised expression at Alex's story.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that in the video both native and foreign speakers of Japanese actively use *aizuchi*. *Aizuchi* that emerge from native speaker is more numerous and varied than foreign speaker. The results of the study found that there were 341 *aizuchi* appearing with details of 199 from native speaker and 142 from foreign speaker of Japanese. The forms of *aizuchi* spoken by both native and foreign speakers include *aizuchishi*, *kurikaeshi*, *iikae*, and *sonota*. The most frequently occurring forms of *aizuchi* are *sonota* in the form of a nod and *aizuchishi* with a short "un-un" utterance. While the *aizuchi* functions spoken by both include listening signs, understanding signs, agreeing signs, denying signs, expressing feelings signs, connecting pauses signs, and adding or correcting signs. The function of *aizuchi* that appears the most is as a sign of listening.

In this study there are still shortcomings such as differences in the number of *aizuchi* that appear with the number of *aizuchi* based on form and *aizuchi* based on function because in one *aizuchi* can consist of 3 forms and 1 function, for example responses in the form of smiling (*sonota*), nodding (*sonota*), and saying *un* (*aizuchishi*) in once respond go as a sign of listening. Suggestions for further research is to find out the inappropriate *aizuchi* performed by foreign Japanese speaker when having a dialogue with Japanese people.

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