

# Fictive interaction in prose text: An experiment on prose-to-dialogue conversion

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Prose essay is intrinsically considered to be a type of 'narrative' that designates unspecified readers as its addressees. The idea that narrative as a monologue potentially has the dialogic nature has been developed since a series of theoretical research by Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1986), but the mechanism under which prose text can be dialogic remains not clear.

The aim of this research is to clarify the cognitive characteristics of 'fictive interaction' (Pascual, 2014) in prose text, examining an experiment on converting a prose essay to dialogue, based on the concept of "open communication" (Okamoto et al., 2008), the communication format where integrated information is conveyed by a dialogue between two participants.

The experiment was conducted annually as part of the university lesson during fiscal 2013 to 2016. As participants, a total of 72 students took part in this study. They were given a short academic essay written in Japanese (approximately 1,400 characters) and were required to convert its content to a dialogue of two characters. The instruction is as follows:

- 1) To convey the contents in an easy-to-understand manner, conscious of its possible audience.
- 2) To make the characters and the scene settings clearly specified.
- 3) To avoid the full translation of the original text and extract its message.

As a result of the experiment, 73 prose-to-dialogue conversion data were acquired for the analysis data. The average number of turns in a dialogue is 19.27, while the maximum is 48 and the minimum is 6. The key concept in the original essay is explicitly mentioned in 42 dialogues and not in the other 31 dialogues. The relationship between the two characters is symmetrical (e.g. friends, couples, colleagues) in 58% and asymmetrical (e.g. parent vs. daughter/son, expert vs. non-expert, boss vs. subordinate) in 42%.

As a result of the analysis, in the case of two participants with asymmetrical relationships, the stance of 'evaluation' (DuBois, 2007; Sakita, 2017) is clearly distinguished between the two. The information provision is biased towards one participant, while the other tends to 'ask' for the motivation of preceding utterances of his/her interlocutor or to 'agree' as approval of preceding utterance contents. On the other hand, individual information and conceptualization (i.e. generalization, categorization, embodiment, extension, deduction, etc.) found in the original text tend to be shared by both participants, regardless of the relationship between them. At this time, the participant's stance is oriented not only toward the information conveyed by his/her interlocutor, but also toward the interlocutor's conceptualization of topics.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the fictive interaction in prose text is based on implicit motivations for individual assertions and conceptualization of topics, which the prose-to-dialogue conversion can make explicit. Since multiple participants can bring the writer's thought in prose text into shape with a different stance to it, we found that the stance alignment is needed for creating a dialogue in the open-communication style.

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