Modal Markers in Japanese: A Study of Learners' Use before and after Study Abroad

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Abstract

Japanese discourse requires speakers to index, in a relatively explicit manner, their stance toward the propositional information as well as the hearer. This is done, among other things, by means of a grammaticalized set of modal markers. Although previous research suggests that the use of modal expressions by second language learners differs from that of native users, little is known about "typical" native or non-native behavior. This study aims (a) to delineate native and non-native usage by a quantitative examination of a broad range of Japanese modal categories, and qualitative analyses of a subset of potentially problematic categories among them, and (b) to identify possible developmental trajectories, by means of a longitudinal observation of learners' verbal production before and after study abroad in Japan. We find that modal categories realized by non-transparent or non-salient markers (e.g., explanatory modality *no da*, or utterance modality sentence-final particles) pose particular challenges in spite of their relatively high availability in the input, and we discuss this finding in terms of processing constraints that arguably affect learners' acquisition of the grammaticalized modal markers.

1. Introduction

The study presented here examines a fairly conspicuous set of Japanese linguistic forms, modal markers, which arguably constitute an important resource for the construction of appropriate social action. Japanese discourse requires participants to index, in a relatively explicit manner (Ikegami 1989 and Maynard 1993, among many others), their stance toward the information (the proposition) as well as the hearer (the target

of illocution). Much (though not all) of this "positioning" is achieved through a wide range of grammaticalized modal markers.

Previous research suggests that second language (L2) users may use modal expressions differently from native speakers (see section 2.2 for references); however, little is known about Japanese native speaker and non-native speaker behavior in terms of the acquisition of modal categories as a whole. Moreover, research is scarce with regards to how this kind of pragmatic competence—interactional positioning through modal expressions—is acquired. The study presented here has a double objective: to begin to delineate native and learner patterns of usage by quantitative and qualitative examination of a range of categories in Japanese modality, and to identify possible developmental trajectories by providing a longitudinal observation of L2 learners' production (i.e., before and after a year abroad), which we hope will begin to shed light on the ways in which the system of modality as a grammaticalized feature of Japanese emerges in learner language, and what this means for the learners' ability to produce interactionally appropriate language.

In section 2 we illustrate the modal markers which are the object of this study, define in what way they are instrumental to the display of competent pragmatic (and communicative) behavior, and review previous studies on L2 acquisition of modality markers in general and of Japanese modality. Section 3 presents our research objectives and describes the study's participants and procedures. Section 4 reports and discusses quantitative results, and section 5 offers a qualitative discussion of three specific modal issues (two modal expressions and utterances lacking any modal marker), which most distinctly characterize learners' patterns of use in comparison to that of native speakers. Section 6 outlines our conclusions.

2. Background
2.1 Japanese Modality (or *Modariti*[i])
The notion of modality in Japanese, or *modariti* (Narrog 2009b; Pizziconi and Kizu 2009), has been investigated from several ontological perspectives (see Narrog 2009a for a history of the subject in Japanese linguistics), but often with divergent results as to what should count as a modal marker, and what such markers do in communication.

A traditional view of modality considers it to be a kind of shell that encases (and does not tamper with) a kernel made of the proposition (as noted by Givón 1995: 112, and a view represented by Masuoka 1991 for

Japanese) and a grammatical category that indexes the speaker's subjective attitude (including both epistemic and "valuative," i.e., deontic attitudes, Givón 1995: 112). While some valuative (deontic) meanings more obviously involve an interpersonal dimension via notions of authority (Givón 1995: 121), classical discussions of epistemic modality are typically conducted in terms of truth and falsity and in relation to the proposition, but not in relation to the communicative goals of the participants to the communicative transaction (Givón 1995: 114). Within Japanese research, a particularly popular definition involves the notion of subjectivity ("elements that express subjective judgments and attitudes" as in Masuoka 1991: 6; also see Narrog 2009b: 27 ff. on the notion of subjectivity in the Japanese tradition). However, most studies conducted from this viewpoint hardly ever feature observations on the role of hearers in the speaker's discourse, and some of those who do (e.g., Kamio 1997, 2002) focus on the cognitive rather than the social aspects (Maynard 1993 and Trent 1997 are notable exceptions).

A communicative view, in contrast, recasts notions of (objective) truth and falsity as matters of "subjective certainty" (Givón 1982, 1995: 113–115), or degrees of speaker's "commitment" to information (Stubbs 1986), and, crucially, reconceptualizes meaning as the result of an "inter-subjective" achievement: meaning is never created by the speaker in isolation, but it involves both speaker and hearer (or speakers' appreciation of hearers' knowledge or position) and is therefore socially negotiated (Givón 1995: 115, 167). Two implications of this view are relevant here. The first is that *all* utterances (and not just those ostensibly displaying modal markers) can therefore be characterized as expressing some sort of subjective attitude. The second is that information is assessed, conveyed, and evaluated, not only on the basis of the speaker's relation to it, but also of whether it is obvious or challengeable by the hearer. Since information is hardly ever socially neutral, how it plays in communication (i.e., whether it is taken for granted, shared, contested, etc.) has a bearing on interpersonal relationships. A great deal of linguistic and cultural specificity can therefore be expected with regards to both the structural means adopted to express modal meanings, and how information must be socially handled.

A full redefinition of each and every Japanese modal marker consistent with this overarching, intersubjective conceptualization of modality has not yet been attempted and it exceeds the scope of this paper[2]. Due partially to a lack of such redefined categorization of

Japanese modal markers but more importantly for the purpose of cross-referencing our work to previous works on Japanese linguistics and Japanese language acquisition, we elected to maintain a form-based approach and to resort to the taxonomy of modal markers (e.g., Masuoka 1991, 2007) widely adopted in Japanese linguistics and in the field of Japanese as a foreign language to conduct this preliminary study of modal markers' usage and acquisition. We are fully conscious of this apparent mismatch; however, the approach adopted here allows us to situate our first snapshot of broad quantitative differences in natives' and learners' discourse in the wider context of research on and teaching of Japanese modality, as we explain further below.

Both Masuoka (1991: 6) and Nitta (1989: 34) define modality in terms of speakers' subjective psychological attitudes. As noted, these definitions may fall short of the proposed communicative re-conceptualization presented above, but Masuoka's work (1991, 2007) does provide two advantages for the present study. The first is that it offers a relatively rich and detailed taxonomy of linguistic forms that conceivably has a bearing on modal meanings, and therefore could assist us in a first coding of the data. The second is that, since a great deal of modal meanings are conventionally indexed by grammaticalized linguistic markers routinely taught in L2 Japanese textbooks and classrooms, a taxonomy based on such linguistic forms is advantageous in mapping the "outcome" of the pedagogical input, and highlights discrepancies between the input and the learners' developing systems.

Based on Masuoka's taxonomy, we examined the following markers:

(1) Modality of Judgment
   a. Evaluative judgment (*beki da* 'be supposed to, must', *nakute wa naranai* 'must', etc.)
   b. Epistemic judgment (*darō* 'probably will', *ka mo shirenai* 'may, might', *-mitai da* 'seem', etc.)
   c. "Bare" affirmative (no modal marker attached to a predicate)

(2) Explanatory Modality (*no da* 'it is that' and its variants, *wake da* 'the reason is that')

(3) Modality of Utterance (sentence final particles (SFP) such as *ne, yo*)

(4) Adjuncts (modal adverbs such as *yappari* 'as expected', *tabun* 'probably, maybe', etc.)

According to Nitta (2000: 97), "bare" affirmative forms in main predicate positions (such as *takai desu* 'it is expensive' and *ikimasu* '(I/he/she/they) will go' can be considered markers of epistemic certainty or *kakushin no modariti*: an unmodalized utterance indicates a proposition that (the speaker may assume) is not likely to be challenged by the hearer and is not projecting to other stated or implied propositions. These forms, which do not contain any modality marker, are also examined in the current study.

2.2 Previous Research on L2 Use and Learning of Modality Expressions

This section summarizes the findings of previous studies on L2 learners' use of expressions of modality, primarily those which have implications for a theorization of modality acquisition. These consistently indicate that learners' patterns of use differ from those of native speakers. Some studies posit the existence of distinct (though not categorical) stages of development, which are described as *pre-syntactic* (in which learners seem to rely mostly on context-dependent, implicit strategies, later moving on to adopt lexical strategies) and *syntactic* (in which grammaticalized modal markers begin to emerge). Studies on L2 Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish and French note the learners' difficulty in acquiring subjunctive as a grammaticalized marker of modality both in tutored (Collentine 1995), and mixed tutored and untutored (Howard 2008, Giacalone-Ramat 1992) contexts, including periods of residence abroad. Studies on L2 English (Kärkkäinen 1992 on advanced, Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig 2001 on beginning levels) similarly seem to suggest that learners tend to rely more on lexical or phrasal means such as *maybe, I think* and *I know* rather than on grammaticalized forms (e.g., the modal auxiliaries *might* or *could*). Dittmar's (1993) study of a Polish migrant's acquisition of German argues that a "pragmatic mode" (relying on intonation, formulaic expressions, and lexical items used as "frame instructions" orienting to modal meanings) precedes the grammatical coding of modal meanings.

Meanwhile, with regard to Japanese, in spite of a considerable number of studies on individual modal markers (such as SFP, and *no da*; see section 5), very few studies so far have, to our knowledge, investigated the learners' modal system as a whole, i.e., how the whole range of Japanese modal markers is acquired. The findings of the

following works, which discuss at least more than one modal marker in L2 Japanese, are relevant to the present study.

Sasaki and Kawaguchi (1994) consider an entire array of modality categories given by Masuoka (1991) and analyze short writing samples by learners (mostly Chinese speakers) and Japanese native speakers of different ages. They find that learners tend to use bare affirmative forms without modal markers more frequently than native speaker university students, which make learners' writing sound more assertive. Similarly to the L2 English studies mentioned above, Sasaki and Kawaguchi also find that learners rely on lexical items such as *to omou* ('I think') more than native university students, who use a variety of grammaticalized epistemic markers.

Watanabe and Iwasaki (2009) study five learners' use and acquisition of modal markers in spoken Japanese by comparing pre- and post-study abroad Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) of five English learners, and observe different developmental stages for different modal markers. They find that while lower-level learners increase the use of epistemic markers (e.g., *-mitai da* 'seem'), higher-level learners increased their use of SFPs and *no da*. Due to the small number of participants these results cannot be generalized for a larger population, but it is worth noting that the markers for utterance (e.g., SFP) and explanatory modality (*no da*) appear to be acquired later.

Some other studies suggest that the form-function mapping diverges from that of native speakers. Oshima (1993) investigates native speakers, Chinese and Korean learners' preferred choice of two types of epistemics: suppositionals (*darō* 'probably will', *ka mo shirenai* 'may/might') and evidentials (*-yō da* 'look like', *-sō da* 'seem'), by means of written tests. It finds that at the lower-intermediate level, Chinese learners choose bare affirmatives more than Korean learners and native speakers, while at the higher-intermediate or advanced level Chinese and Korean learners' use of bare affirmatives approximate that of native speakers' (i.e., the number of bare affirmatives decreases); however they still differ from native speaker usage in the categories of suppositionals and evidentials. Kikuchi, Ikari, and Takegata (1997) assess the "expectancy grammar" of native speakers and (advanced level) learners by providing the beginning phrase(s) of a hearsay sentence (*tomodachi ni yoruto* 'according to my friend…') and asking subjects to complete it. Where most learners complete the sentence only with *-sō da* 'I hear that', natives use different markers (both *-sō da* 'I

hear that' and -*rashii* 'it appears that'), suggesting the incomplete mapping of the functions of -*rashii* (and alleging a transfer of training as one of the possible causes).

There are further studies on a specific modal category in L2 Japanese with reference to L1 effects. Mine (1995) looks at various sentence-final forms (including SFP) in an 8-month longitudinal study of 25 learners of different L1, and claims that these forms are acquired at different developmental stages: for example, *ne* and *yo* always precede *yo ne*, and sentence-final forms such as *kana* and *na* appear after *ne/yo* at a relatively early stage. Mine argues that this may be due to some form-meaning connections being easier to infer than others. The types of forms learners tend to use vary depending on individuals' conversation styles and learning environments but not depending on their L1. In contrast, in a study of English-speaking learners' use of hearsay evidentials by production questionnaires (conveying hearsay information to specific addressees), Ishida (2006) argues that the learners use significantly less evidentials compared to native speakers. L1 transfer effects are said to be in action, since English uses unmarked forms in some utterances that would require modalization in Japanese (as shown, for example, by Kamio's Territory of Information theory 1990, 1997). It should be noted that the apparently contradictory findings between these two studies may be due to the distinct types of modal markers examined; epistemicity (which includes evidentiality) may be perceived by learners as a more clear-cut category (although not invariably grammaticalized in English, systematically expressed under certain conditions) than the meanings conveyed by SFP. As Giacalone-Ramat (1992: 299) argues, learners' acquisition problems are compounded when the acquisition task involves categories which are not already available in the L1. We will come back to this in section 5.4.

3. The Study
3.1 Research Objectives
The review of previous literature largely indicates that learners' patterns and frequency of use of modality markers differ from those of native speakers, and many point out learners' difficulties with certain grammaticalized forms at different developmental stages. Grammaticalized modal markers tend to be underused by learners either because of an avoidance strategy or because they rely on lexical means instead.

However, most studies relating to L2 acquisition of Japanese modality as a whole are cross-sectional research on writing or written/spoken tasks. Furthermore, in many of the studies (e.g., Oshima 1993, Sasaki and Kawaguchi 1994), learners are sojourners in Japan and the effect of studying abroad is confounded. Watanabe and Iwasaki (2009) attempt to isolate the effect of study abroad, but the study population is rather small and it provides no comparison with usage patterns by expert users. In this study we try to overcome these limitations by investigating a broad range of modal categories, in naturalistic spoken discourse, before and after the year abroad, and in comparison with native speakers. This more systematic approach is likely to yield better insights on the details of learners' language development, and we illustrate it as follows.

First, we aim to identify the specific modal categories and/or markers that may be under- or over-used by learners as compared to a group of native speakers. We do this by means of a quantitative analysis in which we measure the proportion of modalized predicates out of all utterances (we call this "volume of speech") and the proportion of modalized predicates out of all predicates that permit modalization (or "modalizable predicates"; see more detailed definitions in 3.3). Once the patterns of usage of specific markers are identified through the quantitative analysis, we zoom in on our interview data and examine specific occurrences of such markers which may be evidence of some learning difficulties. This qualitative analysis highlights the kind of questions that a functional approach to the L2 acquisition of Japanese modality needs to address, such as going beyond the decontextualized measurement of linguistic forms attested in the data set, and investigating the learners' (putative) intended meanings from the viewpoint of the whole communicative context.

3.2 Participants and Procedures
The research instrument is a 15–20 minute long semi-structured informal interview by the same interviewer (the first author, a Japanese native speaker) and based on three topics (approx. 5–7 minutes for each topic, addressed consecutively in each interview): a place the interviewee liked most during his/her trips or during his/her stay in Japan or elsewhere, the person who most influenced him/her, and a film or novel that left an impression on him/her. The interviewer conversed as naturally as possible, let each topic develop freely as it unfolded and did not draw the

interviewee's metalinguistic attention to any particular uses of modal markers (nor other linguistic features). The interviewees were only informed that data would be used for research on Japanese linguistics and L2 acquisition. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The participants are eight native speakers of Japanese (6 females and 2 males, aged 23–37, mode 28, undergraduate and graduate students at a British university; interviewed in May–June 2007), and eight learners of Japanese (5 females and 3 males, aged 19–21, mode 20, undergraduate students majoring in Japanese at the same British university; interviewed in May–June 2007 [before year abroad] and September 2008 [after year abroad]). The two sets of interviews with learners correspond to pre- and post-study abroad contexts—henceforth referred to as PRE and POST. These took place respectively at the end of year 2 and beginning of year 4. The year of study abroad (year 3) in Japan is a compulsory component of their four-year BA degree program (and includes formal instruction).

Pseudonyms	L1 (and heritage language)	Prior visits to Japan	Proficiency (native speakers' rating)	
			PRE	POST
Emma	English	once = 3 weeks	2.24	3.25
Betty	English	0	2.85	4.29
Lewis	English	0	3.56	4.41
John	English	0	3.67	4.73
Tim	English	once = two months (home stay)	3.84	4.47
Helen	Finnish	once = four/five weeks (home stay)	4.78	4.75
Tanya	English (and Japanese)	lived in Japan during infancy, short trips	5.38	5.78
Sally	English (and Japanese)	short trips	4.64	6.10

Table 1. Learners' proficiency ratings, L1, and previous visits to Japan

The learners' first language was English, except for Helen. Two participants who have Japanese mothers declared that only English was spoken at home, but they may have received some degree of exposure to the Japanese language and culture. Three of the eight participants had never visited Japan at PRE.[3]

The participants' proficiency levels at PRE were judged (by the third author, a certified OPI tester) to be approximately at Intermediate-Low to Advanced-Low according to ACTFL proficiency guidelines, based on the learners' performance in the PRE interview. Since the interviews had not probed for high-level tasks, learners' improvement at POST was difficult to judge based on the same guidelines. Therefore, an alternative method of assessment was adopted to assess their level of proficiency for the purposes of comparison (between PRE and POST and between learners): 25 native speaker university students in Tokyo were asked to rate thirty-two randomly ordered 40" interview segments (two segments each from each participant's PRE and POST interviews) on a scale of 1–7 (7 being very proficient).[4] The native speakers' ratings show that seven learners were judged to be more proficient in POST, with Helen (among the top three scorers in both tests) judged as marginally less proficient, which may indicate that the participants' proficiency levels at POST were at least at Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-Mid.[5]

All learners had followed the same syllabus in the first two years.[6] However, the type and amount of formal instruction received during residence in Japan, as well as the amount and intensity of contacts they had with native speakers, could not be controlled for this study since they varied depending on the university of destination (seven different universities for the eight students in this study).

The age of native speaker participants is somewhat higher, but their relationship to the interviewer is the same as that of the learners', i.e., students of the same teacher.

3.3 Coding Data

All interviews were coded at clause level. This includes full sentences/clauses or predicate-less utterances (both the arguably intentionally truncated utterances and the abandoned ones). Thus, volume of speech is calculated in this study as the total number of:

(5) a.   main sentences (matrix clauses)
    b.   coordinated clauses (marked by *-te, ga, kedo, shi* 'and', etc.)
    c.   subordinate clauses (marked by *-tara, to, kara, no de,* etc.)
    d.   complement ("quotation") clauses (marked by *to, -tte, ka* (*dō ka*))
    e.   fragments (arguably intended noun-ending or "incomplete" sentences)

Among the clauses in (5), we then considered which types of clauses permit modal manipulation, and therefore, "modalizable" clauses were isolated from other types of predicates. These are:[7]

(6) a. all main sentences (matrix clauses)
     b. coordinated clauses marked by *ga, kedo, shi* (listing)
     c. subordinate clauses marked by *kara, no de, shi* (reason)
     d. all complement ("quotation") clauses, and
     e. fragments[8]

Consequently, subordinate clauses marked by -*tara, to,* etc. as well as coordinate -*te* are considered non-modalizable: no modal forms are syntactically allowed to appear in them. We therefore calculated the number of occurrences of modal markers in (1)–(4) in the environments of (5) and (6) above.

3.4 Method of Analysis

To test the general finding in previous literature that learners may use grammaticalized modal markers to a lesser extent than native speakers and to examine the impact of the year abroad on learners' language development, three sets of MANOVA analyses with slightly different variables were conducted, each one consisting of two sub-analyses, to test differences between PRE and native speakers, and POST and native speakers. The first MANOVA has nine dependent variables: the total volume of speech and eight modal categories. These include the six categories described in (1–4), then the explanatory modality further subdivided into two (*no da* in all clauses, and a variety of explanatory markers such as *wake da, mono da* and *no da* in matrix clauses), and finally politeness, which was not discussed in this study. The second and third MANOVA have eight variables, that is the frequencies of occurrence (i.e., proportion of use out of the total volume of speech and out of the modalizable predicates) of the eight types of modal expressions. Univariate between-subject analyses were conducted to assess differences between PRE and native speakers, and between POST and native speakers for each of the dependent variables used in the MANOVAs. The differences between the learners' PRE and POST were tested by matched paired t-tests for the nine or eight dependent variables described above.

   With regards to the qualitative analysis, we concentrated on markers whose use appeared to be potentially problematic. However it is

important to note here that because of the nature of the modal markers we focus on (i.e., explanatory modality and modality of utterance; see section 5 for details), it is often impossible to make a categorical judgment as to whether each use of a modal marker is grammatically correct or not. While in the quantitative analyses we examine the frequency of use of modal markers independently from any judgment of appropriateness, in the qualitative analyses, we look into those modal markers whose frequency of use in the native and non-native groups appeared to be significantly different, and cases which the authors considered likely to create potential problems of interpretation.

4. Quantitative Analysis: Results and Preliminary Discussion
4.1 Modal Expressions in Overall Volume of Speech
The average volume of speech and the total number of modal expressions used by each group are illustrated in Figure 1.
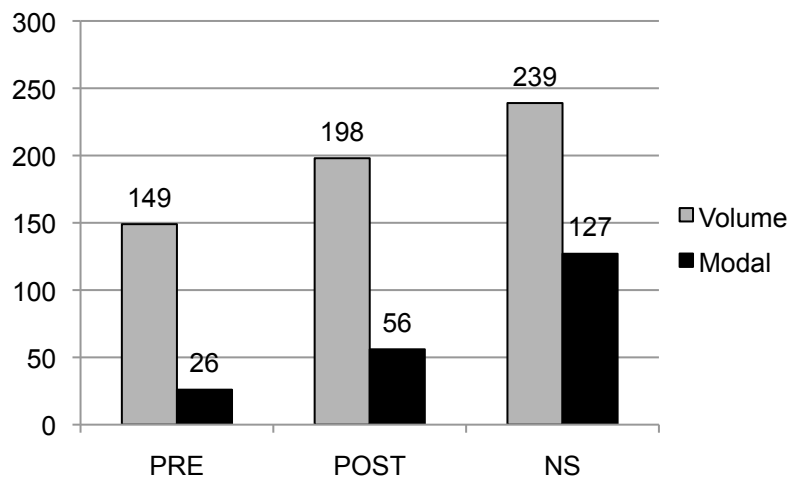

Figure 1. Learners' (PRE/POST) and native speakers' (NS) volume of speech and modal expressions

The results of the first MANOVA showed significant group difference (F (9, 6) = 17.92, p < .01). Univariate between-subject analysis for volume of speech suggests that learners in PRE produced a significantly smaller amount of speech (quantified as number of clauses, as described in (5)) than NS (F (1, 14) = 9.74, p < .01), but in POST, they produced

nearly as many clauses as NS (i.e., quantity-wise, their production did not significantly differ from that of NSs). Indeed the increase in number of clauses between PRE and POST (paired t-tests) was significant (t (7) = 5.31, p < .01).

The second MANOVA with the proportions of eight modal expressions to the volume of speech as dependent variables shows that learners are significantly different from NSs at PRE (F (8, 7) = 8.00, p < .01) but not at POST (although the difference between PRE and POST was not significant). However, when we refine our analysis further and look at how modal expressions are used in relation to the modalizable contexts only, some new interesting facts emerge.

4.2 Proportions of Modal Expressions to Modalizable Predicates

The third MANOVA, which uses as dependent variable eight types of modal expressions in proportion to *modalizable* predicates (see Figure 2, indicating raw frequencies), revealed that the proportion of modal expressions used by learners is significantly smaller than for NS both at PRE and POST: respectively (F (1, 14)=82.34, p < .01) and (F (1, 14) = 15.15, p < .01). This is in spite of a significant increase between PRE and POST (t (7) = 2.92, p < .05).

The fact that learners at POST are still behaving rather differently from NS appears to be driven by three specific categories (cf. Figure 3): *no da* 'it is that' in the category of explanatory modality, SFPs or modality of utterance, and bare affirmatives, in the category of epistemic modality. Other categories such as evaluatives (i.e., deontics) and epistemics ((1a) and (1b) above) do not show any significant difference between learners and NS. [9]

Univariate between-subjects tests reveal that the proportion of modal expressions used by learners at PRE is significantly smaller than NS with regards to *no da* (F (1, 14) = 41.99, p < .01) and SFPs (F (1, 14) = 83.66, p < .01) and, in contrast, it is significantly larger than NS with regards to bare affirmatives (F (1, 14) = 49.27, p < .01).
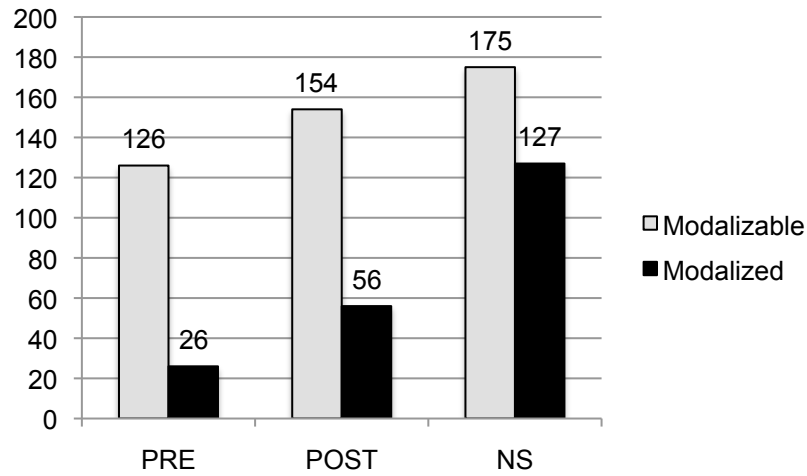
Figure 2. Learners' (PRE/POST) and native speakers' (NS) use of modal expressions to modalizable predicates
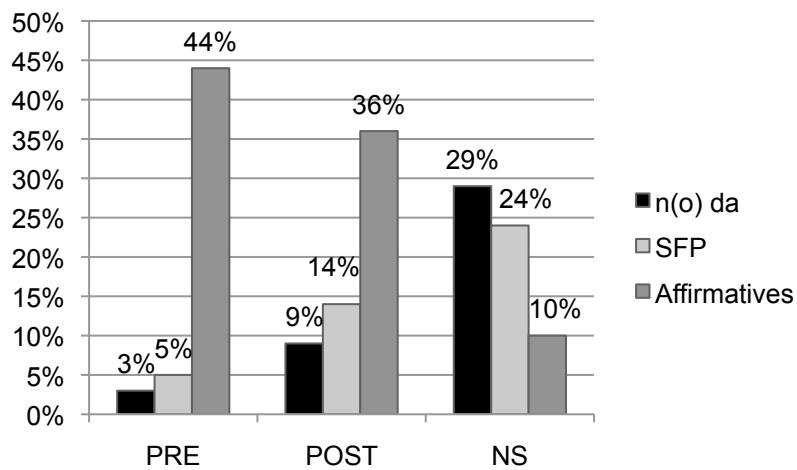

Figure 3. Learners' (PRE/POST) and native speakers' (NS) proportional use of three types of modal expressions with modalizable predicates

Similar results are obtained for POST; the proportion of use of *no da* (F (1, 14) = 9.23, $p < .01$) and SFPs (F (1, 14) = 16.37, $p < .05$) by learners is significantly smaller than NSs', and the proportion of bare affirmatives (F (1, 14) = 21.48, $p < .01$) is significantly larger than NSs'.

Paired t-tests revealed that a significant increase between PRE and POST was found only for SFPs (t (7) = 2.53, $p < .05$). The change between PRE and POST was not significant for *no da* utterances nor bare affirmatives (though both moved, whether increasing or decreasing, toward approximation of NS use).

4.3 Discussion of Quantitative Results

To summarize so far, we found that learners in PRE produce a significantly smaller proportion of modal markers to modalizable predicates (overall) compared to native speakers, and although the overall use increases significantly at POST, the difference between POST and NS is still significant; in particular, learners' and native speakers' behavior was found to be consistently different with regard to three specific categories: SFPs, *no da*, and unmodalized utterances (bare affirmatives). Of these, a significant change between PRE and POST was only observed for the category of SFP.

The modal categories that do *not* show any significant differences between learners (at both PRE and POST) and NS are evaluatives (deontics) and epistemics. Interestingly, many of the forms constituting these categories are periphrastic constructions (cf. Narrog 2009b: 73), which by their very nature are therefore more salient and lexically transparent. In contrast, the categories where significant differences continue to be observed over time seem to be those indexed by non-transparent linguistic forms (*no da* and SFP). These happen to be related to epistemicity, or more precisely to the marking of information status, which does not directly affect the propositional meaning. The relative difficulty of acquisition of, or reluctance to use linguistic forms such as *no da* or SFP may affect the interactional management of information; learners' more liberal use of unmodalized statements possibly makes their utterances sound potentially categorical and one-sided compared to those by native speakers or expert Japanese users. We return to this issue in our discussion of the qualitative analyses.

It could be argued that the development pattern evidenced by our data (i.e., that the frequency of use of the deontic/epistemic marking becomes more target-like than SFP/*no da* marking) suggests a learning

difficulty with SFP/*no da* which could be accounted for in terms of processing constraints. VanPatten's (1990, 2007) Input Processing model stipulates that acquisition is conditional to comprehension. It maintains that, when comprehension is still effortful in terms of cognitive processing and working memory, learners prioritize lexical meaning over grammatical meaning, hence learners tend to process content words before grammatical forms (2007: 118); this is called the "lexical preference principle". In its revised version, the principle specifies that "if grammatical forms express a meaning that can also be encoded lexically (i.e., the grammatical marker is redundant) then learners will not initially process those grammatical forms until they have lexical forms to which they can match them*"* (2007: 118). As noted, many deontic and epistemic markers are lexically transparent, and epistemic markers often co-occur with epistemic adverbs (they may therefore be considered redundant); this may facilitate the "matching" referred to above. SFP and *no da,* in contrast, cannot be expressed by corresponding or alternative lexical items, are therefore non-redundant, and no "matching" is possible. Notably, the model also maintains that non-redundant grammatical markers would be processed *earlier* than redundant ones ("the preference for non-redundancy principle"; 2007: 119); however, the forms in question may represent cognitive categories which are too far beyond the learners' current cognitive set up to be noticed or processed adequately.

There are further functional and morpho-syntactic differences between evaluatives/epistemics and utterance modals such as SFP/*no da*, which may subject the latter to online processing constraints. Unlike evaluatives and epistemics, which can be used in both written and spoken contexts, utterance modal expressions appear mainly in conversational contexts (or some informal written dyadic communication). This makes noticing and understanding them more strongly dependent on successful online input processing, typically effortful in the early stages.

As for explanatory modality *no da*, it often appears between a lexical item (not only a verbal, adjectival or nominal predicate item but also an evaluative/epistemic marker that follows the lexical predicate item) followed by (an optional politeness marker and) a SFP (e.g., *iku n desu yo* 'go *no da*-(POL) SFP'). Thus the position it occupies is not quite the end of the sentence but is sandwiched between lexical and other non-lexical items and, being unstressed, has a less salient phonological (i.e., acoustic, or perceptual) feature (i.e., especially where *no* in *no da* is

realized as *n*).[10] Both SFP and *no da* are semantically non-transparent, which makes them weaker contenders for learners' attention, when attentional resources are limited. These factors may well override the advantage of the relative high frequency of these markers, which are extensively available in the learners' input (though SFP may be limited to colloquial contexts) (cf. VanPatten 2007: 131). The possibility remains of course that the forms that did not appear in our data have been duly processed and acquired partially or fully, and yet are not available in production tasks such as ordinary conversation, under time constraints and performance pressure.[11] Since we have not tested the learners' knowledge of modal markers through other tasks, we are not able to pursue this possibility in the current study, and what we describe here is a relatively conservative, "worst case" scenario of such representations not having yet been developed because of difficulties in the processing of input.

Quantitative differences are not the only noteworthy differences between learners and native speakers. Learners' usage of individual expressions also seemed idiosyncratic (as also pointed out by Mine 1995), and in order to investigate further the nature of learner discourse, we now turn to the qualitative analysis. While it is true that in the subjective domain of modality a degree of variation would not be surprising also in native speaker discourse, the authors of this study (all expert users of Japanese, two of whom are native speakers) noted that some of the learners' uses appear to cause interpretation "hiccups" of some sort. We therefore independently assessed the use as well as non-use of the linguistic forms that showed significant differences (*no da* and SFP), identified some cases deemed problematic by all three authors (this includes the interviewer, i.e., the intended hearer of the learner utterances) and now discuss them in the following section.

5. Qualitative Analysis
5.1 Sentence-final Particles (SFP)
As noted above, SFP is the single category showing significant quantitative development between PRE and POST. However, we show below that this significant increase in use appears to engender, in some contexts, some equivocal interpretations.

SFPs have been investigated in numerous (acquisitional and non-acquisitional) studies. Sawyer (1992), Yoshimi (1999), Masuda (2009) and other studies including Mine (1995, reviewed in 2.2), for instance,

all point out that L2 use of SFPs is limited in range and frequency, and at times inappropriate. Our theoretical position is close to Katagiri (1995), Morita (2002), Kanai (2004) and others, who focus on their interactional potential, viewing them as markers of the speaker's epistemic stance in the collaborative construction of discourse, and participants' dynamic alignments.[12] They are utilized predominantly in face-to-face interaction, and can contribute to the specification of an utterance's illocutionary force (Cook 2006: 103).

Considerable individual variability was observed in the learners' use of SFPs. Below we limit our observations to *ne,* since this is the most frequently used particle in our data, and yet occasionally used inappropriately even at POST.[13]

The case shown in Excerpt 1 details a somewhat strident use of the particle *ne* due to its suggesting an unlikely mapping of the speech participants' respective relations to the information.

1	Int.:	n, ryō wa ja, jisui datta no?
		then did (you) do your own cooking in the dormitory?
2	Sally:	hai, sō desu [ne.]
		yes, that is right.
3	Int.:	[a] hontō.
		ah, really.
4	Sally:	chotto taihen @ deshita @ kedo
		(it) was a bit tough though.
5	Int.:	taihen deshō ne.
		it must have been…
6		he:, chotto isshoni nan ka tsukuttari toka deki:masu yone.
		I see. you could prepare, or cook things together, couldn't you?
7	Sally:	sore wa ma, hima na toki tatoeba [ano:]=
		that well free time for.example well
		that…well…when (I had) time…for example…
8	Int.:	[n:]
		mhm.
9	Sally:	=nikagetsu yasumi ga arimashita [**ne**, ano:] haru ni
		two.months holiday NOM be-*PAST SFP* erm *spring in*
		there were two months holidays, right?
10	Int.:	[n: n:]
		n…
11	Sally:	sono toki ni tomodachi to issho ni nihon ryōri o jibun de
		at that time, (I cooked) Japanese meals with my friends.

12   Int.:   n.
                    mhm.

13   Sally: ganbatte shitemashita [kedo]
                    (I) worked hard (at it), though.

14   Int.:   [a, hontō].
                                                oh, really.

Excerpt 1. Sally POST [16'54"–17'14"]

In Excerpt 1, after having confirmed that Sally cooked for herself in the dormitory in Japan (lines 1, 3), the interviewer asks whether she cooked together with her friends (line 6). In response, Sally provides what seems to be background or preparatory information (lines 7, 9). This would be usually marked by *no da,* possibly followed by *kedo,* as in *atta n desu kedo* indicating that more relevant information is to follow. However by using *ne* instead, Sally "qualifies" this information as one over which she has weak authority, and, we would argue further, over which the hearer (H), and not herself, has authority. Indeed Morita (2002, building on Goffman 1981's notion of "authorship") characterizes the function of *ne* as the speaker's (S) advancing a stance of "weak" or "incomplete" authority in relation to the interlocutor, which consequently invites his/her uptake. However, as this is new information to H, it is not clear what H's uptake should be, and how she could possibly validate it.

The topic of Excerpt 2 is *gyūdon*, a Japanese dish, which John tasted for the first time in Japan and liked (lines 1 and 3). He then comments by saying that *gyūdon* is not easily found in restaurants in the UK (line 7). John's use of *ne* in this line may at first appear to be appropriate since the interviewer, living in the UK, should be familiar with the fact that that dish is not easy to find in the country, and thus, appealing to H's knowledge of this fact seems reasonable. However, his relinquishing his own authority over what seems to be an evaluative (hence rather personal and subjective) statement, i.e., his not taking responsibility for his evaluation, generates an incongruous effect.

1   John: demo ano gyūdon mo suki deshita
                   *but, umm, (I) liked gyūdon (a bowl of rice topped with
                   cooked beef and vegetables) too.*

2   Int.:   un un [un]
                   yes yes yes

3 John: [hajimete] tabemashita.
                         (I) ate (it) for the first time.

4 Int.:   a, sō na[no].
               oh, is that so?

5 John: [hai] sō de(su).
                            yes, it is.

6 Int.:   [he:]
               huh

7 John: [ma] igirisu de wa   anmari   taberaremasen **ne**.
               well UK   in TOP (not-)many eat-POT-POL-NEG SFP
               well in the UK (we) cannot eat (it) often, right?

Excerpt 2. John POST [6'36"–6'44"]

To acknowledge his commitment to the newly introduced information, while requesting H to share in his evaluation, would require the use of the particle *yone* instead.

Yone is a combination of *yo* and *ne*, where *yo* marks an epistemic stance of authority on the part of the S that is not open to negotiation on the part of H (Morita 2002: 227). *Yone*, therefore, shares both functions of *yo* and *ne* and indicates that the S is claiming authority toward the utterance (by *yo*) while requiring H's validation (by *ne*). According to Hasunuma (1995), the function of *yone* is to invite a shared cognitive representation, and to create a mutual understanding between S and H. Given John's plausible line of argument described above, and the participants' mutual epistemic stances at the time of the utterance in line 7, *yone*, and not *ne*, would appear to be the appropriate marker. Mine (1995) and Masuda (2009) reported independently that *yone* was not observed at all in their spoken L2 data. The results of our study further suggest that *yone* may be mastered later than *ne* and *yo*.[14]

5.2. *No da*

Unlike SFP, learners showed only a moderate—and not significant—increase in their use of *no da* between PRE and POST. However, interestingly, although learners used *no da* very sparingly, when they did so, it was judged to be appropriate. It was its non-use that often resulted in some degree of inappropriateness. This tendency to underuse *no da* found in learners' spoken data corroborates the findings of Tsukahara (1998) and the references therein, and the fact that errors are found more in learners' non-use of *no da* than in their use of *no da* has also been

observed in written contexts in previous research such as Koganemaru (1990). However, many of the studies examine learners with Chinese or Korean L1 background, or use written judgment tasks or analyze learners' compositions.[15] Hence, what is known about English learners' use of *no da* in speaking is very limited.

When used in declarative sentences *no da* functions to present the proposition it modifies as a background, a reason, a rationale or a conclusion, by connecting the bracketed content to a state of affairs or to information (to be) introduced in the (preceding or unfolding) discourse (cf. Noda 1997, Nitta 2000). Such a connection between the proposition and its co-text/context is made subjectively by the S, and the statement marked by *no da*—unlike bare affirmative utterances—signals the S's subjective judgment, or interpretation of such connections. When a not-yet-shared proposition is presented with *no da*, H is invited to interpret it as projecting relevance to preceding or unfolding discourse.

No da was introduced to the participants of our study in Year 1, and re-encountered in new contexts throughout Year 2. But, as we noted, learners continued to underuse it even at POST. One learner (Emma) never used it in either PRE or POST, another (John) used it only twice in PRE and never in POST.

Many of learners' utterances were judged by the raters to be inappropriate because of the absence of *no da*. Such utterances lacked the indication of the S's judgment with regard to the information status and failed to mark information as (arguably) related and relevant to the on-going discourse.

1	Tim:	boku itta Koko-Ichiban wa
		(the) Koko-Ichiban I went to…
2	Int.:	n.
		yeah..
3	Tim:	nanka weitā [ga ite
		well, there were waiters, and
4	Int.:	[weitā ga ita?
		there were waiters?
5	Tim:	[n.]
		yeah
6	Int.:	[a, hontō?]
		oh, really
7	Tim:	sābisu arimashita.
		there was service.

8	Int.:	a, sō na n da: he::

wow, is that right?

9	Tim:	un, de, toppingu ga ooi [no de]

and because there were lots of toppings

10	Int.:	[Un,un,un]

uh-huh, uh-huh

11	Tim:	jibun ga sukina mono [**taberemasu**].

self   NOM favorite things eat-POT-POL-NONPAST
you can eat what you like

12	Int.:	[un, un] sō yone:

yeah, that's right, isn't it?

Excerpt 3. Tim POST [4'14"–4'27"]

Tim (POST) has been talking about his three favorite restaurants in Japan, and in this excerpt, about a curry restaurant called Koko-Ichiban. In line 7 he repeats a statement made prior to this passage that this restaurant offers a variety of topping choices and adds that one can freely choose what one likes (lines 9 and 11) as a simple fact unrelated to what has been discussed. Koganemaru (1990: 186–188) argues that in sentences consisting of two clauses with the structure [cause/reason + consequence], when the information focus is on the former, the clause expressing the consequence must be marked by *no da.* Line 11 expresses the consequence of the information focused on in line 9, and this would have to be marked accordingly. According to Koganemaru, among various types of errors in the category of non-use of *no da,* this is the most frequent. The use of *no da* would also signal the potential link between this information and the current discourse and its relevance to the activity he is engaged in (i.e., describing his favorite restaurant and explaining the reasons); Tim's non-use abdicates this inference to the interlocutor's goodwill.[16]

Betty (POST) sometimes used *no da* appropriately but occasionally failed to do so. Prior to Excerpt 4, Betty stated that the most important people she had met were her Japanese host family, from whom she learned a great deal about Japanese culture. In the excerpt, she is recounting her activities with them.

1	Int.:	donna koto o manabimashita, naraimashita, shūkan to ka?

what did you learn (from them), like Japanese customs?

2	Betty:	a:: sono kazoku:?

ah, (you mean from) the family?

3 Int.:   n. kazoku kara.
          yes, from the family.

4 Betty: ano, iroiro nan ka, ano sono kazoku:
          well, umm, various, well, the family

5   no: iroiro ano nihon no kazoku ga [ano:]=
          erm (my) Japanese family, various…

6 Int.:   [un]
                                           yeah

7 Betty: =iwau ano [matsuri to ka ano hinamatsuri to ka:]
          celebrations, festivals such as the Girls' Day…

8 Int.:   [n   n n n n n n n:]
                    uh-huh, uh-huh

9 Betty: sono yō na koto[o:] ano:=
          such things, well…

10 Int.:   [un]
                         uh-huh

11 Betty: =ano, mirare[te:]
          well, I was able to see and

12 Int.:   [he:]
                     wow

13 Betty: soshite ano mochi tsuki [to ka:
          and well such as rice cake pounding…

14 Int.:   [a: he:
                                  wow…

15   e, honto. Kō yatte, kō yatte tsuku [yatsu]?
          really. Pounding like this?

   Betty: [sō sō sō]
                                            right, right

16 Int.:   [he:
          really.

17 Betty: [yatte **mimashita**.
          do   try-POL-PAST
          I tried it.

18 Int.:   a, honto ni?
          really?

19 Betty: @@ zenzen jōzu de wa nakatta   **n desu** kedo.
              at-all good COP   NEG-PAST   no.da-POL-NONPAST but
              not that I was good at it at all.

20 Int.:   @@

21 Betty: sore wa, a, sore wa ano, chichi ga ano: itta   toki,
          that TOP ah that TOP erm father NOM erm go-PAST time

chichi mo   ano: watashi yori jōzu ni ano: <u>yatte</u>
father also erm me   than well   erm do

mimashita.
try-POL-PAST
that… that… when my father went, he also tried pounding it and
did so better than I did.

Excerpt 4. Betty POST [8'49"–9'22"]

The highlight of her recount may be in line 17—she even tried pounding steamed rice herself in a traditional way. This line arguably exemplifies the actual instance in which Betty experienced the Japanese culture. Though *no da* is conventionally used when a concrete example is offered to support the content conveyed in the previous context (Noda 1997: 97), its absence in 17 is appropriate if we interpret the prosodic prominence on the predicate and falling intonation as a signal of a "punch line" in Betty's story (i.e., a "heightened," "foreground" activity).[17] However, its absence in line 21 makes the utterance unnatural. The use of *no da* here would signal S's intention to make the proposition relevant to the overall story of her unskilled attempt, by providing the S's conclusion (a qualifying comment) to the story, just as she does in line 19. Line 21 sounds like an afterthought, part of this commentary about her lack of skill, as she provides the additional observation that even her father was better than she. But because this sequence lacks *no da,* H is again charged with the task (the interpretive effort) of assessing the relevance of this statement to the on-going activity.[18]

Betty does adequately use *no da* in her additional comment about this experience in line 19, but not in the functionally comparable line 21; such variability in Betty's production may appear to be a case of "free variation." However, her frequent use of *no da* within the formulaic sequence *n desu kedo* typically indicating the background, suggests that this noticeable formulaic form is Betty's "entry point" to the meaning(s) of *no da,* which may then spread to other *no da* constructions, including its (morpho-syntactically) independent use. Indeed, all of Betty's seven uses of *no da* were used in this formula (V(NEG) *n desu kedo*), and such formula appeared pervasive also in 4 of the other 5 learners who used *no da* in POST (31 of 46 *no da* used by Helen, 13 of 24 by Lewis, 10 of 15 used by Tanya) or "V(NEG) *n desu ne*" (6 of 7 *no da* used by Sally). In fact the findings by Oba (1995) and Tsukahara (1998) also suggest that

the composite forms containing *n desu ga* are not particularly difficult to acquire.

Learners often did not mark their subjective judgment with regard to the relevance of the propositions to the on-going discourse. Consequently, H is assigned the full responsibility of drawing inferences and making judgments on whether or how the stated proposition contributes to the goal of the interaction, and this prevents the genuine co-construction of a discursive space.

5.3 Bare Affirmatives

The choice to include bare affirmatives in our study derives from a first impressionistic observation (also noted in some previous studies, e.g., Sasaki and Kawaguchi 1994) that learners' production appeared to differ from native speakers' with regard to utterance endings; more specifically, we noted that many learners' utterances sounded baffling to the three raters, as though something was missing, which made interpretation sometimes problematic. Arguably, in some cases this could be the result of learners' reliance on contextual (i.e., discourse-based) inferences, as opposed to the *grammaticalized* marking of such discourse features in Japanese (cf. also Dittmar 1993: 217). The absence of such marking occasionally generated further contextual effects: the learners sounded too assertive or direct (e.g., producing too brutally *factual* conceptualizations). Previous research on Japanese modality often hints at similar discursive inadequacies (Trent 1997: 78). The quantitative results confirm learners' reliance on unmodalized utterances, and in addition to Excerpts 3 and 4 (which also involved such strategy) we discuss a further example here.

The category that we labeled "bare affirmatives" consists of utterances whose predicate does not include overt modal markers. Predicates include verbal, adjectival, or nominal (with or without the "marker" *da*) types.

1	Int.:	e, Ema-san wa minami no hō no shusshin desu ka. Igirisu: [no doko dakke].
		and, you, Emma, are you from the South? Whereabout in the UK were you from?
2	Emma:	[igirisu no…] nyūkassuru [to iu]=
		(I'm from) a place called Newcastle, in the UK.
3	Int.:	[a, nyūkassuru]
		ah, Newcastle!

4	Emma:	=[anoo
		erm…
5	Int.:	[a, honto.]
		really.
6	Emma:	=[a… kita no.
		north…
7	Int.:	hai hai hai.
		yes, yes, yes.
8	Emma:	a: hoku…hokubu?
		north…north.region?
9	Int.:	hokubu
		north.region
10	Emma:	hokubu. [n:].
		morth.region. mhm.
11	Int.:	[a, sō nan] desu ka. he: [sokka, sokka].
		is that so. aha, I see, I see.

12   Emma: [u:n. demo:] ano: hontō no
                                               yes but   well real   GEN
       fuyu ga
       winter NOM
       mhm. but, well, a real winter

| 13 | Int.: | n. |
| | | *mhm* |

14   Emma: igirisu ni   wa nai@   [**arimasen**].
              UK   LOC TOP exist-NEG-NONPAST   exist-NEG-NONPAST-POL
              can't be found in the UK (lit. *there is none*).

15   Int.:   [soo desu yone:]=
                                                  that's true=

16   =sō desu yone:. sukottorando de mo anmari: ne:?
               =that's true. even in Scotland…

<div align="center">Excerpt 5. Emma POST [4'52"–5'13"]</div>

In this conversation, Emma has been talking about her city of origin, when she produces what appears to be an additional, discretionary evaluative comment about winters in the UK (lines 12 and 14). Being a personal evaluative comment (an opinion), it is true that S can claim full authority over it, and that H can claim none[19]. However, its bare form, which indexes it as an unchallengeable certain fact, makes it a fact declared out of the blue, and whose role in the context of conversation is unclear. In a sense, Emma's contribution is *monological*, rather than *dialogical.* If Emma had intended this statement as a conversational

gambit aimed at enhancing her contribution to the dialogue with an interesting and relevant additional comment, she should arguably have provided a more explicit indication of its interactional (rather than mere propositional) value—for example, by using a sentence-final particle marking such joint relevance, such as *yone*.

5.4 Summary and Discussion of Qualitative Analyses

The examples of learners' use of modality markers discussed above seem to indicate that even after extended periods of instruction (more than 350 hours of formal instruction) and naturalistic exposure (10–12 months stay including formal instruction in Japan), many learners produce discourse that is perceived by expert users of the language as somewhat non-natural or inappropriate (i.e., failing to *grammatically* mark some types of modal meaning conventionally marked as such).

Figure 2 clearly shows that unmodalized sentences are a distinctive feature of learners' speech both before and after study abroad, and considering, on one hand, that our data gave no indication that forms such as deontic and other epistemic markers pose a particular difficulty to learners, and on the other the arguable difficulties with *no da* and SFPs detailed above, it suggests that the impression of "abruptness" or "soliloquy-likeness" is at least partly due to learners' non-use of the pragmalinguistic resources available in Japanese for marking the interactional status of the information.

Such impressions were attributed to ineffective handling of information status, which violated expert users' expectations of interactional relevance. Even at PRE, learners are able to produce meaningful and fluent discursive sequences, including complex (coordinated, subordinated) utterances and a wide range of discourse connectives, but in many cases, and still so at POST, the contribution of many of the learners' utterances (their propositional meaning) to the ongoing context has to be worked out inferentially by the H, or requires additional inferential effort on the part of the speaker, as the utterances themselves fail to display such indexical marking. It is for this reason that learners' discourse strikes us as "un-cooperative" (in a Gricean sense) or irrelevant (in a Sperber and Wilsonian sense), a communicative "style" that on occasion is liable to project unfavorable impressions. Much, though of course not all, of this pragmatic marking clusters on the predicate, and is conveyed by non-salient, non-transparent grammatical items. Learners at POST show an increased convergence to native

speaker patterns of use, but their interlanguage still displays features of a system in progress (formulaic usage, simplification).

The learners' rather clear-cut reliance on bare affirmatives, together with the uneven and limited usage of SFPs and *no da* at both PRE and POST (both of which were pointed out by Sasaki and Kawaguchi 1994, and Watanabe and Iwasaki 2009, respectively) does suggest problems with the form-function mapping: learners have been introduced to these markers in their first year, have been further exposed to them throughout the second year and during the study abroad, and yet still seem to underuse them, compared to native speakers, at both PRE and POST. Apart from the processing difficulties which we have argued (see section 4.3) may be responsible for such behavior, learners' reliance on unmarked (unmodalized) predicates could also be caused, as Ishida (2006) maintains, by (negative) morpho-syntactic transfer (e.g., the transfer of zero marking). Considering the sample excerpts in the previous section, this line of analysis would be possible at least for non-use of utterance modals by the English native participants.[20]

Further analyses will have to be conducted on our data to test whether the meanings expressed by these modal markers are systematically encoded elsewhere, and if so with which pragmatic (i.e., context-dependent, implicit devices) or lexical means. This would confirm whether learners are aware of these cognitive categories and instead struggle with online processing. The limited observations conducted so far would confirm previous findings (e.g., Giacalone-Ramat 1992) in that low proficiency level learners may attempt to express relevant modal meanings (i.e., may attempt to qualify their statements epistemically), but prefer lexical over grammatical means of expression: Betty's interviews, for example, show her uttering *chotto wakarimasen ga* ('I'm not sure/don't know but…') followed by a bare affirmative in PRE, but no such phrases and a good range of predicate modals in POST. Increased proficiency (and the exposure gained during a year of study abroad) would seem to free-up resources for noticing non-propositional meanings (see similar findings summarized in Kasper and Roever 2005), but their acquisition seems to require higher proficiency levels and a considerable incubation time. This line of enquiry will need to be pursued further in future studies.

6. Conclusions and Implications for Teaching

Our study has outlined different patterns of modalization between native and learner varieties, both on a quantitative and qualitative level. The former analysis illustrated the emergence of a system that, overall, progressively approximates, while not entirely matching, the native variety for the low intermediate to low advanced proficiency levels examined. The latter analysis illustrated patterns of use that were arguably non-target-like.

It is difficult, on the basis of analyses conducted here and with no access to learners' retrospective accounts, to state unequivocally whether the impression of learners' inappropriateness results from inadequate *cognitive representations* of information status or non-native *interactional handling* of information status (i.e., pragmalinguistic vs. sociopragmatic issues).

Inadequate cognitive representations may be linked to difficulties in the form-function mapping, and be caused by the learners' reliance on pragmatic or lexical, rather than grammatical means (which we have not fully explored in this study). The examples discussed above excluded, as we noted, those cases where the three raters produced inconsistent judgments, which we attributed to the raters' different degrees of tolerance of non-native discourse. The many cases we have *not* discussed, therefore, may have better accounted for judgments of sociopragmatic inappropriateness. Those we have discussed, in contrast, may better illustrate the more serious cognitive procedural hiccups that a learner's discourse can induce. Nevertheless, the borderline between the two is indeed rather subtle,[21] and inadequacies at the level of cognitive representations invariably have potential interpersonal consequences: interpersonal attitudes or identities are not indexed directly by specific linguistic forms, but via the indexing of, among other things, cognitive stances such as epistemic ones.[22]

Of course non-native (pragmatic) behavior can also be the result of a legitimate claim to a non-native identity. But such competent strategic behavior requires at least to a certain extent both grammatical competence and the knowledge of a myriad of interactional socio-cultural conventions, including the operative frames in which social action is carried out (e.g., competitive vs. cooperative, cf. Pizziconi 2009b), normative interactional stances (e.g., an *intersubjective* understanding of "information territories," such as the understanding of the relative authority that participants may have or claim over

information) and the identities that these stances help constituting (Ochs 1996), and many others. Without knowledge of these conventions (which requires a great deal of instruction and/or exposure) identity-indexing or identity-constituting behavior can hardly be entirely deliberate.

This brings us to the question of whether instruction remains necessary for these forms even at intermediate/advanced levels. Although learners' use of SFP or *no da* did not seem to be related to their proficiency (some learners being more "sensitive" than others to the forms and functions of modal markers), we feel that the amount of attention devoted in textbooks and classrooms to the meanings afforded by these forms is perhaps not proportional to the pervasiveness of their usage and their importance in conveying crucial features of native discourse, both at the cognitive and the interactional level. With regards to SFP (especially *ne* and *yo*), for example, although they appear in conversation models in all the textbooks used by our learners, they fail to appear in application exercises, and communicative activities would have to be specifically designed to elicit their usage. Descriptions of the functions are generally rather vague about their interactional implications. With regards to *no da*, the form (along with brief explanations of its functions) is presented in the Year 1 textbook, but the complex, non-transparent form-meaning relation it indexes makes it difficult to use—as evidenced by its consistent underuse in our data. In the Year 2 textbooks, *no da* appears in formulaic sequences such as *X to omou n desu kedo* 'I think that X but...', and exercises are designed for the practice of those formulae. Such instructional strategies, along with the increased noticeability of the formula, may facilitate form-function mapping; however, extracting the meaning of *no da* from such formulae and then reapplying it to new contexts may be rather challenging, or at least an analytical process which is only possible at higher developmental stages.

The notion that targeted instruction can make L2 pragmatic practices more accessible (as suggested by Bardovi-Harlig's 2001 review of empirical studies) seems plausible also for the features analyzed here. Implicit techniques may not be the most effective, given the elusiveness of notions such as "interactional relevance," "background," "information sharing," and others we have discussed. Explicit techniques too need perhaps to be refined so that comprehensible accounts can be produced that are relevant to learners, and, ideally, that extend the focus of instruction to the interpersonal consequences of the manipulation of modal meanings. Whatever the technique, it is only in discursive,

interactional contexts that such features can be appreciated, and our study calls for a more decisive turn of pedagogical practices in this direction.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] The term *modariti* is common in Japanese studies and warranted by its reference to a much broader range of expressions and meanings than those investigated in English studies of modality, i.e., typically modal verbs.

[2] A more comprehensive communicative and intersubjective conceptualization of modal markers from a functional perspective (a perspective tested in L2 acquisition studies of European languages, e.g., Giacalone-Ramat 1992, Dittmar 1992) is a task we commit ourselves to in future studies. See Pizziconi (2009a) for a discussion of one specific epistemic marker from this standpoint.

[3] Interlanguage pragmatics studies have suggested that the length of stay abroad may be a better predictor of pragmatic development than proficiency levels (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 683). However, apart from the 10–12 months of residence in Japan required by the program, the amount of previous visits to Japan was not sufficiently large to warrant further investigations of its effects (see Table 1) except, perhaps, for Tanya. For this reason we did not pursue this issue in this study.

[4] The native speaker raters were not given any training; however, untrained naïve native speakers' impressions are reported to correlate with official OPI ratings (Iwasaki 2011).

[5] The native speaker rating of PRE interview samples, incidentally, appears to correlate with the learners' academic grades prior to the year abroad (Pearson correlation, $r = 0.795$, $p = 0.018$). Post-year abroad grades were not available as the learners followed different paths in their program of study.

[6] Year 1 courses have two tracks: "Elementary" and "Accelerated Elementary," differing in the total amount of contact hours per year (220 for Elementary vs. 154 for Accelerated). Tanya had some prior knowledge of Japanese by self-study and was placed in the latter, all others in the former. Year 2 students had 176 contact hours of formal instruction per year.

[7] Here, we do not claim that any type of modal expressions can appear in all of the clauses in (6), nor that any other type of clause always rejects a modal expression. Rather, we consider modalizable predicates those that admit a "genuine modal" (e.g., *darō* 'will probably') and/or a polite form (e.g. *desu/masu)*.

[8] Shin'ya (2009: 227) considers utterances without a predicate to be full-fledged functional units from the viewpoint of discourse modality (Maynard, 1993).

[9] NS is also significantly higher than PRE in the proportion of adjuncts (modal adverbs) although no significant differences were observed between NS and learners at POST. Due to space limitation, we will not discuss this category further here.

[10] This would also suggest that learners' analysis of *no da* is a more challenging task than its adoption in formulaic uses, in clusters such as *iku n desu yo* 'go no da-(POL) SFP' (cf. our discussion of Excerpt 4).

[11] For example, this would be accounted for by the distinction between *knowledge (representation)* and *control*, whereby poor control mechanisms (limited efficiency or lack of automatization) affect the access to and retrieval of knowledge, hypothesized by Bialystock (2011 among others; see Segalowitz and Hulstijn (2005) with regard to automaticity) to be a feature of interlanguage.

[12] The information-based or cognitive dimensions of SFPs are discussed in McGloin (1990), Masuoka (1991), Kamio (1990), Takubo and Kinsui (1997) among many others. Maynard's (1993) discourse modality study too, which expands on Kamio, can be grouped in the information-based analyses, although her discussion occasionally refers to the social implications of

possessing/displaying information in interaction (e.g., 1993: 196 on the particle *ne*).

[13] The average number of SFP use at PRE is 7.8 but 21 at POST. It should also be noted, however, that most of them are *ne* and *yo*; *yone* appeared only once at PRE (Tanya) and is still scarce in POST (except for Tim who uses *yone* 11 times).

[14] It should also be pointed out that *yone* is not used frequently by native speakers either (Masuda 2009). However in our study, while 7 out of 8 native speakers used *yone* (average = 4.1), only 2 out of 8 learners did (average = 0.1 for PRE and 2 for POST).

[15] Other studies investigating learners' use or comprehension of *no da* with respect to types of functions, conditions of non-use or use of *no da*, and/or proficiency levels, are found in Yō (1990), Muramatsu (1990), Oba (1995), and Zhao (2008).

[16] One may wonder why the relevance of the statement cannot be derived propositionally, perhaps via Gricean implicatures, but it is the functional specialization of the marker *no da* which triggers the assumption of non-relevance of the unmarked proposition.

[17] We owe this observation to a perceptive anonymous reviewer who we thank here.

[18] Arguably the sentence is compositionally somewhat "clunky" and could be phrased as follows: *Chichi mo itta toki yatte mimashita/mita n desu kedo, watashi yori mo jōzu datta **n desu*** (When my father went [to Japan], he also tried [pounding rice], but [he] was better than I was). However the main point remains, regarding the *no da* marking of the final predicate, along the lines suggested above.

[19] This case could correspond to Nitta (2000: 98)'s *kakunin no modariti* (based on one's previous experience) or *kakushin no modariti* or modality of "certain" belief (in reference to a world created by S's thoughts, imagination or inference), both cases of (epistemic) affirmative modality. However it is unclear on what grounds S can make this statement as a non-challengeable one, since the H also lives in the UK and may well be entitled to a different opinion. We argue that the perception of the utterance's "inadequateness" arises at the interactional level and as a result of sociopragmatic dynamics (rather than grammatical or purely cognitive).

[20] In fact, Finnish has two particles which are reminiscent of *no da* and SFP. One is *-pa* or *-pas*, a second position clitic particle (encliticized to the first

constituent), which has a variety of uses, such as for example contradicting a previously made assertion. The other is -*hän*, which is frequently used and again has a range of meanings such as showing that the information conveyed is already known both by S and H; this can (like some SFP) be translated into English by a tag question (we owe this information to Anders Holmberg, whom we thank here). However, the proportion of bare affirmatives that Helen produced does not seem to be particularly smaller than that of other participants, and thus we cannot make any conclusive remarks on L1 effects.

[21] Previous research on the pragmatics of information management in Japanese (e.g., Kamio 1997, 2002) provides a very solid framework to investigate some of the cognitive norms regulating Japanese discourse. Trent (1997: 87), however, noted the failure of such research to appreciate its sociolinguistic implications. Our study points precisely at the interconnection between these two domains.

[22] For example, although the *monological* rather than *dialogical* tone which we claimed characterized Emma's contribution in Excerpt 5 does not, in that context, have obvious interpersonal implications, the stance thus constituted could in determined contexts be construed as rather un-cooperative or self-centered. See also Pizziconi (2009a) for a study of the interactional consequences of the use of epistemics.

Appendix

Transcript symbols and abbreviations used in the interlinear glosses:

> @ = laughter
> [= start of overlapping talk
>] = end of overlapping talk
> INT = interjection
> GEN = genitive
> LOC = locative particle
> NEG = negative
> NOM = nominative
> NONPAST = non-past
> PAST = past

POL = polite (predicate)
POT = potential
TOP = topic

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