

The Second International Workshop on Linguistics of *ba*  
Future University Hakodate  
July 4-5, Sunday, 2015

# How is spoken Japanese more *ba*-oriented than English?

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# What is *ba* ?

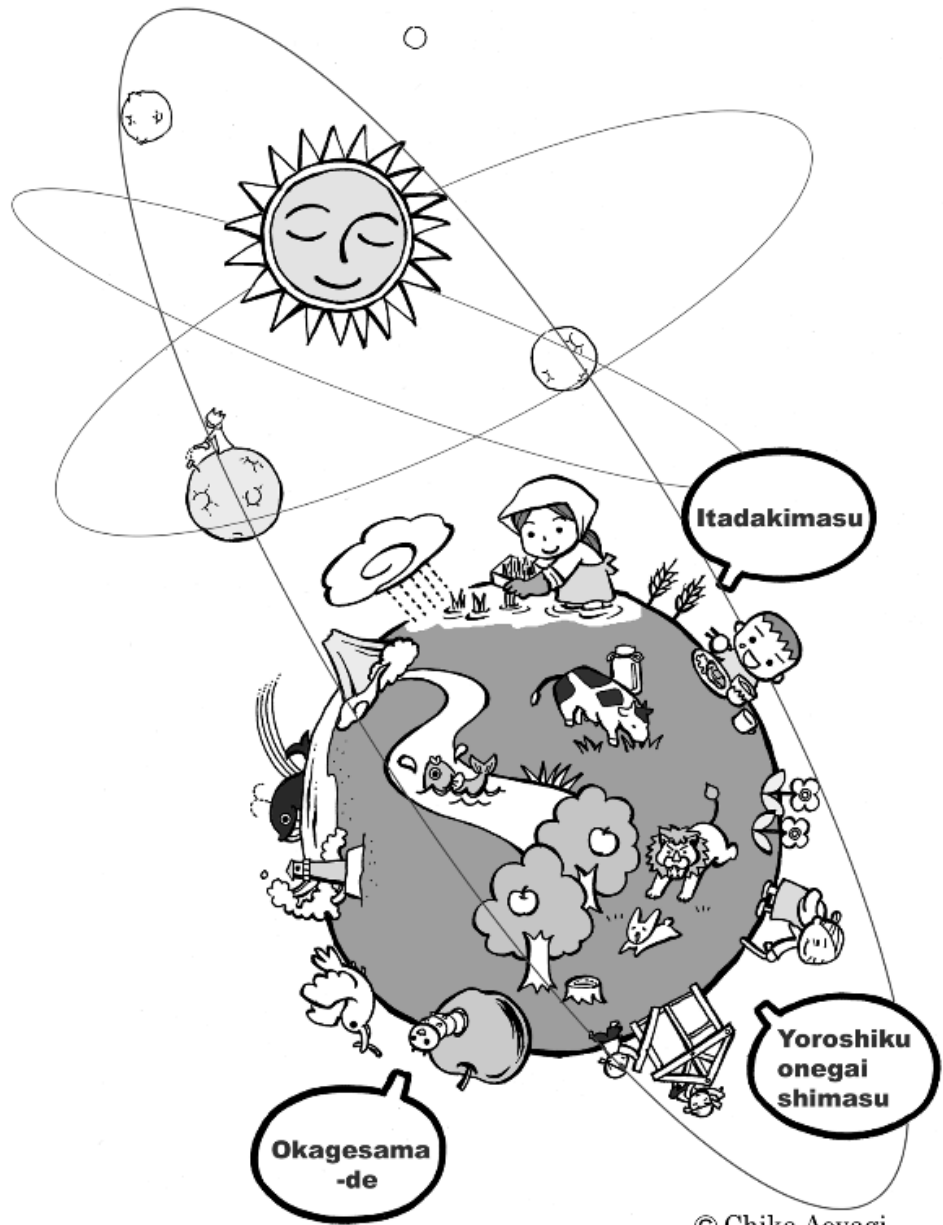
- *Ba* is a way of thinking that complements the reductionistic scientific way of thinking.
- *Ba* is literally 'field', but it is different from 'field' a la P. Bourdieu.
- While in the *ba* way of thinking, a person is considered as an element embedded in the space, while in 'field' a la Bourdieu, a person thinks he is an agent who acts in the space by his volitional power.
- *Ba* is perceived subjectively, whereas 'field' can be recognized objectively.

- How can we imagine a person who is an element embedded in the space in contrast to a person who believes that he is able to control everything by his volitional intention ?
- The following slide illustrates two different perspectives.



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A person in control of the space 'field'



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Persons embedded in space 'ba'

## *The explanation of the Figures*

*Figure on the left: A person in the center who says 'I think, therefore I am' symbolizes the modern scientific perspective that started with de Carte, in which it is assumed that things can be recognized objectively, and that a person can be in control of other things.*

*Figure on the right: People are embedded in space 'ba'. In other words, they exist interacting with each other, and perceiving/recognizing everything as parts of a whole.*

# What is *ba*-oriented language?

- It is a language that requires you to read the 'air' when you speak.
- What kind of air? It is the air of *ba*, the context of speaking.
- Japanese can't be spoken without taking *ba* into account.

# How we read the air of *ba* (1/5)

What day of the week is it today?

English

Today is Sunday.

Japanese

1) *kyou wa nichiyoubi da*

today TOP Sunday COP

2) *kyou wa nichiyoubi desu*

today TOP Sunday ADD. HON

3) *kyou wa nichiyoubi de gozaimasu*

today TOP Sunday CON SUP.HON

➤ There is **no unmarked form of** a Japanese predicate.

# How we read the air of *ba* (2/5)

## First person pronoun

### English

I

### Japanese

ZERO, *watakushi, watashi, boku, ore, jibun*

## Second person pronoun

### English

you

### Japanese

ZERO, *anata, anta, kimi, omae, kisama*



How we read the air of *ba* (3/5)

## Demonstratives

### English

this , that, it

### Japanese

*kore, are, sore*

this that ?

Is '*sore*' equivalent to 'it' ?

# Is '*sore*' equivalent to 'it'?

**it** (Oxford Dictionary of English)

third person singular pronoun

Used to refer to a thing previously mentioned or easily identified, or referring to an animal or child of unspecified sex, or referring to a fact or situation previously mentioned, known, or happening.

***sore*** (Koujien, a most widely used Japanese dictionary)

A demonstrative to index something **close to the hearer** in terms of space, time or psychological distance.

## How we read the air of *ba* (4/5)

One of the context-related elements of '*ba*' is **modality**, which is placed at the end of an utterance to express what the hearer knew when it was made, that is, whether it was shared information or not.

**Scene:** Taro is eating something and expresses his feeling about it.

**English:** tag question

This is good, isn't it?

**Japanese:** final particles

*kore oishii ne*

(When the hearer shares the information.)

*kore oishii yo*

(When the hearer doesn't share the information.)

➤ It is obligatory in Japanese to discern whether the hearer knows the content of the proposition, and to index it by sentence final particles *ne* or *yo*.

## Pragmatic rules of choosing *sore/are* and *yo/ne*

### *sore/are*

It is pragmatically obligatory to discern whether ‘*sore* (it)’ is near **the hearer** or not. When it is near the hearer, *sore* is used, and if not, *are* (that) is used.

### *yo/ne*

It is pragmatically obligatory to discern whether the hearer already knows something in question. When the hearer knows it, *ne* is used, and if not, *yo* is used.

➤ It is an obligatory rule for the speaker to discern the physical and/or psychological state of **the hearer**.

# How we read the air of *ba* (5/5)

The speaker discerns whether the person talked about belongs to the *uchi* (in-group, a Japanese social constraint) of the speaker or not.

English

Taro is ill.

Japanese

The person talked about belongs to the speaker's *uchi*

*Taro wa byouki da*

Taro TOP ill COP

The person talked about doesn't belong to the speaker's *uchi*.

*Taro san wa byouki dat-te*

HON.TL

I hear

## What elements of *ba* must the speaker discern? (1/2)

- 1) Formality of the setting  
Index it by the choice of addressee honorifics or formal forms of personal pronouns.
- 2) Interactional relationship (whether the hearer is superior vis-à-vis the speaker, or a stranger.)  
Index it by the choice of personal pronouns.
- 3) How the speakers want to identify themselves; (how the speaker wants to present himself, eg., as a male)  
Index the utterance by the choice of first person pronouns

What elements of *ba* must the speaker discern? (2/2)

- 4) Whether or not the thing in question is near the hearer

Index it by the choice of '*sore*' instead of '*are*'

- 5) Whether or not the hearer knows it

Index it by the choice of '*ne*' instead of '*yo*'

- 6) Whether the person talked about does or does not belong to the in-group of the speaker

Index it by making the utterance recognizable as hearsay

# Interim summary

➤ In English, grammatical agreement is obligatory.

Agreement is between the subject and predicate forms in terms of person and number.

Additionally, coherence of the terms in discourse is in order.

➤ In Japanese, pragmatic agreement is obligatory.

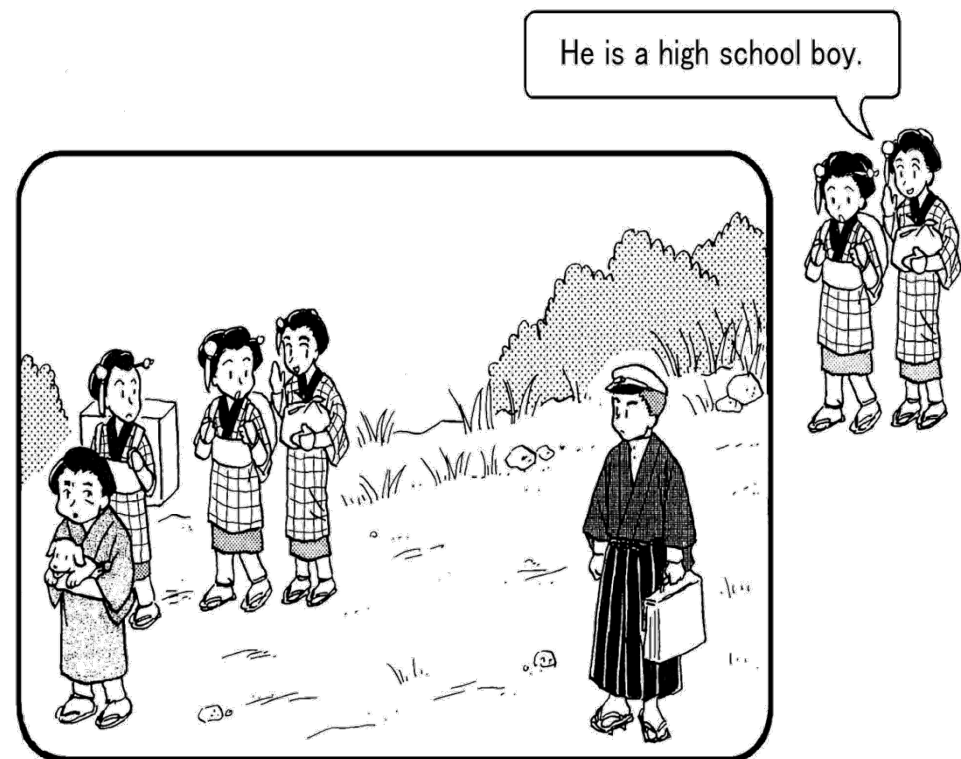
Agreement is between language forms/expressions and the speaker's perception of *ba* elements.



Let's compare Japanese and English.



Kawabata, *Izu Dancer*  
 Translation by E. Seidensticker



# How different are Japanese and English?

## Japanese

「*Koutou gakkou no gakusei san yo*」

high school GEN student HON. TITLE FP

**English** ‘He is a high school boy.’

## What is missing in Japanese?

He (subject), is (predicate), a (article)

⇒ **grammatically** obligatory elements for English

## What is missing in English?

*san* (honorific title), *yo* (FP)

⇒ **pragmatically** obligatory elements in Japanese

# Spoken English

- In speaking English, it is grammatically obligatory to include a subject ('he') and a predicate ('is'). It is also obligatory to have an article to show definiteness or indefiniteness.

# Spoken Japanese (1/2)

- In speaking Japanese, there is no need to have either a subject or a predicate, or show definiteness or indefiniteness.
- But it is pragmatically obligatory to have agreement with the speaker's discernment as to the elements of *ba* and to index this discernment with language forms. Pragmatic agreement in Japanese requires more than that.

## Spoken Japanese (2/2)

- It is required, for example, to index subject and predicate by the zero form.
- It means that, when the speaker is embedded in *ba*, immediacy of a you-and-I-are-here-together sort exists, and expressing this by indexing it with the zero form is obligatory.

What kind of differences are there between agreement in English and in Japanese?

Pragmatic agreement is not rule governed as in English. It is such that the speaker's discernment of the elements in *ba* is evidenced through the indexing by means of the chosen language forms, zero forms, or ergative constructions, among others.

Let's focus on personal pronouns. (1/4)

## First person pronoun

English: I

Japanese: zero, *watakushi*, *watashi*, *boku*, *ore*

## Second person pronoun

English: you

Japanese: zero, *anata*, *anta*, *kimi*, *omae*, *kisama*

➤ How are Japanese personal pronouns chosen?

If the zero form is the top priority, how do you know when to express it or not.



## Let's discuss personal pronouns.(2/4)

After WWII, the Japanese Education Ministry issued a guideline for language use to accommodate a post war democratic society. The guideline recommended the use of the personal pronouns '*watashi*' ('I') and '*anata*' ('you'), instead of the complex varieties of Japanese personal pronouns.

It was assumed that referring to the speaker and the addressee with the equivalent forms of 'I' and 'you' would be a way to cultivate individualism as the basis of a democratic society.

However, the guideline failed to achieve its aim.

## Let's discuss personal pronouns. (3/4)

- Why is it that the use of equivalent words for 'I' and 'you' as proposed by the Education Ministry does not work in Japanese?
- The theories of personal pronoun use in western scholarship (Brown and Gilman 1961 and others) have been unable to explain the complex phenomena of the use of personal pronouns in Japanese and some East Asian languages.

# Let's discuss personal pronouns. (4/4)

- The choice among the repertoire of personal pronouns is not made according to the speaker's volitional choices.
- Therefore, it is not a style shift (Cook 2008, Ikuta 2008), nor a frame shift (Park&Takanashi 2011).
- The shift is 'automatic, not readily subject to conscious recall' (Gumperz 1982:61). It is spontaneous and emergent.
- However, the question as to how the mechanism of 'automatic, spontaneous and emergent' choices functions has been unanswered until today.

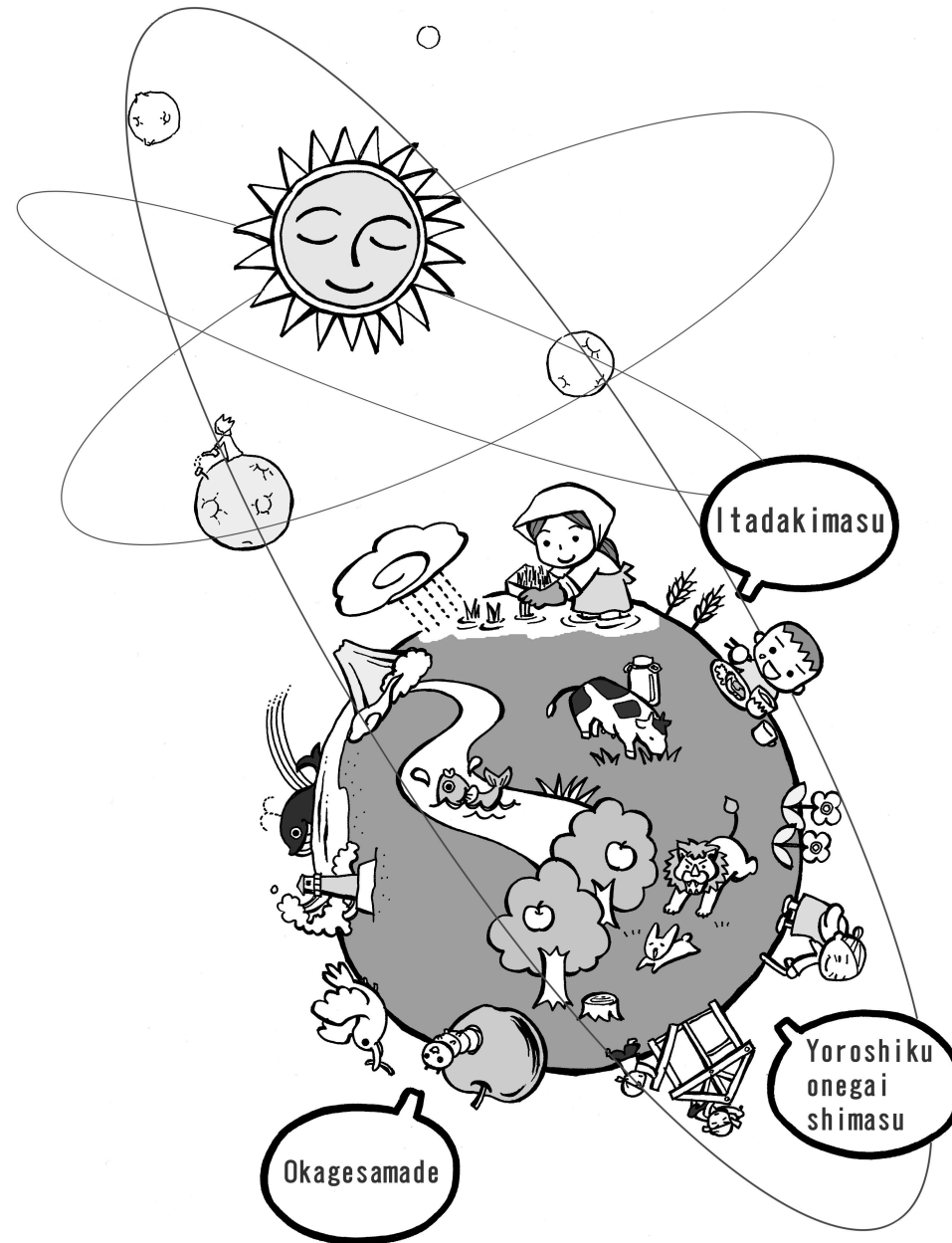
- Some interpretation other than a style/frame shift or sociolinguistic rules is necessary to explain the pragmatic agreement in Japanese.
- This question must be approached from a broader perspective than what has been discussed in modern linguistic and pragmatic theories.

- Pragmatic agreement can become understandable when we imagine the speaker who speaks as a part of the whole.
- What is it like to speak as a part of the whole?

- To explain what it means to speak as a part of the whole, a shift in perspective is necessary.
- What kind of shift of perspectives is required?

The shift is from a Ptolemaic  
to a Copernican perspective

# The shift to Copernican Perspective: *Ba* oriented perspective





- As explained earlier, it is the perspective of looking at all the things on the globe as interacting with each other.
- This is the Copernican perspective. It is a perspective of looking at the speaker embedded as a part of the whole. By “whole” is meant such things as globe, country, community, or the setting where the speaker stands. Perceiving *ba* as a whole, the speaker recognizes her *wakimae*, her sense of what is called for in *ba*, and speaks as a part of the whole.

- Is there a theory based on the Copernican perspective?
- There is, and it is *ba* theory, created by Professor Hiroshi Shimizu, Professor Emeritus of U. of Tokyo.

# What is *ba* theory? (1/3)

- The idea of ***ba*** resulted from the discovery of self-organization at the molecular level in the automatic movement of protein taken from muscle in an experiment in the laboratory.
- Dr. Shimizu thinks that the phenomenon of self-organization is a principle that is useful in understanding what is happening in the natural world, and in human societies.

## What is *ba* theory? (2/3)

- Ba theory, which is supposed to complement the reductionist approach, is characterized by the following.
- The logic of *ba*, the basis of *ba* theory, is non-linear,  
non-reductionist,  
not cause and effect,  
and not dichotomous.

# What is *ba* theory? (3/3)

- Assumptions of *ba* theory applicable to language and communication
  - 1. Immediacy**
  2. Inside perspective
  - 3. Dual mode thinking model** (static model)
  4. Improvised drama model (dynamic model)
  5. Covert communication
  - 6. Way of self organization**
- In this presentation, 1, 3 and 6 will be discussed.

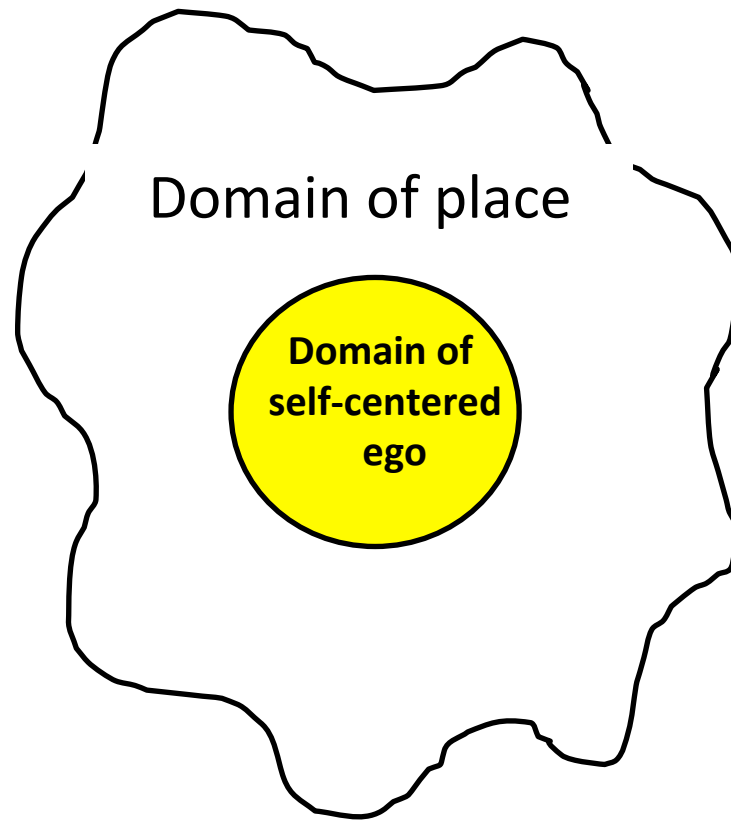
# Immediacy

- The first assumption of *ba* theory is the speaker's perspective of immediacy, direct experience, or a you-and-I-are-here-together perspective.
- It is a non objective perspective.

# Dual mode thinking model

- Rethinking the concept of self
- Is self an independent, concrete entity?
- Is the skin the boundary of your self?
- According to *ba* theory, the domain of self has two layers.

# The model of two domains of self



## Dual-Mode Thinking

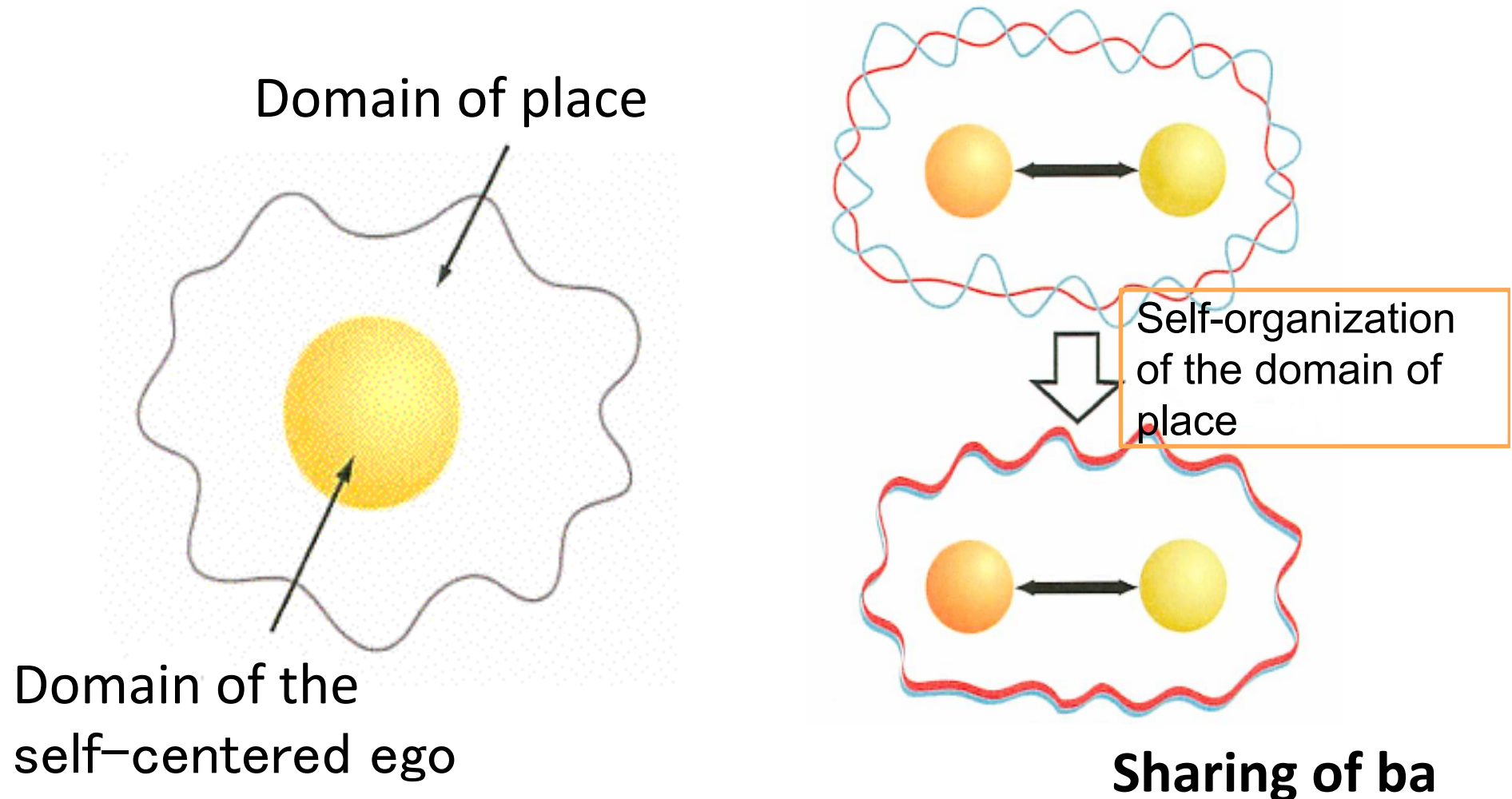
**A: Domain of self-centered ego**  
**recognized** in the neocortex of  
the brain

**B: Domain of place**  
**perceived** by the amygdala of the  
limbic system

**A** and **B** are working  
simultaneously.



# How the 'ba' is shared by two selves



# Way of self-organization

- Way of self-organization: Operational key for *ba* theory
- Self-organization is the spontaneous formation of spacio-temporal structures or functions in systems composed of few or many components.
- It is increasingly recognized that even the human brain may be considered as a self-organizing system, including its functioning in communication.
- *Ba* theory for pragmatics assumes *ba* is created and shared by the way of self-organization of two or more persons.

## How personal pronouns are used (1/3)

- Explanations in terms of *ba* theory.
- Assumption 1: Immediacy
- In spoken Japanese, as is often the case in languages other than English, the first and second personal pronouns are not usually verbalized.
- It is not because of the grammatical requirement, but because of the speaker's taking on a *ba* oriented perspective where the speaker embeds himself in *ba* and therefore, the reference to the first and second person pronouns are obvious in the immediate context of speaking.

## How the pronouns are used (2/3)

Explanations in terms of *ba* theory.

Assumption 3: Dual mode thinking

- We assume that the domain of the self-centered ego is recognized in the neocortex of the brain, while the domain of place is perceived by the amygdala of the limbic system.
- It is the domain of place of the self that merges with the domain of place of the self of others.

## How personal pronouns are used (3/3)

Explanations in terms of *ba* theory.

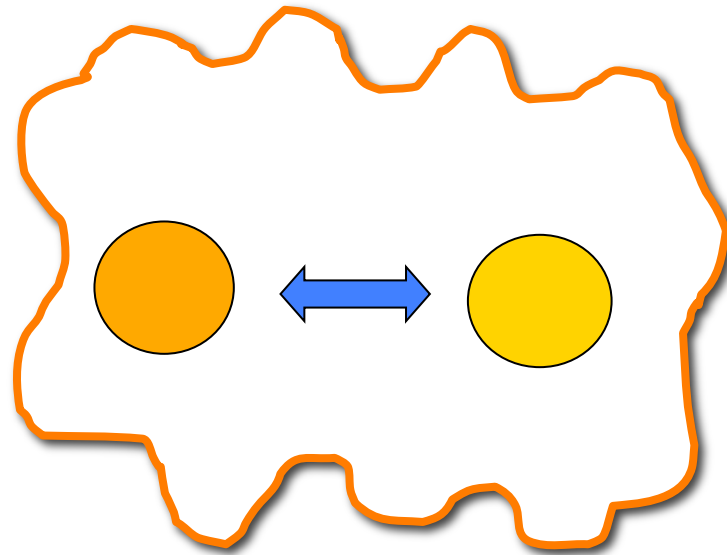
### Assumption 6: Way of self organization

- When the speakers are embedded in *ba*, they negotiate with the hearers who are sharing *ba*.
- What is happening in the shared *ba*? It is merging of two egg whites in self-organizing way, just as with the egg whites in the metaphorical model.
- In the process of merging of egg whites in self organizing way, the speaker instantly judges whether or not to express the pronouns or which pronouns should be used.

# Comparing Japanese and English

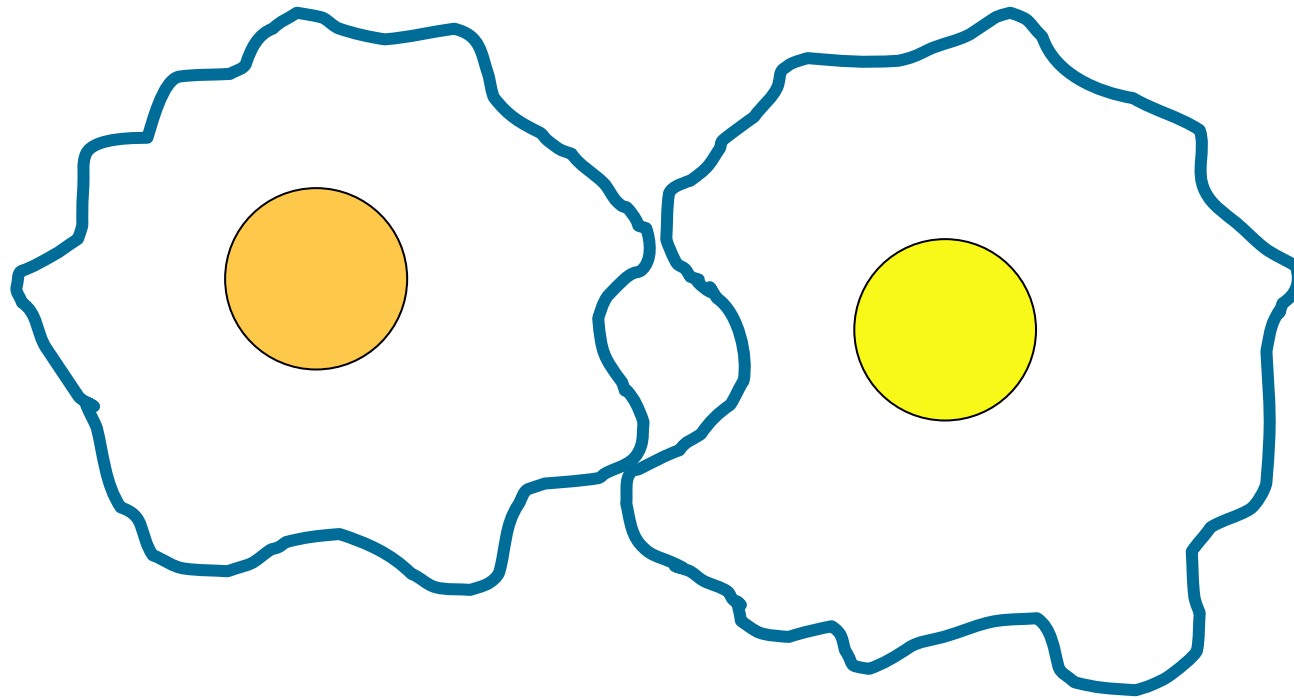
- The following two figures ( Fujii 2012) were drawn, based on the empirical findings of discourse data comparing Japanese and US Americans.
- What these figures represent is that, in Japanese, it is easier than in English to share the selves' domain of place.

# Japanese: Two selves in interaction



Fujii 2012

# US Americans: Two selves in interaction



Fujii 2012



# Concluding Remarks (1/2)

- We have seen that, while English has obligatory grammatical agreement, Japanese has obligatory pragmatic agreement.
- We have seen that this forces us to examine different ways of thinking to explain pragmatic agreement in Japanese.

## Concluding Remarks (2/2)

- We have introduced *ba* oriented thinking as an innovative idea to explain Japanese pragmatics.
- *Ba* oriented thinking, characterized by immediacy, dual mode thinking and way of self-organization, three of the six assumptions of *ba* theory, was introduced to illustrate how, in the choice among personal pronouns, the pragmatic agreement, obligatory in Japanese, is achieved.

Thank you very much.