Documenting Rural Gatherings in Aging Japan: Social Context and Language Use in Interaction at a Mobile Supermarket

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Abstract

This paper presents a documentation framework and an exploratory analysis of language use in everyday interactions at rural gatherings in aging Japan, a communicative setting shaped by distinct social contexts that remain largely absent from existing language resources. Drawing on studies of face-to-face encounters, we propose a typology of rural gatherings and examine mobile supermarkets (vehicles that transport and sell daily necessities at scheduled stops in areas that lack fixed retail stores) as a case study. We present a preliminary analysis based on a community-mediated recording methodology. The quantitative findings reveal that conversational hot spots occur immediately following the encounter and transaction phases, indicating that participants experience these encounters as occasions for social connection rather than mere commercial transactions. The qualitative findings from the interaction analysis demonstrate how participants simultaneously manage work and conversation through vocal, bodily, and temporal resources in a social context. We discuss how these findings illuminate dimensions in social contexts that require interdisciplinary investigation beyond what existing language resources currently capture.

Keywords: social context, rural gathering, language use in social interaction

1. Introduction

Language use is situated within social contexts shaped by various elements, including background knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and physical settings. As research involving social interaction analysis and linguistic anthropology has demonstrated, participants deploy multimodal resources to make their actions recognizable and accountable to others within specific social contexts. Understanding how these contexts shape language use requires an empirical study of diverse communicative settings, yet communities underrepresented in existing corpora remain largely undocumented. In this paper, we document interactions in rural Japan, where super-aging and depopulation have produced distinctive social settings.

Recent advances in corpus linguistics have enabled large-scale documentation of naturally occurring conversations, providing invaluable resources for linguistic research. The *Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation* (CEJC) contains over 200 hours of audio- and video-recorded daily activities with detailed annotations (Koiso et al., 2022). Studies using the CEJC have examined turn-taking, backchannels, and sequential organization across activity types (Koiso et al., 2022), including participant behavior in service encounters (Kishimoto, 2021). A preparatory survey (Koiso et al., 2016) characterized the types and settings of daily conversations, providing a baseline for corpus design. In addition, related projects, such as CEJC-child, which aims to document 100 hours of recorded interaction, are underway (Koiso et al., 2024).

However, these corpora exhibit a clear urban bias, with participants drawn primarily from Tokyo and surrounding areas (Koiso et al., 2022). This urban-centric focus neglects approximately 9.3% of Japan's population residing in rural areas (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2025)—communities that are most impacted by super-aging and depopulation. In rural regions, 39.7% of residents are elderly, compared to 28% nationally (ibid.). This percentage continues to increase as younger populations migrate to urban centers.

A distinctive feature of rural life is the emergence of new communicative settings. With the decline of local retail establishments, services such as mobile supermarkets, which are small trucks that transport and sell daily necessities at scheduled stops near customers' homes, have introduced new community spaces, especially for elderly residents. These localized communication practices require urgent documentation before they change significantly or lose their current form. Because they arise from particular configurations of social relationships, physical environments, and community needs, they can provide empirical evidence of how social context shapes language use in ways not captured by existing corpora.

To capture rural communication, address the urban bias in existing language resources, and facilitate comprehensive studies of language use in interaction, this paper proposes a systematic framework for documenting rural communication

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and describes aging society as a communicative practice through micro-level interaction analysis. Based on Goffman's (1963) concept of gatherings, we propose four types of rural gatherings and examine mobile supermarkets as a case study. In doing so, this study also aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the diversity of communicative settings, which may inform the development of annotation frameworks in future work. We address the following questions: (1) What temporal patterns characterize conversations at mobile supermarkets, and what do they reveal about the social functions of these encounters? (2) How do participants coordinate multiactivity through multimodal resources? (3) What dimensions of social context does this communicative setting present that are not yet represented in existing language resources?

2. Mobile Supermarkets as Rural Gatherings

2.1 Gathering

The concept of gathering, introduced by sociologist Goffman (1963), refers to individuals being co-present in the same space and sharing a social situation. Gatherings can occur not only during scheduled meetings but also in public places, including parks or stations, even when individuals have no explicit intention to "gather." Goffman distinguished between focused interaction, in which individuals engage in a joint activity such as a conversation, and unfocused interaction, in which individuals merely share the same environment while maintaining mutual awareness without overt engagement. Previous studies on multimodal interactions have examined the transitions between focused and unfocused interaction. Mondada (2009) analyzed how engagement and disengagement are organized through utterances, gazes, and bodily movements. However, these studies primarily examined urban contexts, including public spaces. Rural communities offer distinct features of gathering, in which recurring encounters among familiar individuals and the physical infrastructure of daily life produce communicative settings not found in urban environments.

Goffman's framework, though developed in urban contexts, applies equally to rural areas, wherein distinct social and physical features produce particular forms of gathering. "Acquaintanceship" (Goffman, 1963) leads to particular forms of behaviors and procedural norms that differ from the interactions among unacquainted individuals more commonly found in urban contexts. For instance, an acquaintanceship in rural communities can function as a social resource that extends the boundaries of interaction beyond physical spaces. Although Goffman (1963) emphasized physical structures such as doors and walls as special boundaries, Sakai (2024a) illustrated that the predictability of encounters among historical acquaintances can lead to verbal interactions occurring beyond physical boundaries, such as outside the door or separated by a wall, without direct visual contact. This case suggests that rural gatherings are shaped not only by physical context but also by participants' shared social history and expectations of encounters.

2.2 Categorizing Rural Gatherings

To document the communicative ecology of rural communities, we classify rural gatherings according to the social variables that shape participants' expectations: location, social relationships, and the predictability of encounters (Sakai, 2024a). Such classification is necessary because rural communication, similar to urban communication, spans diverse settings, from private to public. Without a systematic typology, documentation risks being biased toward more accessible settings while neglecting everyday but less visible ones, such as brief encounters on the road. Thus, a comprehensive account of rural communicative ecology requires first establishing a typology and then documenting each type systematically. This typology draws on Goffman's (1963) distinction between focused and unfocused interaction and Koiso et al.'s (2016) situational classification for corpus design, combined with fieldwork observations in rural communities.

1. At-home gatherings: Everyday communication within households or visits from community members in private settings.
2. Chance encounters: Brief interactions that occur when individuals meet unexpectedly in public spaces, such as along roadsides, near bus stops, or at village offices.
3. Community events: Scheduled gatherings, such as community meetings or traditional festivals (including practices), in which multiple parties interact on equal footing.
4. Service encounters: Interactions between staff and customers (referred to as users in this paper), such as in shops, banks, or post offices. These participants, while familiar with each other in small rural communities, take on different roles, such as clerk and customer.

As a first step toward documenting all four types, this study focuses on service encounters. Unlike urban service encounters between strangers, rural ones tend to involve community members with shared social histories who take on the roles of clerk and customer. Among these encounters, mobile supermarkets represent a new retail form, operating in novel physical environments such as vacant lots in front of users' homes. This combination of familiar social relationships and dynamic commercial settings makes mobile

supermarkets productive sites for examining how social context shapes interaction.

2.3 Mobile Supermarkets

Mobile supermarkets belong to the category of service encounters but differ from ordinary shop interactions in several ways. As a communicative device in depopulated rural areas, mobile supermarkets generate temporary social contexts in which transactions and community interaction converge.

Sustaining daily life in depopulated and aging rural areas is a critical issue. The main challenge is not aging per se but the mobility decline that accompanies it. Many rural areas suffer from so-called shopping difficulties, particularly affecting elderly individuals who no longer drive and reside in geographically isolated regions, such as mountainous or island communities. This is part of the "food desert" problem, referred to in Japan as the issue of "vulnerable shoppers" (*kaimono nanmin* in Japanese).

Under these circumstances, mobile supermarkets have gained increasing importance as one of the key solutions. These vehicles transport daily necessities and operate out of small trucks stationed near customers' houses or in local open spaces (Figure 1). Their primary users are older adults who live too far from a fixed-location retail establishment to access them independently. The driver typically serves as both a driver and a salesclerk. Despite attracting attention from the social, administrative, and academic sectors, systematic studies examining the communicative dynamics of these mobile shopping environments remain limited. To the best of our knowledge, Takanashi et al. (2023) and Sakai & Sakaida (2024) are among the few studies to date that have analyzed language use and interactions in the context of a mobile supermarket. The present study extends this work by examining how mobile supermarkets function as a communicative device that is grounded in and generates particular social contexts, interactional structures, and participant behaviors not observed in fixed-location service encounters. Research on service encounters has examined interactions in fixed commercial spaces, including both unacquainted (e.g., Harjunpää et al., 2018) and acquainted participants (Laurier, 2013). Even in acquainted settings, the physical boundaries of the shop are actively oriented to by participants as a resource for organizing the interaction (Sakai, 2024b). Mobile supermarkets differ in that the interactional space is temporarily constituted and dissolved, and participants must collaboratively manage the closure of the space itself. The co-occurrence of these features distinguishes this setting.

Figure 1: A mobile supermarket operating in a vacant lot in front of a user's house.

From the perspective of interaction analysis, mobile supermarkets offer significant insights into language use within social interactions. As Sakai & Sakaida (2025) have pointed out, the arrival of the vehicle temporarily transforms the space in front of houses or community centers into a shopping environment. The arrival and departure of the vehicle serve as triggers for the emergence and dissolution of "interactional spaces," respectively (Mondada, 2009). Capturing these temporal transformations through fine-grained interactional analysis requires video-recorded data. This approach yields valuable cases for analyzing how interactional spaces emerge, where their boundaries lie, and how rural life can be understood as a communicative practice. Understanding these practices requires interdisciplinary methods that attend to the social contexts in which interaction occur, shaped by the particular features of rural communities, including social relationships, communicative devices, and physical resources.

3. Methods for Data Collection

3.1 Recording Procedure

Recording naturally occurring conversation in rural communities requires methods adapted to the social context in which interactions occur. For this study, we adopted a situation-specific approach (Koiso et al., 2022) in which researchers visited a specific site to record particular activities, as it allows focused observation, which leads to high-quality audiovisual data.

A central challenge was establishing rapport with research participants, especially when recording was conducted in private spaces, such as the area directly in front of users' homes. Consented recordings were made possible through the cooperation of the driver, who had prior research experience (Oshiro, 2019) and helped explain the research purpose to users and coordinate the procedure. This highlights how community members with a research understanding can act as mediators, facilitating data collection within the social context of the community. Participant

information sheets, consent forms, and consent withdrawal forms were also adapted for elderly participants through means such as enlarged text and verbal confirmation of content.

The recordings were conducted by two researchers using two handheld cameras, two 360-degree cameras mounted on top of the vehicle, two IC recorders attached to ensure full visual coverage, and an IC recorder attached to the driver (Figure 2, partly reproduced in Sakai & Sakaida, 2025). This setup enabled comprehensive audio and video recordings of conversations that occurred around the vehicle. Importantly, the recordings focused not only on the shopping itself but also on the periods before the vehicle's arrival and after its departure. This study aims to capture the interactional transformation that occurs as mobile supermarkets become temporary marketplaces. This approach allowed us to successfully document conversations that extended beyond the transaction phase and even continued after the vehicle had departed.

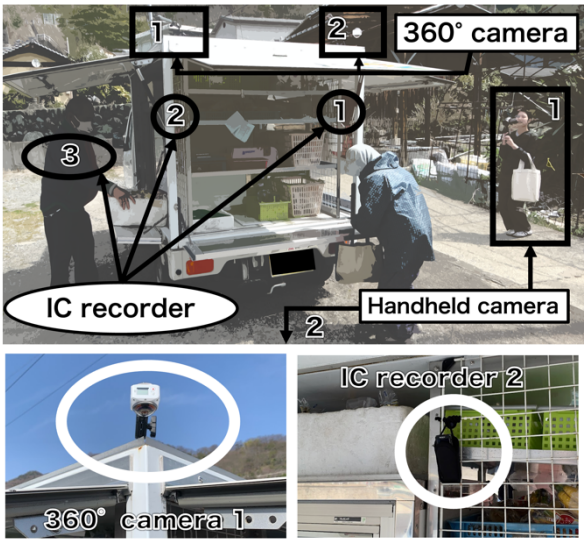

Figure 2: Recording setup with two handheld cameras, two 360-degree cameras, and three IC recorders (view from handheld camera 2)

3.2 Recorded Data

Recordings were conducted on March 22, 2024, after obtaining written consent on March 15. Table 1 presents an overview of the dataset. In the table, letters and subsequent numbers indicate the villages and specific stop points within each village. Recordings were not taken at stops A2, A3, and B2, although sales occurred.

As shown in the table, the dataset includes eight mobile supermarket sessions that took place in five villages (A–E), involving one driver and 15 users. Each stop had 1–4 users, with session durations ranging from 4 to 14 minutes. Some users were already present before vehicle arrival. Conversations occurred between the driver and users and among users themselves. While modest in scale [1], the dataset captures communicative settings absent from existing Japanese conversation corpora, including the CEJC.

	Stop number	Number of users	Arrival	Departure	Duration
1	A1	1	9:57	10:01	0:04
2	A4	3	10:45	10:58	0:13
3	B1	1	11:07	11:18	0:10
4	B3	2	11:36	11:52	0:15
5	B4	1	11:59	12:09	0:10
6	C1	4	14:24	14:32	0:08
7	D1	2	14:56	15:03	0:07
8	E1	1	15:21	15:30	0:09
Total	8	15	-	-	1:16

Table 1: Data overview

4. Preliminary Analysis: When they talk

We examined when conversations occurred during shopping (Figure 3). Each horizontal bar in Figure 3 represents a shopping session, with segment types indicating user, for example, "A1-1," and shopping phase (see caption for details). Sessions were normalized to equal lengths for comparison from arrival to departure.

As shown in Figure 3, conversational hotspots occurred at two distinct moments: shortly after the vehicle's arrival (0–1 minute), when gray or black segments tend to appear, and after the completion of transactions, where black segments frequently follow striped segments. Of the 15 sessions, 9 showed conversational activity within the first minute of the encounter, while all sessions showed conversation continuing after payment. Analyzing the contents of these interactions revealed distinct characteristics at different stages.

[1] Full transcription of the dataset is in progress. As an indication of scale, a one-minute segment (B1-1, 8:45–9:45) from the cleanup phase analyzed in Section 4 and 5, beginning at line 1 of Excerpt 1, contains 141 morphemes (driver: 96, user: 45), segmented using MeCab with UniDic following the CEJC short-unit conventions (Koiso et al., 2022). This count includes two inaudible segments due to the recording conditions. Given the variation in conversational density across sessions, this figure should not be extrapolated to the full dataset.

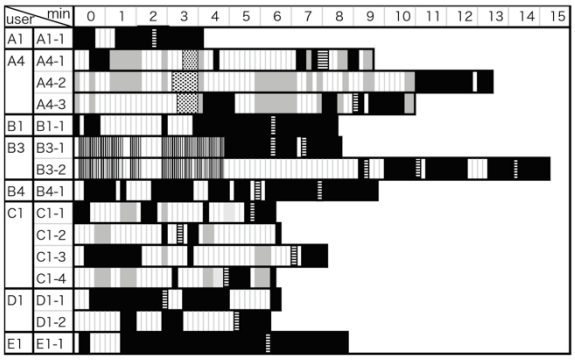

Figure 3: Temporal distribution of conversation during shopping (n=15). Black segments indicate conversations with the driver; grey segments, conversations with other users; dotted segments, the user talking with both the driver and another user; horizontal striped segments, transactions; vertical striped segments, conversations with unidentified participants; and blank areas, silence.

Conversations initiated immediately after the vehicle's arrival typically focused on product availability (from user to driver, (1)(2)) or inquiries about specific items (from driver to user, (3)(4)). The following examples present the original Japanese utterances, their English translations, and the direction of each utterance. Each user is assigned an identifier to distinguish individuals; for instance, the three participants at stop A4 are labeled A4-1, A4-2, and A4-3.

(1) Kyoo wa sashimi ga aru ka nee.

Do you have sashimi 'sliced raw fish' today?

(A4-1 to driver)

(2) Gyuu ga aru?

Do you have beef?

(A4-2 to driver)

(3) Naomi neesan, daburu sofuto iran?

Big Sister Naomi, don't you need *Double Soft? *the name of bread

(driver to B3-1)

(4) Kyou wa nanka iru mon ga aru n su ka no

Do you need anything today?

(driver to B4-1)

The following payments often concern the next shopping visit, representing a typical closing routine initiated primarily by the driver, as shown in (5)~(8).

(5) Hoija maa raishuu getsuyoobi mata kimasu

Well then- I'll come again next Monday.

(driver to B1-1)

(6) Hoija obachan, arigatone.

Well then, auntie, thank you.

(driver to B3-2)

(7) Arigatosan deshita

Thank you very much.

(driver to B3-2)

(8) Tsugi wa getsuyoubi wa oru?

Will you be here next Monday?

(driver to B4-1)

These patterns suggest that the temporal structure of mobile supermarket interactions is organized not only by the commercial task at hand but also by social expectations in which acquaintanceship and regular encounters build up shared expectations about how the conversation unfolds. The driver's familiar address terms and the routine confirmation of the next visit index a relationship extending beyond the transaction.

When conversations continue well beyond payment completion, this typically results not from extended transaction-related talk but from a shift toward small talk, as shown in the following excerpt. Here, DRV represents the driver and USR indicates the user B1-1. We refer to Jefferson (2004) for the transcription conventions.

```
01 DRV  etto, hyaku:, hyaku::, nanajuu to:,
        ni en. yossha.
        Um, 100- 170 and 2 yen. Alright.
(Three lines omitted)
05 DRV  arigato san deshita.
        Thank you very much.
06 DRV  hoija ma- raishuu getsuyoobi mata
        kimassu.
        Well then, I will come again next Monday.
07 USR  getsuyoubi yasumi ja nai ken no?
        Isn't Monday a holiday though?
(Five lines omitted, talking about holidays)
13 USR  raigetsu kara mata nanka saijitsu
        (    )
        From next month there are some other national holidays.
14 USR  attakai na:
        I'm not sure of it.
```

After confirming the next visit (line 6), the topic gradually shifts to holidays (lines 7–14). Furthermore, as the conversation continues beyond line 14, the driver and user stay at the same location for a while. However, it is important to note that the driver has to proceed to the next shopping point, as another scheduled stop follows shortly after the conversation. Consequently,

examining conversation alone is insufficient, as the driver was simultaneously engaged in both small talk and preparations for departure. Understanding how participants manage these competing demands at a micro level reveals the organization of this setting, which arises from its particular social context, including relationships, physical environment, and interactional phase. The next section describes how the driver managed these multiple activities.

5. Case Analysis: How they talk

The term 'multiactivity' refers to how people talk and interact when coordinating or advancing (or not) two or more courses of action simultaneously and with respect to each other (Haddington et al., 2014). After completing payment, DRV (driver) begins cleanup work, projecting the upcoming departure for the next stop, while conversing with USR (user B1-1). In the case below, an elderly customer slowly places their wallet back into their bag and prepares to leave. The DRV's behavior shows no sign of rushing the customer.

To clarify how the DRV manages these two activities, we examined the organization of the interaction and described the DRV's orientation at each moment. Excerpts 1–3 were taken from a single case (DRV and B1-1 user), and the entire cleanup process lasts approximately two minutes.

5.1 Keep Engaging with Voice

The cleanup phase begins immediately after payment. In Excerpt 1, recorded during this phase, DRV and the USR continue their conversation. Following the completion of payment (lines 1-13), the topic shifts to a discussion of the next encounter, which serves as a projection of the closing (after line 15). Simultaneously, DRV returns the handheld transaction device to its place, while USR puts their wallet into their bag (lines 15-28). Immediately afterward, DRV moves to close the right-side door of the vehicle (line 30). For conventions of multimodal transcription, see Mondada (2018).

Excerpt 1 (with multimodal transcription)

```
01 DRV etto, hyaku:, (1.78) hyaku::, nanajuu
        Um, 100- 170
02      to:, (1.50) ni en.
        and 2 yen.
03      (0.2)
04 USR n:n
        mm- hmm
05      (1.5)
06 DRV yossha.
        Alright.
07 USR (nn) hai hai
        yeah, yeah
08      (1.4)
09 DRV hai.
        yeah
10      (0.6)
11 DRV hai.
        yeah
12      (0.3)
13 DRV arigato san deshita.
        Thank you very much.
14      (0.3)
15 DRV .hh hoija ma- raishuu getsuyoobi mata
        Well then, I will come again next Monday. (ll. 15-16)
16      kima[ssu hhh
17 USR      [(u getsu-)
             U, Mon-
18      (0.8)
19 USR %getsuyo%obi yasumi ja nai ken no?
        Isn't Monday a holiday though?
        %.......%DRV-->
20      (0.4)
21 DRV yasumi (  ) ja nakaroo, ho- kongetsu
        It shouldn't be a holiday, uh- this month
22      wa- kongetsu tte yuu ka %are
        I mean this month, um
   usr                          -->%,,,-->
23      wa yasu%mi nakaroo nya.
        Shouldn't be a holiday.
   usr      -->%front-->
24 USR ano::, u-, *raige*tsu nara [nya
        Um, uh, if it's next month then
25 DRV                                [u*
                                       uh
   drv             *.....*USR--------*,,,
26 DRV raigetsu naran [to
        if it's next month
27 USR                [raigetsu %ka(ra)
                       from next month
   usr                          -->%,,,
28 USR mata nanka +saijitsu (    +  )
        there's another holiday or something
   drv             +returns cash register
                    to designated position
   drv                              +steps back
29      (0.3)
30 DRV attakai +na:.
        I'm not sure there is.
                +walks to right side
                 of vehicle-->
31      (0.4)
32 DRV kasana%tta n %ga atta kai na:
        I wonder if there were overlapping ones
   usr       %......%right-->
33 USR un anmari:, sa-, an +sangatsu wa
        yeah not really, uh, um, March
   drv                     -->+
34      +(    ) [(yoran)
        (unclear)
35 DRV          [u+:n
                 uh-huh
        +.........+carries box to left side
                    of vehicle
37      (0.3)%(0.5)
   usr   -->%,,,
38 DRV [(nho)
39 USR [daibunto atta mon nee.
        There were quite a lot, you know.
40      (0.7)
41 DRV are ga mata koma-, nga komaru n ya:,
        That's trouble-, it's troublesome,
42      komaru n yo +no:
        troublesome, you know.
                    -->+
```

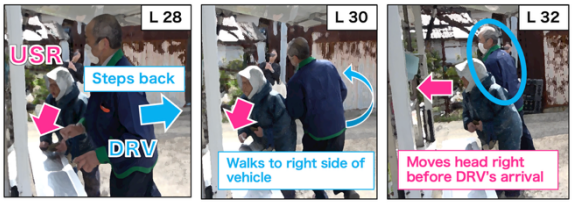

Figure 4: Body movements in lines 28-32

At this moment, DRV does not orient solely toward the conversation but continues the topic while speaking in a louder voice (lines 28-32). DRV steps back and begins to display their orientation to the work, while talking with USR (line 28, Figure 4, left). Also, USR turns their head slightly toward the right side of the vehicle (line 32, Figure 4, right) immediately after DRV begins to move in that direction (line 30, Figure 4, center), and before DRV's arrival at the place. It indicates the orientation to maintain their interactional space (Mondada, 2009), which is about to transform, accompanied by the cleanup work. In this way, the projection of the movement of the body allows a prior orientation toward the intended location.

Subsequently, DRV places the box back on the shelves (line 35), producing audible utterances, even while moving out of the USR's line of sight. This dual engagement is possible because conversation primarily requires the speaker's voice. Occasionally, DRV turns their head toward USR so that their voice is easier for USR to hear and to display their engagement in the conversation. This raises the following question: How does DRV manage activities when a conversation requires bodily engagement?

5.2 Suspension Work for Conversation

In Excerpt 2, the left door has already been closed, and DRV has moved to the right side of the vehicle. Ethnographically, DRV is a resident of Village B, where the selling in this case occurs. In this interaction, they discuss minor changes in their village—specifically, the abundance of harvested lemons at the village elementary school.

Here, we observe that DRV, while working with their arms, uses the deixis expression '*asoko* (there)' during the ongoing conversation. This utterance occurs precisely as he attempts to close the right-side door. Notably, it is difficult to close this door with one arm; it requires the use of both hands to pull down and lock it securely. In Excerpt 2, he uses a pointing gesture to indicate the location verbalized as '*asoko* (there)' and 'shoogakkoo (elementary school)' in lines 7-11.

Excerpt 2

```
01 USR SOOJOO ittaka no: dokono
       Did she go to SOOJOO village or where
   drv >>walks to right side of vehicle-->
02     (hoi demo [              )
       but well
03 DRV           [nn byooin, +mo- aa(h)
                  mm hospital, or- aah
   drv                     -->+closes lower
                                 right door-->
04     byoo(h)in, +ka, +[asoko ka+:,
       hospital or there
05 USR                   [a (          )
                          oh
   drv          -->+,,,,+points---+,,,-->
06         +(byooin[ka)
            hospital
07 DRV              [.h +ima sa:,
                     now you know
   drv -->+try to close upper right door-->
                    -->+points with left hand
                        with right hand
                        placed on door-->
08     (0.2)
09 USR    +n?
          hm?
   drv -->+hold-->
10     (0.1)
11 DRV asoko shoogakkoo n +toko de:
       at that elementary school
                          -->+,,,-->
12 USR    +are, [remo-
             that lemo-
13 DRV          [yooke aru no wa nan-
                 what is with having so many-
   drv -->+places both hands
           on upper right door-->
14     (0.2)
15 USR remon shori.
       Lemon processing.
16     (0.4)
17 DRV    +remon nanka shori n shiyo- ano:
            Are they processing lemons
       -->+closes upper right door-->
18     (0.2)
19 USR hoijake are wa ne (.) m- mae kara,
       so well that you see (.) from before
20     (0.6) ano: +chotto:, (0.4)
       um a little
   drv          -->+...-->
21     TAKA+RA no hito rano:
       the people of Takara association
   drv  -->+places both hands on head-->>
```

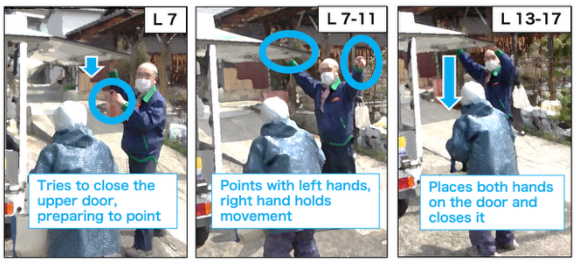

Figure 5: Pointing gesture while verbalizing 'asoko' (there) in lines 7-17

Although DRV initially attempts to close the door (line 7, Figure 5, left), they momentarily suspend the action and point in the direction referred to by 'asoko' (there) (line 7-11, Figure 5, center). At this moment, DRV rests their right arm on top of the door and uses their left hand—the arm closer to the direction of reference—to make the pointing gesture. This suggests that the door-closing task is not reset, but rather temporarily suspended (Raymond & Lerner, 2014).

The door-closing task resumes at line 13. After completing the pointing gesture, the right hand (used to indicate 'asoko'), returns to the door (Figure 5, right). While continuing the conversation and turning their head toward USR,

DRV closes the door. This illustrates how DRV's orientation shifts from cleanup to conversation, expressed through embodied behavior.

5.3 Waiting for Bodily Disruption

As shown above, DRV coordinates their bodily movement and conversation during cleanup work. This coordination is achieved by selectively choosing the orientation at each moment. DRV suspends their door-closing work when engaging in conversation that requires their bodily behavior.

The following excerpt demonstrates a case in which the USR's body positioning disrupts DRV's efficient work. In Excerpts 1 and 2, DRV moves around the vehicle to close its doors. Typically, the preferred sequence is to close the doors in the order: left, back, and right. In many instances, DRV follows this routine. However, in the next case, USR remains standing directly under the back door, preventing DRV's access. Rather than asking USR to move, DRV alters the sequence: they close the left door first, then the right, and finally the back. Excerpt 3 shows the moment when DRV closes the back door.

Excerpt 3

```
01 DRV u:so(h):(h): hh nani shiyon jaroo
       No way:: what are they doing
02     [re+mon ja noni
       even though it's a lemon
          +walks to rear of vehicle-->
03 USR [shiran.
       I don't know
04     (0.1)
05 USR hh h sore ga,
       The thing is
06     (0.7)
07 USR koko no ma+e ka(ra) ni kai hodo
       About twice recently
   drv         -->+reaches hand upper door-->
08     shiyon yo.
       they've been doing it
09     (0.2)
10 DRV ee +ee @hoija-, kyo@o mo, kyoo
       no- today too, today
       -->+puts hand on door-->
   usr         @...........@steps back-->
11     mo to+ori yotta yo:, @[kuru+ma.
       they passed by too, the car
12 USR                              [kyoo mo mata
                                     today again too
         -->+lowers door a little-+holds-->25
   usr                       -->@moves bag back
13 USR kooiu yoona shitotta:?
       were they doing something like this?
14 DRV un.
       yeah.
15     (0.2)
16 DRV kuruma kiyotta mon.
       A car was coming
17     (0.1)
18 USR a[a::
       I see
19 DRV  [washi ga ie-, h. hh.
          when I (     ) home-
20     (0.1)
21 USR a ga [na:, (tsundokin) no:,
       ah you know, (unclear) the
22 DRV      [i- iku toki ni
             wh- when going
23 USR hoide so[re wa ne:,
       and so that you see
24 DRV         [un.
                yeah
25     (0.3)+(0.3)
   drv  -->+closes door-->
26 USR remon o chan- [mae wa shiboru tte
       lemons properly- before they squeeze (them)
27 DRV               [(nn.)
                      mm.
28 USR [(         ) shichon+ ka omottara:,
       I thought they were doing (         )
29 DRV [nn nn.
       mm mm
   drv                    -->+
30 DRV n::n.
       mm mm.
```

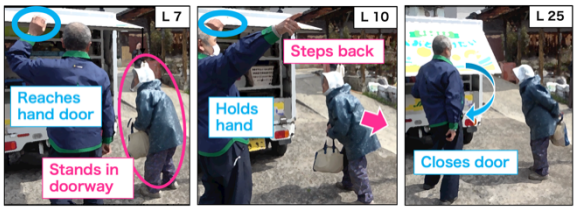

Figure 6: USR stepping away from the doorway while talking with DRV in lines 7-25

USR continues to stand in the rear area, even as DRV approaches the rear of the vehicle and places their hand on the upper part of the back door (line 7, Figure 6, left). After that, USR gradually begins to step back (line 10, Figure 6, center), while talking with DRV. Shortly after USR moves away from the doorway, DRV lowers the door and closes it completely (line 25, Figure 6, right). Following this excerpt, DRV releases their hand from the door, turns fully toward USR, and displays a single orientation toward the conversation.

Across these three excerpts, the driver systematically prioritized the conversation over their tasks to manage both as multiactivity. This practice, realized vocally (Excerpt 1), bodily (Excerpt 2), and temporally (Excerpt 3), enacts orientation toward care shaped by the interaction between participants' backgrounds, the communicative context of a brief encounter, and the immediate situation. These dimensions of social context are difficult to capture without an interdisciplinary, micro-level analysis of the kind presented here.

6. Concluding Remarks

This study documented language use in interactions at a mobile supermarket in a rural community, a communicative setting largely absent from existing language resources. The typology of rural gatherings provides a framework

for systematic documentation in further research, and the community-mediated recording methodology offers a foundation for future work in similar contexts.

The quantitative analysis revealed that conversational activity clusters around the encounter and post-transaction phases, indicating that participants orient to these encounters as occasions for social connection.

The qualitative analysis demonstrated how the driver managed work and conversation simultaneously as multiactivity, adjusting his interactional mode vocally (Excerpt 1), bodily (Excerpt 2), and temporally (Excerpt 3), consistently prioritizing conversation. The cleanup period operated as a buffer zone in which the driver "waited" for the user's movement, avoided applying pressure, and altered routines. For older users with limited opportunities for social engagement, these moments functioned as meaningful opportunities for community connection. A systematic understanding of such "waiting" practices as a form of social support warrants further investigation across rural areas, demographic groups, and institutional settings.

Regarding our third research question, this communicative setting presents a social context not captured by existing language resources. The temporal structure of interaction is organized by social expectations built through repeated encounters, as shown in the quantitative analysis. Furthermore, as the qualitative analysis revealed, the temporary shopping space was dissolved while the participants were talking after payment. The temporary nature of this setting was noted in previous work (Sakai & Sakaida, 2025). Building on this, the present study reveals the concrete multimodal practices through which this dissolution is accomplished. How participants manage this process is shaped by the particular social context of this setting, including relational history, and cannot be observed in fixed-location service encounters, where the commercial space requires no dissolution. While acquaintanceship can produce extended post-transaction conversation in fixed-location settings (Sakai, 2024b), the practices documented here are qualitatively different: Participants collaboratively managed the dissolution of the commercial space while sustaining conversation (Excerpts 1–3). This interactional challenge arises only in temporarily constituted settings such as mobile supermarkets, shaped by the social conditions of rural depopulation and aging. Documenting these dimensions through interdisciplinary methods contributes to a richer understanding of the diversity of communicative settings, and offers empirically grounded factors, such as relational history, interactional phase, and spatial configuration, that could enrich context-aware approaches in the computational modeling of social interaction.

7. Limitations

This study is based on a limited number of recordings from a single rural community and focuses on one driver–user pair. Therefore, it may not capture the full diversity of mobile supermarket interactions in Japan. Future research should include multiple cases across different settings to explore variations in interactional practices. In particular, empirical comparisons with urban service encounters and rural fixed-location stores would clarify which features are specific to mobile supermarkets. Beyond expanding the empirical scope, our future work will develop annotation categories that encode the social contextual dimensions identified here, including relational history between participants, spatial configuration of the interactional setting, and sequential position relative to the vehicle's arrival and departure. We also plan to expand the corpus to cover all four gathering types and to make the annotated data available for linguistic and communication research.

8. Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed of the research objectives and procedures one week before the data collection and provided written consent. Consent withdrawal forms ensured that participation could be terminated voluntarily at any time. The driver confirmed each participant's willingness before recording. Faces in figures are anonymized, and data will not be shared publicly without additional consent.

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