Graphical and Grammatical Viewpoints

on the Necessity of the *Omote-Ura* Spatial Axis

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This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations.

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Introduction

A characteristic of the Japanese language that sets it apart from many other languages is its grammar's strong degree of situational dependency. In Japanese, the semantics and grammar are often closely related; sentences that are grammatical with one semantic meaning may no longer be grammatical when it is intended to carry alternate meaning. This coupling of semantics and grammar encourages the study of pragmatics, defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "linguistics concerned with the relationship of sentences to the environment in which they occur." The nature of Japanese is such that an understanding of higher level Japanese requires the consideration of pragmatics.

So far, the archetypal way of tying together the grammar and the environment is housed in the concept of *uchi* and *soto*, which, in English, have taken on the meaning of "in-group" and "out-group," respectively[1]. Although "the *uchi-soto* dichotomy is a social phenomenon" (Sukle 115), the *uchi* and *soto* viewpoints transcend into Japanese grammar, where their presence accounts for many subtleties of the grammar. However, Lebra argues that the type of social interactions that occur in Japanese society cannot be defined by the use of one dichotomy alone. She suggests the addition of an *omote-ura* ("front"-"back") axis[2], and, together with the *uchi-soto* axis, defines three common situational domains—the intimate, the ritual and the anomic (112).

Each of these situational domains is associated with unique concepts and social behavior, as will be discussed later. However, unlike the *uchi* and *soto* dichotomy that manifests itself relatively clearly in the Japanese language through the multitude of binary choices existent in Japanese grammar, it is unclear whether the *omote-ura* dichotomy can be substantiated by grammatical evidence. In fact, minimal work has been done on this topic, and the research to date has focused on relating grammar and context solely on the basis of *uchi* and *soto*. Therefore, before accepting or rejecting the *omote-ura* dichotomy as an integral part of Japanese culture, there is a need for the analysis of *omote* and *ura* in grammatical terms. This is the purpose of this

[1] Literally, *uchi* means "the home" or "inside", and *soto* means "outside," but these literal translations are unable to convey the myriad of connotations associated with *uchi* and *soto*, so the looser definitions of "in-group" and "out-group" are often used when for linguistic and social analyses.

paper—to analyze the need for the additional *omote-ura* axis from a pragmatics viewpoint. As such, grammatical evidence is taken to be the most valid form of evidence for or against the use of the extra axis. However, graphical examples, the exact meaning of which will become clear later, can also help to demonstrate how spatial axes illustrate Japanese grammatical and social characteristics. First, however, I briefly summarize the current thinking on the *uchi-soto* dichotomy.

The Accepted Foundation of Japanese Pragmatics: Uchi and Soto

Linguists such as Makino have adopted the *uchi* and *soto* dichotomy as being the basis of the situational dependence, and this is no doubt partially due to the existence of grammatical evidence and the wide applicability of the *uchi* and *soto* concept. To summarize the nature of the dichotomy, Quinn has provided extensive lists of *uchi* compounds and *soto* compounds (Quinn 46-64). The distinction of *uchi* and *soto* for spatial terms are obvious and not detailed here, but it is important to note that *uchi* and *soto* also apply to social and partitive concepts, among others. For example, psychologically, the *uchi* words refer to some close and warmer action or feeling, where the sense of empathy is strong, while the *soto* words convey a certain distance and remoteness. Quinn also associates *uchi* and *soto* with the concepts in Table 1. From a slightly different viewpoint, *uchi* houses all the familial concepts such as belongingness, conformism, collectivism, empathy, commitment, dependency, indulgence, among others, whereas these qualities are not emphasized in a more formal *soto*. Rather, the *soto* is established more by definitions, obligations, honors, rank and other unemotional attributes.

Uchi	*Soto*
Indoors	Outdoors
Closed	Open
Experienced	Observed
Hidden	Revealed
Bounded	Unbounded
Limited	Limit-irrelavant
Sacred	Secular
Self(-ves)	Other
Lineal family	Extralineal family
Familiar	Unfamiliar
"Us"	"Them"
Private	Public
Included	Excluded
Known	Unknown
Informed	Uninformed
Controlled	Uncontrolled
Engaged	Detached
Early/primary	Late/secondary

Table 1. Concepts and connotations related to *uchi* and *soto.* (Quinn *Uchi/Soto…* 254)

In exemplifying the *uchi-soto* dichotomy, linguists such as Makino have interpreted the concept of *uchi* and *soto* graphically to make the conceptual dichotomy more inline with its fundamental spatial translations of

[2] Again, the Japanese *omote* and *ura* carry connotations far beyond their dictionary translations. This paper will attempt to address these connotations with the use of graphical and grammatical examples.

"inside" and "outside." Makino's basic *uchi-soto* diagram consists of two concentric circles of different sizes, as shown in Figure 1. On this diagram, *uchi* is the area around the center of the circles, and *soto* defines the outside, annular portion. Thus, the *uchi* and *soto* differ by their radial distance to the center of the circles. Ego is the innermost *uchi*, while actions with the *soto* signify more distant relationships. The grammatical evidence for the strength of the *uchi-soto* concept is strong and comes in many forms, in syntax, particles, verbs, nominalizers, formality, *et al.* A deep study of the grammatical evidence for *uchi* and *soto* is not provided here, but it should be kept in mind that a large part of Japanese grammar can be classified as either *uchi* or *soto* based on the criteria depicted in Table 1.

Figure 1. The graphical interpretation of the spatial *uchi-soto* dichotomy.

Omote and *Ura* as the Ends of a New Spatial Axis

Intimate	*Ritual*	*Anomic*
protected	omoiyari	free from concern
confidentiality	influence	shameless
high interaction	posture	thick-skinned
communication	gestures	heartless
unity	countenance	nobody
spontaneity	formality	anonymity
pleasure	face	competition
mutuality	suppression	unaffected
ittaikan	circumspection	unaffectable
ishin denshin	mediation	unobserved
belongingness	unobstrusive	
empathy	humility	
nudity	enryo	
equality	dignity	
omoiyari		

Table 2. Defining characteristics and concepts of Lebra's three situational interaction domains.

Lebra's impetus for defining the extra *omote-ura* axis stems from her belief that social interactions commonly encountered by people involved with Japanese culture can be classified into three domains[3]. These are the intimate, ritual and anomic domains. Table 2 illustrates the characteristics of each of these domains. In summary, the intimate domain is one in which all pretenses are removed, and one's true self is exposed. This is why characteristics of the intimate domain include unity, empathy and communication. The ritual domain occurs in formalized circumstances where one's emotions are masked by a front which the Japanese have accepted as appropriate for situations where there is a separation in hierarchy, or when two parties are interacting at a purely acquaintance-like level. This is the domain with which foreigners are probably the most familiar. As a highly regulated domain, the

[3] It is of importance that it is not only the Japanese themselves whose behaviors fall into three domains. In fact, their relation with non-Japanese cultures can also be classified with these domains.

ritual interactions encourage a considerable degree of humility, *enryo* (self-restraint), unobtrusiveness and *omoiyari* (consideration).

So far, the intimate and ritual domains may seem analogous to the *uchi* and *soto* dichotomies, respectively; the intimate domain takes on the homely qualities of the *uchi*, while the ritual domain shares the restricted and governed attributes of the *soto*. However, Lebra purports the existence of a third domain—the anomic. As Table 2 shows, the anomic domain is largely defined by adjectives that are preceded by words such as "free from," prefixes such as "un-," and suffixes such as "-less." In other words, the anomic domain is one in which all concerns are forgotten and obligations lifted; one lives for himself or herself. In very general terms, one can regard the anomic situation as one in which a person is unaffected and also cannot affect others.

Although Sukle urged that "*uchi-soto* signaling must be examined in social interaction" (115), Lebra proposes that the *uchi-soto* dichotomy, albeit necessary in defining the three situation domains, is, in itself, insufficient (112). She proposes the addition of the *omote-ura* axis, independent of *uchi* and *soto*, to complement the well-established *uchi* and *soto* axis. Table 3 is Lebra's interpretation of how the three domains of situational interaction are a result of the combination of the two spatial axes. The combination of *uchi* and *ura* is the basis for the intimate domain, while *soto* and *omote* form the ritual domain. However, the impetus for Lebra's system lies in the existence of the third, anomic domain. While the intimate domain can be distilled down to homely *uchi*, and the ritual domain can taken as the colder *soto*, it is unclear where the anomic domain resides, because it shares some aspects of *uchi* listed in Table 1, but also some of the characteristics of *soto*. For instance, the anomic domain does not foster the warmth of *uchi*, but neither is it as regulated as the typical *soto*. It has the "self" idea that is typically *uchi*, while it also has the "unknown" aspect of *soto*.

	Omote (front)	*Ura (back)*
Uchi (in)	-	Intimate
Soto(out)	Ritual	Anomic

Table 3. Lebra's identification of the three situational domains using the *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* axes.

Lebra defines the anomic domain not directly, but by contrasting it with the other two domains:

> "Finally, the anomic situation contrasts with the intimate situation in that Ego defines Alter as an outsider, which rules out intimacy between Ego and Alter; it contrasts with the ritual situation in that Ego is freed from concern that an audience is watching his behavior. The anomic situation is likely to occur when Ego finds Alter or a third person to be a stranger or enemy who does not share Ego's norms and whose approval is irrelevant to Ego. It is in this sense that the anomic situation combines *soto* and *ura*" (113).

I prefer to explain anomic irrelevance describing the domain as one in which one is neither deeply affected by others nor can one readily affect others. I think that the lack of affect characterizes the anomic domain as both *soto* and *ura*. One will note that the combination of two axes naturally gives rise to four combinations, but Lebra dismisses the 4th possible (*uchi-omote*) combination as "unlikely to occur" (112) and makes no attempt to characterize it.[4]

Graphical Interpretations and Extensions of the Spatial Axes

One way in which the parallels between grammar and societal interaction can be represented is via the use of diagrams. Just as Makino represents the *uchi-soto* axis graphically on a diagram (Figure 1), Lebra uses a diagram to illustrate her three domains. This diagram is Figure 2, where one's central ego is surrounded by the three domains. However, I do not believe that this figure is truly reflective of her definition of the three domains based on the two spatial axes. Instead, the diagram underscores her efforts in the creation of the *omote-ura* dichotomy for the simple reason that the illustration makes no graphical use of the *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* axes. Traveling outward from the center of the circle merely allows one to leave the ego, and the there is no further change of domain as one travels further away from the center. Thus, the change from *uchi* to *soto* is not conveyed by Figure 2. Furthermore, it is unclear how the *omote-ura* axis is represented by the figure; there is no direction specified with either *omote* or *ura*. In summary, Lebra's figure does not make use of either of the dichotomous pairs as spatial axes.

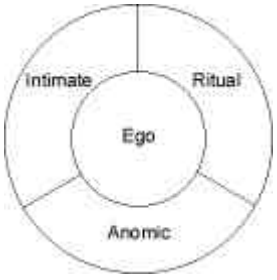

Figure 2. Lebra's graphical interpretation of the three situational domains (112).

[4] The *uchi-omote* combination is unlikely to be encountered. Nevertheless, it is an important combination. I tend to view this combination as one's self-image since the *uchi* describes the self. But rather than being a true self, it is the self with a front. That is, the *uchi-omote* region reflects one's own concern of how others view the ego. This definition is not the point of the paper and will not be considered in more detail here.

I therefore propose an alternative to Figure 3 as an alternative Figure 2, which, although being more complex, is able to integrate both deictic and also account for dynamic shifts in interactions and changes in domains. Figure 3 is similar to the Makino's basic *uchi-soto* diagram shown in Figure 1, except that the circles are now split into two halves to differentiate *omote* from *ura* . In the orientation as shown in Figure 3, the unshaded right half is the *omote*, while the gray left half is the *ura*. The purpose of the arrow is to clarify which half is the *omote*, and it can be regarded as pointing to the front of a person if one takes Figure 3 as an abstraction of a person viewed from the top. The three situational domain are now logically displayed in the diagram and correspond to the definitions provided by Lebra (Table 3). The intimate *uchi-ura* is the inner-left semi-circle, the ritualistic *soto-omote* is the outer-right annular region, and the elusive anomic *soto-ura* is the outer-left annulus.[5] Being the back of the person, the anomic domain demonstrates the irrelevance which Lebra described in locating the anomic domain in *soto-ura*.

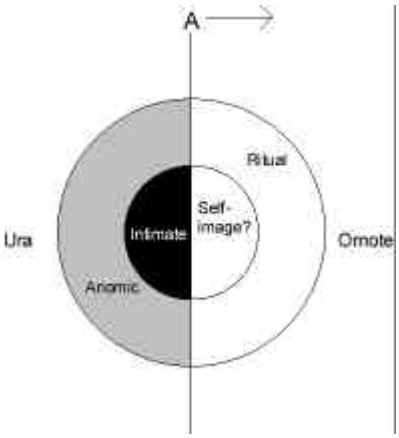

Figure 3. Alternative spatial representation incorporating the *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* dichotomies.

In addition to defining the domains logically, Figure 3 has the additional characteristic of being rotationally and translationally dependent. That is, different interactions can be realized simply by rotating and moving the concentric circles. Thus, Figure 3 is even able to describe how groups or people can interact. For example, Figure 4 shows the example of two strangers bumping into each other. Since there is no defined relation between person A and person B, the situation is anomic, as indicated by the overlapping of the gray anomic regions of A and B. The circles can also be pictured as two people back-to-back. Clearly, neither A nor B is trying to

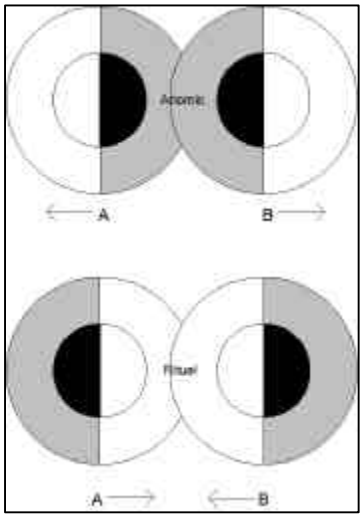

Figure 4. Change of interaction domain from anomic to ritual via rotation.

[5] Figure 3 also shows the self-image domain as *uchi-omote*, which was discussed earlier.

present a front or image. Of course, the relationship can immediately become ritualistic (as shown by the lower half of Figure 4) if the two discover out that they in fact know each other through a common friend, or have met elsewhere before. This type of ritualization, which I call "anomic ritualization" is made possible by a rotation of both A and B such that the zone of interaction now occurs in each other's *soto-omote* ritual area.

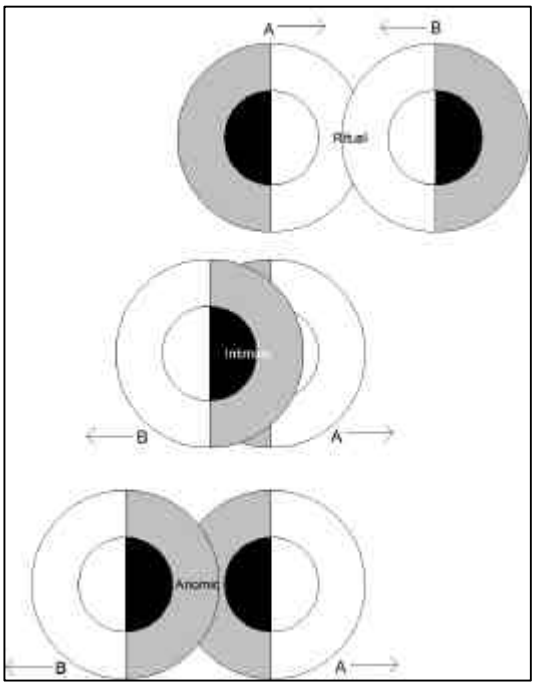

Figure 5. Change of interaction domain from ritual to intimate to anomic.

Next, one can consider an interaction that changes from ritual to intimate (top two diagrams of Figure 5), where A and B itially interact ritually. With the passage of time, A and B get to know each other better and share more in common. This natural process is depicted by B's leftward movement such that A and B essentially have overlapping intimate regions (sharing the black *uchi-ura* region in the middle pair of Figure 5). Of course, the intimate relationship can also deteriorate. If B continues to move further leftward, the overlapping intimate region is now replaced by an overlapping anomic region. This is the case when good friends become enemies. It is interesting to note that this sort of change to an anomic interaction involves the diagrams literally "turning their backs on each other," just as the deterioration of friendship often causes.

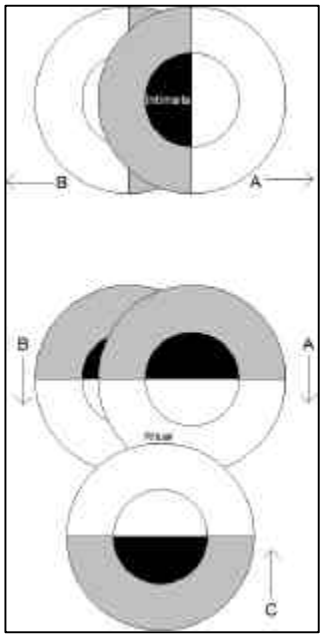

Figure 6. Change of interaction domain from intimate to ritual due to an intruder.

Lebra makes mention of another kind of ritualization, where, if a third person suddenly shows up with which intimate interaction is not possible, "the initial dyadic intimacy is suddenly terminated and replaced by ritual behavior" (133). This is depicted by Figure 6. A and B have overlapping

intimate regions, but the entrance of C forces both A and B to rotate and interact with C only in the *soto-omote* ritual manner. A and B remain intimate as their *uchi-ura* regions still overlap, but to C, only the ritual interaction is seen.[6]

One can certainly imaging other dynamic shifts in situational interaction, but, hopefully, Figures 4 to 6 have given a sense of how the new diagram that incorporates both the *uchi-soto* and the *omote-ura* axes is useful in the understanding the spatial nature and dynamism of Lebra's three domains.

Grammatical Support for the *Omote-Ura* Dichotomy

Although I have introduced the *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* dichotomies, the analysis so far has been based more on diagrams and cultural observations, and I have yet to justify that the use of the *omote-ura* axis is essential to the Japanese culture using grammatical evidence. A two-dimensional graphical viewpoint, although visually analogous and appealing, is insufficient from a pragmatics point of view.

According to Lebra, there is no doubt that the anomic domain of situational interaction exists and is common encountered. The recognition that the domain shares both *uchi* and *soto* aspects and that *uchi* and *soto* alone are insufficient to define the anomic situation uniquely is perhaps one of the strongest arguments for the use of *omote* and *ura* as a supplement. In this section, I will show that there exist some grammatical concepts in Japanese that cannot be explained solely with a binary *uchi-soto* dichotomy either and therefore support the necessity for the additional *omote-ura* axis. The first piece of evidence deals with the three levels of speech in Japanese[7]. Here, I am referring to: the plain form[8], the formal *desu-masu* form and the polite forms (both honorific and humble).

[6] This form of ritualization as a result of an intruder is depicted very closely by the dynamic roles of the family members in two vignettes provided by Bachnik (143-66).
[7] I have specifically chosen not to refer to the levels of speech as "formality" levels or "politeness" levels because I feel that the either "formality" or "politeness" is encompassing enough. By referring to the levels as "levels of speech," I leave the interpretation open for the time being.
[8] The plain form is often called the informal form by many authors and linguists. I choose to call it the plain form because I do not feel that informality characterizes the form's usage appropriately. The reason for this will be explained later.

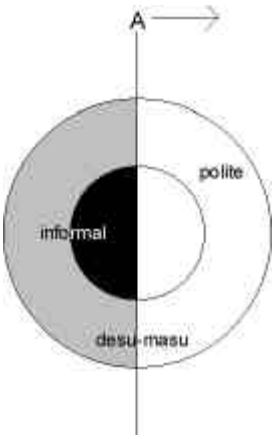

Figure 7. The levels of speech based on the new diagram.

Of these three forms, the most well defined are the polite honorific and polite humble forms. Makino asserts that these forms are to elevate the speaker's superior and to lower the speaker or his in-group members, respectively (Makino. *Uchi to Soto*… 36). Thus, a consequence of the polite forms is to establish a well-defined and mutually agreeable relationship between the speaker and the alter. The polite forms are used only when such defined psychological and physiological relationships are required (Makino. *Uchi to Soto*… 173). They are also noticeably longer than the other forms (Makino. *Uchi to Soto*… 176-77) as they either humbly or honorifically reaches outward to the alter . Furthermore, the polite forms are also the last to be learned by native speakers and foreign learners alike; they are the least likely to be internalized, and the quickest form to be forgotten (EAS 447). As a consequence, the polite forms "can become fantastically cumbersome and error-ridden" (Quinn 70). Because of its formal purpose and unnaturalness, the polite forms are akin to the ritual domain of situational interaction. Figure 7 shows the placement of the polite forms in the *soto-omote* region.

The prefered form for intimate situations, such as in the home and among tightly knit circles of friends, is the plain form. It contrasts with the polite forms because it is the first to be learnt by native speakers. The plain form is short, to the point and carries empathy, a reason why interactions that are more formal can sometimes shift to the plain form (EAS 447). This high degree of empathy associated with the plain form therefore precludes the existence of a "front" or a face, and the plain form situates itself in the intimate *uchi-ura* zone of Figure 7.

However, it is also common for the plain form to be used in anomic situations, when two unacquainted parties undergo a dispute, for instance. In this case, the vulgar language is likely to be in the plain form. Clearly, the two parties are not within each other's *uchi*. In this case, the plain form is not inviting the alter into ego's *uchi*. Instead, it is relegating alter to ego's back, a zone which is marked by the anomic characteristics of free of concern, *et al.* This is why the plain form crosses over to the *soto-ura* region in Figure

7. It is clear here that the plain form cannot be properly classified as *uchi* or *soto* because it is used in both. On the other hand, the plain form is uniquely defined by the *ura* zone. Thus, one can treat the plain form more appropriately as an *ura* marker, and not as an *uchi* marker.

The *desu-masu* formal form is also a hybrid in that it situates itself in more than one region. First, it is obvious that this form is not used for intimate interactions because it distances the parties. This precludes its classification as an *uchi* marker. The *desu-masu* formal form thus lies only in the *soto* regions (both *omote* and *ura*). It shares in the unaffected and unaffectable characteristics that define the anomic situation, but the "front" characteristic of the ritual domain is not entirely removed. The *desu-masu* form is unique in that it is one of the few grammatical features of Japanese that is the relatively neutral and is least likely to offend any party. It is no wonder that this is the form that is first taught to non-native speakers. After all, Figure 7 shows the *desu-masu* form as one which encompasses all of the *soto*, and the *desu-masu* form is thus the first interface with which a foreigner is likely to come into contact.

Table 4 summarizes the applicability of each level of formality. Thus far, I have avoided the distinction between "formality" and "politeness." However, there is a subtle difference between the two that is crucial in justifying the use of the *omote-ura* dichotomy. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines formality as the "compliance with formal or conventional rules," and the extent of compliance and convention is largely determined by the psychological distance between parties. A formal type of behavior or speech is one in that is characterized by the alter being further removed from ego's *uchi*, where convention sets the basis for interaction. Thus, formality is largely measured on the *uchi-soto* axis.

	Plain	*Desu-Masu*	*Polite*
Uchi-Ura	Yes	No	No
Soto-Ura	Yes	Yes	No
Soto-Omote	No	Yes	Yes

Table 4. The applicability of the three levels of speech based on the *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* axes.

In contrast, politeness is not as dependent on the *uchi-soto* position. One can be equally polite to a new acquaintance or to a loved one. Of course, excessive politeness can hinder situational intimacy. This is because politeness is a front that one establishes for specific interactions. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines being polite as "marked by an appearance of consideration, tact, deference, or courtesy." The crucial word here is "appearance." As such an appearance of a front, politeness can be measured more accurately by

the *omote-ura* axis. The fact that the plain form is the first to be learned by native speakers reflects the fact that children are not expected to display the "front" of politeness that is expected of adults.

With *uchi-soto* is the measure of formality and *omote-ura* as the politeness measure, the form of Table 4 can be better appreciated. The polite forms naturally fall into the *omote* region because *omote* symbolizes politeness. The *desu-masu* form is a formal form and so it is applicable only in *soto* regions. The plain form is used when politeness is not emphasized and thus exists only in the *ura* regions. It should now be clear why I have chosen not to call the plain form the informal form; the plain form is really characterized by the lack of its politeness front, and not solely by its lack of formality.[9]

In addition to the grammatical support of the *omote-ura* axis given by the levels of speech, the three demonstratives, *ko*, *so* and *a* (*do* is excluded because it is the interrogative) provide additional reinforcement for Lebra's use of the *omote-ura* dichotomy. For these demonstratives, I propose that *ko* is the intimate (*uchi-ura*) domain marker, *so* the ritual (*soto-omote*), and *a* the anomic (*soto-ura*). The *ko*/*so* relationship is shown in Figure 8 where the small circle is the referent object. Person A is the speaker and focus of empathy/identification for Figures 8 and 9. Niimura and Hiyashi have already shown Sakuma's Speaker-Hearer model as being incomprehensive (814), and I will not discuss the demonstratives in light of that model. Instead, I will make use of Kinsui and Takubo's mental space framework, which states that *ko* and *a* reside in the domain of the speaker's experience, while *so* resides outside of the speaker's experience and often refers to the hearer's (person B) domain of experience. The distinction between *ko* and *a* is that, although both in the speaker's experience, *a* is beyond the speaker's direct control (Niimura and Hayashi, 815). Therefore, Niimura and Hiyashi's framework model focuses on

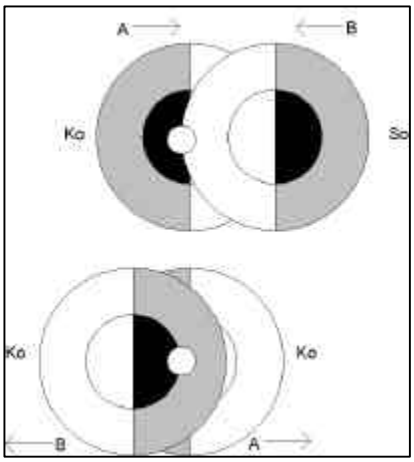

Figure 8. The use of the new diagram to explain the *ko* and *so* demonstratives.

[9] Perhaps the plain form can be taken to be the "impolite form," but the negative connotations with "impolite" have probably been the driving force in making linguists avoid calling it the "impolite form."

the distinction between control and experience. I will show here that control is analogous to the *uchi*, the anchor of the *uchi-soto* axis, while experience is akin to the *ura* of the *omote-ura* dichotomy.

In Figure 8, the referent is in the speaker (persona A's) domain of control and experience. The combination of control and experience means that, to person A, the referent is in his *uchi-ura* region, which is signified by *ko*. Because person B is in the conversation, he/she is also experiencing it (*omote*), but is not in direct control (so the referent is *soto*). Therefore, the referent is considered *so* to person B. However, just as a ritual interactions can turn intimate, person B could also share person A's control, allowing the referent to become part of his/her control as well. In this case, the referent ends up being *ko* to both parties. In real life, an example of this is when two people sit together in close proximity looking at a photograph, with the referents being people in the photograph.

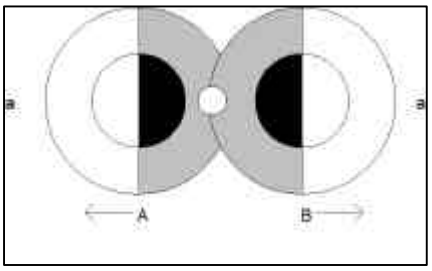

Figure 9. The use of the new diagram to explain the anomic *a*.

Similarly, we can also see how the *anomic* demonstrative, *a*, fits in. Typically, *a* is used when the referent is in neither party's control or direct experience. An example of this is when a tour guide points to a distant monument or when one reminisces over a common nostalgic event that neither party claims to own with control. This is shown in Figure 9 where the *a* referent is something that's in neither party's control or experience. Rather, it refers to a fuzzy, shared item. This notion of sharing or commonality is peculiar to the *a* demonstrative because *ko* and *so* both try to attribute control and experience to a particular owner, whereas *a* does not.

To summarize, *ko* and *a* are similar in that they are both in the *ura* region; this is similar to explanation that they both signify referents within the speaker's domain of experience. *So* differs in that the referent is not within the speaker's experiential domain. Seen in this light, Kinsui and Takubo's domain of experience is analogous to the *ura*, while the aspect of control that distinguishes *ko* from *a* is marked by the *uchi-soto* axis.

Evidence Against the *Omote-Ura* Spatial Axis

Uchi	*Soto*	*Use*
no	koto	nominalizer
kureru	ageru	verb
nasal	velar	phonetics
ni	kara	particle
node	kara	conjunction
noni	keredo	conjunction
ga	no	particle
ga	ni	particle
mono	koto	nominalizer

Table 5. Examples of binary choices in Japanese grammar and their association with the *uchi-soto* dichotomy.

The support provided by the levels of speech and the demonstratives lie in the fact that they are both ternary aspects of Japanese grammar. With the existence of three choices, the demonstratives and the levels of speech lend themselves to a comparison with Lebra's three domains and are able to make use of the new *omote-ura* axis. But where the *omote-ura* axis cannot be easily justified is at the lower levels of Japanese grammar, such as phonetics and particles. The best evidence that these axes are not required in these aspects of Japanese is that there exists a slew of grammatical choices in Japanese that only offer two possible choices and are not ternary in nature. Some examples are given in Table 5. Were there a third grammatical choice, then the *omote-ura* dichotomy could be better substantiated. With only two choices, the redundancy of the *omote-ura* axis is apparent.

For the examples listed in Table 5, the two words (*uchi* or *soto*) on a given row both have the same basic meaning, although the *uchi* choice carries a connotation of closeness that is absent from the corresponding word in the *soto* column. For instance, the *ni* particle meaning "from" is well suited to marking things received from a beloved, whereas *kara* carries a more neutral connotation (Makino. *Oto to imi*… 12-14). In grammatical terms, the binary choices are themselves sufficient for situations likely to be encountered. There is no apparent need for a third choice or to separate the anomic from the ritual. Whether a teacher and student (ritual combination) interact, or two strangers meet (anomic), the interaction is likely to make use of the grammatical items listed in the *soto* column. The lack of grammatical structures that offer a ternary choice, and the lack of a need for their existence together forms the strongest evidence pointing to the redundancy of the *omote-ura* axis.

What about the anomic domain? It clearly is experienced, but is it possible to locate the anomic domain without the use of *omote* and *ura*? Makino gives a possibility, by placing the anomic at the furthest area of *soto*,

and by sandwiching the ritual domain between the anomic and intimate, as is shown in Figure 10. In this figure, the anomic domain is analogous to an outer *soto*, while the *ritual* domain is analogous to the inner *soto*. That is, the ritual domain is one with which one has direct interaction, which is lacking in the anomic situations.

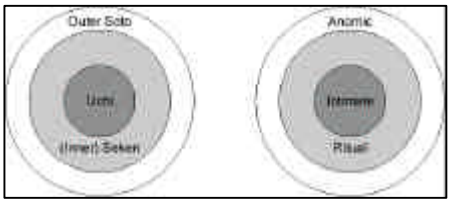

Figure 10. Using only the *uchi-soto* dichotomy in locating the three situational domains.

Therefore, the ritual domain is immediately adjacent to *uchi*, while the anomic domain is, in essence, out of reach of the *uchi*. Makino points out also that the near *soto*, where the ritual domain resides, is analogous to the *seken*, where one is being watched by the public (EAS 447). This diagram is credited for its simplicity but of course loses on clarity and specificity when compared to Figure 3.

One reason for the functionality of the spatial diagram given in Figure 3 was the ease with which situational interactions and their dynamism could be depicted. In light of the directionality, it is perhaps appropriate to turn to directional concepts in Japanese grammar to consider the *omote* and *ura* axis. These include the motion verbs, primarily *iku* and *kuru*, and the giving verbs, *kureru*, *ageru* and *morau*.[10] Unfortunately, these verbs themselves carry only the "in" and "out" connotations, and no connotation of "front" or "back." Therefore, these verbs cannot support the use of the *omote* and *ura* axis either.

Uchi	*Soto*
ura	omote
ninjoo	giri/gimu
honne	tatemae
kunyomi	onyomi
amae	
miren	

Table 6. Social concepts with *uchi* and *soto* as parents.

Given the lack of low-level grammatical evidence for *omote and ura*, Makino suggests to treat *omote* and *ura* as subsets of *soto* and *uchi*, respectively. This is shown in Table 6, where the *uchi-soto* dichotomy is the parent of many more important contrastive Japanese social concepts.

[10] It is usually in the explanation of the giving verbs that students of introductory Japanese are first introduced to the notions of *uchi* and *soto.*

Defending the *Omote-Ura* Axis

In the previous section, I showed that the majority of choices in Japanese grammar are binary in nature, and that Makino has attempted to account for all three situational interaction domains not with the use of an extra axis, but by layering the concentric circles as shown in Figure 10. However, the layering technique and using only the *uchi-soto* axis fails to highlight some key connotations of certain grammatical forms.

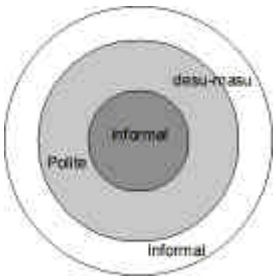

Figure 11. Use of *uchi* and *soto* only to account for the levels of speech.

First, the levels of speech mentioned earlier cannot be located uniquely using solely *uchi-soto*. The most crucial breakdown becomes obvious when considering the plain form. Because the plain form is used in intimate situations and in some anomic situations, the plain form would have to be both *uchi* and *soto*, sandwiching the polite forms and the *desu-masu* form somewhere in between, as shown in Figure 11. With the lack of the "front" concept to explain the polite forms and the back concept to explain the plain form, the levels of speech are not well-defined when only *uchi* and *soto* are used.

The three demonstratives cause even more problems when the *omote-ura* dimensionality is lost. Consider the following ambiguities in defining *ko, so* and *a* using only *uchi* and *soto.* Although *ko* is unequivocally the *uchi*, what are *so* and *a*? Calling them both *soto* would be incorrect because *so* signifies the lack of direct experience while *a* signifies the lack of direct control, and they differ from *ko* not in their degree of *soto*ness, but in experience and control. Perhaps the best that one can do is to call both *so* and *a* "not *uchi.*" The lack of an extra "front-back" axis is perhaps one of the reasons for why it has been so difficult to explain the differences between *ko, so* and *a* to foreigners.

Conclusion

Linguists focusing on the pragmatics of Japanese have so far limited themselves to *uchi* and *soto* as the link between culture and grammar. Under most circumstances, the primarily binary nature of Japanese has not posed any problems for this viewpoint, and the paucity of lower level grammatical choices has not prompted strong consideration of the *omote-ura* axis as absolutely essential. On the other hand, numerous subtleties of Japanese grammar cannot be explained without Lebra's additional *omote-ura* spatial axis.

Although I am in support of Lebra's *omote-ura* axis, I have put forth amendments with the intent of making its spatial attributes clear. For example, neither the *uchi-soto* diagram (Figure 2) or Lebra's diagram of the domains (Figure 3) is able to capture the dynamism of situational interactions. By making Figure 2 rotationally dependent and assigning the *omote* and *ura* sides, the new diagram (Figure 3) is able to account for many of the conceivable social situations.

Grammatically, strong support for the *omote-ura* axis is given by the levels of speech. Rather than using formality and politeness interchangeably, there should be a marked distinction between the two. Formality and its associations with conventions is marked by the *uchi-soto* axis, while *omote* and *ura* indicate the level of politeness. This parallel lends itself well to classifying the plain form as an *ura* marker and the *desu-masu* form as a *soto* marker, while the polite forms are *omote* markers because politeness is a more superficial appearance that one conveys. These classifications are most necessary because, without *omote-ura*, the plain form cannot be uniquely identified or located.

The three demonstratives are also examples of the importance of the additional spatial axis. Here, I paralleled control with *uchi-soto* and experience with *omote-ura* and associated *ko* with the intimate domain because the *ko* referents give the speaker both control and experience. *A*, being the opposite, is analogous to the anomic domain. Lastly, *so* marks referents with experience but not control. These associations are important and may clarify the subtleties of the demonstratives to non-native speakers.

In summary, although further work opportunities lie in the search of more evidence for the use of *omote* and *ura* as a primary spatial axis for Japanese language and culture, there are already numerous areas which

uchi and *soto* cannot explain on their own. Of course, it is possible to force grammatical constructs to the *uchi-soto* axis alone, but much of the insight and intuitiveness is lost in the process. The collapsing of the three situational domains to concentric circles removes entirely the subtleties between the domains. I believe that the existence of three situational interaction domains and their unique characteristics provides good grounds for the acceptance of the *omote-ura* spatial axis.

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