
**Gender Differences in Japanese College Students’ Participation in a Qualitative Study**

DOUGLASS J. SCOTT

*Waseda University, Japan*  
djscott@waseda.jp

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reminded us that a qualitative study can change midcourse, taking the researcher into areas of inquiry they did not anticipate at the beginning. This case study was originally designed to ascertain the benefits and limitations of video-equipped cellular telephone use by Japanese college students. When the data were analyzed, however, the most striking results were of gender differences in the way men and women engaged with the research instrument. Data were collected by seven Japanese college students who kept communication logs for one month. Sixteen content categories were developed and analysis revealed that while the men barely met the minimum requirements, the women provided long and detailed log entries. Similarly, men’s entries were dominant in only two categories, both of limited content and depth. In contrast, there were four categories where the women’s entries clearly outnumbered the men’s (two to four times greater) and four categories where the women’s entries were both dominant and rich. This clear difference along gender lines was unexpected, but one that it is hoped will spark additional research to better understand how men and women may engage differently in a qualitative study.
NTT DoCoMo (Japan) introduced video-capable cellular telephones to the Japanese market in the fall of 2001. These phones were known as “Freedom of Mobile Multimedia Access” (FOMA) and that term is used synonymously with “video-capable cellular telephones” in this article. DoCoMo's promotional campaign, “Vision 2010,” included a 10-minute video outlining their goals for high bandwidth wireless communications in the first decade of the new millennium (NTT DoCoMo, 2001, 2002). The video included a scene where a Japanese young man, about college age, participated in a worldwide 3D virtual classroom while sitting in a sunny park in Tokyo. Intrigued by this optimistic forecast, both in technological and pedagogic terms, I approached NTT DoCoMo about using the current iteration of their video cellular telephones to see what potential they may hold for higher education. The data resulting from that collaboration are presented in this article.

Until recently, video conferencing in education required a considerable investment in time, money, and effort to combine the appropriate hardware and software to enable real-time audio and visual connections. Station-based equipment is expensive to buy and difficult to set up and maintain. Even if the necessary components are successfully installed, various limitations (e.g., bandwidth, video compression, software compatibility between stations, to name a few) often plague online academic discussions. The situation can be further exacerbated by a lack of viable curricular models and limited technical support. Coventry (1997) detailed the many challenges to using video conferencing in higher education in her online report. Video cameras for desktop conferencing using personal computers have been available for over a decade and hold the promise of providing the individual computer user with cost-efficient, easy-to-use personal video conferencing without the need for expensive equipment and technical assistance. In practice, however, limited bandwidth and other technical limitations resulted in grainy video images with poor audio quality keeping the online experience from meeting even moderate expectations. Equipment manufacturers like Apple have recently entered this market with products such as the iSight®, which, combined with increasingly-common broadband internet connections which could find their way into daily classroom use. Despite these improvements these developments might provide the ability to use video cellular telephones to see what potential they may hold for higher education. The data resulting from that collaboration are presented in this article.
far as their virtual tethers will allow them. Adding video cameras to computers, while holding great potential for the classroom and computer lab, still has a ways to go before they can facilitate mobile video communications.

However, computers are no longer the only platforms available for mobile video conferencing. Recent developments in cellular telephone technologies may enable users to “have it all” in video conferencing: Stable, easy-to-use, cost-effective, and mobile. Video-equipped cellular telephones have been available to Japanese consumers since the fall of 2001 (Qui, 2008). NTT DoCoMo’s video-equipped FOMA line of video telephones has built a user base of over one million subscribers in the first two years after they were introduced (Qui, 2008). Currently, all DoCoMo phones are video-capable.

The original goal of this case study was to examine the potential of mobile video-equipped cellular telephones including their potential to facilitate college-level academic discussions. Neither the instructor nor the students had any experience with video cell phones, although most were aware of this technology. Few, if any, guidelines were available for how to incorporate this technology into an academic setting, and the project began with a “try and see” approach, which was eventually refined into several smaller research projects. This article describes this preliminary project, the participants’ assessment of using video cell phones, and directions for future research.

WHY CELLULAR TELEPHONES?

Cellular telephones (“keitai denwa” or “keitai” in Japanese) have become essential equipment for Japanese college students. Ito quotes a survey by the Mobile Communications Research Group indicating that “64.6 percent of all Japanese owned a mobile phone. Among twentysomethings this number is 89.6 percent, among those enrolled in college, 97.8 percent, and among high school students, 78.8 percent” (Ito, 2003). Empirically, in six years of teaching at a Japanese university, I haven’t found one student who does not own a cell phone. Ito describes the essential nature of cell phones among Japanese young people observing that “To not have a keitai (cell phone) is to be walking blind, disconnected from just-in-time information on where and when you are in the social networks of time and place” (Ito). The ubiquitous nature of cell phone use is an enormous market for Japan’s cell
phone manufacturers who fiercely compete with one another to find the next innovation to boost their company’s sales: Text messaging, built-in still and video cameras, radio and TV receivers, and most recently, cellular telephones capable of real-time video conferencing. Although the kind of educational setting described in the DoCoMo promotional video is years away, the technical specifications indicated that the current iteration of these phones could support conference calls of up to four participants. While this seemed optimistic, even one-to-one video conferences facilitated at a distance offered interesting educational opportunities and became the original catalyst for this study.

Analytic considerations: One of the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry is the notion of emergent design: “The researcher should allow their study’s design to emerge (flow, cascade, unfold) rather than to construct it preordinately (a priori) because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately…” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41). These emerging realities have the potential to take the researcher into new and unexpected areas whose significance may rival, if not exceed, the original goals of the inquiry. This report is based on just such a serendipitous happening that greatly shifted the focus of the original inquiry. While analyzing the collected data to learn more about the students’ engagement with video cell phones, an unexpected, but very clear difference emerged in the amount of information men and women entered into their log books. Gender differences were not the focus of the original study, but accepting Lincoln and Guba’s notion of emergent design, the current study was initiated to investigate this new finding, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and to see how this difference informs our understanding of gender communication and the qualitative data-gathering process.

Most research on gender differences in communication have focused on interactive modes such as face-to-face communications (Lakoff, 1973; Tannen, 1992) or written texts including electronic mail (Colley & Todd, 2002) and instant messaging (Baron, 2004). Some studies have also addressed less-interactive written discourse, such as literature (Janssen and Murachver 2004) and student essays (Mulac, Studley, & Blau, 1990). Little or no research is available looking specifically at possible gender differences in the use of, or engagement with, research instruments, in this case, open-ended communication log books. The current study is a first step in better understanding this topic.
METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach, drawing design suggestions from Merriam (1988). Among the strengths of this method was the focus on how the participants’ daily lives, in this case, their engagement with video cellular telephones. Since this is the first known use of video cell telephones in an educational setting, rich description drawn from the participants’ direct experiences were crucial to establishing fundamental understanding of their potential and limitations making open-ended personal communication logs a good choice for data collection. Most of the data presented in the following section comes from these logs.

The use of logs is generally recognized in communication research, and can yield “a wealth of information about people’s daily lives. It is also one of the few methods in which the participants are relatively free to determine the nature of the data” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 119). Ito and Okabe (2005) successfully used communication logs in their study of young people’s use of mobile communications and is one model on which the current study is based.

The students participating in this study were members of a third-year seminar, “Intercultural Communications and Technology,” at a large university in Tokyo. In most Japanese universities, seminars play an important role in an undergraduate’s academic career. Unlike other courses which meet for 90 minutes once each week for one semester, a seminar meets four times longer: Three hours each week for an entire academic year. Students usually write their required senior thesis with their third-year seminar advisor. Taken together, these conditions can make for a more intensive academic experience for all involved, often increasing a student’s motivation and involvement in in-class projects. Such was the case for the participants in this project.

Participants were third-year Japanese university students, three women and four men. Following a brief tutorial by NTT DoCoMo staff, each participant was given one video cell telephone to use for one month (Figure 1). Conditions of use were established by the instructor as follows:

1. Take special care of these phones. They belong to NTT DoCoMo and we are just borrowing them.
2. *Only call me or other members of this seminar.* You may not use the FOMA phones to call outside people.

3. *Use these phones as much as possible.* Send each other mail, make voice calls, and (as much as possible) make video calls.

4. *Always make a note in your telephone journal when you use this phone:* Be as detailed as possible.

5. *Be creative!* Use the phones in as many situations and locations as possible.

Although the instructor and NTT DoCoMo representatives would have preferred to allow students unlimited use of the video cell phones, that is, to call people outside of the seminar, financial considerations compelled us to limit use to the seven students and one instructor. Perhaps future projects can be expanded to include all of a student’s daily communications and come even closer to the “real-world” situation mentioned by Merriam (1988).

![Figure 1. Two video cell phone styles used in this project: Different form factor, nearly identical function](image)
With these instructions in mind, the students began their one-month exploration of the telephones. In addition to their personal explorations, students used the phones in class and to complete some homework assignments. These assignments mimicked established in-class discussions as closely as possible to reduce any sense of being staged or artificial by the participants. This included a four-person simultaneous video conference call near the end of the project period. Although this goal sounds modest, current bandwidth limitations were strained to facilitate two-person communications; the addition to two more participants, while possible, proved to be more difficult than anticipated.

COMMUNICATION LOGS: NUMERICAL SUMMARY

According to telephone use logs, students communicated using the video cell phones outside of class a total of 62 times during the one-month trial period. These communications include video conference calls, voice calls, and email. Removing the communications that included me—mostly research and administrative related—the seven students used the video cell phones 51 times in a 30 day period for an average of 7.29 communications, or about one communication (either sent or received) every fourth day. Table 1 details the students’ communication totals. Knowing total connection time would provide some basis for basic usage comparisons and calculations of approximate cost if the phones were being used by general consumers. Unfortunately, student-generated data was incomplete, and NTT DoCoMo was reticent to release individual usage statistics citing privacy concerns.

Table 1
Actual Outside of Class Communication Totals from Log Entries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SENT</th>
<th>RECEIVED</th>
<th>NOT INDICATED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss Aoki</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Seki</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Araki</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Ota</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ito</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Scott</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Oho</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Imai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actual communications (total / 2) | 62
The telephone logs show considerable differences in individual student use. The most frequent user, Miss Aoki, made nearly four times the number of connections as the least frequent user, Mr. Imai. Although the gap between heavy users (e.g., Miss Aoki and Mr. Seki), moderate users (e.g., Miss Araki, Miss Ota, and Mr. Ito), and light users (Mr. Ono and Mr. Imai) is not great, it is noteworthy that the women occupy three of the top four usage slots. This gender gap grows even wider, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, when the contents of the usage logs are examined which will be discussed in the following section.

In addition to being the most prolific user, Miss Aoki was also the most conscientious, logging every one of her 25 communications as shown in Table 2. On the other end of the scale, Mr. Ono only logged four of his 10 communications. However, the total number of entries is only part of the story; the amount of information recorded can greatly add to the depth of the participants’ descriptions and with it, our understanding of their experience. For example, despite his high participation and relatively large number of log entries, Mr. Seki wrote sparingly of his video cell phone experiences averaging less than four words per entry. On the opposite extreme is Miss Ota. Although her total number of logged communications is less than half of Miss Aoki’s, she provides detailed accounts of her communications, averaging over 113 words per entry. Log entry word counts for each participant are included in Table 2.

Table 2
Log Entries Sorted by Average Words per Entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>LOG ENTRIES</th>
<th>TOTAL WORDS</th>
<th>AVERAGE WORDS / ENTRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss Ota</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>113.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Aoki</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>77.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Araki</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>58.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ono</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>36.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ito</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>30.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Imai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>27.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Seki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is in the previous table that the women’s contributions to the data collection effort can first be seen. Each of the three women participants contributed over 1,000 words each, for an average word-per-entry count of 83.39. The men’s log entries are dwarfed by comparison: None of the men managed to write more than a total of 362 words (a third less than the most economically-worded woman), and between their four logs, the men were unable to average 25 words per entry (24.47). These preliminary data indicated deeper differences between the genders and provided the foundation for the following analysis of the log entry contents which gives insight into the participants’ actual engagement with the video cell phones and with the data collection process.

**COMMUNICATION LOGS: CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The seven students participating in this study were given a small notebook in which they were asked to write down all of their communications using the FOMA telephone: Voice, video, and text messaging. The students were instructed to note the following information in their logs each time they used their telephone: Date of communication, time, location, person they were communicating with, and a brief description of the pros and cons of this telephone. As shown in Table 1, not all of the students were diligent in logging their phone use, and Table 2 detailed the wide range of entry lengths. This section examines the log entries to see if the indications of gender differences noted above are born out in the participants’ log contents.

The content of the participants’ communication log entries were entered into a database which was coded and analyzed using the HyperRESEARCH qualitative data analysis application (http://www.researchware.com/). Log entries were reviewed and, using HyperRESEARCH’s coding function, codes were created “on the fly” based on the log entry being studied. This process yielded a total of 16 codes containing between one and 32 instances from all participants’ log books. The results of this analysis is described in the following section.
Of the 16 categories, men’s log comments were dominant in two (Table 3). As shown in Table 3, men’s logs included four comments categorized as examples of “Content: No detail” compared with no such comments for the women. Admittedly, the number of entries showing this category are quite limited, however, this category is included here because (a) men’s log entries were so limited, that any category they dominate may be of value, and (b) this is the only case where there were no women’s entries in a category dominated by men versus four instances of “women’s categories” where there were no entries from the men. Men also dominated the “Situational explanation: Short” category with 28 comments compared with four for the women.

Table 3
Code Categories Where Men’s Comments (Shaded) Were Dominant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Content: No detail</th>
<th>Situational explanation: Short</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Seki</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ono</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Ota</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ito</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Imai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Aoki</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Araki</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio Men:Women</td>
<td>4:0</td>
<td>7:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are representative log entries from the two “men’s categories”:

1. Content: No detail
   a. “Chatting, show my room”
   b. “talked about general things”

2. Situational explanation: Short
   a. “Own house”
   b. “School”
   c. “I made TV phone calls to [Miss Araki].”
It is telling that the two categories dominated by the men focus on short, practical notations with little description or detail.

“WOMEN’S CATEGORIES”

Women’s coded log entries clearly outnumbered men’s in four categories and fully dominated an additional four categories shown in Table 4. Of these, three categories contained no comments by the men, while the remaining category (i.e., FOMA & FTF Comparison) contained one comment from a male participant.

Table 4
Categories Where Women’s Comments (Shaded) Were Dominant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>FOMA: Experiences or Observations</th>
<th>FOMA: Unique Behavior or Consideration</th>
<th>ICT-related Experience or Observation</th>
<th>FOMA &amp; FTF comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Seki</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ono</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Ota</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ito</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Imai</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Aoki</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Araki</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio: Women:Men</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOMA: Experiences or observations.** This category shows the greatest discrepancy between men’s and women’s log entries in this study. All three women made several comments in this category while the men failed to make any similar entries. Entries categorized here focus on observations about using the FOMA telephone with no clear indication of it being positive or negative (two other possible categories).

Examples include this June 12th entry by Miss Aoki:

I called [Mr. Seki]. We talk often with TV phone. So when he took the phone, he seemed natural….He didn’t say “hi” or “hello” when he turn the camera on. He was doing something and busy with his work.
out of my sight. But…isn’t it also important to be polite and honest to make greetings? (June 12).

Miss Aoki’s entry covers the basics asked in the original instructions, but goes beyond those basics to describe the situation she encountered (a distracted Mr. Seki) and reflects upon the need for communication etiquette (greetings). Her contextual description gives the reader a more complete image of the interaction she experienced, her feelings of this interaction, and her application of this interaction to the more general topic of etiquette revealing a deeper engagement in the research project. If men had similar experiences, they failed to log them.

**FOMA: Unique Behavior or Consideration.** Here, too, all three women made comments in this category compared with none for the men. Representative entries include “He called me [by] TV phone, but I didn’t use camera. Because I was just waking up” (Ota June 11)” and “I discovered that when finishing the call, it is a bit rude to just press the button to turned the screen down, so I thought that it was better to first turn the camera up to hide it into the phone and then ring the phone off” (Araki June 6). Miss Araki went so far as to include a sketch of how she rotated the video camera lens to “sign off” at the conclusion of the conversation (Figure 2).

![Sketch showing Miss Araki rotating the camera lens to end a call](image)

**Figure 2. Sketch showing Miss Araki rotating the camera lens to end a call**
This sketch was the only illustration included in any of the logs, but is an indication of this participant's rich contributions to her communication log.

Both instances came about because of the unique nature of the FOMA telephone where, in Ota's case, the caller would have been able to see her early in the morning. Her description reveals her ability to adapt this new technology to suit her needs and thus maintaining control of her communications. Araki's case is particularly intriguing because she, too, is attempting to negotiate control over this new technology, in her case, regarding proper etiquette. It is unclear if the men experienced similar situations and concerns; if so, they failed to note them in their communication logs.

**ICT-related experience or observation.** Two women made a total of eight log entries that were categorized as related to information and communication technology (ICT) use. Miss Aoki's log provides a lengthy, but informative, example when she writes

> We discussed mainly about [the] Cohen [article, Cohen, 2001). The first one is “Is [e-]mail good for men to express themselves?” He said e-mail can be preserved. So he doesn’t want to send long sentences to friends. I preferred long e-mail, because if it is only businesslike mail, I think it must be sad e-mail to read and brusque image occurs. So I concluded the length of e-mail is somehow related to a person’s character (June 12).

Miss Aoki’s log entry is revealing in that her conversation was taking place over the FOMA telephone, and the content was related to a New York Times article she read for class (Cohen 2001) but her conclusion is unrelated to either. She makes the rather bold conclusion that email length changes depending on one’s character. While that point may be open to discussion, what is certain is that her engagement with this technology, as reflected in her communication log, prompted a degree of reflection that goes beyond simply using the cellular telephone and extends to more general considerations of communication technology use. This level of engagement, while certainly welcome, was unexpected when the project was conceived.

**FOMA & FTF comparison.** One woman, Miss Ota, made all six comments in this category. One example of her log entries includes:
…we talked about the atmosphere of our communication. If we talk to face-to-face, we are [in] the same place, so the atmosphere changes our conversation. For example [in] the train [we] make our voice small and [in] the bar [we] make our voice loud. On the other hand, FOMA can [allow you to] see the partner’s face, but [you] can’t share the atmosphere. (June 12)

Such comments reveal the students’ ability to reflect on the technologies limitations compared with traditional communication contexts. Miss Ota’s ability to contextualize her observations is particularly welcome as it grounds her general observation is well-known situations the reader can identify with. As noted, Miss Ota was the only woman to make these kinds of comments. Reading her log entries gives the strong impression that she was quite taken with the similarities and differences between traditional face-to-face interaction and FOMA video telephones.

The only man to make such a comment in his log was Mr. Imai who wrote, “We’ve discussed about ‘remote versus face-to-face communication’ for the first few minutes and then talked about general things” (June 12). His account is factual and to the point, however, it lacks the detail and reflection apparent in Miss Ota’s entry.

COMMUNICATION LOGS: CONTENT EXAMPLE

As indicated previously, the three women in this study used the video cell phones more than their male colleagues, and they wrote about these experiences in greater detail in their usage logs. The log content analysis showed the difference in number and nature between the categories dominated by men and those dominated by women. The following is a more detailed look at one exchange between two participants, one male and one female, and compares their log entries of this interaction. This example should help illustrate the nature of the differences noted.

Log entries showed several themes that appear in students’ writings about their video cell phone experiences such as reflection noted previously. The following example is from one of Miss Araki’s log entries which contains three of main themes. Concerning her June 1 conversation with Mr. Seki, she writes:
He was at his room and I was at my parents’ house. It was a sudden call, so I couldn’t stay in my room…because my room was a mess! I tried to introduce my parents to him since he asked me to do so, but my parents weren’t prepared (wearing pajamas, etc.) so I couldn’t. [2] We showed each other’s shoes, books and stuffs [sic], and it was quite fun. [1] However our conversation was easily heard by my parents (we didn’t put in earphones…) and I thought that this was a bit of a problem when we use TV phones. [3] I thought that we use more energy when we phone by TV phones since I felt tired after talking with Seki. Calling by TV phones means that more time and energy is needed, and we have to be aware of that when we receive the TV phone. [numbers in brackets are mine]

Miss Araki’s account includes three main themes found in a number of log entries: (a) privacy issues, (b) “show and tell” enabled by the video phone, and (c) considerations about using the video cell phones, which I will address in order below.

In his log, Mr. Seki described their exchange as, “Chatting, show my room (TV).” This kind of short, outline-style log entry is discussed as exemplary of the male participants’ log entries.

Privacy. Miss Araki’s description speaks to the difference in privacy brought about by the video cell phones ([1] Araki) as she feels compelled to abandon her room rather than let Mr. Seki see it in disarray. Similarly, she has to turn down his request to meet her parents as his late night call (around 11:00 PM) has caught them in their pajamas. For their part, Mama and Papa Araki are able to keep tabs on their daughter’s conversation as the speaker phone function of the video cell phone lets them hear both sides of the conversation. The actual impact on Miss Araki’s privacy is minimized by her own observation that some of her (and Mr. Seki’s) privacy could be restored by using the optional audio earphone attachment.

In a log entry chronicling another exchange, Miss Ota addressed her privacy concerns by choosing to answer a video call without the camera, thus turning the exchange into a traditional audio call: “[Seki] called me [using the] TV phone, but I didn’t use [the] camera. Because I was just waking up,” (June 11). Thus, video cell phone users have to contend with new privacy issues, but they develop strategies that give them some degree of control over their communications.
Visual demonstration. The “show and tell” or demonstration function of the phone ([2] Araki) is mentioned by several students. In the previous example, they show each other their shoes and rooms. Given the infrequency with which Japanese young people visit each other’s homes (especially another’s parents’ home), this peek into another’s personal space must have been a novel experience.

In a separate exchange, Ito and Seki also mention showing one another their rooms during a video phone call (June 3). Students tested the camera’s limits as they tried to show their colleagues a tennis match (Aoki calling Ito June 14), and a college baseball game (Ota calling Imai June 1) although Imai records the unsatisfactory results: “Ota tried to show me the [baseball game], but it didn’t work well. We need more zoom. It was difficult to hear because of the [fans’] rooting.” These early generation video telephones provide reasonable visual images for faces and other nearby objects, but their limitations were quickly found.

Video communications. The final element [3] from Araki’s log is comments about the video phones and their use. Here, she mentions that using the “TV phones means more time and energy is needed, and we have to be aware of that when we receive the TV phone.” Other students agree. Mr. Ito observes that “We have to feel special pressure and have to prepare the good condition to talk on the video phone. We can’t do other things without talking and seeing on FOMA...” (Ito calling Seki June 3). The “special pressure” he mentions is the pressure to continuously look at the video screen; students became aware that face-to-face and voice telephone calls don’t seem to place the same level of pressure to maintain eye contact as the video cell phones. This difference was intriguing as video conferencing is often billed as being the next best thing to face-to-face communications.

In conclusion, Miss Araki’s account of her conversation with Mr. Seki is a narrative, the story of getting a sudden call from another student and how it affected her and her parents and her reflections on this experience. This narrative style of log entry is common in the women’s entries, but rarely present in the men’s logs whose entries tend to be more event- and fact-oriented. Mr. Seki’s five word description of their conversation was lengthy compared with his other notations, but it hardly constitutes a narrative. Despite this economically-worded entry, he does manage to convey three main elements (a) general discussion (as opposed to discussing an article from class), (b) “show and tell” described in greater detail by Miss Araki,
and (c) the fact that this was a video call rather than voice. This contrast of story versus outline account of their conversation is perhaps typical of women and men’s communication styles (Cohen, 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

This article described the gender differences in the way Japanese college men and women kept communication logs as part of a study of their use of video-capable cellular telephones. In general, men’s log entries tend to be short and factual with little detail or embellishment. In contrast, many of the women’s log entries provide rich details of their experiences that convey a sense of context to the reader.

Men’s log entries dominated two categories that contained short, practical notions like “chatting” and “own house.” It is important to note that, with the exception of calls they neglected to write in their logs, the men’s log entries were within the parameters of the assignment. The researcher placed no particular emphasis on the length of log entries during the orientation, although students were encouraged to go beyond the “who, what, when” type factual data and write about the pros and cons of using the FOMA telephone. In this way, the differences described should not be thought of as “women followed directions whereas men did not.” Both men and women followed the instructions, but women’s interpretation of these instructions—based on their log entries—revealed several interesting differences. Numerically, women wrote more than three times the amount of information in their log as did their male counterparts. That they wrote such extensive log entries (going well beyond the project’s instructions) indicates a deeper level of engagement relative to the men. Qualitatively, several issues emerged from the data. The contents of the four “women’s categories” are more complex and reveal three main types of comments: Context-oriented, video cell phone specific, and comparisons with other situations.

Context-oriented. Numerous comments from the women’s logs reveal an emphasis on the context in which the communications are taking place. In contrast to the men’s more terse notations (like “own house”), women’s comments provide a more complete picture of the context, such as Aoki’s description of Seki’s lack of greeting when she called him, or her summary of her conversation with Seki about the Cohen article. Although men and
women had the same log notebooks, women made a greater effort to write down more detail about the situations in which they used the FOMA phones. The greater detail in their log entries helps the reader better understand the situation and through them their observations, experiences, and conclusions.

**Video cell phone specific.** The video-capable cell phones used in this study were unique in that they provided the opportunity for real-time visual communications. However, this opportunity comes with some costs that users must take into consideration when using these phones. Miss Ota discovered one such drawback when she received an early morning call and opted to answer it with the video camera off. This kind of comment was anticipated at the beginning of the project as it speaks to the unique nature of this new communication device. In contrast, Miss Araki’s sensitivity to the person on the other end of the line revealed both a greater level of awareness and reflection than was anticipated at the beginning of this study. She didn’t want to appear rude when ending a video call so she developed her own etiquette by slowly rotating her cell phone’s camera to fade out rather than abruptly switch off. In any event, all three women combined listed a total of eight such comments compared with none for the men. It is unclear if the men’s engagement with the phones failed to elicit video cell phone specific incidents, or they simply neglected to enter those incidents into their log.

**Reflection.** At least in the categories they dominated, women’s log entries included numerous instances of reflection on their use of these phones and its broader meaning for communication technology use and interpersonal relations. One example is their generalization of their use of FOMA phones to other kinds of interactions revealing their developing understanding of both situations. Take for example Miss Ota’s six comments comparing the use of FOMA video cell phones with face-to-face interactions. This kind of topic was a common theme in our seminar discussions, but only Miss Ota took the time to write down such comparisons in her log book. Similarly, Miss Aoki’s reflections on cell phone etiquette demonstrate a level of engagement that goes beyond the basics. Her reflections are not merely intellectual as she develops her own unique way of ending video phone calls that is sensitive to the other person.

Notable among the limitations of this study are the sample size. At the time of this study, video-capable cell phones were relatively rare and expensive. It was only through the generous support of the vendor that this project was
able to be conducted. As this technology is now more widespread, increasing the sample size is a realistic goal. Another factor that must be considered is that the Japanese participants were writing their logs in English. Unfortunately, no data was available to compare the men’s and women’s relative English ability; empirically, the students in this study had a comparable range of English abilities and I did not get the impression that language ability was a dominant force in this study. However, confirming language differences (if any) should be included in future research.

It should be clear that the differences between men’s and women’s communication logs in this study go beyond word counts and per entry averages. My assumption at the start of this study was that the students would note the basic information of their FOMA use (e.g., when, where, with whom), and hopefully include their impressions of the telephone’s benefits and limitations. Perhaps like the men participating in this study, I (and by extension, this study’s design) emphasized brevity and factual information rather than reflection and deep engagement. Fortunately, the women participating in the study were able to overcome any such limitations to make long and reflective notations in their communication logs.

REFERENCES


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