

The temporal thickness of the lifeworld: The relevance of remembering

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Abstract

The appeal and limitations of Lt. Col. North's strategic use of remembering and forgetting during the Iran-Contra hearings, as explored by Lynch and Bogen (1996), prompt us to critically reflect on our experience of the past in our lives. Using conversation analysis, we examine interviews with residents who returned to their hometowns after long evacuations due to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and elucidate the conceptual structure in which we are related to a past event in the configuration of a specific action in the local order of interaction. We argue that remembering is not always relevant even when we address our past experiences and that remembering is not the only way of accessing the past. In conclusion, a paradox involved in the modern cultural institution of testimony is discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the topics that Lynch and Bogen (1996) addressed is memory. In the analysis of Lt. Col. North's uses of the "I don't recall" type of utterance in the Iran-contra hearings, in the same vein as Wittgenstein (1953) and Coulter (1979, 1983a), they emphasized the public nature of memory (see Edwards and Potter 1992 for a discussion on memory in similar settings in the same vein). In certain respects, "what a particular witness *can* recall (credibly, plausibly, sensibly) is an irreducibly public matter" (Lynch and Bogen 1996, 186; emphasis in original). What they should and could remember and what they could forget are normative issues to be addressed publicly rather than the issue of individual cognitive ability. When North says "I don't recall," he does not describe how his memory actually operates. The issue is as follows:

[H]ow he relies on his audience to accept what he *says* he remembers, forgets, remembers only in part, remembers in light of later events as plausible, reasonable, and sincere claims. Memory is relevant, but only insofar as it is implicated through a mass of normative assumptions made by the speaker on behalf of his audience, and vice versa (194, emphasis in original).

In the previous literature, the relevance of remembering or memory has been addressed with the following questions: (1) When does talking about one's past experience become relevant? (2) How does one remember one's past experience relevantly (when remembering is rele-

vant)? In this chapter, I consider the relevance issue of remembering differently; I consider the possibility that remembering is only one way of accessing our past experiences; in other words, remembering may not be relevant even when we address our past experiences. The remembering or memory of something is only relevant when that thing is practically subject to the possibility of forgetting (see Yamada [2016] for the discussion on the grammar of “know” in a similar vein). For example, it makes no sense for me, as a Japanese native speaker, to say I still remember some Japanese words while it makes sense to say I still remember some German words; this is the case although I learned both Japanese and German words at some moment of the past. Of course, it would be theoretically possible for me to forget all Japanese words. However, if I forgot them, I would lose one of the most fundamental grounds of my life as it is currently. In this sense, it is *practically* impossible for me as a native Japanese speaker to forget all Japanese words. Similarly, the residents in Fukushima Prefecture to whom an evacuation order was issued after the nuclear disaster would even now not say that they *remember* the explosion of the nuclear power plant, not because they forgot it but because it is practically unforgettable to them.¹

As Malcolm (1977) pointed out, what we remember is not only the past; we may remember a future plan (tomorrow’s meeting), a future event (a movie to be released this weekend), or a future state of affairs (the weather for next weekend) without remembering when and how we learned it. However, people who think and talk about the future may not always do so based on their memory of the future. Similarly, people who think and talk about the past may not always do so based on their memory of the past.

In what follows, after briefly describing the data and method (Section 2), I will first argue that remembering may not be the only way of our accessing our past experiences (Section 3). Husserl’s (1966) distinction between retention and reproduction is well known. For example, when we see a movement (and a stationary state as well) of an object, we have to do more than capture separate momentary states of the object consecutively, that is, we have to capture every present state together with the previous states. Husserl (1966) called such capturing of previous states as part of the present experience of an object “retention,” distinguished from the presenting (in the consciousness) of what happened in the past as past in the temporal dimension (i.e., “reproduction”). Retention concerns the temporal thickness of the *present* experience; we say that we see a ball flying toward the window *now*. In analogy to this, I conceptualize “the temporal thickness of the lifeworld,” in which we experience our past as *past*, not part of the present experience, but we still experience it as seamlessly continuing into the present in performing a distinct action. A past event or fact may be lived as the part of our present life practically not subject to any doubt (in the sense that Wittgenstein [1969] developed) or the possibility of forgetting. In Section 3, by analyzing empirical data, I will suggest that we live this temporal thickness of the lifeworld. I use these data as “reminders” (Wittgenstein 1953, section 127) of conceptual structures in which we are related to a past event in the temporal thickness of the lifeworld. The empirical analysis could not verify conceptual claims, but it reminds us of conceptual connections, which are explicable through examining the

1 Of course, they may say that they cannot forget the incident. Note, however, that saying ‘I cannot forget’ and saying ‘I still remember’ belong to different language games.

use of linguistic and other resources in interactions (cf. Coulter 1983b). Specifically, I focus on alternations of the past and present tenses that the participants use to describe their past experiences in configuring a specific action. I argue that a past event or fact is experienced as seamlessly continuing into the present in the local configuration of a specific action. I employ conversation analysis (CA: Sacks 1992; Schegloff 2007) to demonstrate that the participants alternately use the past and present tenses to configure a specific action that is directly related to their current life. However, I do not follow the CA methodology rigorously but rather use the demonstration as a pointer to the temporal thickness of the lifeworld.

Next, in Section 4, against the background of what I demonstrate in Section 3, I will demonstrate salient cases in which remembering specifically becomes relevant. We focus on participants' use of numbers. Numbers are descriptors that are *generally* useable—that is, expected to be understandable for *anybody*. Numbers are more generally useable than, for example, the expression “few” or “many” whose use is more constrained by situational factors such as the participants' interest and purpose at hand; “five” can be too many for ping pong but too few for baseball (see Sacks's [1992] notion of “members' measurement system”). They are treated by the participants specifically as forgettable. In the juxtaposition of these two sets of data (Sections 3 and 4), I point out the possibility that remembering is not the only way of accessing the past. In conclusion, with the results of these analytic sections, I will return to North's use of the “I don't recall” type of utterance.

2. DATA AND METHOD

In the following, using CA as the methodology, I will analyze the video recordings of our interactions with residents of a town in Fukushima Prefecture to which the general evacuation order was issued after the nuclear power plant explosion in March 2011. The restriction on entering the town was gradually relaxed, and the evacuation order was finally lifted all over the town in 2014. Between 2015 and 2017, my colleagues and I interviewed residents who returned to the town. We conducted 12 interviews with 20 residents in total from various communities of the town and various professions. All of the interviews were arranged by a resident (designated as RSD₁) who assisted us as our informant for the research project, and he also participated in most of the interviews. Each interview continued from 1 and a half hours to 2 and a half hours. In all the interviews, I (the author) acted as the main interviewer (Interviewer 1 or INT₁).

There are differences among the residents in their attitudes toward the final lifting of the evacuation order (which means the suspension of the compensation for evacuation). Although I do not go into the details of the differences, some people argue against lifting the order before the problems related to contamination are adequately solved while others argue for the lifting because they want to initiate the reconstruction of their life in the town as soon as possible. I will be “ethnomethodologically indifferent” (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970) to the validity of their arguments; however, the constructions of both arguments serve as reminders of similar conceptual structures.

3. THE TEMPORAL THICKNESS OF THE LEWORLD

In this section, the main part of this chapter, I will show that in performing a distinct action the speakers' past experiences are treated as continuing into the present, by focusing on their alternating uses of the past and present tenses. In the first two examples, the residents address their past situation when talking about the trouble that continues into the present. In the first example, INT1 offers a "candidate understanding" (Schegloff et al. 1977) of what they said (*to yuu koto wa* ["do you mean"]; lines 01). In response, Resident 2 (RSD2) first confirms INT1's offered understanding (lines 03–05) and then explains why they opposed the lifting of the evacuation order, by elaborating on the situation in which they were located (from line 09 onward). (All the cited transcripts were made using Jefferson's [2004] transcription conventions.)

(1a) [JUL27 2015]

- 01 INT1: *naruhodo. to yuu koto wa, a- dochiraka tte yuuto a- ano:: kanarazushimo*
I see. Do you mean, you, so to speak, d(id) not definitely
- 02 *rkaijo ni sansee rde wa: na().*
agree with the lifting?
- 03 RSD2: *Lmaa::s--: Lsoo da yone.*
Basically, r- right.
- 04 *dotchika tte tara, maa kaijo ni tsuite wa, shookyoku teki na katachi*
So to speak, basically about the lifting, we were
- 05 *rno joo rtai datta n'desu yo.*
in a negative position.
- 06 INT1: *La a, |soo datta n'desu ne::.*
Oh, was that so.
- 07 RSD3: *L()*
- 08 INT1: *naruhodo*
I see.
- 09 RSD2: *Lmaa yaru koto dake wa kichitto sakidatte yatte moraereba: ato soredatta rabg:*
Though "if you do appropriately what to be done,
- 10 *nanimo- ano sore kuria sureba okkee da yo to itteta n'desu dga:*
we would not, uh, if you complete it, we accept it," so we said [to the gov. staff]
- 11 INT1: *naruhodo. naruhodo, naruhodo.*
I see. I see, I see.
- 12 RSD2: *Lnankai ittemo yappari (.) nanka rachi ga aka nai*
Though we said that repeatedly, as expected, (.)
- 13 *kotae datta n'desu r(kara)*
the answer did not include any development.
- 14 INT1: *Laa, soo nan'desu ne. sono yaru- yaru beki koto tte yuu no wa,*
Oh, I see. Do you mean by the thing to be done,

In his confirmation, RSD₂ uses the past tense (*datta*; line 06) to describe the stance that they held in the past—at the time when the lifting of the order was discussed. In his elaboration on their situation, RSD₂ describes what they said (before the lifting) to the government staff in proposing a condition on which they could agree with the lifting, using the past tense, once again (*itteta* [“said”]; line 10). He then concludes by describing the result of their exchange with the government staff, using the past tense *datta* (“the answer did not include any development”; line 13).

However, when, RSD₂ corrects INT₁'s second candidate understanding (i.e., understanding of what should be done before returning; lines 14–15 of Excerpt 1b), RSD₂ uses the present tense (*moratte nai* [“have not yet had”]; line 23) to describe the present situation in which what should be done has yet to be done—soil inspections rather than decontamination were meant by “the thing to be done.”

(1b) [JUL27 2015]

- 14 INT1: *ˌaa, soo nan'desu ne. sono yaru- yaru beki koto tte yuu no wa,*
Oh, I see. Do you mean by the thing to be done,
- 15 *tatoeba, josen toka::, ˚tte yuu ɾkoto nan'(deshoo ka˚)*
for example, decontamination?
- 16 RSD2: *ˌano- maa josen:: no jootai mo*
Uh- well, the situation of decontamination
- 17 *soo nan'desu ga:,*
is part of it, but
- 18 INT1: *ee ee*
Mm-hmm
- 19 RSD2: *ano::- kekkyoku wareware koko e kaette kureba: (.) tanbo nari:: hatake nari::*
Uh::- an important thing is, if we come back here, (.) rice fields or other fields,
- 20 *ɾtsu-tsukun' nakya nan'nai n' ɾda kedo .hh*
we have to make them, but, .hh
- 21 INT2: *ˌee ee ee* *ˌee ee ee*
Mm-hmm Mm-hmm
- 22 RSD2: *sore no jootai no- (>iwayuru<) dojoo kensa toka nan'toka sooyuu yatsu ga*
their condition- (what is called) soil inspections and something like that,
- 23 *zenzen yatte moratte nai ɾn'desu.*
we have not yet had them done appropriately.
- 24 INT1: *ˌaa soo nan'desu ne.*
Oh, is that so.
- ((7 lines omitted))
- 25 RSD2: *soo yuu: katachi no jootai nanka wa ichiba:::n saisho kara moo: yutteta n'desu yo.*
Concerning such a condition, we kept mentioning it at the very beginning.

- 26 INT1: *aa ɾsoo nan'desu ne.*
 Oh, is that so.
- 27 RSD2: ^L*ano:: josen no setumee kai toka nanka atta toki kara ne?*
 Since the time of the meetings where they explained the procedure of decontamination.
- 28 INT1: *>haa haa haa haa ɾhaa<*
 Uh-huh
- 29 ^L*sorega ikkgo: ni rachi ga aka nai, mada- imada katte mada:*
- 30 *kono ka- kaitoo ga (.) kite nai tte yuu fuuna jootai nande(su kedo)*
 Since then, there has been no development. We have never had the answer.

RSD2's explanation develops into the more explicitly current situation: although they have been asking the government to do what is to be done, there has been no development (lines 25–30). Note that in lines 29–30, RSD2, describing the current situation in the present tense, ties the description back to his previous description in lines 12–13 (in which he uses the past tense); in lines 29–30, he reuses the (salient) phrase *rachi ga aka nai* ("there has been no development"), which he originally used in line 12, and utters the word *kaitoo* ("answer"), which has the same meaning as *kotae* ("answer"; line 13). In this fashion, in RSD2's description, the past seamlessly continues into the present.

Mentioning that there is no development despite their repeated requests is hearable as a complaint regarding the premature lifting that continues to affect their current life: appropriate soil inspections were not conducted and they do not know yet how exactly their fields are currently contaminated. Thus, the residents, explaining how prematurely the evacuation order was lifted in the past, also talk about the current situation affected by the prematureness. In their talk, the past event (i.e., what came out of their past exchange with the government staff at the time of the lifting of the order) is an integral part of the thickness of their lifeworld; the past event is experienced as seamlessly continuing into the present in the local order of the configuration of the current action (i.e., complaining about the condition of their current life).

It is not uncommon to talk about what happened in the past as a present issue. In the next example (Example 2), RSD2 consistently explains what happened in the past. After the residents explain how poor the decontamination of the soil provided by the government was, INT1 asks about the radiation dosage of the soil following the decontamination.

(2) [JUL27 2015]

- 01 INT1: *de jo- jo- josen- sono:: toriaezu josen u--: kakko tsuki:: sss:- sono shita ato::*
 02 *no tatoeba hoosha senryoo toka wa ɾmaa ()*
 And after they did dec-dec- decontamination u--: what they called so,
 was the radiation level basically ()
- 03 RSD2: ^L*kore:: moo- moo ano: kekkyoku monitaringu mo*
 04 *shimashi ta kara tte are kekka::: motte kita n'da na (sona ɾ) jaa moo ikkai=*
 "This::, now- now uh after that we took a measurement," they said
 and brought the result. ("If that is the result), take another measurement,
- 05 INT2: ^L()

- 06 RSD2: =*hakatte mite kudasai tte tano*:
please," I said.
- 07 INT1: *ʔee ee*
Mm-hmm
- 08 RSD2: *ˈsoredemo yappa' senryooke de wakarū kara: ano:: e ano:: (gata no)*
09 *toozen mottemashi ta n'de, .hh de koko ikura ari masu ka:: tte tano. toko'ga*
10 *yaayaa ikura de ʔsu tte.*
However, you know- They could measure the radiation with a dose meter that they were carrying, .hh then, "What is the dosage right here?" I said. Yet, you know, they said, "So and so."
- 11 INT1: *ˈLee ee ee*
Mm-hmm
- 12 RSD2: *de kekkoo yappa' takakatta n'desu yo.*
And that was quite high.
- 13 INT1: *n ʔnn nn n*
Mm-hmm
- 14 *ˈL.hh de <konna tokoro ni> datte s-s-sume- ano wareware seekatsu:: deki*
15 *n'no ka tte tano.*
.hh and "How could people liv- could we lead our life in a place like this?" I said.
- 16 INT1: *n nn nn nn:n*
Mm-hmm
- 17 RSD2: *so'shitara 'njaa tte kankyooshoo demo <yoo::yaku ano omoi koshi agete::>*
18 *de ano:: ni kaime no josen yatta no kana?=(ʔ)*
Then, "If you say so," they said, and finally the Ministry of Environment, though reluctantly, completed the second decontamination, I guess.
- 19 INT1: *ˈLee ee naruhodo::*
- 20 RSD2: *de::- sono sunaba:: ni tsuite wa moo san kai yarase (naosase mashi ta)*
And regarding that sand area, I made them do it three times.²
- 21 *ʔmoo dame da tte tte*
"Everything is unsatisfactory," I said.
- 22 INT1: *ˈLaa soo nan'desu ne.*
Oh, I see.
- 23 RSD2: *ˈnankai yatte mo onaji nan'desu yone? ano gyoosha ga ne?*
No matter how many times it is/was done, there is/was no change.
Because of those who implemented it.

In response to the question, RSD₂ describes the exchanges that he held with the government staff in the past. He uses direct citations of the exchanges (lines 03–04, 06, 08–10, 14–15, 17, and 21) that led to the second and third decontamination. RSD₂'s "high-granularity" (Schegloff 2000) description of the exchanges, given in the past tense, highlights the complainable

2 Earlier, RSD₂ mentioned that his young grandchildren are inclined to play with the sand.

aspect of the government's measures; the exchanges are described as occasioned by a routine course of the government staff's action (i.e., bringing the result of measurement) and as initiated by the resident, being suspicious about the result, to pursue further decontamination to obtain more satisfactory conditions. Finally, RSD₂ generalizes the complainable aspect of his description by using the phrase *nankai yatte mo* ("no matter how many times"), suggesting that the problem has not been solved by these attempts to decontaminate the soil. Thus, the complainable aspect of the government's problematic past measures is indicated as seamlessly continuing into the present condition of their life.

The next example (Example 3) is taken from an interview conducted in another community in the same town. The interviewees supported the lifting of the evacuation order. RSD₅ explains her (positive) perspective on the lifting of the evacuation order in the present tense (*aru* ["are"] in lines 06 and 10, *arigatai* ["would appreciate"] in line 24, and *arie nai* ["cannot"] in line 31). However, it is positioned in the context in which RSD₄ requests, in the past tense (*katta* ["were"]; line 01), an agreement from RSD₅ regarding the difficulty that they *had* when the residents discussed whether or not they should admit the lifting.

(3) [JUN22 2015]

- 01 RSD4: .hh n::::-: iya kaijo ni mu- (.) mukete wa muszukashikatta mon' na
 .hh we::ll, to- (.) toward the lifting, there were difficulties, right?
- 02 RSD5: nn:::n
 Yeah::
- 03 INT1: aa aa:: r::
 Mm-hmm
- 04 RSD5: Ldemo yappari ano::::: ka-kaerenai tte gutteiru hito no iken to ne?
 But as expected uh::::: The view of those who say they can't return and?
- 05 INT1: nn nn nn
 Mm-hmm
- 06 RSD5: kae- iikara kaeshite kure tte yuu hito no iken, r-ryoohoo aru wake desu yo.
 the view of those who retur- say "let us return," there are both views.
- 07 INT1: Lnn n::::n ee ee ee
 Yeah, mm-hmm
- 08 RSD5: dakedo::::: kaeshite kara ne?
 However::: after letting [us] return?
- 09 INT1: ee ee
 Mm-hmm
- 10 RSD5: Lkangaereba ii koto mo yama hodo aru wake rdesho?
 there are very many things that we have to think about after returning, right?
- 11 INT1: Ln nn nn rnn
 Mm-hmm
- 12 RSD5: Lda' kuni ga ne?
 So, it was the country, right?

tion, using the quotative particle *to* at the end of line 24. However, in so far as the reason is presented as contrastive to the difficult situation, it is hearable as her own stance on the lifting. In line 04, she thus appears to interrupt jumping into the reason and to “parenthetically” (Mazeland 2007) insert an elaboration of the difficulty that RSD₄ mentions (i.e., there has been an apparently unsolvable disagreement between the residents regarding the lifting; lines 04 and 06); however, she uses the present tense to present the elaboration.

In her way of talking, the difficulty at a past moment—there were two opposite views at the time of the lifting of the evacuation order—seamlessly continues into the present. It is lived as part of the present in the local order of the configuration of a distinct action—displaying a forward-looking stance in the post-disaster situation.

In these examples, describing what happened in the past does not appear to be specifically related to remembering. The told past event or fact is a constitutive part of their configuration of a specific action that is directly related to current anxiety and the felt difficulty of their current life or, contrarily, their current positive perspective on the renewed life. They, as it were, directly live, rather than remembering, the past event or fact as part of their present life in the local order of the interaction.

4. REMEMBERING NUMBERS

In this section, I examine cases in which remembering becomes specifically relevant. These cases remind us of the conceptual structures in which the concept of *remembering* behaves in our interactions. Their juxtaposition with the cases examined in the previous section will reveal that the conceptual domain in which remembering is relevant is delimited by practical forgettability even when the participants speak of their past experiences. Specifically, I examine cases in which numbers are mentioned. Numbers, as general descriptors of their objective situations, appear to become practically forgettable. Mentioning numbers is only an example of the occasion on which remembering is specifically relevant but a salient example in that the speaker frequently *does* thinking when mentioning numbers.

In the next example (Example 4), a resident, who arranged the series of interview sessions for the research team, raises the question of who commuted from the evacuation shelter to the community to repair their houses when the government allowed the residents only to enter it (without staying overnight) after the evacuation order was issued.

(4) [JUL27 2015]

01 RSD1: .sh *ha:yame ni kite'ta hito ttsuu no wa (nanin kuree) ichiroo kun to: hirai kun to:*
.sh (How many) people came here earlier () Ichiroo-kun and Hirai-kun and

02 RSD3: *#nn#::: <watashi to> hirai san to (.)*
#Well#::: <myself and> Hirai-san and (.)

- 03 RSD1: ɾ(sokkara)
(and)
- 04 RSD2: ʌmæe kara mukoo kara kayot ɾteta tte yuu hito wa ɾ#so#nna ni wa ɾinee da nga
Those who commuted from there quite early were not so many, right?
- 05 RSD1: ʌssu- ʌssu- |
- 06 RSD3: ʌinee na
No.
- 07 seezee ni san nin ɾsan nin () ɾsan gurai
Two or three at most, three people () three, perhaps
- 08 RSD2: ʌsan nin san setai gurai kanaa ʌ()
Three people, three families, perhaps, ()
- 09 RSD2: asoko: no ich- ya ɾsuo kun (.) ɾtoko' dakara::
Because, the one there, ich- Yasuo-kun (.) and his family,
- 10 RSD1: ʌyasuo kun
Yasuo-kun
- 11 RSD3: ʌaa sooda naa ɾsan-
Oh, that's right. Three-
- 12 RSD2: ʌnn san setai
Right, three families
- 13 kurai ɾdesu ɾne
perhaps, that's it.
- 14 RSD3: ʌsan se |tai kuree da ne ()
Three families, perhaps, ()
- 15 INT1: ʌaa soo nan'desu ne
Oh, I see.

RSD₁ produces a list of those who commuted by mentioning RSD₃'s and RSD₂'s names and leaving the list incomplete by adding *to* (“and”; line 03) to the second name, thereby inviting the two residents from the community (i.e., RSD₂ and RSD₃) to complete it. In response, RSD₃ first *does* thinking aloud (#nn#::; line 02) and then repeats the incomplete list produced by RSD₁, which is hearable as *doing* trying to remember aloud. In response to RSD₃'s apparent difficulty in remembering, RSD₂ offers a quantitative assessment (“not so many”; line 04) instead of completing the list, thereby exhibiting his understanding that RSD₁'s interest is in the general situation rather than in the exact list and that RSD₁ uses the attempt to list names as a means to reach the number (“how many”; line 01). This understanding may be grounded in the possibility that RSD₁ may have raised the question about the general situation on behalf of the interviewers to whom the concrete names may be irrelevant. Finally, RSD₂ and RSD₃ reach the agreement that three families commuted to the community at the early time (lines 12–14), and, indeed, INT₁, not RSD₁, receipts their reached agreement (indicating the number of the families).

What they are *doing* remembering together is a general situation of the *entire* community beyond their *immediate* situation of life (to which their complaints in Examples 1 and 2 are oriented). In *doing* remembering who commuted to the community from the evacuation

- 09 *hachi nin ka rna?*
From them six or eight persons or something like this?
- 10 RSD5: *Ln::n soo ne. xxx san toko mo naku rnat rte'rushi.*
Yeah, right. the one from the XXX ((name)) family has died.
- 11 RSD4: *Ln |*
Yeah
- 12 INT1: *La aa*
I see.
- 13 RSD4: *kekko naku natta rkata ga rnan'nin-*
More than expected died-
- 14 RSD5: *Ln n | : : n*
Y e a : : h
- 15 INT1: *Lnore wa moo omodori ni narareta ato::: r(desu ka)*
Was that after they came home?
- 16 RSD5: *|iya iya*
Oh, no.
- 17 RSD4: *Ln(sa-)*
- 18 RSD4: *rtochuu de.*
Before returning.
- 19 RSD5: *Lmodore nai rde. (r)*
When they were not allowed to come home.
- 20 INT1: *La ()*
- 21 RSD4: *Lhinan rseekatsu no nakade*
During the evacuation.
- 22 INT1: *Lhinan no nakade*
During the evacuation.

((4 lines omitted))
- 23 RSD5: *rhinan saki de ne:::*
At the evacuation site:::
- 24 RSD4: *Ldatte mina haire- nn nn*
Because they were not allowed to ent- Yeah
- 25 INT1: *ee ee ee rre*
Mm-hmm
- 26 RSD4: *Lyappari are ga yappari ichiban kawai rsoo deshita ne/na.*
You know, that was the most painful, I must say.
- 27 RSD5: *Lchotto nn:::rn*
Well Yeah
- 28 INT1: *La naruhodo.*
Oh, I see.

Mentioning without any hedging the total number of the residents of the community (i.e., 38 families; line 05) is not surprising considering that the district is a very small rural area and that he once served as the official coordinator of the community (see, however, the analysis of

- 08 RSD2: *n- nijuu yō nen da nga*
It was t-twenty four, I think.
- 09 RSD3: *ryo nen:*
Four:
- 10 RSD2: *ni nen- ni nenme atari da na*
Two year- two years ago or so, I think.
- 11 INT1: *aa aa soo nan'desu ne*
Oh, is that so.
- 12 RSD3: *ni nenme atari da ne:*
Two years ago or so, I think.
- 13 RSD3: *ni nenme atari da ne*
Two years ago or so, I think.
- 14 INT1: *l.SHh* *aa soo nan'desu ne*
Oh, is that so.

RSD₃ rejects INT₁'s candidate answer (line 04), while INT₁'s candidate answer offers instruction on how to answer the question—namely, by numbers (see Sacks [1992] on “correction invitations”), and RSD₂ begins to figure out the correct answer in accordance with the instruction, using the year of the earthquake as an orientation (line 06). RSD₃ specifies the (Japanese calendar) year of the earthquake (Heisei 23 [which is 2011]) and figures out that it was one or two years later than the year (line 07). Then, they draw the conclusion that it was the second year after the earthquake (i.e., the nuclear disaster). They infer the answer by referencing a specific point of time (i.e., the year of the earthquake). The exact year is practically not immediately accessible in this example, and *doing* inferring it is *doing* being as exact as possible.

In contrast, if a resident remembers a practically forgettable number without *doing* remembering, the remembering accomplishes something more than remembering *simpliciter*. In the next example (Example 7), the resident (RSD6) who served as the director of the local administration office of the town when the disaster happened and was in charge of the evacuation of the entire town explained how the residents of one entire town were evacuated. In the process of the explanation before the example, he also mentioned the exact number of on-call civilian firefighters in the town (i.e., 267) who visited all the families and ensured that all the residents knew that the evacuation order was issued (data not shown). In doing so, he is *doing* being the responsible former director. I will show how this is accomplished by examining Example 7 in detail; in Example 7, RSD6 mentions another number—the exact time of the completion of the evacuation.

Just prior to the example, RSD6 was telling the interviewers that some elderly residents refused the ordered evacuation. The example includes a long sequence, initiated by INT₁'s inquiry about what happened to these refusing residents, and I divide it into two parts (7a and 7b).

(7a) [SEPT14 2015]

- 01 INT1: *soo yuu kata wa moo:: s- n- saigo made kekkyoku hinan sezu ↓ni:*
Did these residents end up not evacuating?
- 02 (0.8)
- 03 RSD6: *#nn::n#to ne:: ato sono hoka kondo:_.h n::*
#We::#ll in addition, next, well,
- 04 INT2: *n: ↓n*
Mm
- 05 (1.2)
- 06 RSD6: *ken no hoo kara ne: ɾ: son'na koto de::wa: ike nai kara:*
from the prefecture, to deal with the situation
- 07 INT1: *Lee ee:*
Mm-hmm
- 08 INT1: *nn ɾnn*
Yeah
- 09 RSD6: *↳sono hooshanoo (tto) sono me ni mie nai kara ɾyuki fu-*
Well, because radiation is not visible, If we have snow-
- 10 INT1: *↳soo desu yo ɾ↑ne↓:*
Right.
- 11 RSD6: *↳yuki futta toka*
- 12 *ame futta tokda da(tta)ra (0.4) ɾyuki da'ra kon'na ni futta toka=*
If we have snow or rain, (0.4) if it is snow, we are like "we had so much,"
- 13 INT1: *Lee ee ee ee*
Mm-hmm
- 14 RSD6: *=ɾwa(h)ka(h)rumo(h)n' ɾn e e : ɾ:*
we can(h) see(h) it, right?
- 15 INT2: *Lee ee* *↳w a |ka(h)ri masu ne*
Mm-hmm **We can see it.**
- 16 INT1: *Lee ee*
Mm-hmm
- 17 RSD6: *desu kedomo*
However,
- 18 INT1: *soo desu yo ne: (aru ɾimi ɾde)*
That's right (in a sense).
- 19 INT2: *↳n: |n*
Yeah
- 20 RSD6 *↳me ni mie nai mono dakara 'nja (0.4) daqoshitemo*
- 21 *hinan deki nen'da na*
because [radiation] is not visible, so (0.4) it was difficult to evacuate [due to it].

- 22 INT1: n:: r:n
Yeah
- 23 RSD6: L_{n:n} sono (1.2) n::n jieetai san toka
Well, (1.2) well, defense force members and others
- 24 INT1: aa aa raa
Uh-huh
- 25 RSD6: L_{nan'ka} kite minna (1.0) sono settoku ni (.)
were sent, and they (1.0) came here and
- 26 INT2: n: rn
Yeah
- 27 RSD6: L_{mie} mashita.
and tried to persuade them [to evacuate].
- 28 INT1: ee ee ee
Mm-hmm
- 29 INT2: rsoo nan'desu ne.
I see.
- 30 RSD6: L_{dakedo mo::o} (1.2) ii desu yo tto r_{koo} ryappari <katakuna ni> koo
However, (1.2) saying "I will be fine," some people stubbornly
- 31 INT1: L_{e e} | ee
Mm-hmm
- 32 INT2: L_{aa::}
Ah so::
- 33 RSD6: r_{sareru hito wa} (0.4) ikuraka wa nokot: r_{te} (° °)
refused (0.4) and remained () [Including line 36]
- 34 INT1: |_{nn n:n nn nn} L_{aa soo dattan' desu ne: n:n}
Yeah Oh, was that so.
- 35 INT2: L_{aa::} ()
Ah:: ()
- 36 RSD6: ori mashita
(6 lines omitted)
- 37 RSD6: watashi wa::
I uh:
38 (0.4)
- 39 RSD6: ano:: (.) sooyuu .hhh meeree ga -:-: meeree tte yuu ka
40 nigete kudasai r_{toka hinaru shinasai} tte yuu koto ga wakannakute nige nakatta=
41 INT1: L_{ee ee}
Mm-hmm
- 42 RSD6: =tte yuu hito wa i- ano (.) kono Utsukushi ni hitori mo (.) ori mase:n.
Uh: (.) there was none in this Utsukushi ((the name of the town))
who didn't evacuate without knowing that order, or,
that they were told to run away or evacuate. [Lines 39, 40, and 42]

In response to INT1's question, RSD6 first *does* thinking aloud (*#nn::n#tone* ["#we:::#ll"] after 0.8-second silence), indicating that a complexly constructed answer may ensue. What is hearable as the answer to the question appears later in lines 30–36 (“However, (1.2) saying, ‘I will be fine,’ some people stubbornly refused (0.4) and remained.”). A complexly constructed preliminary sequence is inserted before the answer. In this preliminary sequence, RSD6 explains what was done to persuade them to evacuate (“From the prefecture, [line 06] ... defense force members and others were sent, and they (1.0) came here and tried to persuade them. [lines 23–27]”). Moreover, within this explanation, a further explanation is “parenthetically” inserted,⁴ which offers a possible reason for their refusal (“Well, because radiation is not visible. [line 9] ... If we have snow or rain, (0.4) if it is snow, we are like ‘we had so much,’ we can see it, right? [lines 12–14] However, because [radiation] is not visible, so (0.4) it was difficult to evacuate [due to it]. [lines 17–21]”). These explanations are not part of the answer, but they display that the prefecture (and the local administration office) had made all efforts before they let the refusing residents remain and that further there was a legitimate reason why the efforts were unsuccessful (i.e., the invisibility of radiation). Therefore, this entire sequence indicates RSD6's defensive stance toward the fact that not literally all the residents evacuated and his sensitivity to the responsibility as the director of the local administration office. The bottom line of his answer (that while not all residents evacuated, no residents were ignorant about the issue of the evacuation order; lines 39–42) is explicated at the end of Excerpt 7a. In this fashion, RSD6 resists what INT1's question may imply—that is, that they simply failed in evacuating all the residents. Thus, he is *doing* being the former responsible director of the local administration office.

His remembering exact numbers in this context (i.e., in the context in which his commitment to the identity of “the director of the local office at that time” is manifest) may contribute to bringing his sensitivity to the responsibility to the foreground.⁵ At the beginning of the second part of Example 7, RSD6 indicates the “precise” time of the completion of the evacuation of the entire city (line 04).

(7b) [SEPT14 2015]

((4 lines omitted))

01 RSD6: *soshite ano (0.8) juu ni nichi no r:*

And uh: (0.8) on the 12th⁶

02 INT1:

L°°ee°°

Mm

4 This second inserted explanation is marked as parenthetical not only by the grammatical construction but also by using a rough form (*neen'da na;* in other places, RSD6 consistently uses polite forms) and laugh tokens.

5 Note that before offering the bottom line, RSD6 begins to say something with him as the subject and aborts it (*watasshi wa:* ['I uh:']; line 37). He may have changed from the construction in which the focus is on the efforts that he made to ensure that all the residents know the order to the construction that simply expresses the objective fact. He may thus have avoided being too defensive.

6 More precisely, because the date changed at midnight, it was the 13th. It is interesting, however, that he remembers the time as part of the 12th, which was a long day for him (see also Note 8).

- 03 (1.0)
- 04 RSD6: *gozen ichi ji (0.4) desu ne*
at one in the morning, (0.4) then,
- 05 INT1: *aa ρhaa haa haa*
Uh-huh
- 06 RSD6: *ˌzen in (0.8) Utsuku ρshi:: no (.) choomin:: (.) wɑ hinan (.)*
"All the residents (0.8) of Utsukushi have evacuated (.)
- 07 INT1: *ˌnaruhodo naruhodo*
I see.
- 08 INT1: *n fun fun*
Mm-hmm
- 09 (0.2)
- 10 RSD6: *ρima () hinan shimashita tte ano shichoo n̄i*
Just now, the evacuation was completed," so to the mayor of the city⁷
- 11 INT1: *ˌ() ee*
- 12 INT1: *hoo ρkoku ρo*
A report
- 13 INT2: *ˌhoo |koku o shita*
You reported.
- 14 RSD6: *ˌhookoku o itashi ma ρshita.*
I reported.
- 15 INT1: *ˌee*
Mm
- 16 INT2: *n::n*
Mm
- 17 INT1: *naruhodo*
I see.
- 18 RSD6: *oni(h)gi(h)ri(h) dhe deh ρde .hh issenko mo tsu(h)nda(h) ρtorakku de tsu-*
By a truck with one(h) thou(h)sand(h) ri(h)ce(h) balls.⁸
- 19 INT1: *ˌee ee ee:::* *ˌnaruhodo ee ee*
Mm-hmm I see.
- 20 RSD6: *d'shichoo:: san: ne?*
And the mayor,

7 The town is part of this city.

8 The town was first designated as an evacuation site for those from the area where the exploded power plant was located. The residents had been preparing many rice balls for the prospective evacuees before the evacuation order was issued to the town later on the same day. They finally evacuated with these rice balls. This utterance is hearable as a joke but suggests the troublesomeness and effortfulness of his work on that day (the 12th of March 2011). The laugh tokens within the utterance may display his 'trouble resistance' (Jefferson, 1984) as well as marking the utterance as a joke.

- 21 INT1: ee ɾee ee
Mm-hmm
- 22 RSD6: ʌ.hhhh ʌgokuroo san
.hhh "Thank you for your efforts,"
- 23 INT1: nn nn nn ɾ: n n
Uh-huh
- 24 RSD6: ʌnante yutte kure mashita kedo
he said this for me.
- 25 INT1: ɾee ee ee
Mm-hmm
- 25 INT2: ʌn::n
Mm
- 26 INT2: n: ɾ:n
Mm
- 27 INT1: ʌ^o()desu ne::^o taihen deshita ne shika^ʌshi:
^o()^o I can imagine your efforts.

In lines 01–14, RSD6 describes how he reported to the mayor the completion of the evacuation of the entire town. He indicated the exact time of the report (one on the morning of the “12th”). The indication (or remembering) of the time (as well as the exact number of local civilian firefighters) may be part of his *doing* being the former responsible director who made all the efforts to complete his mission. Note also that RSD6 does not produce any hedging about the exactness of the time, as contrasted with the residents in previous examples (e.g., *kurai* or *kuree* [“perhaps”] in lines 13 and 14 of Excerpt 4, *kana* [“or something like this”] in lines 02 and 09 of Excerpt 5, and *atari* [“or so”] in lines 10, 12, and 13 of Excerpt 6).

This intelligibility of the indication of the number is exhibited by the subsequent development of the interaction. In line 22, RSD6 produces a reported speech of the mayor’s appreciation of his efforts (*gokuroo san* is a conventional way for superiors to appreciate their subordinates’ efforts; *kuroo* means “trouble” or “efforts,” and *go* and *san* both mark politeness), indicating that the mayor understood the effortfulness of such evacuation. In line 27, INT1 expresses his empathy with his considerable effort (*taihen* also means “trouble” or “efforts” in this context).

Thus, remembering appears relevant when the participants talk about the past situation in a general way using a general term such as numbers. When remembering is relevant, speaking of the past rememberable (i.e., practically forgettable) fact without *doing* remembering accomplishes a specific interactional job.

4. CONCLUSION

In the previous sections, I demonstrated that even when we talk about our past experiences, remembering may not be relevant. In the temporal thickness of the lifeworld, a past event is experienced as past and as distinguishable from the present event. However, the past event is experienced as seamlessly continuing into to the present in the local order of the confi-

guration of the current action (such as complaining about the government or displaying a forward-looking stance in the post-disaster situation). The past in this temporal thickness is not just the past (re)constructed retrospectively from the present point of view. Certainly, all memories of past episodes are present constructs (cf. Michaelian 2016). However, in the thickness of the lifeworld, some past events are on the horizon of present meaningful experiences related to a current specific action being performed in the actor's present life.

I also demonstrated that remembering may be specifically relevant when one reflects on a collection of facts. It is, in particular, when those facts are presented as part of a situation that is designedly generally—in a way potentially accessible even to outsiders—described. The juxtaposition of the cases in which a past event or fact seamlessly continues into the present in the configuration of a specific action (Excerpts 1–3) and the cases in which remembering a past fact is relevant (Excerpts 4 and 5) revealed the diversity of our access to our own past.

Lynch and Bogen (1996) indicated the usefulness of North's frequent use of the "I don't recall" type of utterance: "the witness can later affirm without cost of contradiction what he does not acknowledge at the moment" (200). A paradox appears as follows. When remembering is relevant, *doing* trying to remember is *doing* being as exact as possible, and the harder one tries to remember, or, in other words, the more uncertain one appears *doing* being about what is asked, the more truthful one *may* appear.

It is true, as Lynch and Bogen (1996) pointed out, that the witness "can still be held responsible for recalling what 'anybody' (in a relevant category) should recall under the circumstances" (200). Bound to the category "director of the local administration office," for example, is the normative expectation to appropriately administrate relevant information regarding the local town. RSD6, previously an incumbent of the category, in the last example, demonstrates such responsibility by recounting the details of the evacuation. However, once remembering is relevant and one is not certain about matters being inquired about, not providing an inexact answer *could be* another way to demonstrate their responsibility.

The testimony may be a very specific cultural institution in which it is presupposed that the facts about the past should and could be collected through individual memory and in which remembering and, therefore, not-remembering as well are omni-relevant. In other words, in a public hearing, a meeting specifically designed for *collecting information* on past events, the witness's access to the past is reduced to remembering past *objective* facts, excluding the witness's subjective evaluations or feelings about them.⁹ This specific context may have allowed North to use the "I don't recall" type of utterance in strategic ways.

After noting the resilience of the conception of "professional vision" (Goodwin 1994) that makes the pre-theoretical vision appear inadmissible, Lynch (2018) remarks as follows: "Both the appeal and the limitations of this concept of 'professional vision' challenges us to seriously consider the possibility of such an inadmissible way of seeing" (243; see also Lynch 2020). In fact, many ordinary people outside the court did not accept the instructed professional vision; the pre-theoretical vision persisted and led to the 1992 "riots" (or uprising). In the same vein, the appeal and the limitation of North's subversive use of not remembering

9 This specific context also reduces remembering to remembering-that, although there are other kinds of remembering such as remembering how to play overtones on the saxophone (cf. Coulter 1979).

in the Iran-contra hearings challenge us to seriously consider the robustness of our lifeworld experience of the past in our life.

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