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Symposium: Toward a Linguistic Thoery of Ba: Semantics and Pragmatics of *Ba*

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"How and why two strangers can co-create a story: Application of the  
'*ba*'-theory based approach to the discourse"

#### Abstract

This presentation addresses the question: how and why can a pair of teacher-student interactants co-create a story? In analyzing the discourse data taken while interactants try to achieve the task of making a coherent story by arranging cards, the 'ba (filed)' theory is employed. 'Ba' based approach is an innovating frame of thinking device that assumes 1) inside perspective of the subject, 2) dual mode thinking of the self, 3) a dynamic model like an improvised drama and 4) two modes of communication, i.e. overt and covert. The data have been analyzed into two phases of discourse: the dialogue discourse and the merging discourse. The former is indexed by the interpersonal modalities such as honorifics and sentence final particles, while the latter is characterized by dropping these linguistic features. The sudden drop of presupposed use of modalities by a teacher is obviously a deviation, but it would serve as a creative use (cf. Silverstein 1967). It is in this merging discourse that the discourse phenomena of repetition, simultaneous utterances, and chaining utterances occur. These phenomena

would add no information to the conversation, but function to synchronize and to entrain the interactants. When synchronization and entrainment are maintained between the interactants, covert communication is to be maintained that would create a basis for smooth overt communication. I will argue that it is by the 'ba' theory based approach to discourse that we can illuminate the dynamic processes of co-creating a story by interactants.