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SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY AND SUICIDE PREVENTION ¹⁾

Heather Fiske, Ph.D.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is an efficient and effective approach to clinical work with individuals who are at risk of suicide, and their families (Fiske, 2008). One reason that SFBT is time-effective is that it utilizes strengths and capacities already present in clients, their families and friends, and their communities. Also, highlighting those strengths and capacities is hope-inducing for the people involved.

There are other good reasons for using SFBT, among them the ways in which solution-focused conversation helps to focus both client and therapist on hope and reasons for living. This focus reduces the amount of time spent going over clients' thoughts and plans for suicide. According to Thomas Joiner's psychological-interactional theory of suicide, people acquire the ability to kill themselves partly by "rehearsing" and thereby desensitizing suicidal action (Joiner, 2005). SFBT selectively amplifies strengths, resources, and solutions, making such desensitization less likely.

Solution-focused practice is client-focused, which mitigates the chance of clients feeling that they are being subjected to a formula. Such impressions are especially likely with the use of standardized risk assessment and

no-harm-contracting protocols.

Scaling and other solution-focused practices help clients to break both problems and change into smaller, more manageable steps ("partializing"). This process undermines beliefs that one's problems are interminable, inescapable, and intolerable—beliefs that push clients toward suicide as a solution.

Individuals who are focused on suicide as a solution often have difficulty imagining any personal future. A unique contribution of SFBT is its emphasis on developing a detailed picture of a preferred future, using tools such as the miracle question. This is one way in which solution-focused conversation is a "tap on the shoulder", drawing clients' attention to possibilities they could not access on their own.

For therapists, attending to clients' strengths and focusing on hope and reasons for living can act as both prevention and antidote for secondary trauma.

Application: Solution-Focused Questions

(Note: All of the questions mentioned here are "second-rate", because they are generic; the best questions are based on what a particular client says.)

What are your best hopes for this conversation? For desperate clients, this opening question often strikes to the heart of the matter: the struggle for hope and reasons for living. It makes sense to them, and is a way of beginning to determine the destination of treatment.

Suppose a miracle happened, and (those best hopes)...were realized, what is the first small sign you would notice...? Again, this question often makes sense because it fits with the clients' beliefs (that it would take a miracle to change things).

What would your best friend (or other close person) say? Relationship questions provide alternative viewpoints and information on supportive connections.

When was the most recent exception to the problem—or (better)

When was the most recent instance of a solution/part of the miracle picture?

Instances of solution challenge the hegemony of problems.

On a scale from 1 to 10... Scaling questions can yield quick information about client safety, goals, and progress. Also, they “partialize”, and may engage more cognitive resources in emotion-laden decision-making.

What else? Details of strengths and resources, exceptions or instances, make them real and live for clients. Details of a miracle

picture create “future pull”, motivating clients to move toward those futures.

Stance

More important than any question or technique is the solution-focused stance: respectful, curious, mindful.

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Effects of interpersonal relations on the cognition of self-deprecating humor

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study is to consider and clarify the affirmative side of self-deprecating humor in daily scenes, focusing on interpersonal relations. We conducted inquiry survey whose subjects are 137 Japanese college students—67 males and 70 females ($M = 19.33$, $SD = 1.38$). When we conducted covariance structures on effects of interpersonal relations on self-deprecating humor, we found that it was perceived as socially desirable in addition to favorableness and warm feelings if they have entertaining relation and feel happy to be with each other. However, it is showed that use of self-deprecating humor is perceived as lack of self-confidence if they have strong emotional ties. Accordingly, the survey shows that self-deprecating humor is perceived differently according relation between friends and it can be said that it is necessary to use it properly to each friend.

KEY WORDS: self-deprecating humor, interpersonal relations

Introduction

We use different humor consciously or unconsciously so as to make human relation smooth and soften the atmosphere at the time. The definition of humor is vague and the means to classify is diverse. According to Martin (2007), humor is “an action that seems funny or appears to invite others to laugh, mental process to imagine and interpret such a funny stimulus and emotional reaction to the stimulus.” Also Ueno (1992) suggests three kinds of humor in Japan, “aggressive humor” “playful humor” and “support-relief humor”. “Aggressive humor” is humor that offends oneself or others, “playful humor” means poor

jokes, punning and so on, and “support-relief humor” is humor that is used to encourage and cherish oneself or other person. In the meantime, Tsukawaki, Higuchi and Fukuda (2009) classified into three types of humor, “aggressive humor” “self-disparaging humor” and “playful humor” after improving and analyzing items of self-defeating humor of “Humor Style Questionnaire” (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003). “Self-defeating humor, self-disparaging humor or self-deprecating humor” means laughing at one’s own failure and immaturity. Besides, humor is classified from two points of view, negative and positive views (Martin, et al. 2003). “Affiliative humor” and “self-enhancing humor” are regarded as positive style of humor. Affiliative humor means it is used to make human relation smooth and solve friction of human relation. Self-enhancing humor is humor

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that is used to deal with stress and calamity. It is said that using such humor prevents a person from becoming involved in negative situation such as suffering and becoming depressed. On the other hand, it is said that there is negative humor that should be avoided because of its mental unhealthiness, which includes aggressive humor and self-defeating humor. It is showed that using that humor has negative correlation with degrees of satisfaction in human relation, self-confidence and wellbeing, and it is thought as lack of social skills (Martin, 2007).

Still, it was already reported that such humor has positive side. In particular, it is suggested that using self-deprecating humor relates to social skills and human resources of the user (Yashima, 2016; Tsukawaki, Hirakawa, 2012). Yashima (2016) notes that the reason why positive side is seen is because self-deprecating humor tends to be adapted to Japanese culture since “modesty” is regarded as virtue there. Therefore, we take up self-deprecating humor among humor and consider further affirmative cognition.

According to Ziv (1984), self-deprecating humor used among Jews was originally typical. He suggests that ability of laughing at oneself is a desirable characteristic and using that humor wins high praise from society. This does not agree with the opinion of Marin et al (2003), who classified self-deprecating humor into negative style. Also Lundy et al. (1998) reported that self-deprecating humor has characteristics such as “humble self-disclosure” and “to convey friendliness” and Dynel (2009)

mentioned it has characteristic “to convey intelligence and calm”. It is also suggested, however, that self-deprecating humor can convey “low intelligence when compared with other humor” and “weakness of oneself” (Lundy, et al., 1998). Accordingly, self-deprecating humor is thought to cause both the situation where positive cognition is given to the receiver and the situation where negative cognition is given.

First, user’s characteristics are mentioned regarding the situation where self-deprecating humor is used. It is indicated that users of the humor have low self-respect and low wellbeing, and their uneasiness and depression are high (Martin, et al., 2003). But it is made clear that the higher degree of self-acceptance they have, the more often they tend to use self-deprecating humor (Tsukawaki and al., 2009). Also, it is regarded that users of self-deprecating humor analyze and understand themselves and their high introversion to use self-insight is their characteristic (Ziv, 1984). Second, it is reported that there are three motivations to use self-deprecating humor; image manipulation, self-support and supporting other person (Tsukawaki, 2011). According to Tsukawaki and Hirakawa (2012), the expression of self-deprecating humor contributes positively to interpersonal relations and control user’s sense of isolation when they try to encourage others.

Moreover, cognition of self-deprecating humor may be affected by receiver’s characteristics. In particular, it is reported that characteristics of being fond of humor are different according gender and it is showed that

compared with women, men feel enjoyable more strongly to humor including aggressiveness, while women feel more pleasant with anecdotal humor such as funny stories they experienced (Crawford & Gressley, 1991).

From the above, factors of users and receivers regarding cognition of self-deprecating humor have been considered. Yet, when humor is expressed interpersonal scene, since communication is established by relation with the aspects of expression contents (Watzlawick, Beavelas, & Jackson, 1967), the recognition of self-deprecating humor depends on the relationship between the user and the receiver. According to Oshima (2006), how to use humor in Japan is different from that in Europe and the United States, since it tends to use after being intimate to a certain extent rather than being used for the first meeting, humor and friendship are greatly related it can be said. There are not many studies focusing on the relation between users and receivers as well as self-deprecating humor among Japanese studies on humor, and such studies can be only seen in the study on “jokes”(Hayama, Sakurai, 2008), which is a similar concept to humor.

Accordingly, in this study, we aim to consider the effects of the relation between users and receivers on cognition of self-deprecating humor, focusing on the relation between self-deprecating humor and friendship of college students.

Methods

1) The survey targets

142 Japanese college students, 137 valid responses (67males, 70 females, $M = 19.33$ $SD = 1.38$).

2) Questionnaire

Respondents are asked to suppose friend A that uses self-deprecating humor by using the Scene Imagination Method and inquired both cognition of self-deprecating humor used by friend A and the quality of the interpersonal relations between them and friend A. Also, description and examples referred to the definition of self-deprecating humor (Tsukawaki and al., 2009) are put on the back of the cover of the questionnaire.

(1) Face Sheet

The followings were asked; sex, age, user’s frequency of using self-deprecating humor, user’s sex, user’s age, the term of friendship with the user, and examples of user’s self-deprecating humor. The examples were asked in free description. Those free comments were not used for analysis since they were aimed at confirming whether respondents could suppose proper self-deprecating humor.

(2) Cognition of self-deprecating humor

We used 21 items regarding cognition of self-deprecating humor by reference to earlier studies. Examples of the items were “I feel him friendly” “I feel him outgoing” “I can sympathy with him” “I can sympathy with the contents” “I feel him intelligent” “I feel him uneasy” and the like. Respondents answered with five-point scale, from “1. Not applied” to “5. Applied”.

Table 1. Results of factor analysis on the items of cognition of self-deprecating humor

No.	description of items	F1	F2	F3
Friendship, affirmation ($\alpha=.85$)				
2	I feel A friendly when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.79	-0.03	0.07
19	I feel A favorable when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.71	0.23	0.06
11	I feel A outgoing when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.70	-0.02	0.06
21	I feel A funny when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.61	0.01	-0.17
4	I feel A positive when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.60	0.04	-0.18
20	I feel it's okay to take advantage of his humor when A uses self-deprecating humor	0.50	0.10	0.00
Nature of common sense ($\alpha=.74$)				
16	I feel A modest when he uses self-deprecating humor	-0.03	0.82	0.23
13	I want to use the humor when A uses self-deprecating humor	0.13	0.59	-0.04
15	I can sympathize with the content when A uses self-deprecating humor	-0.06	0.56	-0.19
3	I feel A showing himself politely when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.09	0.43	-0.06
5	I feel A intelligent when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.09	0.43	-0.07
Lowness of self-efficacy ($\alpha=.72$)				
18	I feel A mentally unhealthy when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.08	-0.15	0.88
10	I feel uneasy when he uses self-deprecating humor	0.08	-0.09	0.73
17	I feel A unsure of himself when he uses self-deprecating humor	-0.25	0.29	0.47
Factor correlation		F1	—	0.54
		F2	—	-0.14
		F3	—	—

(3) Friendship Function scale (Tanno, 2008)

This is the scale to measure relation with friends and in this study the relation between respondents and friend A was measured with the scale. 45 items in total were answered with five-point scale and their subscales were the followings; “Safety, Comfort” (ex. I feel easy with A for some reason), “Entertainment” (ex. I’m not bored with A), “Relationship prospect” (ex. I think A will be a friend throughout my life), “Emotional ties” (ex. I feel something like bonds with A), “Consult, self-disclosure” (ex. A is a good adviser), “Supportability” (ex. A is supportive when necessary), “Affirmation, acceptance” (ex. I think A accepts my being), “Learning, self-improvement” (ex. I sometimes notice a new way of thinking in relation with A), “Significant meaning of life” (ex. I think the time I spent with A will be important in my future life).

Results

1. Results of description statistic and factor analysis in the items regarding cognition of self-deprecating humor

We conducted factor analysis on 17 out of 21 items, to the exclusion of 4 items— “I feel him nervous” “I feel him unsociable” “I feel him hostile” and “I feel superiority to him” that caused floor effect— by using the maximum likelihood method and Promax Rotation, and three factors were abstracted. The abstracted factors such as “I feel him friendly” “I feel him favorable” “I feel him outgoing” and the like, which include items that affect positively on interpersonal relations, were named “friendship, affirmation”. Also, the factors that include politeness such as “I feel him modest” and sympathy linked “I also want to use such humor” were named “Good sense” since items that are socially desirable and respected, were Table 2. The average of all variables and

Table 2. The average of all variables and standard deviation value

	M	D
[Cognition of self-deprecating humor]		
Friendship, affirmation	3.24	0.93
Good sense	2.55	0.78
Lowness of self-efficacy	2.52	1.03
[Friendship Function]		
Safety, Comfort	3.91	0.84
Entertainment	3.76	0.85
Relationship prospect	3.46	0.93
Emotional ties	3.08	0.85
Consult, self-disclosure	3.34	0.92
Supportability	3.49	0.84
Affirmation, acceptance	3.70	0.69
Learning, self-improvement	3.35	0.79
Significant meaning of life	3.09	0.95

standard deviation value collected in those factors. In the meantime, the factors such as “I feel him unhealthy mentally” “I feel him uneasy” that include items affecting negatively on interpersonal relations were named “lowness of self-efficacy”.

On Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, the results were followings, “friendship, affirmation”; $\alpha = .85$, “nature of common sense”; $\alpha = .74$, “lowness of self-efficacy”; $\alpha = .72$. Results of factor analysis (Table 1) and the average of all variables and standard deviation value (Table 2) are showed.

2. Effects of the quality of interpersonal relations on cognition of self-deprecating humor

Deleting paths that had no significant effect with Wald test, we repeated to analyze Model A in the condition where Friendship Function was regarded as independent variables and cognition of self-deprecating humor was regarded as standard variables, and consequently, goodness of fit showed high indicators; GFI = .998, AGFI = .986, RMSE A = .00.

We would like to consider effects of cognition on self-deprecating humor with the

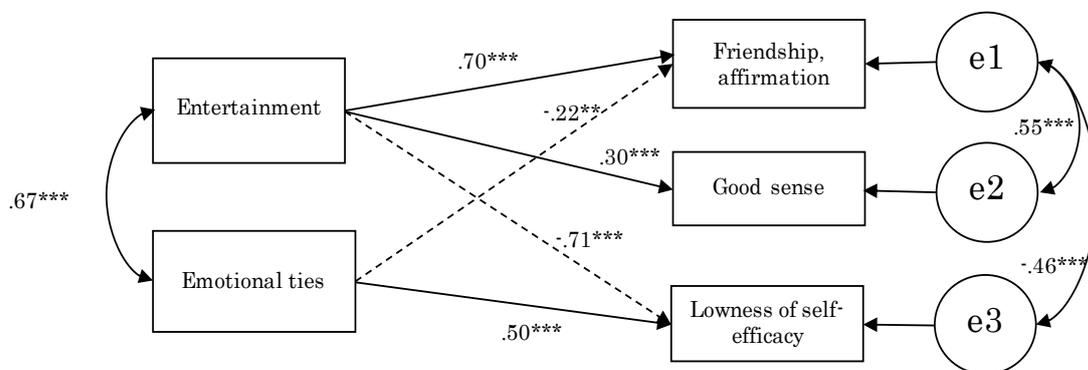


Figure 1. Causal model on the quality of interpersonal relations and cognition of self-deprecating humor

Table 3. Standardized coefficients with Model A and Model B

	Entertainment		Emotional ties	
	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B
friendship, affirmation	.70***	.48***	-.22**	.36***
Good sense	.30***	.00		
lowness of self-efficacy	-.71***	-.08	.50***	.25*

***p<.001 **p<.01

※ Covariance was established between errors of cognition of self-deprecating humor on Model A, and between errors of friendly relation factor on Model B.

Table 4. Goodness of fit index obtained by model A and model B

	AIC	CAIC	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Model A	26.61	77.18	1.000	.998	.986	.000
Model B	29.89	80.47	.993	.989	.914	.085

last model. First, from “Entertainment”, positive effect was showed to “Friendship, affirmation” ($\beta = .70$, $p < .001$), and also showed to “Good sense” ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$), but negative effect was showed to “Lowness of self-efficacy” ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$). In the meantime, from “emotional ties”, negative effect was showed to “Friendship, affirmation” ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$), and positive effect was showed to “Lowness of self-efficacy” ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$) (Figure 1). Next, regarding the relation between the quality of interpersonal relations and cognition of self-deprecating humor we constructed Model B with changed direction of its path that self-deprecating humor affects relations, and compared it with Model A so as to find which causal relationship was reasonable to examine the hypothesis. Table 3 shows standardized coefficients between both model’s variables and Table 4 shows goodness of fit index. As a result of analysis, since goodness of fit of Model A is higher, the hypothesis that the quality of interpersonal relations affects cognition of self-deprecating humor is supported.

Discussion

1. Cognition of self-deprecating humor by receivers

As a result of factor analysis, we found that self-deprecating humor used in friendly relation produces different cognition. Among three abstracted factors, “Friendship, affirmation” factor shows cognition regarded as good impression, and “Good sense” factor shows cognition regarded as socially desirable characteristic and sympathy. However, “Lowness of self-efficacy” factor can be said to have effect of conveying mental weakness.

Yet, “Friendship, affirmation” factor abstracted in this study includes the item, “I feel it’s okay to take advantage of his humor when A uses self-deprecating humor.” That suggests that effect which can cause aggression from receivers to users exists as a side of “Friendship, affirmation” factor.

According to Ziv (1984), self-deprecating humor is regarded as laughing at their own before being laughed at someone. If you use self-deprecating humor, you will remove

hostility of others, and eventually prevent others from laughing at you. At the same time, however, there can be risk of failing to prevent other's aggression beforehand and risk of being opportunistically laughed at. Also, results disagreed with the assertion by Ziv (1984), “users of self-deprecating humor are introverted and have self-insight”. Taking it into consideration that self-deprecating humor has a side of “self-disclosure” as characteristic, we can guess that outgoing person will probably use it.

From the above, similarities and differences with earlier studies are seen in effects of receiver's cognition by using self-deprecating humor, and it is thought that cognition can be different according cultural context.

2. Effects of the quality of interpersonal relations on cognition of self-deprecating humor

As a result of consideration of causal relation model between the quality of interpersonal relations and cognition of self-deprecating humor with covariance structural analysis, it was suggested that cognition of self-deprecating humor changes according the relation between users and receivers.

It is thought that using self-deprecating humor in friendly relation such as groups of hobbies or entertainment makes mental distance shorter and it is impressed as socially desirable and attached. Since “Entertainment” is relation which they share pleasure like “becoming enjoyable with each other” and hobby, using self-deprecating humor seems to

even enhance similarity of values. Therefore, we can guess receivers are awaked emotion that users of self-deprecating humor are friendly and favorable, and they receive positive impression such as intelligence or sympathy. Also, self-deprecating humor expressed by friends, who make receivers pleasant when they are together, probably does not convey their uneasiness or lack of confidence to receivers.

However, it is suggested that using self-deprecating humor leads to convey mental weakness in the friendly relation which both of them feel strong emotional ties and they are what is called “kindred spirits.” It is said that people who favorably use self-deprecating humor undergo a conflict between their own feelings and interpersonal relation (Yashima, 2016). In other words, self-deprecating humor of users whose mental ties with receivers are strong may be received not so much positive as uneasy or anxious, since receivers think users hide their entanglements at the deep bottom of their heart and try to behave merrily.

3. Suggestion for clinic

When results of this study are applied to communication between friends in daily life, it is required to decide whether or not self-deprecating humor should be used according the relation of friends. If you want to make the mental distance from your friend closer, self-deprecating humor can be effective communication. However, if you and your friend have already trusted each other and you have known each other well, it is supposed that you need to refrain using it since it has risk of

having negative effect. Yet, there is room for consideration regarding complexed relation that is entertaining and also you know each other well.

Moreover, we'd like to consider use of self-deprecating humor, focusing on cultural context. While self-deprecating humor was mentioned as "Humble self-disclosure" (Lundy, et al., 1998), the Japanese is noted to have characteristic of referring to themselves negatively. Yoshida and Ura (2003) called it "self-derogative presentation" and defined it as follows; to present one's own negative side to others selectively and avoid presenting his own positive side actively. Self-deprecating humor seems common to the way of self-presentation of the Japanese since his own negative side is mentioned verbally or nonverbally and it can be said to be expression to avoid presenting his own positive side relatively. It has been reported that self-deprecating expression is more often seen in mutually-conscious social groups, but is relatively not in families with strong sense of mental unity (Muramoto, Yamaguchi, 2003). That is to say; as mental distance becomes closer, self-deprecating expression decreases. Thus, use of self-deprecating humor that is similar to self-derogative presentation is liked culturally, but it seems necessary to use properly according interpersonal relations.

Conclusion

It is showed that self-deprecating humor has positive cognition and negative cognition, and it changes according interpersonal relations

with other person. Also, it is supposed that positive cognition is strong if the quality of the interpersonal relations is enjoyable when they are together. Moreover, it is necessary to consider that the state of interpersonal communication, the way of receiving of humor and laugh are provided in the cultural context. While self-deprecating humor has high risk of being understood negatively in the West, it has possibility to agree with "modesty" that is regarded as socially desirable in Japan. Henceforth, we are required to consider use of self-deprecating humor at the global view with a mind to effects by cultural difference.

In this study, we conducted survey with inquiries focusing on the friendly relation of subjects, youth college students, yet it is necessary to consider the way to use self-deprecating humor effectively in experimental situation. Also, it is hoped that we consider how to use it effectively in the social context and group scene including a balance of power as well as friendly relation.

Addition

This study is based on the paper (fiscal 2015) submitted as special examination survey in Humanitarian Behavioral Science course, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty in Iwate university, with some additions and revisions. We would like to express our deep appreciation to everyone that responded inquiry survey.

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A research for potential application of self-directed humor aimed at bullying prevention:

With focusing on Aikido-humor as response to aggressive utterance

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ABSTRACT. In this study, we viewed self-directed humor as “Aikido-humor” by using the analogy of martial art, Aikido. The objective of this study is to evaluate its possible application to preventing bullying. A role-play experiment was conducted with 26 groups, each consists of three university students who had friendly relationship with each other, totally 78 subjects. We asked one of the three members of each group to respond with self-directed humor to aggressive utterance made by another while two sets of six-minute conversation under two different conditions: without and with an observer. The result suggests that the aggressive speaker feels like to reduce emotional distance with the respondent who responds to the aggressive utterance with self-directed humor. On the other hand, it was observed that the aggressive speaker doesn’t feel affinity for the respondent when there is a third party who doesn’t involved in the conversation even if the respondent responds with self-directed humor. Thus self-directed humor, here considered as Aikido-humor, may function as a kind of management communication which tends to make the interpersonal relationship of conversing parties negative while maintaining the mood of conversation when there is a third party. However, further consideration would be needed to make it a practical method to prevent bullying because it is also associated with risks such as encouraging aggression and making detection of victims difficult.

KEY WORDS: self-directed humor, Aikido-humor, response to aggressive utterance, bullying prevention

Introduction

We often see laughter and humor in our daily life and we even think them important. However, there are some kinds of communication involving humor which are related to poor mental health. For example, when someone make a mock of or play pranks on a person with the intention of humor, the person gets angry at the aggressive utterance

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and feels disconsolate. We could often observe such cases where the person accept the unpleasant feeling without express it and experiences conflicted feeling by trying to give consideration to the relationship with the friend and surrounding mood. In such situation, how can we avoid unpleasant and conflicted feelings without destroying surrounding mood? One of effective response options is to respond with humor as described in humor coping with interpersonal stress (Kunugimoto & Yamasaki, 2010). Humor is “a concept signifies stimulus with features that evokes funniness and laughableness, such as joke and sarcasm”

(Tsukawaki, Fukada & Higuchi, 2011), and we could take particular note of self-directed humor among all. Self-directed humor has a feature that converts one's weakness, immaturity or complexes to a funny topic of conversation (Tsukawaki, Higuchi & Fukada, 2011). Self-directed humor has a function that suppresses escalating aggressive behavior of others by making them feel they have already involved in the attack, according to Ziv (1984). Thus responding to aggressive utterance with self-directed humor may enable maintaining interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and suppressing aggressive speech.

There are two styles in humor, positive and negative styles. Self-directed humor falls into the latter category (Martin, et al., 2003). It is suggested that the use of self-directed humor is related to hostility, anxiety and depression (Martin, 2003), in addition, self-directed humor has an aspect that it conveys poor self-affirmation and anxiety of the speaker to the receiver (Nihonmatsu & Okuno, 2016). However, knowledge about self-directed humor is not unambiguous. It is reported that application of self-directed humor promotes social support and reduces the speaker's anxiety (Tsukawaki, Fukada & Higuchi, 2011). Another research found that positive feelings toward one's life is related to preference for using self-directed humor (Ichinoseki, 2015). It is also explained that self-directed humor is a strategy for self-presentation with maintaining one's self-esteem despite it seems verbally harms oneself (Dyner, 2009). Therefore the usage of self-directed humor is not necessarily

related to poor mental health.

It is also reported that the effect of self-directed humor varies according to the features of the user. Self-directed humor used by people with excellent physical attractiveness is preferred (Lundy, Tan & Cunningham, 1998). When a person in an ideal social position uses self-directed humor, it makes others feel friendliness and human touch, and gives pleasant impression. However, using self-directed humor for long-term partners such as marriage relationships may be accepted as undesirable personality (Didonato, Bedminster & Machel, 2013). Thus it could be said that the effectiveness of self-directed humor is affected by the user's social position and status.

In addition, it is also reported that how self-directed humor is used varies according to the context in which it is used. Humor Coping with Interpersonal Stress Scale (HCISS) developed by Kunigimoto & Yamasaki (2010) includes items such as "when dispraised in front of others, speak an episode related to the dispraised features in an amusing way" and "when one's mistake or fault was witnessed by others, try to make them laugh by making the mistake or the fault a topic of conversation". How humor is used varies in the situations where there are several numbers of people engaged in the conversation. Lampert & Ervin-Tripp (2006) reported that in a group of mixed genders compare to groups of the same gender, male speakers had less aggressive teasing and more self-directed humor and female speakers had less conversation with self-disclosure and more aggressive teasing.

The same research describes a conversation in which a male speaker responded with self-directed humor to aggressive humor made by female speakers. As such, there are some cases where self-directed humor is used as a means of coping with stress and communication.

In Brief Therapy, Watzlawick et al. (1974) and Saposnek (1980) compared the flow of communication change to Judo and Aikido using the power of the client in the therapy. Among them, Saposnek (1980) points out humor as the similarity of Aikido and Brief Therapy. Additionally, Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido said “When someone comes to you with anger, you respond to them with a laugh. This is exactly Aikido.” (Ueshiba, 1957). It explains that changing the communication by means of turning disadvantageous situation to a laugh, is highly compatible with Aikido. In this study, the mode of communication involving humor which makes use of the aggression and contents given in the context made by others such as one’s mistakes are pointed out or laughed at by others is regarded as “Aikido-humor”.

As explained above, it has been suggested that the effectiveness of self-directed humor varies according to the situation and relationship among parties. However, there is no studies investigating the possibility of utilizing self-directed humor as a means of responding to aggressive utterance. In addition, though Yoshida & Amemiya (2009) noted triadic interactive system consists of Joker (who makes others laugh), Target (who is

laughed at) and Audience (who is made laugh), there has not been enough discussion comparing the effectiveness of humor between two or more parties. The structure of bullying is similar to the triadic interactive system stated above as it consists of bullies, victims and bystanders.

The objective of this study is to consider possible application of self-directed humor for the prevention of bullying in the situation where aggressive utterance such as teasing is made, with focusing on self-directed humor viewed as Aikido-humor.

Methods

1) Subject

26 groups, each consists of three university students who had friendly relationship with each other, totally 78 subjects (male 36, female 42; mean age±standard deviation 21.23±1.06).

2) Time period

December 2016 – January 2017

3) Experiment procedure

Each student was assigned to one of three roles: the aggressive speaker (A), the respondent to aggressive utterance (B) and the observer who observes the conversation (C) according to his or her adequacy based on the questionnaire response collected before the experiment. In the questionnaire, students were asked how they usually use humor. Each role group consists of 12 male and 14 female students. A and B were seated at the same side of a table and C was seated across the table in

the laboratory. Then they were asked again about contents and frequency of humor they usually use. Regarding advanced instruction, A was informed of topics acceptable to B when others play pranks on B in advance, as the questionnaire asked such topics. B was asked to respond to aggressive utterance made by A with self-directed humor (e.g. joining the conversation by talking about episodes related to the dispraised features). A and B were asked to talk for six minutes under each of two situations: with and without the observer (C). The order of two situations was counterbalanced. Roles are described in Figure 1. Video cameras were set up in the experiment site to shoot the expressions of the three parties, in agreement with the subjects.

4) The structure of questionnaire

①~③ were used to decide roles before the experiment. ④~⑦ were filled out after the experiment.

①The Japanese version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Yoshida, 2012)

This is used as scales to evaluate how questionees usually use humor. In this research we adopted a total of 12 items, six items asking for use of aggressive humor, six items asking

for the use of self-directed humor. A total of four items are excluded from the original scale by taking factor loading into consideration. Evaluation is made by five point scale consists of "1= disagree" - "5= agree".

②Humor Coping with Interpersonal Stress Scale (Kunigimoto & Yamasaki, 2010)

Five point scale questionnaire to evaluate questionee's response to stress and shame with humor in interpersonal communication. It consists of a total of 12 items.

③A questionnaire asking about aggressive humor and self-directed humor used in conversations among three members, acceptable topics and frequency when others play pranks on the questionee (free description).

④B was asked about the extent of aggression in utterance made by A with seven point scale from "1= felt no aggression" to "7=strongly felt aggression". A was asked about the recognition of self-directed humor, i.e. whether he or she felt self-directed humor in B's response with using seven point scale.

⑤Scales on the effectiveness of self-directed humor (Nihonmatsu & Okuno, 2016)

Totally 13 questions to evaluate the effectiveness of self-directed humor used in

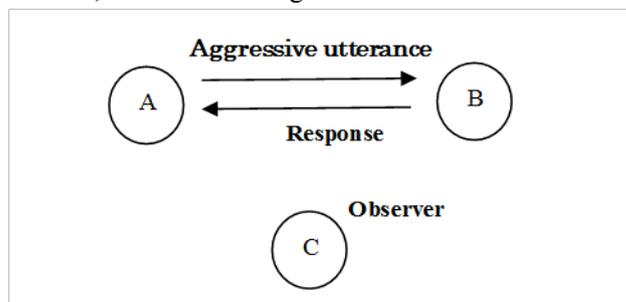


Figure 1. Roles (the aggressive speaker, the respondent and the observer) and abbreviations (A, B, C) in this study

interpersonal communication. A was also asked about subscales: “intentionality of interpersonal relations” such as familiarity and favorability ($\alpha=.84$), “low self-efficacy” including anxiety and lack of confidence ($\alpha=.72$), “dignity” such as socially desirable features including intellectuality ($\alpha=.56$) with using five point scale.

⑥ Property-based adjective measurement questionnaire (Hayashi, 1978)

Totally 14 questions regarding “intimacy” and “social desirability” were used in this study. A and C were questioned with using seven point scale and the results were regarded as their impressions of B.

⑦ Affect scales (Ogawa, Monchi, Kikuya, & Suzuki 2000; Mitani & Karasawa, 2005)

A, B and C were questioned about four items of “positive affect” (fun, pleasantness, vitality and vigorousness) and five items of “negative affect” (tension, fear, anger, guilt and amazement) with five point scale.

5) Analysis

Whether A sensed self-directed humor in the utterance made by B was determined as follows: cases with five or higher points were categorized into self-directed group and those with four or lower points into non-self-directed group. Two-way mixed-design analysis of variance was performed with the effectiveness of self-directed humor, affect scales, and impressions of B, as a dependent variable, and the mode of response (self-directed response group / non-self-directed response group: hereafter self-directed group/ non-self-directed

group) and observer condition (without / with) as independent variables.

6) Ethical consideration

Based on the response of questionnaire ①~③, we sought to reproduce usual relationships and communication. For this purpose Respondent (B) were asked to answer acceptable topics when others play pranks on B under a precondition “in conversations among the three members”. Respondent (B) was firstly instructed and after checking and considering questionnaire response made by B, other participants were instructed. Debriefing session was held to share advanced instructions and feedback among three members after the experiment, and the experiment was concluded after introducing the clinical psychotherapist.

Results

1. Effectiveness of self-directed humor recognized by aggressive speakers

There were 15 self-directed groups and 10 non-self-directed groups. A pair was excluded from the scope of analysis as the conversation was not an interaction involving aggressive utterance and its response. Scores of the recognition of self-directed humor were compared with t-test. Self-directed group has significantly higher scores than non-self-directed group ($t(13.22) = 5.27, p < .001$). Thus it was confirmed that condition setting on response mode was appropriate.

Firstly, regarding effectiveness of self-directed humor, two-way mixed-design analysis of variance was performed with each

Table 1. Difference of “intentionality of interpersonal relationships” felt by A under different conditions of the mode of response made by B and observer condition

		Observer condition				F		
		without		with		Mode of response	Observer condition	Interaction
Mode of response by B		mean	SD	mean	SD			
	Self-directed group	28.87	3.25	30.00	2.27	7.40*	1.93	0.94
	Non-self-directed group	25.90	3.28	28.44	3.82			

* $p < .05$

composite score of “intentionality of interpersonal relations”, “low self-efficacy” and “dignity” as a dependent variable, and the mode of response (self-directed group/non-self-directed group) and observer condition (without / with) as independent variables by reference to scale structure of Nihonmatsu & Okuno (2016). Regarding “intentionality of interpersonal relationships”, main effect of “mode of response” was significant ($F(1,23)=7.40, p < .05$). However, main effect of “observer condition” was not significant ($F(1,23)=1.93, n.s.$) and no interaction was observed ($F(1,23)=0.94, n.s.$). Above explained result is shown in Table 1 and Figure 2.

As for “low self-efficacy”, neither main effect of “mode of response” nor “observer condition” showed significant difference ($F(1,23)=1.96, n.s.$, $F(1,23)=0.00, n.s.$) and there was no interaction either ($F(1,23)=0.19, n.s.$). As for “dignity”, “mode of response” and “observer condition” showed no main effect ($F(1,23)=0.14, n.s.$, $F(1,23)=1.20, n.s.$) and there was no interaction ($F(1,23)=0.05, n.s.$).

Secondly, as for interpersonal impressions, two-way mixed-design analysis of variance was performed with “intimacy” and “social desirability” as dependent variables, and the mode of response (self-directed group/non-self-directed group) and observer condition (without / with) as independent variables.

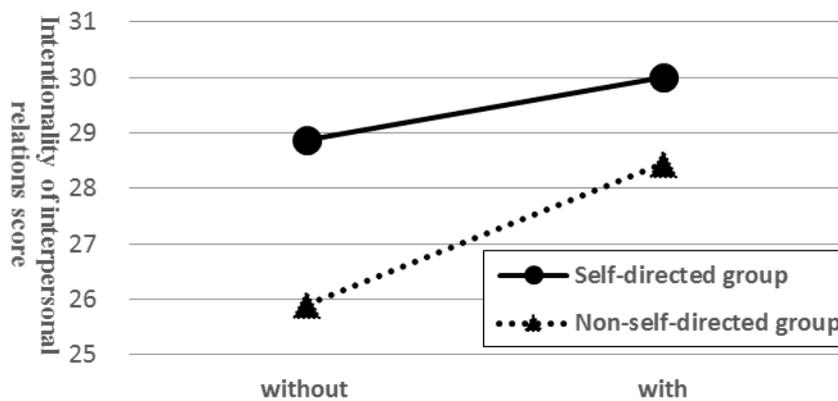


Figure. 2 Mean scores of the intentionality of interpersonal relations

Table 2. Difference of “intimacy” of A toward B under different conditions of the mode of response and observer condition

		Observer condition				F		
		without		with		Mode of response	Observer condition	Interaction
Mode of response by B		mean	SD	mean	SD			
	Self-directed group	41.70	3.86	38.93	4.27	4.17*	4.95*	5.92*
	Non-self-directed group	38.70	5.90	42.60	3.53			

* $p < .05$

Regarding “intimacy”, interaction between the mode of response and observer condition was significant ($F(1,23)=5.92, p < .05$) and then simple main effect test was performed. Under the “observer condition” is “with”, the simple main effect of the “mode of response” was significant ($F(1,23)=4.17, p < .05$), and the simple main effect of “observer condition” was significant among non-self-directed group ($F(1,23)=4.95, p < .05$). These results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 3.

As for “social desirability”, neither significant difference ($F(1,23)=0.01, n.s., F(1,23)=0.00, n.s.$) nor interaction ($F(1,23)=0.55, n.s.$) was observed in each main effect of the “mode of response” and “observer

condition”. In the same way, neither significant difference ($F(1,23)=1.88, n.s., F(1,23)=0.63, n.s.$) nor interaction ($F(1,23)=0.16, n.s.$) of the “mode of response” and “observer condition” was observed regarding positive affect. Likewise, neither significant difference ($F(1,23)=0.47, n.s., F(1,23)=1.90, n.s.$) nor interaction ($F(1,23)=0.85, n.s.$) of the “mode of response” and “observer condition” was observed regarding negative affect.

2. Respondent’s Affect and observer

Two-way mixed-design analysis of variance was performed with affect scale, with which respondent (B) rated aggressive utterance, as a dependent variable, and the mode of response

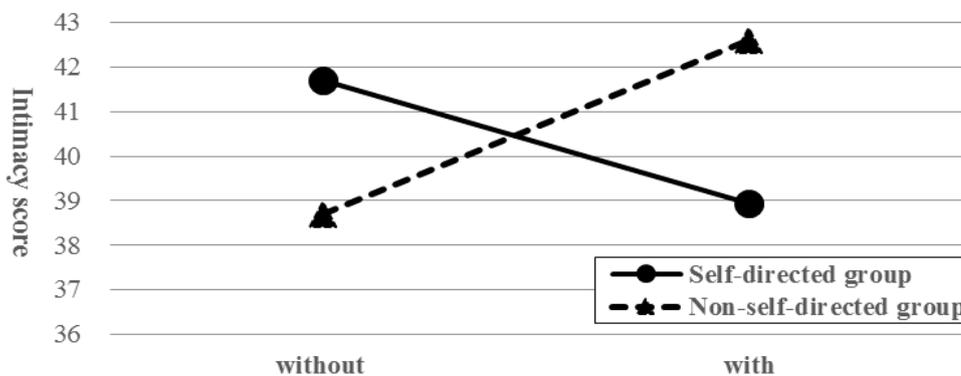


Figure. 3 Mean score of intimacy

Table 3. Difference of B's positive affect under different conditions of the mode of response and observer condition

		Observer condition				F		
		without		with		Mode of response	Observer condition	Interaction
Mode of response by B		mean	SD	mean	SD	0.85	5.13*	0.08
	Self-directed group	15.87	2.62	16.80	1.74			
	Non-self-directed group	14.80	3.29	16.00	2.54			

* $p < .05$

(self-directed group / non-self-directed group) and observer status (without / with) as independent variables. The main effect of “observer condition” was significant regarding “positive affect” ($F(1, 23)=5.13, p < .05$). Neither main effect nor interaction of “mode of response” was observed ($F(1,23)=0.85, n.s.$, $F(1,23)=0.08, n.s.$). These results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 4. On the other hand, main effect ($F(1,23)=0.08, n.s.$, $F(1,23)=2.36, n.s.$) and interaction ($F(1,23)=0.00, n.s.$) were not observed in the “mode of response” and “observer condition” regarding “negative affect”.

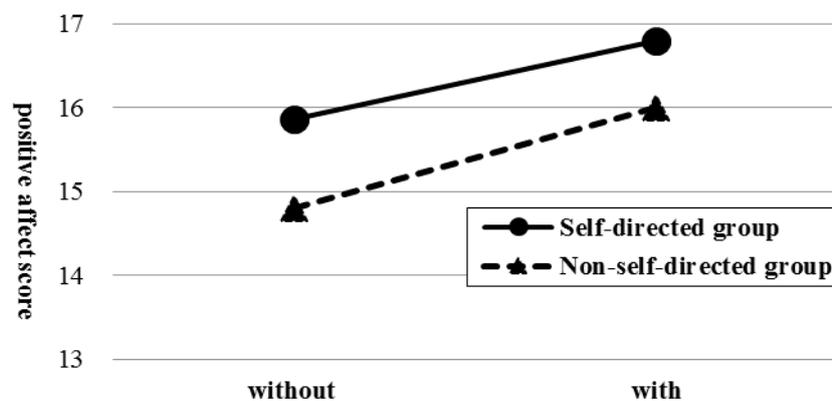
Regarding the observer (C), self-directed group and non-self-directed group are compared by performing t-test with impressions

rated by the observer (intimacy of A and B, social desirability of A and B) as dependent variables and the mode of response as independent variable. There was no significance observed ($t(23)=0.01, n.s.$, $t(23)=-0.33, n.s.$, $t(23)=0.05, n.s.$, $t(23)=-0.35, n.s.$). In the same way, there was no significance observed with affect scale (positive affect, negative affect) as a dependent variables ($t(23)=0.64, n.s.$, $t(23)=-0.55, n.s.$).

Discussion

1. Self-directed humor viewed as Aikido-humor

It was suggested that the aggressive speaker feels like reducing emotional distance with the user of self-directed humor when the

**Figure 4. Mean score of B's positive affect**

respondent uses self-directed humor as a response to aggressive utterance, as the main effect of “mode of response” on “intentionality of interpersonal relationship” was significant in the result of analysis of variance. An example given by Lampert & Ervin-Tripp (2006), responding to teasing about “small feet and shoes” as “These shoes were made by a man with a green moustache”, has effect which make the mood of conversation cheerful and friendly, while making use of aggressive utterance. According to Watzlawick et al. (1974), instead of pushing back with the same force against the pushing force by the opponent, pulling, accepting, and amplifying it, bring a change and problem solving. However, we cannot say with absolute certainty that responding with self-directed humor as Aikido-humor has short-term or long-term effect against mental damage.

In this study, we set interpersonal conflict situations, where one is played pranks with or teased by an intimate partner. Wakashima, Ikuta, & Hasegawa (2000) reported that “disqualification reactions” occur frequently in interpersonal conflict situations. Disqualification is also referred to as “trans-contextual communication”, and is a communication deviates from the context of the talk or deviates from the utterance of the partner (Wakashima, Ikuta & Hasegawa, 1999). Humor can be comprised of disqualification from the structure such as paradox and ambiguity. However, in such paradoxical behavior, Aikido humor is utilizing the aggression which the opponent was trying to

degrade himself. It may be useful as an effective means to prevent bullying that applies to the structure of “Accuser / Defender game (Weakland et al., 1982)”.

2. How the observer and the mode of response affect the effectiveness of self-directed humor

It is suggested that the aggressive speaker feels less “intimacy” with the respondent who answers with self-directed humor under the condition that the observer is present. In other words, when there is a third party and teased respondent responds with self-directed humor, teasing speaker feels less familiarity with the respondent while he or she feels like reducing the mental distance at the same time. If there are subjects who are evaluated by observer in interpersonal conflict situations, consider how they appear in the eyes of the third person, and try to give a good impression to everyone in the place (Fukushima, Oobuchi, & Kojima, 2006; Sasaki & Daibo, 2010). In brief, self-directed humor as Aikido humor in the presence of an observer is likely to have reduced familiarity as a result of being caught as a controlled, acting and non-honest response. Regarding mode of response, when considering conversation system and interpersonal system suggested by Wakashima (1999), self-directed humor can be regarded as a centripetal conversation system which leads verbal and non-verbal laughter. In this study, it is used in an intimate interpersonal system. Okuno (2008) says that if there are only centripetal reactions in conversation and interpersonal systems, intimacy will be

increased or the either risk of disruption or transformation will be increased, and then positive feedback will be observed. This seemingly paradoxical result (Figure. 2 & Figure. 3) may show both possibilities of increasing familiarity caused by humor, and the transformation of relationship.

On the other hand, it was suggested that in the cases of non-self-directed response, which are not regarded as responses with self-directed humor, the aggressive speaker feels more “intimacy” with the respondent under the condition that the observer is present. The presence of a friend observer has a function to maintain smiling of speakers and activate conversation (Yamamoto, 2012; Yamamoto, 2013). It is expected that smiling face may make others deem the person familiar and active conversation has simply influenced good interpersonal impression.

However, in non-self-directed group, there were various responses including some cases which respondents couldn't make self-directed response though the respondents had been asked to respond with self-directed humor. Based on limit of this research, further consideration is needed regarding the distinction of responses.

3. Respondents and observers

Regarding “positive affect” of the respondent, main effect of the “observer” was significant in the analysis of variance, which suggests fun and pleasant feelings of the respondent to aggressive utterance is promoted when there is the observer. Originally, it is said that receivers

of aggressive utterance such as teasing often experience negative emotions, especially in females (Keltner et al., 1998). Therefore, it is predicted that emotions such as grief and anger will arise in the receivers to the partner's aggressive utterance. However, under the situation where there is an observer, positive affect was promoted on receiving aggressive utterance, regardless of the mode of response. In Yamamoto (2013), it is said that the amount of utterance, smile, gaze of speakers when there is a friend observer is not related to the positive emotion of the speaker. Therefore, the mechanism of how the existence of a friend observer affected the respondent's positive emotions should be examined in the future.

Regarding the observer, there was no effect of the mode of response observed. Because the more two people's conversation is active, the more observer's cognition becomes positive according to Kimura, Yogo & Daibo (2005), the activeness of conversation may be more important than the mode of response.

4. Suggestion for clinic

Regarding possible clinical application of the result of this study, application as a communicative intervention holds promise for preventing bullying. For example, it may be effective if you are teased excessively, and you want to stop. Yoshida & Amemiya (2009) states that people use aggressive humor towards others as relationships stabilize. This means that as you get closer, you get more aggressive utterance and teasing. Under such circumstances, self-directed humor as Aikido

humor may function as a management communication that can maintain the atmosphere while lowering familiarity. However, it is true only when there is the third party who is not verbally involved in the communication.

On one hand, there are some risks accompanied. According to Kimura (2015), the observer infers not only goodness but also intimacy of communication from active communication of two people. Negative aspect of above stated feature is that the responding with humor, the behavior itself, can disguise victims of bullying who suffer from unpleasant feelings, and make it difficult others discover them. There are also possibility that the observer comes to join the attack. In short, when applying self-directed humor as Aikido-humor, a prudent attitude is required to use it. The more you use it immoderately, the more others will tease you with expects you react comically.

Regarding the way to respond to other than self-directed humor, since a specific reaction wasn't identified in this study, we couldn't suggest unambiguously. However, as well as self-directed humor, non-self-directed humor can be used properly depending on how you want to make the relationship with aggressive speakers in the future.

Conclusion

Based on this study, it is suggested that the aggressive speaker's interpersonal impressions of the respondent changes according to the mode of response to the aggressive utterance. It

is also suggested that the presence of the third party, who is not involved in the conversation between the two parties, affects the effectiveness of self-directed humor. Though Aikido-humor, a form of response to aggressive utterance with self-directed humor, gives familiar and cheerful impressions to the aggressive speaker, it is suggested that the respondent can give unfamiliar impression under the condition with the third party.

When considering to apply humor to communication in schools and other organizations, further consideration about how to apply it in groups which consists of more than two people is required. However, as it is pointed out that the tripartite relationship in interpersonal conflict situations cannot be understood only from member's positions and intimacy (Yoshida and Nakatsugawa, 2013), observer's presence and mode of response should be considered with braking them into smaller categories. Finally, it is important to consider using self-directed humor as Aikido-humor to prevent escalation of bullying and teasing as a practical measure, and to gain more knowledge from the viewpoint of difference in positions such as the aggressive speaker and the observer.

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