Interaction Practice Tasks for Japanese EFL Students

An Investigation into Turn-Taking Techniques

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Abstract

This paper is an investigation to see how gleanings from discourse analysis can help in designing task-based interaction practice in language classrooms. It first looks into the theoretical backgrounds of task-based interaction practice with its benefits and limitations, and then examines some features of natural interaction, with specific focus on turn-taking systems. After a brief discussion on cultural differences in interaction, a tactic to increase the number of turns taken in a conversation class is suggested.

Introduction

Skehan (1996) says that the "teacher's concern for meaning-based activities and the researchers' investigation of patterns of interaction suggested a task-based approach to foreign language instruction" (p. 20). An important goal for the task-based lesson planning is to incorporate interaction practices that could be replicated to the real-world interaction. This reflects the idea that interaction through the target language can promote learning of the use of the target language. J. Willis (1996) defines the task as follows, for example:

> By 'task' I mean a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome. In other words, learners use whatever target language resources they have in order to solve a problem, do a puzzle, play a game, or share and compare experiences. . . . The games they play, the problems they solve, the experiences they share may or may not be things that they will do

> in real life, but their use of language, because it is purposeful and real, will replicate features of language use outside the classroom. (J. Willis, 1996, pp. 53−54)

With the emphasis on interaction, many communicative activities and communication tasks have come to be used in language classrooms. Cook (1989), however, points out that teachers trying to incorporate interaction practice often face a phenomenon whereby "a student with an advanced proficiency in pronunciation, grammar, and texts somehow fails to use these language skills to communicate successfully" (p. 49). This phenomenon that puzzles many L2 teachers may be one of the biggest stumbling blocks for the task-based interaction practice. If a learner's linguistic knowledge and proficiency are not the main obstacles preventing the learner from achieving successful interaction, one needs to explore other aspects of the interaction to identify what other potential limitations may explain this phenomenon.

Discourse analysis looks into typical structures and features of various types of discourse that are components of interaction. Thus, the fruits of discourse analysis research are expected to be helpful in identifying some features of "natural" interaction. This paper will refer to the exchange model used in discourse analysis to explore one such aspect of interaction: turn taking in task-based interaction.

1. The exchange model

Discourse analysis research tries to focus on discourse functions in a broader context and to see the communicative dynamics of language: "function is survived at with reference to the *participants, roles* and *settings* in any discourse, and that linguistic forms are interpreted in light of these" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 18). The rank scale used to describe grammatical organization[1] eliminates non-linguistic elements of language. Therefore, it fails to describe the function of each stretch of language in discourse that entails paralinguistic factors: "Grammar is concerned with the *formal* properties of an item, discourse with the *functional* properties,

[1] In this rank scale called Hallidayan model, the lowest rank 'morphemes' make a 'word,' words make a 'group,' groups make a 'clause,' and clauses make a 'sentence.'

with what the speaker is using the item for" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992, p. 8). Accordingly, John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard provided a hierarchical model for discourse analyses in 1975. Their rank scale consists of elements similar to those of the grammatical one: *act*, *move*, *exchange*, *transaction*, and *lesson*. In this scale, the 'act' is the lowest rank; acts make a 'move'; moves make an 'exchange'; exchanges make a 'transaction'; and transactions make a 'lesson.'[2]

The exchange model describes the structure of exchanges in terms of moves. A dominant classroom exchange type includes the three basic moves of *Opening*, *Answering*, and *Follow-up* (or *Feedback*), which were later revised and labeled as 'Initiation' (I), 'Response' (R), and 'Follow-up' (F) by Sinclair and Brazil (1982). The three-part IRF exchange model shows slots for the initiating, responding, and follow-up moves, but not all exchanges have items for each of the IRF slots. The only slot all exchanges will always have an item for is the initiation move.[3]

In teaching exchanges, on the other hand, the follow-up move is often missing or deferred until the purpose of the exchange has been achieved, despite that they provide clues to see the relationship between the participants, their turn-taking strategies, and "functions of the individual speech acts in exchange" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 8). In terms of turn taking, the follow-up moves signal the coming turn-taking chances for listeners/receivers because they mark the end of a transaction or the end of negotiation of meaning. Thus, insufficient follow-up moves in classroom exchanges could allow some participants to dominate the transaction while the others remain in the mere listener/receiver role, even if the listeners/receivers have an adequate level of linguistic knowledge or fluency.

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[2] 'Sequence' was later added between the exchange and the transaction by Sinclair and David Brazil (1982).

[3] In some exchanges, initiating move has no eliciting or directing head or initiating move itself seems to be missing. The move that seems to be lacking, however, is found in the elicitation or direction in previous exchanges, so exchanges without initiating move or those with no eliciting or directing head are considered to have items for the initiation slots. This supposedly existing initiation move referring back to the previous initiation is labeled as 'bound initiation' (Ib), and keeps the IbRF exchange structure ('bound exchange') (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992, pp. 28−31).

2. The Interaction Hypothesis and task-based interaction practice in the classroom

The theoretical background for task-based language teaching is found in the Interaction Hypothesis, which further goes back to the Input Hypothesis of Krashen and Terrell (1983). The Input Hypothesis claims that learners need "to understand input language that includes a structure that is part of the next stage" in order to progress from the current stage (i) to the next stage (i+1). Another claim the researchers make is that plenty of exposure to comprehensive input, the input which contains 'i+1' content but comprehensible to the receiver with the help of context, extra-linguistic information, and the speakers attempts to make oneself understood, will cover the 'i+1' gap automatically (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, pp. 32–33).[4] Interaction contains plenty of comprehensible input; thus, the Interaction Hypothesis claims that the interaction in the target language promotes the acquisition of the language. What lies behind the communicative activities and communication tasks popular in language classrooms is the recognized learning process of interaction: that the learner modifies an input into a comprehensible one through interactional modifications and negotiation of meaning. By analyzing exchanges, discourse analyses can sketch the rough development of such interaction involving interactional modifications and negotiation of meaning.

Although there seems to be little clear distinction between the 'interactional modification' and the 'negotiation of meaning,' 'negotiation of meaning' has a broader scope in the effort to produce comprehensive input, possibly consisting of more than one interactional modification. In other words, an 'interactional modification' is more concerned with each exchange that produces a modified output, while 'negotiation of meaning' is concerned with a stretch of exchanges continued until the meaning of the first input is understood. Examples of interactional modifications are:

[4] The Input Hypothesis has since been criticized. The main criticism is for its equation of 'acquisition' with mere comprehension that can still have room to complete acquisition. The mere understanding of the input cannot mean that the learner will automatically acquire the competencies to produce output at the 'i+1' level and perform effectively.

- clarification request (to ask more information to reach understanding of the input)
- confirmation check (to check whether one's understanding of the input is correct)
- comprehension check (to check whether one's output is understood correctly)
- self-repetition or paraphrase (to repeat the whole or a part of a previous utterance)

The Interaction Hypothesis does not assume that acquisition takes place during interaction, but assumes that input modification promotes acquisition by providing "the learners with the linguistic raw material which they will process internally and invisibly" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 44). Research by interactionalist theorists like Hatch (1992), Pica (1994), and Long (1983) had demonstrated that "modification which takes place during interaction leads to better understanding than linguistic simplification or modification which is planned in advance," and Lightbown and Spada (1999) also says that some recent research has also shown that "specific kinds of interaction behaviours aid learning" (pp. 43–44).

As with the Input Hypothesis, the Interaction Hypothesis has been criticized for its tendency to view interaction as a one-way process in which the learner's role is limited to that of the receiver/interpreter of comprehensible input. By the negotiation of meaning among participants, however, comprehensive input is provided not only through teacher instructions and teacher-student interaction but also through student-student interaction. Interactional modifications through exchanges make the input comprehensible as well as create more chances for learner output and for implicit feedback, with which learners can check the appropriateness of their interlanguage.

3. Limitations of task-based interaction practice

Seedhouse (1999) found that negotiation of meaning was certainly generated in task-based interaction: "[Task-based interaction] does tend to generate clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and self-

repetitions, and indeed, interactions display their orientation to the task by means of these features" (Seedhouse, 1999, p. 154).

However, there are also pitfalls in task-based teaching. While discussing the task-based approach, Skehan (1996) and D. Willis (1996) say the pedagogical goals of language learning classes are attainment of accuracy, fluency, and complexity produced through restructuring assisted by self-analysis of interlanguage (Skehan, 1996, pp. 22–23; D. Willis, 1996, pp. 50–51). Skehan (1996) is concerned that the pressure of time and the need to get meanings across in task-based interaction may increase fluency, but it might also lead to the loss of accuracy because learners are likely to "rely on prefabricated chunks to solve their communication problems" (p. 22) to meet the demands of real-time language use. Skehan thus concludes that the central issue in task-based interaction is "how to plan (or decode) the linguistic and the conceptual content of messages while time is passing, and while other members of an interaction might take the floor, steal turns, leave rooms empty, etc." (p. 21). Seedhouse (1999) echoes Skehan's concerns while admitting that tasks can give chances for negotiation of meaning:

> . . . the task constrains the nature of the turn-taking system which the learners use . . . . there is a general tendency to minimize the volume of language used, and to produce only that which is necessary to accomplish the task. Turns tend to be relatively short, with simple syntactic constructions. (Seedhouse, 1999, pp. 151–153)

Foster (1998) also observed short turns among her learners, and she also points out the imbalance in the amount of utterances and that in the distribution of turns among participants. In her research, negotiation of meaning was not always initiated, and many students did not produce interactive modifications in task-based interaction, both in pair work and in small group work. These observations may be explained by the pressure of time and short pauses at the end of utterances that possibly allowed more fluent speakers to dominate the interaction while other participants could not find a chance to steal turns, and thus resulted in leaving the latter out of the interaction. Whether or not accuracy is sacrificed, what these findings suggest are certain implicit features of natural interaction lacking in L2 learners' interaction, centered on the turn-taking system.

4. Turn taking in "natural" interaction and cultural differences

The exchange model of discourse analysis distinguishes the chunks and functions of the participants' moves and gives a comparable picture of turn-taking places and moves in interaction. It also helps us find units of exchanges where interactional modifications may be observed, and a longer unit, a transaction, within which a process of negotiation of meaning is completed. Turn-taking chances usually come at the end of sentences, and the speaker sometimes notifies the coming of the chance by the use of the initiating utterance of adjacency pairs.[5]

Preceding discourse analysis research on 'natural' conversations has found that turns will occur smoothly with split-second pauses at the end of utterances (Coulthard, 1985, pp. 59−63; Cook, 1989, p. 52; McCarthy, 1991, pp. 127−28). Overlaps of turns are observed though they only occur five percent or less of conversations, because there is a tacit understanding that only one speaker should fill the gap (Coulthard, 1985, pp. 59−60). Overlaps also emerge with a short turn-taking tactic called 'back-channel response,' a tactic to avoid taking a long turn and/or to show that the utterances are being listened to, usually represented with short linguistic expressions and vocalizations such as "yeah," "right," "no," "mm," "uh-huh," etc. Interestingly, McCarthy (1991) points out that the overlaps due to back channeling or to utterance completion in natural interaction are almost non-existent in L2 learners' interaction (p. 128).

As seen in the previous section, features of L2 interaction are loss of accuracy, minimum use of language, and short turns as well as imbalance in the distribution of utterances due to short turns and/or short pauses. Although Japanese L2 students exhibit most of these features when engaged in interaction practice, short pauses that could lead to imbalance in contribution are not always observed. Rather, pauses tend to become relatively long, often stretched into complete silence. Conversation is likely to be dominated by more frequent speakers, but a lack of initiation of negotiation of meaning is still observable even among fluent speakers, and they tend to wait patiently until an utterance is completed. Sometimes the end of an utterance is marked by the speaker explicitly by saying

[5] An adjacency pair is a pair of utterances where a certain types of responding utterances are expected: greeting-greeting, question-answer, offer-acceptance/refusal, etc.

"Finished." In addition, back channeling that occurs is more often given by non-verbal languages such as nodding for acknowledgement or leaning one's head for disagreement, which clearly reduce the chances for taking turns and allow the same speaker to dominate the floor, regardless of the fluency of the speaker.

This unnatural interaction brought about by poor turn-taking techniques could be partly explained by differences between Japanese and Anglo-American cultures, compared by Hofstede (1986) as differences in interaction related to the collectivism versus individualism dimension, with Japanese society being regarded as the former type:

Collectivist Societies

- individual students will only speak up in class when called upon personally by the teacher
- individuals will only speak up in small groups
- formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times
- neither the teacher nor any student should ever be made to lose face

Individualist Societies

- individual students will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher
- individuals will only speak up in large groups
- confrontation in learning situations can be salutary; conflicts can be brought into the open
- face-consciousness is weak

(Hofstede, 1986, p. 312; taken from Brown, 2000, p. 192)

Thompson (2001) also describes some specific features of Japanese speaker reflecting the collectivist nature of their society pointed out above by Hofstede:

> . . . . It is worth noting, also, that eloquent, fluent speech is not highly rated in Japan; indeed, it is often distrusted. Tentativeness is preferred to assertiveness, hesitancy to momentum. Japanese abounds in what are to European ears 'unfinished' utterances, and the Japanese have an amazing ability to hear the unspoken word and to sense changes in atmosphere and

> human relationships.
>
> Given these striking differences between Japanese and English attitudes to language, it takes the student a good while to tune in. An added barrier to adaptation is the tension associated in Japan with language learning—though women find it easier to relax in the language class than men.
>
> (Thompson, 2001, pp. 296–97)

Any speaker may have longer and more frequent pauses in L2 interaction than in L1, but these features of interaction by Japanese students pointed out by Hofstede (1986) and Thompson (2001) are also emergent in their L1 interaction. Turn-taking systems, which include non-linguistic clues such as eye contact and body language, vary depending on the participants' background cultures as well as circumstances and the language in use. Knowledge of the mechanism may be, therefore, beneficial to L2 learners in some cases (Cook, 1989, pp. 52–53; McCarthy, 1991, pp. 128–29). Considering this, task-based interaction practice for Japanese students is thought to benefit from raising their awareness of turn-taking techniques in the target language that support fluency in more natural interaction in the real world.

5. Suggested consciousness-raising activities

A simple straightforward tactic to raise students' consciousness of the natural flow of discourse is to have them compare conversations in L1 and L2. Considering the features of natural interaction, teachers can alert learners to and encourage them to take advantage of the following three features regarding turn taking:

1. Listeners are predicting the coming of the next turn based on the completeness or incompleteness of the on-going utterance.
2. In real-world interaction, a long pause at a turn is likely to be perceived as uncomfortable and produces uneasiness among participants, so it tends to be avoided.
3. Verbal and explicit tactics such as back channeling and utterance completion

> can produce more chances for turn taking than implicit, non-verbal ones, and they can also prevent the occurrence of uneasy silence and ease pressure on the speaker.

Among these, the third feature regarding explicit tactics may need to receive more focus in L2 classrooms for Japanese students. In traditional classroom discourses, turn taking tends to have ordered, rigid patterns, with no overlapping. According to McCarthy (1991), recent trends in classroom discourse using task-based interaction practice attempt to break this ordered turn-taking pattern, but do not always succeed in recreating natural patterns:

> We are all familiar with role plays where individuals are so intent on formulating their contributions and making them at the 'right' moment as determined by the activity rubric, that they pay little attention to the contribution of others, and the natural patterns of back-channel, utterance completion, etc. simply do not occur.
>
> (McCarthy, 1991, p. 128)

This observation by McCarthy points out the importance of back channeling and utterance completion in natural interaction despite the fact that their occurrences are limited in real interaction to avoid overlapping of speakers. This suggests that the incorporation of conscious back channeling and utterance completion practice may be beneficial for L2 learners to improve their fluency.

The question, then, may be how to encourage the use of back channeling and utterance completion in responding and follow-up moves in interaction practice. As has been already stated, the interactional modifications used during a stretch of negotiation in meaning are clarification request, confirmation check, comprehension check, and self-repetition or paraphrase. Among L2 learners, repetitions of parts of previous utterances are observed in all these modification types, perhaps due to the relative ease of adopting the techniques because it only involves varying the intonation, and the repeated part can thereby take on a different function such as an acknowledgement or a question. Frequent use of the repetition technique may produce more overlapping than natural interaction, but it could prevent the imbalance in participants' contributions and turn-length, not to

mention uneasy silence. To demonstrate its effect, discourse in two information-gap activities of the same pair are compared here.

5.1 Practice 1

This study was conducted in a Japanese university L2 English classroom. Prior to Practice 1 described below, students were asked to explain where to find something within the campus in L1, in a group of three or four. An IC player recorded the L1 interaction, and the recording was first repeated to identify some common expressions used, so that students could make an English vocabulary list to possibly refer to later. The recording was then repeated again to time each pause at places where turn taking had occurred. The overall speed of L1 interaction is faster than when in L2, so the purpose here was simply to remind students of the very short length of pauses in the natural interaction. After this, a very simple explanation of the IRF exchange model was given, and students were asked to think about which of the three labels was applicable to part of their L1 utterances. As preceding research has shown, the follow-up moves were not always observed in the recorded L1 exchanges, but students were encouraged to insert such moves whenever possible because the main goal of the L2 interaction practice that followed was to establish the explained IRF exchange structure. None of the three features of turn taking described earlier in this section was introduced at this stage.

Practice 1 is an extract from an information-gap pair-work task in English, and Student 1 (S1) who has a complete map helps Student 2 (S2) complete her map, which has certain features missing. S1 is more fluent than S2 in English, so S1 took the complete map. Clues for some of the missing features are indicated on both maps, so S1 begins to tell S2 where the first feature 'the road' is:

1. S1: The road from [the] town to the hotel ... [The] coconut=(I)
2. S2: =On[c]e more please, again. (R)
3. S1: The road from [the] town to the hotel. (I) (7.5 sec)
4. S2: Again. (R)
   [The] town, where is the town? (I)
5. S1: The town is near Jason Bay. (R)
6. S2: The ... road? (I)

7. S1: The road is from the town to the hotel. (R) (11 sec)
   OK? (I)
8. S2: OK. (R)
9. S1: [The] mountain is ... behind [the] beach and [the] Jason Bay. (I) (8.1 sec)
   [The] river is from the mountain to the beach. (I) (7.2 sec)
   [The] coconut tree is ... along the beach. (I)

The I and R in parentheses indicate the initiation move and the responding move respectively, and the two equal signs ('=') indicate where overlap of speakers was observed. The length of each relatively long pause, where turn stealing is possible, is also shown in parentheses in the above script.

What is noticeable in this interaction is the use of long pauses by S1. In Line 1, perhaps the desire to finish the task quickly had led S1 to use minimalized form of language to describe where 'the road' was. Seedhouse (1999) regards this simplification as a tactic used by L2 learners (p. 152). In the same line, S1 did not think about the possibility that 'the town' was missing on S2's map, and went on to tell 32 where the second feature 'the coconut tree' was, without any pause. As a result, S2's request for repetition in Line 2 overlapped with S1's turn. This overlap is not an utterance completion, yet it implies that S2 was engaged in real interaction. With the request, possibly with gestures, S1 realized that she had been too hasty. She became more cautious in proceeding with her explanations and took longer pauses at the end of each utterances so that S2 could take turns and respond to her, without overlaps. Hence, in Line 3, S1 repeated exactly the same utterance, but added a longer pause at the end.

The S2 then noticed that the S1 had not realized 'the town' was another feature missing on S2's map. After responding to S1, therefore, S2 made her request clearer using a full sentence in Line 4, and made R-I moves in her turn. Having realized that there might be more missing features on S2's map than were indicated on her own map, S1 gave one more twist to her way of explaining: she again responded to S2 with a full sentence in Line 5. This additional twist may be a result of S2's first (and only) use of a full sentence in Line 4, by which S1 probably assumed that full sentences were easier for S2 to understand. S1 continued her use of full sentences after this line.

However, S2 did not follow up with S1 in Line 6 and made an initiating

move to return to the first topic, 'the road.' Her move was not in a full sentence and went back to a chunk of words, just using rising intonation to turn it into a question. On the other hand, S1 continued to use a full sentence in Line 7, and left a long, conscious pause that was meant to encourage S2 to take turns. S2, however, had failed to follow the move up again despite the clearly long pause. As a result, the pause was stretched into complete silence, so S1 decided to check whether S2 was following her explanation by asking "OK?" in the same turn (R-I moves). Again, the R-I structure prompted S2's response, so she repeated "OK" in Line 8. This confirmation resumed S1's explanations on the locations of missing features. However, with the understanding that S2 might not explicitly follow up her moves, S1 began to continue her initiating moves without waiting for S2's response, though she still consciously left longer pauses between her successive initiating moves.

In the Practice 1, both students showed uses of interaction modifications, and S1 showed a certain knowledge of turn-taking techniques. Their interaction, however, still has problems from pedagogical perspectives. The first problem is in the linguistic forms they used. The S1 has become more conscious of the use of pauses and full sentences, but the sentence structures remained simple and almost identical so as to make them easier for S2 to understand; thus, complexity is perhaps not expected to develop in S1's utterances. On the other hand, the weaker S2 was hesitant to speak and showed the same minimum use of language throughout the interaction despite the fact that she also displayed her ability to speak in full sentences. Secondly, the turn lengths are not balanced between the students, and that makes S2 a passive receiver of information. The lack of knowledge of the turn-taking system was another factor that differentiated S1 from S2. A long pause can frame the end of an exchange and provide the listener with a chance to steal the coming turn, and S1 was aware of this. S2, however, did not respond to or acknowledge the S1's initiations in spite of the longer pauses S1 inserted. The S2's lack of responses may also be a result of real-time pressure, but she was unable to realize that this lack was actually delaying the completion of the map. The third problem is the one commonly observed in many task-based exercises: confusion or misunderstanding of the task goal. Although the students were clearly told that the completion of the map itself was not the main goal of Practice 1, both students were too focused on the 'map' completion to remember

the linguistic goals behind the task. Their desire to complete the 'task' here is reflected in the word-chunk use and the hasty move of S1 at the beginning and in S2's reluctance to make utterances. The same desire to complete the 'task' often leads to L2 students' use of L1, which is probably a major problem of task-based approaches in which both the speaker and the listener/receiver share the same L1.

5.2 Practice 2

Practice 2 is another information-gap pair-work task carried out a week later, and the same students are trying to find differences between their pictures. Unlike Practice 1, the students do not know what features are different between their two pictures. However, in this case, they had been explained the three features of turn takings in natural interaction beforehand, and were encouraged to avoid long pauses by repeating part of the previous utterance when they were not sure what to say. A distinct difference from Practice 1 is that both students make responding and follow-up moves to show acknowledgements and evaluations.

1. S1: OK, let's start. Please tell me what can you see in your picture. (I)
2. S2: OK. [R]
   Er, I see two girls and a man. (R)
3. S1: Yes, (R)
   two girls and a man. (F)
4. S2: [The] man is wearing a hat. (I)
5. S1: Same, (R)
   [the] man and a hat. (F)
6. S2: Er, girls are [on the] left side ... left of the man ... (R)
7. S1: Yes ... (R) (3.4 sec)
   Wait...where are they=(I)
8. S2: =Where? (R)
9. S1: I'm talking about girls...where in your picture? (I)
10. S2: Ah, I see. (R)
    If you look at the picture, it's on the right side. (R) (2.7 sec)
    [The] same? Find it? (I)
11. S1: Hm. (R)

The script above only shows the length of relatively longer pauses, and the *F* in parentheses means the follow-up move. Unlike in Practice 1, the turn lengths are almost equally balanced between the two, with the use of more follow-up moves. This is probably because the repetition is easy even for weaker students to use. Without the need for clarification requests S1 responded and followed up S2's utterances and assured the S2 that she was following the explanations in Line 3. By means of the follow-ups, she also implied that S2's utterances were comprehensible enough to require no further modifications (Lines 3, 5, 11). S1's response in Line 11 may be a back-channeling response to avoid taking turns, which is a feature of natural conversations (McCarthy, pp. 127–28). The only time when S1 stole the turn was when S2 failed to make any move (the long pause in Line 7), and this suggests that S1 was able to perceive the lack of the expected move to be her chance for stealing the turn. Likewise, S2 felt the need to cut the long pause in Line 10, despite that the pause length was far shorter than those in Practice 1 were. The interaction in Practice 2 thus follows a certain fixed patterns, but without long, uncomfortable pauses.

Furthermore, after being familiarized with the use of repetitions, some features commonly found in natural interaction began to emerge in the students' interaction. The following script from the later part shows occurrences of overlaps closer to those in natural interaction as well as a near case of utterance completion:

26. S2: Behind the...the house, there's a sun,=
27. S1: =Ah, yes. (R)
28. S2: =very big, and there are trees on the right side. (I) (4.3 sec)
No sun? No trees? (I)
29. S1: I think it's different. I have sun here, =(R)
30. S2: =I have a sun, er, over the house on the right hand. (R)
31. S1: =but my house is small. (R)
It's on top. (F)

Here in Lines 26–28, S1 interrupted S2 to confirm the existence of the house

in her picture ("Ah, yes"), but the S2 continued her turn without hesitance perhaps because she perceived the interruption to be a self-repetition, and expected to hear a similar response from S1 after her description of the sun. S1, however, did not respond to her immediately, as she could not decide the target of the modifier "very big" that she had heard during the overlap. Thus, the rare pause—though shorter than compared to those in Practice 1—signaled S2 that something was wrong. S2 tried to amend this communication breakdown with simple questions made with rising tone ("No sun? No trees?"), expecting to hear either "sun" or "tree" in S1's response. This initiation move led to the emergence of a near natural utterance completion in Lines 29–31. In Line 29, S1 decided to say that the sizes of the houses were different between the two pictures in her response to S2. At the same time, it seems S2 noticed that she had used a wrong word ("behind" instead of "over") in her explanation. Thus, as soon as she heard the expected word "sun" in Line 29, S2 began her turn and attempted to complete the utterance that S1 had begun, in order to correct her previous error and change the location of the sun from "behind" to "over" the house (Line 30). With the utterance completion, the confusion derived from the modifier was solved, and S1 followed up S2's utterance in Line 31 ("It's on top.").

Looking at the linguistic forms the sutdents used during Practice 2, the grammatical structures have more variations, and complexity is also observed as in the use of "if-clause" in Line 10, which was actually from the 'weaker' S2, whose utterances were almost as accurate as those of the 'more fluent' S1. Another distinctive feature that supports the improved naturalness of the interaction is the increased use of expressions such as "I think," "Please," "I'm talking," or "here," which imply that the students were engaged in real-time interaction while they were trying to complete the task. Although it was under the limitations of a classroom setting, it seems the addition of the repetition practice achieved better results than merely asking them to make responding and follow-up moves.

6. Conclusion

What differentiated the smoothness of the turn taking between the two interaction practice exercises were the simple explanation of the features of the natural turn-taking system and the addition of the repetition exercises to

break the long, unnatural pauses. Between the two exercises, the students were reminded of the quick turn taking in the L1 interaction and then were encouraged to consciously avoid the occurrence of the long pauses they had in the previous exercise. They were also taught how to make use of repetitions to cut a silent pause instead of leaving it until it becomes an uneasy one. As a result, the students became more conscious of the length of a pause and its implication, which further led them to step in and steal the turn more willingly. The improvements in both the turn-taking techniques and the amount of contribution to the transaction were observed more freguently among weaker students. Although more extensive research is needed to examine the effects of repetition practice, the results obtained from this study have shown how findings from discourse analysis can be potentially beneficial in the improvement of L2 interaction skills, and help teachers evaluate and improve their teaching.

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