Repairing "Failed" Questions in Foreign Language Classrooms

外国語教室における「失敗」となった質問の修復

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While the pedagogical value of teachers' use of questions in classrooms has been widely researched, what exactly teachers do if a question fails to obtain an adequate response has not yet been sufficiently addressed from an interactional perspective. This study examines how and why foreign language teachers deal with this problem and how they pursue a response. Conversation analysis of EFL classroom interactions demonstrated that teachers employed three strategies to repair a question: a modification of the failed question in the target language, codeswitching into L1 as a further step of the modification, and proffering candidate responses to the failed question. Teachers do not merely simplify and sharpen the focus of the original question successively to pursue a response, but they teach English in interaction by trying to help students understand the meaning of the questions in English. Implications for teachers who face the problem of failed questions are discussed.

これまで教師による「質問」の教育上の価値はよく研究されてきたものの、「質問」が学生の回答を得ることに失敗した場合に教師はどうするのかということは相互行為的視点からは十分に研究されてこなかった。本稿は外国語教室の中で教師が、失敗となった質問をどのようにそしてなぜその方法で扱い回答を求めていくのかを研究するものである。外国語としての英語教室での相互行為の会話分析により、教師は次の３つの方略を取ることが分かった。失敗となった質問の目標言語による改良、そしてその次の段階としての学生の第１言語へのコードスイッチイング、回答例の提案である。教師はターン毎に質問を易しくしたり焦点を絞ったりするだけでなく、目標言語である英語で「質問」を理解させようと試みることによって、英語を相互行為の中で教授していることが明らかとなった。最後に失敗となった質問という問題に直面する教師への示唆を議論し、本稿の結びとする。

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The notion of teachers questioning their students has always played an important role in education. From ancient times, as in Socrates and Boy's dialogue in *Meno* (Guthrine, 1956), the act of questioning has been used by teachers to carry out pedagogical work. The well-known *Initiation-Response-Feedback/Evaluation* (IRF/IRE) sequence (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) is a prevalent format in classrooms typically initiated by a teacher's question. Although teachers' questioning has been criticized by critical discourse analysts (e.g., Young, 1992) as an imposition of the teacher's power over the students, Macbeth (2000, 2003) argued that critical discourse analysts fail to recognize what teachers' questioning accomplishes and also tend to overlook its rich pedagogical value. Through a microanalysis of classroom interactions, Macbeth demonstrated that teachers' questioning is a way to organize a classroom in terms of the installation of knowledge; that is, it constructs objective knowledge of a lesson through the interactional sequence developed from a teacher question. Knowledge to be learnt is not only found in the content of the teacher's question, but it is collaboratively constructed in the sequence through the exchange of the teacher's question and the students' responses. The virtue of questioning in the classroom is that it invites students' participation in constructing learning content through the question-answer sequence and therefore makes the content apparent to the students. In this sense, questioning is an essential technology for collaborative teaching and learning in classrooms.

The importance of teachers' questioning holds for second or foreign language education. Chaudron (1988) states that "teacher's questioning is a primary means of engaging learners' attention, promoting verbal responses, and evaluating learners' progress" (p. 126). Lee (2006a) argues that teachers' questions are "central resources whereby language teachers and students organize their lessons and produce language pedagogy" (p. 691). Through a microanalysis of ESL classroom interactions, Lee (2007) demonstrated how teachers' questioning enables the accomplishment of several types of pedagogical goals at the third turn of a three-turn sequence of actions (i.e., the feedback in an IRF sequence), in addition to feedback or evaluation alone, such as achieving classroom order and steering the interactional trajectory.

However, while the value of questioning in language teaching has been recognized by researchers, and practical advice for teachers on how to ask a question has been covered to some extent in teacher education textbooks (e.g., Brown, 2007; Richards & Lockhart, 1994), thus far, to the author's knowledge, there have been no studies or pedagogical suggestions specifically addressing the issue of what to do when a question fails to elicit an adequate response from a participant-relevant (i.e., emic) interactional perspective. The solution to this problem has been left to the competence of individual teachers. If questioning is pedagogically valuable in classrooms, however, it would be worthwhile to study how teachers in classroom interactions ask second or subsequent question(s) to obtain an adequate response when the original question fails to do so. Such a study will inform language teachers about how to handle the problem of failed student responses.

In this paper, I address the issue of failed questions or the trajectory of unsuccessful question and answer sequences. The research focus is on how teachers in language classrooms, especially in foreign language (FL) classrooms, deal with the problem of failed questions.

Studies on Repair for "Failed" Questions

A question calls for an answer, usually in the immediately following turn (Sacks, 1987). If an answer is not readily available, as indicated either in the form of silence, a repair initiator, or an inappropriate response, the questioner is put in the position of considering the reason for non-availability of an answer to the question. The question is treated as "failed" by the questioner's subsequent repair practice in response to the non-immediate or non-adequate answer; a failed question is an interactional construct held by both the questioner and the answerer, not a question itself doomed to failure from the onset. Pomerantz (1984) studied how American first language (L1) English speakers treated failed questions in ordinary conversation. She found that failed questions were repaired in three ways: (a) repair of a problematic vocabulary item for understanding the question (e.g., by replacing the troublesome word); (b) repair of a problematic reference for understanding the question (e.g., by providing detailed information to the troublesome reference); and (c) repair of a problematic assertion in the content of the question (e.g., by weakening the original assertion or changing the opinion so that the hearer can agree to the question).

In institutional settings in which one party in the interaction is given asymmetrical rights to ask questions, the party tries to clarify the focus of the failed question. The study of American broadcast news interviews by Heritage and Roth (1995) discovered that the interviewers added a specific word, a phrase, or more detailed information to sharpen the focus of a failed question. This way of handling failed questions, in an increment, was also found in several institutional talk settings in Sweden such as health care interactions, courtroom trials, police interrogations, and social welfare office talk (Linell, Hofvendahl, & Lindholm, 2003). Antaki's (2002) study of failed questions showed that particularizing or personalizing the content of the failed question from a more general one was another approach used by staff at a service institute for children with learning difficulties.

These practices are not only limited to interaction among L1 speakers; they are also found in interaction involving second language (L2) speakers. Gardner (2004) studied conversation among L1 English speakers and L2 English speakers, and discovered that the L1 speakers used strategies similar to those found in the studies above to pursue an answer, such as rephrasing the question with different words, adding a turn increment to the question, modifying the question with a minor change, or expanding the question by adding new information.

Studies on English oral proficiency interviews (OPIs), such as Kasper (2006) and Kasper and Ross (2007), have found the same practices employed by the interviewers, but a difference was discovered in their orientation to the trouble source of the non-answer. In Gardner's (2004) study, non-answers in L1-L2 speaker conversations were treated as an indication of possible disagreement to the assertion in the question, not as incompetence of L2 speakers. Therefore, the L1 questioners initiated repair on their failed questions in order to get an agreement from the L2 answerers. On the contrary, in the OPIs, when an answer was not available from the candidate, it was not considered as a dispreferred marker that indicated the answerer's orientation to disagreement, but as an indication of a lack of understanding due to the answerer's level of language proficiency. The interviewer's orientation to the candidate's incompetence was made public through the practice of eliminating dispensable parts of the original question, such as the change from "Can you tell me about what you did over Golden week?" to "Tell me what you did for Golden Week, over Golden Week" (Kasper & Ross, 2007, p. 2051). Kasper and Ross concluded the omission of "can you" in the subsequent version of the question is to "make the request more transparent and hence easier to understand."

Orientation to the answerer's lack of competence in repairing the failed question can be seen as key to explicating how teachers pursue a student's answer in language learning classrooms, in which the students are institutionally identified as not yet competent in the target language (TL). The study of code-switching in Turkish university EFL classrooms by Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005) touched on another way of handling the failed question, as documented in the following segment from their study.

Segment 1 (adapted from Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005, p. 313)

```
1.  T:   okay (.) hh on Tuesday night?
2.       (0.5)
3.  T:   on New Year's night?
4.       (1.0)
5.  T:   on Tuesday (.) last Tuesday?
6.       (2.0)
7.  T:   Salı günü?
         on Tuesday
8.       (0.5)
9.  S4:  er-
10. T:   =YılbaTı gecesi?
         on New Year's Eve
11. S4:  I (2.0) study (0.5) English
```

The teachers' original question (line 1) is followed by a gap of silence, not an answer. Then, the teacher initiates several modified versions of the question, which are also met with silence. After several repairs in the TL, the teacher handles the non-answers by employing the students' L1 (lines 7 and 10). The Turkish questions finally obtain a response (line 11).

Üstünel and Seedhouse's (2005) study analyzed some of the interactional practices teachers use to deal with failed questions in FL classrooms. As in other instances of institutional talk, modifications are employed, but in this particular talk the bilingual practice of codeswitching (CS) is also used as a further step to pursue an answer from the students. Üstünel and Seedhouse suggested, "CS is one further (but more radical) way of modifying and simplifying the linguistic forms [to repair the failed question]" (p. 315). Considering the similarities between the Turkish university EFL context and EFL classrooms in Japan in which almost all of the students share the same L1, the findings in this study give insight into how to handle a failed question in our classrooms.

However, it seems necessary to advance this line of study to be more instructive to teachers dealing with the trouble of failed questions. First, the possibility of other practices for dealing with the trouble should be examined. Second, not only how, but also why these practices are used needs to be accounted for (e.g., why was the re-initiation of the question in the CS conducted only after the modifications in the TL in the segment?). If there is rationality in designing practices to handle the failed question in FL classrooms and if this is explicated, then teachers will be able to follow the practices strategically, not randomly, when faced with the problem in their classroom. Or at least, the effectiveness of rational practices can be evaluated. The value of prior research on failed questions actually lies not only in the fact that it explicates an individual's conversational techniques but also in the fact that it has practical implications for institutional practice in areas such as interviewer and teacher training. If interviewers and teachers know that a question sometimes fails to elicit an adequate response and are aware of how to deal with the situation strategically, they will be better prepared. In turn, a study of the way teachers treat failed questions in FL classrooms will have implications for pedagogy in which teachers' questioning is crucial for teaching and learning.

The Study

Objectives

This study aims to extend the line of studies on failed questions to FL classroom settings and to explicate how and why teachers deal with the problem of students' inappropriate responses as the teachers engage in their pedagogical work. I will conduct a detailed analysis of naturally occurring examples of teachers' repair on failed questions in FL classrooms in order to determine the methods they use to deal with the problem of students' inappropriate responses.

Data and Method

The study is based on audio-recordings of 810 minutes of classroom interaction in EFL classes at a Japanese university. Interactions in three classrooms were recorded: (a) an intermediate communication and writing class (270 minutes), (b) a semi-intermediate communication and writing class (180 minutes), and (c) an intermediate communication class (360 minutes). The teacher of the first two classes was an L1 English speaker who had lived in Japan for more than 10 years. He had experience as a teacher of English in a variety of schools and had completed level 1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The teacher of the intermediate communication class was an L1 English speaker who had lived for more than 30 years in Japan.

The data were analyzed using conversation analysis (CA), which is a structural analysis "done by reference to contextual features, especially sequencing, and to conventional understandings and procedures" (Bilmes, 1988, p. 161). The purpose of CA is to explicate the mechanism (not psychologically but socially) that produces and explains individuals' actions in interaction. Social mechanisms do not exist as governing rules of interaction but reflexively construct and are constructed by individuals' competent ways of engaging in interaction. In other words, CA aims to consider individuals' competence in accomplishing socially ordered action in interaction (Heritage, 1984). The detailed transcription employed in CA is a way to understand such individuals' methods of interaction; it makes visible the individual's orientation to detailed features of sequences of interaction as publicly displayed cognition (Schegloff, 1991). The data were transcribed according to the standard CA conventions (see Appendix). The detailed transcription approach has another virtue: Readers can follow the analysis of the data as it was analyzed by the researcher and can even challenge the analysis. This promotes the reliability and validity of the study (Seedhouse, 2005). Detailed ethnographic notes taken during the time of the recordings were also employed as supplementary information.

Through detailed structural analysis of the segments, this CA-informed study focuses on the methods teachers use to deal with the problem of failed questions.

Analysis

A total of 22 cases of teachers' repair of failed questions were found in the data. Ten cases were from the semi-intermediate communication and writing class and nine were from the intermediate communication and writing class. All the cases were found in the same kind of activity, namely discussion activities that took place between the teacher and students. The students were given about 10 minutes to discuss two questions within a group of four students first, and then one of the members of each group answered two questions posed by the teacher. The teacher occasionally asked a new question to students on the topic related to the discussion after hearing their answers to the given questions. Three other cases were found in the intermediate communication class, all of them in the same activity, the teacher's feedback to students on their performance in a speaking test. This feedback talk was conducted immediately after the test. In each instance of testing and feedback, only the students taking the test were in the classroom.

While it would be ideal to show all 22 cases of the ways teachers dealt with failed questions, here I will present several selected excerpts transcribed from the data as examples (in the 22 specimens) of the repair practices the teachers used to pursue a response from their students (see ten Have, 2007, on specimen perspective).

Modification in TL of Failed Question

As in prior research, the teachers in my data enacted a modification of their failed question to pursue an answer from students. Eight cases of the modification similar to the example below were found in the data.

Segment 2
'D' for Derek (teacher), 'F' for Fumiya.

```
1.    D:   uh: million dollars what do you do,
2.         (1.2)
3.    F:   shopping.
4.→   D:   haha £go shopping.£ .hh go shopping,
5.→        for what.
6.         (0.3)
7.→   D:   what do you buy.
8.         (0.4)
9.→   D:   go shopping for:,
10.        (0.8)
11.   F:   Ferrari.
12.        (0.6)
13.   D:   oh Ferrari, nice.
```

The question in line 1 is a pre-given question for which the students have prepared in groups. After providing receipt of Fumiya's response, the teacher, Derek, asks a related question in lines 4 and 5 "go shopping, for what." However, this does not immediately get answered but instead results in a 0.3-second gap. Derek then modifies the question in line 7 by emphasizing "what" instead of "for" in the original question. Seeing another 0.4-second gap in the next turn, he further modifies the question; this time he omits "what," and elongates the "for" with continuous intonation, which can be considered a designedly incomplete utterance (see Koshik, 2002). Fumiya finally answers the questions in line 11. Through his answer, it is seen that he analyzes what has been asked is to say a name of an object which corresponds to “what” following “for:,” (lines 7 and 9). Derek accepts Fumiya’s analysis and response as an acceptable answer with a compliment.

The modifications above succeed in obtaining an acceptable response from a student, but when necessary, the teachers go one step further to pursue an answer by using the bilingual practice of codeswitching into the students’ L1.

Codeswitching After Modification in TL of Failed Question

In the following segment, taken from the intermediate communication class, the teacher employs the students’ L1 after several modifications in TL as repair for a failed question.

Segment 3
‘E’ for Ethan (teacher), ‘G’ for Goro, two other students are also present.

1. E: uh: (0.8) what famous your hometo:wn?
2. (0.4)
3. E: no.
4. (0.4)
5.→ E: how do you change it,
6. (1.6)
7. E: what famous your hometown,
8. (0.3)
9.→ E: change it to (.) (better) English.
10. (2.2)
11. E: ↑what famous your hometown.
12. (2.5)
13.→ E: ↓change it.
14. (0.9)
15.→ E: naoshite kudasai.
correct please
please correct (it).
16. (1.0)

```
17.   G:   °what is famous for wo  naosu    nen°
                                     ((to other students))
                               O   correct  IP
           (We are supposed) to correct what is famous
      for.
18.   E:   <what is your home[town famous for.>
19.   G:                     [↑ah::
20.   E:   chotto   muzukashii.
           little   difficult
           (It is) a little bit difficult.
```

Ethan first reads out a memo he took during the speaking test (line 1), quoting back to the students something one of them had said. Then while continuing to look down at the memo, in line 3 he uses the prototypical negative token ("no") to retrospectively reject the form of the quote, in effect telling the students that it is incorrect.[2] So it is in this sequential context that Ethan's question first appears (line 5). Then after a long gap, Ethan reposes the question with the error, which specifies the content of "it" in the first version of his question (line 5), and repeats his request for the student to suggest a more appropriate syntactic form. The modification (by omitting "how do you") and the addition of "(better) English" specify both the point and the action that the students are required to engage in. However, this second request does not elicit a response from any of the students but instead results in a longer gap (line 10). Ethan again indicates the mistake, but this, too, is followed by another lengthy silence (lines 11 and 12). In line 13, he again directs the students to change the problematic utterance, but this time he uses perhaps the simplest grammatical form—a direct request ("Change it"). After yet another non-response from the students, Ethan finally produces a further request with the same content but in Japanese (line 15). Goro, one of the students, identifies the teacher's action as a request for them to correct the grammar in the proposed sentence and explains this to the other students (line 17). Finally, Ethan stops waiting for the student to answer and provides the response himself.

Although it is not clear whether Ethan treats Goro's turn at line 17 as an acceptable response to his direction, it appears here that the teacher orients to the ordering of a number of repair practices for pursuing an answer, that is, first TL modification(s) and then CS. A similar pattern is found in another extract from the data, Segment 4.

Segment 4

'D' for Derek, 'K' for Kenta, 'Ss' for students.

```
1.     D:   any Kyoto people?
2.     K:   ((raises hand))
3.→    D:   Kyoto's good yeah?
4.          (0.3)
5.→    D:   good to live?
6.          (.)
7.→    D:   sumiyasui?
8.          good to live?
9.          (0.2)
10.    K:   sumiyasui.
11.         good to live.
12.    D:   yeah. good to live.
13.         (0.3)
14.    K:   [°good to live.°
15.    D:   [>↑okay good work.< ((app[lause])
16.    Ss:                           [((applause))
```

On seeing Kenta's embodied response to his question, in line 3 Derek puts forward a related assessment that includes a turn-final tag question, "Kyoto's good yeah?" However this does not receive an immediate response and Derek then adds an increment "to live" in line 5, which makes clear the meaning of "good" in his original question. As a further step, in line 7, he changes languages and asks the question again in the student's L1. After a 0.2-second gap, the student responds to the question in Japanese, which is considered an answer to the last, codeswitched question in that the answer is in Japanese. The answer is acceptable to Derek, the questioner, who acknowledges it with "yeah." in the immediately following turn (line 10). He then moves on to direct a positive assessment toward the whole class ("okay good work.").[3]

The repair practice in this segment seems to indicate that a failed question is not always a problem on the student's part. Here Derek leaves just a micropause before initiating a CS. It is reasoned that such a pause would be difficult for an intermediate student to fill with a response in the TL. Considering the fact that he hastens to go on to CS, the segment seems to be a case of the teacher's self-repair rather than a teacher-initiated (i.e., other-initiated) repair for the student's problem in understanding the question.

Another important finding is that the pattern appearing in the segments above is similar to Segment 1 (Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005), in which the teacher modified his original question in English as the TL, and then employed CS in the students' L1. The pattern actually seems to be fairly common. It is found in seven cases in my data and one more in Üstünel and Seedhouse. Why then do the teachers order modification in the TL first and CS later? According to Üstünel and Seedhouse, the length of the gap after a TL modification is the key: A gap of 1.0-second or more after a modification in the TL triggers the practice of CS (p. 321). As we have seen, however, there are cases that do not fit this explanation. In addition, it does not answer the question of why a modification in the TL is done first. I will pick up on these points in more detail in the discussion section.

Proffering Candidate Responses: A Bidirectional Repair

Teachers sometimes also offer candidate responses as another strategy; that is, on receiving no answer but a gap of silence at the turn after a question, they provide possible answers to the non-answered question.

Segment 5

'D' for Derek, 'N' for Naoko, 'R' for Rei.

```
1.    D:   ↑million dollars what would you do,
2.         (2.6)
3.    N:   I: want to buy a car.
4.         (0.7)
5.    D:   ↑o:kay, buy a car.
6.         (.)
7.→   D:   ↑what type of car.
8.         (2.1)
9.→   D:   Toyota Porsche Ferrari:¿
10.        (1.1)
11.   R:   ((to N)) Benz
12.        (0.4)
```

```
13.  N:   ((to D)) Benz.
14.       (0.3)
15.  D:   oh::. ((start writing on the blackboard))
16.       Benz. Mercedes Benz. ((finish writing))
17.       (0.4)
18.  D:   nice.
```

The focal turn in this segment appears in line 7, when Derek initiates the specification question "what type of car.". In this segment, Naoko and Rei have formed a pair and have been practicing two teacher-prepared questions for about 15 minutes. In the response turns, Naoko represents the pair and answers both questions when Derek asks them. Derek's first prepared question, "million dollars what would you do,", is answered by Naoko.[4] Then, after a gap, he acknowledges her answer with "o:kay," and initiates his follow-up question to the pair in line 7. The question does not receive immediate uptake, and results in a 2.1-second gap. Derek then poses some possible answers with slightly rising intonation in line 9 formulated as a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990). After a 1.1-second gap, Rei prompts Naoko with an answer in line 11, which Naoko then delivers to Derek (line 13). He accepts the answer and provides a favorable assessment in line 18.

The practice of repairing failed questions, as we have seen, involves bidirectional repair; that is, proposing possible answers operates in two directions at the same time. On the one hand, it works backward to sharpen the content of the failed question by incrementing the information, where the question "what type of car" can ask what line of car such as sports car, SUV, or minivan. Furthermore, by being given possible answers, the content of "what type of car" is clarified as "which manufacturer or what brand of car." On the other hand, the practice also works forward to repair the trouble of answering, as it makes the acceptable class of answers available to the student. In Segment 5, the students' answer is in the class of answers provided: Benz is a brand of car, as are Toyota, Porsche, and Ferrari. In other words, the practice deals with both the problems in understanding the content of the question and the challenge in producing an answer, and succeeds in obtaining an adequate answer from the students. This practice is found in another six cases in my corpus, including the following.

Segment 6
'D' for Derek, 'A' for Atsushi.

```
1.    D:   teacher is good very good job.
2.         (0.3)
3.→   D:   ↑what teacher¿
4.         (0.5)
5.→   D:   high school junior high school elementary?
6.         (1.0)
7.    A:   high school.
8.    D:   high school. ((writing "high school" on
9.         the blackboard)) high school, (.) kids are
10.        very (0.3) very nice.
```

Here, after listening to Atsushi's answer, "teacher," to the question given to all groups, "What do you want to be after graduation?" Derek initiates a topically related question, "what teacher" in line 3. Receiving no immediate response, the teacher suggests possible answers to the question in line 5, which is again a three-part list. After a further 1-second gap, Atsushi answers "high school." Considering that one can mean different things in asking "what teacher" such as "a teacher of what subject?" an appropriate answer might be something such as "PE teacher." By presenting possible answers, Derek retrospectively defines the intention of his question and also prospectively suggests a class of answers. Atsushi could have answered, "I want to be a high school teacher," but he followed the suggested class of answer and simply gave "high school," which was accepted through repetition and embodied action by Derek, who then briefly extends it into a topically related assessment in the next turn constructional unit.

Discussion

This detailed analysis of naturally-occurring interactions in EFL classrooms indicates that teachers repair the troubles of failed questions with the following three strategies: (a) a modification of the failed question in the TL, (b) codeswitching into L1 as a further step of the modification, and (c) suggesting answers for the failed question.

The interactional practice of modification shares the features of the interviewers' practice of pursuing an answer in OPI settings (Kasper, 2006;

Kasper & Ross, 2007). By re-asking in a grammatically complete sentence (Segment 2), changing the speech act from an indirect to direct request (Segment 3), and by emphasizing a part of speech and purposefully omitting a part of a sentence (line 7 and line 9 in Segment 2), the teachers display their orientation to the difficulty of analyzing what is required by the questions. In other words, the teachers identify the trouble source as the student-recipient's inability to parse the questions in a timely manner.

The teachers' orientation to addressing the students' difficulty with the question is observable through their strategy of proffering candidate responses. By suggesting a possible class of answers for a failed question, the teachers are able to repair the problems both in parsing the question and answering the question; the practice locates the trouble sources of a failed question in both the understanding of and the responding to the question, dealing with these problems in an economical way by repairing both troubles at the same time.

The bilingual practice of codeswitching into L1 focuses more on the trouble of understanding the failed question. It is of course easier for students to parse a question in their L1 rather than in the TL. A question arises here: Why do teachers resort to CS only after a TL modification? To address that issue, we need to consider the nature of the question, or language, and also the nature of language teaching.

Put simply, any question has two components: propositional content and an action (or speech act) that it is designed to achieve (cf. Hauser, 2005). A student first has to determine that what the teacher is saying is a question (i.e., an action requiring some response) and must also understand the question's propositional content (i.e., what response is specifically required). Since it is widely accepted that the meaning of language can be ambiguous or indexical, parsing a question actually demands interpretation work on the part of the student, which is done on the basis of (a) sequential context, (b) situational or background context, and (c) the conventional meaning of language.[5]

The first two components require an answerer to use interactional competence. Understanding a question as an action requesting a response is realized by the answerer's tacit knowledge of interactional norms in a given situation. Thus far, classroom studies on teachers' questioning that have been conducted using ethnomethodology and CA have focused on (students') tacit knowledge of these two components or discursive practical reasoning of questions (Lee, 2006b; Macbeth, 2000, 2003; Mehan, 1979). These studies have indicated that, given that a question demands the use of competence, the act of questioning is pedagogical in its own right. It should also be noted, however, that prior to discursive practical reasoning, conventional linguistic reasoning is required.

It is a given that when a teacher's question is formulated in the TL, the addressed student has to use knowledge of TL conventions. On the other hand, if a teacher's question is formulated in the students' L1, the student does not need to use linguistic knowledge of the TL but rather can use L1 knowledge. The use of the L1 for questioning means that the teacher is not teaching the TL communicatively. Therefore, although L1 questions succeeded in eliciting responses or reactions from the students and should be considered as a valuable resource in repair, the teachers generally kept them as a last resort.

In summary, questions and modifications in the TL and the use of codeswitching in FL classrooms are explained on the basis of priority in formulating questions. Questioning in language classrooms has two pedagogical benefits. Firstly, as Lee (2007) demonstrated, it enables the teacher to engage in pedagogical work at the third turn position. For example, in segments 2, 4, and 5 the teacher invited students into new but related questions at the third turn positions (see lines 4–5 in Segment 2, line 3 in Segment 4, and line 7 in Segment 5). In addition, questioning itself is a way of teaching in that it demands discursive and linguistic reasoning. In order to satisfy both these pedagogic benefits, any first version of a question has to be posed in the TL, meaning the use of the TL for questioning is prioritized. Grammatically simplified TL questions (in the sense of omitting a word or a phrase in the original question) which appear as subsequent versions of the question are reasonable considering the teachers' orientation to the pursuit of the pedagogical values of questioning. While these modifications may weaken the second pedagogical value, they do not totally eliminate it. The use of the L1 is least prioritized, achieving only the first of the two pedagogical values, although it accomplishes that goal more efficiently than does a question in the TL. The practice of proffering candidate responses does not deviate from the priority in formulating questions; although it suggests possible answers, it is typically done with a question-like form intonation, and the students orient to such turns as questions, rather than as answers. Thus, it can be seen that teachers in FL classrooms appear to follow a prioritized hierarchy of actions in order to teach their students the TL during their interactions.

It should also be noted that a failed question is not always the student's problem. Questions from the teachers may potentially be ambiguous and the teachers themselves may orient to their speech as the origin of the breakdown. In this case, as seen in Segment 4, the teacher may self-repair the trouble source first with a combination of the modification and CS practices.

Concluding Remarks

Language classrooms are where we teach a language to students. The methods used by teachers to repair failed questions have rationality according to this goal. The present study identified three strategies used to handle failed questions, and these techniques are no doubt evident in the way most teachers teach. I would suggest that in FL classrooms like those in Japan it is beneficial for native speakers of a TL to learn the students' L1, as Derek and Ethan have done. Although it is prioritized lower than modification of the question in the TL, students' L1 can be a valuable resource for obtaining a response and to engage in pedagogical work at the third turn position. Thus, the use of the L1 should not be totally prohibited as it has a role to play in teaching the TL.

Although the three practices can also be found in ordinary and other institutional talk, the practices seem to be particularly effective interactional devices for language teaching. It should be noted, however, that the strategies found in the study are not identified as the best ways to deal with failed questions. The teachers' practices are surely rational, but there may be other, perhaps even better, ways to pursue a response from students. The current study represents an initial attempt to document practices of teachers' management of failed questions in detail. It will be more meaningful when this study is supplemented by subsequent studies extending the line of research, providing a more extensive knowledge base for repairing the source of trouble in failed questions.

Notes

1. All names in the segments are pseudonyms.
2. Ethan's nonverbal actions are based on my field notes.
3. The question and answer on students' residences had become a sequence in which three students participated as answerers before this segment started. Therefore this utterance should be heard as a compliment to the whole class or at least to those students who participated. "Okay" seems to be used as a transition-making marker (see Beach, 1993).
4. Readers might be curious as to the reason why the teacher does not modify the initial question, which is not with the conditional phrase "if you had," in the 2.6 gap instead of waiting for the student's response. First, it seems that the omission was recipient designed to simplify the question for the pair, as they had already been given 15 minutes to

consider it and also had seen that the other five groups' had been asked and answered the same questions before them. Second, because of their preparation, the teacher seems to think that the pair understand the question.

5. Although language is indexical, it does not mean that it is totally indexical. Language has a focal meaning because of its conventions (word, phrase, and grammar) that are more or less the same as a dictionary definition (Bilmes, 1986). Otherwise, people would find it impossible to communicate with each other.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions and Abbreviations

Transcriptions Conventions

(0.0)	Time gap in tenths of a second
(.)	Brief time gap
=	"latched" utterances
[	The beginning of overlapped talk
( )	Unintelligible stretch
(( ))	Transcriber comment
-	Cut-off
:	Elongated sound
?	Rising intonation
.	Falling intonation
,	Continuing intonation
↑	Marked rise of immediately following segment
↓	Marked fall of immediately following segment
under	Emphasis
££	Smiled voice
° °	Decreased volume
> <	Increased speed
< >	Decreased speed

Abbreviations

IP	Interactional Particle
O	Object Marker