

Contrastive Models for Turn-Taking in English and Japanese

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Turn-taking remains an underemphasized aspect of foreign language instruction. As more is understood about this central component of interactional competence, foreign language teachers will need to consider the best ways to teach students how to take turns speaking and managing the floor in the target language. This paper provides a brief outline of turn-taking mechanics as originally defined by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) before providing contrastive models for turn-taking in English and Japanese. Some recommendations for classroom instruction targeting turn-taking for EFL students in Japan, as well as a call for greater sensitivity to this fundamental aspect of communicative competence, are also provided.

外国語教育において、「話者交替」の重要性はまだ十分に注目されていない。相互行為能力の中心的構成要素である話者交替についての理解が深まるにつれ、外国語教育者は目標言語でどのように交替しながら話し、場の進行をすばいいかを教授するための最善の方法を考える必要が出てくるだろう。本論では、Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974) によって定義された話者交替の働きについての概要を説明した後、英語と日本語での話者交替の対照モデルについて述べる。日本の英語学習者に話者交替を教える際にクラス内で推奨されるいくつかの教授法と、話者交替というコミュニケーション能力の重要な一面に対するより細やかな配慮への必要性についても述べる。

Interactional competence (IC) as a pedagogical pursuit is generally credited to Kramsch's (1986) assertion that "language is primarily a *functional* tool, one for communication [...] bound to its situational context" (p. 366) and her ensuing proposal to redirect "the enthusiasm generated by the proficiency movement toward a push for interactional competence" (p. 370). In the three decades since this initial call, IC as a construct has been advanced and applied to both studies of second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language teaching practices (Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Wong & Waring, 2010). Richard F. Young (2011) expands the pragmatic and context-sensitive aspects of Kramsch's definition of IC to include the criterion that linguistic and interactional resources employed between interlocutors are done so "mutually and reciprocally by all participants in a particular discursive practice. This means that IC is not the knowledge or the possession of an individual person, but is co-constructed by all participants in a discursive

practice, and IC varies with the practice and with the participants" (p. 428). IC is featured prominently in Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence, where the author advocates for IC's explicit instruction in foreign language education, noting that the "performance of speech acts and speech act sets can differ in important ways from language to language" (p. 49).

It has been proposed that a critical element of IC is turn-taking, without which there cannot be any interaction (Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010). However, turn-taking "is perhaps the least tackled in pedagogical materials and classroom instruction, mostly because it's the least understood" (Wong & Waring, 2010, p. 14). Language learners often have difficulty learning how to take turns effectively in another language (Cook, 1989; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994), and Japanese learners of English are no exception (Munby, 2005; D. Young, 2013). Having a better understanding of how speaker changes occur in both Japanese and English can therefore provide useful context for EFL teachers of L1 Japanese students to create activities that bolster turn-taking skills and build interactive competence more generally.

Any discussion of how turns are taken in a given language necessitates a basic understanding of transition relevant places (TRPs), the "conjunction points among grammatical, intonational, and semantic completion points" (Furo, 2001, p. 17). More simply put, TRPs are the moments in which a speaker concludes a speaking turn and the floor becomes open for another person to take. TRPs are projected by linguistic features, which allow fluent listeners to identify when one is approaching and thereby recognize that the floor will soon be open. Accepting that IC is a mutual, reciprocal, and co-constructed, there is also some burden on the speaker to properly project TRPs. All participants in any discourse share responsibility for negotiating TRPs, including projection and recognition, to effectively take turns and manage the floor. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson's (1974) set of rules for how turn changes occur hinges upon negotiating TRPs:

1. At a TRP
 - b. If the current speaker (CS) selects a specific next speaker (NS), that NS should take a turn.
 - b. If the CS does not select a specific NS, any NS may self-select.
 - c. If neither rule (a) nor rule (b) is followed, the CS may extend his/her turn.
2. Rules 1(a)–(c) operate again for the next TRP.

Because these rules can be viewed operationally, the success or failure of a particular rule operation will result in either the beginning of a new turn or else the execution of a subsequent operation. As with wider IC, negotiating TRPs is collaborative, interactional, and context sensitive (Lerner, 2003; Sacks et al., 1974).

Creating Contrastive Turn-Taking Models

The projection of TRPs differ from language to language as a result of contrastive linguistic features between those languages (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen, 2005; Wong & Waring 2010). English, for example, is a subject-verb-object language and uses *wh*-raising for question formation, whereas Japanese is subject-object-verb and uses post-positional particles to mark questions. The beginning of the turn in English is the most important for projecting the shape of the turn (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen, 2005; Tanaka, 1999). Take the example of making a polite invitation in English: “*Would you like to see a movie this weekend?*” In this example, the first three words signal to the listener that an invitation or offer is being made and thus the listener has the rest of the turn to begin formulating an appropriate response.

Furo (2001) notes that floor changes in English often occur before TRPs, because next speakers (NS) are able to anticipate the current speaker’s (CS) intent and begin speaking before the former turn is complete; this results in simultaneous or overlapping speech. However, in Japanese, turn-endings are critical for turn projection (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen, 2005; Tanaka, 1999). For example, this polite invitation in Japanese has the same meaning as the one above in English: *Shumatsu ni eiga wo mimasen ka?* The invitational aspect does not come until the very end of the utterance through the conjugation of the sentence-final verb and question particle *ka*. Furo notes that floor changes in Japanese most often occur at or after TRPs, as NSs must wait until the CS’s turn is complete or nearly complete before he or she can begin formulating an

appropriate response. As a result, pauses between speakers are a common feature in Japanese discourse (Furo, 2001; Kitamura, 2001).

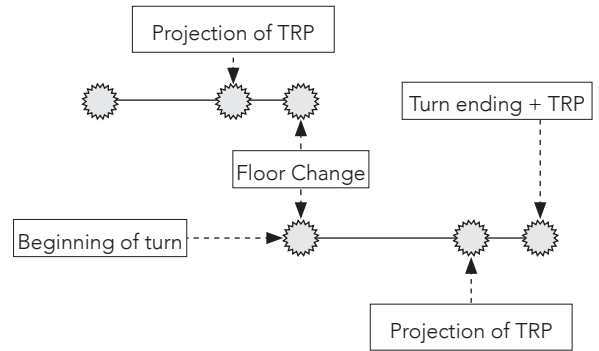


Figure 1. A model for TRP projection and floor changes in Japanese.

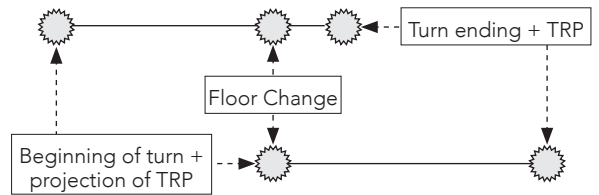


Figure 2. A model for TRP projection and floor changes in English.

As Figure 1 above reflects, TRPs in Japanese often occur simultaneously with floor changes, both of which are immediately preceded by the TRP’s projection. On the other hand, in Figure 2 the projection of TRPs in English occurs far earlier, nearer, or at the beginning of a speaking turn—allowing floor changes to precede the TRP itself and thereby resulting in more overlapping speech. It is important to note at this point that the brief periods of silence common in Japanese have been observed among L1 Japanese learners of English discoursing in the target language (Harumi, 2001; D. Young, 2013; 2015), which may be due to L1 transference, English proficiency deficits, or a combination of both. Improving such learners’ IC should therefore include both awareness raising strategies and explicit instruction for taking turns in the target language.

Because IC is mutual, reciprocal, and co-constructed, problems negotiating TPRs for Japanese learners of English can arise from a CS’s inability to properly signal that the floor is open, potential NSs’ inability to recognize that the floor is open, or a combination of both. Harumi (2001) posits that silence between speaking turns among L1 Japanese learners of English may occur when a possible NS

has difficulty claiming a speaking turn or is simply not allocated one. NSs must monitor for possible - not actual - completion in order to join the discussion in a timely way, which can be very difficult for learners (Wong & Waring, 2010). On the other hand, possible NSs in discourse between learners may mistake the silence following a completed turn as simply “thinking time,” resulting in the speaker’s need to recall a lexical item or plan out a grammatical construction (D. Young, 2013). Regardless of the cause in any given context, turn-taking is a collaborative process. Pedagogical solutions must therefore attempt to close the IC gap from both sides—that of the CS and the potential NSs.

There are a number of approaches teachers can take to improve their students’ turn-taking abilities. Barraja-Rohan (2011) proposes using CA as a diagnostic tool to identify the causes of interactional complications as well as a pedagogical one to help raise students’ awareness of their floor management and help create relevant activities. Using such an approach, Kern (2009) found success in teaching interruption techniques to help Japanese EFL learners orient to an English floor, while D. Young (2014) noted similar success in using manipulatives to scaffold turn-taking phrases in the form of adjacency pairs, as well as to raise awareness of how floor changes operate around TRPs. Kellas (2012) was able to raise students’ awareness of the collaborative aspect of floor management through a “fish bowl” turn-mapping activity.

Conclusion

As IC as a pedagogical pursuit continues to gain momentum, it will be more and more important for foreign language teachers to understand the differences between turn-taking in not only the target language, but also their students’ L1s. Based on this understanding, activities that exploit the collaborative nature of turn-taking can help improve learners’ overall IC. Furthermore, such activities should aim to raise awareness of turn-taking mechanics and equip students with tools to negotiate TRPs in the target language. However, in a conversation analysis of turn-taking practices (both before and after explicit instruction on and awareness raising of turn-taking practices) the results revealed that despite such instruction, learners remained oriented to a Japanese style of floor management (D. Young, 2015). The learners in this study were able to utilize adjacency pairs to negotiate TRPs in English, but no simultaneous or overlapping speech was ever observed. Rather, pauses remained between speakers in keeping with the Japanese style of floor management described above. This is not to say that

Japanese learners of English can never orient to an English style of floor management, but rather that teachers should understand that such reorientation remains a difficult transition for students to make. In the interim, providing students with linguistic tools for managing the floor and providing extensive practice attending to TRP projection should be considered worthwhile goals for the classroom.

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[JALT PRAXIS] TLT INTERVIEWS



Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

TLT Interviews brings you direct insights from leaders in the field of language learning, teaching, and education—and you are invited to be an interviewer! If you have a pertinent issue you would like to explore and have access to an expert or specialist, please make a submission of 2,000 words or less.

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Welcome to the May/June edition of *TLT Interviews*! For this issue we are happy to bring you two separate conversations, one on teacher development and the other on artificial intelligence in the classroom. Our first interview is with Gabriel Díaz-Maggioli. Dr. Díaz-Maggioli is Director of the LUDUS Center, the professional development node of the Catholic University of Uruguay. He was interviewed by Matthew Turner, a Teacher Development SIG officer, and co-creator of *The TEF-Lology Podcast*. Matthew asked questions to Gabriel about his research interests of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Teacher Education, and the Teaching of Teachers (ToT).

were very few resources and where being a language teacher was not considered a profession. It was mostly a quest to support my colleagues and myself in procuring new ways of doing things. Also, living somewhere where there were no graduate programs in education, how would we grow as a nation if we didn't do research and get into more professionally sound practices?

So to what extent is a country's political upheaval and the situation of teachers as workers intertwined?

An Interview with Gabriel Díaz-Maggioli

Matthew Turner: *What got you interested in teacher development as a research discipline?*

Gabriel Díaz-Maggioli: It was mostly from having worked for many years in a country where there

