Turn-taking with Japanese ESL learners studying abroad

Introduction
This study examined how Japanese ESL learners use turn-taking to develop interactions in US or Canadian university settings. The results present the variation of turn transitions in conversations, which shows the diversity of turn types. The learners and their interlocutors had much in common using their resources in turn-taking. Turn-taking is aimed at facilitating a conversation smoothly and correcting misunderstandings in the talk. Despite sharing these objectives, these resources had various characteristics used by them.

Method
Participants
- Ten participants were all Japanese university ESL learners at the B1 proficiency level (Independent User) of the CEFR.

Data collection procedures
- Informal conversations between ESL learners and other interlocutors were recorded by each participant using her smartphone during the study abroad.

Data analysis procedures
- After transcription, I analyzed each conversation based on line-by-line analyses and compared with data from conversations and participants regarding turn-taking.

Results
The current study presents the results of turn-taking at speaker changes (gaps, overlaps, and interrupts) in the conversations. The analysis examined linguistic and pragmatic competence with the qualitative data concerning the strategies used in resources by NSs and NNSs.

Gap, overlap, and interrupt distributions in the conversations indicate what kind of interaction control turn-taking. The instances of gap showed how the next speaker used the gap to participate in progress, supporting Chen's (2000) statement that the speaker leaves a sentence incomplete to allocate a turn to the next speaker. Similarly, Taguchi (2014) argues that by leaving a sentence unfinished, an L2 speaker can appeal to the listener for co-construction of talk, such as completing the sentence initiated by the speaker. A participant and her interlocutor often started their turns by overlapping the last word of a prior utterance. Also, most overlaps simultaneously happened at the beginning of the turn constructional unit (TCU). Overlaps seemed not to hinder the flow of dialogue. Similarly, Konakahara (2015) concludes that the interactants neither treat the overlap as interruptive nor competitive, and as a result, they are successful in achieving mutual understanding and developing interpersonal relationships. Interrupts resulted in turn-taking in many cases and took the floor from the current speakers. If the current speaker stopped speaking, the transition usually occurred at an inappropriate transition relevance place (TRP). Still, the interactions cooperatively developed the ongoing talk.

Consequently, the overlapping talk showed active engagement in NS-NNS interactions. The learners frequently sought help from their interlocutors and intentionally transferred the turn-taking to them, producing gaps to search for words. Mostly the interlocutors were aware of their roles as informants with their expertise. Thus, the learners developed interactional resources to manage turn-taking, gaining intersubjectivity with their interlocutors.

The data also show the number of cases that reaction to such signals is relevant to speaker changes. Overall, the transitions between turns in conversation, most frequently occurred with a no-gap-no-interrupt. Similarly, Sacks et al. (1974) mention that participants regularly observe a turn-at-talk to find a possible place of completion.

Discussion
The results of the turn-taking across the conversations suggest some indicators: (a) the prediction of transition relevance place (TRP) from the context of the conversation, (b) the collaborative completion of incomplete sentences, (c) natural turn-taking with overlapping the last word of a prior utterance, (d) the gap for allocating a turn to the next speaker, and (e) the cooperative development of the ongoing talk without clinging to interrupts. The increase in authentic interactions seems to be a beneficial effect of the study abroad. Participants seemed to have naturally learned how to take turns as they were exposed to real-life conversations abroad, where formal teaching and textbooks rarely teach these features.

References
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