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Task Design, Plan, and Development of Talk-in-Interaction: An Analysis of a Small Group Activity in a Japanese Language Classroom

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Using the methodological framework of 'conversation analysis' as a central tool of analysis, this paper examines the sequential development of talk-in-interaction observed in a small group activity in a Japanese language classroom. While the group work was designed to have students engage in a discussion with native speakers invited to the class, the resulting interaction ended up becoming rather like a structured interview with successive exchanges of the students' questions and the native speaker's answers. How did the instructional design affect the ways in which they developed their talk? And conversely, how did the development of talk demonstrate the participants' orientation to the institutionalized nature of talk? This study explores the relationship among the task instruction, the students' reaction to the instruction during their pre-task planning, and the actual development of the talk with the native speakers. The students' planning tended to focus on the content of discussion, compiling a list of sequence-initiating actions, in particular, questions. While the plans contributed to the development of the talk, the episode reveals that a more natural and coherent discussion was afforded by the students' production of spontaneous utterances and attention to the contingent development of talk.

1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of second and foreign language instruction has transformed itself since the 1970s under the influence of the sociolinguistic theory of communicative competence (Hymes 1972) and the psycholinguistic theory of natural second language acquisition (Krashen 1982), among others. These theories have generated a wide-spread belief in the necessity of learners' exposure to 'authentic' or 'natural' language in the process of acquisition and have encouraged a focus upon meaning and purpose, which is viewed as the essence of authenticity and naturalness, rather than on form (Cook 1997: 224). Accordingly, the maximization of opportunities for learners to engage in close to real-life interaction has been privileged over the teacher-fronted, controlled practice of linguistic structures. Thus, today, 'tasks' designed to facilitate language learning through purposeful language use constitute a central element of language pedagogy (Bygate *et al.* 2001). This study introduces one such task undertaken in a Japanese language classroom and

considers the relationship between the instructional design of the task and the resulting interactional practices. Through the process, the paper exemplifies one way of applying the methodological framework of conversation analysis (cf. Sacks *et al*. 1974) to the study of classroom interaction.

This single case study contributes to the emerging body of research based on microanalyses of language classroom discourse (e.g. Bailey and Nunan 1996; Hall and Verplaetse 2000; Markee 2000; Ohta 2001; Van Lier 1988). A wealth of studies that discuss various perspectives on tasks and examine the relationships between their implementations and outcomes (cf. Bygate *et al*. 2001; Crookes and Gass 1993a, b; Long and Crookes 1991; Long and Porter 1985; Nunan 1989; Skehan 1996) also establish a background for the current study. Among these recent developments, the following three veins of research seem particularly relevant for situating the contributions that the current study intends to make in the field of applied linguistics.

The first vein of research is a series of quasi-experimental studies that have investigated the relationship between task types or the conditions of their implementation and the resulting language performance (e.g. Crookes 1989; Foster and Skehan 1996, 1999; Skehan and Foster 1997). In these studies, language performance is measured through the methods of codification and quantification, concerning the aspects of accuracy (indicated for example by error-free clauses), complexity (indicated for example by an index of clause subordination), and fluency (indicated for example by reformulations, replacements, false starts, repetitions, hesitations, pauses, etc.). Crookes (1989) and Foster and Skehan (1996), for instance, suggest that pre-task planning can lead to greater fluency and complexity and, less dependably, greater accuracy. Foster and Skehan (1999) further differentiate conditions for pre-task planning and conclude that group-based planning is a relatively unsuccessful condition compared to teacher-fronted or solitary planning. The findings of this line of study offer valuable insights into the issue of how to optimize the mastery of linguistic forms in task-based instruction. However, the measurements of language performance and the evaluations of task types and conditions in these studies do not generally consider interactive aspects of language use. This paper, on the other hand, introduces detailed analyses of the ways in which the learners and their native speaking co-participants develop talk-in-interaction during the task and the pre-task planning. Taking this descriptive approach, this study reconsiders the significance of pre-task planning in the construction of sequences of talk during the task, which is beyond the sentence-level accuracy, complexity, or fluency considered in previous studies.

The second vein of research, upon which this study builds, addresses the variable relationship between the task designers' intentions and the learners' interpretations of the tasks assigned to them (e.g. Coughlan and Duff 1994; Duff 1993; Kumaravadivelu 1991; Ohta 2001). Coughlan and Duff (1994), for instance, demonstrate how various learners' actual undertakings prompted by the same task can be unique on each occasion, reflecting 'a particular

constellation of actors, settings, tasks, motivations, and histories' (1994: 190). Thus, they propose the differentiation of the notions 'task' and 'activity': the former refers to behavioral blueprints presented to learners while the latter refers to behaviors generated by the blueprints. As for the use of tasks in the classroom, Kumaravadivelu (1991) identifies potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation (i.e., cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional, and attitudinal) and discusses the need for instructors to sensitize themselves to the exact demands made by language learning tasks. More recently, Ohta (2001), analyzing beginning level Japanese language courses, considers the relationship between task design, pre-task work, and language use during peer learning activity and poses a set of questions for analyzing and evaluating interactive tasks for beginning learners. While Ohta's study provides illuminating pictures of interactive tasks incorporated in beginning level courses, what happens at later stages of the language learning has not yet been explored with the same level of detail. As the learners' proficiency advances, the goals and design of instruction shifts, reflecting the instructors' understanding of what the learners can or cannot do. Drawing an example from an upper-level Japanese language course, this paper contributes to further understanding of the relationship between task design and performance.

Finally, the third line of research which informs this study is the one that challenges the notions of 'authenticity' and 'naturalness,' based on which task-based approaches have flourished (e.g. Cook 1997, 2000; Kramsch and Sullivan 1996; Sullivan 2000). While 'authentic' and 'natural' language is generally understood as that spoken or written by native speakers for real-life communication purposes, the definitions of what exactly count as authentic or natural have remained rather vague. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996), reviewing situations of English language teaching, raise questions as to whose words, rules of interpretation, and discourse conventions comprise authentic language. What are considered to be norms in a particular community where a language is spoken may not apply to another community where the same language is spoken. Cook (1997, 2000) also critiques the pedagogy of authenticity, which often focuses on making meaning and achieving practical purposes, by reviewing native language use among children as well as adults that includes elements of language play which are driven by sounds and grammatical structures rather than meaning. This study addresses the issue of authenticity and naturalness through the close examination of the actual talk observed in a classroom activity, which was designed to enhance the 'authenticity' of the language use. The sequential organization and interactional procedures observed in the task and the pre-task planning will be compared to those that have been described by conversation analysts investigating naturally occurring mundane conversation as well as institutional discourse.

The paper proceeds with a brief review of the methodological framework of

conversation analysis, a guiding tool adopted by this study (for more comprehensive review of the methodology, see recent books by Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), ten Have (1999), Markee (2000) and the collection of Sack's lectures (1992)). The analysis of the relationship among the instruction, the pre-task planning, and the actual activity will be followed by discussion of the contributions and limitations of the research methodology and of the implications for teaching.

2. CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Conversation analysis (CA, hereafter), a branch of ethnomethodology established and developed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson and their students and colleagues, has examined the fundamental organization of talk-in-interaction, which is recurrently exhibited by participants' conduct in a wide range of social interaction. That is, CA studies have explicated how a turn and a sequence at talk are developed in a moment-by-moment fashion and what kind of resources are utilized as the participants locally manage turn construction and allocation. While earlier studies and some recent ones focus on 'context-free' (Sacks *et al*. 1974) mechanisms that can be observed throughout various types of interaction, others explore the aspects of talk that cannot be adequately described without referring to specific features of the context in which the interaction takes place. These latter studies have investigated interactions taking place in various institutional settings such as survey or news interviews, doctor–patient interactions, courtroom interactions, and classroom interactions, among others (e.g., Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Button and Lee 1987; Drew and Heritage 1992a; Duranti and Goodwin 1992). Their analyses have revealed how the constraints of the institutional contexts may alter the organization of talk.

The CA approach to the analysis of 'institutional discourse,' however, distinguishes itself from other traditions of qualitative research in the treatment of 'context' and the consideration of 'interaction-external' factors. That is, rather than approaching the data with a set of assumptions concerning the relevance of the characteristics of the settings and/or the participants' assumed roles, CA researchers start with the micro-analysis of the ways in which the participants organize their interaction and accomplish various social actions. The micro-analysis subsumes the comparative perspective that 'the basic forms of mundane talk constitute a kind of benchmark against which other more formal or 'institutional' types of interaction are recognized and experienced' (Drew and Heritage 1992b: 19). That is, the particular ways in which the participants make each of their contributions are considered to reflect their treatment of the local configuration of the talk developed so far, as well as of the 'larger' environment or institutional contexts surrounding the talk. In other words, the participants' visible and describable conduct at each moment of interaction is considered to reveal which features of the participants or of the setting become relevant at that moment for the

participants themselves. To wit, 'the CA perspective embodies a dynamic approach in which 'context' is treated as both the project and product of the participants' own actions and therefore as inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment' (Drew and Heritage 1992b: 19). The current study adopts these analytical perspectives and provides a case study of an interaction occurring in a foreign language classroom.

The application of CA to the classroom dates back to the 1970s when McHoul (1978) examined the structures of classroom discourse with reference to the classical model of turn-taking operation in mundane talk proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Since then, various studies have investigated the aspects of interaction that are specific to the classroom and reflective of the role of teachers and students, as well as the ways in which the interactional practices or devices observed in ordinary talk are employed to construct pedagogical discourse (e.g. Baker 1992; Heap 1985, 1990; Lerner 1995; Macbeth 1990, 1991; McHoul 1978, 1990; Mehan 1979). The classroom data analyzed in CA studies covers a wide range of subject areas and pedagogical activities. The foreign/second language classroom, from which the data of the current study are extracted, is no exception. Recent studies by researchers such as Koshik (1999), Markee (1994, 1995, 2000), and Ohta (1999, 2000a, b, 2001) have provided a close look at language classroom interaction, applying the CA techniques.

What is particularly intriguing about language classrooms is the fact that the language is not only the vehicle of learning but also the target of learning in this particular setting. As mentioned in the introduction, the essential goal in the recent trend of communicative or proficiency-oriented attempts is to enable students to interact with speakers of the target language in real-life situations. Thus, concerns in the process of curriculum design include how to simulate real-life language use in the classroom. For the understanding of this simulated real-life language use, then, CA's rich tradition of examining the organization of varying types of talk-in-interaction, including both daily mundane conversation and institutional discourse, offers a fruitful resource.

In the following, we will examine the sequential development that unfolded in group work generated by a task in an upper level Japanese language classroom. Since one of the purposes of this paper is to exemplify how the methodology can be applied to classroom research, the presentation of the methods and findings may appear unconventional with respect to the traditional standards of applied linguistics. These methodological issues including the manner of presentation will be addressed in the concluding remarks.

3. *ZADANKAI* OR DISCUSSION MEETING WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS OF JAPANESE

The episode examined in this paper is extracted from a database that consists of approximately 12 hours of classroom interactions that were videotaped in

upper level Japanese courses at an American university.[1] In the courses observed, the students were assumed to have completed the instruction of basic grammatical structures. The instruction, therefore, focused more on comprehension and production of meaning in written and oral discourse rather than on specific linguistic forms and structures, although the latter became a focus at times when the instructors identified a need.

In this database, there were three occasions when native speakers of Japanese who reside in the area were invited to the classroom to interact with students. These events were usually scheduled after students had learned about some aspects of Japanese culture and society (e.g., employment system, gender role, family) through the reading of textbooks or the viewing of films or TV programs. Thus, the primary purpose of these visits of native speakers was to enrich the students' understanding of social or cultural issues by listening to the voices of native informants. At the same time, supposedly, students were exposed to authentic language spoken by native speakers other than their instructors.[2] The structure of this event thus distinguishes itself from ordinary classroom talk.[3] This paper examines one of these occasions.

The course instructor and the students referred to this event involving guest native speakers as *zadankai*, or 'discussion meeting.' The three Chinese characters used for this term mean 'to sit down' (*za*), 'to talk' (*dan*), and 'meeting' (*kai*). A Japanese dictionary, '*Daijirin* Second Edition,' defines the term as follows:[4]

> *Nanninka ga atsumatte, aru mondai ni tsuite, kakuji no iken ya kansoo o nobeau kai. Keishiki baranaide hanashiau koto o mokuteki to suru.*
> (A meeting in which several people get together and discuss their opinions or impressions on a certain issue. It aims at discussing matters without enforcing formal structures.)

Namely, the genre of talk specified by this term assumes the predetermination of an issue to be discussed, but not the pre-allocation of turn types. That is, unlike the exchange system classified as 'interview,' in which the roles of questioner and respondent are pre-assigned to each party, 'discussion,' in theory, allows all parties to raise a question and engage in the exchange of opinions and impressions. The participants are supposed to determine contingently, at the site of interaction, what kind of contribution each of them makes and how they develop their discussion.

The expectation for the mutual exchange of experiences and opinions is also implied in the guidelines provided by the instructor one week before the meeting with the native speakers:

1 Explain to the guests the content of the video and the textbook.
2 Ask the guest what kind of person his/her father is and what kind of relationship he/she has had with his/her father.
3 Tell the guests what kind of person your father is and what kind of relationship he has had with you.

This particular meeting was scheduled after the class had read units on issues concerning the lack of fathers' involvement in family matters and had watched a documentary on the subject. In the meantime, the native speakers invited to the class were not given detailed information regarding the purpose of this meeting or the history of instruction, but were simply asked to talk with the students on the topic of father–child relationships.

Introducing a segment of interaction among two students, Oakland and Miles, and native speakers Sasaki (female) and Yamada (male),[5] the next section describes what kind of speech exchange system unfolded at their meeting and what triggered the shift of the participation structure during this interaction. The subsequent section then examines the interaction between Oakland and Miles during their pre-task planning.[6] A comparison of the interactions during the two occasions illuminates the ways in which the students interpreted the guidelines given by the instructor and demonstrated their interpretation in their talk with the native speakers.

4. QUESTION–ANSWER PAIRS AND BEYOND

As pointed out by Coughlan and Duff (1994), Duff (1993), Kumaravadivelu (1991), and Ohta (2001), among others, different students may interpret task instructions in different ways and their interpretations may generate different kinds of activities responding to the same instruction. This observation applies to the target episode as well. Namely, what unfolded at the actual meeting was not exactly what is described in the definition of *zadankai* stated above. The students tended to continue asking the native speakers a series of questions, rather than commenting on the native speakers' answers or letting the native speakers ask them questions. Except for a few segments, the interaction resembled a structured interview. Excerpt 1 exemplifies this pattern of exchange.[7]

The segment consists of a series of question and answer adjacency pairs (lines 5–10, 11–13, 18–38, 42–48, 49–52, 58–64). Adjacency pairs, most notably questions and answers, are considered fundamental units in developing various types of talk-in-interaction. As a first pair part of an adjacency pair, a delivery of a question sets the frame of reference for how the subsequent turn would unfold or should be understood. That is, the occurrence of an answer as the corresponding second pair part becomes relevant, and the lack thereof, or a seemingly unfitting utterance, is recognized as a noticeable problem of the normative second, and accounted for with reference to the 'conditional relevance' (Schegloff 1968).

What is noticeable about this particular interaction, however, is the ways in which the participants dealt with the slot following each question and answer pair. The 'third position' following question and answer is often occupied by the questioner's acknowledgment or evaluation of the answer produced in the second position, as schematized below (p. 331):[8]

Excerpt 1: Questions and Answers

1	Sasaki:	*dakara sono:: chichioya ga jibun no*	Sasaki: So we::ll it's not that my father talks
2		hanashi o suru *n janakute:,* (0.7) *tte*	about himself, (0.7) it's sort of
3		*yuu kanji desu.*	like that.
4		(0.5)	(0.5)
5	Oakland:	*ja: otoosan wa:: ano::,* (0.5)	Oakland: The:n as for your father uh:m (0.5)
6		*kodomotachi ni:: a:no:: eetto::: .hhh*	did he have we::ll uhm .hhh
7		(0.5) *>honto< ano:: kyoomi*	(0.5) really we:ll any interest in his
8		*arimashita ka?*	children?
9		(2.5)	(2.5)
10	Sasaki:	*soo:::: kkana? °u::n .hh* (*ya-*)°=	Sasaki: I::: would say so. °yeah .hh (ya-)°=
11	Oakland:	*=nannin kyoo- nannin kyoodai desu ka?*	Oakland: =how many sibli- how many siblings?
12	Sasaki:	*ee:tto futari kyoodai desu.=ani ga*	Sasaki: uh:m two siblings.= I have an older
13		*imasu.*	brother.
14	Oakland:	*ani.*	Oakland: older brother.
15		(2.3)	(2.3)
16	Sasaki:	°*soo desu.*°	Sasaki: °that's right.°
17		(0.8)	(0.8)
18	Oakland:	*soide otoosan wa::: ano:::* (1.0) *eeto::*	Oakland: then your father we::ll (1.0) uh:m
19		*mainichi:: yuugohan ni kaette kite::::,*	he came home for supper everyday
20		*sono ato: mata ano:: shigoto ni*	a::nd, after tha:t did he go back to
21		*ikimashita ka? =soretomo-* (1.0)	work again?=or- (1.0)
22		*uchi ni?*	stayed home?
23		(2.0)	(2.0)
24	Sasaki:	°*u::*[*n*°	Sasaki: °uh::[m°
25	Oakland:	[*dakara otoosan to::: issho ni ano*	Oakland: [so you had supper with your
26		*yuugohan o::: tabete::-*	uhm father-
27	Sasaki:	ha:: ha:: ha::=	Sasaki: yeah yeah yeah=
28	Oakland:	*=taberu koto ga oo::kat::tan* [*desu ka?*	Oakland: =did you eat with him many [times?
29	Sasaki:	[soo desu	Sasaki: [That's
30		[ne.	rig[ht.
31	Oakland:	[*soo desu ne.>sorede< sono ato wa::::,*	Oakland: [right. Then after tha::t,
32		*ano:: otoosan wa mata:: ano::* (1.0)	we::ll your father again we:ll (1.0)
33		*kaisha ni* [*ikimashita ka?*	did he go back [to his office?
34	Sasaki:	[*aa::: ikanai ika*[*nai.*	Sasaki: [oh::: he didn't[didn't.
35	Oakland:	[*aa::.*	Oakland: [oh:::::
36	Sasaki:	*ha:i.*	Sasaki: ye::s.
37		(1.5)	(1.5)
38	Sasaki:	*uchi ni imashita.=*	Sasaki: he stayed home.=
39	Oakland:	*=uchi ni imashi*[*ta.*	Oakland: =stayed ho[me.
40	Sasaki:	[*hai.*	Sasaki: [yes.
41		(1.2)	(1.2)
42	Miles	*soshite SHUUmatsu shigoto shimashita*	Miles: then did he work during week-
43		*ka?*	ends?
44	Sasaki:	*.hh*	Sasaki: .hh
45	Miles:	*hima deshita ka?*	Miles: was he free?
46	Sasaki:	*doyoobi wa::: shi*[*teta kana? a:::n*	Sasaki: On Saturdays I think [he did. Yeah
47	Miles:	[°hu::::n°	Miles: [°hu::::n°
48	**Sasaki:**	*demo nichiyoobi wa uchi ni imashita.=*	Sasaki: but on Sundays he stayed home.=
49	Oakland:	*=donna shigoto desu ka?*	Oakland: =what kind of job?
50	Sasaki:	*.hhh °>donna shigoto.<° u::nto ne::,*	Sasaki: .hhh >°what kind of job<° we::ll uhm,
51		(1.2) *donna shigoto::: ee:to ne::,*	(1.2) what king of jo::b we::ll
52		*enjiniaringu no shi(h)goto(h):: desu.*	uhm, engineering rela(h)ted jo(h)b.
53	Oakland:	*hun.*	Oakland: hun.
54	Sasaki:	*.hhh u:n. demo:: sono: o- chichioya*	Sasaki: .hhh uhm. But uhm fa- my fathe:r,
55		*wa:,* (0.3) *jibun no shigoto no hanashi*	(0.3) He didn't talk about his job at
56		*mo ie ja shinai node, kuwashiku wa*	home, so I don't know much about the
57		*wakarimase(h)n. .hh .hh EE.*	detai(h)ls. .hh .hh yes.
58	Oakland:	*ANO::: sasaki san wa:: koma- (0.5)*	Oakland: WE::ll Ms. Sasaki, when you- (0.5)
59		*komatteita toki niwa:::* (0.3) *otoosan*	when you are in trouble (0.3) did you go
60		*soretomo okaasan no tokoro ni*	to your father or your
61		*ikimashita ka?*	mother?
62		(3.0)	(3.0)
63	Sasaki:	°*ee::* (0.5) *ee:::::::*° *haha desu ka*	Sasaki: °uh::m (0.5) uh:::m° I think to my
64		*ne(h):.hh* [*hh hh hhh*	mother, .hh [hh hh hhh
65	Oakland:	[*.hh hh*	Oakland: [.hh hh
66		*a:: dooshite desu ka?*	Why is that?

1st Pair Part A: ((Question))
2nd Pair Part B: ((Answer))
3rd Position A: ((Acknowledgment or Evaluation of the Answer))

While the third position acknowledgment is a possible action to be taken after the delivery of an answer, it is not normatively required to the same extent as the second pair part is by the first pair part. Another possible action to occur in the third position is the original questioner's subsequent question, which may or may not indicate the questioner's acknowledgment of the preceding answer.

1st Pair Part A: ((Question))
2nd Pair Part B: ((Answer))
A: ((Next Question))

Yet another possibility is the respondent's returning the same or a similar question, as it is typically observed in a greeting sequence such as 'How are you?' 'Fine. And you?'

1st Pair Part A: ((Question))
2nd Pair Part B: ((Answer))
((Returning the Same or a Similar Question))

The respondent, after providing an answer, may also shift a topical focus and initiate a telling or a question on this shifted focus.

1st Pair Part A: ((Question))
2nd Pair Part B: ((Answer))
((Telling/Question on a shifted focus))

That is, while an adjacency pair such as question and answer forms a tightly connected unit or block for building a sequence of talk, the third position offers an opportunity to determine the next course of talk-in-interaction, accommodating a range of possible actions.[9]

What we see in Excerpt 1, however, are fairly patterned behaviors occurring in the third position. Oakland and Miles, who had asked questions, responded to Sasaki's answers with minimal displays of acknowledgment. They did so by repeating a portion of Sasaki's answers, as in lines 14 and 39, by producing reactive tokens such as *hu:::n* in line 47 and *hun* in line 53, or by producing vertical head movement as observed in lines 4, 10, 15, and 40. The students did not produce any explicit assessment or extended evaluation of the answers Sasaki had offered. Meanwhile, Sasaki also passed up the opportunities to initiate a different type of contribution or to ask the students the same or a similar question, and continued to assume a passive role only offering answers to the students' questions.

After the minimal acknowledgment of answers, then, Oakland and Miles moved on to the next questions, some of which did not necessarily tie into the prior responses. For instance, Sasaki's answer in line 10, which had suggested

that she thought her father was not very interested in his children, was not reflected in Oakland's next question on the number of Sasaki's siblings. The answer that Sasaki has an older brother (lines 12–13) was not taken up in the next question regarding Sasaki's father's routine starting in line 18. Likewise, Sasaki's answer that her father is a kind of engineer (line 52) and her account that explained her problem in describing her father's job (lines 54–57) were not reflected in Oakland's next question as to whom Sasaki turned to when she was in trouble.

In this fashion, this portion of interaction proceeded with the students asking consecutive questions and the native speakers answering these questions. The lack of elaborate assessments of the answers, and the use of successive loosely connected questions contrast with the repeatedly confirmed observation that 'conversational turns by and large exhibit understanding of prior utterances' (Maynard 1980: 263). Thus, the participants in this interaction appear to have treated this occasion differently from an 'ordinary conversation' or a 'discussion.' They appear to have conformed to the fixed roles of questioner and respondent and shaped the interaction more like a 'structured interview.'

This group developed their talk by repeating this pattern for some time. However, after twenty-one of these question and answer pairs, Oakland made an explicit assessment of the guest speakers' answers to his question for the first time, as shown in Excerpt 2. In lines 1 and 2, Oakland asked if the guest speakers had seen their father cry. In lines 4 through 6, both Sasaki and Yamada said that they had not. In line 7, Oakland produced a 'response cry' (Goffman 1981), *uha a*, and a spontaneous assessment of their answers with the adjective *sugoi* ('amazing') followed by laughter. The spontaneity of Oakland's assessment is also indicated by his shift of speech style. That is, while he constantly used the *desu/masu* style or the addressee honorifics, whose use is generally associated with the degree of formality of the situation, the degree of social distance, or a discipline mode of being (cf. Cook 1996; Ikuta 1983; Makino 1983; Maynard 1993; Okamoto 1999), in this particular turn, he produces the adjective *sugoi* ('amazing') in its plain form, whose use is often associated with the informality of the setting, the closeness between the participants, or the spontaneous mode of self.[10]

As we discussed in the previous section, the third position after a question-answer pair provides an opportunity to shift to the next course of interaction. Indeed, the occurrence of this first explicit assessment of Oakland's was followed by the occurrence of the first role switch between the questioner and respondent. Sasaki treated Oakland's display of amazement as something that needed to be accounted for and asked the students the same question she had just answered, while changing the simple past tense Oakland used in his question to the more appropriate expression for asking about someone's past experience. In line 9, Sasaki initially formed the question with the minimum phrase, *arimasu ka*? ('Have you?' or more literally 'Do you have (the experience)?'). The content of the question is arguably recoverable from the

Excerpt 2: Sponaneous Assessment

1	Oakland:	*ja: otoosan wa: ano:, naita toki ni-*	Oakland:	The:n when your father uhm cried-
2		*ee:: sore wa:, ano::: mimashita ka?*		uh:m did you uhm see it?
3		(1.3)		(1.3)
4	Sasaki:	*uWA:::::::* (0.8) *ya::::: Ta(h)bun nai*	Sasaki:	uWA:::::::: (0.8) we:::::ll maybe not
5		[*kana:::.*		[I think.
6	Yamada:	[°*nai*.°	Yamada:	[°no.°
7	Oakland:	*uha a* ***sugoi****. Ha ha ha ha °ha ha ha ha°*	Oakland:	wow **amazing.** Ha hahaha °hahahaha°
8		(1.5)		(1.5)
9	Sasaki:	*arimasu ka?*	Sasaki:	Have you?
10		(1.0)		(1.0)
11	Miles:	*nan desu* [*ka?*	Miles:	What is [it?
12	Sasaki:	[*oto- otoosan ga naiteru no o::*	Sasaki:	[Have- have you seen your
13		*mita koto ga arimasu ka?*		father crying?
14	Miles:	*nai n desu. itsumo a- nete mashita.*	Miles:	No, I haven't. I was always sleeping.
15	Sasaki:	*uha [ha ha*	Sasaki:	uha [ha ha
16	Oakland:	[*HA HA HA ha ha*	Oakland:	[HA HA HA ha ha
17	Miles:	*watashi no haha no- ano::*	Miles:	Cause that was my mother's- we::ll, it
18		*shi*[*goto deshita kara.*		was her [job.
19	Oakland:	[*uh hh*	Oakland:	[uh hh
20	Sasaki:	*u::n* [*ha ha*	Sasaki:	u::n [ha ha
21	Miles:	[*u:::n*	Miles:	[u:::n
22	Oakland:	*ya boku mo nai desu.*	Oakland:	No I haven't either.
23	Sasaki:	*hu:::n °hu:n hu:n hu:n hu::n°*	Sasaki:	hu:::n °hu:n hu:n hu:n hu::n°
24	Miles:	*.hh ano::: amerika no::, chichioya kan*	Miles:	.hh we::ll concerning the image of
25		*ni zuite::: donoyooni: okangae deshoo*		American fathers, what do you
26		*ka?*		think?
27		(1.2)		(1.2)
28	Sasaki:	*u::nto amerikajin no↑ (0.6) chichioya-*	Sasaki:	hmm American↑ (0.6) father-
29		(0.5)		(0.5)
30	Miles:	[*ni kan-*	Miles:	[about-
31	Oakland:	[*ni tsuite*	Oakland:	[concerning
32	Miles:	*ni tsuite wa:::*	Miles:	concerning that
33		(0.5)		(0.5)
34	Oakland:	*doo kangaete masu ka?*	Oakland:	What do you think?
35	Sasaki:	*ha::::::::*	Sasaki:	ha::::::::
36		(1.2)		(1.2)
37	Yamada:	°*amerika- amerika no chichioya ga*	Yamada:	°America- I (still) don't know what
38		*dooyuu mono na no ka boku wa (mada)*		American fathers are like,
39		*wakarannai n de::,*°=		so::,°=
40	Miles:	*=u:::n*	Miles:	=u:::n
41	Yamada:	*doo deshoo ka? nihon to kurabete mite.*	Yamada:	What d'you think? Compared to Japan?

preceding context, but the change of the tense form and the elliptic question appear to have confused the students. Miles's repair initiation in line 11 triggered Sasaki's reiteration of the question in lines 12–13. Miles then answered the question, adding a few humorous comments to the answer, namely, that he was sleeping when his father was crying and that it was his mother's job to look after his father. These comments of Miles invited the participants' laughter. As is apparent, this segment in Excerpt 2 presents a rather different organization and participation structure than the segment in Excerpt 1 observed earlier. The occurrence of the spontaneous assessment happened to break the routine of questions and answers at this moment.

The importance of the use of the third position turns, in particular, of assessments, has been addressed in Ohta's (1999, 2001) recent studies of Japanese language classrooms as well. Her studies, which focus on lower level language courses, illustrate how little students participate in initial or follow-up turns in teacher-fronted settings (97 percent of follow-up turns are taken

by teachers and only 3 percent of them are taken by students). On the other hand, her analysis of pair activities proves that they provide students with the opportunity to produce portions of interactional routines, including the use of assessments and the display of alignment, in which they have rarely participated in teacher-fronted discourse. Further, her longitudinal observation of a student engaging in pair activities demonstrates the increase of the frequency and variety of the student's use of assessments.

The current data, which consist of a small group activity in an upper level course, however, indicate that the students participating in this activity did not produce assessments as often as they could have. Various reasons can be offered as to why this particular interaction turned out to be the way it is. For instance, one may wonder if the students' competence is a possible cause of this sort of performance. That is, one may speculate that the students in the current data are not used to, or not capable of that sort of practice, or that they have not been explicitly instructed in the importance of assessments as Ohta's subjects had. However, this speculation cannot be fully warranted by the data in hand. In fact, the portion of the interaction we have just reviewed in this section suggests that Oakland does offer a spontaneous assessment on occasion, although the number of occurrences is very limited. Another approach to the question of what might have caused the interaction to develop in this particular manner is to review how this activity was situated in a larger context of classroom interaction and see if we can identify to what features of the context the participants seem to be showing their orientation. Pursuing this latter approach, the following section reviews the interaction between Oakland and Miles that took place when they were planning for this meeting with the native speakers.

5. PRE-TASK PLANNING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE ON-GOING DEVELOPMENT OF TALK

As mentioned in the earlier section, in the week before the meeting with the native speakers, the students were provided with the guidelines that outlined the overall content of discussion. The students were also offered an opportunity to engage in pre-task planning. The instructor considered that the planning would push students to express more complex ideas and reduce cognitive load during the actual engagement in the task (cf. Skehan 1996).

During the pre-task planning, the students went over the written instructions, which required them to (1) talk about what they learned in the previous class, (2) ask the native speakers about their father, and (3) tell the native speakers about their own father. Most students in the course reacted to the linear order of these requirements and focused on what information to convey or obtain rather than how to carry on a natural, coherent interaction while accomplishing the assignments. This orientation towards the information transfer was demonstrated by the ways in which the students developed their interaction during their meeting with the native

speakers. Excerpt 1, for instance, demonstrates that the students were attending to the second part of the instructions, asking a series of questions regarding the native speakers' fathers. These questions, with no explicit link between one question and the next and no elaborate assessment on the answers offered, still enabled the students to gather the information to compose their post-task report, but as discussed in the previous section, they ended up creating the appearance of a structured interview.

The interaction between Oakland and Miles during the pre-task planning further illustrates the influence of the task instruction upon the realization of the talk-in-interaction during the actual meeting with the native speakers and the students' differentiated reactions to the instruction. As they planned for the meeting according to the sequence of the instructions, they considered first how to explain their previous study of the topic. Then, they considered what sorts of questions they could ask the native speakers regarding their fathers, and then they moved on to the third item, talking about their own fathers. Considering the sequential development of talk to be generated by this task, the first item, the explanation of their previous study, serves as a pre-sequence accounting for the subsequent questioning in the second item (cf. Schegloff 1980). Thus, the first item and the second item involve sequence-initiating actions. That is, the students will be the ones who initiate first pair parts of adjacency pairs. However, the accomplishment of the third item involves more than mere initiation of a telling. That is, in order to do what the third item suggests, at some moment in the interaction, the students needed to stop asking the native speakers about their experiences and opinions and start telling the native speakers about their own stories about their fathers. As discussed in the previous section, Oakland's spontaneous assessment triggered the native speaker's question soliciting the students' telling of their own experience. In another group, however, the students ended up initiating their telling of their relationship with parents out of the blue, as if the classroom discussion suddenly turned into a confession within a sequence of therapeutic talk.

CA literature (cf. Goodwin 1984; Jefferson 1978; Sacks 1974, 1978) documents that in ordinary conversation, a prospective teller tends not to suddenly initiate a telling, but that he or she identifies a moment when the telling becomes relevant and coherent in the on-going development of talk. He or she may pre-announce the nature of telling and wait for their co-participants' alignment as story-recipients, or may be requested to initiate a telling by prospective recipients, as happened in the segment discussed in the previous section. It is regarding this procedural complexity in initiating a telling that Miles expressed his concern during the pre-task planning. Excerpt 3 demonstrates the segment in which the two students discussed their planning for the third requirement.

In lines 1 through 8, Oakland read aloud the third item in the instruction. During the 5.5 second pause in line 11, Miles read the instruction again in silence, following it with his pen. During the 7.5 second pause in line 13, both

Excerpt 3: Planning Stage

1	Oakland:	*sono ato wa::: ano:::* (1.0) *jibun no*	Oakland: after that we::ll (1.0) please talk
2		*otoosan wa don:na hito ka:: hanashite*	about what our own fathers are
3		*kudasai.*	like.
4		(1.8)	(1.8)
5		*jibun ni totte:: otoosan wa donna sonzai*	what kind of relationship he had with
6		*ka:,*	you
7		(0.9)	(0.9)
8		*hanashite kudasai.*	please talk about it
9		(1.2)	(1.2)
10	Miles:	*u:::n*	Miles: u:::n
11		(5.5)	(5.5)
12	Miles:	*aa::: okay.*	Miles: aa::: okay.
13		(7.5)	(7.5)
14	Oakland:	*soo::* (0.6) *moshika shitara: nani jibun*	Oakland: so:: (0.6) it could be about what
15		*ga:: ano:* (1.8) *baransu ga totteiru ka*	whether or not we:ll (1.8) we think we
16		*dooka::*	are balanced
17		(1.3)	(1.3)
18	Miles:	[*u:::n*	Miles: [u:::n
19	Oakland:	[*ano::: chanto:: ryooshin kara::: (to)*	Oakland: [if uh:::m we've properly received love
20		*aijoo o:*	from our parents
21		(2.3)	(2.3)
22	Miles:	*soshite* [( )	Miles: and then [( )
23	Oakland:	[*moratta ka dooka:.*	Oakland: [if we received it
24		(0.8)	(0.8)
25		*sore mo ano hanashi shinakereba*	I think uhm we need to talk about that,
26		*naranai to omou.*	too.
27		(1.0)	(1.0)
28		*sore ni tsuite.*	about that.
29		(1.2)	(1.2)
30	Miles:	*dakedo gesuto wa: ano::* (0.8) *bokura*	Miles: But what if our guests uhm (0.8) if they
31		*no:: ko- (0.8) ryooshin ni tsuite*	don't ask us-(0.8) about our parents if
32		*kikanak- kereba:::* (1.4) *doo suru?*	that's the case (1.4) what shall we do?
33		(0.8)	(0.8)
34		*setsumee-* (0.3) *shite mo::?*	even if we (0.3) explain
35		(3.2)	(3.2)
36	Miles:	*ne, sanban wa ne:, (0.8) jibun no*	Miles: y'know about number three,(0.8) own
37		*otoosan?*	father?
38		(0.5)	(0.5)
39		*wa donna hito?*	what kind of person?
40		(0.8)	(0.8)
41		*dakedo ne, >sore wa< Oakland san to*	but, >that's< about your father and my
42		*boku no: otoosan desho?*	father, right?
43		(0.6)	(0.6)
44		*da(h)ka(h)ra gesuto wa sono koto ni*	so(h):: if the guests do not ask us
45		*tsuite: kikana- kikitaku nakereba: doo*	about that topic, then what should we
46		*suru?*	do?
47		(1.0)	(1.0)
48	Oakland:	*.hhhh*	Oakland: .hhhh
49		(1.1)	(1.1)
50	Miles:	*sore wa ne::,*	Miles: that's uhm,
51		(2.3)	(2.3)
52		*wakaranai kedo::.*	I don't kno::w.
53		(2.3)	(2.3)
54	Oakland:	*maa soo dattara:: ano:: mochiron moo-*	Oakland: well if that's the case uh:m of course
55		(0.6)	then- (0.6)
56		*ippantekina::* (.) *setsumei toka:,*	general (.) explanation or
57		(0.8)	(0.8)
58		*eeto:: nihonjin to: amerikajin no:*	we::ll about Japanese a:nd American
59		*chichioya:* (1.6)	fathers (1.6)
60		*wa↑* (0.7) *dookashira?*	about them↑ (0.7) how's that?
61		(1.0)	(1.0)
62	Miles:	[*un.*	Miles: [un.

63	Oakland:	[*ippantekini::: ano::, setsumee*:: (1.0)	Oakland: [please explain uhm generally (1.0)
64		*shitekudasaimasen ka toka::, soo*	please explain, I think we could ask
65		*shitsumon kiitara ii to omou.*	them in that way.
66		(2.0)	(2.0)
67	Oakland:	*soretomo:: (.) amerika no: chichi wa:*	Oakland: or (.) American fathers
68		(1.0) *amerikajin no chichioya wa donna*	(1.0) what kind of people do you think
69		*hito to omotte imasu ka?*	American fathers?
70		(1.8)	(1.8)
71	Miles:	*aa::::*	Miles: oh::::
72		(0.8)	(0.8)
73	Oakland:	*sorekara ano:::*=	Oakland: and then uh:m=
74	Miles:	=*sono* [*ato::*	Miles: =after [tha:t
75	Oakland:	[*jibun kara::: maa nihonjin no:,*	Oakland: [from your perspective we::ll
76		*chichioya wa::, sooyuu hito o doo*	what do Japanese fathers think about
77		*omoimasu toka:.*	those people or something.

Oakland and Miles kept looking down at the instruction sheet, neither one offering a proposal as to how to accomplish this requirement.

In lines 14 through 28, Oakland suggested that they should mention if they consider themselves to be well-balanced individuals and if they had received sufficient affection from their parents. These suggestions relate to the text they had read in the prior class. The text includes the phrase, 'for well-balanced development as a human being, one must have both mother's love, which unconditionally embraces children, and father's love, which prays for children's growth while maintaining the strictness.' Thus, Oakland offered ideas for the accomplishment of the third requirement, demonstrating his concern with the determination of details of content that reflect their previous study of the subject matter.

On the other hand, in lines 30 through 32, Miles raised a question as to how they could initiate the telling if the guest speakers did not ask them about their parents. Oakland did not provide an immediate uptake to Miles, as demonstrated in the occurrence of pauses in lines 33 and 35. Miles then reiterated his concern in lines 36 through 46, confirming the understanding of the instruction first and repeating the earlier question. This time, Oakland produced a quiet but audible in-breath, which indicates at least his reception of Miles's talk. Without any further response from Oakland, Miles ceased from pursuing the issue and faded away from the discussion. The utterances in lines 50 and 52 were produced in a lower tone with a faint smile on his face.

In line 54, however, Oakland initiated his response to Miles, suggesting first that they ask the guest speakers to explain generally about Japanese and American fathers. In response to this solution offered by Oakland, Miles produced slight vertical head nods while looking down at the instruction sheet, but did not say anything to indicate his appreciation of this suggestion. In lines 67 through 69, Oakland modified the question he suggested earlier and recommended to ask, 'what kind of people do you think American fathers are.' This time, Miles responded with *aa::::,* which is considered to be a Japanese equivalent of the English 'change-of-state token' *oh* (Heritage 1984). Miles also moved his gaze up from the instruction sheet to Oakland as he

produced slight nods. This vocal and non-vocal conduct of Miles's demonstrated his better appreciation of Oakland's second suggestion compared to the first one.

The second question proposed by Oakland could open up an opportunity for the students to provide their own comments on American fathers in the third position after the native speakers' answer. Or the native speakers may return the same or a similar question, which will also allow them to initiate the telling as a natural course of action. Indeed, Miles appears to have started referring to such a possible course of next action when he initiated his talk in line 74, with *sono ato::* ('after tha:t'), although the utterance was terminated by the overlapping talk of Oakland's.

The segment shown in Excerpt 3 thus indicates Miles's awareness of difficulty in accomplishing or planning for a smooth entry into a telling, not knowing their co-participants' reaction. It also indicates that Oakland's suggestion of the solutions again involves a sequence-initiating action. The solution he suggested was to initiate a question that could possibly open up an opportunity for them to naturally launch into the telling or that could possibly trigger the native speakers' counter question. That is, what they can plan in advance is a list of sequence-initiating actions, but what they cannot fully anticipate is the contingent development of talk. The timing and appropriateness of the execution of the planned sequence-initiating actions needed to be determined with reference to the on-going, contingent development of the talk-in-interaction and to the situated actions, if they were to generate a conversation-like discourse. So in Excerpt 2, Miles initiated the planned question, 'what do you think of the image of American fathers,' after the segment where Oakland, for the first time, produced a spontaneous assessment and Sasaki responded with a counter question.

As discussed in the previous section, Miles answers Sasaki's question regarding the experience of seeing his father's tears with a bit of humor that triggered the others' laughter (lines 14 through 20). After this, Oakland, who expressed his amazement at the fact that Sasaki and Yamada had not seen their fathers' tears, also admitted that he had not seen his father's tears either (line 22). Here, Oakland provided only a short response, while he could have extended the response, elaborating on the relationship with his father. Subsequently, Sasaki produced the token *hu::n* several times, which appears to have minimally indicated her acknowledgment of the prior talk. By producing the token, she also appears to have passed up the opportunity to initiate a fully-fledged next turn that might regenerate the discussion (cf. Hayashi 1996; Iwasaki 1997). It is at this moment that Miles delivers the question that Oakland had suggested at the pre-task planning. Miles produced this question, applying not only the addressee honorifics or *desu/masu* form, but also the subject honorifics or respectful form, that is *okangae deshoo ka?* ('What do you think?').[11] His use of these honorifics also implies that this question is a well-prepared utterance rather than a spontaneous one. In sum, the role-shift contingently accomplished in response to Oakland's spon-

taneous production of an assessment had created a relevant context for the students to initiate talk about their fathers. However, the lack of the student's spontaneous extension of response to Sasaki's question seems to have occasioned the deployment of the pre-planned question regarding the Japanese co-participants' perception of American fathers.

The native speakers, however, did not immediately offer an answer to this question. After a short pause, Sasaki started to repeat the question, confirming her hearing and delaying her response at the same time. Miles and Oakland joined in the repetition of the earlier question (lines 30–32) and Oakland completed it in line 34. Sasaki again delayed her response by producing the vocalization *ha*::::::::, which suggests that she was having difficulty in offering an answer. After a short pause, then, Yamada provided an account for the absence of an immediate answer, referring to the lack of his knowledge about American fathers (lines 37–39). Further, Yamada produced a counter-question in line 41, asking the students what they thought about American fathers in comparison with Japanese. Thus, the students successfully managed this role shift by deploying the pre-planned strategy at a moment when its deployment appeared to become suitable in the ongoing development of the talk-in-interaction.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE OUTCOMES AND THE MICRO-ANALYTIC PROCESS

The previous section examined how the students reacted to the task guidelines as they prepared for the upcoming meeting. The guidelines suggested the overall content of discussion and the mutual exchange of their stories and perspectives during the meeting. The structures of talk during the meeting and the discussion during the pre-task planning revealed that the students tended to orient to the information transfer aspect of the task. The planning of the details of information to be conveyed or obtained may have allowed them to come up with more complex ideas and more accurate or sophisticated forms, as discussed by previous studies. However, the reliance on what they could plan, that is sequence-initiating actions, and the lack of acknowledgment of the contingency in the development of talk may have kept the students from generating a natural and coherent discussion-like interaction. During the pre-task planning, one student did indicate his concern with the coherent development of talk, namely, how to accomplish a smooth entry into a telling of one's own experience. The planned solution for this problem again involved a question, or a sequence-initiating action, which could possibly establish a sequential context in which their initiation of telling would be appropriate. The proper execution of these planned questions, however, still depended on the contingent development of talk and required the identification of moments at which the delivery of such questions became relevant. Thus, if the students were to accomplish the task not only as mere transfer of information but also as natural, coherent,

discussion, they needed to attend to the moment-by-moment development of talk and make their contribution relevant to the immediate sequential context. In the group including Oakland and Miles, the unplanned assessment spontaneously produced by Oakland contingently occasioned the native speaker's solicitation of the students' telling. Although this impromptu shift of roles was not fully utilized as an opportunity to deliver stories about the students' fathers, it was treated as an appropriate moment to execute a planned strategy for the same effect.

The examination of this episode raises several points of consideration regarding the implementation of this task in particular as well as task-based instruction in general. First, the case study leads us to reconsider our understanding of 'authentic' or 'natural' language. The meeting offered an opportunity for students to be in touch with real voices of the members of the society rather than just reading the descriptions of the society that were presented in the text. The language the students were exposed to may be considered authentic with regard to its forms (pronunciation, intonation, syntax and semantics heard) and its meaning (social and cultural information obtained), and consequently, the task may be considered successful. However, the structures of interaction generated in response to the task design did not always reflect what natural discussion or conversation would be like. The instruction and the pre-task planning tended to focus on the form and content of each sequence-initiating action and not on the contingent sequential development of talk. While the critique of traditional teacher-fronted instruction has motivated the field to introduce tasks such as the one examined in this study into language classrooms, task-based instruction still may not guarantee its capability for simulating real-life, non-institutional interaction as described by CA.

The review of the instructions, the pre-task planning and the resulting interaction directs us to the second point as to whether or not modified instruction can bring about different results. The instructions and the students' reaction to them appear to reflect what has traditionally been the focus of language pedagogy and second language acquisition research, namely, negotiation of meaning, often defined by the transfer of information (cf. Firth and Wagner 1997). The focus on the information transfer aspect of communication has coexisted with the tendency for applied linguists as well as language instructors to lump together various kinds of speech exchange systems under the rubric of face-to-face interaction. By raising the awareness of the sequential organization of talk and explicitly teaching the procedures that they can follow to accomplish certain social actions, the instructors may be able to raise the probability that interaction during group work becomes coherent and natural. However, as discussed in the previous section, what the conversationalists can plan in advance is restricted, and they need to be able to attend to the moment-by-moment development to activate their planned utterances. The awareness of the contingent nature of talk and the flexibility to adjust, diverge from, or even abandon the plan, thus, may also facilitate a

more natural, coherent interaction. Indeed, ironically, the interaction between Oakland and Miles during the pre-task planning appears to exhibit a more discussion-like mutual exchange of ideas. On that occasion, they were tackling their real life problem, without any pre-established plan to carry on the discussion. Another difference between the two occasions is that in the pre-task planning, both Oakland and Miles had equal access to the instructions and shared a prior history of study, whereas the native speakers who participated in the meeting did not share the same instructions or background of the task. The differentiated knowledge also seems to have affected the lack of initiative on the part of the native speakers. Had the native speakers shared the same instructions and post-task goals, the resulting interaction might have taken a different shape, although the balance between the plan and the contingency might still have been an issue even in such an arrangement.

The third issue concerns the assumption of students' abilities, based on which the instruction is designed. As mentioned earlier, the pre-task planning directed by the guidelines was incorporated because it was considered to increase the complexity of content and forms of the students' utterances and to reduce the cognitive load of the students during the meeting. This reflects the instructor's assumption of the students' limited linguistic competence. Observing only *zadankai* in Excerpt 1, the instructor may regretfully reconfirm the assumption of students' deficiency, namely, that the students at this level still cannot carry on a discussion-like interaction. However, what students do on one occasion does not always exemplify what they do in other situations or what they are capable of doing. In fact, the interaction during the pre-task planning demonstrates that the same students did actually discuss the strategies for the upcoming meeting. Miles's anticipation of a possible problem they may encounter in switching the roles of questioner and respondent and Oakland's proposal of a solution to this problem stem from the understanding of how adjacency pairs work in organizing interaction. Thus, the students demonstrated that they possessed the understanding of these organizational units of talk as a part of their competence. Further, in the actual meeting with the native speakers, the students undertook this planned strategy, by judging the appropriate moment for its implementation. This example prompts further inquiry concerning potentially universal interactional resources which learners may bring with them to the learning of a second or foreign language. While instructors design tasks and consider necessary guidelines and assistance reflecting on their assumption of what students can and cannot do, there may be times when such good intentions turn out to restrict the students' performance to the level that they assumed. Further, the sample of student performance that instructors can observe and use for their judgment of the students' competence unfortunately tends to be restricted, and this fact, too, would influence the design of instruction. The two aspirations, that is to conform to the definition of the classroom as a site of official pedagogy and to design instructions, on the one hand, and to create a task that houses a

natural, real life interaction, on the other, may thus present an inevitable dilemma to instructors.[12]

This study applied the CA perspectives in order to analyze the structures of talk-in-interaction generated by the task design and to understand the significance of the students' concerns and proposals expressed during the pre-task planning. The methodology offers the techniques to explicate 'context-free' structures of talk that are utilized as a resource for organizing interaction in any setting, as well as 'context-specific' features of talk that manifest themselves as a noticeable pattern that differs from what has been reported about 'ordinary' conversation. The conversational procedures and the relevance of varying levels of contexts upon the procedures explicated by CA researchers provide rich resources for investigating further the issues described above.

An important point of consideration in the application of CA to classroom research is how to link the sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction CA offers and the needs and interests of educators. For some CA researchers, who are purely interested in describing and discovering how talk-in-interaction in general is constructed, classroom interaction can be considered just one of many kinds of data they happen to analyze (these studies are called 'straight ahead CA' by Heap (1997) and 'pure CA' by ten Have (1999)). While such studies advance our knowledge of human interaction in general and refine CA methods and findings, they may not offer satisfactory answers to educators' and education researchers' burning questions. On the other hand, the determination of research agendas and the constriction of interests prior to the examination of the data contradict the fundamental principles of CA. As is the case for many developments of interdisciplinary research, the bridging of the two fields—CA and classroom research—induces a legitimate tension. Heap addresses this issue and proposes the following:

> This difficulty should be thought of as a productive tension. Out of all the events captured on tape, applied CA committed to education tells us what to look at. Straight ahead CA tells us how to look, and what we must do in order to show how the features of institutions, like education, are produced *in situ*, in real time, interactionally. The future of conversation analysis in education will depend on how well the tension between interests of straight-ahead CA and the commitments of applied CA are managed, explored, and made productive (Heap 1997: 225).

During the process of analyzing the current episode and writing this report for an audience largely consisting of applied linguists and classroom researchers, the tension discussed by Heap has constantly presented itself. In this study, my initial approach to the database was that of straight ahead CA, namely, unmotivated and yet meticulous observation of the ways in which the participants construct talk-in-interaction. The observation then led to the discovery of the peculiar pattern of exchange among the students and

the native speakers at the particular meeting. The peculiarity, or the deviation, from what has been considered the structures of naturally occurring conversation observed in the interaction prompted my search for reasons for the deviation, and my reflection on some of the current discourse regarding language pedagogy and second language acquisition. CA perspectives and techniques continued to assist the further analysis while the applied linguistics literature shaped the discussion of the findings and the implications that can be drawn from this case. Thus, the resulting study can be classified as an example of applied CA. Finding the appropriate blend of the two disciplines, however, was not an easy task. For instance, the decision as to how much contextual information to foreground in the presentation of the study was precarious. While the CA tradition tends not to refer to contextual information that was not made relevant through talk by the participants, some of this information becomes crucial to situate the analysis in the context of classroom research. But still it is important to keep in mind that the decision as to which contextual information is relevant at a particular moment for a particular practice is not up to the researcher but up to the participants. The pursuit of applied CA should not lean too much towards an interest in the preexisting issues, leaving the spirit of straight ahead CA behind. The constant reminder of the two different motivations seems necessary for producing meaningful and unique contributions to the field.

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

[	the beginning of overlapped talk
(0.0)	length of silence
(.)	micro-pause
underlining	relatively high pitch
::	noticeably lengthened sound
CAPS	relatively high volume
-	sudden cut-off of the current sound
=	'latched' utterances
?	rising intonation
.	falling intonation
,	continuing intonation

(words)	unintelligible stretch
((words))	comments by the transcriber
hh	audible outbreath
.hh	audible inbreath
(hh)	laughter within a word
° °	quieter than the surrounding talk
> <	increase in tempo

NOTES

1 The data involve three different Third Year or Fourth Year Japanese courses. The number of students in each class varied from seven to sixteen. The majority of the students were native speakers of English, although there were some native speakers of Asian or other European languages. The students' backgrounds in previous study of Japanese also varied, as is usually the case for upper level courses in most Japanese programs in the USA. Some of them have just completed roughly 300 hours of instruction at the university without any experience of study abroad, while others had spent some time in Japan as an exchange student or as a teacher of English and returned to the USA to continue studying Japanese. Those students who had studied Japanese elsewhere were placed in an appropriate course, based on the results of a written test and an oral interview test.

2 The instructors for these courses were all native speakers of Japanese. They were teaching assistants with a few years of teaching experience. At the time of recording, they were studying second language acquisition and language pedagogy.

3 The information concerning the course objectives and the curriculum design was gathered through the course material (syllabus and handouts) and personal communication with the instructors.

4 *Daijirin* is published by Sanseido, Tokyo, Japan. The definition quoted here was acquired through the internet at the following address: http://dictionary.goo.ne.jo/cgi-bin/jp-top.cgi/.

5 Oakland and Miles had been studying Japanese for several years and both of them had participated in a study abroad program at different stages of their learning.

6 Small group work was videotaped by a research assistant who was holding a camera at a distance where he could capture the vocal and non-vocal behaviors of all the participants. To ensure the audio quality, a small wireless microphone was placed in the center of the group. As the class was frequently videotaped through the semester with the instructor's and the students' consent, the students became used to the presence of the microphone and camera. Out of the three groups which participated in this event, the present group was chosen for close analysis because while all three groups were videotaped during the meeting with native speakers, the taping of the pre-task planning was limited to Oakland and Miles.

7 Excerpts in this paper include the original Japanese transcribed according to the CA conventions listed in Appendix on the left and the approximate English translation of the original Japanese on the right. Caution is needed in examining the English translation, as it may not always accurately represent what went on in the actual interaction, especially in terms of the temporal development of talk. For instance, due to the difference in the word order between the two languages, the timing of overlap initiations or intra-turn pauses cannot be well described in the corresponding English translation. When such a difference becomes critical to the analysis, I include further explanation in the main text.

8 In the literature on classroom discourse analysis, this pattern is often referred to as IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) or IRF (initiation-response-follow-up) exchanges (Mehan 1979; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). While studies of IRE or IRF typically address the exchange between teachers and students, in particular in a teacher-

controlled classroom, this study focuses on the question-answer-assessment sequence, which is also prevalent in non-instructional, mundane interaction.

9 Of course, it is possible for a participant to shift the direction of talk right after a question, rather than offering an answer to the question. This may result in creating what is called an 'insertion sequence' (Schegloff 1972). However, this lack of answer or the occurrence of an action other than an answer would be interpreted with reference to the normative occurrence of an answer.

10 One may wonder if Oakland's choice of these styles coincides with that of native speakers. However, the fact that he used the plain form only at this moment and that the turn was initiated with the exclamatory vocalization, *uha a*, seems to indicate the spontaneity of his response associated with the use of plain form.

11 The plain form of the verb is *kangaeru* ('to think'). The speaker can produce the question by using this plain form and simple rising intonation, applying the addressee honorifics as in *kangaemasu ka* or *kangaete imasu ka*, or applying both the addressee honorifics and the subject honorifics as Miles did in this turn.

12 Schegloff makes a similar point in his recent interview with Wong and Olsher (2000).

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