Conversation Management in Interactions Between Beginning Japanese Students and Japanese Native Speakers at Visitor Sessions

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ビジターセッションでの初級日本語学習者と日本語母語話者の会話におけるインターアクション

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Abstract:

It is difficult for foreign language students to find opportunities to interact with the target language outside of the classroom. Many research studies state that "conversations" in classroom settings have unique characteristics that differentiate them from "normal" daily conversations. Thus, occasionally some native speakers of the target language are invited to the classroom to have "conversations" with students there. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether visitor sessions provide the opportunity for students to manage conversations in practical interaction with native Japanese speakers. The results of this research study show that visitor sessions can provide students with practical interaction, an environment that can rarely be provided by teachers in regular classroom sessions where the teachers control conversations and interactions. The students tried to take turns to initiate conversations and negotiate their interaction with the Japanese visitors. However, the results reveal that the students need to learn several components of conversation in order to manage their Japanese interactions successfully. The conversations during the visitor sessions were dialogical but not harmonious and student turn-taking was not appropriate. It is obvious that students need to learn not only how to say what they want but also how to listen in order to contribute to a realistic harmonious conversation.

1. Introduction

It is difficult for foreign language students to find opportunities to interact with the target language outside of the classroom. This holds true for students studying Japanese where it is not used in daily life; quite often, they do not have opportunities to interact with native Japanese speakers. For these students, contact

with native speakers (NS) is mainly in the classroom, and their teachers may be the only native Japanese speaker with whom they interact. Neustupny (1995) states that students whose study is classroom-based can create sentences in the classroom, but can barely speak Japanese in practical interactions with Japanese speakers. This is because such students do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in "conversations" in practical situations where each participant contributes to a current of unplanned interaction (Saito, 2000).

Many research studies state that "conversations" in classroom settings have unique characteristics that differentiate them from "normal" daily conversations. According to Muraoka (1999), interactions in the classroom are generally transactional in nature with the purpose of conveying actual messages. Teachers play the role of conversation managers, controlling the topic and purpose of classroom interactions. They often use "teacher talk," as defined by Muraoka (1999), and direct students to take turns (Kaplan, 1997). In instances where the students' oral proficiency is low, Muraoka (1999) affirms that teachers are more controlling of the students' participation in the target language. Kaplan also states that in conversation, "any party may choose to speak next, but in the classroom, only the teacher can self-select" (p.154), which emphasizes the teacher's role as a conversation manager.

Another unique characteristic of classroom interactions is that they are "action interactions," or conversations where the purpose of the conversation is the conversation itself (Muraoka, 1999). In order to accomplish this purpose, the "Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)" exchange is used by teachers (Muraoka, 1999), and many of the initiations used in the classroom are display questions (Muraoka, 1999; Long & Sato, 1983). Teachers initiate and control the units of exchange and student utterances; Saito calls the teacher's control "classroom pivotal interaction management." That is, in "teaching exchanges" (Muraoka 1999), teachers usually control the topics and interactions, and students are expected to utter what the teachers have planned for them. This type of interaction does not exist in non-classroom, "normal" daily interactions among NS.

Another relationship exists between teachers and students that complicates classroom interactions—the host and guest relationship—when teachers are native speakers of the target language. According to Fan (1994), when NS interact with non-native speakers (NNS), they become hosts and guests respectively, with the NS managing the conversation as a host. When a foreign language teacher is a native speaker of the target language, both the teacher-student relationship and NS-NNS host-guest relationship exist simultaneously in the classroom, and both of these relationships reinforces the other. As a result, teachers are expected to be responsible for managing conversation in the foreign language classroom and keeping students under their control. These two relationships make the classroom conversations and exchanges distinct from daily conversations and exchanges.

In order to bridge the gap between the two types of conversations and exchanges, teachers can provide practical situations to learners in the classroom and have conversations to make the class more practical and useful. According to Ozaki and Neustupny (1986), it is necessary to provide not only classroom activities to practice the target language, but also practical situations where students can realistically use the language. Kaplan (1997) and Cadoreth and Harris (1998) also point out the importance for students to learn to cope with unpredictable exchanges in conversation which occur in normal, non-classroom interactions. If students have negotiated interaction in practical situations, their language acquisition may be enhanced (Kaplan, 1997; Cadoreth & Harris, 1998).

Neustupny (1995) found that when a new Japanese teaching assistant arrived at Monash University in Australia, the students explained things about their town in detail to the JTA and rephrased their explanations as needed. In other words, when the students were expected to play the role of hosts in a normal, daily situation, the students took on the role of conversation managers in Japanese. When learners are required to play the role of hosts in a practical situation with a NS, they have opportunities to self-select for turns, change topics by themselves, and negotiate unpredictable exchanges in conversations.

2. Methods and Procedures

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not visitor sessions provide the opportunity for students to manage conversations in practical interactions with native Japanese speakers. In order to identify how the students interacted with the Japanese visitors, the following questions were utilized: (1) how often did the students take turns, (2) what was the manner in which the students took turns, (3) did the students initiate the changing of topics.

2.2 Participants

The subjects of this study were twenty-six students in two second-year Japanese classes and three Japanese visitors who voluntarily participated in the visitor sessions. The visitors were invited to the class as cultural informants once every two weeks. The students and the Japanese visitors were divided into three groups, and were given a topic of discussion by a teacher before each session.[1] Since the students had invited the Japanese guests to attend their class, the students were expected to behave as hosts during the groups' conversations.

Most students did not have contact with a Japanese NS other than their Japanese teachers outside of the classroom. The students' oral proficiency levels were novice-high or intermediate-low. The three visitors were native Japanese speakers: one Japanese male graduate student of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and two female teachers at a Japanese supplementary school. The visitors were asked to speak English as little as possible in the classroom. The teacher was not supposed to participate in the conversations, but he did participate occasionally. His participation may have affected the results of the study. A Japanese researcher also participated during the conversations of the fifth session.

2.3 Methods and Data Collection

The visitor sessions were conducted at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville during the 2000 fall semester. The visitor sessions were held for fifty

minutes once every two weeks for a total of six class meetings with the visitors during the semester. The teacher divided the students and the three visitors into three groups and gave them discussion topics beforehand. The topics included information about food, hometowns, sports, customs, schools, and an introduction. The topics were selected from the textbook that was used in regular class sessions, *Nakama 1*. For example, in the customs and schools sessions, the instructor showed several brief videos about the topic, and the main discussion turned to the differences and similarities between America and Japan. Three sessions were selected to be audio taped for analysis so that each group analyzed would be interacting with a different Japanese visitor. Eight focus students (S1-S8) were randomly chosen from the twenty-six students in the three group sessions. Only student S4 participated in both the third and fifth sessions.

After the first and second sessions, the researcher interviewed the Japanese visitors for twenty to thirty minutes in order to understand what the Japanese visitors thought of the students as hosts. Based on the first and second interviews plus observation notes, the researcher gave feedback to the teacher. The teacher then reminded the students that they were hosts in the visitor sessions. In addition, the visitors were reminded that they were not expected to behave as teachers but rather as ordinary native Japanese speakers.[2]

Table 1: Topics and Participants in the Recorded Sessions

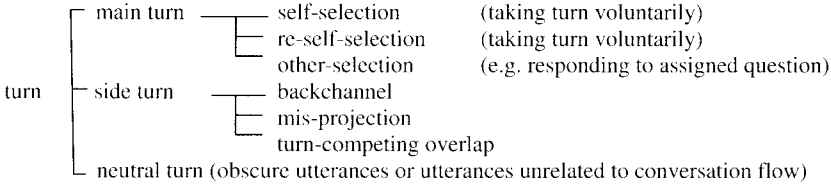
Session	Topics	Group participants	Notes
3	Sports	Japanese visitor 1 Students 4 (a teacher joined partially)	A student requested this topic
5	Japanese and American customs	Japanese visitor 1 Students 2 (a Japanese observer joined partially)	After watching a video
6	Japanese and American schools	Japanese visitor 1 Students 3	After watching a video

The recorded data from the group conversations was transcribed and analyzed (Table 1) as the basis for this study. Other data include interviews with the participants, observation notes of the researcher, and questionnaires filled out

by the students. The method used in this study is derived from Kim's (2000) and Sugito's (1987) studies, where each turn in the transcription is numbered in sequence in each session for analysis.

The definition of "turn" follows Kim's (2000), which is in turn based on the definitions by Sacks et al. (1974), Cappella (1979), and Sugito (1987). A turn is "the unit of conversation that begins when a participant in a conversation starts talking, and continues until another participant starts talking if there is a pause" (p.180). Kim (2000) classifies turns into subcategories as follows:

Chart 1: Turn Subcategory Classifications



A main turn is the only turn that can take the floor and control the current of a conversation. It has the substantive ability for turn-taking and changing topics. The main turn is divided into three subcategories depending on how a speaker takes a turn: voluntarily or involuntarily. Self-selection and re-self-selection are the turns that participants take voluntarily, whereas other selection is the turn that another participant directs to the speaker with a question or by addressing him by name. Side turns cannot take the floor; neither can a neutral turn. However, Kim mentions, that a side turn affects turn-taking indirectly because it is related to a main turn. Backchannels display the listener's agreement, understanding, and encouragement to the speaker.

In this study, the following subcategories have been adopted and modified from Kim's study. Re-self-selection is integrated into self-selection because both show that a speaker takes a turn voluntarily. Since no mis-projection or turn-competing overlaps appeared the data, these were excluded.

In contrast to Kim, Sugito (1987) does not categorize turns except to distinguish backchannels. He uses "turn" and "content" as simple units in his analysis of conversation among native Japanese speakers. In order to identify how participants interact in conversation, he examined three items:

(1) Types of interaction: interactions where two participants take turns (e.g. A-B-A-B-A-B . . .) or interactions where several participants take turns freely (e.g. A-B-C-A-D . . .). The type of interaction is identified by the rate of pairs of turns by the same speaker. For example, when turns #1-3, 5-7, 9-11 are A's turns and turns #2-4, 6-8, 10-12 are B's turns, the interaction occurred between two participants in an A-B-A-B pattern.

(2) Attitude of participants: the participants' attitude in their participation, active or passive, is identified by the number of backchannels. When the backchannel rate is high for one participant, that participant's attitude is passive. This is because of the characteristic of backchannels—backchannels cannot take the floor and only shows a listener's agreement and understanding.

(3) Offering topics: the participants who offered topics identified them by mentioning nouns first in the conversation. According to Sugito, a noun offered early in the conversation usually leads to a new topic.

As Kim (2000) and Sugito (1987) state, the participants' interactions can be described as "turn-taking," or the process of exchanging turns. "Turn" includes main turn, side turn, and neutral turn. However, "turn-taking" is the process of exchanging main turns as defined by Kim. Exchanging main turns implies that the participant takes the floor and affects the current and content of conversations. This research examines whether the visitor session can provide the opportunity for students to manage conversation. Therefore, it follows Kim's definition for "turn-taking" as well.

The data was analyzed as follows: (1) how often and for how long did the students take turns, including an analysis of the number of individual students' turns, the rate of pairs of turns by the same speaker, the number of student turns by category, the number of student self-selected turns by function, and the pattern

of students' turn-taking, and (2) did the students initiate changing topics, including an analysis of the number of times that nouns were first offered by students and the transition of topics by students.

3. Findings and Results

3.1 The Number of Student Turns

First, the data was analyzed to see how much the students participated in the conversations without considering content and length of turns. All turns were counted as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Turns (S: Student, J: Japanese visitor, T: Teacher, O: Observer)

Topic	Group turns	Turns by each participant			Turn percentage (%)
Sports	337	S1	66		
		S2	27		
		S3	59		
		S4	11	Total: 166	49.3
		J1		98	29.1
		T		73	21.6
Customs	252	S4	30		
		S5	94	Total: 124	49.2
		J2		102[a]	40.5
		O		26	10.3
School	236	S6	38		
		S7	61		
		S8	24		
		(SS)[b]	2	Total: 125	53.0
		J3		111	47.0
Total	825			S1-8 total: 412	49.9

[a] 27 out of 102 (27.5%) were backchannels.
[b] SS= S6, S7, and S8 greeted each other and offered a polite introductory question.

In each session, the students took one-half of all turns of the conversations and the Japanese visitors (or teacher or observer) took the other half. Among the students, however, the number of turns varied depending on the individuals within the group. Each group had one or two students who took the initiative and took more turns than the other students in the conversations: S1 and S3 in the session on

sports, S5 in the session on customs, and S7 in the session on schools. These initiative-taking students also offered subjects voluntarily (the issue of offering topics will be discussed later). The teacher's observations indicated that these students were not more talkative in the classroom compared to the other students; in particular, S7 seldom spoke up in the regular class sessions. According to the number of students' turns, those who were quiet in regular class sessions were not necessarily so in the visitor sessions.

3.2 Percentages of Turn-taking by Specific Speakers (Type of interactions)

Next, the percentage of turn-taking by specific speakers was calculated in order to identify the type of interaction (in this section, "interaction" means communication with two specific participants taking turns or with several participants exchanging information freely). According to the data, the percentage of the one-by-one turn-taking pattern (A-B-A-B) was 65.3% overall.

Table 3: Percentage of Turn-taking by Specific Speakers

Topic	Number of pairs of all turn-taking	Number of pairs of turns by specific speakers	Percentage of pairs of turns by specific speakers (%)
Sports	168[a]	114	67.9
Customs	126	80	63.5
School	118	75	63.6
Total	412	269	65.3

[a] The last utterance was not a pair.

The session on sports resulted in the highest percentage of turns by specific speakers. According to the transcript of this session, one student and the Japanese visitor took most of the turns regardless of who initially mentioned the topic. While one student and the Japanese visitor were talking about the topic or subtopic, the other students did not participate.

Table 4 shows an example of this interaction. A student, S4, offers a subtopic, boxing, with turn #100, and J1 and S3 take over the conversation and continue to talk about boxing during turn #101-112. Another student, S5, offers a

different topic, hockey, on turn #113. However, student S5 does not continue to talk about the new topic that they just introduced; instead, S2 and J1 take over the conversation and continue to converse about hockey during turn #113-124.

Table 4: Turn-taking in the Session on Sports (from turn #98 to #121)

Subtopics	Boxing (from #100-112)				Hockey (from #113-121)			
S4	98-100							
S5					111-113			
S2							115-117	119-121
S3		102-104	106-108		110-112			
J1	99-101	103-105	107-109			114-116		118-120

These are examples of interactions where two specific participants take turns—in these two cases, the patterns are S3-J1-S3-J1 and S2-J1-S2-J1. The same tendency for two participants to dominate the conversation was observed in the other two sessions; this pattern seems to be the key type of interaction where the Japanese visitor is the center of the conversation. This type of pattern is similar to a typical classroom interaction where the teacher is the center of the conversation, but a key difference during the visitor sessions was that each group had students who were able to initiate the conversations.

3.4 Number of Student Turns by Category

Table 5: Number of the Students' Turns by Categories

Session	Main turn			Side turn (Backchannels)	Neutral turn	Total
	Self-selection	Other-selection	Subtotal			
Sports	75 (46.0%)	68 (41.7%)	143 (87.7%)	8 (4.9%)	12 (7.4%)	163
Customs	52 (42.0%)	35 (28.2%)	87 (70.2%)	11 (8.9%)	26 (20.9%)	124
School	38 (30.4%)	55 (44%)	93 (74.4%)	6 (4.8%)	26 (20.8%)	125
Total	165 (40.1%)	158 (38.3%)	323 (78.4%)	25 (6.1%)	64 (15.5%)	412

The students' turns were divided into three main categories with two sub-categories following Kim's classification (Chart 1) in order to identify how the students participated in the interactions (Table 5). In addition, the number of the students' self-selected turns was broken down by function (Table 6).

Table 6: Functions of Students' Self-selection Turns

Functions		Sports	Customs	School	Total	
Question	Questions about the topic	28	3	1	32	89
	Questions asking for a word the students wanted to say	7	4	6	17	
	Questions to confirm understanding of or repeat a question	20	12	8	40	
Statement	Utterances about the topic	20	32	20	72	76
	Words given that other students didn't know	0	1	3	4	
Self-selected turn total		75	52	38		165

3.4.1 Main Turn

Most of the students' turns were main turns (78.4%; see Table 5) in which the student took the floor and changed the current of the conversation (Kim 2000). In addition, almost half of the main turns taken by the students were self-selected. The number of self-selected turns indicates that the students voluntarily took turns to participate in the conversations, albeit at a modest rate.

The researchers were able to categorize the specific functions of self-selected turns into the following (see Table 6):

(1) Questions
   A) Questions about the topic
   B) Questions asking for a word that the students wanted to say
   C) Questions to confirm understanding of or repeat a question
(2) Statements
   A) Utterance about the topic
   B) Word given that other students did not know

Self-selected turns were almost evenly divided between questions and statements with 54% and 64%, respectively. The students took turns with questions in order to negotiate their interactions with the visitor and to initiate conversations. The number of questions asking for a word that the students wanted to say in Japanese (17; Example 1) and to confirm understanding of or repeat a question (40; Example 2) indicate that the students were negotiating their conversations. Under the Questions function, 67% of the turns (57 out of 89) were uttered in order to negotiate meanings about the language itself rather to discuss the topics.

<Example 1>
S7: "Geometry"は日本語でなんですか。
(What is "geometry" in Japanese?)
J3: きか? (Kika?)

<Example 2>
S4: もう一度いってください。すみません。
(Please say it again. Sorry to trouble you.)
J2: お豆腐、豆腐。 (Tofu, tofu.)
S4: 豆腐。はい。 (Tofu. I see.)

The session on sports had the greatest frequency of the students taking turns with questions, but they seldom took turns this way in the other sessions. In this session, students introduced subtopics with questions. One Japanese visitor (J1) answered most of their questions and asked questions in return (Example 3).

<Example 3>
S3:日本でボクシングがありますか。
(Do you have boxing in Japan?) *Question (Initiation)*
J1: あります。スポーツとして。ボクシングがあります。
(Yes, we do as a sport. We have boxing.) *Response*
S3: ほんと。 (Really?) *Backchannel*
ありますか。ほんとに。 (Do you? Really?)
Statement
J1: アメリカでもありますか。 (Do you have it in America?)
Question(Initiation)
S3: ん。あ、はい。 (What? Ah, Yes.) *Response*

In the sessions on customs and schools, the students' self-selected turns were primarily statements about the topics rather than questions. In the session on sports, there were not as many factual statements by participants about the topic because the topic tended towards a sharing of opinions such as various likes and dislikes about sports. On the other hand, the conversations during the sessions on customs and schools included factual information plus the participants' own thoughts and opinions because the participants had already acquired information about Japanese customs and schools from the videos shown in class. Usually these conversations consisted of the Japanese visitors asking the students about a broad topic and the students expressing their own opinions and experiences. For example, the students might be asked for their impressions of the video, or information about American customs and schools, and the students would offer their own opinions and experiences. The visitors would continue the conversation by asking questions or by making statements about the students' statements. This type of pattern is observable in Example 4 where the students already have information about the topic (why studying in Japanese schools is more difficult than in American schools) and voluntarily initiate statements while exchanging information with others in the group.

<Example 4>:

S6: 幾何はアメリカで。。。中学の。。。
(We . . . geometry in middle school in America.)
Initiation (statement)

J3: 中学で勉強しますか。
(Do you study [geometry] in middle school?)

S6: 中学で勉強します。 (We study [geometry] in middle school.)

J3: あ、はい、はい。わかりました。 (Oh, yes, yes. I see.)
[pause]

S7: 日本の学校はとても忙しいです。
(Schools in Japan are very busy.) *Initiation (statement)*

The other half of the main turns in the recorded conversations are other-selected turns rather than self-selected turns. These are turns in which another participant directs the speaker with a question or by addressing them by name.

Most student turns in a classroom session belong to this type, with the teacher directing turns. Other-selected turns in the visitor sessions were answers to the questions posed by the Japanese visitors. The Japanese visitors did not address the next speaker by name when asking their questions. However, the students understood who was being directed to respond in any turn because of the previous interactions where two specific participants were taking turns. It is very interesting that the teacher addressed each student by name and asked questions specifically to the student he named during his participation in the session on sports. This is a typical classroom interaction management technique that Saito (2000) discusses.

3.4.2 Backchannels

In contrast to the main turns, few of the students uttered backchannels. The average rate of the students' backchanneling was very low (6.1%). Along with the students' low rate of backchannels, the Japanese visitors' rates of backchannels were also low (J1 at 3.1%, J2 at 27.5%, and J3 at 11.7%) when compared to the backchannel rate in conversations between native Japanese speakers. According to Sugito (1987), a participant is actively involved in a conversation when the rate of backchanneling is low. However, it is possible that the students did not utter backchannels because they did not comprehend the previous statement or they had not yet acquired the skill of backchanneling. When the researcher interviewed the Japanese visitors after the first and second sessions, the visitors stated that they were puzzled because the students hardly uttered backchannels.[3] They were worried about whether or not the low backchannel rates in this research indicated the students' active participation in conversations.

The low backchannel rate also indicates the style of the conversation. Kim (2000) states that the difference in backchannel rate and main turn rate shows the difference between conversation styles; that is, whether the conversation style is dialogical (question and answer) or harmonious (conversation with backchanneling), with harmonious being the typical Japanese conversation style.

The rate of backchannels in conversations among native Japanese speakers is approximately 50%, taking into account individual differences (Sugito, 1987; Kim, 2000). According to Maynard's study (1986) on conversations among Japanese NS, when one participant is speaking actively, the rest of the participants in the conversation utter backchannels to avoid conflict and interact harmoniously. According to this interpretation of low backchannel rates and typical conversation styles, the conversations in these sessions tended to be dialogical conversations.

3.4.3 Patterns of Turn-taking by Students

In order to identify when the students took turns, the patterns of student turn-taking were analyzed. There were four types of student turn taking: (1) turn-taking after a pause and a change in subtopic (Appendix, Examples 5 and 6), (2) turn-taking after a pause with no change in subtopic (Appendix, Example 7), (3) turn-taking after backchanneling with no change in subtopic (Appendix, Example 8), and (4) turn-taking with a transition word at the beginning of a sentence (Appendix, Example 9).

Turn-taking is supposed to occur at the moment when a speaker finishes speaking (or a listener judges that a speaker has finished) and the listener becomes the speaker (Horiguchi, 1997). However, according to Komuro (1995), a speaker must show consideration to the listeners in turn-taking during conversations between native Japanese speakers (for example, by using the tag question *ne* or emphatic *yo*). The listeners then have to show consideration towards the speaker by backchanneling. The basic pattern is as follows (Komuro, 1995, p.55):

Chart 2: Basic Patterns of Japanese Turn-taking

Participant I:	content (a)
Any participant other than I:	(b)
Participant II:	content (c)

Utterances (a) and (c) are main turns with current content.
Utterance (b) is backchanneling, laughing, or using a transition word.
Participant II could utter (b) by him/herself and take a turn.

In the sessions observed for this research study, most of the students' turn-taking patterns in the conversations were Types (1) and (2). According to Komuro (1995), Types (1) and (2) are inappropriate patterns and Types (3) and (4) are acceptable. The data of this study reveals only four instances of turn-taking belonging to the appropriate patterns.

In the cases of inappropriate turn-taking (Type (1) in Example 5, Type (2) in Examples 6 and 7), the students took turns after a pause. Pauses occurred quite often in the visitor sessions for several reasons. As Example 5 shows, when the students could not understand a word or sentence in the Japanese visitor's utterance, they did not respond to it, thus creating a pause. After the pause, the students took a turn and changed the subject. However, the turn after the pause seemed awkward because the listener or student who took the turn did not show his/her consideration to the previous speaker via backchannel or similar method.

Even when the students seemed to understand the previous utterance, pauses frequently occurred and the flow of conversation was broken, as Examples 6 and 7 demonstrate. This might have been because the students needed time to think about what to say and how to phrase it in Japanese. Interviews confirmed that this was the case; one student said in her interview that it took time to think of what she wanted to say in Japanese, and another student mentioned that he gave up saying what he really wanted to say because his Japanese was not good enough to talk about an abstract idea in detail. It is difficult for elementary learners to listen to the target language (in this case, Japanese) and show consideration toward the speaker while thinking of what they want to say next. These results suggest that students need to have opportunities in practical settings in the classroom in order to experience normal conversations with unpredictable exchanges and acquire appropriate turn-taking skills.

3.4.4 Transition to Subtopics in Conversations

The final part of the data analysis examined the number of nouns that were first introduced by the students and the students' transitions to different

subtopics in order to determine if the students were initiating conversations (see Tables 7 and 8). Numerically, of the total number of nouns introduced in conversations, about half the nouns were introduced by the students and the other half were generated by the Japanese visitors (or the teacher/observer).

Table 7: Number of Nouns Introduced by the Students

Session	Total	Students	Number of nouns first introduced by students	Nouns repeated by other participants ( ) = Other users; T=teacher, O=Japanese observer
Sports	101	S1	18	supootsu (J, S3, S4, T), yakyuu (J, S2, T), ninki (J, T), yakyuu senshu (J) sumoo (J, S2), onna no hito (J, S2), sakkaa (S2, T), three ball (S4, T)
		S2	5	Orinpikku (J, S3, T), gymnastic/taisoo (J), tenisu (J), hockey (J), team (J)
		S3	21	Pro-wrestling (S4), boxing (J), hima (T), Domino's Pizza (T), banner/kanban (T), first place/ichiban (T), rowing (T), high school (T), Chattanooga (T), fishing/tsuri (J)
		S4	1	
		Session Total	45 (44.6%)	
Customs	66	S5	4	ongaku (J), McDonald's (J)
		S6	29	uchi (J, O), kutsu (J), Jane (J), voice/koe (J), hirugohan (J), sushi (S4, J), udon (J), 21sai (J), juusu (J), roommate (J), garage/gareeji (J), gate/mon (J, O)
		Session Total	33 (50.0%)	
School	51	S7	10	geometry/kika (J), chuugaku (J), pun (J), onigokko/tag (J), nin (J), nen/5nensei (J), benkoo (J), shiritsu (J)
		S8	12	recess/yasumi (J, S6, S8), monkey bar (J), hitori (J), sensee (J), kookoo (J)
		S9	4	homework/shukudai (J), ichi-ji (J), swing (J, S7)
		Session Total	26 (51.0%)	
Total	218		104 (47.7%)	

Some nouns initially introduced by the students were used by other participants and the conversation continued on the subtopic. The Japanese visitors' nouns fall

into this category; they used nouns already introduced in order to continue the conversations. Only seven nouns were repeated by the students in the conversations, and five of them were words from English, such as スポーツ (sports) and オリンピック (Olympics). The Japanese visitors uttered as many nouns as the students did during the conversations, but the students did not repeat many of these nouns. This might have been because the students had not yet learned most of the nouns and could not understand their meaning. In fact, in the questionnaire, more than half of the students answered that it was difficult to speak with the Japanese visitors because they did not have the vocabulary to carry on conversation. These results show that the Japanese visitors picked the nouns that the students introduced and continued the conversation on the subtopics while the students introduced subtopics but could not sustain the conversation.

Table 8: Transition to Subtopics of the Conversations

Topic	Transition of the subtopics and the person who offered the subtopics
Sports	favorite sports (S1), baseball (S1), Olympic (S3), popular baseball player (S1), sumo (S1), pro-wrestling (S3), baseball player (S1), boxing (S3), sports they do/did (J), hockey (S2), college sports (S1), football (S1), NASCAR (S3), popular teams (S2), women and sports (S1), soccer (T), Olympic (T), what S3 did (painting)(T), baseball (T), what S3 did (rowing)(T), rafting (T), fishing (S3)
Customs	shoes (S5), music in the video (S4), how to take off shoes (J), Jane's voice (S5), lunch (S5), how to sit (S4), how to fill a glass of beer (S5), age and drinking (S5), how to treat a guest at a meal (J), garage and gate (S5)
Schools	Impression of video (J), difference between American and Japanese school (J), homework (S8), recess (S7), number of teachers (S7), size of a class (S7), difference between American and Japanese schools (S7)

When the teacher joined the conversations, the transition to subtopics showed the typical characteristics of classroom discourse. During the period when the teacher joined the visitor sessions, the students never initiated subtopics (see the underlined transitions in Table 8). The number of nouns the teacher introduced was 12 (11.9%), but he controlled all subtopics in the conversations in which he participated. In addition, he assigned the next speaker by addressing the

student by name. These results suggest that it is difficult for both teachers and students to get out of the usual classroom role relationships.

4. Conclusion

The results of this research study show that visitor sessions can provide students with practical interaction, an environment that can rarely be provided by teachers in regular classroom sessions where the teachers control conversations and interactions. In the conversations during visitor sessions, the students tried to take turns to initiate conversations and negotiate their interaction with the Japanese visitors. They also introduced most of the subtopics. The visitor sessions were able to provide realistic situations where the speakers and listeners in the conversation experienced unpredictable exchanges. The students who participated in the sessions affirmed this with the following responses to the questionnaires: "We didn't have set things we were going to say during the project session," "We had an opportunity to speak and attempt alternative structure solutions to reinforce and or correct/be corrected [on] their ideas on different topics," "The visitors sessions involved more interaction," "The visitor sessions were more challenging because we had to initiate conversations on our own."

On the other hand, the results reveal that the students need to learn several components of conversation in order to manage their Japanese interactions successfully. The conversations during the visitor sessions were dialogical but not harmonious and student turn-taking was not appropriate. It is likely that their listening comprehension and vocabulary were not developed enough to create harmonious conversation. The students seldom uttered backchannels when they should have shown listener empathy to the speaker. It is obvious that students need to learn not only how to say what they want to say but also how to listen in order to contribute to a realistic harmonious conversation.

This research suggests the importance of providing realistic, practical situations for foreign language classes. It also suggests that teachers need to provide practice in the classroom in developing listening skills, improving

vocabulary, and learning backchanneling techniques in addition to practical interactions.

Notes

1. A male graduate teaching assistant conducted these sessions under the supervision of the Japanese professor for each class.
2. A limitation of this study was that two visitors were teachers and there was a concern that they might behave as teachers. It was difficult to find Japanese visitors in the area who could participate in all of the sessions.
3. A few students did not utter backchannels but showed non-verbal signs (i.e. laughing and nodding).

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Appendix: The Patterns of Turn-Taking by the Students

(shadowed area is a cue and □ box part is turn-taking)

(1) turn-taking after a pause and a change in subtopic

<Example 5>

S3: オリンピック、テニス、好きですか。
(You like Olympic tennis?)
J1: テニスはまだ見てません。（？？？）を見ました。
(I haven't watched tennis. I watched ???)
S3/S4: はい。 (I see.)
J1: あ、見ました？ (Did you see it?)
[pause]
□S3: 新しいオリンピック、水着、とてもおもしろいね。□
(The new swimsuit is very interesting.) *[Statement]*

<Example 6>

J1: オリンピックは見ません？ (Didn't you see the Olympics?)
S4: いいえ。 (NO.)
[S1 and S4 laugh]
[pause]
□S1: 日本で相撲が好きですか。□ (Is Sumo liked in Japan?)
[Question]

(2) turn-taking after a pause with no change in subtopic

<Example 7>

S5: あ、明日はすしと [pause] ごはんと [pause] あ、えどん。
(Well, I [like] sushi, rice, and edon)
J2: うどん？ ([you mean] udon noodles?)
S5: うどん。 (Udon noodles.)
J2: うどん。 (Udon noodles.)
S5: あ、あん。。。がおいしいです。
(Well, [udon noodles] is delicious.)
[pause]
□S4: あ、すし、[pause] ことがあります。□ (I have [eaten] sushi.)

(3) turn-taking after backchanneling with no change in subtopic

<Example 8>

S7: 私は小さい音楽、行きました。 (I went to a small music.)
J3: 小さい音楽ですか。学校ですか。
(Is it a small music or school?)
S7: はい、小さい。。。
An, elementary school . . .
(Yes, a small . . . Well, elementary school.)
S6: 小学校。 (Elementary school.)
J3: 小学校。 (Elementary school.)
S7: 小学校。 (Elementary school.)
J3: 小さい学校。そうですか。はい。 (A small school. I see.)
S6: わたしもそうでした。 (My school was also [small].)

(4) turn-taking with a transition word at the beginning of a sentence

<Example 9>: (Talking about fences and house gates in the US)

O: アメリカもフェンス。。。がある家も。。。あります。
(There are some houses with fences in America, too.)
S5: 。。。はい。。。 (Yes . . .)
。。。でも。。。家の前にフェンスが。。。ありません。
(. . . But . . . the fences are not in . . . front of the houses.)