Characteristics of NNS Talk in Oral Interview

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This study explores non-native speaker (NNS) interview discourse within the framework of conversation analysis. The data for the study consist of approximately 300 minutes of one-to-one interviews between intermediate/ advanced level college students and the instructor. The analysis focuses on characteristics of NNS discourse in terms of the following aspects: turn-taking strategies, code switching, and the use of discourse markers (DMs). These foci were chosen to display how NNSs with their limited fluency manage to interact with the interlocutor in talk-in-interaction. The findings demonstrate that in terms of turn-taking, NNSs show their own strategies in maintaining and ending their turn. When it comes to NNSs’ code switching, it is striking that it serves mainly to “mark” difficulties in finding expressions and to manage discourse, but not to “replace” English words they could not think of, which might be expected as the main motivation for code switching. Finally, in terms of NNSs’ use of DMs, they use discourse connectives such as but far more frequently than other DMs such as I mean. However, even in the case of discourse connectives, their use reveals some differences from that of NSs’.

I. INTRODUCTION

This study explores some characteristics of non-native speaker (NNS) discourse in oral interview data from a discourse-oriented perspective. Approaching NNS discourse or learner discourse so far has mainly been pursued from the perspective of second language acquisition

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(SLA) and it is only recently that researchers started to examine NNS discourse as a genre of discourse analysis (cf. Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Osher, 2002). The focus and methodology used in each research direction is quite different from each other.

In SLA research tradition, the examination of the learner's production is motivated to explain how second language is learned. What the researcher typically does for this goal is to collect the learner's language data mostly through some sort of elicitation with particular hypotheses in mind. NNS discourse data in many SLA studies, therefore, tend to be collected in experimental settings to prove certain hypotheses of the researcher's quantitatively.

One of discursive features in NNS discourse that has drawn SLA researchers' attention is the learner's negotiation for meaning in interaction. As Long asserts (1983, 1996), it is crucial for learners to learn how to negotiate for meaning by asking for the definition of an unfamiliar word or clarification questions in order to obtain modified input. Researchers (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1994; Pica 1988, 1994) have shown successfully that this ability can indeed help the learner to perform better in accomplishing given tasks. It is one of the cases among SLA studies that show how important it is for learners to acquire interactional and discursive features as well as linguistic ones. However, the studies mentioned above mainly dealt with how NNSs' acquisition of meaning negotiation skills affect their performance in experimental settings and failed to examine NNSs' negotiation and interaction process itself in a more spontaneous situation, using a more qualitative methodology.

Researchers who were interested in the latter part, i.e., the interaction process of NNS discourse itself (e.g., Firth 1996; Kasper 2001; Wagner, 1996; Wong, 2000a, 2000b) started to examine data differently. They mainly tried to explain how NSs and NNSs interact with each other in spontaneous talk-in-interaction and what some systematic patterns of NNSs' utterances in different types of discourse are. For example, Wong (2000b) illustrates how NNSs, whose native language is Chinese, raise "delayed" repair initiation as in the following examples:

(1) (Wong, 2000b, p. 250) (NS is a native speaker and Ju is Chinese)

NS: I dunno if you remember seeing her. Very pretty young woman.=
Ju: =Uh h[uh
NS: [She flew in specially.
Ju: Oh I see.
NS: [From Washington D.C. (.) to be with her mother on that special day.
Ju: Oh I see.=
NS: =and her grandson was here.
-> Ju: Uh huh.

(1.0)
Ju: Oh, grandson?
Ns: Right.
Ju: Yesterday?
Ns: Yeah.
Ju: Did I meet?

Han: So when are you going to ( ) Boston
Irene: tch *h I'm going to go: the last uh:: two week (0.3) of July

-> Han: uh huh
Irene: tch *h so:::

-> Han: Oh so you mean jus stay there for two weeks?
Irene: *h (0.2) Y-eah so that I c'n uh:: get a job [first [before I move back=
Han: [huh huh [uh huh
Irene: =here

In these examples, Wong shows how the NNSs consistently initiate repairs after they pass the first chance to do so (marked with the first arrow) and provide “delayed” repair initiators (marked with the second arrow). Through a collection of similar phenomena, Wong asserts that they are different from native speakers' repair initiation which is usually raised right after the trouble source and thereby “constructing their identities as interactants who are talkers and learners” (p. 261). As she suggests, this phenomenon can be attributed to the following reasons. That is, NNSs need more comprehension time and this phenomenon shows one of the ways in which they achieve it. It is also possible that NNSs may be more concerned about maintaining the flow of the conversation at first and try to hold the clarification request.

What this type of studies demonstrates is the need for describing and analyzing what is happening in NNS discourse systematically, which in and of itself is valuable as a genre of discourse studies and, at the same time, can contribute to the better understanding of NNSs' use of language.

Now, for the second type of research to examine data qualitatively, a different kind of methodology is needed and what many researchers adopted is a methodology called conversation analysis (hereafter, CA) (cf., Have, 1999; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Levinson, 1983; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Olsher, 2002). CA is a data-driven, micro-analytic, and empirical approach originally developed by a few ethnmethodologists in 1960s and 1970s. Conversation analysts refuse to be constrained by any previous theoretical assumptions. Instead, they emphasize detailed transcripts to start making
any observations and try to ask “Why this now?” to see how interlocutors themselves understand what is going on in the interaction. CA offers a set of several organizations, i.e., turn-taking organization, repair organization, sequence organization, openings and closings, etc., which basically serve as building blocks for the analysis and are used to explain how conversation is structured.

Regarding the use of CA to analyze NNS discourse data (cf., Wong & Olsher, 2000), Markee (2000) asserts that in the past SLA tradition, “the details of how learners actually deploy talk to learn on a moment-by-moment basis have largely been ignored” (p.3). This means that there are many aspects of NNS discourse that have not been drawn to proper attention yet. For example, concepts like communicative competence or interactional competence may be clearer and more concrete by looking at NNSs’ discourse and conversational practices such as turn-taking and repair. Markee makes it clear, however, that he does not propose that CA holds the key to formulating yet another theory of SLA. Rather, he claims that “CA can help refine insights into how the structure of conversation can be used by learners as a means of getting comprehended input and producing comprehended output” (p. 44).

Adopting his position and Schegloff et al. (2002), this paper as part of a larger on-going study will explore NNS interview data to describe and analyze how NNSs manage discourse in talk-in-interaction. More specifically, it will focus on the following three aspects of NNS discourse, which were observed to be most outstanding in the data: 1) how NNSs maintain and end their turns, i.e., how they manage turn-taking; 2) what NNSs’ code switching behavior reveals about their discourse management ability and 3) how NNSs use discourse markers. These foci were chosen since they seem to represent some interactional and discursive characteristics of NNS interview data.¹

As Kasper (1997) asserts, “there is (thus) a three-way dependency—theory shapes transcripts, transcripts shape results, the results shape theory” (p. 308). In adopting conversation analysis and its detailed transcribing method, researchers will be able to obtain different results, that is, being able to locate various detailed characteristics of NNS discourse that have not been revealed before, and also explain why they occur. I hope that by adopting CA as a methodology for this study, it will demonstrate some discourse-related characteristics of NNS discourse and the findings will help contribute to the better understanding of our learners in terms of their discourse, pragmatic, and strategic competence as part of their communicative competence.

¹ Due to the foci of the study mentioned here, other characteristics that may also deserve some attention are not going to be investigated in this study.
II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study are approximately 300 minutes of interviews of intermediate and advanced level college students at a university in Seoul. The levels of the students were divided based on the students' TEPS\(^2\) scores: Intermediate level students' TEPS scores were between 500 and 700 and advanced level students' scores were above 700. The interviews were conducted as part of a final exam of freshmen English courses called College English (CE) for intermediate level students and Advanced English (AE) for advanced level students. Both CE and AE courses were taught only in English throughout the whole semester and students' use of Korean was strongly prohibited in class.

The total number of the interviews transcribed for the study is 17 for the intermediate level and 10 for the advanced level. The participants for the intermediate level interviews include seven male students and ten female students. For the advanced level, five students were male and five students were female. The students' majors varied. Before the interviews, students were told that their interviews would be recorded for the grading and research purposes and it is possible that the recording affected the students' performance. The instructor who conducted the whole interviews was a fluent female non-native speaker. She had lived overseas for about eight years and it was her third semester to teach these courses.

Each interview in both CE and AE lasted about ten to fifteen minutes and had the same format. The following presents the organization of each interview:

1) Opening: The instructor asked two to three warm-up questions such as how the student's first semester in college was and what his/her plans for the summer vacation are.

2) Topic-related talk: Students were asked to select one of the cards the instructor had prepared for possible topics and then talked about it. The topics were taken from the textbook and students had had chances to discuss them in class. Each student answered two of such questions.

3) Closing: The instructor asked a few more questions such as which topic in the textbook was the most interesting one and which chapter was the hardest to understand. Then, the instructor moved on to show the subtotal of the student's grade to make sure it was accurate\(^3\) and finished the interview.

The data were all audio-taped and then transcribed, following CA transcription conventions

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\(^{2}\) TEPS is the Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University.

\(^{3}\) This last part was not transcribed since it was rather a mechanical process.
(cf., Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Also see Appendix). The analysis was conducted within the framework of conversation analysis. However, to see the overall patterns, frequency analysis was also conducted for code switching and NNSs’ use of discourse markers.

III. ANALYSIS

1. Characteristics of NNS Talk in Turn-taking Organization

When engaged in conversation, non-native speakers face several interactional tasks in terms of turn-taking management. That is, they have to know 1) how to initiate their turn properly without interrupting others, 2) how to maintain their turn when they want to continue to talk, and 3) how to “exit” their turn when they are finished with their turn or just want to leave their turn for some reason. Indeed, these tasks can be as challenging as other tasks such as being able to come up with proper expressions in the target language. However, they have not drawn as much attention as they deserve and few studies, if any, have dealt with these aspects before. This study, therefore, will address some of these issues and provide what NNSs actually do in these situations.

As for the task of how to initiate their turn in conversation, since the data are taken from interviews where the turn-taking is mostly controlled by the interviewer and the nonnative speaker is usually allotted a turn when asked a question, it is not much relevant to deal with it here. On the other hand, the issues of how to maintain a turn when the NNS wants to continue and how to end a turn are frequently observed in the data and we will examine them in this section. Before we start to look at such instances in the data, I will briefly introduce how CA explains the mechanism of turn-taking in native speaker conversation.

1) How to Maintain an Ongoing Turn

According to conversation analysts (i.e., Sacks, et al., 1974. For a more recent, comprehensive overview, see Ten Have, 1999; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Schegloff et al., 2002), there are four types (i.e., lexical, phrasal, clausal, and sentential types) of turn-constructional units (hereafter TCU) that consist of a turn. The speaker is initially entitled one TCU in his/her turn and when a TCU is possibly complete, a turn transition from one speaker to the next is relevant. In terms of turn-allocation, the current speaker may select a next

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4 There was only one instance when a NNS interviewee initiated a turn and asked a question to the instructor.
speaker or the other parties may self-select. If neither is the case, the current speaker may continue to talk.

It is also notable that in between the time when the speaker possibly completes his/her turn and before speaker-change occurs, "one beat of silence" is allowed and natural (Schegloff et al., 2002). In other words, for the current speaker to continue to talk after producing one TCU, there can be "one beat of silence," which is legitimate and ordinary in conversation.

When looking at NNS discourse, in more advanced level, this still seems to be held true as in the following:

(3) AE

1 T: So how was your semester?
2 -> S: It was pretty good, but it was too:- I mean it passed too fast too quickly.

Here, T is the instructor and S is the initial of the interviewee's first name. S, the student, responds to the instructor's question in two parts. Note that when she finishes her first TCU, a sentential one (i.e., It was pretty good), she uses a comma (rising) intonation which signals that she is going to continue. This is also what a native speaker would do to mark his/her continuation of a turn. There was also a natural beat of silence followed by the connective "but" and S continues to provide the negative assessment about the semester. The flow of this turn is very natural.

Now, we will look at less proficient speakers' data. Before we examine how they continue their turn, however, it is important to note that their overall rate of speech is extremely slow and their production is full of many signs of struggles and hesitations. Example (4) illustrates this point:

(4) CE

1 T: um but then the number of people who died was about twenty out of one hundred thousand. So some other people were actually saying that it's really a small number of people. So maybe the risk is not that, that big. What do you think about that?
2 C: um (5.7) um (3.2) uh I- (.2) I thought that:
3 T: mhm,
4 -> C: many people's life is, important<but, (.8) um əss (1.2) yes əhhhh

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5 In the following examples, only interviewee's' first name initials will be used. In all the examples, T is the instructor.
8 T: okay. So you think that even just one person dies, that still counts.

Here, the interviewee, C, shows various signs of hesitations such as *um* and *uh* and long pauses as long as 5.7 seconds shown in lines 5 and 7. Now, what is striking here is that in line 7, C, all of a sudden, rushes, which is marked with "<" symbol, in the middle of this slow production of an utterance. And his motivation to do this is purely interactional, that is, to manage his turn and continue to talk after providing one TCU. That is, when he finished with his first sentential TCU, "I thought that many people’s life is important,” he rushes to provide the very beginning of his next TCU, but, to hold his turn and let the instructor know that he wants to continue. However, this kind of rush before providing the next TCU is not normally found in NSs’ conversation since “one beat of silence” between utterances is allowed and natural as mentioned earlier (Schegloff et al., 2002). Therefore, this part of C’s utterance stands out and makes it sound unnatural. It can also be notable that C, after marking his intention to continue his turn and finally being able to hold it, was unable to complete it unfortunately and then struggles to “exit” his turn with yes and a laughter, which we will examine in the next section. Example (5) is another one to illustrate the point:

(5) CE
1 T: All right. Okay. So how was the reading? Overall, was it really difficult? (.)
2 to understand?
3 (1.8)
4 N: The first part is: (1.1) I think: (.2) it’s so easy= but (.4) last part,
5 T: [mm, [mhm,]
6 T: uh huh,
7 N: Yeah. It’s really difficult.

Here, again, N, the interviewee, is producing his utterance with full of pauses, but when he reaches the end of his first TCU (i.e., I think it’s so easy), he rushes to provide but, this time with a "latch" sign, which means that there is no silence between the preceding and following parts (See Appendix A). The motivation for N to rush his next utterance this way is again interactional and has everything to do with turn-taking mechanism. For nonnative speakers like N who are not familiar with the turn-taking system in English, it is very challenging to hold his turn after completing one TCU and rushing to produce the next item seems to be a strategy many NNSs develop before they become more proficient.

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6 It refers to a “rush through” sign as shown in Appendix A.
In the following example, the speaker is talking about her preference of a bilingual program over an ESL program. Note that what the speaker provides right after the rush in line 5 is not even a word like *but* as we examined above but something else:

(6) AE
1  P: um if my children learn more slowly,
2    T: mhm.
3  P: uh (1.2) then: (.8) hh
4    T: hh
5  ->  P: I (.) thought- I think, (.6) that's- that's not very important=uh:
6    T: mhm,
7  P: I think my children don’t confused a lot,
8    T: [mm
9  P: [and my children, (.2) learn:: (.3) my- uh our native language also
10     T: mm Okay, so you like the bilingual program.

Here, the NNS, P, is from an advanced level class but her rate of speech is overall very slow and there are many self-repairs and repetitions. In line 5, however, when she reaches the end of her first TCU (i.e., (even) if my children learn more slowly, I think that's not very important), she rushes to try to provide the next TCU. What is interesting in this segment is that this time what she provides right after that rush is not even a lexical word but a filler *uh*. In response to this, the interviewer, T, provides a go-ahead sign (Schegloff, 1982), which means that P was successful in holding her turn and is now entitled to provide another TCU.

In these examples, what we find is that NNSs with limited proficiency demonstrate their own strategy in turn-holding. That is, when they face an interactional challenge of holding their turn, one of the ways they accomplish this is to rush and provide the next TCU as quickly as they could, which is in sharp contrast with their otherwise noticeably slow rate of speech and other signs of hesitations. It is also worth mentioning here that it is the detailed CA transcription that makes it possible to reveal this kind of phenomenon and also helps us to explain why this happens. As mentioned earlier (Kasper, 1997), methodology employed can and does affect the findings from the data.

2) How to “Exit” a Turn

Next, we will look at how NNSs “exit” their turn when they are not able to complete the turn for some reason. For this, they often employ *yes/yeah* as in the following examples:
(7) CE
1 T: um but then the number of people who died was about twenty out of one
2 hundred thousand. So some other people were actually saying that it's
3 really a small number of people. So maybe the risk is not that, that big. What
4 do you think about that?
5 C: um (5.7) um (3.2) uh I- (.2) I thought that:
6 T: mhm,
7 -> C: many people's life is, important<but, (.8) um ^ss (1.2) Yes hhhh
8 T: Okay. So you think that even just one person dies, that still counts.

In this example, which appeared earlier (Example (4)), C is trying to respond to the interviewer's question about the risk live organ donors have to take. In line 7, C completes the first TCU (i.e., I thought that many people's life is important) and rushes to provide another one as shown earlier. After providing a connective but, however, he seems to have difficulty completing this new TCU and ends up leaving the turn with yes and a laughter (hnhh).

Let us examine one more segment where the NNS, B, is trying to talk about his plans for the summer vacation:

(8) CE
1 T: Okay. So umm what're your plans (.) for the summer?
2 (1.1)
3 B: I will do: (.2) alupaithu (.2) [^and teaching] s- students in (.6) um (.8)=^7
4 T: [mm, ^okay]
5 -> B: =yes ^hum
6 T: ^hwhh Okay. So umm do you already have a job? (.) part-time job?
7 B: (.5) No (.1) [ I will- I will- ]

In line 3, after providing an expression “do arbeit” that seems to be a rough equivalent of a Korean expression alupaithu hata, (i.e., work part-time), B tries to explain it further in English by saying “teaching students.” However, at this point, he seems to have difficulty providing the English counterpart of a Korean word hakwuen, which means a private (language) institute. After some pauses and hesitations, he gives up and in order to leave his turn, he says yes and then non-linguistic vocalization, hum.

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7 Here, the latch sign is used to link different parts of a single speaker's utterance when these parts have to be separated to accommodate an intervening interruption (See Appendix).
The last example is different from the two examples observed earlier in that here, the speaker does complete his utterance but wants to leave the turn after he gets the interviewer’s go-ahead sign:

(9) CE
1 D: A lot and in case of: 11,
2 T: mhm,
3 D: Word is very (.2) difficult=hhh[h
4 T: [Right. Right. There were a lot of animal
5 name s and so: okay
6 D: [Yeah yeah (2.8) But I like to have a chance with- (.1) with other
7 people and listen to other opinion;
8 T: mhm,
9 -> D: Yeah.
10 T: Okay. That’s good. All right. That’s basically that.

In lines 6 and 7, the NNS, D, is talking about what he liked about the course, that is, being able to talk to other people and listen to their opinions. The problem occurs when he completes this TCU: instead of completing it with a falling intonation, which signals that he is done, D provides a comma (rising) intonation that is used to show the other speaker that he is continuing. In response to this, the interviewer provides a go-ahead sign (i.e., mhm) to let D to continue. Then, D provides yeah to signal that he is indeed complete and now wants to leave his turn. It is interesting that NNSs systematically use yeah/yes to exit their turn whether they actually complete the turn or not.

Throughout these examples, we have looked at a NNSs’ turn-holding strategy and a turn-exit strategy. When engaged in talk-in-interaction in English, both turn-holding and turn-exit are interactionally crucial tasks NNSs have to perform. However, both tasks can be very challenging simply because NNSs are not used to these tasks. It is also observed that the strategies NNSs employ for both tasks are more common among intermediate level learners. It seems that as the learners’ level goes up, they become fluent enough to hold and exit their turn more properly.

2. NNSs’ Code Switching Behavior

One of the initial observations of the data revealed that there were some instances of code switching from English to Korean, which was not allowed during the interview. This observation was then led to the question in what cases and why NNSs’ code switching occurs.
As will be shown in this section, NNSs’ motivation for their code switching has much to do with their limited ability to manage discourse.

In order to find a general pattern of NNSs’ code switching, a frequency analysis was conducted and Table 1 shows the results.

### TABLE 1
NNSs’ Code Switching from English to Korean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korean Words Used</th>
<th>CE (16,449 words)</th>
<th>AE (10,613 words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ye ('yes')</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>ye ('yes')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kukka ('I mean')</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>kukka ('I mean')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku ('that')</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ku ('that')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ani ('not')</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>mwe ('what')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonghwal ('students' experiencing farm life')</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>hathun ('anyway')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sayangkak an nota ('not remember')</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>ai (interjection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cungkan ('midterm'), kimsal ('final'), swunung ('Korean SAT'), arupaihu ('part-time job'), etc. (13 words)</td>
<td>13 (each one used once)</td>
<td>Kyeyechakkpi ('summer session'), congkang party ('end-of-year party'), nonghwal, etc. (9 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai (interjection)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kunley ('but')</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwe ('what')⁸</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etter ('some')</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>83 (0.5%)</td>
<td>26 (0.24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the frequency of code switching in intermediate level is slightly more than double the frequency of advanced level learners'. It needs to be mentioned here that some learners tend to resort to Korean a lot more often than others, so the frequency here needs to be considered only as a tendency. What is most notable in this table is that the Korean expressions used most frequently are not to replace lexical items in English. That is, the NNSs in the study were well aware that the interview was conducted as part of their final exam and they were not supposed to speak Korean. Therefore, they seemed to try very hard to avoid using Korean words and such effort was clearly shown in the table, i.e., the not-so-high frequency of Korean lexical words. Then, what makes them turn to Korean? We will examine some examples of code switching in

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⁸ “What” is the literal meaning of mwe, but it is used as a filler (i.e., “say” in English) in spoken discourse. Likewise, the literal meaning of etter in the following line is “some,” but it can also be used as a filler in spoken discourse.
the following and try to find what motivates NNSs to switch codes.

One of the most striking results in Table 1 is that the most frequently used Korean expression in both intermediate and advanced level data is "yes", meaning "yes." Why do the NNSs use it this frequently when "yes" in English is probably one of the very first words they learn in English? A close examination of the tokens of ye reveals that the contexts for their use of ye are very consistent as shown in the following examples:

(10) CE

1  K: I think this case (.4) ah:: I agree with this case.
2  T: mkay.
3  -> K: ye. umm (.4) safer save one:: save one (.5) wife- life is good (.3) um good job
4  T: mkay, [to save basically your child's life] you'll basically do anything=
5  -> K: ye
6  T: =possible.

Here, K uses ye in lines 3 and 5. His use of ye in line 3 seems to be a characteristic of NNS discourse, occurring after the NS's go-ahead sign and before resuming his/her talk (Park, 2000). The other two tokens of ye in line 5 are used as continuers, that is to give a go-ahead sign to the current speaker and yield his own turn (Schefflin, 1982). Note here that all three tokens of ye in this segment are used to perform some interactional functions rather than to replace some words or expressions the speaker could not think of.

Another use of ye we can refer to is as a repair initiation as in Example (11):

(11) CE

1  T: What do you miss most.
2  (.2)
3  T: about your hometown.
4  -> M: (.3) ye?
5  T: Was there anything you missed?

In this example, first note that the interviewer T elaborates her question step-by-step as in lines 3 and 5 after her first attempt in line 1 did not get the response. In spite of her effort, however, the nonnative speaker M is having difficulty understanding her question. In addition to

\^ Here, the students' pronunciation of Korean ye is different from that of English "yeah" and the incidences of code switching to ye were counted based on the pronunciation differences.
the long pauses that show his non-understanding, M does code switching in line 4 and says ye, meaning “yes” in English. With rising intonation, it can mean “Pardon me?” or “Huh?” which signals that the current speaker is having a problem either in hearing or understanding and therefore, initiating the previous speaker’s repair of that turn.\(^\text{10}\) What is again notable is that the reason why the speaker resorts to Korean here is not due to the difficulty providing a lexical word but due to the interactional difficulty, i.e., understanding (or hearing) the interviewer.

It needs to be mentioned here that ye was used mainly by a few learners. This reflects the fact that some of the NNSs in this study are not familiar with using English for even very simple interactional functions such as providing a continuer or asking for a repair. In other words, some learners are only used to producing sentence-level propositions, but not to managing actual discourse and being engaged in conversation in English.

What I would like to draw attention next is the use of the boldfaced words in Table 1 such as *kukka* (‘I mean’) and *ku* (‘that’), whose frequencies are also very high, especially in intermediate level speakers’ data. As will be shown in the following, what is striking about the use of these words is that they are not used to replace some lexical words NNSs wanted to express but just to “mark” that they are having difficulty finding proper expressions in the context of self-repair or in the middle of their struggle to think of some expressions they have in mind. Their use is very spontaneous and more related to discourse management.

Example (12) illustrates the use of *kunkka* in the context of self-repair:

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(12) CE
1  T:  okay. But then some other people said that it was umm only twenty out of
2   100,000 donors and people do need organ transplants anyway, so: what
3   would you say to them?
4-> A:  umm People- *kunkka* one life is more important than anything else
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Here, in response to the question about the risk of live donors’ organ donation, A seems to be saying that even if it’s only one donor who dies after the organ donation, it still matters. In line 4, she abandons the word “people” and replaces it with “one life” but before that, she inserts *kunkka*,\(^\text{11}\) which is used to “reformulate prior talk (Kim & Suh, 1996)” in Korean. This connective can be used in self-repair in the same turn as in the above, but as *Kim and Suh* (1996) demonstrate, it can also be used to upgrade what was said before or to disagree with the prior speaker in Korean. Its English counterparts can be “I mean” (Schiffrin, 1987) or “what I’m

\(^{10}\) In CA, it is called next turn repair initiation or NTRI.

\(^{11}\) *Kunkka, kukka, or kunkka* are all contracted forms of a discourse connective, *kulemkka*. In spoken Korean, these contracted forms seem to be used more frequently than their full form.
saying is,” depending on the context. It is very interesting that NNSs spontaneously choose to use this Korean connective to mark their self-repair in English. Code switching here is again not due to a problem of replacing a lexical expression itself, but due to a problem in discourse management, i.e., doing self-repair.

Example (13) shows another incidence of kukka. Here, the speaker is responding to the interviewer’s question, that is, what H thinks of the fact that some animals that were sent back to the nature by modern zoos could not survive.

(13) CE

1  H:  [All- ALL okay ] uh uh [okay] not all the animals die
2  T: mkay,
3  H: yes.
4        (2.1)
5  H: a: becoz- a: (1.6) se? [therefore
6  T:         [mkay,
7  T: uh huh,
8  ->  H: they- kukka in the zoo they are practicing in this book-
9  T: m [hm
10->  H: [like this book, practicing and exper- kukka have experience for: like (.7)

In line 1, H is defending modern zoos’ effort, saying that not all the animals that were sent to the wild died and therefore, it is still worth it. Then, in line 5, she tries to add to what she has just said, but she seems to have difficulty providing a proper connector and first uses “because” and then abandons it for “therefore” in line 5. Then, in line 8, she continues, but soon there is a cut-off followed by kukka. What comes after is the insertion of “in the zoo” and the speaker goes back to the word “they.” In line 10, in the middle of saying “experiencing,” H stops and inserts kukka before she changes the structure and provides “have experience.”

In these examples, kukka was used before the speaker inserts a phrase, changes the grammar structure, or abandons what was said and provides a brand-new phrase, that is, in their effort to reformulate what was going on previously in the context of self-repair.

Let us examine more code switching instances by the same speaker:

(14) CE

1  H: wild place.<Because (.7) uh: they have, (.6) ah they ha- ah they:: (.4) I think
2        it is poo- poorer for the animal to:: live in the small cage,
3  T: mh[m,
4 \( \rightarrow \) H: \[ \text{captiv} \cdot \text{ed.} \text{(4)} \text{ d} = \text{uh so } \text{ss k} \text{u} \text{nte} \text{y m} \text{a- sorry um} \text{ (2.1) ku} \text{ (7)} \]
5 \[ \text{T: } \text{mhm,} \]
6 \[ \text{H: it- it is (3.) necessary to: practice (6) enough (1.) for: um minimize} \]
7 \[ \text{the (3.) death of wild animal=uh} \text{ (2.6)} \]
8 \[ \text{T: mkay,} \]

Here, H says that for animals to live “in captivity” is not good in lines 1 and 2, which is a problem of typical or traditional zoos. She seems to try to say “captivated” in line 4, but cannot complete it and hurriedly initiates another TCU with “so.” H then provides a Korean connective \textit{kuntey}	extsuperscript{12}, which can be roughly translated into “but” (Park, 1998) or “by the way” in English. Based on what comes before and after this part, this connective seems to be a better choice than “so” in that what she is talking about is not in a causal relationship—H first talks about the problem of traditional zoos and then, after \textit{kuntey}, she points out the problem of modern zoos, i.e., sending animals back to the nature before they are ready and thus, causing them to die. Note also that in line 4, there is another incidence of code switching, i.e., the use of a Korean word \textit{ku} (“that”). As Kim and Suh (2001) note, \textit{ku} is used when the speaker tries to “retrieve his/her memory.”

So far, we have examined NNSs’ code switching instances. As shown in Table 1 and the close examination of code switching examples, NNSs in this study resort to their native language, i.e., Korean, not due to lexical problems themselves, but mainly due to their inexperience of managing discourse and interaction in English.\textsuperscript{13} The fact that some NNSs often use \textit{ye} to perform simple interactional functions such as back-channeling and initiating repair demonstrates that they certainly need a lot of exposure to natural interaction and should have an opportunity to practice conversation in a more spontaneous setting in order to acquire how to manage discourse in English. Also, their frequent use of \textit{kukka} shows their incompetence to use English discourse managing expressions, i.e., discourse markers. We will, therefore, investigate how NNSs use English discourse markers in the next section.

3. The Use of Discourse Markers

The previous section was to investigate how often and when NNSs resort to Korean and the results demonstrate that their code switching occurs most likely to fulfill their discourse-related

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Kuntey} is a contracted form of \textit{kalentey} and is used more frequently in spoken Korean.

\textsuperscript{13} Learners’ main motivation for this kind of code switching can be further pursued. As two of the reviewers indicated, the context of the interviews to be part of the students’ final exam might have affected them to suppress the use of Korean lexical words more consciously.
needs in English, reflecting the fact that they are not familiar with discourse management in English. These results then pose a question, that is, to what extent NNSs can use English expressions used for discourse management, i.e., discourse markers (hereafter DMs) (cf., Fraser, 1990, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987). This section is to address the question.

Schiffrin (1987) defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (p. 31). Depending on different researchers and approaches, however, the terms and the types of DMs can vary (Jucker & Ziv, 1998). Researchers like Fraser (1990, 1999) analyze DMs mainly as conjunctive expressions such as however, consequently, and as a consequence. Schiffrin, on the other hand, includes various kinds of DMs such as adverbs like well and now, discourse connectors like and, but, and so, and pragmatic expressions like I mean, and you know. In this study, I will mainly follow Schiffrin’s definition and include several discourse connectives such as but, so, and therefore, and other frequently used DMs such as well, I mean and you know, as the target forms to look at in the data.

As a previous study on DM acquisition, we can consider Kyritzis and Ervin-Stripp (1999) for children’s acquisition of DMs in their first language acquisition. Based on Schiffrin’s (1987) approach, they show that young children acquire DMs, first more for textual functions, then acquire more interactional functions of DMs. In terms of DM acquisition in SLA, Chaudron and Richards (1986) presented that DMs do not affect second language learners’ lecture comprehension much. Their study was then confuted by Flowerdew and Tauroza (1995) who adopted a different and more natural way of recording and showed that DMs were indeed effective for better lecture comprehension. So far, there have been very few studies conducted in the acquisition of DMs, especially in the area of English as a second/foreign language and therefore it awaits more studies that can shed light on our understanding in this area.

1) Types and Frequency of DMs

First, we will look at the overall tendency of the NNSs’ use of DMs. Table 2 shows the kinds of discourse markers NNSs used in the data and their frequencies. The figure in parenthesis next to the frequency of each DM refers to the relative frequency. It must be cautioned here that this table is simply to show a general tendency only since there can be various individual differences and other variables such as topical and interactional contexts for the speaker to choose various DMs. Also, the DMs counted for the frequency analysis here do not form a complete list. They were chosen since they seem to represent some general patterns of the NNSs’ use of DMs in the data.
TABLE 2
NNSs' Use of Discourse Markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Markers</th>
<th>CE (16,449 words)</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
<th>AE (10,6113 words)</th>
<th>Relative frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What the results clearly demonstrate in this table is that among the DMs counted for the study, both intermediate and advanced level learners use discourse connectors like **but** and **so** much more frequently than pragmatic markers such as **I mean** and **you know**. This suggests that learners are much more comfortable in using connectives as a discourse-managing device than other kinds of discourse markers. Among the three discourse connectors counted, **but** was the most frequently used one\textsuperscript{14} and **so** was the next. The frequency of **but** in advanced level learners' data is by far the most frequent and we will examine how they use it in the next section. Interestingly, **therefore** is used only by intermediate level learners who do not seem to be aware of the differences between formal/informal and written/spoken discourse and use **so** and **therefore** almost interchangeably. Another interesting result from the frequency analysis is about the use of **well**, which was expected to be used more frequently since learners must be familiar with this marker. However, this simply was not the case and the frequency is very low. It is possible that the genre of the data, i.e., oral interviews, may have affected NNSs' use of it somehow.

The low frequency of the pragmatic markers such as **I mean** and **you know** demonstrates that the NNSs in the study have not acquired them yet. It can be explained that since they are the kinds of DMs that are used in spontaneous spoken discourse, especially in informal conversation, it is very difficult for NNSs who have learned English as a foreign language and have seldom had opportunities to be exposed to natural settings to acquire them. It is also precisely why many NNSs in the study resort to the Korean expression, **kukka**, which is a rough counterpart of **I mean**, as shown earlier.

It should also be mentioned that 13 out of 15 tokens of **I mean** in the table were actually produced by one student who had earned her B.A. in the United States. The same student also

\textsuperscript{14}It should be mentioned here that the frequency of **and** is not counted, but it can be easily guessed that it is used very frequently, probably more frequent than **but**.
produced three out of the four tokens of you know. This skewing pattern shows how crucial it is to learn English in natural settings. It seems that even in advanced level, the learners are not able to use a variety of DMs. However, overall frequency of the use of DMs is higher in the advanced level than in the intermediate level as shown in their relative frequencies in the table.

In the next section, I will focus on the use of but in the data since it was the most frequently occurring DM and the NNSs’ use of it demonstrates its various functions in interaction most clearly.

2) Qualitative Analysis on the Use of But

Schiffrin (1987), based on her analysis of but in native speakers’ conversation, defines it as a contrastive marker in terms of textual meaning and interactional effects, and suggests several functions such as speaker return and marking the speaker’s disagreement. Park (2001) provides various interactional functions of but in NSs’ spontaneous conversation data, based on its position in one’s turn, i.e., turn-initial, turn-medial, and turn-final. In this section, we will examine NNSs’ use of but in the data to see in what ways NNSs’ use of it is similar to that of NSs’ and in what ways it is different. As shown earlier, but is one of the frequently-used DMs and it will be interesting to see if NNSs can use it properly in the data.

Perhaps the most frequently used function of but is to mark a semantic (i.e., John is tall but Mary is short) or a pragmatic contrast (John is poor but he is happy) in an utterance. The following example demonstrates one such case. That is, the speaker contrasts the opposite fates (i.e., dying vs. surviving) of animals as an example of the survival of the fittest in the nature:

(15) CE
1 T: okay, good. but even other animals, animals that are not endangered, some of
2 the animals were sent back to the wild and they died. What do you think of
3 that?
4 D: I think it’s uh: (.5) natural selection? hh
5 T: okay,
6 -> D: hhh many of ’em die: but some of them (.2) live.
7 T: okal[y,
8 D: [an’ that’s- the- the most strong and (.2) uh talent animal (.3) live hhh]

Most of the examples of but belong to this type of contrast. However, there are also other, more interactional uses of but as in the following examples.
Here, what the speaker is doing is what Schiffrin (1987) calls "speaker return," that is, before answering the interviewer's question, the speaker starts with a disclaimer then "returns" to his position to provide his answer. Park (2001) sees this as a preliminary part before the speaker provides the main action, that is, answering the question why he agrees with the doctor. This "pre" part plays an important role interactionally since this is the part that often contains justifications, disclaimers or apologies before the speaker conveys interactionally delicate main actions such as disagreements or rejections. In this example, the speaker is providing a disclaimer first before he turns to his main action to answer the question.

What is notable here is that this is the only example where the speaker provides a disclaimer or a justification before the main action in intermediate level learners' data. In other words, intermediate level NNSs tend to provide the main action without any "pre" part as will be shown in the following example:

In this example, W, the NNS, has just said that she likes the idea of sending animals back to the wild after modern zoos train them to survive there. The instructor then challenges W, saying that there were some animals that could not survive. In response, W tries to say that not all animals died in line 3. Note here that her response lacks the "pre" part that usually comes before the main action of disagreeing in the NSs' data (Park, 2001). That is, unless it is in the middle of
a heated discussion or an argument, NSs usually provide a "pre" to qualify what the other speaker has just said (e.g., yeah, that may be true but...) before their disagreement. As noted in Park (2001), NNSs are not quite good at doing this and therefore may create the impression that they are very direct and argumentative. The above example illustrates one such case.

The following example is another one where the NNS starts with but without the use of a "pre" part:

(18) CE

1 T: So basically you think it's right for zoos to release animals back to the wild.
2 Then what about the animals that died after released to the wild?
3 \textit{} \rightarrow S: uh:: \textbf{but} uh: in fact wild animal,
4 T: umhm,
5 S: born in wild an (.2) grow in wild,
6 T: mhm,
7 S: these are- animals are also: (.2) die. It's naturally.

Here, again, the speakers are talking about modern zoos' efforts to train animals to send them back to the wild. As the speaker in the previous example, the speaker, S, in this example also has a positive opinion about modern zoos' efforts and tries to defend them. When the interviewer challenges S in lines 1 and 2, she says that some animals in the wild also die. Again, S starts without any disclaimer or qualification of what the other speaker has just said.

In sharp contrast, the advanced learners in the data seem to be more familiar with this use of \textit{but} and it is often found that they provide a "pre" first before they start any interactionally delicate actions as in the following:

(19) AE

1 N: in high-\textit{yes} it's thuh:: too grammar?
2 T: uh huh,
3 N: grammar-center? yeah (.3) uh (.2) I- our- it's, it could be- it may be- it might be that arrogant attitude as a learner,
4 T: uh huh,
5 \textit{} \rightarrow N: \textbf{but} I think uh:: high school English teachers English never- their English pronunciation
6 T: uh [huh,
7 N: \textit{} [and intonation is not (.1) really good, \textit{} [I think=\textit{cuz uh huh,}
Here, the student N is talking about the problems of English teaching in high school in Korea. *First,* he says that it was too grammar-centered. *Then* in lines 3 and 4, he starts a "pre" part, that is, a disclaimer (i.e., what I’m saying may sound arrogant as a learner) with a lot of hesitations and pauses before he starts his criticism about high school teachers’ pronunciation. His use of *but* in this example clearly demonstrates that he is able to deal with an interactionally delicate action, i.e., criticizing someone with a disclaimer first.

The following example shows how an advanced level learner delivers a disagreement that is different from what we have seen in Examples (17) and (18):

(20) AE

1 T: okay, ... but in some poor countries, it’s kind of a way of gaining knowledge.
2 Can you accept that? Do you think? [It cannot be justified? still?
3 L: [uh
4 L: uh of course the low developed country, that
5 T: uh huh,
6 L: they might have idea that that they can- they can borrow,
7 T: uh huh,
8 L: other’s- other’s source
9 T: uh huh,
10 L: to- to prove their- to prove their ability?
11 T: uh huh,=
12>L: =but uh: the more important thing is to prove their ability, they must- they
13 must do things to work for themselves.

Here, the instructor is asking about the interviewee’s (L) opinion of people making pirate editions of original books and CDs. L is basically disapproving them. The instructor in lines 1 and 2 is challenging him about the circulation of pirate editions in poor countries, i.e., there can be some exceptions or justifications of circulating pirate editions in those countries. From line 4 to 10, L provides a "pre," i.e., a weak agreement first to acknowledge the need in underdeveloped countries, then in line 12, he provides his main action of disagreement.

So far, we have examined the use of *but* in interactionally delicate situations and how intermediate level learners and advanced level learners are different in those situations. Now, we will look at some other uses of *but* that do not occur so frequently but illustrate interesting uses of *but.*
In Example (21), the speakers are talking about difficult lessons in the textbook.

(21) CE
1 G: A lot. And in case of: (.) 11, word is really difficult hhhh
2 T: Right. Right. There were a lot of animal names.
3 G: yeah
4 T: okay
5 -> G: (6) and (2.1) but I like to have a chance with- with other people and listen
to other opinion,

The NNS G is talking about why Lesson 11 in the textbook was difficult, i.e., there were many unfamiliar words in that lesson. Then, in line 5, he uses but to mark a shift from what he was talking about and starts to talk about the positive aspect of the class, i.e., having an opportunity to talk to other people and listen to their opinions. It is a kind of topic shift and also a very rare example of the speaker initiation of a new topic.

The following example is another one that illustrates an interesting use of but:

(22) AE
1 T: How about other courses?
2 N: Other courses:: my major is law  [and
3 T:                      [uh huh,
4 -> N: but uh we freshmen all learn pephakkayron (An introduction to law)?
5-> [like this? But it's- kind of (2) um professor teaches almost nothing. hhhh

In response to the interviewer’s question about the courses N is taking that semester, N is delivering a short narrative about a course called “An introduction to law,” which is a requirement for all freshmen majoring in law. In line 4, N makes a shift to insert a piece of background information that all freshmen in law school need to take the introductory course and to mark the shift, he uses but. However, this use does not seem to be the typical or even natural use of but since it would also have been fine by using “and” and saying “I attend law school and we freshmen are all required to take the course called ‘An Introduction to Law’”. N’s second use of but in line 5 seems to mark the punch line of his story, which seems to be well chosen to help the interlocutor to focus on the upcoming punch line.

So far, we have looked at how NNSs use DMs. As shown above, their use of DMs can be divided into two categories, i.e., the use of discourse connectors such as but and so, and the use
of other pragmatic markers such as *I mean* and *you know*. In case of the former, NNSs seem to be able to use them quite properly, perhaps because they are introduced early in their English learning and thus, having been exposed enough. However, NNSs’ use of pragmatic markers was scarce due to their lack of exposure to these markers. As shown in the table, this tendency seems to be fairly the same in both intermediate and advanced level learners, which may imply that even the advanced level in this study was not advanced enough to have acquired the use of DMs.

More detailed analysis of the use of *but* shows that NNSs are able to use it for both textual and interactional functions, although there are also some uses not quite natural yet. It will be interesting to examine the use of other DMs by NNSs in different levels. For example, in the case of *so*, a more qualitative analysis may be able to show that intermediate level learners use it more for logical connection, whereas advanced level learners use it for both logical connection and more interactional functions.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

So far, we have examined various characteristics of NNS discourse that can be attributed to NNSs’ inexperience in managing actual talk-in-interaction and little exposure to spontaneous spoken discourse previously. The findings can be summarized as follows:

First, in terms of turn-taking, NNSs were observed to use a unique strategy to hold their turn by rushing to provide a next item right after producing one turn constructional unit, which does not seem to occur much in NS data. This strategy stands out in that their overall rate of speech otherwise is extremely slow. NNSs were also observed to use *yes* when they cannot end their turn properly, i.e., complete their utterance. In other words, they use the strategy to signal that they are unable to exit their turn properly but they are indeed complete.

Next, it was also shown that NNSs sometimes resort to their native language, Korean, even though they were well aware that they were not supposed to use Korean during the interview. The most frequently used Korean is *ye*, “yes” in English, which clearly demonstrates that their code switching is not due to the lexical difficulty. That is, in most cases, NNSs spontaneously switch to Korean to manage discourse and interaction, i.e., to provide a continuer, to ask for repetition, to carry out self-repair and to provide a discourse marker such as *I mean*.

Thirdly, as shown in NNSs’ use of the Korean counterpart of *I mean* in English, it is expected that NNSs are not familiar with English discourse markers. The findings show that it was indeed the case: NNSs in the study were not able to use a variety of discourse markers. The frequency of their use of discourse connectives was much higher than other, more pragmatic markers.
However, more detailed analysis shows that even their use of discourse connectives is not quite natural and native-like yet.

There were some differences between the intermediate and more advanced level learners, such as the frequency of code switching, the frequency of the use of DMs, and how they use DMs. However, it also needs to be mentioned that advanced level learners' speaking abilities varied and some of them turned out to be not as competent as others.

It should be reminded here that the findings from this study are based on very specific type of NNS interview data which were collected in a very specific context and, therefore, they need to be understood as such. That is, the NNS performance in the study was probably affected by many contextual factors such as the testing setting and the interlocutor being their instructor.

What this type of study may suggest as pedagogical implications is as follows: The difficulties or problems NNSs demonstrate in the study seem to reflect their lack of understanding of conversational discourse practices or mechanisms and their insufficient previous exposure to naturally occurring spoken discourse. In order to solve this problem, learners should be taught English in a more natural setting where all the aspects of spoken English features including proper ways of using discourse markers are naturally displayed. Also, in developing textbooks and oral tests for NNSs, findings from this type of discourse studies can be considered so that actual problems or difficulties NNSs have in terms of their discourse or interactional management may be properly reflected.

It is hoped that more of this kind of studies will be conducted to learn more about our learners so that we can help them properly. For further study, it will be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study where the researcher traces developmental features of a learner in terms of interactional characteristics. Another area that awaits more studies is to examine NNS discourse in different genres. Each genre has different interactional characteristics, which can affect participants and the types of interaction. When there are enough studies accumulated in this area, we will be able to see how NNSs act differently in different genres and the results will help us teach more effectively.

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Association of Korea, Seoul, Korea.


APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

[ overlapping or simultaneous talk

= Equal signs indicate no gap or discernible silence between utterances. It can also be used to link different parts of a single speaker’s utterance when those parts constitute a continuous flow of speech that has been carried over to another line to accommodate an intervening interruption.

:: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.

_ Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.

(5) Length of pause

( ) Micropause
? Rising intonation, not necessarily a question
. Continuing intonation
< The inverted question indicates a rise stronger than a comma but weaker than a question mark.
- A cut-off or self-interruption
< The less than symbol indicates that the immediately following talk is jump-started, i.e., sounds like it starts with a rush.

hhh Hearable aspiration: It may represent breathing, laughter, etc.
(()) Transcriber’s descriptions of events
() Uncertainty on the transcriber’s part

Applicable levels: secondary education, tertiary education
Key words: non-native speaker discourse, turn-taking, repair, discourse markers, code-switching, conversation analysis

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