

## **An Acknowledgment of Turn-Taking as One of the Communication Skills and an Insight into Society by Means of Studying Turn-Taking Behaviors**

by

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### **Introduction**

“First come, first served,” is the way to organize customers at a shop, a store, and a restaurant. Standing in line is the rule when getting on a train or a bus. So how do we decide the next speaker in a conversation? How is a speaking turn taken, and what are the rules behind it? Finding out about the turn-taking mechanism and its organization will present us with some interesting insights into human interactions.

Turn-taking is a transitional mechanism established in conversations; when we want to say something, we simply wait for the moment a speaker finishes his/her sentence and then start to talk, which may sound very simple. However, it is one of the communication skills which learners acquire along with language and sociability. A speaking turn seems to be automatically taken by a person who wants to say something under the rule that one person speaks at a time, but is it really so? In this paper, turn-taking will be studied holistically. First, turn-taking will be looked at in terms of its complex signals and mechanism. Second, this particular communication feature will be discussed from a sociolinguistic point of view in order to understand its subtle nature.

Thirdly, people's turn-taking behaviors will be studied because these are often observed to be asymmetrical, which is assumed to be the reflection of unequal relationships. In order to find out

what is going on in those interactions, turn-taking behaviors among groups with unequal relationships will be examined in this paper.

Moreover, turn-taking behavior will be looked at cross-culturally because it is assumed there are considerable differences among cultures. Turn-taking is one of the conversational features observable in all verbal interactions, which makes it universal. However, turn-taking behavior along with its organization, when and how to take a speaking turn, must be strongly bound to each culture's value systems. Therefore, analyzing this particular conversational feature will be substantial with regard to finding out how to manage cross-cultural communication.

Finally, turn-taking will be reconsidered as one of the communication skills required for smooth verbal interactions. Being skilled in turn-taking is like knowing how to drive observing the traffic rules; a person knows when to go and stop without bumping into other cars. That is to say, it is ideal to start speaking without overlapping someone's speech and to know when to stop his/her own speech in conversational interactions. It seems important then that turn-taking should be practiced in class using communication activities.

### **The Turn-Taking Mechanism**

Turn-taking automatically appears in a conversation when speakers change; a turn is usually taken by a person who wants to speak his/her mind or to participate in a conversation. Turn-taking is

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thought to be essential in human interactions; however, it will vary greatly depending upon the situation and the interactors' relationship. In this section, we would like to look at turn-taking from systematical and technical points of view.

First of all, Sacks et al. describe the organization of turn-taking in a conversation as being systematized in terms of two components: the turn-constructive and the turn-allocational component. The turn-constructive component is set by "unit-types" for English, made up of sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions.<sup>1</sup> The turn-allocational component seems to be differently managed, depending upon the situation, the formality, the number of participants, their relationship, individual personality, etc. Therefore, the turn-allocational component should be described in terms of techniques and rules operating along these differences. Turn-allocational techniques are seen as two kinds: 1) those in which a next turn is allocated by a current speaker selecting a next speaker, and 2) those in which a next turn is allocated by self-selection.

- 1) Other-selection: a current speaker selects a next speaker.
  - The party selected has a right or is obliged to take the next turn to speak.
- 2) Self-selection: a person who wants to speak takes a turn by force of his own will.
  - The first to speak automatically obtains a right to take a turn to speak.
  - A current speaker may, but need not, continue until another self-selection occurs.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, turn-allocation rules seem to provide an opportunity to change speakers and coordinate overlap of taking by two parties or not having a long silence at a "transition-relevance place."<sup>3</sup>

According to Sacks and others' findings, the turn-taking system works in a variety of ways which are not so readily apparent.

1. Speaker change overwhelmingly recurs and at least occurs... Speaker change and speaker change recurrence are not automatic...
2. Overwhelmingly one party talks at a time.
  - 1) The system allocates single turns to single speakers, and any speaker getting, with the turn, ex-

clusive rights to talk to first possible completion of an initial instance of unit-type...

- 2) All turn transfer is coordinated around transition-relevance places, which are themselves determined by possible completion points for instances of the unit-types.
3. Occurrences of more than one at a time are common, but brief... One obvious source of their briefness is that they occur at transition-relevance places, that is, places where current speakers can or should exit, their exciting removing a constitutive component of the overlap.
4. Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions.
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies. ...it does not vary randomly.
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies. The variability of turn size has grossest sources in two features of the system...: The availability of a range of unit-types out of which turns may initially be constructed, and the availability to a current speaker of free selection among them, provides for a set of turns...
7. Length of conversation is not specified in advance. The turn-taking system itself says nothing directly about length of conversation or closing conversation. It does, however, put constraints on how any rules, or system of rules, for achieving conversational closing, and thus length, could operate.
8. What parties say is not fixed or specified in advance. In ceremonies, what is said by the participants in it may be specified in advance to any degree desired. In debates, the order in which the participants talk is directly related to the character of what they are to say, the parties being characterizable as "pro" and "con,"... By contrast with these other speech-exchange systems, the turn-taking organization for conversation makes no provision for the content of any turn...
9. Relative distribution of turns is not fixed, but varies. The rule-set maximizes the set "potential next speakers."
10. The number of parties to a conversation can change... In not providing for number of speakers

beyond current and next, the system is compatible with different numbers of participants from conversation to conversation.

11. Conversation can be continuous or discontinuous. Talk is continuous when, for a sequence of transition-relevance places, talk continues (by another or by a same speaker continuing) across a transition-relevance place, with a minimization of gap and overlap. Discontinuities occur when at some transition-relevance place, a current speaker having stopped, no speaker starts (or continues), the ensuing space of nontalk constituting itself as more than a gap; not a gap, but a lapse.
12. Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when a current speaker addresses a question to another party); parties may self-select, in starting to talk.
13. Various "turn-constructural units" are employed. Turns can be projectively "one word long," or, for example, they can be sentential in length.
14. Repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obviously are available for use. For example, if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble.<sup>4</sup>

Duncan also states that turn-taking is one of a number of communication mechanisms which operate in face-to-face interaction. According to him, the use of turn-taking signals according to rules serves the function of integrating the organization of the flow of messages.<sup>5</sup> It also serves to balance the frequency with which a speaker enters a conversation and to ensure the prohibition of interruption.

In order to take a turn properly in face-to-face interaction, a participant needs to recognize turn-yielding and attempt-suppressing signals, and needs to know how to attempt to take his/her own turn. He/She should also know how to interrupt other participants who do not want to give up their speaking turns. These signals are fairly complex and are expressed in verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

A person who wants to take a speaking turn will usually wait until a speaker shows some turn-yielding signal, because it is desirable to avoid interrupting someone's

speech. It is considered to be very rude for anyone to "bump" into someone's speech as it is for a pedestrian to bump into another on a street. In order to avoid interrupting a speaker, the next speaker should not only wait for the final moment of the speech but also recognize the turn-yielding signals displayed by the speaker. Turn-yielding signals are considered to be fairly complex and wide-ranging, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Different speakers may prefer one particular signal to others, or may use a combination of two or more signals. According to Duncan, the turn-yielding cues among the speakers of English can be seen as follows:

1. Intonation: the use of rising or falling intonation.
2. Paralanguage: Drawl on the final syllable or on the stressed syllable of a terminal clause.
3. Body motion: the termination of any hand gesticulation/ the relaxation of a tensed hand position during a turn/ shrugging one's shoulders/ posture...
4. Sociocentric sequences: the use of several stereotyped expressions. e.g. "...but uh," "...or something," or "...you know."
5. Paralanguage: Pitch/ Loudness: a drop in paralinguistic pitch and/or loudness in conjunction with one of the sociocentric sequences described above.
6. Syntax: the completion of a grammatical clause.
7. Eye contact: gazing at the listener's face before finishing a turn.
8. Unfilled pause: an appreciable unfilled pause following the phonemic clause.<sup>6</sup>

However, when a speaker wants to maintain his/her turn, he/she does not display any of those turn-yielding cues but an attempt-suppressing signal. The attempt-suppressing signal is seen in a speaker's hand(s) gesticulation without dropping the hand(s) into rest position.<sup>7</sup> When the speaker keeps on displaying the attempt-suppressing signal, the next speaker's turn-taking attempt, which may be seen as interruption, will occur verbally or nonverbally: a stereotyped expression, paralanguage, and kinesic behavior. In interrupting someone's speech, people use stereotyped expressions such as "Excuse me," "I'm sorry to interrupt you, but..." and so on. They can also interrupt by making some kind of noise such as "tut-tut," "ahem," "uh-huh," or "oh-oh." Turn-taking attempt signals can be observed in body motion or kinesic behavior, too. Intending speakers may raise their hands

or lean forward. They tend to gaze at and maintain eye contact with a speaker.

Thus, turn-taking is a fairly complex communication mechanism; however, it is managed with apparent ease by people of the same culture. A speaking turn is automatically taken by the next speaker who is aware of the turn-yielding cues. A turn-taking attempt is properly done by the next speaker who knows how to interrupt someone's speech politely.

### **Sociolinguistic Considerations of Turn-Taking**

Turn-taking should be discussed from other functional points of view which relate to other sociolinguistic rules in human interaction. A speaking turn is not taken at random; people's turn-taking behavior is influenced by other sociolinguistic rules. Ervin-Tripp mentions that sociolinguistic rules are integrated; one specific sociolinguistic aspect is entwined with a set of rules operating on face-to-face interaction.<sup>8</sup> From our point of view, turn-taking behavior is bound up with creating harmony among participants in give-and-take relationships, taking the floor, face preservation in speech acts, back channels, and interruption. These aspects inherent in human interaction will be briefly explained here in order to understand the subtle nature of turn-taking.

The turn-taking mechanism can be described as a functional constituent of creating harmony among participants. According to LaFrance and Mayo, turn-taking is, simply, the give-and-take in a conversation.<sup>9</sup> Without a sense of give-and-take, a relationship which people usually establish through a conversation can not be harmonious and diplomatic. It is impossible to interact with a person who does not want to give up his/her turn and keeps on talking, or with a person who is never willing to take a speaking turn. Thus, a conversation requires both participants' willingness to interact, which means taking and yielding turns appropriately. By taking and yielding turns, Goffman maintains that they accept each other as legitimate participants in a conversation.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, turn-taking is the give-and-take rule which plays a role in creating harmony among the participants in face-to-face interaction.

Turn-taking is considered to be different from the concept of holding the floor, although "floor" is often ensured through a speaking turn. Turn-taking is a

conversational mechanism that allows participation in a conversation and possibly allows a person the opportunity to hold the floor which is defined as the right to speak. It is possible to take a turn without having the floor, and it is also possible to have floor while a person is not speaking, according to Edelsky. She distinguishes taking a turn from having the floor. She defines turn as an on-record speaking behind which lies an intention to convey a message that is both referential and functional, but the floor is the acknowledged what's-going-on within a psychological time and space.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the concept of taking a turn does not necessarily correlate with the idea of getting the floor.

Turn-taking, however, can be seen as a reflection of the concept of having the floor that interactors have to have as social acknowledgment when they interact. It could be said that taking a turn is much more taken for granted by the interactor with the right to speak than by the one without it. Turns should not be taken at random by the interactors who are sensitive to what's-going-on in their minds. Here, we need to see that the turn-taking behavior is entwined with the concept of having the floor, though these two are defined as separate.

Turn-taking should be discussed from the point of view of face preservation which governs spoken interactions. Here, "face" is defined by Brown and Levinson as "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction."<sup>12</sup> Taking a speaking turn means that, automatically, speakers expose their face to others and that they should know how to conduct or represent themselves in terms of speech. In this sense, turn-taking is not just taking a speaking turn in a sequence of conversation; people commit themselves to speak up and open themselves to judgment by others along with taking their speaking turn. They will obtain a chance to say something which may preserve their face through taking a speaking turn. Goffman explains about the face preservation in speech acts:

By saying something, the speaker opens himself up to the possibility that the intended recipients will affront him by not listening or will think him forward, foolish, or offensive in what he has said. And should he meet with such a reception, he will find himself com-

mitted to the necessity of taking face-saving action against them. Furthermore, by saying something the speaker opens his intended recipients up to the possibility that the message will be self-approving, presumptuous, demanding, insulting, and generally an affront to them or to their conception of him, so that they will find themselves obliged to take action against him in defence of the ritual code.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, turn-taking requires speakers to be confident in exposing themselves to others in terms of themselves and their ability to manipulate language. The speakers commit themselves to the interaction by taking a turn, which Goffman describes as the face-saving action.<sup>14</sup>

As a part of the turn-taking mechanism, back channeling should be studied as a unique feature in face-to-face interaction. Back channeling is an accompaniment behavior and a listener's response according to Duncan. Back-channel signals are observed including "mm-hmm," "yeah'," "huh," or head nods. Back-channel communication differs from a turn-taking attempt or a claim for a turn, although it appears when a speaker is displaying a turn-yielding signal. Back channeling is often used by a listener to avoid taking his/her speaking turn, while indicating a signal of "I am listening to you."<sup>15</sup> It is also adapted for a brief request to a speaker for clarification; the use of "uh?" "pardon?" or "what?" serves the function of requesting further explanation or clarification. Moreover, we observe that some back-channel signals showing agreement such as "really( \>)," "absolutely," and "of course," encourage a speaker's verbal behavior and ask him/her to keep holding his/her speaking turn. A listener's surprise or astonishment such as "gee," "gosh," "wow," and "no!" further encourages a speaker to hold his/her speaking turn, according to Goffman.<sup>16</sup>

Last of all, turn-taking accompanies interruptions. The turn-taking system rules are often violated by interruptions where the next speaker does not wait until the current speaker finishes his/her speech. Interruptions are defined as simultaneous speech penetrating someone's boundary of a unit-type and are viewed as violations of the turn-taking system rules, by Zimmerman and West.<sup>17</sup> Interrupting, bumping into someone's speech, is very impolite and is best avoided. Interruptions could occur mistakenly because of the interactors' carelessness; however,

they do not always occur because of a lack of turn-taking skills among interactors. They tend to occur in interactions between two or more different interlocutors in terms of their role, status, age, and sex. For example, interruptions tend to occur more in cross-sex interaction than in same-sex interaction.

To conclude, turn-taking behavior is made subtle by the influences of those sociolinguistic aspects mentioned earlier because the turn-taking mechanism is deeply entwined with these operating on human interaction.

### **Asymmetrical Interactions Reflecting Unequal Relationships**

People do not take their turns at random because they are aware of social factors between themselves such as age, status, sex, role, and situation which strongly influence their turn-taking and interrupting behaviors. We often see that the frequencies of turn-taking and interruption are asymmetrical among interactors; certain interactors take more turns than others and tend to interrupt others more frequently. Analyzing these inequalities in interactions will bring the power structure in society to light. In this section, the studies of the turn-taking behaviors and interruptions between teachers and students, adults and children, and males and females, will be looked into in order to reveal their unequal interactions reflecting their asymmetrical relationships.

The turn-taking behavior in the classroom is influenced by the teacher and students' role difference. A teacher has the role of teaching students and has a responsibility to teach them effectively. Automatically, the teacher has the right to speak in the name of teaching. As a consequence, the students' freedom to speak is restricted; they can usually take a turn to answer when being asked a question by a teacher, or they sometimes take a turn voluntarily when they have some specific questions to ask the teacher. These interactional patterns are commonly seen in any type of classroom.

HcHoul observed the organization of turns during formal talk in the classroom and states that classroom interaction is identified as "question-answer-comment," rather than as "adjacency-pairs."<sup>18</sup> "Adjacency-pairs" is a bound question and answer such as complaint-denial and compliment-rejection patterns which are commonly seen in ordinary interactions, according to Sacks et al.<sup>19</sup>

Mehan and Griffin also report that a primary discourse pattern in a classroom is characterized by the sequence of an "initiation-replay-evaluation." Consequently, they found that a teacher talks two thirds of the time while students talk one third of the time.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Allwright found that the teacher got 204 speaking turns in total which was a significant number in comparison to the most active participant's 47 times in class. He also found that the teacher interrupted frequently.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that the classroom interactions between a teacher and his/her students are customarily under the control of the teacher because of their parents' different roles. The teacher is the one who takes more turns than any student, decides the next turn-taker, and has the right to interrupt the students' turns. On the other hand, the students play the role of a good audience: listening to the teacher, responding to the teacher when being asked, and not interrupting the teacher's talk.

The turn-taking behavior between adults and children is also significant in a sense that children are encouraged to take a turn by their parents or caretakers. The children are taught how to socialize with people by their parents or caretakers; they learn not only how to talk but also how to take a speaking turn simultaneously. Sacks states that one main characteristic of an adult-child interaction is a question and answer sequence such as Q-A-Q-A-Q-A... In this conversational sequence, an adult is in the position of generating the questions.<sup>22</sup> According to McDonald and Pien, mothers try to involve their child in conversation and to facilitate child language development. They also mention the mothers' intention to control and direct the children due to their frequent directives, attention devices, negation of child actions, and other findings.<sup>23</sup>

Heath reports that children from middle-class homes learn a natural way to interact with their parents through the bedtime story. The parents provide books and read stories to them at bedtime. The children are usually asked questions about the stories by their parents; they are encouraged to talk about the stories which are read by their parents. Then, the parents provide verbal feedback and label their responses as good or bad. Thus, middle-class children learn how to socialize by the "initiation-reply-evaluation" sequence at an early age, which is the same structural feature seen in the classroom interaction.<sup>24</sup> That

is why Heath maintains middle-class children tend to perform better than lower-class ones in the classroom. They have sufficient practice at home.

In short, the turn-taking behavior in an adult-child interaction is affected by the inequality of their pragmatic competence. It is characterized by mothers or caretakers controlling an interaction and encouraging their child to take a turn in order to participate in a conversation by the extensive use of questions. The adults' task is to make efforts to have children learn how to interact with others at the same time as learning how to talk.

The turn-taking behavior between males and females is remarkable in terms of sex role differences in conversation. Females are not encouraged to take more and longer turns than males. These male and female turn-taking behaviors are the reflection of their way of interacting in a mixed sex group; men should be talkative, but women should not, reports Kramer.<sup>25</sup> Women's speech still keeps this trait more or less even though their speech has changed considerably since the feminist movement.

One of the characteristics seen in the conversation of a mixed sex group is males' interruptions during females' speech, which are viewed as violations of the turn-taking system rules. Zimmerman and West's findings (1975) show that in cross-sex interaction, men interrupt women more often than women interrupt men.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, they (1983) report that, 21 out of 28, 75 percent of the interruptions are done by the males to the females.<sup>27</sup> Yamazaki and Yoshii also report that males' interruptions of females are twice the number of those in the same-sex groups among the Japanese speakers.<sup>28</sup> Here, we need to acknowledge that interruptions do not always occur because of a lack of turn-taking skills among interlocutors; they tend to occur in interactions between two or more different interlocutors in terms of their sex, status, age, and role. That is to say, these findings can be interpreted as inequality of speech rights between males and females; men deny equal status to women as conversational partners because of male dominance in conversations. Zimmerman and West (1975) remark that "difference between males and females in the distribution of turns may be, for example, parallel to the difference between them in the society's economic system."<sup>29</sup>

So far, we have looked at turn-taking behavior and its accompanied behaviors between teachers and students,

adults and children, and males and females, whose relationships are regarded as being unequal in society. Some resemblance is seen in their interactions; teachers, adults, and males tend to be able to take more turns and to interrupt more frequently than students, children, and females in conversations. That is to say, the turn-taking is controlled and its rules are often violated by teachers, adults, and males who have a higher status, who are older, and who have more socioeconomic power than the others. Here we conclude that turn-taking behavior is recognized as often being asymmetrical among interactors because it is affected by the social factors: their role, age, status, sex, and so on. Supposedly, such an unequal interaction will be taken for granted in any society. However, the social factor that has the strongest influence on people's interaction is liable to differ among cultures. In any case, people's turn-taking behavior is assumed to be considerably different from one culture to another.

#### **Ethnographical Management in Turn-Taking**

Each culture has its own way to manage turn-taking system rules as conversational patterns are ethnographically different among cultures. For example, turn-taking with no or little overlapping is considered to be ideal in the English language, but it can be speculated that there are some languages which pretty much allow overlapping when a turn is taken. Also, in terms of turn-allocation techniques, people tend to use the self-selection technique more often than the other-selection technique in the English language when they interact. However, this tendency may not be seen in other languages. Turn-taking behavior needs to be studied cross-culturally.

Gumperz reports some problems in interethnic communication because of "differences in linguistic and sociocultural knowledge."<sup>30</sup> He analyzes an interview conducted in English by a British female counselor with a Pakistani male teacher. Lack of coordination was seen throughout the interview because of many overlappings and pauses which were mostly displayed by the Pakistani male.<sup>31</sup> The transition of their speaking turns appears to be awkward and this kind of interactional asynchrony created "uncomfortable moments" between the interactors, according to Gumperz.<sup>32</sup> Here, it can be assumed that part of the problem lies in ethnographical differences in turn-taking management.

Philips compares the face-to-face interaction between Anglo Americans and the Indians of the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon. She found a culturally diverse interactional management between these two groups. Indian speech is characterized as having a slower pace, frequently longer pauses between turns, and more tolerance for silence than those of Anglo Americans. They rarely interrupt each other. A speaker maintains control over his turn and minimizes the control over other speakers' turns. He controls the length of his own turn and is not interrupted by others.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Indian speech is observed as having calmness, stillness, and control.

Being native speakers of Japanese with a long association with the English language, we feel the greatly different turn-taking behaviors between Japanese and Americans reflect the different speech values. One of the noteworthy characteristics is that Japanese are not encouraged to use the self-selecting technique because being talkative or outspoken tends to be negatively valued among the Japanese as Morsback mentions.<sup>34</sup> They are apt to wait for their speaking turn to be given. This tendency grows stronger as formality increases. Therefore, disconnection of flow may be seen throughout their formal interactions due to more pauses and silences at turn-taking transitions. English speakers may evaluate such interactions as being awkward or lacking smoothness; however, the Japanese seem to be tolerant of pauses and silences and take them for granted.

Having looked at turn-taking behaviors ethnographically, it can be said that turn-taking behavior varies from one culture to another. Consequently, interethnic communication may not flow on; we should expect that some difficulties may arise due to cultural differences in turn-taking management. Further study about the turn-taking behavior of various languages should be carried out for the purpose of better cross-cultural communication.

#### **Conclusion**

Looking at the turn-taking behavior which automatically appears in human interaction, we have learned how a speaking turn is taken and that its system rules are fairly complex because it is integrated with other communication aspects: the give-and-take concept, the idea of getting the floor, face preservation in speech act, back channels, and interruptions. We have also learned of the

sensitive nature of turn-taking due to the influence of socioeconomic power between interactors. Moreover, we have recognized that turn-taking behavior is considerably different among cultures. We can see then that turn-taking is one of the communication skills and turn-taking behavior is governed. Therefore, in order to be an effective communicator who is able to interact with others appropriately in any setting, who expresses his/her opinion clearly, and who knows how to do things with words, it is important for us to acquire the necessary communication skills including this particular one and learn how to use them in actual situations, along with developing our language proficiency.

In classrooms, we have observed Japanese students as passive communicators; they are a good audience most of the time, but they are too intimidated to ask questions or speak their mind. Generally speaking, they are not good at participating in class of their own free will. They don't seem to feel obligated to give feedback or make a comment unless being asked to by a teacher. That is to say, Japanese students are not accustomed to using the self-selecting technique in turn-taking; generally the teacher is the one who allocates a speaking turn in class. The teacher is likely to give a turn to a student by asking questions such as "Sato-san, what do you think of XXX?" or "Tanaka-kun, would you explain XXX briefly?" The students are obliged to say something when a turn is given; otherwise, they are apt to keep silent or just wait for a turn.

This type of interaction is also commonly seen in of American university classes; nevertheless, the American students often participate in class with the use of the self-selecting technique as well. It would seem that the American students are not inhibited about being active interactors. In short, their interactional pattern is somewhat different from the Japanese' in terms of the greater use of the self-selecting technique in the turn allocation.

Hence, we will be able to imagine what kind of problems or difficulties a Japanese student could encounter when he/she attends a class at an American university, and vice versa. We often hear that native English teachers struggle to have the Japanese students participate in class.

Lastly, we would like to suggest that a native English teacher should not expect Japanese students to partici-

pate in class of their own free will. Quite simply, they are not accustomed to doing so. Instead, teaching is likely to be more successful if the teacher invites his/her students to participate in class with the use of the other-selecting technique. In other words, he/she allocates a speaking turn by asking a question or someone's opinion instead of waiting for voluntary participation. On the other hand, the teacher trying to teach his/her students the self-selecting technique in turn-taking, is highly commendable because it will require excessive effort; the teacher will need to constantly encourage his/her students to participate in class of their own free will and help them be active interactors.

Turn-taking should be taught in class in order for Japanese students to be effective communicators. It must be taught as part of communication activities because it is impossible to teach turn-taking alone. Through the activities, the students will learn how to give and take in the classroom interactions, as well as expressing their opinions. However, the present classroom situation obstructs the introduction of communication activities into class mainly in two respects: the large size of the class and the traditional role oriented class management. Such a classroom situation needs to be improved.

First, a large class will not produce effective communicators; we all know that a smaller-sized class is ideal for communication activities. Active interactions between a teacher and students or among students are more likely to take place during the activities in a smaller-sized class rather than in a larger-sized class. A smaller-sized class can provide students with more chances to acquire communication skills.

Second, the traditional role oriented class management should be reconsidered because it does not facilitate interactions. A teacher gives a lecture and students listen to it. This type of class would not provide give-and-take relationships between the teacher and the students. The teacher should be eager to interact with his/her students in terms of bringing up questions, listening to their opinions, and discussing points. He/She needs to create an atmosphere where students feel their opinions are welcome, yet maintain control over his/her class. Needless to say, such efforts will be more fruitful in a smaller-sized class.

Nowadays, silence does not seem to be golden any



more. We need to be aware of the necessity of becoming and producing effective communicators. Our society needs them. Cross-cultural communication also requires the Japanese people to be effective communicators. That is to say, we have to take into account acquisition of oral communication skills as well as the development of language proficiency among Japanese students. Consequently, the classroom situation should be improved for this purpose.

#### Notes

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### Abstract

Turn-taking, one of the communication skills, was studied holistically. First, turn-taking signals and mechanism are described. Second, turn-taking is discussed with sociolinguistic considerations and it is delineated how it is entwined with other sociolinguistic rules. Then, turn-taking behavior is looked at among groups with unequal relationships in order to find out what is behind their turn-taking behaviors. The observation of those gives us an insight into society. Inequality of speech rights between interactors is reflected in their turn-taking behaviors; that is to say, status, age, and socioeconomic power influence interactors' turn-taking behaviors. Last, differences in turn-taking behaviors are also looked at cross-culturally. Each culture has its own way of managing conversational interactions; consequently, turn-taking behavior is thought to be governed and cross-cultural interactions could cause misunderstandings among the interactors due to their different turn-taking management.