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Development of Communicative Competence in English : Teaching Listener's Responses in English to Japanese Learners[1]

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Introduction

The teaching of grammar, in which pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, spelling and linguistic semantics are included (Canale 1983:7), has long been a focus of attention in Second Language Teaching. Acquiring grammatical competence in a target language is essential for the learner of that language to say what he/she wants to say. However, since Hymes (1972) introduced the term 'communicative competence', claiming that a native speaker of a language knows not only 'whether something is formally possible' but also 'whether something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated' (1972:281), a great amount of both theoretical and practical research into teaching appropriate use of a language in context has been carried out in the related fields of study (Canale and Swain 1980, Canale 1983, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993, Thomas 1983, among others). It is essential for a non-native speaker to learn 'the extent to which particular communicative functions (e.g. commanding, complaining and inviting), attitudes (including politeness and formality) and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation' as well as 'the extent to which a given meaning (including communicative functions, attitudes and propositions/ideas) is represented in a verbal and/or non-verbal form that is proper in a given sociolinguistic context' (Canale 1983:7).

Native speaker's knowledge of how conversation is organized and developed, which involves the principles of conversational discourse, is referred to as 'conversational competence' by Richards and Schmidt (1983). The teaching of conversational competence is crucial for Second Language Teaching not only because it constitutes a part of communicative competence but also because 'conversational competence is closely related to the presentation of self, that is, communicating an image of ourselves to others' (Richards and Schmidt 1983:150).

In the present paper, I will consider one aspect of conversational organization, listener's responses to speaker's extended talk, based on an approach to conversational organization known as Conversation Analysis. Then I will propose that listener's responses such as "uh huh", "yeah", "Did you" and "That's good" should be taught in a systematic way to learners of English as a second language because an appropriate use of these items is necessary for successful communication in English.

1. Native and non-native speaker's conversation in English

It is often observed that non-native speakers perform only passive roles in conversation with na-

tive speakers. Fragment (1) shows a non-native speaker's passive role in conversation and fragment (2) shows 'passive recipiency' (Jefferson 1984:200) of a non-native speaker.

(1) (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:146–7)

NS : a female, Caucasian American native speaker of English. NNS : a male Japanese office worker in Los Angeles for an intensive summer course in ESL. He is a 'beginner'. This is their first meeting, which has been arranged by the researcher. It is tape-recorded in a small office.

1. NS : [Name] , how are you, [name] ?
2. NNS : (How are you ?)
3. NS : How are you ?
4. NNS : I am fine thank you.
5. NS : Good good How long have you been here in the United States ?
6. NNS : I've been (.) about uh three weeks about three weeks
7. NS : Oh Do you like it ? Do you like it here ?
8. NNS : Yes, I liked it (xx) very much.

48 lines omitted

9. NS : Where did you study English ?
10. NNS : ... I studies English at uh school ... high school and the university
11. NS : (oh) university What university ?
12. NNS : (yeah)
13. NS : All right What university did you go to ?
14. NNS :/ajia/university.
15. NS : What city is that ?
16. NNS : At/nostasi/city
17. NS : I don't know Japan. I have never been there
18. NS : [slight giggle]
19. NNS : [slight laugh]

(2) (my data)[2]

NS is a female university student in UK. NNS is a female Japanese student, studying at a university in Northern Ireland. This is their first meeting and has been arranged by the researcher.

1. NS : huhuhu yes, I don't have a TV in my room but
2. my frie// nd ac// ross the ha//ll
3. NNS : mm hm mm hm mm hm
4. NS : she has so//me ( )
5. NNS : mm hm

6. NS : so whenever something good on then we'd bang on her door
7. she says GO away
8. I am trying to sleep NO ::: there's a film on.
9. NNS : aHAHAHAHA
10. NS : so we keep//her out of bed.
11. NNS : .hhhhh Wow mm
12. NS : and I have a friend she's living in hou em number 15
13. NNS : mm hm number 15
14. NS : yeah
15. NNS : mm hm
16. NS : and (0.2) she brought her own TV and she found
17. she thought it was too quiet she couldn't cope with the quietness.
18. NNS : oh//( )
19. NS : coz she she was up in the halls where I am last year
20. NNS : mm hm
21. NS : and it was constantly people banging doors n shouting n (0.3) you
22. know always somebody//talk
23. NNS : mm hm
24. NS : and TV going to .hhh (0.2) after a while if anybody wants to go
25. sleep but it's the last thing you want
26. NNS : mm//hm
27. NS : but she got used to that noise and hasn't slept
28. without noise,
29. NNS : mm hm
30. NS : and now very quiet//and she cannot sleep because it's too quiet
31. NNS : ah ::::::::::::::::::
32. NNS : Ah :: ye :: ah
33. NS : and
34. NNS : hm ::
35. NS : We told her we come and shout outside her window and I don't think
36. the rest of yous would appreciate it.
37. NNS : oh really ?
38. NS : ahahaha
39. (0.5)
40. NNS : Ah :::
41. NS :You would be shouted back.
42. NNS : mm hm. hha. hha. hha
43. NS ://mm
44. NNS : yeah by the way e :: r (0.3) do you find some Japanese in hall ?

In fragment (1), the NS asks questions and the NNS answers them; He never takes a first turn in question-answer sequences. Such an interaction rarely happens in casual conversation between native speakers but is common in conversations between native and non-native speakers (Richards and Schmidt 1983:130).

In (2), the NNS produces only verbal utterances such as "yeah", "mm hm", "oh really" and laughter, except for "house 15" in line 13, which is a partial repeat, until she initiates a new topic in line 44. These two excerpts show different types of non-native speaker's passive participation in conversation with native speakers.

It might be argued that their insufficient linguistic ability causes this passiveness and that when their vocabulary and grammar has improved enough, they will be able to make an active contribution to conversation with native speakers. Conversation, however, is a collaborative achievement of participants and these non-native speakers' contributions in the fragments (1) and (2) are also responsible for jointly creating the flow of conversation with native speakers: the former making only second pair parts of question-answer adjacency pairs and the latter producing only verbal responses such as "mm hm" and "yeah" respectively. Since 'questioners have the right to talk again after the other party has answered the question' (Sacks 1972, cited from Richards and Schmidt 1983:130), no matter how grammatically elaborate answers the non-native speaker makes, he never gets an opportunity to be an active party unless he makes a first pair part of interactional acts. In the case of fragment (2), the use of such items as "mm hm" demonstrates to the co-conversationalist her choice of being in a recipient state because they have a function of displaying that its producer passes the turn and the speaker continues his/her talk (Jefferson 1984, more detailed discussion in 2. 2).

This indicates that improvement of linguistic competence will not be a necessary and sufficient condition for second language learners to become competent interlocutors in the target language. Acquiring a knowledge of how conversation is organized in the target language is essential for successful interactions. As we have seen, this knowledge involves a knowledge of appropriate use of verbal responses such as "mm hm", "yeah", "oh" and the like. Throughout this paper I will refer to these items as listener's responses. The term 'listener' should be justified by noting that even though its producer makes some vocalizations, he/she does not take a turn as a speaker, in other words, he/she intends to remain as a listener or recipient while the other interlocutor is making a multiunit turn. I will look at their functions and places of occurrence in section 2 and the differences between English and Japanese listener's responses in section 3. Then I will propose that the teaching of the system of listener's responses in English constitutes an integral part in developing Japanese learners' conversational competence, or more broadly communicative competence, of English.

2. The system of listener's responses in English

2.1 An approach to the study of listener's responses : Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis was first established by scholars associated with a group of sociologists known as ethnomethodologists. Conversation analysts have examined the details of natural occur-

ring data transcribed from recordings, avoiding intuitive analysis of what is going on but seeking the categories to which participants themselves display orientation. While this approach has been and still is one of the most promising ways of looking at the accomplishment of social order by people through language, since Schegloff and Sacks (1973:289) shifted their attention to conversation itself, 'the study of conversation as an activity' has attracted the interest of researchers.

Conversation Analysis is based on the four fundamental assumptions :

1) interaction is structurally organized;
2) contributions to interaction are both context-shaped and context-renewing ;
3) these two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order of detail in conversational interaction can be dismissed a priori as disorderly ;
4) the study of social interaction in its details is best approached through the analysis of naturally occurring data.

(Heritage 1989:22)

In relation to the topic of this paper, namely the functions of listener's responses, it may be worth describing the second assumption in more detail. Schegloff convincingly states that

> in the real world of conversation..., an utterance will occur someplace sequentially. Most obviously, except for initial utterances, it will occur after some other utterance or sequence of utterances with which it will have, in some fashion, to deal and which will be relevant to its analysis for co-participants. Less obviously, but more importantly, it (and here initial utterances are not excepted) may occur in a structurally defined place in conversation, in which case its structural location can have attached to its slot a set of features that may overwhelm its syntactic or prosodic structure in primacy.
>
> (Schegloff 1978:86)

The meaning of an utterance is neither defined by its syntactic form nor defined by the speaker's intention of what it means at the moment of uttering. It is defined by its sequential place in which it is used[3]. For example,

(3) (Milroy and McTear 1983:64)

A : Is lunch ready ?
B : Would you stop nagging me !
A : I was only asking.

The illocutionary force of A's first utterance is interpreted by B as directive, then this interpretation is disclaimed in A's second utterance by displaying it as an inquiry. What we could tell here is that the illocutionary force of A's first utterance is negotiated within the ongoing sequence and is inter-

preted as an inquiry rather than directive, no matter what A had in mind at the moment when he/she uttered it.

Another useful example, which explains the importance of sequential consideration of an utterance for deciding its illocutionary act, is from Schegloff (1978).

(4) (Schegloff 1978:81 (1), the first 8 lines are omitted)

9. B : He says, governments, an' you know he keeps- he
10. talks about governments, they sh- the thing that
11. they sh'd do is what's right or wrong.
12. A : For whom.
13. B : Well he says-//he-
14. A : By what standard
15. B : That's what - that's exactly what I mean. he s-
but he says...

According to Schegloff (1978:89–90), the A's utterance in line 12 is ambiguous in terms of its interactional act ; two analyses are possible for this linguistic form : one is a question, more specifically, doing a request for clarification and the other is showing understanding of and agreement with B. Although Schegloff explains in more detail how both acts of A's utterance in line 12 become possible at this 'place in which it is used' (1978:93–99), it suffices for now to say that there are two interpretations concerning "For whom". B's response in line 13 displays that B has understood A's utterance as a question and B produces his utterance as a second pair of a question - answer adjacency pair. Then A in line 14 interrupts B by producing a nearly isomorphic utterance to his utterance in line 12 in terms of its syntactic form, intonational contour and stress placement because B's understanding is not what A intended. This time B takes it as showing agreement and displays an acknowledgement of agreement. How could B come to hear A's utterance in line 14 as showing agreement, not as a question even though its syntactic forms are almost isomorphic? Schegloff puts it,

> Whatever defines the class "questions" as a linguistic form will not do for "questions" as conversational objects, or interactional objects, or social actions. If by "question" we want to mean anything like a sequentially relevant or implicative object, so that in some way it would adumbrate the notion "answer," if, therefore, something like adjacency pair organization is involved, then it will not do, for a variety of reasons, to use features of linguistic form as sole, or even invariant though not exhaustive, indicators or embodiments of such objects. Sequential organization is critical.
>
> (Schegloff 1978:99)

With this preoccupation with sequential consideration together with the other assumptions mentioned above, conversation analysts have produced quite a few research works on response token ob-

jects such as "uh huh", "mm hm", "yeah", "oh", "really", "Did you ?" and "You did" (Schegloff 1982, Jefferson 1981, Jefferson 1984, Heritage 1984, Goodwin 1986, among others). Until then, these items were given only marginal attention in linguistic disciplines (Maynard 1989:159), because they were considered to be semantically and syntactically insignificant. Conversation analysts, however, have found that they are used by interlocutors in a systematic way. I will look at findings from Conversation Analysis regarding the types, place of occurrence and functions of listener's responses in more detail in 2.2 and 2.3.

2.2 Functions of listener's responses such as "uh huh" and "yeah"[4]

Among listener's responses in English, items such as "uh huh", "mm hm" and "yeah" have been referred to under different category names, depending on how the scholar characterizes their functions. Having adapted the term "back-channel behaviour" coined by Yngve (1970), Duncan and Fiske (1977:73) classify "uh huh" under the category of "back channels", which includes verbal as well as non-verbal responses.

Schegloff refers to them with the term 'continuers' since expressions such as "uh huh", "yeah" and the like are most commonly used to 'embody the understanding that extended talk by another is going on by declining to produce a fuller turn in that position' and 'when so used, utterances such as "uh huh" may properly be termed 'continuers" (1982:81).

Jefferson (1984) refers to "uh huh", "mm hm" and "yeah" as 'acknowledgement tokens', because they are used when 'a recipient of some ongoing talk will at some point neither simply shift topic nor talk on the topic in progress' (1984:199), but acknowledge it.

In this study, I will not use a specific term to refer to the class of "uh huh" and the like but will keep the term 'continuer' for describing their functions. Giving a functional name to this class may lead to confusion when the corresponding expressions in the Japanese language are brought into the scope of inquiry, since they are used not only as a continuer but also as a device displaying other functions such as an agreement with the co-conversationalist's prior turn (Maynard 1989).

Schegloff (1982) characterizes the function of 'uh huh' as a continuer, exploiting the notion of turn-taking organization and repair. According to him,

> perhaps the most common usage of 'uh huh', etc. (in environments other than after yes/no questions) is to exhibit on the part of its producer an understanding that an extended unit of talk is underway by another, and that it is not yet, or may not yet be (even ought not yet be), complete. It takes the stance that the speaker of that extended unit should continue talking, and in that continued talking should continue that extended unit. 'Uh huh', etc. exhibit this understanding, and take this stance, precisely by passing an opportunity to produce a full turn at talk. When so used, utterances such as 'uh huh' may properly be termed 'continuers".
>
> (Schegloff 1982:81)

He also argues that by passing an opportunity to produce a full turn at talk, its producer passes

an opportunity to initiate repair on the immediately preceding talk' because it is such other-initiated repair that might have relevantly been done at this opportunity (1982:87–8). He continues that although "uh huh" and the like have been characterized as 'evidence of attention, interest, and/or understanding on the listener's part' (1982:78) in the literature, this characterization should not be thought to come from 'a direct semantic convention' attached to them, but is derived through 'ordinary inference' that by passing the opportunity to initiate repair on the immediately preceding talk, the talk is being understood (1982:88).

Jefferson (1984) makes a distinction between "mm hm" and "yeah" in terms of their function. "Yeah" and "yes" are associated with topical shift and "mm hm" exhibits 'passive recipiency' by which its user is proposing that his co-participant is still in the midst of some course of talk, and shall go on talking' (Jefferson 1984:199–200).

Jefferson also argues "mm hm" stands in contrast to 'news receipt/topicalizer' such as "oh really" and "he does" by which 'co-participant exhibits some interest in being told more, indeed encourages the telling of more, and warrants the introduction of the matter in the first place' (1984:202). She claims that in (5) E could have responded with "oh really" to L's introduction of a new topic but instead she produced "mm hm", exhibiting her intention of 'recognizable yielding' and an immediate subsiding into a state of passive recipiency (1984:202).

(5) (Jefferson 1984:201 (1. 1))

(1–11 omitted)
"He" in line 13 refers to Mr. Cole, E's daughter's father-in-law and Dwight is L's friend's husband. L introduces a new topic concerning Dwight in line 15 (this description is my addition).

12. L : Ye :: ah well hu
13. E : And he's quite a pla : y | bo : y you kno : w.
14. (.)
15. L : Yeah you just got to be caref We : ll see : 'hh Dwight only
16. has (0.2) u-one : ga : ll bladder ?
17. (0.7)
18. E : → Mm hm

When the listener utters "uh huh" and the like, the speaker of the prior turn can or should continue his/her talk. In fragment (6), B manipulates this function to achieve her conversational goal.

(6) (Jefferson 1984:208–9, (3.2))

G is telling about the selling of a house and B is a potential scavenger, with an interest in "some of the plants".
1. G : u-We :ll Loretta wa : nted thi : s, and (.) she wanted tha : t? and

2. .hhh a : nd uhm (0.8) uh : m Loretta- w-the woman said to me
3. well what uh : are you takin : g ou : t of the house. that's
4. atta : ched.
5. (.)
6. B : M-hm,
7. (0.2)
8. G : | An : d uhm (0.3) | I said we : ll (0.4) I guess noth : ing'h (0.2)
9. : uh : m I thought well s- ih heavens. after | all you c(h)
10. t(h)ake everythi : ng,
11. B : No : ,
12. G : .hhhh A : nd um (.) so they
13. B : you're going to take some crystal things
14. though aren't you ?
15. G : Uh we : ll

((19 lines omitted re. switching chandeliers))

35. G : I'd li : ke to have the mirrors. But if she wants | them ? (.)
36. .hh | why that's : i-th-tha : t's | fin :: e.
37. B : Mm hm,
38. G : If she's going to use them you kno : w.
39. B : Mm hm,
40. G : .hhhhhh I'm not going to uhm, hh maybe queer a dea : l just
41. by wanting this that and the othe r (you know),
42. NO :.
43. (0.2)
44. G : .hhhh s : So : uhm, h (.) tha : t's : the | story.
45. B : → Mm hm,
46. (0.2)
47. G : An : d uh (0.6) uhm, hhh (1.0). hhhh u-Then I have a ma : n
48. coming Tue : sday to see abou : t uh remo : deling the kitchen the
49. way I want it you know ? and the butler's pa : ntry
50. B : Uh huh,
51. G : .hhhh and doing a few thin :gs like tha : t.
52. B : Uh-huh
53. G : .hhh | And uh : (.) it's just (.) just geh- you know working
54. then to tr y and ge t (.) thing kind of li : ned u :: p.
55. B : Y e a :: h
56. B : Yeh < .hh nNow I wonder uh : m .hh eh-uh : (w) (0.5) .h whhen would
57. eh : (0.2) 'tch'hh be the best ti : me for me to get some of

58. the pla : nts that Maurice doesn't wa : nt.

In this fragment, B deliberately distances her utterance of "to get some of the plants" in line 56 to 58 from G's utterances in line 1 to 10 and 40 to 41, by repeating "mm hm" (Jefferson 1984:209). As Jefferson claims, B could have brought up the inquiry of plants after G's utterance, "That's the story", because this explicitly displays the completion of G's topic and provides an ideal place for topic shift. However instead of taking this opportunity, B remains as a passive recipient by producing only "mm hm". G's desperate search for a new topic with pauses and in and out breath proves G's intention of the completion of her prior talk and interpretation of B's response as a continuer.

2.3 The system of listener's responses in English

I have so far focused my attention to the functions of such vocalizations as "uh huh" and "mm hm" as instances of listener's responses. It is, however, obvious that listener's responses are not limited to these items.

What constitutes the category of listener's responses? Do the members of the category work systematically? Nofsinger (1991) examines a number of 'specific responses through which participants work toward alignment' (1991 : 114). He includes in the set of responses working toward alignment assessments such as "That's good"[5], newsmarks such as "Did you" and "really"[6], "oh" receipts[7], continuers, formulations and collaborative completions. Although formulations and collaborative completions are important devices for displaying alignment, I exclude them from the system of listener's responses because the listener takes a full turn when uttering them. In addition to the items above, such utterances as "I see" and "Right" might be included in the system because they may occur in the midst of an extended turn of the speaker, showing the recipient's 'recognition that the speaker is involved in a multiunit turn and his/her cooperation in allowing the speaker to continue' (Nofsinger 1991:119)[8].

What structure does the system of listener's responses have? What features or functions does each sub-category of the system have and how are they related to each other? We have seen in 2. 2 that "mm hm" and "uh huh" differ from newsmarks such as "Did you" and "Really", so what about other types of listener's responses ?

I will begin my investigation of the relations of each sub-categories of listener's responses with the work of Heritage (1984) regarding "oh" receipt. Heritage (1984) examines occurrences of 'oh' in responses to informings and repairs and concludes that 'oh' is used 'to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness (1984:299). Both "oh" in turn-initial position and in free-standing proposes that a prior turn was produced as informing, in other words, that the producer of "oh" 'has been informed as a result of the prior turn's talk' (1984:304). By contrast, "mm hm" and "yes" are used to avoid or defer treating prior talk as informative (1984:305).

(7) (Heritage 1984:301 (5))

First 8 lines are omitted.

1 C : She decided to go away this weekend. =
2 E : →= Yeah
3 C : ˙hhh (.) y'know I really don' have a
4 place ti'stay
5 E : → ˙hO ::: h.
6 (0.2)
7 E : ˙hh So you're not gonna go up this weekend ?

In line 2, E proposes that 'C's informing is not yet possibly complete' and elicits further talk from C by using a continuer, but in line 5, E produces a free-standing "oh" and does not prompt further talk, by which E proposes that C's 'informing is now complete' (Heritage 1984:302) and thus a change of state has occurred.

Because of this function of "oh", it is not happenstance to observe that turn-initial "oh" can be combined with assessments, questions or newsmarks.

(8) (Heritage 1984:302 (7))

J : I w'z j'st eh ringing up t'say I'll be comin' down
inna moment,
I : → Ohgh goo : d,

(9) (Heritage 1984:303 (11))

N : My f : face hurts, =
H : = °W't-°
(.)
H : → Oh what'd'e do tih you.

(10) (Heritage 1984:303 (12))

V : Oh I met Jani :e, eh ::: m yesterday an' she'd
had a fo : rm from the Age Concern about that
jo : b. h =
J : →= Oh she has ?

In each of these cases, "oh" is produced to propose that the prior turn has been informative and that a change of state of the recipient has occurred. Thus it can be combined with an assessment as in (8), which treats the informing as complete, reveals the recipient's judgement about the news as

good or bad and may curtail the topic, or with a question as in (9), which treats the prior news announcement turn as incomplete and elicits further information from the speaker, or with a newsmark as in (10) (Heritage 1984:302–3).

By contrast, "yes" or "yeah" prefaces 'additional turn components that assert prior knowledge of just delivered information' (Heritage 1984:305).

(11) (Heritage 1984:305 (14))

H: Listen, Bud's alright.
J: → Yeah, I know, I just talked to 'm.

"Oh" in both turn-initial position and free standing is thus contrasted to "yeah", "yes" and "mm hm" in terms of whether a prior turn is informative or not to the recipient. Free-standing "oh" also contrasts to "mm hm" in terms of whether the informing in a prior turn is completed or not.

Heritage argues that when "oh" receipt 'occurs in response to informings that are elicited by question' (1984:307), it 'implicates the questioner's acceptance of an answer as fact' (1984:339–44 notes 12 and 13)[9]. Evidence is provided by the systematic avoidance of "oh" by the British broadcast interviewers and arbitrators in British small claims courts (1984:339 note 12)[10]. Another proof of this is that while 'a variety of assertions of ritualized disbelief', e. g. "yer kidding" "really?" "Did you" etc. invite the speaker to reconfirm the substance of the prior turn's talk, free-standing "oh" does not. (Heritage 1984:339–40 note 13).

(12) (Heritage 1984:340 note 13 (b))

N: But uh I didn't get home til' ˙hhh two las' night
I met a very, h very n: ni: ce gu: y.
D: → Di (.) dju.:::::
N: → I: really did through the: se frie: nds.

(13) ((12) is modified)

N: But uh I didn't get home til' ˙hhh two las' night
I met a very, h very n: ni: ce gu: y.
D: → Oh.:˙
N: → ?? I: really did through the:se frie:nds.

This is also justified by the different trajectories projected by "oh"-plus-newsmarks such as "oh you are" and free-standing newsmarks such as "you are" and "I do", which are not syntactically produced as queries. The latter may project disagreement as in (14) and (15), but "oh"-plus-newsmarks do not (Heritage 1984:342–4) as in (16).

(14) (Heritage 1984:342 (l))

T : That broom you lookin' for is on the s-
landing a'the stairs.
(0.3)
J : → It i:s ?
(0.2)
T : Yea//:h
J : → I don't see any broom there.

(15) (Heritage 1984:343 (n))

A : ..... You sounded very far away.
(0.7)
B : → I do ?
A : Meahm.
B : mNo ? I'm no : t,

(16) (Heritage 1984:343 (q))

E : Well, we just got do : wn, hh
L : → Oh you di ://d ?
E : Yea : uh.
L : Oh how co:me.

What is special about newsmarks? As we have seen, newsmarks, both in free-standing and in a position prefaced by "oh", treat a prior turn as news rather than merely informative. Because of this function, they regularly encourage more talk from the speaker in reference to the news just delivered. They are also followed by a reconfirmation utterance of the speaker as in (17) and (18). By contrast assessments can curtail the topic and are often used as such as in (17) (Goodwin 1986:215, Jefferson 1981).

(17) (Heritage : 1984:340 (c))

M : How many cigarettes yih had.
(0.8)
E : NO : NE.
M : → Oh really ?
E : No :.
M : → Very good.

(18) (Heritage 1984:341 (e))

A: We're havin a h-buncha people over too.:
B: → Oh are yih ?
(.)
A: → Yej it sort'v.....

In terms of a possible completion of an on-going extended turn, assessments have a sharp contrast with continuers.

In sum, the category of listener's responses consists of vocalizations such as "uh huh" and "yeah", newsmarks, "oh", assessments and brief utterances such as "I see" or "right"[11]. Listener's responses are produced by the recipient of an extended turn in a systematic way. While "uh huh" and "mm hm" function as mere continuers, "oh" and newsmarks display informativeness or newsworthiness of the prior turn. While assessments and free-standing "oh" may bring an extended turn to an end, newsmarks and "uh huh" elicit further talk or reconfirmation of the prior turn from the speaker. "Oh" regularly treats the substance of the prior turn as fact, but free-standing newsmarks may require a reconfirmation utterance from the speaker and lead to a disagreement in the subsequent sequence.

3. Differences in functions of Japanese and English listener's responses

It is essential for participants of conversation to display attentiveness towards and understanding of co-conversationalist's talk for successful communication. Therefore the presence of devices which achieve this may be universal. This, however, does not necessarily mean such devices operate in the same way in different languages, nor that people of different languages prefer to indicate their attentiveness in the same way.

From a Second Language Teaching point of view, it is interesting to know if devices which the listener uses to respond to the speaker's extended talk function in the same way between a mother language and a target language. I will look at Japanese listener's responses in 3.1 to see if they differ in function, places of occurrence or frequency from those of English.

3.1 Listener's responses in Japanese

Maynard (1989) examines 'back-channel behavior' in Japanese in detail. Unlike Duncan & Fiske (1977), who include in the class of back channel utterances such as m-hm, sentence completions, requests for clarification and brief restatements, Maynard's study focuses on 'occurrences of behaviour where an interlocutor who assumes a listener's role sends short messages during the other's speaking turn' (1989:160). She identifies as back-channel behaviour primarily 'turn-internal listener back channel' (1989:161), which is listener's behaviour occurring during the turn-internal listener state. It is not limited to verbal behaviour, but comprises non-verbal signals such as head movement and laughter (1989:160–162). Some instances of Japanese verbal back-channels are "un" (uh huh, yeah, hum), "honto" (really), "soo" (yeah, I see), "ee" (yeah, yes), "aaa" (I see), "uun" (hum, I see)

(Maynard 1989, 1997)[12].

Interestingly, Japanese back channels do occur in the midst of an utterance as well as at the borders of turn construction units. In (19) and (20), B's "un"s occur both in the utterance-internal positions such as B1,B5 and B6 and at the borders of turn construction units such as B2 and B7.

(19) (Maynard 1989:170)

2. A : Dakara huransujin no sensei ga/
so Frenchmen LK teacher S
'So our French teacher,'
→ (B : 1 Un) (B : 2 Un)
yeah yeah
'Yeah' 'Yeah'

(20) (Maynard 1989:170–171)

5. A : Yaru hito iru jan./
do person there are TAG
'There are such people, you know'
→ (B : 5 Un) (B : 6 Un) (B : 7 Un)
hum hum yeah
'Hum' 'Hum' 'Yeah'

While this type of occurrence of listener's responses is rarely observed in English native speakers' conversations, it is frequently heard in Japanese verbal interactions. This phenomenon is also observed in utterances of Japanese native speakers when they have conversation in English. In fragment (21), a Japanese speaker, H, produces "mm hm", overlapping "friend" and "across", which are not at all potential turn transition relevant places.

(21) (My data)

1. C : huhuhu yes, I don't have a TV in my room but
my fri//end ac//ross the ha ://ll
2. H : mm hm mm hm mm hm
3. C : she has so//me ( )
4. H : mm hm

These fragments clearly exhibit a difficulty in identifying universal functions of those items in terms of places they occur. As was discussed in 2.2, the function of "mm hm", "uh huh" and the like is based on the sequential position of their occurrence, i.e. a place at which the next speaker

could take a full turn. So the same concept of 'continuer' does not apply to the Japanese items which occur in utterance-internal positions.

Maynard analyzes the class of back channels as a whole and assign to them the following six functional features.

1. Continuer,
2. Display of understanding of content,
3. Support toward the speaker's judgment,
4. Agreement,
5. Strong emotional response,
6. Minor addition, correction, or request for information.

(Maynard 1989:171)

She argues that while the function as a continuer is identified on the basis of a turn-taking system and the concept of repair as Schegloff (1982) proposes, the other functions are identified by the types of utterance the speaker makes in the prior turn. The function of support toward the speaker's judgement is realized when the speaker makes an evaluative statement. The function of agreement is identified when the speaker performs speech act of questioning or question-like statement and the function of strong emotional response after the speaker's exclamatory phrases or laughs (Maynard 1989:171–2). Although some problems should be noted, at this moment it suffices to say that Japanese response tokens, "un" or "soo" in particular, have various functions, depending on the sequential place at which they occur[13]. In sum, Japanese listener's responses differ from English listener's responses in terms of places of occurrence and the ways functions are assigned to each item.

3.2 Effects of these functional and positional differences in a Japanese speaker's interaction with an English native speaker

When we look at how the functional and positional differences in English and Japanese listener's responses, "uh huh" and "un" in particular, affect Japanese learners' interaction in English, two specific questions may be relevant. One is whether the frequent use of "un" in Japanese conversation is transferred into English interactions and if so, what consequences it may have. The other question concerns whether the Japanese speaker assigns to English response tokens such as "mm hm" more functions than a mere continuer.

Regarding the first question, fragments (2) as well as the data shown in Maynard (1997), White (1989) and Miller (1991) clearly indicate that Japanese learners of English use much more "uh huh"s and "mm hm"s than native speakers both at utterance-internal and turn transition relevant places. What cross-cultural consequences are likely to be caused by this transfer, however, is still under discussion and needs further research[14]. As Maynard puts it, they may vary depending on who you are talking to and what situation you are in (e.g. a casual interaction or the existence of a sharp conflict of interest, etc.) (Maynard 1997:55).

One of the possible undesirable consequences as a result of too frequent use of "mm hm" at turn transition relevant places may be that the non-native speaker loses opportunities for restoring the speakership or for repair even if he/she has difficulties in understanding the talk because the native speaker feels obliged to keep talking because of "mm hm". Also repeated use of "mm hm" may arise a doubt in the speaker that the recipient has not understood his/her talk as in (22).

(22) (My data)
NS is a native speaker of English. NNS is Japanese. NS is explaining what Mphil Dphil means.

1. NS : Yeah the same thing Mphil Dphil it's master of Philosophy and
2. doctor of philosophy.
3. NNS : mm hm
4. NS : So it means if you finish,
5. NNS : mm hm
6. NS : after one year,
7. NNS : mm hm
8. NS : then you are only master of philosophy and you can leave it there,
9. NNS : mm hm
10. NS : but if you do it for three years and you can transfer to the Dphil part,
11. NNS : mm hm
12. NS : So that's why they change the name of it.
13. NNS : mm hm
14. NS : So it's a problem. I don't know if you have heard that before
15. have you ? Mphil Dphil ?
16. NNS : mm hm
17. NS : Have you heard people call it that instead of PhD ?//No ?
18. NNS : No ?

NS becomes skeptical about NNS's understanding of her description of Mphil Dphil after line 12, in which she completes her description of Mphil Dphil with "So that's why they change the name of it" but is responded with a continuer. When she asks if NNS has ever heard of the expression, she is again responded by "mm hm". She immediately asks the same kind of question but this time she prepares the answer by herself.

To deal with the second question, I will show a fragment which was overheard by the author and one which was tape-recorded.

(23)
B is a native speaker of English. H is Japanese. H was having coffee in a kitchen with her friends and B came in to boil some water. Looking out of the window,

B : Lovely day, isn't it ?
H : → mm hm Ah :: Bonny, Are you have some tea ?

H's "mm hm" in (23) should be interpreted as an agreement with B's statement about the weather, not as a continuer, because H takes a full turn immediately after her production of "mm hm".

(24) (Excerpt from (2))

35. NS : We told her we come and shout outside her window and
36. I don't think the rest of yous would appreciate it.
37. NNS : oh really
38. NS : ahahaha
39. (0.5)
40 NNS : Ah ::::
41. NS : You would be shouted back.
42. NNS : → mm hm. hha. hha. hha
43 NS : mm

In (24), NNS's utterance "mm hm" is immediately followed by laughter, which displays that NNS takes the prior utterance "you would be shouted back" to be funny. This excludes the interpretation of "mm hm" as a continuer. "Mm hm" in line 42 is to be interpreted as a display of agreement with or support of the prior turn.

What follows from the usage of "mm hm" in these two fragments is that Japanese speakers are likely to assign to "mm hm" more functions than "mm hm" really has when they use it at a possible turn transition relevant place in English interaction. This might result in misunderstanding of the Japanese speaker's intention of utterance and affect the subsequent sequence.

4. A proposal for the design of listener's response teaching

We have seen in section 2 that native speakers of English have an orientation to the systematic use of listener's responses during an extended talk. When one instance of listener's responses is used, it is always interpreted as such and determines the type of next utterance of the speaker. This makes it possible for an interlocutor to exploit the system to achieve his/her conversational goal as we saw in 2.2. This knowledge of the system of listener's responses constitutes a part of conversational competence of native speakers. With this knowledge, a learner of English will be able to align appropriately to native speaker's turns in English interactions.

One might argue that this kind of knowledge is universal and thus the learner of the English language has already acquired it in his/her mother language. If so, there is no need to teach the system of English listener's responses to the Japanese learner. To consider this question, we have looked at Japanese listener's responses and concluded that functions, places of occurrence of listener's responses are different between Japanese and English and the Japanese learner of English is like-

ly to use English listener's responses in the same way in which he/she uses Japanese ones.

What is suggested from the considerations in section 2 and 3 is that teaching listener's responses in English is essential for Japanese learners to perform successful communication. But it is more important in terms of attitudes toward interaction. Inappropriate uses of these devices could cause more serious consequences than formal errors because they are likely to be interpreted as a problem of personal attitudes toward interaction, rather than lack of ability in English.

Where does the teaching of the listener's response system fit in a Second Language Teaching program? Since it is part of conversational competence, it should be related to the teaching of how conversation is organized and developed. At the initial stage of second language teaching, it is often observed that learners are instructed how they answer questions, how they respond to invitations, requests, or compliments. They are based on the strongly limited concept of adjacency pairs :Questions are followed by answers; Invitations, offers and requests are followed by either acceptance or rejection; Greetings are followed by greetings. Such paired utterances may be a fundamental unit of conversational organization and thus be an integral part of Second Language Teaching. Natural conversation is, however, more complex phenomena than a simple set of adjacency pairs. It is full of statements or assertions which do not form adjacency pairs. When one party of an interaction makes a multiunit turn, the other party may remain as a recipient. There is no fixed type of second pair part in recipient's slot because there is no adjacency pairs such as statement-assessment or statement-continuer and so on. This may be one of the reasons why in language classes learners are rarely given an instruction of how to respond statements, assertions or other type of informings[15]. However, as conversation is collaborative work between participants, the recipient of a statement must make an appropriate response to it either verbally or non-verbally, if he/she wants to work on for a successful communication. It is in this context that the teaching of listener's responses becomes relevant.

Furthermore, in ordinary conversation, almost any utterance in the slot following the first pair part of an adjacency pair will be interpreted as a second pair part of some sort under the operation of some conversational principles (Owen 1990:25, Levinson 1983:306–7, Richards and Schmidt 1983:120). For example, B's turn in (25) or the directive in (26) can be interpreted as a sort of answer, i.e. a rejection to answer the prior question.

(25) (Richards and Schmidt 1983:120)

A : How much did you pay for that blouse ?
B : → Do you like it ? I got it at Metro.

(26) (Togo 1989:57)

Are you married ?
→ Mind your own business. (directive)

What has been said here also applies to listener's responses. Any Listener's response in the slot following the first pair part of an ajacency pair will be interpreted as a second pair part of some sort. An extended turn is sometimes prefaced with a 'pre-announcement' (Levinson 1983:349ff) and it requires in the following slot either a ratification or non-ratification (prior knowledge, no interest, etc.) of the announcement from the recipient. In this slot, "mm hm" could be interpreted as a display of lack of interest in the potential talk, rather than a simple continuer, as exemplified in (27).

(27)

A : I don't know if you have heard the rumor yet.
B : → What's that ? (ratification)

C : I don't know if you have heard the rumor yet.
D : → Yeah, I know. It's terrible, isn't it. (prior knowledge)

E : I don't know if you have heard the rumor yet.
F : → m hm

Therefore the teaching of listener's responses constitutes an integral part of the instruction of conversational organization for successful communication.

How should the functions of listener's responses be presented to the learner ? Since different listener's responses project different trajectories for a subsequent sequence, the listener selects one type from the set of listener's responses based on its sequential position and his/her intention of alignment to the prior turn. Therefore when the system of listener's responses are taught, the function(s) of each item should not be presented in isolation but should be presented in relation to another together with possible trajectories. For example, newsmarks should be best understood by contrasting them to "oh" and "mm hm" with possible trajectories.

(28)
(a)
A : It was a wonderful meal.
B : → Really ?/Was it ? (newsmark)
A : Yeah, I enjoyed it very much. (reconfirmation)
(b)
C : It was a wonderful meal.
D : → It was ? (newsmark)
C : Yeah, I think so. (reconfirmation)
D : Well, I don't think so. (disagreement)
(c)

E : It was a wonderful meal.
F : → Oh (oh receipt)
E : And the music was nice too. (more talk without reconfirmation)
(d)
G : It was a wonderful meal.
H : → Oh was it ? (oh plus newsmark)
G : Yeah, it was. (reconfirmation)
(e)
I : It was a wonderful meal.
J : → mm hm (continuer)
A : Cus the chef is French.
B : → mm hm (continuer)
A : And she did a great job.
B : → mm hm (continuer)
A : Well, y'know (you know)

It should be also effective to show the learner instances of inappropriate use as well as the appropriate one in the same sequence. For example, the three pairs of utterance in (29) show what is the appropriate response if the learner wishes to show his/her prior knowledge of the speaker's informing.

(29) (Heritage 1984:305 (14) and the last two pairs are modified based on the first one.)

H : Listen, Bud's alright.
J : → Yeah, I know, I just talked to'm.

H : Listen, Bud's alright.
J : → ?? Oh, I know, I just talked to'm.

H : Listen, Bud's alright.
J : → ?? Mm hm, I know, I just talked to'm.

These ways of presentation will enable the learner to use one listener's response instead of others depending on how he/she intends to align to the speaker's turn, knowing what consequences he/she may have.

Conclusion

One of the aims of Second Language Teaching is to help the learner acquire both linguistic knowledge and a knowledge of appropriate use of forms and meanings in context in the target language. The latter knowledge includes a knowledge of how conversational interactions should be

organized and developed in order to achieve conversational goals.

Conversation analysis, an approach to conversational organization, provides insightful findings on what people orient to in interactions. The present paper has introduced one of the findings to the design of English language teaching.

I have reviewed various types of listener's responses in English such as "uh huh", "oh", "yeah", "you are", "really" and "did you" as well as those in Japanese. Based on this review, I have concluded that listener's responses constitute a system and their functions are best understood in relation to each other. Then I have proposed that this paradigmatic nature of listener's responses should be incorporated in the design of teaching materials of listener's responses.

Although this study may have offered a theoretical basis to the design of listener's response teaching, the research will not complete until practical and experimental studies have been carried out. Furthermore, since the category of listener's responses is in a paradigmatic relation with the category of repair, formulations and probably dispreferred markers such as "well", the relation should be investigated in more detail in the future.

In Second Language Teaching, teaching of listener's responses has further significance other than becoming linguistically competent. The different ways of using listener's responses between English and Japanese reflects different attitudes toward verbal interaction in both languages. It is said that the Japanese tend to avoid manifesting potential differences in opinions during communication, therefore they have a strong preference for displaying understanding of, support for and agreement with the speaker's talk, even if it is only superficial understanding and agreement. On the other hand, speakers of English view an verbal interaction as an opportunity to clarify differences in ideas and opinions of interlocutors, thus superficial exhibition of agreement is not relevant. This difference in social attitudes toward interactions will be learned in the course of teaching the usage of listener's responses, because it is a representative instance of cross-cultural differences which embody in language use.

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Notes

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[2] I followed the transcription conventions in Levinson (1983) for my data but followed the original transcription conventions for the data from the literature. For my data, for example,//means overlap, ?, comma, full stop means rising intonation, continuous intonation, falling intonation respectively.

[3] For related discussions from a more pragmatic point of view, see Leech and Thomas 1990 : 194–99 and Leech 1983 :23–4.

[4] In the present study as well as other studies on listener's responses (Schegloff 1982, Jefferson 1984), occurrences of "uh huh", "mm hm" and "yeah" following 'yes/no questions' are excluded from consideration.

[5] See Heritage (1984 : 302).

[6] Newsmarks are Jefferson's term describing 'objects that specifically treat a prior turn's talk as news for the recipient rather than merely informative' (Heritage 1984 : 340).

[7] See Heritage (1984).

[8] Although it is important to incorporate into the consideration of listener's responses head movements and other non-linguistic behaviour, this paper deals only with verbal responses, because (1) as Ikeda and Ikedah(1996 : 55) mentions, there does not seem to be an established way of describing non-verbal listener's responses in data or a criterion of what non-verbal behaviour should be included in the analysis, (2) most of the analyses I refer to in English listener's responses focus on verbal responses and (3) my data of native-nonnative conversation are also limited to verbal behaviour.

[9] It occurs in a sequence such as (question)-(answer)-("oh" receipt).

[10] Arbitrators in British small claims courts avoid the production of "oh" in favor of more neutral "yes" or "certainly" when questioning both plaintiff and defendant (Atkinson 1979 cited by Heritage 1984:339).

[11] It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive. Other utterances could be included in the category of

listener's responses as long as the candidate occurs in the midst of a speaker's extended turn.

[12] The English translations are from Maynard 1989 and 1997.

[13] Although it is beyond the scope of inquiry of this paper, these questions might be asked. Maynard treats the class of back channels as a whole and does not specify functions of each back channel. However, each back channel may be characterized by its own function because they are not always interchangeable. For example, we could ask what is special about "un" or "honto". As she applies the notions of turn-taking system and repair to identify the function of 'continuer', utterance-internal "un"s cannot be treated as a continuer. What function do they have ?

[14] While Miller refers to its negative effect that 'American speakers may think that Japanese interactants are continually and perhaps insincerely agreeing with them, or are interrupting their talk when they are merely demonstrating attentiveness' (1991:128), White concludes that in Japanese-American dyads, there was a positive correlation between Japanese use of backchannels and American speaker's perception of their comprehension, interest, and encouragement. Also Americans perceived Japanese to be significantly more patient, polite, and attentive' (1989:74).

[15] Some of the practical works which deal with the teaching of listener's responses include Togo 1986, Tazaki 1965 and Weinstein 1987.