



**DISCOURSE STRUCTURE
AS A COMPONENT OF COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT**

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**AARE Conference
Brisbane, December 2002**

- Abstract -

Since 1980s when Krashen (1982) first began to advocate the importance of comprehensible input in foreign language teaching, a substantial body of research has emerged to substantiate his claim. To date, the importance of comprehensible input has been attested to by numerous researchers investigating pedagogical strategies in a variety of teaching/learning environments, eg ESL classroom in Japan (Mizuno, 1998), Spanish language classes in USA (Steele and Johnson, 2000), etc. Discussions of the latest pedagogical theories (eg Gillford and Mullaney, 1999; Krashen, 2000) also focus on the importance of teacher input in the classroom. However, on the premise that language is being learnt primarily for the purpose of communicating with native speakers of that language outside the classroom, it is important to put the efficacy of classroom teaching/learning to the test. With this aim in view, this paper compares discursal strategies of two speakers of Japanese interacting informally with a group of intermediate level learners of Japanese. The data are analysed for discourse features that aid learners' comprehension and ability to maintain conversation, in other words the desired comprehensible input on the discourse structure level.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1980s when Krashen (1982) first began to advocate the importance of comprehensible input in foreign language teaching, a substantial body of research has emerged to substantiate his claim. In most cases language learning occurs in the confines of the classroom and learners have only a limited opportunity, if any at all, of interacting with speakers of the target language in "natural" situations. The importance of the language teachers' role in providing an the right input and serving as a model has to be emphasized (Lightbown, 1991). In recent years, the importance of comprehensible input has been attested to by researchers investigating pedagogical strategies in a variety of teaching/learning environments. For instance, Mizuno (1998) discussing teaching strategies in an ESL classroom in Japan, outlines a number of ways in which provision of comprehensible input contributes to language learning. Gillford and Mullaney (1999) in their discussion of pedagogical theories also attest to the importance of comprehensible input as a facilitator of learning. Steele and Johnson (2000) discussing video-based, primary school level Spanish language program, also find that comprehensible input provided through videos, games and songs played an important role in facilitating language acquisition. Cummins (2001) in his paradigm for academic language learning emphasizes the importance of focusing instruction on facilitating learners' ability to process comprehensible input. Krashen (2000), continuing to support his comprehensible input theory, states very clearly that language can be acquired outside the target language environment, even without formal instruction, providing that the learners are exposed to comprehensible input.

The above are but a few examples cited here to illustrate the general growth of academic interest in comprehensible input theories and the emphasis placed by research on the role of the teacher as the main provider of the required input. However, accepting the premise that language is being learnt primarily for the purpose of communicating with native speakers of that language, it is important to put the efficacy of classroom learning to the test.

With this aim in view, this paper extends the findings of research on native speaker (NS)-language learner (LL) interaction presented at the AARE conference in 2001. The configurations of the situation are the same in terms of the setting, purpose of interaction and participants.

However, while the 2001 paper compared NS-LL communication strategies in terms of lexical choices they made, this paper focuses on the discursive structure of NS contribution to the interaction and discusses the difference between two NS subjects in terms of provision of comprehensible input.

DATA

The two native speakers whose discourse structure is analysed here for comprehensible input are both male, coded NS1 and NS2. NS1, aged between 60-65 years, has been a teacher of Japanese at tertiary level for over 30 years. He has resided in Australia for approximately the same length of time and, therefore, has a good command of English and, being an applied linguist, is fully conversant with the theoretical and practical aspects of foreign language teaching. NS2 is also aged between 60-65 years and, prior to his retirement, taught Japanese history at secondary level in Japan. Unlike NS1, he is only a visitor to Australia and has never resided outside his home country. Not being a language teacher, he has little knowledge, if any, of language teaching pedagogy and his competence in English is rather low.

The purpose of inviting the two NSs to participate in this research project was to acquire data for the analysis of language teacher-led and layman-led conversations with the view of comparing the efficacy of their individual versions of comprehensible input. To maintain the desired naturalness of interaction, the conversations were allowed to evolve spontaneously without any specific guidelines for the NSs for choosing the topics.

The two separate interactions involving the same small group of intermediate-level language learners took place in an informal setting and each was of approximately 40 minutes duration. Both interactions were video-taped and the texts were subsequently transcribed in a modified Hepburn system of romanisation

The methodology adopted for comparing the discursive features of NS speech is a qualitative evaluation of the data, supported by tables and graphs showing the distribution of speech acts per NS participant.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

For purpose of analysis the relevant data excerpted from the video-tape are categorised, in the first instance, into turns. The term 'turn', as used here, denotes an utterance or an uninterrupted sequence of utterances, produced by a single speaker (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). To start with, two categories of turns are examined: questions and statements.

Table 1.1 Distribution of turns

Speaker	Questions	Statements	Miscellaneous	Total
NS1	98	30	56	

	53.3%	16.3%	30.4%	100%
NS2	47	55	10	112
	41.9. %	49.1%	8.9%	100%

Information tabulated above indicates a great deal of difference between the two speakers in the way they structured their respective discourses. The data show that approximately half of NS1's turns were questions (53.3%), with statements accounting for only 16.3%. In the NS2's discourse, on the other hand, questions and statements are more evenly (49.1%) distributed. Another point of difference, which will be discussed later, is shown by the percentage figures in the miscellaneous category.

Table 1.2a - Type of questions

Speaker	Display	Referential	Total
NS1	0	98	98
	0%	100%	100%
NS2	0	47	47
	0%	100%	100%

As shown in Table 1.2a, all questions asked by the NSs were referential questions. An expected result as the interaction was not a formal classroom event but a conversation about various matters unrelated to structured classroom dialogues. This result supports the findings of Long and Sato (1983) who found, in their analysis of six ESL lessons to adults in the United States, that the dominant type of questioning used by the teachers in the classroom was display questioning, while referential questions occurred mostly in non-classroom settings.

Table 1.2b - Distribution of Open-ended and Closed Questions

Speaker	Closed	Open-ended	Total
NS1	35	63	98
	31%	69%	100%
NS2	26	21	47
	55.3%	44.7	100%

Information listed in Table 1.2b shows a difference between the two speakers in regard to the type of questions. NS1, within the referential type questions, appears to have favoured open ended questions (approximately 70%), that is questions requiring provision of information rather than questions referred to by Hatch (1978:419) as "or-choice" questions, many of which elicit only yes/no answers. Distribution of closed and open-ended questions, in NS2 data, on the other hand, indicates that more than half of the questions he did ask (55.3%) were questions requiring only a yes/no answer. The difference in this aspect of the two NSs' communication strategies is an important one. It shows the skilful orchestration of the conversation by NS1 whose question-based discourse encouraged, or even forced, active participation of the LL group. Conversely, NS2's strategy of relying on statements and closed questions could not have been very productive in terms of encouraging LLs participation as 'yes/no' answer is an effective conversation stopper.

Having established the way NS1 and NS2 used questions within their respective conversations, the next step was to look at how they handled the question routines: did they address a series of questions to the whole group or individually? Were their questions comprehensible to the listener/s or did they have to modify these in some way and, if, so, what form did these modifications take? To evaluate the two strategies in this respect, the questions they asked are examined in terms of "initial", "modified" and "repeated" categories.

The term "initial" refers to all questions that the NSs directed to the LLs, either singly or as a group. This category includes also repeated/rephrased questions addressed to a different listener. In other words, questions in which rephrasing or repetition were not used for clarification purposes.

The term "modified" denotes all questions which failed to produce an answer and which NS1 or NS2 repeated in a modified form.

The term "repeated" refers to all occurrences where the initial question was repeated verbatim to the same listener.

Table 1.2c Categories of Questions

Speaker	Initial	Modified	Repeated	Total
NS1	68	30	0	98
	69.4%	30.6%	0%	100%
NS2	27	20	0	47
	57.4%	42.6%	0%	100%

As can be seen from the tabulated information, 68 (69.4%) of the 98 questions asked by NS1 did not require modification to be understood by the LLs. In other words, NS1 asked questions which he anticipated LLs would be able to answer. He did this by using basic common-usage vocabulary and concentrating on topics generally covered early in Japanese language programs. Furthermore he asked the same question to all students in turn so that, while one LL was answering, the others could use his answer as a paradigm for their own responses. For instance, NS1 asked a general question why the LLs were studying

Japanese. One of them answered that he wants to work in Japan. NS1 immediately followed with another question, expanding the topic of working in Japan by asking about the type of work he would like to do.

NS1: *Ja, LLsan wa nihon ni itte donna shigoto o shitai n desu ka?*

(Well, what sort of job would you like to do in Japan)

LL: *Ee, ee, oosutoraria, ah, ninenkan ni komyunikeeshon o shigoto desu.*

(Ah, ah, in Australia, ah, I worked in communications for two years)

NS1, after asking a few more pertinent questions to the same LL, to expand the topic of working in the communications field, turned his attention to the other LLs and repeated the question about work in Japan, to the LL who was first to respond.

NS1: *Aa, aa, LL san wa? LL1 san wa?*

(Ah, ah, how about you LL3? LL1?)

LL: *Hai.*

(Yes.)

NS1: *Nihon e itte donna shigoto o shitai desu ka?*

(What sort of job would you like to do in Japan?)

Similarly to the conversation segment with this LL, NS1 then expanded the topic of working in Japan by a series of pertinent questions directed to other LLs repeating the same question routine.

As mentioned previously, NS1 adopted the strategy of repeating the same question to each LL in turn to facilitate LLs responses and thus maintain a fairly steady pace of conversation.

According to Chaudron (1988:132) rephrasing is a useful strategy in promoting comprehensibility. While repetition of questions does not seem to solve a problem of non-comprehensible input, modification of questions to improve comprehensibility can be considered as an eventual aid to the learner. It follows, therefore, that to enable learners to understand a question, a right sort of modification, by way of subsequent rephrasing, is necessary to make the question comprehensible and answerable by the learner.

In the instances when the strategy of asking similar questions to all the LLs in turn failed, NS1 rephrased the questions to overcome the comprehension problem. Thirty (30.6%) questions out of 98 had to be modified in some way. NS1 appears to have been very adept in this regard. For instance, talking with a LL about his Japanese friend, NS1 asked how the two have met:

NS1: *Sono tomodachi wa doo shite mitsuketa n desu ka.....doo yuu fuu ni shite....*

(How did you find this friend.... In what way....?)

LL Ahm.

NS1: *Dare no intorodakushon desu ka.*

(Who introduced you?)

Since the sentence: *Sono tomodachi wa doo shite mitsuketa n desu ka.....doo yuu fuu ni shite* (How did you find this friend... In what way....?) seemed to present a comprehension problem to LL, NS1 rephrased the question to a lexically and syntactically simpler form: *Dare no intorodakushon desu ka* (Who introduced you?). Not only is the second sentence much shorter and thus easier to process but its comprehensibility is aided by the inclusion of a loanword from English: *intorodakushon*(introduction)(Sanseido, 1987) instead of the Japanese word *shookai* (introduction).

NS2 also attempted to modify the non-understood questions. The information listed in Table 1.2c shows that 20 questions (42.6%) were modified in some way. However, in the process of modification, NS2 tended to include additional information which, inevitably, obscured the desired meaning and confused the listeners. For instance, in asking LLs how much time Australian students spend on study per day, NS2 used a colloquial expression *ichinchi* (one day). This confused the LLs who had not met the expression before in this particular context. The excerpt below illustrates the ensuing mis-communication problem.

NS2: *Oosutararia no gakusei- tte no wa ichinchi dono kurai benkyoo suru n desu ka.*

(How long do Australian students study in one day?)

LL: *Ichinchi?*

(One day?)

NS2: *Ee, ichinchi. Tatoeba gakkoo ne.....gakkoo de benkyoo suru igai ni.... tatoeba ie to ka apaato ni kaette... dono kurai benkyoo shimasu ka.*

(That's right. One day. For example school.... apart from school... for example, when you get back to your house or your flat.... how long do you study after you return home?).

LL: *Ah, ah, ah.. uh. Watashi wa ninensei desu.*

(I am a second year student.)

The problem word was, of course, *ichinchi*. Mis-communication occurred because the LL who requested clarification of the meaning of *ichinchi*, did so by merely repeating the word with a question intonation. Had he framed his request in an appropriate verbal structure (eg what does *ichinchi* mean or similar) the problem would not have arisen. *Ichinchi* (one day) is a very common word, well known to students even at the beginner level. Consequently, repetition of *ichinchi* as a question was undoubtedly taken by NS2 as a request for

confirmation that he wanted to know how much study is done in one day. Therefore, instead of clarifying the meaning of *ofichinchi*, NS2 attempted to make his meaning clearer by elaborating the content to such an extent that it became completely incomprehensible to the LLs.

Repetition of a question without any modification was not a communication strategy adopted by the NSs. They appear to have been well aware that simply repeating a question would not be a particularly productive move if, for lack of vocabulary, etc., the LLs failed to comprehend the meaning in the first place. This is consistent with the findings of the research on ESL classroom interaction, undertaken by White and Lightbown (1984), which have shown that the success rate of students responding to repetitions of unaltered questions was quite low, lower often than the rate of response to questions asked only once. Similarly, Chaudron's (1983) research, also conducted in an ESL classroom, indicates that repetition of the same non-understood question does not promote a great amount of learners' production.

In summarising the "question" aspect of the NSs strategies, the most important finding to be pointed out is the difference between the two speakers in relation to utilisation of questions as a communication tool. NS1 displayed the ability to equally involve all participants in the conversation. He achieved this by directing a series of the same or very similar questions to each LL in turn. This, in turn, elicited a considerable amount of meaningful response from the LLs. He also used the strategy of rephrasing questions into a syntactically and/or lexically simpler form to provide a more comprehensible input for his listeners and, thus, facilitate language output. NS2 relied on the strategy of questioning to a much lesser extent. Moreover, he appears to have lacked the expertise in restructuring his utterances along lexical/syntactic simplification lines. Elaboration of content rather than lexical or syntactic substitution emerges as one of the characteristic features of his discourse.

As the next step, the NSs statement turns are examined within the parameters established for the questions segment.

Table 1.3 Categories of Statements

Speaker	Initial	Modified	Repeated	Total
NS1	26	4	0	30
	86.7%	13.3%	0%	100%
NS2	43	12	0	55
	78.2%	21.8%	0%	100%

As shown in Table 1.3 there were no occurrences of repeated statements in the data. The point to be commented upon here, before proceeding to the discussion of initial statements, are the low percentage figures for the 'modified' category. This can be explained by the fact that, unlike questions, statements do not necessarily demand a response and, thus, do not need to be fully understood by the listener/s to allow a conversation to proceed. An acknowledgement by means of a verbal or non-verbal signal usually suffices to indicate the listener's participation in the conversation, making it rather difficult for the speaker to know whether anything he had said was understood. Hence, the need for modification of statements is much lesser than in the case of questions.

Regarding initial statements, although the information recorded in Table 1.3 shows no significant difference between NS1's and NS2's speech in this respect, it has to be borne in mind that statements were the dominant discursive feature in the NS2 data. Examination of the texts reveals that while NS2 tended to introduce topics with statements, NS1's statements occurred mostly as expansions of a topic, relevant to the information introduced by a LL's answer. For instance, to elaborate on information that a LL would like to work in a bank in Japan, NS1 expanded the topic by telling of a former student employed in such a position.

Example:

NS1: *Aa, (name of a university) no gakusei, sotsugyoosei, (name of a university) de nihongo o benkyoo shite, sore kara nihon no ginkoo de hataraitte iru hito ga imasu ne.*

(Ah, a student of (name) university, a graduate, there is a person like this who studied Japanese at (name) university and is now working for a Japanese bank in Japan)

LL2: *Hai. Hai.*

The example cited above, in particular LL's response of *hai, hai* seemingly (or truly) acknowledging comprehension of the information about the ex-Japanese student working in a Japanese bank, explains in a sense the relatively few instances of modification (4 - 13.3%) in NS1 data. Furthermore, since the above statement was merely an incidental adjunct to the main topic of LL wishing to work in a Japanese bank, the conversation could proceed irrespective of whether this was understood by the LLs or not.

This was not the case, however, in regard to the statements made by NS2. For instance, at one stage of the conversation, NS2 introduced the topic of Japanese architecture by using a picture of the Himeji castle hanging on the wall as a starting point. Although it appears that the words he used were not within the range of the LLs vocabulary, they seemed to understand the general context as evidenced by the effort made by them to continue the topic. One of them did this by introducing a single key word *otera* (temple). NS2 then proceeded to elaborate on the topic as shown below.

Example:

NS2: *Otera mo ne.. ookii no ga arimasu.*

(Temples also... there are big ones)

LL: *Un*

NS2: *Nihon de ookii otera-tte iu to sono Kyooto.. Nara in arimasu.*

(In Japan the large temples are in Kyoto and in Nara)

LL: *Un*

NS2: *Nara ni ano yuumeina daibutsu no haitta toodaiji-tte ne... Daibutsu ga aru... anoo ...otera wa sugoi ookii...zenbu nihon no baai wa ki de dekite imasu.*

(The famous Todaiji temple housing the Great Buddha statue in Nara.... The one with the Great Buddha... a very large temple... like all of the temples in Japan it is made of wood)

LL *Un* ...

NS2: *Gojuu no too. Ne. Are wa otera ni arimasu. Kyooto ni ne.... yahari ikutsu ka arimasu.... gojuu no too. Un.*

(Five story pagoda. It is in a temple. In Kyooto.... indeed there are a number of them... five story pagodas.)

LL *Kireina*....

(Beautiful...)

NS2: *Kirei desho.*

(Beautiful, isn't it.)

LLs: *Un.*

(Long silence)

As shown by the excerpt above, LLs contribution to the expansion of the topic was limited to "*aizuchi*" (*um* in this case) which, other than showing that the LLs were listening, gave no indication as to how much, if anything at all, they understood of what NS2 had said. NS2 valiantly kept on talking until the long period of silence after his last utterance made him realise that there will be no contribution from his listeners to the expansion of this particular topic and, as a consequence, he made another effort at maintaining the conversation by introducing a different topic.

The remaining category, labelled "Miscellaneous" includes turns referred to in the relevant literature as Interactional Modification Turns (Long 1983; Pica 1990), discussed below in terms of speech act sub-categories.

Table 1.4 Miscellaneous Category (NS1 and NS2)

	Feedback	Correction	Comp. Check	Clarification Request	Total
NS1	46	7	0	3	56
	82.1%	12.5%		5.4%	100%
NS2	7	0	2	1	10
	70%	0%	20%	10%	100%

The terminology adopted for the four speech act sub-categories are as follows: "Feedback" refers to an utterance within a turn, or constituting a turn, used to confirm understanding of LL/s message and encouraging the LL(s) to continue speaking. "Correction" refers to provision of syntactically and/or lexically correct form as requested by the LL(s) or spontaneous repetition of LL(s) syntactically or lexically deviant message in a correct form. "Clarification Request" refers to all utterances or turns used by the NSs to elicit clarification of a LL(s) message they failed to understand. 'Comprehension checking' refers to turns with which NSs tried to ascertain that what they said was understood by the LL(s).

Distribution of the four speech act sub-categories, illustrated in Table 1.4, shows that both speakers included "feedback" in their respective strategies. In the NS2 data which included only 10 (100%) "miscellaneous" turns, "feedback" accounted for 70% of these turns. In the case of NS1, one of the characteristic features of his strategy was 'feedback' expressed through repetition of the salient content of the message. Fortyseven (82.1%) of the total of 56 "miscellaneous" turns are listed in this sub-category. The examples below illustrate this feature of NSs respective strategies:

Example: (NS1)

LL: *Piano o hikemasu.*

(I can play the piano).

NS1: *Piano o hikemasu ka...hee.*

(You can play the piano...aaa)

Example: (NS2)

LL: *Ee... ah... un ..uhn .. uchi*

(Ahm a house).

NS2: *Uchi. Aa soo desu ka.*

(A house. Is that so).

Unlike the "feedback" feature, the fact that no 'correction' was found in the NS2 data and only 7 (22%) items were identified in the NS1 data suggests that both NSs most likely accepted a number of deviant utterances in preference to inhibiting LL(s) output by overt correction. Analysis of the video-tape for interaction with NS1 shows that, throughout the conversation, he appeared to be more concerned with understanding that the LLs were trying to say than with the grammatical accuracy of their responses. He accepted most of what they said, limiting his correction to supplying an appropriate item of vocabulary or, covertly, providing models of correct grammatical structures with which to express their ideas. In this way he focused his attention on expansion of topics rather than on the lexical/syntactic accuracy. For example, when one of the LLs was asked by NS1 about the type of work he would like to do in Japan, he answered that he would like to work for a trading company. This elicited the next question from NS1:

NS1: *Nani o uttari kattari shitai n desu ka.*

(What do you want to buy and sell)

LL: *Kal... karenshi*

(Cur... currency)

NS: *Ah, okane ne*

(Ah, money isn't it?)

LL: *Okane... Okane*

(Money.... money.)

NS1: *Okane mo kaemasu ne.*

(One can buy money also, can't one?)

LL, having been asked what he would like to buy and sell, provided an answer irrelevant to the normal activities of trading companies, that is that he would like to trade in "currency". Despite the unexpected content of the message, NS1 accepted it and provided the needed vocabulary item, which he assumed the LL would know, that *isokane* (money) rather than the correct term *tsuuka* (currency). The term was known to the LL which allowed the topic to be expanded further by NS1 who tied it to his original question of "buying and selling" by the rather simplistic statement that one can buy money also.

In addition to aiding LLs by providing vocabulary items, which were comprehensible to them, NS1's strategy of topic expansion included also an occasional provision of models for correct grammatical structures. He achieved this by repeating LL(s) utterances in the appropriate format.

Example:

LL: *soni... soni... hatarakitai..*

(Sony... Sony... I want to work for Sony.)

NS1 *soni de hatarakitai.*

(You want to work for Sony)

As shown by the above example, the LL conveyed the message of wanting to work for Sony by using only the key lexical elements "Sony" and "want to work" without the particle *de* (at or for), an obligatory component in a correct grammatical structure. NS1, by repeating the phrase, unobtrusively provided the necessary correction.

There were no examples of comprehension checking turns in the NS1 data. This suggests that NS1 felt reasonably confident that his speech was comprehensible to the LLs. This suggests, in turn, that NS1 made a conscious effort to adjust his speech, syntactically and lexically, to the perceived competence level of the LL group. In the case of NS2, the two examples of comprehension checking found in the data suggest that at least at some stage of the conversation, NS2 felt the need to ascertain that what he was saying was being understood. For instance, speaking about traffic laws, NS2 felt the need to check LLs' comprehension of the key words *kootsuu shingoo*(traffic lights):

NS2: *Sore de ne....tatoeba ne...kootsuu shingoo arimasu ne.... kootsuu shingoo..wakarimasu ka.*

(So...for instance..there are traffic lights...do you understand traffic lights)

Similarly to comprehension checking, request for clarification were only a marginal feature of the communication strategies of the two NSs. Only two clarification requests were produced by NS1 and only one by NS2. Analysis of the text reveals that these were necessitated by the need to understand what the LLs were trying to say only at specific points of the respective interactions. Such clarification requests as were made, by either speaker, consisted of repetition of a non-understood word in the question intonation contour.

contour.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the discourse structure of NNS' speech, focusing particularly on questioning with some discussion also regarding statements and interactional modification turns listed in the "miscellaneous" category, reveals that there was a substantial difference between the communication strategies adopted by NS1 and NS2 respectively. This is particularly noticeable in the proportionate distribution of question turns in the two sets of data, with NS1 relying on this type of interaction to a much greater extent than NS2. Conversely, NS2 relied to a much greater extent on statements, often of substantial length and syntactic and lexical complexity. In the miscellaneous category, "feedback" turns were the favoured features of both strategies, with only a minimal proportion (or none) of other sub-category turns. Since it can be assumed that both speakers, wishing to communicate with their listeners, made appropriate modifications to their "native" speech in order to do so, the effectiveness or otherwise of these modifications can only be judge by analysing LLs rate and type of participation

Comparison of the LLs' contribution to their respective conversations reveals that a higher degree of comprehension was achieved in conversation with NS1 than with NS2. NS1's questions elicited immediate answers as well as a number of topic expansion turns. Furthermore, the proportion of speech acts such as clarification requests, etc. was relatively low. In the case of conversing with NS2, on the other hand, the highest percentage of LLs' turns was recorded for the "miscellaneous" category, including a high proportion of "asides" in English. This indicates that the LLs had to face a considerable comprehension challenge before communication with NS2 was achieved.

Undoubtedly the strategy adopted by NS1 in terms of discourse structure aided the provision of comprehensible input for this particular group of students. Utilising his language teaching expertise, he largely adhered to conversational classroom routines suitable for the language level of his interactors. Therefore, looked at from the classroom teaching perspective, NS1 strategy was a successful one in that it allowed the LL group to converse on simple, lexically and syntactically undemanding topics.

At the same time, however, conversation with NS1 did not provide the challenges that LL group experienced in interaction with NS2. The difficulty they found in maintaining conversation in Situation 2 should not be ascribed solely to NS2' communication strategy. In fact, Situation 2 can serve as a valuable pointer to what intermediate-level language learners might encounter in out-of classroom interactions with non-English speaking Japanese. What is needed, therefore, in structuring comprehensible input, is not only attention to lexical, syntactic and discoursal features but also to providing language learners with the necessary meaning-negotiation skills.

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