

“Listenership” in Japanese:
An Examination of Overlapping Listener Response

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“Listenership” in Japanese: An Examination of Overlapping Listener Response

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overlapping listener response

The performance of “listening” in Japanese interaction has become a focus of a growing body of research in the last couple of decades. Earlier studies on listener responses tend to concern themselves with quantification of backchannel tokens (White, 1989; Maynard, 1989; 1997 among others), and more recently more studies adopt microanalytic approach to delineate the listener responses and their mechanisms (Horiguchi, 1997; Ikeda, 2001, 2003). In this paper, I will focus on one particular listener response pattern often encountered in naturally occurring conversations in Japanese, which I call *overlapping listener responses*. Here is an example from a piece of conversation illustrating what is being discussed (see transcription keys for the symbols used):

(1) multi-party (3 participants) NS interaction

1 A- nankai mo yatte purakutisu shiteru/ kara/|| dekiru yoo ni naru no ka,/||>
 many times do practice doing because become able to do NOM Q

2 soretomo talented / ||> =
 otherwise ‘talented’

 “I wonder if he got to be able to do it because he has been practicing many times, or he is
 talented=”

3 B- =e?
 what?
 “what?”

4 → A- talented (.) / ||> nooryoku ga [sugoi an]/ no kana= / ||>
 ‘talented’ (.) ability SP extremely have NOM Q
 “talented. I wonder he has such a talent (Jpn word)”

- 5 → B- [a : : : : : : : :]
 [oh : : : : : : : :]
 “oh”
- 6 =kamo shiren.
 (.) perhaps. “perhaps.”
- 7 A- [((laugh))]
- 8 C- [((laugh))]
- 9 B- datte shabetteru koto o, sonomama tsurii ni shite iku n da mon.
 because talking thing Obj exactly tree to doing go NOM COP FP
 “ Because he draws (structural) trees of what one exactly says.”

This is a segment of interaction among three Japanese speakers, A, B, and C, in which they discuss about B’s friend who is very knowledgeable about linguistics. As seen in line 5, B inserts her reactive token (as in Clancy et. al., 1996) *a : : : : : : : :* ‘oh: : : : : : : :’ at the non-terminal point of A’s turn in line 4. B’s response here is an acknowledgement / comprehension of A’s attempt to explain the English word *talented*¹. B did not see what A meant after line 1, and asked for repair in line 3 by sending out a non-overlapping response *e?* ‘what?.’ A repeated the last word she said in line 1, *talented*, and also translated the word into Japanese. Then the overlapping response *a: : : : : :* in line 5 sends the message that B shows uptake of A’s repair, before waiting for the final completion of A’s utterance. Furthermore, immediately after A finishes her turn in line 5, B adds *kamo shiren* ‘perhaps’, an evaluation of A’s comment in line 4 (that one can be very good at writing a structural tree because he is naturally talented), this time responding to the content of the message indicted by A.

As shown in this example above, the primary purpose of this study is to examine conversational environment in which overlapping responses occur, and attempt to show evidence indicating the critical function of these responses in naturally occurring Japanese conversation.

A study of practical strategies by which Japanese speakers do *being a good listener* (Ohta, 2001) also have direct implications for Japanese language education. Narrowing down the focus of *listenership* to use of overlapping listener responses, this study questions whether learners make use this listening strategy, and if they do not, it further probes to find out the consequences for lacking such a resource. The non-application of overlapping listener responses will bring out some consequence in the on-going interaction. The speaker of the interaction may react against the lack of listener responses by adjusting their delivery and design of the utterance, or work further to elicit a response from the primary listener (Pomeranz, 1984). In this paper, many cases with *nonoccurrence* of overlapping listener responses were found in the interactions with the non-native speakers of Japanese, particularly when they played primarily the listening role in a segment of interaction. Hence this study treats these cases as a comparative resource (as suggested in Schegloff, 1996) for the analysis as *deviant cases* (Heritage, 1984) to show that overlapping responses do make a difference in interaction.

1.2. General literature review

‘Overlap’ of multi-speakers in interaction is an interest in the current trend of conversation analysis research (c.f. Schegloff, 2000). Previously, overlap by the next speaker (or of the interlocutors) in a turn-internal, midstream position has been recognized as a phenomenon that demands an immediate resolution. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:706) discussed that one-speaker-at-a-time behavior is the dominant principle in turn-taking, hence more than one speaker at a time (i.e., overlap) must be brief, and it usually occurs at a possible Transition Relevance Point, i.e., a place where current speakers can or should exit (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). For example, Lerner (1989), in her article *Notes on overlap*

¹ The participants of this particular excerpt are Japanese graduate students in an American University.

management in conversation, discusses one strategy in which the first speaker delays his utterance after the onset of overlapping talk by another participant, which she calls *delayed completion* (p.167).

Schegloff (2000), for example, has illustrated a comprehensive perspective on overlaps in interaction. He has proposed four types of overlapping talk; 1) *terminal overlap* in which one speaker appears to be starting up by virtue of a prior speaker's analyzable incipient finishing of a turn, 2) *continuers* by which recipients of another's talk can show precisely that they understand that the speaker is in the course of an extended turn at talk which is not yet complete. 3) *conditional access to the turn* in which a speaker of a not possibly completed turn-in-progress yields to another, or even invites another to speak in his turn's space. 4) *chordal overlap*, by which interlocutors properly participate in simultaneous occupations of the floor (e.g., laughs, or collective greetings, choral congratulations). In the same article, Schegloff (2000) also suggests that not all overlaps are competitive, hence they do not demand any resolution. He counts such non-competitive overlaps as *appropriate simultaneous production* (p.6). What Schegloff (2000) emphasizes, and the tradition of Conversation Analysis has put forward ever since its paradigm was founded, is that the participants of each interaction are those who determine whether overlapping talk is something interruptive (hence it requires remedy) or cooperative (hence it enhances the productivity of interaction), and such a decision is locally oriented. This point noted by Schegloff (2000) is crucial to the discussion in this study; it supports the idea I have adopted in this study, which is to say that overlaps can be a communication strategy. Here is another illustration, adopted from Bilmes (1997):

22 P: =and she thought I was
23 [hitting on her or something. I don't know
24 D: [(you were*izing her) No no no she was
25 sa [ying don't tease me

adopted from Bilmes(1997:509)

In this example above, P's utterance, "hitting on her or something" in line 23 is overlapped with D's utterance, "you were *izing her." Right after this overlap, D responds to P, "No no no she was saying don't tease me" in like 24-25. This is a disagreement upon P's line 23, which means that D heard and responded successfully to what P has said in overlap. Bilmes (1997) suggests that this type of overlaps seem to be a fairly efficient way of communicating (p.510).

Within studies at the intersection of grammar and conversational mechanisms, we find a sub-focus to examine the linguistic environment in which listener responses occur. Sacks et al. (1974) proposed the notion of syntactic projectability to the students of interaction, which signals a possible end of the turn or a Transition Relevance Place (TRP). Since then, this notion has been examined at a more linguistically detailed level such as grammar, intonation, and pragmatics, and the turn-taking mechanism was found to be correlative with a completion point of these linguistic features. Ford and Thompson (1996) and Ford, Fox, and Thompson (1996) conducted a study to find out which component among these three linguistic factors (grammatical, intonational, and pragmatical completion points) is more influential to constitute a most likely *speaker change* (include both full turns and backchannel turns point in English interaction). What they found in their data is that *all* three components work in conjunction to create the most relevant transition place, which they called *complex TRP (CTRP)*.

A similar approach has been adopted to study the turn-taking mechanism in Japanese interaction. Furo (1998) examined location of speaker change in relation to CTRPs, replicating Ford and Thompson's study (1996). On operationalizing the notion of CTRP in Japanese, what Furo (1998) as well as Takana (1999) call conversational syntax, in comparison with analytic

syntax, has been adopted. Conversational syntax focuses on the real time utterance as its unit, and it takes an intonational boundary as important to determining the key of such a unit. An example from Tanaka (1999:69) illustrates this point.

K: tabun ||
soko no bubun ga chittomo kaishoo saretenai# mitaina **omoi ga oarininaru# n janai# desu ka.#** || / >
W: arimasu# nee.# || / >

English Translation

K: isn't it the case that ((you)) have the sort of feeling that part is not at all resolved?
W: it is, indeed.

|| = intonational completion # = analytical syntactic completion / = conversational syntactic completion > = pragmatic completion

The utterance “~ oarininaru n ja nai desu ka” in the example above can be analyzed to be X ga aru # n janai # desu ka#, composed of three possible units in terms of its analytic syntactic structure. However, when we examine the intonation contour of the utterance, we can see that intonation falls on the final (question) particle *-ka*. Here we find the first conversational syntactic boundary. Furthermore, we see that K's utterance as a whole constructs a question, indicating that this same point is also a pragmatic completion point (Tanaka, 1999). Along with Ford and Thompson's argument (1996), Tanaka (1999) suggests that locations which are most relevant for speaker change are now recognized as Complex Transition Relevance Points (CTRP).

In her study, Furo (1988) discovered that Japanese conversations in her data show a significant amount of occurrence of overlaps at non-CTRPs, in other words the second speaker performs either turn-taking or backchannels in the midstream location. This result also implies that there is frequent overlapping of the interlocutor's utterance with the first speaker's turn projection. Ford and Thompson (1996) and Furo (1998) argue that speaker changes at non-CTRPs are done to show some interactional work, which are motivated by the next speaker's cooperation and strong agreement.

Furo's interpretation of turn-internal speaker change at non-CTRPs (1998) assumes that overlapping responses are *marked* (Myers-Scotton, 1998) ways of performing speaker change. Participants' expectation of linearly sequenced turn-taking is unmarked; therefore overlapping utterance can generate conversational implicature (e.g., strong agreement, involvement, etc). Maynard (1989) and others have also treated the highly frequent production of backchannels by Japanese interlocutors as a marked strategy, setting the performance observed by English speakers as the *unmarked* baseline. Based on this marked perspective, Maynard (1989) claims that frequent backchanneling is an *affect-laden interactional style*.

In this study, I revisited this previous conclusion on Japanese listener performance and ask this question; do Japanese speakers really orient to overlapping responses by the interlocutor as something marked? There are some findings in the literature that provide a negative answer to this question. Clancy et al. (1996) studied language specific behavior of listener responses (or Reactive Tokens) in English, Japanese, and Mandarin, and found that more than half of all Japanese Reactive Tokens occur in non-final (therefore non-CTRP) locations. Frequent occasions of RTs that are an overlap over the current speaker's talk were reported in the study. Clancy et al. (1996) argue that predictability of the item to be produced by the current speaker motivates the Reactive Token to overlap (p. 373). When we take this result into account, it becomes difficult to accept the marked notion of overlapping speech.

2. RESEARCH

2.1. Data

The data consist of tape-recorded, naturally occurring conversations between friends in informal friendly settings (e.g., at dinner with friends, small talk at the café or a friend's apartment). Both non-native data and native data sets consist of two different dyadic interactions, one three-party, and one four-party conversation. The first of the two sets of data is composed of all native speakers of Japanese, and the second set includes one nonnative speaker in each conversational setting. The first set was examined to find out the contribution of overlapping Reactive Tokens in interaction, and the second set was examined to see how learners perform or react to such overlapping listener responses. Following Tanaka (1999)'s methodology, a CTRP was applied as a unit to determine whether a response is occurring in an overlapping position. In other words, if a listener utterance was inserted at a non-CTRP position; such a response is recognized as an overlapping response. The transcribed data were analyzed with a method of microanalysis which is informed by conversation analysis.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. NS data

3.1.1. Overlapping response and interactional sequence

In my native speaker data, there were cases where the first speaker responds to the overlapping response. In examples (2) and (3)², A is the current speaker who holds the turn, and B is the other interlocutor.

² The participants of the excerpts (2) and (3) are both Kansai regional dialect speakers.

(2) dyad NS-2 interaction

- 1 D- iro anmari yakehen nen ka, kore demo daibun yakete n / [kedo. /]>
color not so much not tan NOM FP this even much tan NOM but
“I don’t tan so much, I did get darker although it is this much.”
- 2 E- [sore de?
that COP
“with that much?”
- 3 → D- kore demo tomodachi ni suggoi yaketa na tte iwareru/ [kara₁/]> =un₃ shiroi=
this but friends by very much tanned FP QP being said because
“Although it is this much, my friends tell me that I did get darker, so. =yeah, I am
- 4 → E- [sore de?₂=
that COP
“with that much?”
- 5 D- =yan,/ motomoto./]>
NOM originally
=pale to start with, you know.”

(3) dyad NS-2 interaction

- 1 → D- demo atashira tte mada ie kimatte-hen shi,/|| atashi kotchi ni [sunderu shi₁/]> [un₃=
but us QP yet house decided-NG FP I here at living FP yes
“But the house hasn’t been decided, and I live over here so, yeah=”
- 2 → E- [morote mo naa [tte?₂?
received FP QP
“you are like “(it won’t do any good) if we receive it now?”
- 3 D- =dakara zenbu teeki-yokin ni shita. (0.3) sorede:.,
so all saving account to did then
“So we put all of it in the savings account. Then,”
- 4 E- un.
uh-huh
“uh-huh”

A pattern we find in these two examples is the *three-turn sequence* (numbered in the excerpts as 1, 2, 3). D sent out an overlapping response in both examples (line 4 in (2) and line 2 in (3)). Still continuing her talk with the overlap, D responded back to E’s utterance with *un*, or using Iwasaki’s term (1997), sent a *back-backchannel*. Right after *un* in both examples above, A self-selects herself to be the next speaker, maintaining her turn. Particularly in (3), D uses turn-grabbing device *dakara* ‘so’ which is frequently used in Japanese interactions when the speaker’s following talk is congruent and repetitive with the prior talk (Mori, 1999).

In example (4), the participants, all female speakers of Japanese with various ages from mid 20's to late 30's, are discussing who is the tallest of the group, and prior to this excerpt, G (not present in segment 4) insisted that she was the tallest. However, the other participants did not agree with her and start stating their disagreements here.

(4) multiparty (4 participants) interaction

- 1 F- demo ne://> donguri no sei-kurabe da to omou yo. //>
 but FP chestnuts LK comparison of heights COP QP think FP
 “But, I think it is not much of a comparison.”
- 2 G- iya iya=
 no no
 “No, no.”
- 3 → H- = ka wan[ne:// tte:::1 //> =Xsan ni kurabe tara?/>=
 differ-NG QP Xsan to compare when
 “It’s not different, I’m telling you.” =”When you compare with X-san=”
- 4 → G- [X-san ni kurabe tara.2//>=
 X-san to compare when
 “when you compare with X-san.”
- 5 H- = minna chikkoi guruupu da/ to omou yo. //>
 everyone short group COP QP think FP
 “=I think all of us belong to the short group.”

This particular example shows a lexical overlapping listener response by G in line 4 *X-san ni kurabe tara* ‘compared to X-san.’ The main speaker, C, continued finishing her first utterance while A’s response overlapped it, and integrated the exact wordings *X-san ni kurabe tara* of A’s utterance to start up a new turn (line 3 to 5).

The utterances numbered as 3 in the above examples deserve some discussion at this point. They were inserted immediately before the first speaker moved on to extend her turn. This third position³ was recognized as the *third pair part* in Tsui (1989). Tsui (1989) argues that in a natural interaction, the initiating utterance that the speaker produces is subject to the interpretation of the

³ Sequentially, the third turn is interactionally beneficial to the original speaker as well; Antaki et.al. (1996) points out in their analysis that the third sequence enables the speaker to sustain their original footing (e.g., the ratified speaker).

addressee, who displays his or her interpretation in the response (or the second pair part); moreover, the interlocutor may need to know whether the current speaker has understood his/her listener response, whether the response is acceptable, and whether the interlocutor has correctly interpreted the speaker's utterance. This interactional pattern is also recognized in a routine labeled *extended assessment activity* by Goodwin and Goodwin (1987). This is an interactional routine in which an assessment is produced by one speaker, and then? frequently another interlocutor (or the first speaker himself) produces an aligning assessment in response.

Studies specific to Japanese, Ohta (1994; 1999 among others) found that an extended assessment activity is a way to heighten expression of affect in the interaction. Given that, we can argue that *un* in example (2) and (3) as well as the copied wording by the current speaker in (4) functions to indicate to their interlocutor that the overlapped response was acknowledged, and furthermore, confirming that *allusion* (Schegloff, 1996) projected by the listener for his/her interpretation.

Extended assessment activity in corporation with the overlapping response found in the data were not limited to back-backchanneling utterances such as *un*. There were examples where the first speaker shows alignment to the listener response in the content of his/her ongoing turn. Example (5) is a representative case of my point here. This is a dyadic interaction, in which the participants were talking about getting homesick while living overseas and yet not being able to confess their feeling to other people.

(5) dyad NS-2

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | K- | demo tomodachi igai ni dare ni iimasu?=
but friends except whom to say?
“But who would you tell besides friends?” |
| 2 | L- | = u:::n. / >
= we::ll.
“well...” |
| 3 | ((0.2)) | |

- 4 → K- oya ni wa ienai de[sho, // > mo ienai toshi. // > atashi mo zettai oya ni =
 parents to TP not say FP already not say age I too absolutely parents to=
 “You can’t tell your parents, can you. We are already too old for that. Me **too**,”
- 5 → L- [un un un.
 yeah yeah yeah
 “yeah.”
- 6 = wa ienai? // nani ga aroo ga. // >
 TP not say? what S exist but
 “=I can’t tell my parents. No matter what happens.”

In line 1, K asked a question, “who else would you tell besides friends?” and L responded with a hedge, *u:::n*, indicating L is reluctant to answer the question. In line 4, K proceeded with her next turn, and stated her opinion that once becoming at a certain age, one cannot be totally honest with his/her parents. At this point, L sent out her listener response by overlapping K’s turn. K’s *un un un* is composed of a repetition of *un* ‘yes’, which indicates L’s alignment to K’s comment. After this response, K continues with saying *atashi mo zettai oya ni wa ienai?* ‘Me too, I can’t tell my parents.’ There are two features in this particular utterance to be noted here. Firstly, *Atashi mo* ‘Me, **too**’ can tell us that K has incorporated L’s alignment to her previous comment. Secondly, the rest of this utterance repeats what K has said before receiving L’s alignment. This ties the utterance back to the initial claim in line 1. In other words, this particular utterance did not provide any new information in its content; instead, it functioned as an extended assessment activity against L’s response.

In the examples shown in this section, the current speaker produced her third part assessment in the continuing turn; this might be indicating that the interactional sequence promoted here is not only attended to by Japanese participants, but that it may also take priority over other aspects of conversational progress.

3.1.2. Deviant case analysis

What does a listener accomplish with overlaps? A further examination of the immediate environment of overlapping responses was conducted in order to answer this question. The approach is to find cases where overlapping responses were not produced (i.e., *deviant cases*, Heritage, 1988) in comparison to the cases discussed earlier.

In example (6), the parties were comparing two professors (XX and LL), and N in line 1 made a statement that LL is a more flexible (and not irresponsible) person. M did not agree with N's opinion, and states that LL is too much of an easy-going person and that she does not approve of him.

(6) multiparty (3 graduate students at an American University)

- 1 N- XX wa chotto iikagen na toko ga atte, / **de[mo LL** wa iikagen ja=
XX TP little irresponsible COP point S exist but LL TP irresponsible COP
"XX is a bit irresponsible, but LL is not="
- 2 → M- **[un, dem-**
yeah, but-
"Yeah, but-"
- 3 N- =nakute, / jiyuu-ni yaraseru tte kanji. / || >
not freely let [us] do QP like
"=he sort of lets us do things freely."
- 4 → M- u:::n, demo jiyuu na kawari ni / **jibun mo jiyuu da yo ne:: / || > =**
we::ll but free COP instead himself too free COP FP FP
"Well.. but he is also free (spontaneous) as much as we are, isn't he."
- 5 =**dakara omoitsuki ga [sugoi. / || >**
so whim S extreme
"so his ideas are spur of the moment."
- 6 N/O- **[((laugh))**
- 7 M- obuzabeeshon, yaru koto ni natte ru n da kedo, are tte:: ima?
observation do NOM to decided NOM COP but that QT
"we are supposed to do an observation, but is that:: (are we doing it) now?"

The analysis of this example is twofold. The first point to be made concerns line 2, in which we find M's attempt to insert an utterance *un, dem-* 'yeah, but.' *Demo* 'but' here indicates

that M was trying to show disagreement with N, and M withdrew her insertion abruptly (see the cut-off sound of the vowel [o] in *dem-*) when her utterance ended up overlapping with N (line 1, after *demo LL wa* ‘But LL is’). After line 2, M waited for N to finish her turn then finally took the dissenting turn in line 4, again, initiating with *un, demo*. M’s utterance starting with *u:::n, demo* ‘we:::ll but’ suggests that M’s turn here is in disagreement with N’s prior comment, and this was what M attempted but ceased to do so in line 2. M’s immediate cease of her overlapping utterance in line 2 seems to be related to the nature of overlapping listener response in general. M’s behavior here makes sense if we can hypothesize that overlapping responses are meant to show *alignment*; M’s turn needed to be heard as a disagreement, hence producing her utterance in an overlapping manner would have not fallen into this pattern.

The second observation is the absence of the response to M’s turn in line 4-5. Line 4 states the main point of her evaluation of LL (*jibun mo jiyuu da yo ne* ‘he is also free’) and line 5 is an elaboration of her point, making the use of *dakara* ‘so,’ that LL’s ideas are (always) spur of the moment. At the end of line 5, M receives an overlapping laughter from her interlocutors (N and O), and M moved onto another topic in the next turn (line 7).

What does it mean when there is no *overlapping response*? In order to explain what I mean here, I will adopt the concept of *priority* scale (Bilmes, 1993) in a set of possible responses to a first pair part. Bilmes (1993) defines *priority response* as the following: “If X is the first priority response, then any response other than X (including no response) implicates (when it does not explicitly assert) that X is not available or is not in effect, unless there is reason to suppose that it has been withheld.” (p.391). For example, by specifying that acceptance of an invitation is first priority, we can account for the implication of refusal when acceptance is absent in the immediate response. Therefore a hedge, or *reluctant marker*, such as “well” as the first word to be mentioned

instead of “Yes, thank you,” functions as an indicator of refusal. A silence can be another indicator of an absence of the first priority response. Such a silence will be understood as something consequential, following Bilmes’ theory (1993). Now let us think about a case where the current speaker’s utterance has formed a first pair part of an adjacency pair, yet she continues her turn beyond the TRP. For the listener, there are few choices left at this point. She is obligated to fulfill her conversation duty to respond; hence she wants to “get in now, while the initial matter is still relevant even if it means physically overlapping.” (Jefferson, 1986:160). In the example above, N (and secondly O) was responsible to show either alignment or non-alignment with M about the evaluation about Mr. XX. Absence of an overlapping response for line 4 was interpreted as non-alignment by M; hence she pursues another turn by listing an illustration of her statement in line 4. At this point, N and O produced a laughter token, which was treated as alignment with M’s statement. Now an adjacency pair that M initiated has been completed; therefore, she moves on to another topic in line 7. Adopting Bilmes’ priority response mechanism (1993), we can see that overlapping responses are not simply accidentally produced. This analysis also seems to suggest that overlapping responses are interpreted as alignment to the on-going turn by the first speaker.

3.1.3. Summary: Overlapping listener responses in Japanese interaction

The examples from Japanese NS conversations examined in this study show that the overlapping responses contribute to a specific interactional routine; the shape of the interaction as a result indicates that a “good” listener will get into the current speaker’s turn (hence overlap) while the initial matter is still relevant (Jefferson, 1986). In a casual conversational setting like the data examined in this study, overlapping responses are part of the responsibility to be a “good” listener in Japanese. When this *listenership* is satisfied, the interaction moves forward smoothly. When *precision of timing* (Jefferson, 1986) of an overlapping response is not accomplished, there

will be an impact on the current flow of the conversational sequence. Overlapping responses in the examples discussed in this study function as an alignment indicator, typically following the three-turn sequence suggested in this paper.

While previous studies on backchannels tend to note the high frequency of continuer backchannels such as *ee*, *un* to argue that Japanese prefer a harmonious, empathetic interaction, many other communicative functions satisfied by *listenership* in Japanese are neglected (Saft, 1998; 2000). When we adopt a CA point of view in examining listener responses, in other words when we see backchannels as a part of conversational organization, we find that listeners are on the par with speakers (Duranti, 1986), co-constructing the interaction on-line. Overlapping listener responses in this study are one illustration of such obligatory responsibility of the listener in Japanese interaction.

3.2. Non-native speakers' performance and overlapping listener responses

Given the critical function of overlapping listener responses in Japanese, we must now examine how non-native speakers of Japanese manage them in conversation. In this study, an examination of four different nonnative speakers' performances in natural casual conversations with native speakers of Japanese was conducted. The nonnative subjects who participated in the conversations are graduate students in an American university, in their 20's and early 30's. They all have gone through several years of Japanese language courses in an American institution, and at least two years (but three of four participants had more than two years) residing in Japan. Their language skills were considered to be highly advanced. The researcher herself, a native speaker of Japanese and familiar with ACTFL proficiency guidelines, would place them as somewhere in low advanced to high advanced level.

3.2.1. Listener responses in L2

In her study with advanced German non-native speakers of English, House (1996) found that pragmatic fluency in listening responses was poor even after having explicit training for 14 weeks. Her study suggests that their response failures stem from many different interacting sources (Kasper, 1981; House 1993). In the data examined in this study, I found similar results to her study; the subjects performed very few overlapping responses as part of their listening responses. The data showed that non-native speakers sometimes led to a wrong reaction, or compensated for the lack of this particular strategy with certain learner strategies. In examining how the NS participants deal with these non-native speaker performances, it is found that the interactions did not simply break down, but rather it led native participants to depend less on non-native participants in constructing a conversation. In this section, I will explore 1) use of laughter as a listener response, 2) miscue by a wrong reactive token (particularly overlapping responses), 3) limited occurrence and non-occurrence of listener responses, and discuss what happens to the construction of the conversation in each case.

3.2.1.1. Avoidance of better listenership: Laughter

In a casual conversation setting, nonnative speakers are aware that they need to perform as a “good” listener; they know that they must signal to the other interlocutors that they are appreciating the on-going talk. Laughter was used very frequently by the non-native speakers in the data in order to satisfy this demand. In example (7) below, two native speakers actively took turns in interaction, and a nonnative speaker produced several laughter tokens that often overlapped with the current speaker’s talk.

(7) multi-party (4 participants) NNS data

NJ= nonnative speaker of Japanese, A and B are native speakers of Japanese

- 1 A- T-san nee, kooiu no, suki na n desu yo./||> dakara ichiban \$ookii [no\$/||>
T-san FP this one like COP NOM be FP so first big one
“T-san likes this kind of thing so hers will be the biggest one”
- 2 → NJ- [**((laugh))**]
- 3 B- doko de katta no
where at bought NOM
“where did you buy it?”
- 4 A- kore wa:: ((0.1)) ano:: ((0.1)) seifuwei.
this TOP well:: Safeway.
“this, uhm, at Safeway.”
- 5 B- tsukurimasita tte ieba yokatta ne./||> sono [patto ni ha]itte kiteru n nara nee. /||>
made QP say-if good FP that tray in put come NOM COP FP
“You should’ve said you made it, when it came in that pan.”
- 6 → NJ- [**((laugh))**]
- 7 A- attameta n desu yo.=
warm up NOM COP FP
“I just warmed it up.”
- 8 NJ- =a::?
=oh::?
- 9 B- iwanakya barenakatta. ((0.2))
say-NEG revealed-NEG
“you wouldn’t know if I didn’t tell.”
- 10 A- sore mo chotto kangaeta n desu [\$ kedo\$]
that too a little thought NOM COP but
“I thought about it for a minute, too, but.”
- 11 B- [demo iki]nari ii nioi ga shitara [bareru. /||>
but suddenly good smell S did-if reveal
“but when it starts to smell so good suddenly, I can tell.”
- 12 → NJ- [**((laugh))**]
- 13 A- soo desu nee. /||> san pun gurai de i[kinari, ii] nioi ga \$shite kite.\$ /||
so COP FP 3 minutes about COP suddenly good smell S do coming
“That is true. It started to smell so good in like three minutes.”
- 14 → NJ- [**((laugh))**]
- 15 B- S-chan mada kaette kitenai no?
S-chan yet return come-NEG NOM
“Hasn’t S-chan come home yet?”

In a multiparty conversation like this one, the non-native speaker was not playing a major role in the conversation most of the time. There were very few cases where she takes her turn by self-selecting herself to be the next speaker. The other two native speakers were engaging in the conversation very actively; they both take turns in this particular interaction. The non-native speaker was participating in the interaction by inserting laughter. Line 2, 6, 12, 14 are the examples. Laughter often overlaps with the current speaker; except in line 2. The occurrences of laughter in this excerpt are all overlapping tokens with the current speaker's turn. In line 1, A herself produced laughter while she finishes her turn, which invited the laugh from the NJ (non-native participant) in line 2. (Jefferson, et al. 1987; Lerner, 1996)

Laughter does not seem to require a response or an acknowledgement as a third turn in a sequence as found in discourse sample (5) and (6). It is understood as an acknowledgement token (Schegloff, 1982) but it merely functions as a continuer, meaning that it is an indication of alignment, and it is taken as a clear indication of passing one's intention to take a turn. While the other types of reactive tokens seem to have more potential to *prelude* for the future turn transition (Iwasaki, 1997), for example *a* ::::: 'oh:::::' eventually enabled the producer to be the next speaker as we saw in example (1), a laughter does not enable one to do so.

Laughter in this example can be interpreted as a learner strategy to substitute for other kinds of responses demanded in interaction. The advanced speakers such as those in my data are aware that they are obligated to indicate their attention and interest in the on-going conversation; however, performing an overlapping response which must be produced with precise timing is a difficult task. Successful performance of listener responses demands a learner with highly sophisticated language skills as well as a rich stock of knowledge about interaction in the target language (House, 1993; 1996). In terms of production skill, one must have a rich paradigmatic

selection of possible responses including substantial, non-pre-made utterances. In terms of comprehension skill, one must be able to not only parse what has been uttered on-line, but also interpret the pragmatic meaning of such an utterance. In Japanese interactions, Tanaka (1999) found that participants use many subtle *pre-act* strategies, or in Schegloff's terms preliminaries (1980), such as prefaced steps incrementing to an invitation, a question, or a request. Unless they recognize the first pair part of an adjacency pair, no matter how inexplicitly it is articulated, they cannot send an appropriate listener response.

Therefore, what we see in the example is the non-native speaker's solution, which is to align with the other participants by laughing together (Schegloff, 1979; Jefferson, et al., 1987). Laughter at least shows attentiveness to the current speaker. This very choice of *listenership*, or *communicative strategy* (Aston, 1993) results in handicapping the participant from participating in *co-incumbency* of the interaction (Baker, 2002).

3.2.1.2. Miscue created by an inappropriate listener response

The non-native participants in the data sometimes produced a reactive token that overlaps in a similar manner as those of native listeners. However, examining the lexical content of the non-native speakers' listener responses, we find that they are in conflict with what overlapping responses are supposed to do, namely, to indicate alignment with the speaker. Example (8) illustrates the point here. The two participants in this interaction were comparing the lifestyles of school teachers and office workers. Prior to excerpt, C, a native speaker, indicated that she had thought about taking an office worker position before because she thought a school teacher has a very unusual lifestyle. The first line is C's elaboration of her point, seeking an agreement from NK.

(8) NNS data (dyad-1)

NK = non-native speaker of Japanese C=native speaker of Japanese

- 1 C- gakkoo no sensei ni naru / tte [iu koto wa]/
school GEN teacher to become mean NOM TOP
“What it means to be a school teacher,”
- 2 NK- [a :::::::::::::::]
“oh::::::::::::”
- 3 C- zenzen raifusutairu ga chigau/ [ja n //>
at all lifestyle S different COP NOM
“lifestyle would be very different, right?”
- 4 → NK- [eh, sou na::?=
oh really
- 5 C- =nee
FP
“right?”
- 6 NK- un=
yeah
- 7 C- = datte, kaisha ni iku no to, || gakkoo no sensei ni naru no to, || zenzen chigau /
because company at go NOM and school teacher to become NOM and at all different

desho//> =
FP
“Because, commuting to a company and being a school teacher are very different, isn’t it?”
- 8 NK- =un
yeah
- 9 C- = seikatsu ga.//> ((1)) nari[tai na/ to omotta koto aru ? //> =
lifestyle S want to become FP QP thought chance exist
“it’s the lifestyle. Have you ever wanted to be an office worker?”
- 10 NK- [demo = demo zutto nanka ((0.5))
but but always anyways
“but but I’ve always
- 11 NK - ofisu no shigoto wa chotto taihen da to omou.
office of work TOP a little hassle COP QP think
thought that office work is a bit of a hassle.”

In line 1 and 2, we see that A receives an overlapping reaction which is very similar to the one from the NS data (1) line X, *a ::::::::::::::*. It indicated that NK recognized C’s communicative point, as well as she is in alignment with the speaker. Upon this response, in line 3, C engages the extended assessment (alignment) activity in the interactional sequence repeating C’s point (‘lifestyle [of a teacher] would be very different’).

Up to this point, the conversation seems to be proceeding successfully. After completion of this sequence, the next speaker usually starts a new topic, as we saw in NS data (see examples (3)). On the contrary, in line 4, NK sent out another overlapping response *eh, soo na::?* ‘oh really?’, which disturbs the expected conversational sequence. There are several things to be pointed out about this reactive token; first of all, *eh, soo na::?* is not a set expression used by native speakers. It resembles *a, soo na no?* ‘oh, is that so?’, in which case NK’s response can display discrepancy of opinion towards C. In line 5, A produced a final particle *nee*, which indicates a request for the addressee’s cooperation (Cook, 1992). NK responded to C with *un* in line 6, showing that NK is not in disagreement with C. At this point, it is uncertain that NK is in complete alignment with C due to two contradicting responses (“display of discrepancy” in line 4, and agreement in line 6). In line 7, C starts her turn with *datte* ‘because,’ which prefaces that what follows it indicates extension to the previous content, pursuing further on her point of argument (Ford and Mori, 1994). From this we can tell that C is reacting to the reaction *eh, soo na::?* in line 4, in other words C is treating the interaction as yet to be settled for the endangered discussion. Interestingly, C finishes her turn in line 7 with a final particle *desho*, seeking an agreement or confirmation from the interlocutor (Makino and Tsutsui, 1986; Jorden and Noda, 1987). This *desho* seems to indicate that C still wants to have clear aligning feedback from NK. However, C did not receive an adequate alignment response from NK, even with a second long pause provided in line 9. Finally C initiated a move by asking a question in line 9 (‘have you ever thought of working at an office?’), discarding the previous attempt for an interactional sequence. What we see in example (8) is the impact of a miscued response produced by the non-native speaker on the conversation progress. Pomerantz (1984) discusses several possible resolutions that the current speaker performs when there is a failure in receiving a wanted response from the interlocutors. Receiving an inappropriate listener response as seen in the

example above was seen as a failure of communication by C, and she repeatedly attempted to reconstruct her talk by renewing interactional sequences.

3.2.1.3. Occurrence and non-occurrence of overlapping listener responses

Until now, I have shown the case of “failure” in the nonnative speakers’ listener response performance. However, the nonnative speakers did perform overlapping responses in certain situations. When the nonnative speaker plays the role as the resource of information for certain topics under discussion, and the other interlocutors seek confirmation from them in a rather explicit manner, appropriate overlapping responses were produced. Here is an example of such a situation. In example (9), the participants were discussing about a company in Columbia that provides a rehabilitation program for employees with alcohol addiction. NL is a graduate student in Public Health, and the two other native participants do not know much about this topic. In the interaction, A was reviewing what she understood from NL’s talk prior to line 1.

(9) multi-party (3 participants) NNS data

NL= non-native speakers of Japanese A= native speaker of Japanese

- 1 A- kaisha ni aru/ arukohoorikku no hito no: ga[kko- ((0.1)) /|| yoku \$ [kiitenai\$ /||>
 company at exist alcoholic of people for school well listening –NEG
 “So there is a program for alcoholic people in the company- I wasn’t listening well”
- 2→NL- [sou da ne [sousousou
 yes COP FP yes yes yes
 “yes” “yes yes yes.”
- 3 A- de, sono hitotachi o tasukeru tame no= =puroguramu/ tte iu no/||>
 and that people O help purpose of program QP say FP
 “And it is a program to help those people, right?”
- 4 NL- = sou =
 right
 “right”
- 5 A- tukuranakucha ienai no. /||>
 make have to FP
 “you have to establish it?”

A similar pattern was found in example (10), a dyadic interaction. NN in this example is a senior graduate student to B in Japanese linguistics. A engaged in sharing her experience in historical linguistics with NN in this interaction. NN is pursuing her Ph.D. in historical linguistics, hence A seeks constant confirmation in her talk.

(10) (dyad-2) NNS data

NN = non-native speaker of Japanese B=native speaker of Japanese

- 1 B- eeto, manyoogana no toko./||> nanka uta dakara:: /||> ichi gyo [ome?/|| ga=
 well, manyoo script of place something poem so::
 “well, the place that is manyoo script is something like a song, so, the first line? is=”
- 2 → NN- [un sou so.
 yes right
 “right”
- 3 B- kanbun de. /||> =
 Classic Chinese and
 “in classic Chinese, and=”
- 4 NN- = un.
 yes
 “yes”
- 5 B- tsugi ga zenbu hiragana. /||>
 next S all hiragana
 “the next is all hiragana.”

Both examples have a similar context in common; the current speaker does not hold certain information or seeks a confirmation of the information she holds from NN. In (9), we find B is expressing uncertainty by elongation of the particle *no::* in line 1, and also the self-initiated laughter while she was finishing her turn. In (10), there was also an elongation of the last mora in *dakara::* ‘so’ which shows uncertainty, and furthermore a rising intonation with *ichi gyooome?* ‘the first line?’ affirms the observation made here that B wanted a confirmation from NN. The non-native speaker in (10) successfully reads what was pragmatically demanded hence sent out an overlapping response in line 2. The non-native speakers’ overlapping responses in both examples enabled the current speakers to maintain the floor and proceed with their story. These examples of

nonnative performance of overlapping responses suggest another layer to the issue at hand; in addition to the fact that non-native speakers of Japanese yet have difficulty in performing responses themselves, there may exist some expectation difference between the native speakers and the nonnative speakers (at least for the participants in my data) as to when is the appropriate opportunity to perform responses conversationally. The nonnative speakers successfully performed overlapping responses when their confirmation was clearly needed because of their expertise in the topic, whereas they failed to perform in other occasions where a RT was also needed pragmatically. For instance, the following excerpt is a continuation of example (9) below. There is another native speaker, D comes into the interaction:

(11) multi-party (3 participants) NNS data

NL= non-native speaker of Japanese A, D = native speakers of Japanese

- 7 → A- nanka nihon de wa/ soko made **kaisha::** wa mendoo mitekurenai[:::/ ne./||> ((0.1))
 well Japan in TOP there by company TOP care take-NEG FP
 “Well, a company wouldn’t take care of the employees in Japan, does it?”
- 8 D- – [un.
 yes
 “yes”
- 9 NL- sou.
 yes
 “yes”

As explained earlier, the NL in this interaction is the expert of the topic (i.e., the rehabilitation program promoted by the company for it employees in different countries). A is taking up the topic after NL, and is the main person speaking back to him. In the interaction, A was uttering line 7 facing the NL rather than D. In line 7, A has two locations where she showed unusual elongation of her words (*kaisha::*: ‘company’ and *mitekurenai::*: ‘[the company] won’t take care’), seeking an agreement from NL (and peripherally, from D). However, NL did not send any responses to A during her turn, while D sent out an overlapping response after the second

elongation of word by A (*mitekurenai:::*). Comparing the two examples (9) and (10) with overlapping responses and this example (11) with the absence of an overlapping response, we may account for this in relation to L1 pragmatic influence on the part of their reaction. There may be a complex set of possible factors we can consider for the outcome, but at least we can say that the learners' perspective on what is going on at the discourse level may differ radically from the native speakers' interpretation of the interactional context.

3.2.2. Comprehension of overlapping response

In this section, I will illustrate the findings that concern non-native speaker's performance as a speaker who receives overlapping responses from other native interlocutors in the interaction. Whether the learners can appreciate overlapping responses as an alignment indicator was the main question of this analysis. The findings point out two issues: one is that learners' failure to appreciate the overlapping responses may be due to inappropriate comprehension at the syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of language (House, 1996), and the other point is that the learners seem to have a different interpretation of overlaps in general, which seems to stem from the pragmatic knowledge based on their L1. The different reactions to overlapping responses observed in non-native data confirm these hypotheses.

3.2.2.1. Inadequate comprehension of interaction

In accounting for non-native speakers' pragmatic fluency, House (1996) adopted Langer's notion of *mindless actions* (1989) and suggested that because people often switch off their comprehension process when engaged in over-learned, over-rehearsed behaviors, in interaction and save their processing capacity for planning what they would say next. Lacking a full processing capacity in the L2, non-native speakers also readily stop paying attention to the reality of the input (House, 1996:248). Without comprehending the upcoming input, learners are more in

risk to make misinterpretation of the conversation. In my data there were cases where learners' poor comprehension seems to be reason for the learners' miscue of listener responses.

The following example shows a case in which a nonnative speaker is not sensitive to his interlocutors' responses while he is engaged in producing his turn. NL is making an argument that a company should provide some kind of care for its employees' personal problems such as alcoholism because their poor performance at work is damaging for the company. To remind the readers, NL is a graduate student in Public Health.

(12) multiparty (3 participants) NNS data

NL = non-native speaker of Japanese A, D= native speakers of Japanese

- 1 NL- un:: yopparattara,/ a::, kaisha ni eikyoo aru::/|| >
 yeah:: drunk-if um company to influence exist::
 “Yeah, if (workers) are drunk, it will affect the company::”
- 2 A- un.
 yeah
 “yeah.”
- 3 → NL- shigoto ni ko[nai toka /||> ie no mond [ai:: ||> shigotochuu ni] neru || toka./||>
 work to come-NEG like family of issue during work at sleep like
 “They may not come to work, they have family issues, they might fall in sleep during work”
- 4 → A- [haha:: [sositara fire shichaeba ii jan?]
 oh::: then fire do-if good FP
 “Oh.” “Then the (company) can fire them, can't they?”
- 5 D- [soo ka:: ((whispering))
 I see::
 “I see”
- 6 ((1))
- 7 A- nanka nihon de wa/ soko made kaisha:: wa mendoo mitekurenai:: /ne./||> ((0.5))
 well Japan in TOP there by company TOP care take-NEG FP

“Well, the company won't take care of its employees to that extent in Japan, right?”

In this interaction, NL is explaining how alcoholism of individuals can also be damaging to a company. In line 3 NL lists several points to emphasize his argument. Right at the point where NL mentioned the first example ('they may not come to work'), the native speakers A and D both

sent out overlapping responses as seen in line 4 and 5. However, there was no change in pace or intonation in NL's turn, nor any response back to A and D as an alignment with, or acknowledgment of their responses. In fact, NL continues on his elaboration even after he received recognition of her communicative point. Native speaker A, expecting that a conversational sequence has been completed by her reaction in line 4, self-selects herself *soshitara fire shichaeba ii jan?* 'then (the company) just fire them, right?' as the next turn and overlaps with NL. NL did not give up his turn to speak by insisting on his turn, which ended up creating a relatively extensive overlap. This overlap is a different type from what I have been discussing in this paper; it is a form of a question, which is initiating a new interactional sequence (i.e., the first pair part of an adjacency pair). What we can observe from this is that A was starting her new turn at this point assuming that it is an adequate CTRP. There are several factors involved in here; first of all, NL's intonation was falling as if he was finishing his turn in *ie no mondai*. 'a family matter.' Secondly, the overlapping responses that shows agreement with NL's point were produced by his listeners (line 4 and 5), which would lead them to anticipate a sequential end-point would take place immediately after that. As a current speaker, NL could have responded to A's utterance in line 4 on-line, as native speakers in NS data of this study did. However, NL ended up simply failing to respond to A's turn, and it led to a second, awkwardly long pause observed by all the participants of the interaction. Finally in line 7, A initiates a turn once more to continue the conversation. What is to be noted here is that the dominant speaker role was taken away from NL to A at this point. This speaker change seems to be attributed to NL's inability as a turn-holder to deal with overlapping utterances.

3.2.2.2. Overlaps as a threat to one's turn maintenance

Interpretation of overlapping items can vary. The current speaker may take the overlapped utterance produced by the interlocutor as something interruptive (i.e., violation of her current turn), or, as the native speakers in the data show, she may recognize it as interactionally cooperative act (Murata, 1994; Hayashi, 1988). Conversation analysis informed studies have emphasized their approach to examine interpretation of overlapping responses by studying the uptakes produced by the current speaker. In this study, the behavior of the nonnative speaker as the current speaker was examined, and there are some behaviors worth mentioning that match Bilmes' description of the act of *being interrupted*. (1997). Here is one such example:

(13) NNS data (dyad-2)

NN=non-native speaker of Japanese B= native speaker of Japanese

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | NN- | ano, SO- ((0.2))
well, SO- | kanbun
Classic Chinese | wa /=
TOP | |
| 2 | B- | | | =un | |
| 3 | NN- | yappari ano, SOV
after all well SOV | desho./ > =
FP | | [Subject-Object-Verb/
desho./ > |
| 4 | B- | | | = a, so[kka.
oh right | |
| 5 → | NN- | dakara aa iu
so that say | kaeri-ten [toka
like | [DEMO SORE yomu/
but that read | to hontoo konran=
if really confusion |
| 6 → | B- | | [soo soo. ichi-ni-[ten toka.
yeah yeah ichi-ni-ten like | | |
| 7 | NN- | =suru/[yo./ >
do FP | ho]ntoo ni= | | |
| 8 | B- | [un un
yeah yeah | =un.
yeah | | |
| 9 | NN- | ano:: SOV /
well:: SOV QP say | tte iu [fuu ni yondara, > =
like read-if | =angai
unexpectedly | wakariyasui yo.
easy to read FP |

10 → B-

[un un
yeah yeah

=un un=
yeah yeah

In his discourse data from a political debate in English, Bilmes (1997) points out that when the current speaker feels interrupted during her turn, often she raises her voice to win the turn-taking competition. This *insistence of turn* (Bilmes, 1997: 519) was found in the example above. In line 5, receiving A's overlapping response *soo soo. ichi-ni-ten toka* 'yeah yeah. like *ichi-ni-ten*', the current speaker NN continued to talk in another overlap with B's response (line 6), applying a louder voice for the initial words *DEMO SORE* ..'but that..' despite that there is nothing in the context of B's overlapping response to suggest that she intends to interrupt NN. This can be also observed from B's reactive tokens in line 8 as what Schegloff (1982) calls *continuers*, which gives up the chance to become the next speaker. Another interruption display found in NN's re-start of her turn in line 5 is that she used *DEMO* 'but', which is a discourse marker which is frequently used as a turn-initiation in Japanese interactions. This is also an interruption display in the sense that this *demo* shows that the first speaker was not finished talking (Bilmes, 1997:522).

This excerpt has NN's two different uptakes for two different types of overlapping responses. Compare line 5, which was discussed here and line 9. When B's reaction is *non-lexical* (Iwasaki, 1997) such as the reactive tokens *un un* 'yeah yeah' as in line 10, NN did not respond to them with the interruption display that she did in line 5 against a *substantive backchannel* (Iwasaki, 1997). This may indicate that NN tends to interpret lexical responses as a full-turn, not a listener response. The analysis done on English conversations (Sacks et al, 1974; Lerner, 1989; Schegloff, 2000) suggest that the participants of these types of overlapping locations tend to perform some kind of *overlapping management* (Lerner, 1989; Schegloff, 2000). In the excerpt above, NN is actively working to fight to keep her turn, while B is only attempting to insert a more lexical listener response. Here is another example with a similar pattern. In example (14) below, two native

interlocutors sent out overlapping responses while NJ was telling them about her friend who dyed her hair orange.

(14) NNS data (multi-party (4))

NJ=non-native speaker of Japanese A, B = native speakers of Japanese

- 1 NJ- ano, itsumo kau? /||>= iro ga, kawatchatta./||> dakara, hoka no iro katte,/|| McDonald no iro,
 well always buy color S have changed so other of color bought McDonald of color
- 2 A- =un.
 uh-huh
- 3 →NJ- suggoi, orenji, ni [nat [ta./||> **KONO, KO**no kurai./ ||>= ((point at an orange colored item))
 very orange to became
- 4 B- [arya[rya:: = e ::
- 5 A- [e ::::
- 6 A- iro wakaranakatta no?
 color tell-NEG NOM
- 7 NJ- wakaranatta. iro no namae wa, *cherry coke?* datta kara
 tell-NEG color of name TOP *cherry coke* COP because

In line 4 and 5, the native participants both sent out overlapping responses, showing the reflection to NJ’s story (i.e., her friend’s hair turned orange). Immediately NJ raised her voice in continuing her turn saying how orange the color was by pointing at an orange item in front of her. As an outcome, NJ’s turn was sustained after the overlapping of the three speakers. However, A and B were not attempting to take the turn away from NJ at this point; their utterances in line 4 and 5 are merely non-lexical expressions, and they cease their production immediately when NJ started her extended turn.

3.2.3. Summary: Non-native speakers’ use of overlapping listener responses

As we have seen in the data presented in this section, non-native speakers’ “poor” performance seems to further confirm the interactional function of overlapping listener responses

in Japanese. Native participants in interaction who received these miscued responses engaged in re-shaping the interaction so that they will receive long-awaited alignment from nonnative participants, which will complete an interactional sequence. Native speakers' attempts were not always successful; as a result, native participants often discarded such an incomplete interactional sequence and started another interactional sequence. Being aware of their limitation in the L2, laughter was used as an alignment indicator instead of overlapping responses. The data showed that this strategy has its cost to pay, meaning that laughter did not enable them to achieve the same accomplishment one would have gotten from an overlapping response.

Once the nonnative participants showed their incompetence in engaging in the expected interactional pattern, native participants took control of the conversation by taking over the floor by initiating a new topic. In this section of analysis, I have shown the possible consequences that learners may face for not having the skill to engage themselves in interactional sequences involving overlapping responses.

4. FINAL DISCUSSION

The findings from the analysis in this study delineated what overlapping listener responses enable a speaker to obtain a full listenership in interaction in Japanese. Overlapping does not just happen by chance; rather, the participants of the interaction make sure to denote their strong alignment with the current speaker. Some deviant cases with respect to this particular phenomenon were also discussed in this paper. An accidentally overlapped disagreement response was withheld immediately to avoid a wrong interpretation, and the non-native speakers' misinterpretation of overlapping listener responses for alignment was shown to be consequential in the interaction.

There are yet to be answered questions left out in this particular study. For instance, how are the various shapes among the overlapping listener responses different in interactional consequences they bring out. As I have pointed out in this paper, some listener responses are more lexical than others, and at least for the non-native speakers' reaction to overlapping responses, the lexical ones are more vulnerable for misinterpretation than non-lexical ones (e.g., *hmm*, *aa*, etc). In order to investigate further on overlapping listener responses with these questions in mind, another study with a wide range of data samples must be conducted. The data set of this study is not large enough to get at such a research question, although I sense some hits were present.

With some caveats stated, I believe that this study has opened up a new approach for the traditional framework of listening behavior in Japanese; it promotes a rigorous investigation of interaction, and it has also shown that examining non-native speakers' performance might be in fact highly informative to find out native speakers' interactional practices in conversation.

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KEY TO THE TRANSCRIPTION

- (.) pause unmeasurable but perceivable
(?) uncertain comment
hh exhalation
- cut off sound
= no pause between the two utterances, latching
[overlap
:: elongated sound
. falling intonation
, continuing intonation
? rising intonation
→ analysis point
\$word\$ uttered with breezing laughter (giggling)
((description)) any kind of non-verbal observations, pause
/|> complex Transition Relevance Point, combination of / (conversational syntactic completion), || (Intonational completion), > (pragmatic completion)

* CTRP marks in the data were indicated only where it is relevant for the analysis of location of the overlapping utterances.

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS FOR JAPANESE GLOSS

- S** subject marker
Obj object marker
Q question marker
QP quotation particle
TP topic particle
NG negation marker
FP sentence final particle
LK linking particle
NOM nominalizer

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