

Profiling Performances of L2 Listenership: Examining The Effects of Individual Differences in The Japanese EFL Context

Pino Cutrone*

Nagasaki University, Japan

Abstract

This paper describes a study designed to profile performances of L2 listenership. The writer examines the listenership behavior of 23 Japanese EFL learners, who were all freshmen students at a national university in Japan (16 females and 5 males) at the time the study was conducted, in an attempt to identify some of the features associated with different levels of performance concerning listenership behavior. Specifically, this study sought to identify some of the common characteristics of Japanese EFL participants who exhibited competent backchannel behavior compared to those who did not. Assessments involved having each student participate in an intercultural conversation, complete a questionnaire, and be interviewed. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used to investigate the relationships between variables (i.e., whether various performances in sub-categories of listenership are interrelated, as well as how individual performances in sub-categories of listenership may be related to L2 proficiency, personality dimensions, willingness to communicate, etc.). Besides helping to provide researchers with a more detailed description of the dynamics of listenership/backchannel behavior, the results of this study will have practical implications for Japanese EFL practitioners.

Key Words: listenership, backchannel behavior, Japanese EFL context, individual differences, pragmatics

Introduction

This paper attempts to piece together a profile of successful versus non-successful learners where listenership/backchannel behavior is concerned. The first step is to provide a clear and concise definition of what a backchannel is. While several different definitions of the term exist in the research literature (see Fujimoto, 2007 for a list of 24), backchannels can be understood in general terms as “the brief verbal and nonverbal responses and/or reactions that a listener gives to the primary speaker when the primary speaker is speaking” (Cutrone, 2011, p. 53). To understand what this means, it is necessary for readers to also be familiar with the notion of turn taking in conversations. Thus, when one person is taking a turn at speaking in the conversation, they are considered the primary speaker, and their talk is the main channel of communication. The listener is then considered the non-primary speaker and their utterances during the primary speaker’s turn are backchannels, which in turn serve to provide short cues to notify the primary speaker that the non-primary speaker is listening. In other words, the primary speaker is the one that is carrying conversation and driving it forward (i.e., has the floor and on topic), while a non-primary speaker (i.e., listener) is the one that is reacting to what the primary speaker is saying. Example I illustrates this difference:

- I. Carrie: In some high schools in America, they offer Japanese.
Akie: Uhum.

Nonverbal and non-word vocalizations such as head nods and laughter respectively can be considered backchannels if they serve a listening function. For instance, in Examples II and III, it is clear that Akie’s head nods (shown by the symbol ^) and laughter respectively are reactions to Carrie’s statements.

- II. Carrie: New York’s China town is very huge.
Akie: ^^

EMAIL: k-pino@nagasaki-u.ac.jp, School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences, 1-14 Bunkyo-machi, Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan, 852-8521

III. Carrie: That is so cute because it looks like a grade schooler.
Akie: (*Laughter*)

Examples used in this paper, such as I, II, and III shown above, have been taken from authentic conversations produced in this study, as shown in Appendix A. In some cases, the examples have been modified and/or various aspects of the transcription conventions have been omitted in order to make them easier to understand. Such examples are used simply to provide models of backchannel behavior occurring in naturally occurring speech, and, thus, more in-depth analysis of the issues involved in creating and deciphering of conversational transcriptions are needed.

Differentiating a Backchannel from a Turn

One of the most difficult issues in identifying a backchannel seems to be in determining whether a behavior constitutes a backchannel or a separate turn (i.e., a sub-issue is whether to include longer reactive utterances as backchannels or not). Ergo, it is necessary to be able to understand and identify specifically what constitutes a turn in this study. In their seminal work, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) proposed a model for the organisation of turn-taking in conversations in which they describe a turn to consist of one or more *turn-constructive units* (TCUs). According to their model, TCUs can range in size from a single word to clauses filled with many embedded clauses. Each TCU ends at a *transition-relevant-place* (TRP), which is identified as a moment in the conversation at which an exchange of turn is appropriate. TRPs are signalled by the conversation's participants to each other through various contextual cues such as *silence* or the *end of a question*. TRPs are commonly observed in similar conversational contexts as backchannels (Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki, & Hongyin, 1996; Cutrone, 2014; Maynard, 1997; White, 1989).

Although Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) model is useful for understanding the general set of rules that govern the turn-taking system, it may not be the most suitable for identifying backchannels in this study, as it does not account for the concept of *having the floor* (Edelsky, 1981; Hayashi, 1988). While the definition of a TCU is primarily grammatical, the concept of having the floor is based on participants' sense of who has the floor and is on topic, as well as the quantity and frequency of their speech. The concept of having the floor does not seem to fit within the framework of CA in terms of identifying backchannels since a speaker could continue to hold the floor while non-floor holders ask questions and/or make comments to drive the floor holder into new directions of conversations. Such questions and comments would constitute full turns in the field of CA, whereas they would not necessarily do so in terms of having the floor.

In this study, the writer approaches the observation of listening behavior not only from a research perspective that relies mainly on providing further descriptions of this phenomenon; but also, in the context of this study, the writer is concerned with how listening behavior is used in, and affects, real-world intercultural communication (IC). Hence, as Fujimoto (2007) and Thonus (2007) have suggested, it may be more practical from such a perspective to consider backchannels as any listener response that reacts to what the primary speaker has said. Following O'Keeffe and Adolphs (2008), the term 'listener response' is used as an umbrella term to describe any response which reacts to something that the primary speaker has said (p. 74). In the context of this study, backchannels/listener responses would extend beyond what is meant by the term backchannel in many other studies to also encompass longer utterances which also act in response to an interlocutor's utterance. The rationale for this becomes clear below, where the framework for assessing listening behavior is detailed. Within this framework, the writer employs Markel's (1975) definition of turn to analyze listener responses in this study:

A speaking turn begins when one interlocutor starts solo talking. For every speaking turn there is a concurrent listening turn, which is the behaviour of one or more nontalking interlocutors present. (p. 190)

Hence, in this turn-taking system, the only time that a change in speaking turn occurs is

when the non-primary speaker begins solo speaking, which is recognized here as some point or utterance made which serves to actually advance the conversation (i.e., this does not include short backchannel utterances such as *uhuh*, *mmm* and/or *I see*, which seem only to serve a listening and reactive function). In instances where simultaneous speech occurs, the primary speaker continues to *have the turn* if the primary speaker continues to solo speak after the simultaneous speech. However, if the non-primary speaker begins solo speaking after the simultaneous speech, then a change of primary speaker turns would have occurred. Within this framework, brief questions such as *Really?* or *Is that right?*, which are formed in terms of requests for clarification, are considered backchannels, as they are thought to primarily serve a listening function. In contrast, a question such as *Why did she move?* is considered a full speaking turn because it serves a speaking function in terms of driving the conversation in a new direction.

Thus, responses to questions are considered full speaking turns and not backchannels. That is because, unlike responses to questions, backchannels are optional and not required (Ward & Tsukuhara, 2000). Further, responses to questions, even when they are quite brief (often due to ellipsis), would also seem to provide new information that helps steer the conversation forward constituting a change of primary speakership. Finally, researchers must decide how to deal with utterances found between turns at talk, i.e., would such statements be recognized as listening reactions or part of a turn at talk? Following the writer's previous analyses (Cutrone, 2005, 2014), utterances were considered listener responses in this study only when they occurred immediately after the primary speaker stopped talking (within one second) and were followed by a substantial pause before the next turn at talk started (exceeding one second). This decision was made because it was felt that such listener responses were produced in response to the primary speaker's utterance, and they occurred before a substantial turn transitional period started.

Types of Backchannels

Listener responses are recognized to occur as verbal backchannels and/or nonverbal ones. According to Tottie's (1991) oft-used classification, verbal backchannels in this study are grouped according to three types: simple, compound, and complex. To illustrate this distinction, it is useful to also understand the difference between a backchannel and a backchannel item. A simple backchannel such as *uhuh* is one which has only one backchannel item. A compound backchannel such as *yeah yeah yeah* is one in which one backchannel item exists but is repeated more than once. A complex backchannel such as *yeah, I know* consists of multiple and varied backchannel items. Nonverbal backchannels, which can occur both simultaneously and independently of the three verbal types above, fall within the following categories: simple accompanied by a head nod(s), compound accompanied by a head nod(s), complex accompanied by a head nod (s), isolated head nod, multiple head nods, smile, laughter, raised eyebrows, and two or more nonverbal backchannels occurring simultaneously.

A broader categorical distinction involving listener responses is presented in Stubbe's (1998) *feedback continuum* (p. 259). At one end of the continuum is listener feedback, which is brief and minimally supportive, while at the other end is lengthier feedback which conveys a higher degree of involvement in the conversation. Following this framework, minimal responses are defined as any simple verbal backchannel (including non-word vocalizations such as *uhuh* or *mm*) and/or nonverbal backchannel occurring in isolation. Extended responses, in contrast, are defined as the lengthier, verbal listener feedback consisting of multiple and varied words as characterized by complex backchannels, irrespective of nonverbal backchannel accompaniment.

Functions of Backchannels

The most common function of a backchannel, to allow the primary speaker to continue speaking, is deeply embedded in navigating the turn-taking system and specifically on the non-primary speaker forsaking the opportunity to take a primary speaking turn (Schegloff, 1982). This clearly demonstrates the apparent link between how much (or little) a person speaks with how frequently (or infrequently) they provide backchannels. Several intercultural

analyses involving Japanese EFL speakers have shown a relative lack of primary speaker incipency in tandem with the frequent use of backchannels, which seems to negatively affect perceptions across cultures. In addition to the continuer function described above, Maynard (1997) identifies a few more prominent backchannel functions, such as to show understanding, agreement, support and empathy, emotion, as well as to include minor additions (see further explanations and examples of these functions in Cutrone, 2005).

Listenership across Cultures and Targets for Listenership Behavior

The followings sub-sections will identify some of the areas of listenership and put forward some general targets for Japanese EFL/ESL speakers (JEFLs hereafter) to adhere to in their intercultural encounters in L2 English. The establishment of such targets was based on two goals: (1) trying to approximate the conversational patterns and behaviors of fully proficient speakers of English, and (2) dealing with the issues that Japanese EFL/ESL speakers have been known to have where listenership behavior is concerned. Therefore, more specifically, this involves having JEFLs provide minimal backchannels less frequently (especially while one's interlocutor is speaking), with greater variability (but at context-appropriate moments), while asking questions and taking the primary speakership in the conversation more often, and initiating conversational repair strategies when they do not understand and/or disagree rather than feign understanding and agreement. With these targets in mind, it should be noted that there can exist a great deal of individual differences in listenership behavior within any given culture or group. Thus, since listenership behaviors are often individualistic and context-driven (and contain considerable overlap between sub-categories), it does not seem wise to prescribe quantifiable targets in precise terms. Rather, based on the recorded observations of fully proficient speakers of English in the literature, which were limited to native English speakers (NESs hereafter) where listenership behavior was concerned, the targets in the following list provide practitioners (i.e., teachers and users of the language) with general directions for assessing various aspects of backchannel behavior.

Target 1: Approximating the Listenership Behavior of Proficient Speakers of English Overall Frequency

Several studies have reported JEFLs uttering backchannels significantly more than NESs (Clancy et al., 1996; Crawford, 2003; Cutrone, 2005, 2014; Ike, 2010; Maynard, 1986, 1990, 1997; White, 1989). Depending on the study, JEFLs have been observed to send anywhere from two to four times as many backchannels as NESs. Although the context of the conversation will always be the overriding factor as to when they should send backchannels, in general terms, one goal for JEFLs is to backchannel less and eliminate many of the superfluous, empathy-building backchannels that they provide in English.

Variability

One of the findings in Cutrone's (2005, 2014) previous analyses is that the JEFLs in the researcher's studies tended to rely mainly on minimal backchannels (i.e., short, brief and repetitive non-word vocalizations, and head nods) in their listener feedback and this was perceived negatively in ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) conversations across cultures. The NESs in Cutrone's studies, comparatively, tended to balance minimal backchannels more evenly with extended backchannels (i.e., longer backchannels consisting of content words, phrases, and expressions). Hence, in general terms, another goal is for JEFLs to develop a more diverse repertoire of backchannels to use in their intercultural encounters in English. In other words, JEFLs should work towards increasing the number of extended backchannels and decreasing the number of minimal backchannels they produce. The former objective operates in tandem with increasing WTC (willingness to communicate), which will be discussed in Target 2 below.

Discourse Contexts Favoring Backchannels

This category encompasses a term coined by Maynard (1986) used to describe the locales in the primary speaker's speech where backchannels are commonly found and includes primary

speaker behaviors that seem to attract listener feedback. In several studies, grammatical completion points (i.e., phrasal and clausal boundaries) and pauses (especially occurring simultaneously) have been identified as primary discourse contexts favoring backchannels in English (Cutrone, 2005, 2014; Maynard 1986, 1990, 1997; White, 1989). Several other discourse contexts including self-adaptors and gesticulation (Duncan & Fiske, 1977), gaze (Kendon, 1977), and prosodic features (Ward & Tsukuhara, 2000) have also been suggested in the research literature. This is a difficult category to offer precise targets since backchannels that are sent in locales other than the ones mentioned above are not necessarily considered incorrect and their adequacy is largely dependent on the context of the conversation and the function that the non-primary speaker desires to communicate. Nonetheless, as a general method of measuring performances, the researcher compares the percentage of backchannels the participants employed in the opportunities they were provided in primary discourse contexts such as grammatical completion points and/or pauses.

Simultaneous Talk

At rates similar to those of overall frequency, several studies have shown that, when compared to NESs, JEFs tended to send backchannels that co-occur with the primary speaker's speech creating simultaneous talk much more frequently (Cutrone, 2005, 2014; Hayashi, 1998; Lebra, 1976; Maynard, 1997; Mizutani, 1982). In tandem with the general targets of discourse contexts favoring backchannels presented above (i.e., to send backchannels at grammatical completion points and/or pauses), the goal for JEFs here is to generally try to avoid sending backchannels while their interlocutor is speaking.

Form and Function

Choosing suitable and appropriate linguistic forms to correspond with specific (and desired) functions of backchannels may have the greatest impact on one's communicative effectiveness. With this in mind, success in this area will be extremely difficult to measure because it is highly context driven and largely dependent on the individual intentions and feelings of the person providing the backchannels. Further, success will be very difficult to measure quantitatively, as there is considerable overlap between forms and functions (see Cutrone, 2010 for a sample inventory of backchannel forms corresponding to the functional categories presented above). Here, the writer addresses some of the JEFs' unconventional uses of backchannels in English such as their tendency to employ continuer, understanding, agreement and/or support, and empathy type backchannels in situations when they did not understand what their interlocutor was saying. In tandem with certain aspects of Target 3 below (i.e., initiating conversational repair strategies), the main goal here is for JEFs to convey their feelings with appropriate backchannel forms, and for these intentions to be recognized accordingly by their interlocutors.

Target 2: WTC and Conversational Involvement

In various intercultural analyses, JEFs' reticence and minimal responses have been cited by NESs as reasons negatively affecting IC (Anderson, 1993; Cutrone, 2005, 2014; Sato, 2008). Demonstrating how backchannel categories are highly interconnected, this is yet another category that overlaps with others. That is, if JEFs make a concerted effort to initiate conversation more (which is the goal here) they will, in turn, backchannel less (which was one of the goals stipulated in Target 1 above). Similarly, the goal of providing more extended backchannels over minimal ones (as stipulated in the *variability* sub-category of Target 1) would seem to fit in well with the goal here of speaking more. Lastly, in the same way, the goal of employing full speaking turns (as touched upon in the *form and function* sub-category of Target 1 and to be discussed again in Target 3 from a conversational management perspective) instead of backchannels to get over certain obstacles that come up in a conversation is also in line with the goal of more conversational involvement. The JEFs' involvement and WTC in conversations will be measured in three ways in this study: (1) WTC scores (using the widely used WTC scale designed by McCroskey, 1992, see Appendix B), (2) how much they spoke in the conversations, and (3) the number of questions they asked their interlocutor.

Target 3: Conversational Micro-Skills

As stated above, one of the goals concerning more effective listenership behavior is for JEFs to exhibit a higher degree of WTC and conversational involvement. To this end, JEFs would be well advised to make use of conversational management techniques, which refer to the ability to effectively incorporate the following in conversations: appropriate usage of discourse markers and listener responses, evaluative comments, return questions, follow-up questions, new topic initiation, expansion techniques, the ability to ensure comprehension on the part of the listener, and the ability to initiate repair when there is a potential breakdown. Concerning the latter (which was introduced in the *form and function* aspect of Target 1), JEFs must deal specifically with their issue of sending unconventional backchannel types (such as continuer, agreement, and understanding listener responses) when they do not understand what the interlocutor is saying.

Target 4: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

The final criterion for JEFs to demonstrate effective listenership behavior involves exhibiting a certain degree of ICC. According to Spitzberg's (2000) well-known model of ICC, the optimal conditions for successful ICC are provided when knowledge, skills, and motivation are aligned with meeting the other person's expectations regarding appropriateness and effectiveness. Thus, any instrument seeking to measure appropriate and effective listenership behavior in intercultural conversations must consider perceptions across cultures. From the perspective of JEFs, meeting the expectations of the global ELF community is paramount to achieving success in this area. To measure this aspect of listenership, this study will use Hecht's (1978) Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (see Appendix C). This is useful in assessing interlocutors' listenership behavior, conversational satisfaction, and perceptions of one another after conversing.

Research Questions

Research into the area of listenership behavior, particularly concerning individual differences, is in its infancy and, thus, much remains unknown. Most studies to date have focused primarily on detailing the patterns of the backchannel output of various groups in terms of frequency and discourse contexts favoring backchannels, and to a somewhat lesser extent the variability and backchannels creating simultaneous speech. Presently, very little is known about the characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful communicators where listenership is concerned. As the writer mentioned in Target 3 above, the degree of an individual's WTC may affect their conversational performances (and listenership) and is worthy of more in-depth exploration. Another variable that will be investigated in this study is the extraversion/introversion dimension of personality. Extraversion is particularly relevant to this study, as it has traditionally been thought to be at the centre of personality models (Eysenck, 1992), and, similar to the WTC construct, has been shown to affect L2 use (Dewaele & Furnham, 2000). Further, concerning the four targets for listenership provided above, it is not known if success or failure in one area will correspond to success or failure in others. Accordingly, RQ 1 attempts to detail some of the features associated with different levels of performance concerning listenership behavior.

RQ 1: What are some of the common characteristics pertaining to the JEFs that demonstrated competent listenership behavior compared to the JEFs that did not?

Similar to RQ 1, the objective of RQ 2 is also to contribute to the profile of successful and unsuccessful learners with regards to listenership behavior. To this end, RQ 2 investigates L2 proficiency as a moderator variable. Concerning L2 proficiency, researchers such as Heffernan and Jones (2005) have attempted to use individual differences to create profiles of successful JEFs. Concerning pragmalinguistic features of language such as listenership behavior, it is not yet clear how L2 proficiency affects the learning of such targets. Researchers in the area of L2 listenership such as Thonus (2007) have surmised that instruction on

listenership behavior is best begun at intermediate levels; however, to date, this hypothesis has not been tested. Likewise, there seems to be a general assumption of a strong correlation between L2 proficiency and successful listenership behavior that requires empirical validation. Hence, RQ 2 has been formulated.

RQ 2: Do student L2 proficiency levels (according to the TOEFL) correlate to their levels in listenership behavior?

In short, this study attempts to piece together profiles of performance associated with listenership behavior by examining the effects of variables such as L2 proficiency, extraversion, and WTC.

Methodology

Participants

The study included 26 participants. The 21 student participants were all first year students at a national university in southern Japan (16 females and 5 males), who were enrolled in a faculty that focuses on the study of global humanities and social sciences and that emphasizes the study of English. When this study began, participants were on average at an intermediate level of English proficiency (as reflected by their TOEFL PBT scores), between 18 and 20 years old, and had studied English for 6.5 years on average (including a collective six years in junior and senior high school). The students had been enrolled at the university for six months and were all taking courses related to English study. Additionally, this study included 5 NES participants to serve in two capacities: two of the participants (1 female and 1 male) served as interlocutors in the intercultural dyadic conversations and three of the participants (2 female and 1 male) were involved in assessing the JEFs' performances in the video recorded conversations. Participating of their free will and understanding the nature of the study, all participants were given explicit instructions (i.e., verbal and written, in both English and Japanese) regarding this study and their role in it. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used in this paper.

Instruments

Three methods of measurement were used in this study: observations, questionnaires, and language proficiency tests. Observations consisted of the researcher video recording (and subsequently having NESs observe and assess) intercultural dyadic conversations between a JEF and an NES in English. The three questionnaires used in this study were administered respectively: (1) to gauge how extraverted the JEFs thought they were, (2) to determine the extent to which the JEFs were willing to communicate across cultures in English, and (3) to assess the levels of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) attained by each JEF. First, the researcher administered a Ten Item Personality Inventory, i.e., the TIPI-J (developed by Oshio, Abe, & Cutrone, 2012, see Appendix D). Since it was thought that Extraversion/Introversion would have the greatest impact on listenership behavior (and how much individuals speak), this dimension was the focus of this analysis. Second, in administering the WTC questionnaire, the researcher used McCroskey's (1992) well-known WTC scale (see Appendix B). McCroskey's WTC scale is a 20-item, probability-estimate scale. Eight of the items are fillers and 12 are scored as part of the scale. Considering the focus of this study, the sub-scores corresponding to interpersonal communication were used in the assessment of performances. The third type of questionnaire used in this study included a modified version of Hecht's (1978) widely used Interpersonal Communication *Satisfaction* Inventory. Although this inventory may at first appear dated, it is still widely used in linguistic research pertaining to both listening behavior and ICC due to its high degree of reliability and validity when used to measure interactional satisfaction in actual and recalled conversations (Harrington, 1995). Consistent with the expectancy principle in Spitzberg's (2000) model of ICC, Hecht (1978) proposed that communication satisfaction depends on the fulfilment of expectations. With this in mind, the researcher administered this questionnaire to three members of the target community (i.e., proficient users of ELF, which in this study was limited to NESs). The role of

this group was to watch each of the 21 video recorded conversations and subsequently provide impressions of the JEFs' conversational and listenership behavior by filling out the questionnaire. Lastly, in order to measure overall English proficiency, a paper-based version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was administered by the university administration. This test was used because scores were readily available to the researcher, as the JEFs' university administration uses it monitor students' English progress over time.

Data Collection Procedures

Three methods of data collection were used in this study: observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The observation phase involved the videotaping of intercultural dyadic conversations between JEFs and NESs. These conversations took place in a private office at the researcher's work place. The video recording equipment used was a Sony digital video camera, which was set up unobtrusively in the corner of the room on a tripod. While the conversation was being video recorded, only the participants were present in the room. Although conversational prompts were provided by the researcher to help stimulate conversation initially, participants were encouraged to talk about anything they liked. Following the methods used in the researcher's earlier studies (Cutrone, 2005, 2014), conversations were video recorded for a period of thirty minutes, of which only the middle three minutes of each conversation were included as data to be transcribed. Moreover, the WTC and Personality questionnaires were given to JEFs directly prior to their participation in the intercultural conversation. Finally, once all intercultural conversations were completed, the researcher sent digital video copies of the conversations, with corresponding conversational assessment questionnaires, to the three NES assessors in this study. The NESs were instructed to watch each three-minute conversation and to provide their impression as to the adequacy of each JEF's conversational and listenership behavior by completing the corresponding questionnaire. Further, questionnaires were administered before the intercultural conversations took place, whereas interviews with the JEFs were conducted directly upon completion of their intercultural conversation. Interviews involved the participants watching a recording of their just completed conversation and answering questions posed by the researcher. The interviews were semi-structured in that the interviewer had a general plan for the interviews but did not use a predetermined set of questions, as some questions were guided by the circumstances in the videotaped conversations and the responses of the interviewee.

Data Analysis

From a macro perspective, the data derived from the observations and questionnaires will be examined to inform judgements within the four assessment categories of listenership behavior described above: approximating listenership behavior of NESs (in the observable areas of backchannel frequency, variability, discourse contexts, and simultaneous speech), conversational involvement (via WTC scores and the number of words and questions uttered), conversational micro-skills (i.e., examining participants reactions in situations of non-understanding), and ICC (NES observer perceptions of the participants based on their conversational performances). This involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Concerning the intercultural conversations, the first phase of analyzing data involved a thorough examination of the transcribed conversations to ascertain whether any patterns and/or relationships were evident. Desiring to highlight some of the features associated with different levels of performance concerning listenership behavior, the researcher examines and compares the performances of individual participants across the sub-categories of listenership.

Results

Observations: Approximating the Listenership Behavior of NESs *Frequency*

As stated above, JEFs who provide fewer backchannels per interlocutor word are thought to be more in accord with NESs' listenership behavior. The JEFs to backchannel an average of

less than every 20 interlocutor words were Hanako, Mayumi, Mana, Sae, Keiko, and Kenichi. Although less frequent backchannelling often correlates to more primary speaker words, that was not always the case in this study. While Hanako, Mayumi, Mana, and Sae were among the most talkative JEFs in this study, producing 97, 113, 165, and 250 words respectively, Keiko and Kenichi uttered only 12 and 47 words, respectively, in their conversations. On the other end of the spectrum, the JEFs who sent backchannels the most frequently were Runa, Sakura, and Yuka (providing a backchannel every 7.78, 7.2, and 5.88 words respectively). Predictably, Runa and Sakura were among the least talkative (uttering 30 and 4 words respectively); however, Yuka, who produced backchannels the most frequently in this study, managed to utter 92 words as a primary speaker (which was 15 words more than the JEF average of 77).

Variability

To determine the extent that JEFs were using diverse and varied responses, the researcher examined the ratio between minimal and extended responses that each participant provided. As no JEF in this study employed more than one extended response (and only four JEFs produced one extended backchannel), the results pertaining to this category seem largely negligible. For instance, it is difficult to say whether Yuka, Momo, and Rika's ratios of minimal to extended backchannels of 25:0, 24:1, and 21:1 respectively are better than Hanako (5:0), Mayumi (4:0), and Yoshimi's (2:0) ratios. These results suggest that students, overall, were quite weak in this area. Some of the JEFs who sent backchannels most frequently were, noticeably, the only ones to produce extended backchannels. Using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test to measure the relationship between variables (see Appendix E), a significant positive correlation was found between the JEFs' Extraversion scores and the number of extended backchannels they uttered in the conversations ($p < .03$). That is, the higher a participant's Extraversion scores were, the more they were likely to produce extended backchannels. In addition, a significant negative correlation was found between the JEFs' WTC scores and the number of minimal backchannels they produced in the conversations ($p < .05$). Hence, the higher the JEFs' WTC scores were, the fewer minimal backchannels they sent.

Discourse Contexts

For this category, the researcher examined how often JEFs produced backchannels at clause final boundaries in their interlocutors' speech. Overall, most of the JEFs did so between 25 and 50 % of the time such opportunities presented themselves. A few exceptions were Yukari, Yohei, and Taro who produced backchannels at a much higher clip of 71, 63, and 58 % in this discourse context. This result seems to reflect the fact that Yukari, Yohei, and Taro sent backchannels more frequently overall (i.e., sent a backchannel every 5.88, 10, and 10.61 interlocutor words respectively). In other categories such as TOEFL scores and number of words spoken, these JEFs were near the average. On the other end of the spectrum, one JEF, Miki, did not provide a backchannel in any of the 13 opportunities she had in this discourse context. However, it should also be noted that Miki did not produce any backchannels during this study. This performance was indicative of Miki's below average TOEFL score (447) and consistent with how she performed in other areas, i.e., Miki was able to produce only 44 words, most of which were not initiated by her but rather coaxed out by her interlocutor's questions.

Simultaneous Speech Backchannels (SSBs)

The average number of SSBs for the JEF group was 2.2, with SSBs ranging from 0 to 6 among participants. A few JEFs such as Nami and Haruna uttered 6 and 5 SSBs respectively. A closer look at their profiles demonstrates some key differences between them. For instance, Nami's TOEFL score (560) was among the highest in the group (and 65 points higher than the average score), whereas Haruna's TOEFL score (477) was one of the lower ones (18 points below average). Further, Nami produced roughly twice as many words and backchannels as Haruna (i.e., 91 to 40 words and 20 to 10 backchannels). In contrast, a few JEFs such as Mana and Miki did not produce any SSBs, but this appeared to be attributed to the fact that they sent less backchannels overall, as Mana only produced 2 backchannels overall and Miki did not produce

any as mentioned above. Unlike Miki, Mana's performances in other areas varied, as Mana's TOEFL score of 487 was only slightly below average, and she managed to produce 165 words in her conversation (which were 89 more words than the average for the group).

Conversational Involvement and Willingness to Communicate *WTC*

Taro, Nami, and Hanako's WTC scores of 80, 70, and 70 were noticeably higher than the average (42), whereas Nao, Reiko, and Sachi's scores of 3, 0, and 0 were significantly lower. This was reflected to some degree in their word output and Extraversions scores. Regarding word output, Taro, Nami, and Hanako were all well above average (76), uttering 89, 91, and 97 words respectively. Conversely, Nao, Reiko, and Sachi were all well below average, uttering 60, 30, and 4 words respectively. On the Extraversion scale, Taro, Nami, and Hanako were all above average (4.1), scoring 5, 4.5, and 4.5 respectively, while Nao, Reiko, and Sachi were all below average, scoring 4, 2, and 3.5 respectively. TOEFL scores among the participants with high WTC scores varied as Nami and Hanko's scores of 560 and 523 were above average (495) but Taro's score of 463 was well below. TOEFL scores among the participants with lower WTC scores varied as well, as Sachi and Nao's scores of 497 and 483 were near the average, whereas Reiko's score of 443 was well below.

Word Output

Since the number of words a conversational participant utters in a primary speaker role is directly linked with how frequently they are in a listener role and, thus, able to send backchannels, part of the analysis for this sub-category of *word output* has already been presented above in the *frequency of backchannels* sub-category (i.e., in tandem with word output). Nonetheless, to add to what has been presented thus far, the results of the data analysis seem to suggest a strong connection between English language proficiency and how much the JEFs spoke in the conversations. That is, a significant positive correlation was found between the JEFs' TOEFL scores and the number of words they uttered in the conversations ($p < .023$). This was especially evident in the case of Sae, who scored 593 on the TOEFL (which was more than 30 points higher than anyone else); Sae uttered 250 words, which was by far the most of any JEF (85 more words than anyone else).

Number of Questions

This is another area in which JEFs were weak across the board. In 21 conversations, only 4 questions were posed, and each question was uttered by a different JEF. Thus, the results here are largely negligible. The implications of these findings will be discussed below.

Conversational Repair Ability *Situations of Non-understanding*

As stated above, some unconventional uses of the JEFs' backchannels were brought to light, namely, their tendency to employ continuer, understanding, agreement, and/or support and empathy type backchannels in situations when they did not understand what their interlocutor was saying. Using retrospective interview techniques and analysis, the researcher examined the number of non-understanding situations experienced by the JEFs in the conversations and how they reacted to them. First, it is necessary to point out that more proficient JEFs were less likely to encounter situations of non-understanding, as a significant negative correlation was found between the JEFs' TOEFL scores and the number of non-understanding situations they experienced in the conversations ($p < .017$). Like the *variability* sub-category, this appears to be an area where students did not perform well across the board. That is, in the 39 times they experienced situations of non-understanding, JEFs produced unconventional backchannels 38 times (97%). More proficient JEFs tended to produce less unconventional backchannels, as a significant negative correlation was found between the JEFs' TOEFL scores and the number of unconventional backchannels they uttered in the conversations ($p < .017$). Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between the JEFs' Extraversion scores and the number of unconventional backchannels they uttered in the conversations ($p < .018$). Ergo, the

higher participants' Extraversion scores were, the fewer unconventional backchannels they produced.

Repair Ability

The ability to use conversational repair strategies is directly linked to the aforementioned discussion of the JEFs' tendency to employ unconventional backchannels when they did not understand what their interlocutor was saying. Rather than feign understanding or agreement in these situations, JEFs may choose to convey their true feelings in one of two ways: by providing a minimal backchannel expression with a rising intonation, or by employing a longer expression or phrase as a conversational repair strategy. No JEF in this study was able to employ a conversational repair strategy (minimal or full-turn repair) in situations of non-understanding. In fact, the one time that a student did not produce a nonconventional backchannel in this situation, she just simply remained silent and did not do anything at all. It was only revealed to the researcher post hoc in the playback interviews that she did not understand the gist of what her interlocutor was saying.

Intercultural Communicate Competence (ICC)

As discussed above, a fundamental requirement of ICC is for a foreign language speaker to be seen as a competent conversationalist by members of the target culture. Accordingly, a small group of NES observers were able to watch each of the 21 video recorded conversations and subsequently provide impressions of the JEFs' conversational and listenership behavior by filling out the revised version of Hecht's (1978) Interpersonal Communication *Satisfaction* Inventory questionnaire (see Appendix C). Subsequently, the researcher calculated (and averaged) the overall scores (as associated with positive perceptions) of NES observers on this questionnaire. The three JEFs to score the highest were Sae, Rika, and Nao (with scores of 90, 89, and 86). Sae and Rika were also among the most proficient in TOEFL (595 and 540 respectively), while Nao's score of 483 was slightly below average. Their word output fluctuated as well, with Sae uttering 250 words, but Rika and Nao producing only 75 and 60 respectively. In the same way, concerning backchannel frequency, Sae provided a backchannel for every 23 of her interlocutor's words, while Nao and Rika did for every 11 and 10 respectively. On the other end of the spectrum, Miki and Aya's scores of 65 and 61 were well below the average of 78. Both produced a minimal number of words, as Aya uttered 60 and Miki uttered 44. Interestingly, there was notable disparity in their English language proficiency, as Aya's score of 533 was well above average on the TOEFL (495), while Miki's score of 447 was well below.

Discussion

From the findings analyzed above, some general observations can be made. Addressing RQ 1, the JEFs who performed well in one area of the four assessment criteria of listenership behavior did not necessarily perform well in other areas; however, many of the JEFs who performed poorly in one area of the four assessment criteria tended to perform in the same way in other areas. Although the significance of individual differences has been well documented, it is also necessary to point out that each sub-skill may have its own unique interface with individual learners, and, thus, the mastery of one, or even many, of the sub-skills involved in listenership behavior does not guarantee success in other areas of this highly complex and multifaceted skill-set. Within single sub-categories, the researcher always discovered exceptions bucking the general trends, which make it impossible to draw any concrete and comprehensive conclusions towards definitive profiles of listenership behavior.

Regarding RQ 2, it is not possible to say that English proficiency predicts success in EFL listenership behavior; however, there appears to be a tenuous link between proficiency and performance in several of the sub-skills of listenership behavior. Most notably, more proficient students were generally able to adopt a primary speaker role more often and had fewer situations of non-understanding, which, in turn, meant producing less unconventional backchannels. Nonetheless, one of the peripheral findings of this study is that students in varying levels of proficiency would benefit from instruction on listenership behavior. Across the board, students collectively were not able to produce extended listener responses, pose

adequate questions, expand upon initial utterances, and use conversational repair strategies and management techniques.

All three of the NES observers commented on the inability of the JEFLL to drive the conversation forward. The following excerpt provides a typical example of what the NES observers are referring to:

-
- G
6. John; they are very very near same?// what's the main difference//=
^
- =umm*
-
- G
7. John; i mean price was the same?// price un(.) cost?// same? // near same?//
^ ^^^ ^^^
price *uh*
- same*
-
- G
8. Taro; (..)umm(.)program (.)umm program difference//= (..)umm
 ” *=uh* *huh*
- okay*
-
9. John; do you have some questions for me?//= not really?//
>>>
=umm(.) umm
-
- G
10. John; so did you get the/ get a homestay // did you write letter your homestay
-
11. John; family?// did they reply?//
^^ >>
yes
-

In the excerpt above, it is clear that John is driving the conversation forward, while Taro is merely reacting to what John is saying. In fact, John poses 11 questions, while Taro does not ask any. As shown on line 9, in an attempt to encourage Taro to take some conversational responsibility, John even resorts to asking Taro if he has any return questions, which is probably not considered a natural thing to do in a casual ELF conversation. Taro's performance may owe a great deal to his somewhat lower proficiency in English (i.e., 463 TOEFL); however, it was clear that Taro, like many of the JEFLLs, was extremely hesitant and did not make a great effort to drive the conversation forward. This type of behavior was consistent with what Cutrone (2014) and Sato (2008) reported of the JEFLL participants in their intercultural analyses. Although the NES interlocutors in these studies generally expected and accepted that they would have to carry the conversation in their NS-NNS exchanges, they also admitted that this onus detracted from their conversational satisfaction and enjoyment.

Conclusion

In short, what we have confirmed here is that there is a great deal of individual variation where listenership is concerned, and output is often influenced to varying degrees by, among other things, the specific contexts of each conversation, the personality and demeanour of the participants, and the chemistry between the participants in the dyadic conversations, as well as seemingly peripheral variables such as the amount of sleep the participants had the night before and the mood of the participants at the time of the conversations, etc. With this in mind, this

study has helped identify some areas of listenership that EFL teachers and trainers in Japan can target for instruction in their classrooms. Specifically, the researcher advocates the teaching of conversational management techniques, which involves the appropriate usage of discourse markers and listener responses, evaluative comments, return questions, follow-up questions, new topic initiation, expansion techniques, the ability to ensure comprehension on the part of the listener, and the ability to initiate repair when there is a potential breakdown.

Since the so-called *rules of conversation* are quite different in Japanese than they are English, the writer suggests a three-pronged teaching approach that first begins by raising awareness of communication styles across cultures. To raise students' consciousness of a particular feature of communication, teachers can expose their students to sample (chosen or created) conversations that demonstrate the behavior to be analyzed (e.g. how much participants spoke, and/or how many questions they posed). Upon observing the sample conversation, students should be guided through a discussion of what they observed and how the behaviors in question might be perceived across cultures (i.e., in the above-mentioned example, students might be able to reach the conclusion that low speaker incipency and failure to ask questions to drive the conversation forward, will, at times, negatively affect IC). This process of deconstruction helps learners understand they might need to adjust some of their own behavior in order to better adapt to ELF norms.

Thus, the second phase of instruction provides students with a framework for initiating some changes in their conversational behavior. This would involve the teacher explicitly demonstrating to learners how they might be able to improve in a particular area. For instance, concerning the example given above, teachers would help students develop turn-taking and expansion techniques, as well as strategies that help them pose adequate return and follow-up questions in conversations. Lastly, in the third phase of instruction the teacher provides students with practice opportunities and feedback. This can be done by having students participate in role-plays or conversations in which they focus on applying the new conversational techniques they learned in the previous phase. The teacher and/or other students should observe the conversations (live, or if possible, via video playback) and offer constructive feedback.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of the listenership behavior of Japanese EFL learners. While there appears to be an association between proficiency level and performances relative to listenership behavior on some levels, participants also exhibited a great deal of individual variation in their performances. Follow-up studies could be designed to shed even more light on individual differences by increasing sample size and incorporating a more balanced ratio of female to male participants. Regarding the latter, the role of gender differences in listenership behavior could be examined by utilizing mixed-sex conversations. Moreover, future research in this vein would do well to investigate diverse groups of EFL learners and examine how listenership behavior is affected by other factors such as larger group dynamics, varying conversational registers, interlocutor familiarity, and the topic of the conversation.

References

- Anderson, F. (1993). The enigma of the college classroom: Nails that don't stick up. In P. Wadden (ed.), *A handbook for teaching English at Japanese colleges and universities* (pp. 101-110). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clancy, P. M., Thompson, S. A., Suzuki, R., & Hongyin, T. (1996). The conversational use of reactive tokens in English, Japanese, and Mandarin. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26(1), 355-387.
- Crawford, W. (2003). Back-channel transfer in cross-cultural second language conversation: Do native Japanese transfer more than native English speakers? *Journal of Kitakyushu National College of Technology*, 36(1), 155-163.
- Cutrone, P. (2005). A case study examining backchannels in conversations between Japanese-British dyads. *Multilingua - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 24(1), 237-274.
- Cutrone, P. (2010). The backchannel norms of native English speakers: A target for Japanese L2 English learners. *University of Reading Language Studies Working Papers*, 2(1),

- 28-37.
- Cutrone, P. (2011). *Towards the learning of listener responses in the Japanese EFL context*. PhD Dissertation, University of Reading, Reading.
- Cutrone, P. (2014). A cross-cultural examination of the backchannel behavior of Japanese and Americans: Considerations for Japanese EFL learners. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 11(1), 83-120.
- Dewaele, J. M., & Furnham, A. (2000). Personality and speech production: A pilot study of second language learners. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(1), 355-365.
- Duncan, S., & Donald, F. (1977). *Face to face interaction: Research, methods, and theory*. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.
- Edelsky, C. (1981). Who's got the floor? *Language in Society*, 10(1), 383-421.
- Eysenck, H. (1992). *A hundred years of personality research, from Heymans to modern times*. Houten: Bohn, Staeu Van Loghum.
- Fujimoto, D. T. (2007). Listener responses in interaction: A case for abandoning the term, backchannel. *Journal of Osaka Jogakuin College*, 37(1), 35-54.
- Harrington, N. G. (1995). The effects of college students' alcohol resistance strategies. *Health Communication*, 7(4), 371-391.
- Hayashi, R. (1988). Simultaneous talk - from the perspective of floor management of English and Japanese speakers. *World Englishes*, 7(3), 269-288.
- Hecht, M. L. (1978). The conceptualization and measurement of interpersonal communication satisfaction. *Human Communication Research*, 4(3), 253-264.
- Heffernan, Neil & John Jones. 2005. *Top-notch students: Study skills for Japanese university students*. Tokyo: MacMillan Language House.
- Ike, S. (2010). Backchannel: A feature of Japanese English. In A. M. Stoke (ed.), *The Japan Association for Language Teachers (JALT) 2009 conference proceedings* (pp. 205-215). Tokyo: JALT.
- Kendon, A. (1977). Some functions of gaze-direction in two-person conversation. In A. Kendon (ed.), *Studies in the behavior of social interaction* pp. 13-51). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lebra, T. S. (1976). *Japanese patterns of behavior*. Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press.
- Markel, N. (1975). Coverbal behavior associated with conversation turns. In A. Kendon, R. M. Harris & M. R. Key (eds.), *Organization of behavior in face-to-face interaction* (pp. 189-197). The Hague: Mouton.
- Maynard, S. K. (1986). On back-channel behavior in Japanese and English casual conversation. *Linguistics*, 24(6), 1079-1108.
- Maynard, S. K. (1990). Conversation management in contrast: Listener responses in Japanese and American English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(1), 397-412.
- Maynard, S. K. (1997). Analyzing interactional management in native/non-native English conversation: A case of listener response. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL)*, 35(1), 37-60.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40(1), 16-25.
- Mizutani, N. (1982). The listener's responses in Japanese conversation. *Sociolinguistics Newsletter*, 13(1): 33-38.
- O'Keeffe, A., & Adolphs, S. (2008). Response tokens in British and Irish discourse: Corpus, context and variational pragmatics. In A. Barron & K. Schneider (Eds.), *Variational pragmatics* (pp. 69-98). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Oshio, A., Abe, S., & Cutrone, P. (2012). Development, reliability, and validity of the Japanese version of Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI-J). *Japanese Journal of Personality*, 21(1), 40-52.
- Sacks, H. E., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simple systematics in the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(1), 696-735.
- Sato, Y. (2008). *Oral communication problems and strategies of Japanese university EFL learners*. PhD Dissertation, University of Reading, Reading.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1982. Discourse as an interactional achievement: Some uses of "UH-HUH"

- and other things that come between sentences. In D. Tannen (ed.), *Georgetown University roundtable on language and linguistics, analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 71-93). Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (2000). A model of intercultural communication competence. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader, 2nd edition* (pp. 7-24). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Stubbe, M. (1998). Are you listening? Cultural influences on the use of supportive verbal feedback in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 29(3), 257-289.
- Thonus, T. (2007). Listener responses as a pragmatic source for learners of English. *CATESOL Journal*, 19(1), 132-145.
- Tottie, G. (1991). Conversational style in British and American English: The case of backchannels. In K. Aijmer and B. Altenberg (eds.), *English corpus linguistics: Studies in honour of Jan Svartvik* (pp. 254-271). London: Longman.
- Ward, N., & Tsukahara, W. (2000). Prosodic features which cue back-channel responses in English and Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(8), 1177-1207.
- White, S. (1989). Backchannels across cultures: A study of Americans and Japanese. *Language in Society*, 18(1), 59-76.

About the Author

Pino Cutrone has been teaching in Japan for twenty years and is currently an Associate Professor at Nagasaki University. He received his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Reading and has published widely in his field. His research interests include intercultural pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and EFL pedagogy.

Appendices

Appendix A

Transcription Conventions

- Listener responses are shown in italics below the primary speaker's talk at the point they occurred in the talk.
- To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used in the speaker labels on the left side of each transcribed line.
- To not confuse readers with the colons that are used for a different purpose described below, the speaker labels will be followed by a semi colon.
- To further preserve anonymity, pseudographs (i.e., notations in parentheses) will be used in instances where participants' private information such as name, address and/or telephone number has been uttered in the conversation.
- Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in hundredths of seconds of pauses occurring in the conversations. Parentheses with a dot (.) indicates a micropause and/or hesitation under .5 seconds. Pauses are timed using transcription software in this study (Praat Version 5.0.18).
- The equal sign "=" indicates latching - i.e., no interval between the end of a prior piece of talk and the start of a next piece of talk.
- The beginnings of simultaneous speech utterances are marked by placing a left bracket at each of the points of overlap, and placing the overlapping talk directly beneath the talk it overlaps.
- Right-hand brackets indicate the point at which two simultaneous utterances end.

Metatranscription is shown as follows:

- Empty parentheses () indicates that part of the transcription which is unintelligible.
- Words between parentheses indicate the transcribers' conjecture at the words or utterances

in the conversation that they are not completely certain of.

- Words between double parentheses may indicate comments and/or features of the audio materials other than actual verbalization.
- L stands for laughter.
- Other than apostrophes, which are used to show contraction between words, punctuation symbols in these transcriptions are not used as regular English punctuation markers indicating grammatical category. While other, non-regular, grammatical functions are shown by symbols such as slashes and double slashes, other punctuation symbols such as question marks and colons are used to indicate prosodic features in these transcriptions.

Nonverbal behavior is shown by the symbols indicated below.

- h stands for audible breathing, ^ stands for vertical head movement (head nod). > stands for horizontal head movement (head shake). S stands for smile. " indicates that eyebrows are raised. G indicates body or hand gestures.
- In cases where nonverbal behavior occurs concurrently with speech, symbols are placed directly above the speech it co-occurs with (instances where two types of nonverbal behavior occur simultaneously are shown by underlining them both). Nonverbal behavior that is continuous and occurs for a period longer than 2 seconds will be noted by signaling the beginning and the end of the behavior in parentheses where it occurs in the conversation. N.B. The parentheses containing the symbols below are solely used for separation purposes to make them easily identifiable in the specific examples below. Parentheses will not be used in this manner in the transcriptions as they have other specific functions, which have been outlined above.
- A slash (/) marks the grammatical completion point of an internal clausal boundary (i.e., a clause which is continuative).
- Two slashes side by side (//) mark the grammatical completion point of a final clause boundary (i.e., a clause which terminative). N.B. A final clause boundary is one that makes complete sense (i.e., fully meaningful) and could end the utterance there. In contrast, an internal clause is one in which the meaning is not complete, and there is a requirement for the utterance to go on in order for the meaning to be complete.
- A question mark (?) at the end of a word and/or utterance indicates a clear rising vocal pitch or intonation (i.e., one that is clearly heard, and is shown to rise by at least 600 Hz using Praat software).
- An inverted question mark (ė) at the end of a word and/or utterance indicates a clear falling pitch or intonation (i.e., one that is clearly heard and is shown to fall by at least 600 Hz using Praat software).
- A colon (:) as in the word "ye:s" indicates the stretching of the sound it follows (i.e., only marked in cases where the stretching was extended greater than .5 seconds).
- A hyphen at the end of an uncompleted word indicates the disfluency of a truncated word. For instance, if the word "bird" were truncated, it may be transcribed as "bir-".
- A part of a word and/or phrase containing CAPITAL letters indicates that it has been said with increased volume and/or more emphatically than the rest of the phrase (i.e., only marked when the highest point of the stressed part of speech was greater than 10 decibels the lowest part of the surrounding parts of speech).
- The underscore sign (_) indicates that the talk it precedes is low in volume.
- (~) indicates that the talk which follows is consistent with the person's regular voice and tone. This symbol is to be used after low volume talk to indicate the point in which the volume rises back to normal. When a pause occurs after the low volume talk and the talk that follows returns to normal, this symbol will not be shown.

27. Taro; yeah star wars i (.)
 ^
-
28. Gary; which which of the star wars movies have you seen// (.)
 ((G ends))
-
29. Taro; aaa (1.29) _ what is that// uu maybe (episodes) th- (.) (three) // i (.)
 S
-
30. Taro; maybe i (.) three// () (2.25)
-
31. Gary; you know when a jedi, uu (.) reaches their arm out// and then something
 ((G begins))
-
32. Gary; (.)flies into it// (.) [and then] they catch it// (.75)
 ((G ends))
-
33. Gary; but = (.) (51) but let's say they dropped your [life ()]//
 S
 = AAa (1.37) aa / (Lh)//
 ^
-
34. Gary; their [life saver]// ((G begins))
 = [and then] (.) they reach for it// =
 / (Lh)// h () = / yeah /
-
35. Gary; [and] then the life saver flies to them// (.51)
 = h Lh [Lh]
-
36. Gary; [()] seeing something/ like that// (1.26)
 ((G ends))
 / AAaa /
-
37. Taro; maybe i (.) i, (.) ss (.67) saw that// (.) maybe (.67)
-
38. Gary; uuu (.) star wars is; (.) uuu (.) a big part of popular culture//
 ^ ^
-
39. Gary; in a[merica]// ((G begins))
 = aaa (2.06) and u kevin smith (the) (.54)
 ^
 [uhum] (.) yeah =
-
40. Gary; [he] he's, no exception// he, uu (.)greatly enjoys the: star [(wa-)]
 ((G ends))
 / ()// ^ ^
 [uhum]
-
41. Gary; star wars mythology// (.62) [uu and incor]porates it//
 ^

<i>Sub-score Desired</i>	<i>Scoring Formula</i>
Group discussion	Add scores for items 8,15, and 19; then divide by 3.
Meetings	Add scores for items 6, 11, and 17; then divide by 3.
Interpersonal conversations	Add scores for items 4,9, and 12; then divide by 3.
Public speaking	Add scores for items 3, 14, and 20; then divide by 3.
Stranger	Add scores for items 3, 8, 12, and 17; then divide by 4.
Acquaintance	Add scores for items 4, 11, 15, and 20; then divide by 4.
Friend	Add scores for items 6, 9, 14, and 19; then divide by 4.

To compute the total WTC scores, add the sub-scores for stranger, acquaintance, and friend. Then divide by 3.

Appendix C

Conversational Satisfaction Questionnaire (for NES Assessors)

Date: _____ Name: _____ Key: 1 = Yes

7 = No

Please score the sentences below based on how often you thought they generally occurred in the conversation. Based on the key shown above, circle the number that best corresponds to your opinion.

1. The Japanese person let his/her partner know that the partner was communicating effectively.
.....1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. The Japanese person showed his/her partner that they understood what their partner said.
.....1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. The Japanese person showed that they were listening attentively to what their partner said.
.....1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. The Japanese participant expressed a lot of interest in what their partner had to say.
.....1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. The conversation went smoothly.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
6. The Japanese encouraged his/her partner to continue talking.1 2 3 4 5
6 7
7. The feelings that the Japanese person expressed by means of listening feedback during the conversation seemed *authentic* (i.e., they conveyed what they were truly feeling and not just agreeing and/or pretending to understand for the sake of harmony and/or to keep the conversation going smoothly).....1 2 3 4
5 6 7
8. The Japanese person seemed impatient.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
9. The Japanese person seemed cold and unfriendly.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
10. The Japanese person was polite.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7

11. The Japanese person appeared warm and friendly.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
12. The Japanese person was impolite.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
13. The Japanese person appeared interested and concerned....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
14. The Japanese person interrupted their partner at times.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
15. The Japanese person seemed to want to avoid speaking.....1 2 3 4 5
6 7
16. When the Japanese person did not understand something, they were able to clearly convey this to their conversational partner with their listening feedback.....1 2 3
4 5 6 7
17. The Japanese person's listening behavior seemed inadequate in some ways.1. 2 3 4
5 6 7

If you answered "yes" (i.e., 1, 2 or 3) to question 17, please explain how and/or why you think their listening behavior seemed inadequate.

18. Any other comments and/or observations regarding the Japanese participant's behavior in the conversation.

Appendix D

Personality Questionnaire

Name (名前) : _____ Date (記入日) : _____

Questionnaire 質問紙

Following the scale below, please write a number next to each statement below to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

○ 1 から 10 までのことはがあなた自身にとのくらい当てはまるかについて、下の枠内の 1 から 7 までの数字のうちもっとも適切なものを括弧内に入れてください。文章全体を総合的に見て、自分にとれたげ当てはまるかを評価してください。

Disagree Strongly (全く違う)	Disagree moderately (あまり)	Disagree a little (少し違)	Neither agree nor disagree (どちらでも)	Agree a little (少しそう)	Agree moderately (まあまあそ)	Agree strongly (強くそ)
--------------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------

と思う 1	そうだとは 思わない) 2	うと思う) 3	ない) 4	思う) 5	う思う) 6	う思う) 7
----------	---------------------	------------	----------	----------	-----------	-----------

I see myself as... (私は自分自身のことを...)

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.(活発で、外向的だと思う)
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.(他人に不満をもち、もめこどを起こしやすいと思う)
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.(しっかりしていて、自分に厳しいと思う)
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.(心配性で、うろたえやすいと思う)
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.(新しいことか好きで、変わった考えをもつと思う)
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.(ひかえめて、おとなしいと思う)
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.(人に気をつかう、やさしい人間だと思う)
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.(たらしなく、うっかりしていると思う)
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.(冷静で、気分が安定していると思う)
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.(発想力に欠けた、平凡な人間だと思う)

Appendix E

Correlational Analyses

Key explaining dependent variables in order presented below: Total Words, Frequency (number of backchannels per interlocutor word), Number of Questions, MinBack (percentage of backchannels constituted by minimal backchannels), ExtBack (percentage of backchannels constituted by extended backchannels), BCs@FCBs (percentage of clause final boundaries attracting backchannels), SSBs (simultaneous speech backchannels), NONU (number of non-understanding situations), UNCONV (percentage of non-understanding situations constituted by unconventional backchannels), MinRep (percentage of non-understanding situations constituted by minimal backchannel as repair strategies), and FullRep (percentage of non-understanding situations constituted by Full-turn repair strategies).

		TOEFL	WTC	Extraversion
Total Words	Correlation Coefficient	.495	.168	.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023*	.465	.229

BC/IL word	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-.054 .815	.101 .665	.209 .364
Questions	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.059 .798	-.050 .831	.334 .139
MinBCs	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.021 .930	-.433 .05*	.022 .924
Extended BCs	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.041 .861	-.140 .544	.475 .030*
BC@FCBs	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.203 .379	.128 .581	.258 .259
SSBCs	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.119 .606	-.133 .565	-.036 .876
NONU	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-.513 .017*	-.259 .256	-.428 .053
UNCONV	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-.490 .024*	-.271 .235	-.511 .018*-
MinRep	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	N/A	N/A	N/A
FullRep	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	N/A	N/A	N/A