Classroom Interactional Competence
in a Japanese Elementary English Classroom

Yumi Ohashi

Abstract

The study examined classroom interactional competence in an elementary English classroom in Japan, seeking to illuminate the nature of interactions between pupils and instructors, a Japanese homeroom teacher (HRT) and a native-speaker assistant language teacher (ALT). Six classroom hours at a state elementary school were videotaped and audiotaped, with conversation analysis adopted for data analysis. Analysis revealed that the HRT and the ALT used a wide range of skills for shaping learner contributions such as repeating, clarifying, extending, elaborating, modelling, and translating. The study also revealed that while the HRT and ALT had a number of interactional features in common, they also called upon distinctively different types of interactional resources that in turn contributed in different ways to pupil learning. Whereas the HRT's use of interactional resources mainly served to assist the ALT's teaching, the ALT's interaction was more focused upon the scaffolding of pupil learning.

Key words: classroom interactional competence, shaping learner contributions, conversation analysis, elementary EFL, homeroom teacher (HRT), assistant language teacher (ALT)

Introduction

In 2013, in order to enhance the English language ability of Japanese citizens, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced major reforms to English language education in Japan. The reforms reflect concerns over the nation's current standards of English language attainment and a growing awareness of the need for Japan to more effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization.

The intent of the reforms is to strengthen English education at all

levels of the school curriculum from elementary to lower and upper secondary schools. The common goal is to develop communication abilities to enable students to function in English (active use) rather than accumulate knowledge of the language (memorized grammar and vocabulary). Under the current curriculum, English is not taught as a 'subject' at the elementary level though English activities begin in Grade 5. Under the new curriculum guidelines, activity-based classes will take place once a week in the third and forth grades. The aim here is to lay a foundation for communication abilities by getting pupils accustomed to the use of English, cultivating a positive attitude, and developing intercultural understanding. In the fifth and sixth grades, English will be taught as a formal subject twice a week with the intent to develop elementary communication abilities in English. Reading and writing will also be taught in the new curriculum beginning in the 5th grade.

Within the literature of second language teaching it is widely recognized that in order to promote active language use and communication abilities, classroom interaction is deemed to "be the most important thing" (van Lier, 1996, p.5). Consequently, in order to achieve MEXT's goal of raising communicative abilities, the underlying imperative of the reforms must be that teachers provide a classroom environment and employ teaching methodologies that promote communication, classrooms in which students have exposure to and engage in meaningful dialogue. However, Ohashi's (2017) survey of elementary classroom teachers revealed that while teachers were aware of the demand for interactive teaching and believed that they were making use of interactive methodologies, classroom practice cast doubt on whether teachers fully understood the nature and demands of interactive teaching and meaningful communication activities. In their responses to a questionnaire, teachers' claimed that interactive teaching was adopted with frequent use made of meaningful activities. However, the teachers also stated that traditional teacher-centred activities were in frequent use. Ohashi points out that "(t)hese apparent contradictions could be interpreted as a reflection of an insufficient understanding by teachers' of the nature of interactive and communicative teaching. There appears to be a clear need to improve our understanding of the primary classroom discourse" (p.35).

Research into classroom interaction in English classes taught by Japanese classroom teachers at the elementary level has scarcely been conducted in Japan. Accordingly, little is known about the nature and

extent of such interaction and its contribution to language learning and the building of communicative ability. Accordingly, if the recently announced reforms to English education in Japan are to achieve MEXT's primary objective, the development of basic communication skills, there is a need for classroom based research, a need to develop our knowledge of the characteristics of classroom interaction, of teacher understandings and interpretations of communicative teaching and the techniques employed, of pupil responses and language use and most importantly, of the outcomes achieved. The current study seeks to contribute through an investigation of interaction in a state elementary school English classroom, making use of Walsh's (2011) classroom interactional competence (CIC).

Literature Review

It is generally understood that classroom interaction has an important role to play in shaping learning. Walsh (2006, 2011, 2013) suggests the concept of classroom interactional competence (CIC), which is defined as "teachers' and leaners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning" (Walsh, 2011, p.158). It is assumed that an improvement of CIC will enhance the quality of learning and learning opportunities.

Interactional competence

Literature on the nature of foreign language teaching and learning (Kramsch, 1986; Cook, 2001; Walsh, 2011) points out that, in seeking to assess learners' ability, it is insufficient to consider an individual in isolation, their solo performance focusing on accuracy or fluency. As noted by Jacoby & Ochs (1995), abilities, actions, and activities do not belong to the individual but are jointly constructed in a discursive process by all participants. Consequently, for effective communication to occur, it is required that each individual pays attention to the local context and interacts with others to establish inter-subjectivity by applying knowledge and interactional skills such as repairing breakdowns and clarifying meaning (Kramsch, 1986). Walsh (2011) also argues that effective communication requires not only fluency and accuracy but also *confluence* (McCarthy, 2005) in which speakers attend to each other's contribution and collectively make meaning by trying to understand each other, negotiating meanings, assisting and questioning, supporting, clarifying and so on.

The notion of interactional competence (IC) was originally suggested

by Kramsch (1986) and has since been further elaborated. According to Markee (2008), IC consists of language as a formal system, semiotic systems, and paralinguistic features. Young (2008) focuses more on interactional resources such as turn-taking, repair, overlaps & interruptions and topic management. For Walsh (2011), IC is understood as a context specific, collective enterprise for jointly establishing understanding. It is less concerned with accuracy and fluency and more with communication, with the contributions of all participants, the collective support and guidance each provides. From such a perspective IC can be perceived as a fifth skill in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. Effective IC requires a language user to be able to call upon both interactional and linguistic resources with greater emphasis being given to interactional skills such as turn taking, overlaps, pauses and repair than to accuracy and fluency.

Classroom interactional competence

If IC is indispensable for effective communication in general contexts, it follows that it is required to pay attention to IC in L2 instructional settings. Indeed, Walsh (2006, 2011, 2013) argues that classroom interactional competence (CIC), defined as "teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning" (Walsh, 2011, p.158), is an indispensable feature of classroom language learning and learning opportunities and identifies four key features that he suggests enable teachers to more effectively engage in context-specific interactional activities. These are the ability:

1) To use language that is appropriate to both the pedagogical goal and the learners (Seedhouse, 2008);
2) To maximise interactional space by allowing increased wait time and planning time, trying not to fill silence (eg. reducing teacher echo) and encouraging extended learner turns;
3) To shape learner contributions by seeking clarification, scaffolding, modelling, paraphrasing, reiterating, repairing learner input, summarising and checking confirmation;
4) To make use of effective eliciting strategies by asking and exploiting questions and by encouraging learners to ask questions.

(adopted from Daskin, 2015, p.34)

Of these, shaping learner contributions (SLC) has a central role to play in assisting learners in the classroom. SLC involves "taking learner response and doing something with it rather than simply accepting it" (Walsh, 2011, p.168). Walsh also lists various types of interactional skills involved in SLC such as paraphrasing, summarizing, extending, scaffolding (assisting learner performance), and repairing.

In examining SLC, Seedhouse (2004) suggests four types of modes of contexts: form-and-accuracy mode, meaning-and-fluency mode, task-oriented mode and procedural-mode. The form-and-accuracy mode refers to lesson stages where presentation and practice of linguistic forms occurs. In the meaning-and-fluency mode, the class is engaged in expressing feelings and meaning. In the task-oriented mode learners are engaged in a task interacting with each other. In the procedural-mode, the teacher gives instruction regarding classroom activities.

Research into CIC has been carried out by a number of researchers. Sert (2011) examined how a teacher manages claims of insufficient knowledge by using resources such as incomplete utterances and embodied vocabulary explanation in a university EFL classroom. Sert (2013) also explored the use of epistemic status check in a secondary English classroom, revealing that teachers are able to recognize learners' insufficient knowledge through their non-verbal cues. By conducting such epistemic status checks teachers are then able to adjust their teaching as they seek to move a lesson forward. Park (2013) examined the role of the feedback move in the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) pattern of discourse in college EFL and ESL contexts, revealing that repetition of the Feedback turn has an important role to play in shaping learner contributions. Seedhouse (2004) revealed how repair in shaping learner contributions is used in various contexts. In the form-and accuracy context the type of repair is didactic whereas the repair in the meaning-and fluency context is conversational. Daskin's (2015) study investigated interactional patterns shaping learner contribution in an EFL preparatory class at a Turkish university, illustrating differences in interactional features between the form-and-accuracy context and the meaning-and-fluency context. The study in particular identified the value of translation and the use of a whiteboard/blackboard as well as a variety of other teacher's interactional skills such as repeating and modelling.

Although these studies have provided insight into CIC in the adult language classroom, CIC in the young learners' classroom has been

scarcely examined. Thus, the current study seeks to identify elements of CIC used in an elementary English classroom in Japan taught by a non-English specialist classroom teacher and an ALT. In so doing the study focuses on the third key feature identified by Walsh (2006, 2011, 2013), the shaping of learner contributions.

Data and Method

Data in this study was collected from a Grade 5 class at a state elementary school in Japan that placed a greater emphasis on English activities than normally found in state schools. Thus, although the current national curriculum stipulates English activities are required only for Grade 5 and 6 pupils once a week, the school offered English activities to all year groups from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The pupils in the Grade 5 class were either 10 or 11 years old and all beginners although some did take private English lessons outside of school. There were approximately 30 pupils in the Grade 5 class. English lessons were held in an open multi-purpose classroom with pupils seated on chairs in rows. The class was team-taught by a male Japanese homeroom teacher (HRT) and a male English native-speaker assistant language teacher (ALT). The Japanese teacher had several years of teaching experience as a general classroom teacher but had never received any specific pre- or in-service training to teach English. The ALT had several years of teaching English at various levels as a language teacher in Japan and had received TESOL training prior to coming to Japan. The school mainly used teaching materials provided by MEXT. The data analysed consists of 6 lessons, each lesson lasting approximately 45 minutes.

Conversation analysis (CA) is adopted as a method to analyse the data. CA seeks to reveal how social actions including learning are jointly organized and accomplished through talk. Seedhouse (2005) identifies the following principles of CA:

- All conversations are highly structured and ordered
- Contributions are context-shaped and context-renewing
- Analysis is bottom-up and data driven; no preconceived categories required
- The details in talk are important, requiring micro-analysis

In order to achieve intersubjectivity or mutual understanding, interactants

employ sequence organization, turn-taking and repair (Seedhouse and Walsh, 2010). Considering the goal and principles of CA, CA appears to be an appropriate method to employ, the aim of the study being to examine the ways in which specific interactional features shape learning and learning opportunities. The video-filmed data was transcribed, using the transcription conventions of Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008). In the transcriptions N stands for the HRT and M for the ALT, Pp refers to several students, S and K to unidentified pupils, P to an individual pupil. In revealing SLC, sequences are analysed in terms of turn taking, sequence organization and repair.

Analysis

The lesson analysis that follows was conducted in the meaning-and-fluency context mode. Schools in Japan follow the government's curriculum guideline in which the goal is defined as follows:

> To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages...In doing so, teachers should try to have pupils understand language and culture experientially, avoiding giving too detailed explanations or engaging pupils in rote learning. (MEXT, 2010. pp.1-2)

Based on these stated aims, there is an expectation that meaning-and-fluency based lessons are encouraged in elementary English activity classes and form-and-accuracy based lessons discouraged.

Routine question

In Extract 1, the warm-up stage of the lesson, the class is engaged in answering a routine question concerning the weather. This is a frequent activity, the class usually beginning with a number of routine questions about the date and weather led by the ALT.

Extract 1: Routine question
1   M   (1.) how's the weather ((points outside))

2   Pp   today it's sunny
3   P   eeeh?
4   P   sunny
5   M   huh ↑ ((looks outside))
6   P   sunny ((points outside))
7   P   cloudy
8   P   sunny
9   Pp   ((raise hands))
10 P   ((stand. up)) tenkiyoho wo miruto a. chigau. harenochi kumoridesita
           according to the weather forecast. no. it is sunny and cloudy later
11 P   daken cloudy?
           so
12 M   cloudy. I cannot <u>see</u> the sun
13 P   nan yattakke? cloudy
           what is it?
14 P   cloudy and sunny
15 P   ((unint))
16 M   cloudy. very cloudy. you can't see the sun ((shake the head))
17 P   cloudy
18 P   ((unint.))
19 M   cloudy
20 Pp   cloudy
21 M   good. it's cloudy
22 Pp   it's cloudy
23 M   if it's part cloudy and part sunny partly
24 P   [no no
25 P   sunny and cloudy
26 M   partly
27 P   partly
28 N   ((unint))
29 M   [but it's not partly cloudy . it's <u>a::ll</u> cloudy. <u>very</u> little sky
30 P   it's it's cloudy
31 M   it's it's cloudy. what day is it today? one two

In line 1 the ALT utters a question "how's the weather?" asking the whole class to provide an answer. It is supposed to be "cloudy" on the day. The teacher's question opens a sequence, the first turn (the first-pair part or FPP which initiates an exchange) in an adjacency pair with the

subsequent pupils' contributions (the second-pair-part or SPP which is a response to FPP). Immediately after the FPP, a second-pair-part (SPP) follows in line 2 as pupils supply the answer "today it's sunny". To the answer one pupil expresses a doubt and utters a response, "eeeh?" meaning "really?" in line 3 using a rising intonation, which functions as a repair initiated by the pupil. The ALT also tries to repair by requesting a clarification in line 5 (a post-expansion). He utters a clarification request of "huh?" with an exaggerated questioning intonation, accompanied by the gesture of looking outside the window. Responding to the clarification request, several pupils provide answers (lines 6 to 11). A number of pupils state that it is sunny while one disagrees, stating it is cloudy (line 7). One pupil code-switches to L1, to elaborate his comment (line 11). The ALT does not interrupt the pupils, allowing them to take turns to express their opinions freely. In doing so he is creating space for learning in the interaction enabling the pupils to make a full contribution. In line 12 the ALT provides the answer "cloudy" and elaborates by saying "I cannot see the sun". In line 13 a pupil repeats after the teacher, appropriating the word cloudy though his accompanying utterance of '*what is it*' reveals that cloudy is not easily retrievable. Despite the teacher's answer, however, one pupil still insists it is sunny (line 14), an act of challenge seeking to repair the teacher's answer. This appears to be a sign of very active contribution by the pupil, not hesitating to assert his opinion. In line 16 the ALT repeats the word "cloudy" and the same elaboration as in line 12 occurs with a body gesture of shaking the head to emphasize denial of "sunny". Eventually the pupils repeat "cloudy" after the ALT. In lines 23 and 29 the ALT further extends and elaborates, explaining a new word "partly" cloudy and sunny.

Extract 1 illustrates how the ALT shapes learner contributions by seeking clarification, elaborating, modelling and repeating in post-expansion sequences. This reveals that the ALT is trying to reach mutual understanding through interaction in the meaning-and-fluency context by means of various interactional resources. Firstly the use of clarification requests (e.g. line 5) is a sign of repairing the disparity in understanding and negotiating meaning to reach intersubjectivity. By doing so he is inviting the active participation of the pupils. The use of prosodic features in clarification requests also contributes to encouraging pupil participation. Repeated modelling of the word "cloudy" is also effective for aligning pupils to eventually reach mutual agreement on the weather of the day as well as for teaching and consolidating the use and meaning of the key word

"cloudy". His further effort to establish mutual understanding is observed in the use of elaboration accompanied by gesture. Additionally, he extends the conversation, bringing in the new expression "partly cloudy", an example of additional linguistic input. These interactional features appear to effectively contribute to shaping learner contributions in this ALT-led conversational sequence.

Silhouette quiz

A silhouette quiz is an activity incorporated in *Hi, friends,* the teaching material provided by MEXT. In the quiz detailed below the pupils have to identify an object by looking at a silhouette. For the activity an interactive whiteboard and DVD player provided by the government are used. Silhouettes are shown on the interactive whiteboard and pupils listen to recorded questions about the silhouettes. In Extract 2 pupils have to guess the answer by looking at the silhouette of a dog. Whereas routine questions in the warm-up stage are led by the ALT, the silhouette quiz is led by the HRT who controls both the DVD and the interactive whiteboard.

Extract 2: Silhouette quiz

1	CD	what's this
2	N	[what?
3	P	[buta ((imitating English pronunciation))
4		*pig*
5	P	buta ((imitating English pronunciation))
6		*pig*
7	P	pig
8	P	buta
9		*pig*
10	P	cat
11	N	I know I know
12	P	buta
13		*pig*
14	P	I know
15	N	(1.0) ok. Shinto
16	S	(1.0) eeeh.. pig
17	P1	=ONAJI.
18	M	pizza?
19	N	pig pig

20	P	yeah yeah onaji
21		*same*
22	S	eeh pig
23	N	pig
24	P1	onaji. ((imitating English accent))
25		*same*
26	N	oink oink.
27	P1	onaji ((imitating English accent))
28		*same*
29	N	pig. buta
30		*pig*
31	P	<u>onaji</u>. <u>same.</u>
32		*same*
33	S	[dodesuka
34		*what do you think?*
35	P	[same. same
36	S	dodesuka
37		*what do you think?*
38	P	onaji
39		*same*
40	M	me too
41	N	me too?
42	P	onaji
43		*same*
44	M	oh come on. me too
45	P	((unint.))
46	M	me too
47	P	((unint.))
48	P	me. too
49	M	[<u>me too</u>
50	N	[<u>me too</u>
51	P	meat spaghetti ((language play))
52	N	I know?
53	P	((unint))
54	N	Koyuki
55	K	it's cat. dodesuka
56		*what do you think*
57	P	=no

58	N	no?
59	P	no
60	P	no me too
61	P	no me too yaro
62		*isn't it*
63	M	not a <u>cat</u>. not a <u>pig</u>. it's a?
64	P	dog
65	P	pig
66	CD	what's this
67	P	what's this
68	M	i::t's a ?
69	PP	((uninit.))
70	M	<u>do:g</u>
71	N	what's this
72	P	fox
73	N	it's a?
74	P	fox
75	N	dog. good job. good job

In Extract 2 the FPP starts with the recorded question on the DVD. The HRT reformulates the question (line 2) and several pupils provide the SPP (lines 3 to 7). In providing the answer "pig" some of the pupils code-switch to L1 (lines 3 and 4) pronouncing the Japanese word "buta" with an elongated "aaaa" sound in imitation of English pronunciation, as they do not know the English word for "pig". This appears to be a sign of their effort to communicate in English by making it sound like English. In lines 11 and 14 the HRT models how to bid for a turn in English by providing the phrase "I know I know". The HRT nominates Shinto and he provides the answer "pig". The ALT thought the pupil said "pizza" (line 18) and requests clarification with a rising intonation. Understanding the pupil's Japanese pronunciation, the HRT repairs the ALT's utterance, saying "pig pig" (line 19). The HRT repeats and reformulates the pupil answer "pig" in support of the pupil and also to ensure the rest of the class can hear it. In line 26 the HRT extends the pupil's contribution (the answer "pig") by saying "oink oink", English onomatopoeia for the sound made by a pig. He gives additional assistance by providing an L1 translation of "pig" to ensure the whole class understands the word "pig". In showing their agreement with the answer "pig", pupils repeatedly shout "onaji" in L1, meaning the same.

In line 40 the ALT first repairs this L1 pupil contribution ("onaji") by providing an English model expression "me, too", which is also repeated by the HRT (line 41). A pupil repeats "onaji (line 42). The ALT provides a direct repair uttering, "come on, me too" and repeats twice more. Reacting to the repair, one pupil eventually uses the new expression "me too" (line 48), and another pupil plays with the language, uttering the words "meat spaghetti" (line 51), the association here being with meat ("me too") sauce spaghetti, a favourite of young children in Japan. Not satisfied with the answer "pig", the HRT teacher requests a further contribution by saying "I know" in order to get pupils to raise their hands and provide clarification. Suzune is appointed and she provides the answer "cat" (line 55). Immediately pupils try to directly repair her answer by saying "no". The HRT requests a clarification by repeating their answer "no" with a rising intonation (line 58). Responding to the HRT, pupils reply saying " no me too" (lines 60 & 61). Although this is incorrect usage (it should be "I don't think so"), it is a sign that pupils are incorporating "me too" into their language use—as modelled earlier by the ALT. It is of note that neither of the teachers corrects "no me too". As the repair has not been completed, the ALT elaborates by summarizing the pupil contributions so far (line 63) saying "not a <u>cat</u>. not a <u>pig</u>". He then prompts a further turn when he says "it's a?" with a rising intonation. This 'designedly incomplete utterance' (DIU) is an incomplete sentence designed to "elicit missing information in the shape of utterance completion" (Margutti, 2010, p.316). When the HRT eventually checks the answer using the DVD, he also uses DIU in line 68.

Extract 2 illustrates how the teachers shape learners' contributions in an activity in which both the HRT and ALT jointly lead a lesson. The HRT's use of interactional resources consists of reformulation of the quiz question by simplifying and repeating, modelling how to bid for a turn in English, nominating pupils, assisting the ALT by repairing his misunderstanding of pupil pronunciation, reformulating pupil performance by reiteration, and giving L1 translation for whole class comprehension. The ALT, on the other hand, makes use of clarification requests, direct repair, modelling a new expression, elaboration, summary and DIU.

In accord with the meaning-and-fluency mode of context (Seedhouse, 2008) the interactional resources observed above are well used for the co-construction of meaning. For example, the ALT's clarification requests and the HRT's modelling for bidding are used to elicit learner negotiation and contribution. In so doing, pupils are encouraged to express their ideas. The

HRT's reiteration, L1 translation and resort to onomatopoeia are used for confirmation and reinforcement of learner understanding and contributions. The pupils are engaged throughout, willingly participate and are actively involved in the joint construction of their collective understanding. In addition, the ALT at an appropriate juncture is able to engage in lexical repair for accurate use of an expression ("me too"). This correction provides an opportunity that enables pupils both to learn and to make active use of a new expression in their participation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Analysis of the data reveals that various types of support for shaping learner contribution are to be found in the elementary school English classroom. Among the observed interactional resources are clarification requests, repeats, summaries, elaborations, modelling and translation, that is, a similar range of interactional resources to those observed in a number of other studies conducted overseas (Walsh, 2002; Walsh and Li, 2003; Daskin, 2015).

Close examination of the data reveals both commonalities and differences in the interactional features exhibited by the ALT and HRT. Among the features in common are items such as clarification requests in repair, DIU and reiteration. There were, however, also noticeable differences in interactional features, in part the result of the respective roles assigned to the ALT and the HRT. The interactional resources mainly used by the HRT include making use of modelling of how to bid in the target language, translation to assist both ALT and pupil understanding, and elaboration of pupil performance using onomatopoeia. The interactional resources used only by the ALT include extension of the topic, elaboration of pupil performance by summarizing and explanation, and modelling of correct usage of English expressions in repair. All of these are features providing rich use of English and meaningful exposure to English in context.

The observed differences suggest that the ALT and the HRT effectively make use of interactional resources in different ways. The strength of the HRT appears to be the ability to provide assistance to the ALT based on knowledge and understanding of his pupils who he sees every day and the L1 background he shares with pupils. For example, being able to provide translation in L1or understanding the accent of pupil

English are valuable types of assistance that many ALTs would not be capable of. In addition, being a model participant and learner by providing a model performance of how to interact and participate is an appropriate role for the HRT. Furthermore, the HRT's CIC is related to classroom management such as nominating pupils and by modelling how to bid, observed in the above, is often suggested as an appropriate role to be adopted by HRT's. Turning to the ALT, one of the notable interactional features observed was to provide a rich linguistic exposure to the pupils and scaffolding by modelling new language use such as "partly cloudy" and "me, too". The ALT also engaged in reformulating learner contributions by rephrasing, something that requires a high level of linguistic skill in English as well as the ability to judge pupil's ZPD.

Among the keys to success in early foreign language learning are the total number of hours of exposure to the target language and the quality and accessibility of input. To these can be added the enhancement and maintenance of motivation. Ecological linguistics (van Lier, 2000) also suggests that learners need a lot of opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction that provide affordances. When learners perceive relevant and usable linguistic resources in a rich linguistic environment, they are enabled to use them for taking part in an on-going activity. Such a perspective—learning understood as communication and participation— accords well with the new course of study (Mext, 2017) guidelines that state the goal of English for Grade 5 and 6 pupils is the development of basic communication abilities. In seeking to achieve this, the quality of the linguistic environment provided is all-important. It is then incumbent upon HRTs to seek to create learning environments that are supportive, environments in which learners feel safe and are encouraged to participate. The above extracts are examples of such an environment. However, within that learning environment the quality of the affordance received, the teaching provided, is crucial. Beyond syllabus, materials and methodologies, beyond pacing or termly schedules, if the intent is to enhance communicative abilities, produce confident active users of English, teachers have a central role to play "in shaping learner contributions by taking a learner response and doing something with it rather than simply accepting it" (Walsh, 2011, p.168). As Walsh (2011) further states, the need is for "teachers and learners, by making appropriate interactional choices through their online decision-making, both (to) facilitate the co-construction of meaning and display to each other their understandings" (p.177).

Judging from the analysis of the above data, the interactional resources for providing a rich linguistic environment mainly come from the ALT. However, how feasible is it for every school to have an ALT? Additionally, how realistic is it to expect all ALTs to be well trained and committed? In seeking a partial solution to this problem, the course of study (2017) states that homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities are expected to devise teaching programs, and effort should be made to involve more people in lessons by seeking assistance from native-English speakers resident locally or from local people proficient in English. The difficulty in locating such a local resource needs to be understood. Currently, under the existing curriculum, schools are required to provide 35 hours of instruction in English a year for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. With the introduction of the new curriculum, schools will be required to provide 70 hours of instruction at Years 5 and 6 as well as 35 hours of 'English activities' in Grade 3 and Grade 4. Undoubtedly the presence of ALTs in every school offers the prospect of greater exposure to proficient speakers' of English and would assist in shaping learner contribution. However, without such a presence and confronted with a scarcity of locally available personnel, schools will find it very difficult to provide the rich exposure, scaffolding and engagement desirable.

The present study illuminated the repertoire of a regular HRT and an ALT's CIC for shaping learner contributions. It is believed that the findings contribute to promoting understanding of the nature of classroom interaction and teachers' CIC. An implication drawn from this study is the need for teachers to pay attention to the importance of classroom interaction and CIC, a teacher's interactional resources making an invaluable contribution to the creation of learning opportunities. As Walsh (2012) argues, while it is important for teachers to pay attention to teaching materials and methodology, it is equally important to highlight the role of classroom interaction. Finally, given the paucity of our knowledge of English language learning at the elementary level in Japan, there is a clear need for further research. For example, building upon this study, conversation analysis to investigate other types of interactional resources offers the prospect, not only of increasing our understanding of interaction within the elementary English classroom, but also of enhancing the quality of the learning experience and the teaching provided. A specific example would be the use of gestures, observed in this study but not within the scope of the study and thus not analysed in depth. However, the

multimodal and embodied nature of practices was widely observed and is of particular relevance to learning in the young learners' classroom.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix. Transcription conventions
Adapted from Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008)

.8)	Numbers enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause. The number represents the number of seconds of duration of the pause, to one decimal place. A pause of less than 0.2 seconds is marked by (.)
[ ]	Brackets around portions of utterances show that those portions overlap with a portion of another speaker's utterance.
=	An equal sign is used to show that there is no time lapse between the portions connected by the equal signs. This is used where a second speaker begins their utterance just at the moment when the first speaker finishes.
::	A colon after a vowel or a word is used to show that the sound is extended. The number of colons shows the length of the extension.
(hm, hh)	These are onomatopoetic representations of the audible exhalation of air
.hh	This indicates an audible inhalation of air, for example, as a gasp. The more h's, the longer the in-breath.
?	A question mark indicates that there is slightly rising intonation.
.	A period indicates that there is slightly falling intonation
,	A comma indicates a continuation of tone.
–	A dash indicates an abrupt cut off, where the speaker stopped speaking suddenly.
↑ ↓	Up or down arrows are used to indicate that there is sharply rising or falling intonation. The arrow is placed just before the syllable in which the change in intonation occurs.
Under	Underlines indicate speaker emphasis on the underlined portion of the word.
CAPS	Capital letters indicate that the speaker spoke the capitalized portion of the utterance at a higher volume than the speaker's normal volume.
°	This indicates an utterance that is much softer than the normal speech of the speaker. This symbol will appear at the beginning and at the end of the utterance in question.
> <, < >	'Greater than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the talk they surround was noticeably faster, or slower than the surrounding talk.
(would)	When a word appears in parentheses, it indicates that the transcriber has guessed as to what was said, because it was indecipherable on the tape. If the transcriber was unable to guess what was said, nothing appears within the parentheses.
£C'mon£	Sterling signs are used to indicate a smiley or jokey voice.
+	Marks the onset of a non-verbal action (e.g. shift of gaze, pointing)
italics	Translation