Organising talk in group speaking tests: learning from high-scoring students

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This article investigates how group speaking test candidates manage group talk during assessed, time-limited tasks. Drawing on recorded and transcribed data, it explores how higher-scoring learners manage spoken assessment tasks through their talk, moving conversations on or slowing them down in order to perform and complete the tasks' requirements in a timely way. This data is contrasted with the ways in which lower-scoring test candidates attempt to organise and manage assessed group talk. While the data and findings from this particular study can be used to teach students about, and prepare them for, multi-person discussions and, more specifically, task-oriented and time-limited group speaking tests, we also suggest that our awareness-raising investigatory approach, if brought into the classroom, offers learners (and teachers) a way of uncovering some of what actually *occurs during talk, illuminating the 'invisible rules' that guide how participants engage in and manage interaction.*

Introduction

Many high-stakes English language tests allow for or adopt a small group format to assess leaners' speaking skills, for example, the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) in China, the foreign language oral test of the Spanish Baccalaureate, and Cambridge English's speaking assessments such as First (FCE) or Advanced (CAE). Typically, candidates introduce themselves individually before then engaging in one or more group tasks to which they are equally entitled, and/or required, to contribute. These tasks might ask them to, for example, debate a topic of contemporary importance (e.g., how to solve environmental problems) or reach an agreed decision from a range of possibilities, to be achieved within a relatively limited test-oriented time-frame.

The aim of group assessment tasks is to enable learners to display their speaking skills 'in appropriate, contextualized, communicative language use' (Bachman, 1990: 84). Providing opportunities for non-hierarchical communicative interaction with peers, the argument goes, facilitates performance by allowing learners to speak in a more authentic setting than would be possible with a single examiner as interlocutor, reducing or removing imbalances in power or 'speaking rights' and in language proficiency during the task (Leaper and Brawn, 2019). It also, of course, allows the examiner to watch, listen and assess, rather than participate and assess.

Yet group-based speaking tests bring with them their own range of challenges for learners. They are based on the assumption that test candidates can work collaboratively through speech to complete, or come close to completing, a

spoken task in a given time, co-constructing the in-test discourse through effective interaction (Taylor and Wigglesworth, 2009). However, in any grouping, there are likely to be at least some differences in L2 oral proficiency (Bennett, 2007), in self-confidence and anxiety about speaking in the L2, and in related factors such as personality and introversion/extroversion, the ability to work cooperatively or not, and so forth (Leaper and Brawn, 2019). Furthermore, as most readers used to institutional or workplace meetings will know, even those discussions which commence with the best collaborative intentions can lose focus, drift off-point, and meander without conclusion and/or without the range of relevant voices being heard.

Thus, as Wong and Waring (2010: 2) point out, 'learning to engage in ordinary conversation is one of the most difficult tasks for second language learners', and learning to do this in a way which facilitates successful task completion in a time-limited assessed situation is even harder. Understanding and, where appropriate, teaching what constitutes effective conversation or 'talk-in-interaction' in group speaking tests is thus important for language teachers involved in preparing learners for this form of assessment (ibid.).

Yet what aspects of discursive behaviour, that is, of the way talk might be collaboratively organised and managed within the kinds of group tasks that students experience in speaking tests, might teachers draw learners' attention to and provide opportunities to practice and develop? One way of finding out is to analyse the relevant linguistic behaviour of more successful test-takers in comparison to that of less successful test-takers.

Looking at group talk through Conversation Analysis

Although spoken language in general, and conversational language in particular, is often characterized as 'a few sentences spoken by one participant ... followed and built upon by sentences spoken by another' (Brown, 2007: 244), this is not how spoken discourse 'works' in reality. Speech does not typically comprise complete sentences and smooth turn-taking which inevitably leads to coherent and/or equal participation, shared meanings and the achievement of shared goals. Rather, conversation comprises interruptions, hesitations, silences, changes of direction, speakers talking at the same time, speakers passing on or picking up turns, speakers failing to pass on or to pick up turns, and so forth (see, for example, Sacks, 1992). And as this list of conversational features suggests, therefore, it is turns and turn-taking, rather than the sentence, that lie at the heart of interaction (Wong and Waring, 2010).

When we reflect on the nature of group-based assessment tasks, the importance of the turn and turn-management during interaction becomes clear. While individuals need to demonstrate their speaking abilities during the test, this takes place through talk-in-interaction within the group. And for this talk-in-interaction to be successful, individuals need to be able to contribute ~~(i.e., take turns)~~ to the conversation themselves (i.e., take turns) and work collaboratively with others (i.e., get others to take turns). The extent to which learners manage

this within the test time available will depend on both the kind of issues noted in the Introduction (i.e., their L2 proficiency, personality, or anxiety) *and* their ability to organise and manage group conversations effectively, taking account of participants' equal entitlement to contribute. And it is here, in uncovering how participants might successfully organise and facilitate group talk during tasks, that Conversational Analysis (CA) can help; for, as we shall see, the ability to manage talk during tasks is more than simply a matter of spoken language proficiency.

CA seeks to uncover what people actually *do* in order to have a conversation, examining, amongst other things, the 'commonsense practices' (Wong and Waring 2010: 4) that are required to keep a conversation going. From this perspective, conversation is the product of a joint effort between speakers (Schegloff 1997) as they share understandings of the 'invisible rules' (Wong and Waring 2010: 9) which guide, for example, when and how to take, link, join and sequence turns; open and close conversations; and repair problems of hearing or understanding the talk.

Of course, many coursebooks and related instructional materials provide learners with 'useful phrases' to facilitate conversation and help in discussions, often based around functions such as 'Getting clarification' (e.g., *I'm sorry, could you say that again*), 'Rejecting ideas' (e.g., *I agree to some extent but...*), or 'Presenting an opinion' (e.g., *In my view...*). Yet although such lists are increasingly drawn from actual spoken language data (see for example, the "Touchstone" coursebook series for students, or Carter and McCarthy, 1997, for English language professionals and applied linguists) rather than from author intuition, they do not deal with those invisible rules which govern group interaction, the ebb and flow of individuals' participation, and, in particular, the overall progression of the conversation. In effect, turn-taking and equitable participation are implicitly assumed to be relatively unproblematic, with groups self-organising and achieving shared goals in a timely fashion. Yet as noted in the Introduction, this is a somewhat optimistic conception of many group discussions, even those which take place in speakers' first languages.

Thus, what is missing from most instructional and test-preparation materials are insights into what learners might actually need to do or say in order to manage more effectively the group conversation, that is, to move it on or slow it down, in order to achieve the shared goals of the talk-in-interaction. In group speaking tests, such management is particularly important given that candidates are meant to demonstrate their proficiency by completing (or nearly completing) a task within a given test-oriented time-frame, and it is therefore the focus of our current analysis.~~.~~

The research: context and data

Consequently, this article seeks to ~~address this gap by~~ identify~~ing~~ how test candidates manage group talk during assessed, time-limited tasks. Deploying a CA approach and drawing on recorded and transcribed data, it explores how

higher-scoring learners manage spoken assessment tasks through their talk, moving conversations on or slowing them down in order to perform and complete the tasks' requirements in a timely way. This data is contrasted with the ways in which lower-scoring test candidates attempt to organise and manage assessed group talk.

Data is drawn from video-recorded end-of-term pre-sessional EAP speaking tests in a UK university language centre; the recordings were subsequently transcribed. In order to progress to their degree programmes, students need to achieve the equivalent of an IELTS proficiency of 6.5 across all 4 skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), with no individual score lower than the equivalent of IELTS 6.0. Consequently, all speakers in the data are at or around these levels of spoken proficiency. In the speaking tests, students, working in groups of three or four, address a hypothetical decision-making scenario, with the goal of choosing one of four provided outcomes. They are given 15 minutes to discuss the relative merits and drawbacks of each option before, hopefully, reaching group agreement as to which one should be chosen.

Part of a larger research project which investigated learner talk in group speaking tests more generally across 10 hours of test recordings, the data discussed in this article were identified as typifying the talk-in-interaction behaviour undertaken by more and less successful test takers as they moved on and/or slowed down their conversations. Our identification of 'more' and 'less successful' test takers is drawn from the students' scores for their performance in their group speaking test, awarded according to marking criteria which are reasonably typical for such assessments (including, for example, demonstrating functional and interactional features such as discourse management and interactive communication, as well as grammar, lexis and pronunciation). Not unexpectedly, higher scoring students were also generally found to be more successful at expediting and slowing down the discussion, and vice versa for lower scoring students.

Initiating an alternative order on subsequent talk: more and less effective turn management

The following analysis explores how initiating an alternative order on subsequent talk looks in low-scoring and high-scoring test performances. First, we examine examples of students expediting discussion, taking action through their talk to move the task on more quickly. We then consider how students attempt to slow down progression through the task by recalibrating and re-ordering turn-taking within the group. For each, we first present a sample sequence from a low-scoring test performance, and then analyse a high-scoring group performance, in order to highlight some of the key differences in how these same actions, of moving the discussion on or slowing it down in order to complete the task satisfactorily within the limited available time, are accomplished through talk across the two groups.

Expediting discussion

In this first Excerpt, students Johnson, Poppy and Eva (names changed) are engaged in an assessment task that requires them to discuss, and eventually decide upon, which product from a range available on their prompt sheet would be the best to invest in (relevant CA transcription conventions can be found in the appendix).

Excerpt 1: Low-scoring group

93	JON:	I'm still think it's expensive
94		((Johnson turns to Poppy))
95		(0.5)
96	POP:	mmm but I think [the]
97	EVA:	[it's] worth its value I think
98		(.)
99	POP:	yeah uh it uh: for (.) this product is not uh expensive but
100		have many (.) similar things- materials (.) maybe: pla- pluh-
101		pla:tics=
102	EVA:	=platics=
103	POP:	=(plastics) so: uhm I think it uh: more (0.5) expensive=
104	JON:	=uh and uh finally uh this advantage disadvantage have you
105		uh any ideas?
106		(1.0)
107	POP:	[mmm]
108	JON:	[°I] think we should be more quickly°
109		(1.0)
110→	POP:	uh so let's summarise about [the] four things=
111	EVA:	[okay]
112	JON:	=uhm (.) my- uh I just- uh: (unless) it's all
113		(.) of these four products.=
114	EVA:	=yeah=
115	JON:	=first one is uh:: (0.8) uh target market is for,
116		students (.) uh mostly and uh it's useful (.) uh

At the onset of the sequence, we find the group debating whether one of the products on their prompt sheets is too 'expensive' (line 93) or 'worth its value' (line 97). In her turn, starting in line 96, Poppy attempts to defend the product in question on the basis that the materials used in the manufacturing process (i.e. 'plastics') are 'not expensive' (line 99). In doing so, Poppy constructs a turn that is replete with false starts, pauses, and hesitations markers, which, as a result, increase the amount of time taken up by her turn. Indeed, Johnson's subsequent turn (lines 104-5) appears to display an orientation to moving on to the next stage of discussion *quickly*. His turn design is (1) delivered in a latched position, that is, there is no gap between his own turn and Poppy's preceding speech, (2) he introduces his turn with a prefatory *finally*, and (3) it is formatted using interrogative syntax which requires another student to offer a task-oriented opinion (i.e., his question aims to move the discussion along) . Based on Johnson's gaze and body position (see Figure 1), his question seems to be specifically directed at Eva: Eva, however, does not proffer an answer. In fact,

after a 1.0-second pause, it is instead Poppy who eventually begins to formulate a response. Like her previous turn, however, her response is formatted with a hesitation marker (*mmm* – line 107). From this, Johnson appears to pre-empt another lengthy turn and responds in overlap, with a more explicit call to move the discussion on quickly (Line 108). This explicitness however is mitigated in that it is delivered in a whispered tone of voice, suggesting his attempt to initiate an alternative order on talk is *off-the-record*, that is, deliberately inaudible to the two examiners. Such vocal perturbations, often delivered quietly as single turns, are not uncommon in the dataset of low-scoring groups (as will be shown in Excerpt 3), and this kind of turn tends to occur in delicate, potentially face-threatening, moments of interaction where a group member either displays a need to expedite or prohibit further discussion, but does not seem to know how to do so in English without causing offence to other participants. Notable, therefore, is the way in which Johnson's attempt to expedite the discussion by involving Eva is unsuccessful; Eva contributes very little to the discussion, which is problematic in terms of the task's collaborative goals.

Figure 1: The gaze and posture of, from left to right, Johnson, Poppy and Eva (extract 1, lines 105-6*; participant permission granted***).**

Next, we will consider how the same social action is achieved (i.e. moving the discussion forward) within a higher-scoring group of students. In this sequence, students are involved in the same assessment format, choosing from a range of options provided on their test prompt sheet. However, in this instance, students Dani, Theresa and Ryu have been asked to decide upon the best way to deal with young offenders.

Excerpt 2: High-scoring group

144	DAN:	based on what Theresa said just now that (.) they only target
145		(1.2)
146		like just offenders like (.) in jail (.) cos:
147		(1.5)
148		they are undergoing heavy ( ) so:: kind of
149		(1.4)
150		uhm not really affecting (1.5) uh new offender
151		(0.9)
152	THE:	|may I interrupt because we're actually running out of time

153: ((Theresa taps Dani then points at the digital timer))|
154 I think we should |jump into| the last proposal (0.9) uhm
155 |((taps prompt sheet))|
156 yeah (0.8) Ryu what do you think (.) [about] the last one?
157 RYU: [uhm]
158 (1.7)
159 RYU: I think well firstly there's gonna be lower costs for police

Much like Excerpt 1, this sequence begins with a lengthy assessment of one of the options on the students' prompt sheets. This turn, delivered by Dani in lines 144-150, is similar to Poppy's in that it is replete with pauses and hesitation markers, all of which, as above, serve to increase the time she takes up. Similar, too, is the nature of the subsequent responses, which both, albeit differently, orient to a need to expedite the discussion. Theresa, like Johnson in Excerpt 1, regards the previous speaker's talk as being too slow.

However, in this sequence, the way in which the discussion is expedited is quite different. In line 152, Theresa interjects with a turn that includes four elements: (1) a mitigating preface (*may I interrupt*), (2) an account for the interruption and forthcoming directive (*because we're actually running out of time*), (3) a directive, which proposes that the group begin (i.e. *jump into* – line 154) their discussion of the final option, and (4) a question that selects Ryu as the next speaker to contribute to the task. This is a much more complex approach than that implemented by Johnson in Extract 1. There, although Johnson also attempted next speaker selection via a question, this was delivered separately, and *before* his directive to move on more quickly. Only upon failing to elicit a suitably prompt response did Johnson attempt a directive akin to the 'jump into the next proposal' of Theresa. In a further contrast to Theresa's successful turn, Johnson's directive, though declaratively formatted as a suggestion, did not contain any *linguistic* mitigating phrases (instead, he whispered). What's more, Theresa's turn included an explicit explanation of her approach, displaying her orientation to the timed-nature of the task (line 152);in Johnson's turn, this was merely implied.

Slowing discussion

Similar disparities are also apparent between high- and low-scoring groups in accomplishing slowing down the interaction in the interests of effective task completion. In this sequence, four participants, Marshall, Serene, Shawn and Ivan, are discussing which location would be the best for opening a new pizza restaurant.

Excerpt 3: Low-scoring group

03 MARS: not only com- competition but also have the (0.5) reduce
04 the pressu- the pressure↗=
05 SERE: =uh:: maybe↗ [it is]
06 MARS: [ease] the pressure
07 (0.3)
08 SERE: yes

09 (1.4)
10 SERE: so: (.) which one <do you think is the best?>
11 ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 SHAW: =>wait wait wait wait <
13 ((SHAW raises right palm to SERE then taps pen on prompt sheet))
14 SERE: huh what?
15 ((SERE and MARS lean forward to look at SHAW's prompt sheet))
16 (0.5)
17 SHAW: you- do you notice (0.3) about that?
18 (0.3)
19 there has [uh: twenty five]
20 MARS: [twenty-four hours petrol station]=
21 SHAW: =[hours petrol stations↗]
22 IVAN: [twenty-four hours]
23 (0.3)
24 SERE: [↗oh:: ↘]
25 IVAN: [yeah] and it's uh=
26 SHAW: =that's means (0.3) any time (0.5) uh::
27 (0.5)
28 always have people to be there
9 lines omitted
38 IVAN: [yes uh- uh] mm whenever they want to eat pizza=
39 SHAW: =yeah you always can find that=
40 IVAN: =so it's a good fact
41 (0.3)
42 SHAW: yeah it's- it's (0.6) pretty good

In lines 3-8, we see Marshall extolling the merits of one of the locations (see lines 3 and 6). Serene acknowledges Marshall's assessment in line 8 (*yes*); however this is followed by a 1.3 second pause, which effectively puts discussion of this option into a state of 'topic hold' (Jefferson, 1981). To resolve this, Serene asks Marshall which option he thinks is the best (line 10) with a question introduced by the prefatory 'so', which is often used by speakers to mark that 'they are about to change the topic of the conversation' (Gan et al., 2008: 325). However, Shawn prevents Marshall from responding to Serene's question with his directive in line 12. This takes the form of a command (*wait*), an assertive format that shows no orientation to possible non-compliance.

Serene responds to Shawn's directive by trying to repair the potential breakdown in the interaction in line 14 (*huh, what?*). Shawn then responds with a question (line 17), which functions like the account in Excerpt 2, in that it explains, albeit *im*plicitly, the impetus for the initiation of an alternative order on the discussion. In this sequence, this derives not from the fact that the group are not progressing quickly enough to meet time demands, but rather that the group are proceeding in a way that does not properly orient to the perceived task remit, namely that the group should not conclude their discussion without a proper consideration of all factors on the prompt sheet.

Again, as with the previous example from a lower-scoring group, we see how the social action of initiating an alternative order on the talk is achieved without any linguistic mitigating phrases. Furthermore, the directive is relatively simplistic comprised only of the bald imperative, *wait*. This gives Shawn's directive the quality of a command, a turn format that claims high entitlement. And, as with Excerpt 1, in lieu of a more complex turn which could include mitigating phrases and explicit reasons and rationale (see Excerpts 2 and 4), this directive, like Johnson's above, is delivered with a marked vocal perturbation (rapid pace), which seems to add to the potentially face-threatening nature of this intervention.

In contrast, Excerpt 4 shows how students in a higher-scoring group achieve the delicate action of initiating an alternative order on talk in a markedly different way. In this sequence, examinees Sara, Jimmy and Shirley have been asked to decide, like the task in Excerpt 1, upon a product in which to invest.

Excerpt 4: High-scoring group

29	SARA:	uhh=
30	JIMM:	=(this one) and it's very useful (0.4) if you-
31		if you (home is have) a dog
32		(0.7)
33		it is- (0.2) maybe it's hard for you to clean up
34		(0.4)
35		dog (0.9) and especially when you walking dog
36		(0.4)
37		in the street (0.4) it's hard for you to clean up
38		the dog mess=
39	SARA:	=but can we have the description of the first product first
40		((Sara points at her crib sheet))
41		so we can=
42	SHIR:	=ok=
43	SARA:	=decide?
44		(0.9)
45	SARA:	i think the first product is useful
46		because its a (.) portable bin=
47	JIMM:	=mmm
48		((Jimm and Shir both nod in unison))

As was the case in Excerpts 1 and 2, this sequence begins with a speaker offering an assessment; Jimmy is assessing the positive utility of the product in question (see lines line 55 and 60). Again, the next speaker treats this as somewhat problematic and interjects with an initiation of an alternative order on talk. In this case, Sara (lines 39 – 43) prohibits the continuation of Jimmy's turn. However, unlike in Excerpt 3, this is not delivered as a bald imperative, but rather in an interrogative requesting format (e.g. *can we* . . .?), followed by an explicit account (*so we can decide*), which provides a warrant for her initiation of an alternative order much like in the previous Excerpt from a high-scoring group (cf. Theresa – line 152).

Though the initiation of an alternative order on subsequent talk is eventually successful in each of the Excerpts above, what can be seen from the higher-scoring groups is that with their more explicit, mitigated and multi-part turns, the change in the flow of the interaction, as a result, is more seamless and affiliative. Note that in the less successful Excerpts 1 and 3, the key turns are followed by multiple lengthy pauses (Excerpt 1), repair initiations (Excerpt 3) or hesitation markers (Excerpt 1). On the other hand, in the more successful Excerpts 2 and 4, uptake of and affiliation with the newly proposed order, of both speeding up and slowing down progress through the task, is proffered by a co-participant even before the full completion of the primary speakers' turn (line 157 – Excerpt 2; line 42 – Excerpt 4). The brief and immediate nature of these responses display clear affiliation with what is being proposed and are supportive of social solidarity within the group (Teleghani-Nikazm, 2006). These are features of interaction that may be judged favourably in a task where the aim is to *jointly* discuss options and arrive at a *group* consensus in a timed assessment setting where all participants are equally entitled to contribute.

Learning from high-scoring students: implications and conclusions

The data and analysis has a number of implications for English language teachers and other ELT professionals, such as materials writers and speaking test assessors. Firstly, and in line with recent developments in CA-informed, research-based training initiatives (e.g., Stokoe's (2014) Conversation Analytic Role-Play Method), this approach, if brought into the classroom, offers students (and teachers) a way of uncovering some of what *actually* occurs during talk and interaction. As Brown and Yule (1983) note, an effective approach to the teaching of interactional language is via awareness-raising approaches such as this, in which students engage with, analyse and learn from 'raw data', via a process of guided discovery which teachers mediate. Whilst it is, of course, unreasonable to expect leaners, and indeed teachers, to undertake a *full* Conversational Analysis of transcripts of speech that deploys the more technical elements of CA terminology, analysis and transcription conventions, the approach taken in this study, highlighting the differences between more and less effective talk-in-interaction strategies, offers possibilities to students and teachers alike, and, indeed, to materials writers. It goes beyond useful stock phrases to illuminate the 'invisible rules' (Wong and Waring, 2010) of interaction that guide how participants engage in and manage talk, drawing on norms around, for example, politeness and pragmatics, as well as 'just' linguistic proficiency. The data and findings from our particular study, for ~~example~~instance, can be used to teach students about, and prepare them for, multi-person discussions and, more specifically, task-oriented and time-limited group speaking tests.

With regard to multi-person discussions and the ways in which learners might manage talk during group speaking tests more specifically, two key turn-management sequences have been considered in this paper – how to move conversations on or slow them down in order to perform and complete a tasks'

requirements in a timely way. The analysis shows how, in higher-scoring groups in which learners initiate and manage subsequent talk more effectively, participants are able to couch their central expediting or prohibitive directives in more complex turns. These display an orientation to reducing the speaker's entitlement by, for example, including introductory components that foreshadow the speaker's intervention, mitigating their directive to move on or slow down with interrogative or declarative syntax and softer modals such as *can* and *should*, as well as by making next-speaker selection explicit (see, for example, Excerpt 2). Unlike the turns deployed in lower-scoring groups - far simpler turns consisting of high entitlement formats such as commands – the interventions of higher-scoring students are often responded to with stronger displays of affiliation, which reinforce the intended cooperative nature of the task. Meanwhile, the simpler attempts to expedite or prohibit ongoing interaction within the lower-scoring groups are met with delayed responses, hesitation markers, and repair initiations, which typically do not signal affiliation.

The analysis thus shows that there are often overlooked practices through which test candidates (and participants in group discussions more generally) can negotiate more affiliative, seamless uptake of their alternative agenda for turns and talk as they seek to complete tasks or reach agreement in cooperative ways. Being able to issue directives in such a way may not be an explicit target of any group-based assessment and, therefore, may not have a *direct* bearing on overall test performance. However, what these findings offer prospective test-takers is a valuable insight into how delicate moments of social interaction may be navigated more effectively and this, in turn, may go some way to improving the confidence of learners taking tests and, importantly, their ability to organise group talk in ways which provide enhanced opportunities for collaborative and equitable task-completion.

In future research, and, indeed, in developing classroom practices, we strongly support investigating and drawing upon what successful or high-scoring students can tell us, as ELT practitioners, and our students. ~~They~~ Such investigations offer students realistic and accessible models of language use that are particularly relevant to the task-at-hand (e.g.~~i.e~~., performing well in ~~a~~ language tests), and allow for explicit discussion and awareness of the hidden norms of talk. Interested ELT practitioners might develop further their own knowledge of CA and of more and less successful patterns of talk-in-interaction in order to implement such analyses in the classroom, and there is a range of useful literature to draw upon in support of such CPD (as a starting point, see, for example, the references for this article). Thus~~And~~, although this article has focused on a particular aspect of talk-in-interaction, that is, how to manage more effectively group conversation by moving it on or slowing it down in order to achieve the shared goals of the discussion or task, future studies might similarly uncover and explore further 'invisible rules' that facilitate learner talk-in-interaction.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

NAME: talk…	focal turn(s) during the excerpt(s)
[yeah] [okay]	overlapping talk
=	end of one turn and beginning of next with no gap/pause in between
(.)	very short untimed pause
(1.5)	interval between utterances (1.5 seconds in this case)
wo:rd wo:::rd	lengthening of preceding sound
↗	marked shift in pitch upwards
< >	talk produced more slowly than the surrounding speech
> <	talk produced more quickly than the surrounding speech
(( ))	non-verbal activity
-	false start/interruption