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Interactional Competence and the Use of Modal Expressions in Decision-Making Activities: CA for Understanding Microgenesis of Pragmatic Competence

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Introduction

Interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) is a research area that is concerned with what second language (L2) learners do with the target language, and how their competence in using the language develops over time. However, until 1996 when Kasper and Schmidt put out agendas for more developmentally oriented investigations, research on interlanguage pragmatics had been predominated by studies focusing on the former, L2 use at a point in time. This research area has matured more by now in the area of developmental interlanguage pragmatics, as reviewed in Kasper and Rose (2002). Along with an increased attention to longitudinal development arose investigation of the role of interaction, as well as the role of instruction, in L2 pragmatic development. Taking Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986) language socialization theory (e.g., DuFon, 1999) and Vygotsky's theory of psychological and language development (e.g., Belz & Kinginger, 2003; Ohta, 2001), researchers have recently begun exploring the affordances of social interaction for emergent competence and longitudinal development. In this paper, I will further this line of research with a focus on the examination of microgenesis (Vygotsky, 1979; Wertsch & Stone, 1978) of modal expressions in decision-making activities between a native speaker and an L2 learner of Japanese.

Interlanguage pragmatic research on the use of modal expressions

Modal expressions, such as *may*, *can*, *would*, and *it seems* in English, can index the speaker's stance about the factual status of the information he

or she is conveying. In the research on interlanguage pragmatics, these expressions are considered to be important linguistic devices used for producing various illocutionary effects in speech acts, although they are not examined as the focal object of the studies (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981). In recent years, there have been a small number of studies that focus on L2 learners' development in the use of modal expressions in English (e.g., Cho, 2003; Kärkkäinen, 1992; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001) and in Japanese (Fu & Khwanchira, 2002). These studies revealed that, when learners at different proficiency levels are compared, higher proficiency learners can use modal expressions more often and with a wider variety of functions (Cho, 2003; Fu & Khwanchira, 2002). However, although learners with higher L2 proficiency can use a wider variety of modal expressions, such as *would* and *could* in addition to *maybe* and *I think*, they are not necessarily able to use them effectively for various pragmatic functions (Kärkkäinen, 1992; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001). These findings show developmental patterns in the use of modal expressions, but as Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig demonstrate in their longitudinal study, "linguistic competence does not guarantee that learners will use all their available linguistic resources in the service of pragmatics" although "pragmatic competence is affected by linguistic competence" (2001, p. 148). Kärkkäinen's (1992) study also suggests that even linguistically more competent learners of English in Finland were not able to use modal expressions for a face-saving strategy or a persuasion and manipulation strategy although they were able to use them for a politeness strategy. These findings suggest that it is fruitful to investigate what L2 learners can and cannot do in interaction with and without the use of modal expressions at one point in time and how such competence changes over time.

While these studies of L2 pragmatic development with the use of modal expressions identify pragmatic functions such as mitigating the force of face-threatening acts, softening the assertiveness of a statement, building solidarity, and yielding a turn to other participants, it has to be noted that there is a fundamental difficulty in identifying these functions due to the indexical nature of modal expressions. Although modal markers are defined in semantic theories as expressions of the speaker's or writer's judgment of possibility and necessity about the proposition of a sentence (Lyons, 1977), the ambiguity of modal meanings has been pointed out by the theorists themselves (e.g., Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1986; Perkins, 1983). The limitation of semantic analyses is that linguists try to identify modal meanings by attending to isolated sentences. If we understand language as representation of the idea a speaker comes up with in his or her mind, it can

be a fruitful approach to analyze meanings of parts of a sentence in the sentence structure in relation to syntax. However, meanings of modal expressions vary depending on the context of the situation, as they emerge through inferences and are eventually grammaticalized only by conventionalization (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca, 1994). To borrow Ochs' (1996) formulation of the relationships among indexical meanings of a form, while a modal expression may primarily index the speaker's epistemic stance as well as affective stance, it may secondarily convey other social meanings such as social acts, social activity, and the speaker's and hearer's social identities. These meanings are not in one-to-one relationship with a form, but become relevant in a specific situation of use. Because those meanings indexed with a modal expression are interrelated and overlap, identifying its functions with the use of discrete categories is difficult.

For the aim of identifying meanings of modal expressions used by an L2 speaker of Japanese and her conversation partner, I consider the research domain of grammar and interaction (Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996) to be informative. Speakers of a language need to know the rule or system of language use, not only in terms of sentence grammar but also in terms of "interactional" grammar. For example, one needs to know how to combine contrastive independent clauses with a connective "but," and also how to use "but" in agreeing and disagreeing (e.g., Ford & Mori, 1994). Koshik's (2002) analysis of a writing conference shows how a teacher helps the student reach expected solutions with the use of yes–no questions. In the analysis of interactional grammar or in interactional linguistics (Selting & Couper-Kuhlen, 2001), meanings or functions of forms including sentence structures, connectives, and modal expressions, can be examined with regard to what they do in interaction, not what they might mean. Therefore, interactional grammar is an informative way of identifying meanings and functions of linguistic forms in interaction. However, in this study, I will not search for a rule shared by native speakers of a language by examining a large corpus of interactional data as interactional linguists would aim at. Instead, the focus of this paper in interlanguage pragmatics is to show how an L2 speaker of Japanese uses modal expressions as a part of linguistic resources for social interaction. It would be informative if we knew what native speakers of Japanese would do in similar situations, but without a foundational research body in this area, I would not judge the L2 speaker's competence in comparison with native speakers of Japanese at this stage.

Microgenesis of competence in social interaction

The present study focuses on different ways in which a learner of Japanese interacts with a native speaker and how they change during a 10-minute interaction. As introduced at the beginning of this paper, while examinations of individual learners' longitudinal development are important for the understanding of ontogenetic development over an extended period, it is also imperative to investigate the role or affordance of social interaction for the emergence of competence. As Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) observed, a child's higher competence emerges through repeated engagement in social interactions during a relatively short period of time. From this perspective, "microgenesis" (Wertsch, 1979; Wertsch & Stone, 1978) of competence, or the processes whereby higher competence emerges through engagement in particular social interactions, becomes an important research topic.

Although a focus on the process of learning during interaction in relation to the product can also be found in the psycholinguistically motivated line of research on the interactional hypothesis (Long, 1996), which has been extensively investigated in the field of second language acquisition, Vygotsky's approach differs from this line of research in several respects. Most importantly, Vygotsky's experiments are themselves activities where a child can demonstrate his or her ability or competence, while experiments for the interactional hypothesis are considered to be the providers of negotiated input and an environment which enhances the learner's noticing of the gap between the target form and his or her interlanguage form. The latter approach examines the interaction between the learner and his or her interlocutor not to examine the learner's emerging competence but to statistically analyze the relationship between the opportunity for learning in the interaction and the development of competence as demonstrated in different tasks. In Vygotsky's theory of learning, competence is considered to emerge first on the social plane (during an interaction with a more capable member of a social group), and later becomes internalized in the individual for future engagement in another occasion. Therefore, observing the ways in which the learner participates in similar interactions gives the analyst an insight into the competence that the learner demonstrates.

Therefore, in the Vygotskian approach, competence can be identified within the interaction, not as self-standing construct but in relation to the interlocutor's way of engaging in the interaction. Such view of competence observed in social interaction is consistent with the concept of "interactional competence" (Hall, 1995; He & Young, 1998; Young, 1999). It is the

competence for sustaining social interaction, and it is both the knowledge of and the ability to use the relevant resources drawn on in “interactive practices” (Hall, 1995), and it is co-constructed (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). For Vygotsky, the focus is on development in the ways a child accomplishes a task in social interaction, in which language plays an important role as a medium of social interaction. In parallel to this, I will examine an L2 speaker’s development of competence for engaging in decision-making activities and the change in which modal expressions are used as the linguistic resources for accomplishing the task.

CA for the examination of L2 interactional competence with the use of modal expressions

In the present study, I will examine the microgenesis of competence with which an L2 learner engages in decision-making activities and uses modal expressions, using conversation analysis (CA; e.g., Heritage, 1984; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). As Heritage (1984, p. 241) states, CA “is concerned with the analysis of the competences which underlie ordinary social activities.” Competences are observed in, for example, delaying a disagreement by inserting a pause or by initiating the turn with a partial agreement (Pomerantz, 1984), and treating a silence after a question as an absence of an answer and pursuing an explanation. By way of displaying their understanding of each other’s contributions, participants in social interactions are co-constructing meanings on a moment-to-moment basis. With such a view of interactional work, CA enables examination of how the meaning of an indexical expression is co-constructed at a particular moment. In previous studies of L2 learners’ use of modal expressions in Japanese, modal expressions that do not correspond to those used by native speakers of Japanese are labeled as “inappropriate use.” Because meanings of modal expressions are identified largely based on the researcher’s internalized knowledge of those meanings in Japanese, learners’ divergent use of those expressions becomes unanalyzable. Meanwhile, CA offers an alternative approach to identifying meanings of modal expressions based on sequential analysis of the participants’ turn-by-turn contributions from their perspectives. Using CA, I will be able to examine ways in which the co-participant’s response highlights the indexical meaning of a modal expression that the learner used, and thus better understand roles of social interactions for emergence of interactional competence with the use of modal expressions.

Although there are some difficulties in applying CA methodology to talk-in-interaction involving L2 speakers, who may not share “reasoning

procedures and sociolinguistic competencies” with native speakers of the target language, previous research has shown that it is a fruitful enterprise (Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Olsher, 2002; Wong & Olsher, 2000). A difficulty in applying this observation to L2 learners may involve a question of whether we can interpret a pause in the same way as we interpret a native speaker’s pause. Moreover, if some sequential order, such as partial agreement followed by a disagreement, is not observed in L2 data, should we interpret it as incompetence of the L2 speaker? These problems become obstacles as long as only the regularities of native speaker competences are discovered and if we try to prescribe such regularities for L2 speakers’ competences as the norm. As the research is expanded to the analysis of regularities in interactions in different languages and in cross-cultural interactions, without relying exclusively on English native speakers’ ordinary conversations, these obstacles will be diminished and changed into an important research object. As Firth and Wagner (1997) argue, in the research program of CA for L2 conversations, the native speaker and L2 speaker categories should not be presumed. Rather, those categories should be discovered as the participants themselves make relevant (Firth, 1996; Hosoda, 2000; Wong, 2000). This suggestion will be followed in the present study.

The Study

The analytical focuses of the present study are (1) ways in which an L2 speaker and a native speaker of Japanese co-construct decision-making activities, (2) ways in which modal expressions are used in the construction of those activities, and (3) changes in the ways the L2 speaker participates in activity-construction with the use or nonuse of modal expressions. In order to understand how an L2 learner’s interactional competence with the use of modal expressions emerges in social interaction, it is important to view language as action, rather than as representation of preconceived ideas. Modal expressions are linguistic resources drawn on to construct an activity. Therefore, my analysis will compare similar activities in which modal expressions may or may not be used. When the use of a modal expression is observed, I will focus on how the next-turn response treats the previous utterance, which is how we can identify the meaning of a modal expression as co-constructed by the participants in the social interaction.

The data for the present study, taken from a larger project, is a 10-minute interaction that an L2 speaker of Japanese, Erica, and a native speaker of Japanese, Mariko, engaged in. Erica is an unclassified graduate

student at a university in Hawai'i and has lived in Japan for about 3 years. Mariko is an exchange student who came from a university in Japan to the university Erica attends. The interaction between these strangers was set up in a small room on the university campus. I asked them to write two lists of three hotels they would like to recommend to tourists in Hawai'i, one for tourists from the U.S. mainland, and the other for tourists from Japan. Before they met in the room, each of them separately prepared her tentative lists for both populations on a sheet of paper. Since they had written different items and reasons for the choice, they had to exchange information and decide on which items to choose for each population. Several decision-making activities were observed in the 10-minute interaction for the task, and several modal expressions were used in these activities.

While the social interaction under investigation is not naturally-occurring talk but a set-up task, it will be analyzed as spontaneous talk-in-interaction that resulted in within the constraints of an institutional setting. As Mori's (2002) analysis of a small group activity in a foreign language classroom reveals, an institutionally arranged pedagogical task may not turn out to produce an activity as designed. Although the task of making two hotel lists in this study was set up by the researcher to elicit many decision-making activities in which the participants reach agreement on items by sharing information and convincing the other, each of the participants may be concerned about other matters such as developing good personal relationships and practicing the target language. Therefore, I will analyze the ways in which the two participants engage in the activity of decision-making without assuming that the objective of the task is shared by both participants at all times.

Findings

Japanese modal expressions observed in the data include markers of the speaker's epistemic stance toward the stated proposition such as *kamo* (perhaps, it might be possible) and *~to omou* (I think that ~). A conjugated form of a verb *-yoo*, which corresponds to 'let's ~' in English, is also used as in *~ ni shi-yoo* ('let's decide on ~'). Sentence-final particles *ne* and *yo ne*, and a question form of 'it is not' —*ja nai?* ('isn't it?')— are also considered to be modal expressions that are concerned with the delivery of the proposition in relation to the addressee. *Ne* can index the speaker's epistemic stance in relation to his or her judgment of the addressee's knowledge of the conveyed message. For instance, a resident of Honolulu, A, can use *ne* as in "*Saikin yoku ame ga furimasu ne:*" ('It's been raining these days, hasn't it?') to

another resident of Honolulu, B, because A can assume that B also has the information as deeply embedded in his or her knowledge as A has. However, A cannot use *ne* to his or her friend who just came to visit Hawai'i. To a recent visitor, A would explain the situation by saying "*Ima wa uki na n desu yo*" ('It's rainy season now'), using another sentence-final particle *yo*. *Yo*, which is used to emphasize the illocutionary force of an utterance, has the meaning of 'I'm telling you this information as a person who has more knowledge than you' in this case. When the two particles are combined, the expression *yo ne* becomes similar to 'y'know' in English. Although these forms may not be regarded as modal expressions according to the truth-conditional definition of modality as proposed for European languages (Onoe, 2001), many Japanese linguists include these forms as modal expressions based on the understanding that they index the speaker's attitude toward the conveyed message in relation to the addressee.

The segments shown below are numbered (1) through (4) in the order of appearance in the interaction. The alphabetical mark "a" or "b" after the number of the segment indicates either the first or the second part of the segment. In the transcripts, only the initials of the names of the participants will be used: E for Erica and M for Mariko. The names of hotels are abbreviated in the transcripts. I will follow the transcription conventions provided in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). English glosses are provided underneath the corresponding Japanese words, and rough translation of each line is provided in the third line.

From *ne*-ending assessment to *jaa*-initiated decision-making move

As I will demonstrate through the analysis of segments (1a), (3a), and (4a), a pattern in which an agreement to a positive comment about a hotel led to a decision-making move was found, but the ways in which Erica, the L2 speaker of Japanese, participated in this activity varied.

The segments shown below are numbered (1) through (4) in the order of appearance in the interaction. The alphabetical mark "a" or "b" after the number of the segment indicates either the first or the second part of the segment. In the transcripts, only the initials of the names of the participants will be used: E for Erica and M for Mariko. The names of hotels are abbreviated in the transcripts. I will follow the transcription conventions provided in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). Underlined text indicates an increase in volume and up and down arrows (↑↓) indicate a rise and fall of pitch. Bolded text indicates an example of the point currently under

discussion. English glosses are provided underneath the corresponding Japanese words, and rough translation of each line is provided in the third line.

In segment (1a), Erica's immediate agreement to Mariko's positive assessment of a hotel is followed by Mariko's initiation of decision making.

(1a) (about 3.5 minutes from the beginning) Erica and Mariko are talking about TBH, which was on Erica's list of the hotels to be recommended to Japanese tourists.

- 28 E: keshiki mo (.) un (.) naga[me mo:]
 scenery also yeah view also
 "The scenery and, yeah, the view are also"
- 29 M: [kiree?]
 beautiful?
 "beautiful?"
- 30 E: kiree (0.7)
 beautiful.
 "beautiful."
- 31 M: ii [ne: ,]
 good ne
 "It's good, isn't it,"
- 32 E: [(so) o] (.) un: (0.5)
 right yeah
 "Right. Yeah."
- 33 M: jaa (.) osusume ni shiyoo.
 then recommend-let's
 "Then, let's recommend it."

This segment begins with co-construction of an assessment, which "displays an analysis of the particulars of what is being talked about" (Goodwin, 1986, p. 210). Before Erica finishes her description of the hotel's scenery in line 28, Mariko joins in by saying *kiree* ('beautiful,' line 29), which is repeated by Erica in line 30. After the co-construction of a positive assessment, Mariko gives another positive assessment *ii* ('good') with a modal expression *ne* ('isn't it?') in line 31. Although Erica produces an agreement token *soo* ('right') immediately after the word *ii*, she adds *un* ('yeah') in response to *ne*. This additional response indicates that *ne* functions here to invite an agreement in a similar way as English tag questions such as "It is good, isn't it?" does. After Erica's immediate agreement to Mariko's positive assessment of the hotel, Mariko begins a turn in line 33 with *jaa* ('then, in that case'), and thus initiates a decision-making move.

A similar sequence of a positive assessment, an agreement to it, and a decision-making move was also observed in segment (4a).

- (4a) (about 7 minutes from the beginning) After deciding on other hotels, Erica and Mariko revisited IRH and TBH, which they had discussed individually earlier in the interaction. Both IRH and TBH were on Erica's list of the hotels to be recommended to American tourists. Erica begins explaining IRH by pointing at her note.

- 187 E: kore (0.2) wa: (.) nanka (.) nanka: (0.6)
 this one TOP like like
 "This one is like, like,"
- 188 satsuei basho de: (0.2) nanka omoshiroi
 filming place COP-and somewhat interesting
 "a film location and, it's somewhat interesting"
- 189 ka na:: tte omot-[(0.4)-ta kedo::]=
 Q na QT s thou(ght) PAST but
 "I wondered, but,"
- 190 M: [hun hun hun hun]=
 hmm hmm hmm hmm
 "Hmm, hmm."
- 191 E: =(pointing to TBH) kore wa: (1.0)
 this one TOP
 "as for this one,"
- 192 jooba: toka (.) gorufu: (.) toka (0.4)
 horse riding and etc. golf and etc.
 "horseback riding and golf and"
- 193 iroiro ga atte. (1.7) moo hoteru: (.) ni
 various SUB exist-and already hotel at
 "there are many kinds and, at the hotel"
- 194 M: moo hoteru: (.) ni iru dake de
 already hotel at stay only by
 "Just by staying at the hotel,"
- 195 tanoshimeru [tte (kan-
 enjoy-can QT (feel like so-)
 "you can enjoy it, is it like that?"
- 196 E: [un::::: (0.4)
 yeah
 "Yeah."
- 197 soo soo (0.3)
 right right
 "That's right."
- 198 M: ii **n ja nai?** ko- (0.4)
 good NOM it isn't thi-
 "Isn't it good? Thi-"
- 199 kore ii **to omou na=**
 this one good QT think na
 "this is good, I guess."
- 200 E: =un (0.5)
 yeah
 "Yeah."

- 201 M: **ja=**
then
"Then,"
- 202 E: =**so-** (0.2) **sore** **ni shiyoo**
tha- that one on decide-let's
"Tha- let's decide on that one."

After Erica's description of the activities that TBH can offer, Mariko summarizes the positive feature of the hotel in lines 194 and 195. After Erica approves the summative comment by saying *so so* ('that's right') in line 197, Mariko gives a positive assessment of the hotel *ii* ('good') with a modal expression *ja nai?* ('isn't it?') in line 198. This assessment is not immediately followed by Erica's agreement as we have seen in segment (1a), but this could be due to Mariko's latching continuation of her turn with *ko-* ('this'). Erica's agreement to Mariko's assessment comes immediately after the second time Mariko used *ii* ('good'), this time with a mitigated modal expressions *to omou na* ('I think'). After establishing a common ground with Erica about this hotel, Mariko in line 201 begins a decision-making move with *jaa* ('then, in that case'). However, this time, it was Erica who completes this decision-making move in line 202.

The following segment also shows an instance where Mariko begins a decision-making move with *jaa* after she and Erica has shared their positive comments about a hotel with each other.

- (3a) (about 5.5 minutes from the beginning) Erica and Mariko are talking about KMH, which was on Erica's list of hotels to be recommended to Japanese tourists.

- 119 E: **nanka** (0.3) **iruka** **toka** (0.3) **pengin** **ga=**
like dolphins and etc. penguins SUB
"Like, dolphins and penguins are"
- 120 M: =.hh:aa[:(.)
ah
"Ah,"
- 121 E: [ite.
 exist and
"they are there and"
- 122 M: **shitteru:=**
know
"I know that!"
- 123 E: =aa so? .hh [u:::n:]
oh right mm¹
"Oh, really? Mm."
- 124 M: [itta it]ta. (0.3) **iruka** **mita:.**
 went went dolphins saw
"I went there! I saw dolphins."

- 125 (0.5)
126 E: aa aa[::]
oh oh
"Oh."
- 127 M: [mita] mita.=
saw saw
"I saw it."
- 128 E: =[u::n]
mm
"Mm."
- 129 M: =[de ko]ko: (.) nihonjin ookatta yo.
and here Japanese many-PAST yo
"And, I tell you, I saw many Japanese there."
- 130 E: a soo?
oh right
"Oh, is that right?"
- 131 M: un:.
yeah
"Yeah."
- ((E and M exchange their ideas that rich people and celebrities stay there))
- 149 M: =n- tabun ne:. asoko ne:. nihon- (.)
probably ne there ne Japan-
"Probably, there, Japan-"
- 150 nihonjin ookatta. itta [yo, (0.7)]
Japanese many-PAST went yo
"I saw many Japanese people. I went there"
- 151 E: [aa:::::]
oh
"Oh."
- 152 M: tada iruka mini(0.3)
just dolphins to see
"just to see the dolphins."
- 153 E: aa aa aa aa aa soo soo soo=
oh oh oh oh oh right right right
"Oh, that's right."
- 154 M: =un
yeah
"Yeah."
- 155 E: haireru yo ne,
enter-can yo ne
"We can enter there, y'know?"
- 156 M: soo soo [soo.] haireta.=
right right right enter-can-PAST
"That's right. I could enter there."
- 157 E: [un]
yeah
"Yeah."
- 158 M: =jaa (.) kimari da ne,
then decided COP ne
"Then, it's decided, isn't it?"

While Mariko had to judge hotels based on Erica's descriptions in many cases as seen in segments (1a) and (4a), she now has some more information to contribute to the discussion of KMH based on her first-hand experience of visiting there. When Erica mentions dolphins and penguins in line 119, Mariko is reminded of the hotel and begins talking about seeing dolphins and seeing many Japanese visitors. Although this information could be taken up as an important reason for recommending the hotel to Japanese tourists, it is about Mariko's own experience, which Erica is simply able to respond to as new information —*aa* ('oh, ah') and *soo?* ('Is that right?')— in lines 126 and 130. Erica's such responses show that she treats this sequence as one about Mariko's experience and not about recommending the hotel or not. However, when Mariko repeats the same information with an additional emphasis on having been there only to see the dolphins in lines 149, 150 and 152, Erica utilizes this information as generalizable one—that any ordinary people, who do not have to be the rich or celebrities, can enter (*haire-ru*) this expensive hotel without staying there (line 155). To this comment about the hotel, Erica adds *yo ne*, which indicates her presupposition that she shares the understanding with Mariko.² Erica's *yo ne* is responded immediately by Mariko with a repeated use of an agreement token *soo* ('right'), which is overlapped with Erica's response *un* ('yeah'). Mariko continues with the use of the same lexical item *haire-ru* ('to be able to enter') in the past tense *-ta*, which legitimizes Erica's generalization with her first-hand evidence.³ After these several turns of agreements, Mariko goes on to conclude that they have reached a decision. The turn is initiated with *jaa* ('then, in that case').

To summarize the sequential pattern we have observed in segments (1a), (3a), and (4a), when one of the participants describes a good feature of the hotel under discussion, the other person may evaluate the information with an assessment or give a generalizable comment with the use of *ne*, *ja nai?* or *yo ne*. As Erica's additional utterance of *un* ('yeah') after responding to *ii* ('good') with *soo* ('right') in segment (1a) suggests, a comment ending with *ne*, *ja nai?* or *yo ne* invites an agreement token. When an immediate agreement does not follow a *ne*-ending comment, the speaker may pursue an agreement token by repeating *ne* (Tanaka, 2000, p. 1169) or, by using another modal expression that leaves the hearer with more choices of responses, as with the case of *ja nai?* and *to omou na* ('I think'), seen in segment (4a). Although the recipient has a choice of responding with a clear agreement token or without it, when she gives an agreement token to those favorable comments ending with *ne*, *ja nai?* or *yo ne*, it had a significant effect on the subsequent turns in the decision-making activities Mariko and

Erica have constructed. That is, the agreement, which establishes a common ground by “displaying congruent understanding” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, p. 28), was immediately followed by a decision-making move initiated with *jaa* (‘then, in that case’).

The roles taken by the two participants in this sequencing pattern are worth discussing here. It was always Mariko who initiated the decision-making move with *jaa*, and who gave comments with *ne*, except for segment (3a). Does this indicate that Erica is always a passive participant who only follows Mariko’s initiative? Although this could be the case with segment (1a), we should not conflate interactional roles with one’s (in)ability to become an active participant. Since Mariko, who had been in Hawai’i only for 3 months in a semester-long exchange program, claims her ignorance about hotels in Hawai’i,⁴ Erica’s role was constructed as the information provider most of the time and Mariko’s role was constructed as the evaluator of the information. These co-constructed interactional roles were not static, however. When Mariko provided her first-hand evidence, claiming her knowledge of the hotel by saying *aa shitteru* (‘Oh, I know that!’ line 122) in segment (3a), Erica’s interactional role was shifted to be a commentator. Although Erica first responded to Mariko merely with receipt tokens of new information, she later found a way to relate Mariko’s personal information to the generalized knowledge and gave a comment using *yo ne*. This instance gave Erica a chance to demonstrate her ability to act as a commentator as well as information provider. Erica was also able to take part in the production of a decision-making move in segment (4a), after Mariko’s two uses of *jaa*-initiated decision-making move in 1a and 3a. Using the same structure that Mariko used in segment (1a) —*jaa ~ni shiyoo* (‘then, let’s decide on ~’)—, Erica completed the decision-making move that Mariko initiated with *jaa*. This suggests that Erica, going through the sequence of establishing mutual agreement and hearing *jaa*, did see the prospective trajectory of the activity sequence through repeated participation in similar sequences.

The ways in which Erica and Mariko co-constructed their interactional roles in the segments analyzed above indicate not only their interactional competence but also their abilities to use a variety of modal expressions as linguistic resources for the interaction. In segment (3a), Erica used *ne* in combination with *yo* in giving a positive comment about the hotel whose favorable aspects have been talked about, and elicited Mariko’s agreement. In segment (4a), Erica used *~ni shiyoo* (‘let’s decide on~’) to complete a decision-making move that Mariko initiated with *jaa*. What is striking about her use of these modal expressions is that their use resembles the pattern

we were able to observe among segments (1a), (3a), and (4a). We cannot conclude that Erica acquired the use of these expressions during this interaction, but the analysis has shown the change in the way she participates in this part of decision-making activity through her responses to Mariko's use of modal expressions and through her own use of modal expressions. While her ability to use these modal expressions in other activities and her longitudinal development in interactional competence and the use of various linguistic resources should be investigated in future research, the analysis presented in this section has shown microgenesis of competence in decision-making activities.

The consequentiality of agreement tokens

As the previous section has demonstrated, Erica's way of participating in decision-making activities during the 10-minute interaction with Mariko indicated some changes both in terms of interactional roles she takes and in the use of modal expressions. The analyses of segments (1a), (3a), and (4a) also highlighted the roles of *ne*-ending assessments and *jaa*-initiated decision-making moves in moving the interaction more toward the completion of decision-making. Although the ability to produce these turns is an important aspect of interactional competence, competence in responding to them is also a crucial part of interactional competence. In this section, I will examine the significance of responses to those turns and demonstrate Erica's competence as indicated by her responses.

First, a decision-making move is merely a bid but does not lead to an actual decision-making unless the other person approves it. Among the three examples discussed, while *jaa*-initiated decision-making moves in segments (3a) and (4a) lead to actual decisions as will be seen in segments (3b) and (4b), it is not the case with segment (1a). I will analyze the subsequent turns that followed these segments, in order to show the consequentiality of a response to a *jaa*-initiated decision-making move. Segment (4b) shows the continuation of segment (4a).

(4b) (continues from segment [4a]) Erica and Mariko are deciding on TBH as a hotel to be recommended to American tourists, after deciding to include a luxurious hotel, HHV. Much earlier in the conversation, they have also talked about including YMCA especially for young people who may want to keep the cost low (*yasu-i*).

200 M: **ja=**
 then
 "Then,"

- 201 E: =so- (0.2) sore ni sh[**iyoo**]
 tha- that one on decide-let's
 "Tha- let's decide on that one."
- 202 M: [shiy]oo.
 do-let's
 "Let's."
- 203 e: jaa (.)ikko o YMCA yasui no (0.4)
 um then one item ACC YMCA cheap NOM
 "Uh, then, YMCA, the cheap one"
- 204 [o susumeyo kka.
 ACC recommend-let's Q
 "shall we recommend it?"
- 205 E: [un
 yeah
 "Yeah."

The ending part of the *jaa*-initiated decision-making move, initiated by Mariko in line 200 and completed by Erica in line 201, was overlapped with Mariko's utterance *shiyoo* ('let's') in line 202. This overlapping *shiyoo* aligns structurally with Erica's utterance, and thus accepts the proposal of decision-making that Erica succeeded over Mariko. Another decision-making move about YMCA that Mariko made in lines 203 and 204 and Erica's approval of it in line 205 reflexively indicates that *shiyoo* in line 202 made the completion of a decision on TBH.

As this segment and the next one demonstrate, an acceptance of a decision-making move seems to be necessary to put a decision-making activity to completion. Segment (3b) is the continuation of segment (3a).

(3b) (continues from segment [3a]) Erica and Mariko are deciding on KMH as a hotel to recommend to Japanese tourists. Before the discussion of this hotel, they have already agreed on two other accommodation options, home stay and AMH.

- 158 M: jaa (.) ki[ma]ri da ne,
 then decided COP ne
 "Then, it's decided, isn't it?"
- 159 E: [un]
 yeah
 "Yeah."
- 160 M: kore ichiban de: (0.4) ((circles "homestay"))
 this number one COP-and
 "This is Number 1, and"
- 161 E: aa yokatta:.
 ah good-PAST
 "Ah, I feel relieved."

As Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) suggest based on the analysis of a display of agreement to an assessment, "recipients are in fact engaged in

40 E: nihonjin ni wa (.) u:n doo ka na:
Japanese for TOP mm how Q na
"For Japanese people, mm, I wonder if it's okay,"
41 to o(h)mou(h) ke(h)d(h)o:. .hhh (0.7)
QT think but
"I think but"

In this segment, Mariko's *jaa*-initiated decision-making move is not overlapped with an agreement token or immediately followed by a repetition or other kinds of agreement. This absence is oriented by Mariko, who in line 34 expresses her uncertainty after a 0.7 second pause, and also by Erica, who from line 37 provides an account that the hotel might be suitable only for Americans. These responses suggest that the 0.7 pause after the decision-making move was a relevant one which suggests Erica's nonagreement to making a decision on TBH at this moment.

To reiterate, while a display of agreement to a *jaa*-initiated decision-making move led to the final decision-making in segment (3b) and 4b, Erica's non-display of a verbal agreement in segment (1b) was followed by further discussion of the hotel, not leading up to an actual decision. Then, if Erica did not want to decide on this hotel, why did she agree to Mariko's *ne*-ending assessment of the hotel in the first place, as we have observed in line 32, segment (1a)? To understand the issue, we have to think of this question from a different angle. We cannot simply make an assumption that Erica did not want to decide on this hotel, since her nonagreement to a decision-making move was locally occasioned only in line 33. I would like to argue that Erica said *un* ('yeah') in response to Mariko's *ii ne* ('It's good, isn't it?') in line 32 simply because she agreed to the assessment of the hotel, without anticipating an upcoming decision-making move as the consequence of her agreement. While Erica and Mariko have agreed on the general features of the hotel, Erica became uneasy about making a decision before discussing its suitability for each of the two populations, tourists from the U.S. mainland and those from Japan, once she heard the decision-making move in line 33.

The instance we have seen in segments (1a) and (1b) can suggest, probably to Erica as well as to the analyst, how significant the consequence of an agreement to a *ne*-ending assessment is in this particular interaction between Erica and Mariko. Shortly after segment (1b), Erica had another chance to agree to Mariko's *ne*-ending assessment, but she did not display agreement, as shown in segment (2a).

(2a) (about 4.5 minutes from the beginning) Erica and Mariko are talking about IRH, which is one of the hotels Erica put on her list for American tourists.

Erica has explained that the hotel is probably popular because it was a film location for a movie.

- 74 E: joshi saafaa no eiga (0.3)
female surfer GEN movie
"It's a movie about female surfers."
- 75 M: huu:[::]:n ((nodding four times)) (1.3)
ah
"Ah."
- 76 E: [↑un]((nodding four times))
yeah
"Yeah."
- 77 M: soo na n da[a:. e sor]e ii ne:,
right COP NOM COP um that one good ne
"I see. That one is good, isn't it?"
- 78 E: [un::] ((nods once))
yeah
"Yeah."
- 79 E: ((nods))
- 80 M: so[re wa] ii kamo. (0.3)
that one TOP good perhaps
"It is perhaps good."
- 81 E: [(n::)] ((nodding))
um
"Um."
- 82 n so- ↑kore mo: (.)↓nanka rizooto minai
um tha- this one also like resort it seems
"Um. That, this one is also like a resort"

Mariko acknowledges Erica's explanation of the movie in line 75, which is overlapped by Erica's *un* ('yeah,' line 76). After a 1.3 second pause, Mariko continues her indication of the receipt of the information by saying *soo na n da* ('I see') in line 77. Erica's response is again *un*, which affirms the information. Up to this point, both participants have focused on some features of the hotel under discussion but have not provided any explicit assessment. It was after the information is confirmed in line 77 that Mariko gives an assessment of the hotel ending with *ne* (line 77). However, in line 79, Erica does not provide any verbal agreement token in response to the *ne*-ending assessment although she slightly nods a few times. As we have seen in segments (1a), (3a), and (4a), a display of agreement to a *ne*-ending assessment is likely to lead to a decision-making move in the interaction between Mariko and Erica. Meanwhile, in this segment, where such agreement is absent, the participants do not initiate a decision-making move. Instead, in line 80, Mariko repeated the assessment "*sore wa ii*" ('It's good'), adding a modal expression *kamo* ('perhaps'), which mitigates the force of the assertion. Erica also orients to the absence in line 82 by initiating a

discussion of the hotel in comparison with another resort hotel, TBH, which has been discussed before this segment.

While Erica had to face the need to go against Mariko who tried to decide on TBH in line 33 in segment (1a) and 1b, she successfully prevented an upcoming decision-making move later in segment (2a) by avoiding a display of clear agreement to Mariko's *ne*-ending assessment. As these instances demonstrate, a response to a *ne*-ending assessment is very consequential for the subsequent trajectory of the decision-making activity. Mariko and Erica are creating a sequential structure which they use to understand and interpret what is going on in the interaction. When the speaker describes a hotel as favorable, the recipient may give a positive assessment using *ne* or *ja nai?* When the first speaker agrees to it, she can give a verbal agreement token. However, she may not have to give such a response if she does not want to give a decisive assessment of the hotel in terms of choosing a hotel to recommend to two different groups of tourists. An assessment may appear to be simply about the description of the hotel, but when the two reaches a mutual agreement on the evaluation of the hotel, it could become a good ground for making a decision on it. It is possible that Erica came to realize such consequentiality of a clear agreement to a *ne*-ending assessment in this decision-making activity through the participation in segments (1a) and (1b), and subsequently used the sequential structure to avoid inviting a decision-making move in segment (2a).

The above analyses of segments (1b), (3b), and (4b) have also highlighted the consequentiality of a response to a decision-making move. Although a decision-making activity appears to be completed with a decision-making move —*jaa*, *~ni shiyoo* ('Then, let's decide on~') or *jaa*, *~ni kimari* ('Then, it's decided')—, a participant can legitimately move on to a discussion of another hotel only when such a move is responded with an agreement token (segments (3b) and (4b)). This sequential pattern applies also to another decision-making activity that occurred before segments 1a and 1b, whose transcript cannot be presented here due to the limitation of space. In this activity, after Erica accepted Mariko's decision-making move, Mariko started discussing another hotel. However, in contrast to segments (3b) and 4b, Erica did not align with Mariko who moved onto the next decision-making activity, and instead cut in the middle of Mariko's turn to bring out an issue that had to be solved before completing the present activity. After this instance which highlighted the relevance of an agreement to a decision-making move for the completion of a decision-making activity, Erica seems to be more cautious of expressing clear agreement: In segment (1b), Erica did not show any explicit response to Mariko's decision-making move and later

expressed her concern that had to be addressed before making a decision. This example also shows that Erica became more and more competent in anticipating the trajectory of a decision-making activity by reading the consequentiality of a response.

Conclusion

In order to investigate microgenesis of interactional competence with the use of modal expressions, I have analyzed the ways in which Erica, an L2 speaker of Japanese, participated in decision-making activities and modal expressions she used as linguistic resources for engaging in the activities, and examined how they change during a 10-minute interaction. Using CA as an analytical approach, I tried to examine the functions of modal expressions used by Erica and Mariko in terms of what they do rather than what they represent. As we found through the analysis, modal expressions such as *ne*, *ja nai?*, and *-yoo* are important linguistic resources for making decisions, not only in terms of how an agreement to the utterance using them leads to the next step of a decision-making activity, but also in terms of how a non-display of agreement becomes relevant in the activity. The analysis suggested that Erica, through repeated participation in decision-making activities, came to realize the consequentiality of clear agreement to *ne*-ending assessments and *jaa*-initiated moves, and became more competent in engaging in the interaction with Mariko by anticipating the trajectory of the decision-making sequence. Erica also demonstrated her interactional competence with the use of modal expressions, *ne* and *-yoo*, in turns that help the interaction move toward the completion of a decision-making activity. Based on the observation that her use of these modal expressions resembles Mariko's earlier use of them in similar turns in the decision-making sequence, participation in similar turn sequences is considered to have afforded Erica a glimpse of interactional grammar that is relevant in this particular activity, and enabled her to use it later in the similar activities.

The analysis of a 10-minute interaction I have presented in this paper suggests that CA is useful for understanding the interactional "grammar" of modal expressions in a particular social interaction and microgenesis of interactional competence with the use of such grammar. Such understanding is a necessary step for the investigation of the development of L2 speakers' pragmatic competence. However, CA should be applied carefully when the issue of learning is addressed. First, when some phenomenon, such as the use of a modal expression, is not observed in a particular interaction, it should not be used as the evidence of the L2 speaker's incompetence. (It is

because their interactional roles constrain their language use while participants' use of language also contributes to the co-construction of interactional roles at the same time.) Therefore, analysts should take into consideration the interplay of interactional roles and language use, especially when we analyze an L2 speaker's participation in different activities. Moreover, focus on the production of certain linguistic forms is not enough for understanding one's competence. We can understand much about a learner's competence by the way she or he responds to another person's turn in which modal expressions are used.

A person's competence is locally constructed. Therefore, it is very difficult to compare one's competence demonstrated on different occasions. Nevertheless, we, who are interested in L2 pragmatic development, need to somehow investigate emergent competence and longitudinal changes through the analysis of how a learner participates in activities. I hope this paper has succeeded in suggesting one approach that enables us to tackle this challenging task.

Notes

- 1 Based on the prosodic feature of *u:::n*: —lengthened and flat—, “mm” was chosen for the English gloss. This is contrasted with a short and articulated *un* ([yeah]), which is an informal version of *hai* ('yes').
- 2 The modal expression *yo* intensifies the force of a speech act, in this case the assertiveness of the proposition *haire-ru* ('can enter').
- 3 Although the subject of *haire-ta* ('could enter') is not explicitly stated here, it is clear that Mariko is talking about her own experience. If she were referring to other people's past experiences, she would use some type of an evidential marker.
- 4 She listed “homestay” and “HWV” for both Japanese and American tourist groups. At the very beginning of the 10-minute conversation, Mariko explicitly stated her limited knowledge about hotels in Hawai'i by saying “*Watashi futatsu shika* ('I could list only two')” and “*Watashi wakaranai kara ichiban me ni hoomu stee o irete* ('Because I don't know, I put homestay first, and').”

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