

Task type completion in lower level EFL classes: A conversation analytic study

Language Teaching Research

1–26

© The Author(s) 2021

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/1362168820987957

journals.sagepub.com/home/ltr**Yujong Park** 

Sungkyunkwan University, Korea

Abstract

This study assesses a range of task-based interaction (i.e. structured vs. unstructured tasks) between lower-English-proficiency middle school English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in a task-based learning (TBL) class employing conversation analytic methodology. From the video data, which allowed for an emic analysis of the students' vocal and non-vocal actions when engaging in the different task types, it was found that in both the structured and unstructured task interactions, because the students were mainly focused on task completion, there were frequent minimal turns and sequences. A deviant case analysis revealed that the participants prioritized task completion as the focus of activities even when engaging in social talk by evoking various types of roles (e.g. students, friends). The study proposes several pedagogical suggestions for employing tasks in lower-level EFL contexts.

Keywords

conversation analysis, Korean EFL classrooms, structured tasks, task-based interaction

1 Introduction

Studies on L2 classroom discourse have widely examined the learning that occurs in group or pair interactions (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Eksildsen & Wagner, 2015; Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Hellerman et al., 2019; Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Markee, 2015; Mori, 2004; Ohta, 2001; van Lier, 1988). In many of these studies, tasks are viewed as important foundations for classroom teaching, social interaction, and language development (Ohta, 2001; Ro, 2018; Seedhouse, 2004). Few studies, however, have investigated real-time task interactions in the English as a foreign language (EFL) setting,

Corresponding author:

Yujong Park, English Language & Literature Department, Sungkyunkwan University, 53 Myeongnyun-dong 3-ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-745, Korea

Email: yujpark@gmail.com

especially in the secondary school context and among students with low levels of English proficiency, despite the benefits that the tasks may serve for this group of students (Chen & Wright, 2017). Investigating the task interactions of students with low levels of English proficiency may improve our understanding of the social processes involved in building tasks and the learning opportunities that can be created or afforded by different task types for this group of learners. To bridge the research gap, this study examined the task-based interactions of students of EFL with low levels of English proficiency in South Korea to explore the reality and plausibility of task-based learning (TBL) in this setting.

Previous research found that structured tasks, such as information gap activities, led to increased minimization and indexicality and that discussion tasks presented more divergent, unpredictable outcomes (Foster & Skehan, 2009; Jenks, 2009; Seedhouse, 2004). To examine the veracity of these earlier findings, the current study employed two task types, namely, structured tasks (e.g. information gap and jigsaw activities) and less structured tasks (e.g. decision-making tasks). Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate the orientation of the participants and analyse their interactions in line with the recent trends in task-based language teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes detailed classroom studies on ways in which students perform classroom lessons (Long, 2015; Newton & Bui, 2017).

Instead of measuring the effectiveness or the value of particular tasks by the numbers in which the specific learning features occur, recent TBL research defined learning in relation to the interactional features during task performance (Balaman, 2019; Hellerman, 2008; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2005). In other words, instead of examining task effectiveness using pre- and/or post-tests (Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 2009), these line of research explored how participants employed language to (successfully) complete tasks (Gardner, 2015; Mori, 2004) that frequently employ the notion of language-related episodes (LREs; Dao et al., 2017; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). Seedhouse (2004) re-conceptualized the meaning of language tasks by revealing the mismatches that can occur between the intended and actual pedagogies for ‘task-as-workplan’ and ‘task-in-process’ (Breen, 1987, 1989; Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Park, 2018; Seedhouse, 2005). The intended pedagogical approach may be in the form of communication tasks that build opportunities for communication with a focus on meaning (Long et al., 1998). However, task-in-process may not support such goals. Research on second language acquisition (SLA) that analysed concepts or constructs specified as task-as-workplan found from the interactional data that the task-in-process to be something different (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Jenks, 2009; Park, 2018). Frequently, these mismatches are not visible as the majority of studies have not given examples of raw interactional data. A means for avoiding mismatches between workplans and actual processes is working inductively from the data by taking ‘an emic perspective’ when describing the interactions which are produced in the language classroom and the learners’ focus during such interactions (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 251).

The research on TBLT has explored the relationships between task design and task performance and how tasks can maximize learning capacities (e.g. attention and memory) through interactions (Ellis, 2000; Foster & Skehan, 2009; Skehan, 2003). Task completion has been investigated generally using SLA theories and hypotheses (Gass, Mackey & Ross-Feldman, 2005), with the underlying assumption being that task design

is closely related to task completion and that task completion can be manipulated by modifying the task design. Structured tasks, such as information gap activities, have been quantitatively found to encompass more meaning negotiation episodes than other task types (Pica et al., 2006) and associated with more accurate, more fluent language performances (Skehan & Foster, 1999; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). Thus, the general recommendation is that tasks should be designed in a more structured manner that can promote momentary communication breakdowns and/or encourage language learners to notice problematic utterances. In a recent work on TBL, Dao et al. (2017) investigated how to promote learner attention to form by employing communicative tasks that are inherently repetitive and formulaic. However, research that elucidates the activities-in-process during structured tasks and how such types of tasks may (or may not) lead to greater learning potential than unstructured tasks is scarce. Even less studies have investigated the Korean EFL secondary school setting with low-proficiency students due to difficulties associated with the administration of TBL classes (Deng & Carless, 2009). Therefore, the present study is motivated by interest in the manner that structured and unstructured tasks is implemented and performed in real-time classroom contexts in Korea and the learning that occurs from various task designs.

The study employed conversation analysis (CA) as the primary methodology for analysing talk sequences. In addition to the examination of ordinary talk, CA has been used to analyse institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992), such as classroom interactions (Gardner, 2015; Hall & Looney, 2019; Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Markee, 2015; Mori, 2004; Park, 2013; Ro, 2018; Seedhouse, 1999, 2011). Heritage (2004) referred to the second form of CA as ‘institutional CA’, which uses CA to understand talk in the legal, education, mass media, medical, and other social institutional contexts. As the findings from studies on institutional CA tend to be less permanent, historically contingent, and sensitive to social change (Heritage, 2004, p. 105), they tend to be subject to social goals, constraints, and inferences particular to the specific contexts. Research on CA in the classroom has been classified as institutional CA and, therefore, could be understood as having particular social goals, constraints and inferences relative to the classroom context.

CA has been used in L2 contexts to understand the occurrence of TBL through interaction, and how language is being used and learned in real-time classes (Balaman & Sert, 2017; Hellerman, 2006, 2008; Jenks, 2009; Park, 2018; Pekarek Doehler, 2010, 2013; Seedhouse, 2004; Wong & Waring, 2020). The CA-based view of ‘learning’ is defined as the ‘process of performing tasks’ that are embodied in the sequential organization of talk through ‘word searches, repair, and acknowledgments’ (Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler, 2010, p. 27) with even the adaptation to local contingencies that emerge during the task-based interaction being viewed as learning (Hellerman, 2008). The study defers from exploring how learning occurs through task-based interaction. However, the findings may contribute to the methodological contribution of institutional CA toward the existing literature on language pedagogy (Fagan, 2015; Hall & Looney, 2019; Kasper & Kim, 2015; Kasper & Wagner, 2014; Pekarek Doehler, 2013) and TBL (Balaman, 2019; Hellerman et al., 2019; Jenks, 2009) by examining how language is used in real-time EFL classrooms with students with low levels of proficiency in English.

The research question for this study can be summarized as following: How do EFL learners with low levels of English proficiency orient toward structured and unstructured task activities during task-in-process?

II Approaches to TBL

In its first conception, TBL has been approached through a cognitive framework following SLA theories that viewed learning as an internal, intra-mental, cognitive process (Bygate et al., 2009). TBL research has tended to examine the relationships between different types of tasks and their learning potentials or learning outcomes (Skehan, 2003). A central element of L2 language pedagogy has been the development of tasks that facilitate purposeful language use to encourage language learning (Chen & Kent, 2020; Samuda, 2015; Skehan, 2003).

A contrastive view proposed by recent line of TBL research represents tasks as tools that can assist students to use language for social practices, which frequently occur in real-world contexts (Jenks, 2009; Samuda, 2015; Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009; Shintani, 2016). A number of studies that employed the CA framework found a significant difference between task-as-workplan and task-in-process, which raised validity questions for prior conclusions based on task-based research (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2005; Park, 2018; Seedhouse, 2005, 2011; Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009).

The definitions for ‘task’ as a construct are as wide-ranging as the research on TBL, which influenced how TBL was conceptualized in research as well in the classroom. For example, Moore (2018) elucidated the specific characteristics of a task as ‘task-as-workplan’, ‘primary focus on meaning’, ‘language use that reflects that used in the real world’, ‘promoting language development’, and ‘stated communicative outcome’. Ellis (2003) reviewed early research on TBLT and proposed the following definition: ‘A task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed’ (p. 16). Furthermore, Ellis (2009) proposed four features of a language learning task, namely, a focus on meaning, the presence of a gap (information or opinion), requirement that learners draw on their own resources to complete the activity, and specification of a non-linguistic outcome. The current study used the definition coined by Seedhouse and Almutairi (2009, p. 312) for task when analysing the interactional data; that is, an ‘L2 interaction in which participants display an orientation to the completion of a task.’ The present study continues to bear in mind the relevance of other definitions as well.

The contemporary methodology of CA involves processes in which the specific details of naturally situated interaction are prioritized, whereas any idealizations about the function of interaction are forestalled (Heritage, 1984, 2004). By employing CA, Mori (2004) demonstrated that student orientation toward a speech exchange system during engagement in a series of classroom tasks differed from the instructor’s intentions. Moreover, Seedhouse (2005) found that learners were frequently intensely focused on completing an assigned task, such that linguistic forms were viewed to be of minor importance. These microanalyses of interactions on L2 learners extended the understanding of the manner in which constructs, such as learning and competence, is realized

within task interactions. However, very few studies were conducted on the experiences regarding TBL of middle school EFL students with low levels of English proficiency. The following reasons are assumed: (1) TBL is not viewed as beneficial for test-taking skills (this aspect is important for students in the secondary school context) and (2) collecting task-based interaction from students with low levels of English proficiency requires additional teacher effort and guidance. For example, Chen and Wright (2017) reported a marked variability between beliefs and practices in using tasks with beginner-level learners in their study on the belief of EFL teachers in the Chinese secondary school context. In such a context, tasks were used as a communicative ‘add-on’ to the standard form-focused teaching.

Research that has examined novice/low-level EFL learners have focused on the learner competencies and practices being demonstrated in the classroom interactions, which occur mostly between the teacher and the students (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2013; Carroll, 2000, 2005; Greer, 2016). Several studies examined learners with low L2 proficiency, engaged in different types of tasks (Leeser, 2004; Shintani, 2016; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). For example, Watanabe and Swain (2007) found that Japanese learners of English reported more learning when working with partners with low than high levels of English proficiency. However, the authors neither examined the interactions between low-proficiency speakers nor included an emic analysis of the data set.

Therefore, the current study complements prior research by focusing on task interactions among EFL students with low levels of English proficiency, which may contribute to the development of L2 instructional practices. Classroom demographics were relatively homogenous in terms of reasons for learning English (i.e. to pass the college entrance exam) and topical interests (i.e. movie stars, idols and teenage culture). In addition, all students shared a common L1 (Korean), which was employed when they encountered a problem in English. The study, therefore, used an emic, procedural approach to analyse interaction by employing CA as the main methodology to focus on the interactional practices employed by EFL students with low English proficiency during engagement in varying task types.

III Method

I Participants

The main data sources were video-recordings of after-school EFL classes in three middle schools (i.e. K, L and M) in Korea. Obtaining approval from the respective schools was very difficult because implementing TBLT entailed that the instructor had to deduct time from regular English lessons to engage the students in the tasks as central units of instruction (Ellis, 2000, 2009). In the Korean context, task-based teaching is viewed as non-beneficial for the preparation for exams that test explicit knowledge of English. This view led to the uncertainty on the part of the schools and students alike in implementing and taking part in a TBL classroom. Challenges in implementing TBLT were reported in other EFL contexts as well (Butler, 2011; Chen & Wright, 2017; Lai, 2015), which includes cultural national ethos and national examination systems. As a result, the instructor was able to record only one or two schools only in the form of an extra-curricular class that extended

Table 1. Participating schools and number of students.

| Middle school | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | |
|---------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| | Students | Lessons conducted | Students | Lessons conducted | Students | Lessons conducted |
| K | 8 | 5 | | | | |
| L | | | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| M | | | | | 10 | 3 |

to three years (Table 1). After obtaining informed consent from the school administration and participants following the ethical procedures of the researcher’s university, a total of 15 lessons were videotaped, in which 28 students participated. Three of the eight students from K middle school were male. As L and M were middle schools for girls, all participants were female. All participants spoke Korean as the first language and joined the classes on a voluntary basis, which is the reason for the very small class sizes. The smallest class had only five students, whereas the largest class had ten students (Table 1). At each school, the teacher matched the aims and tasks used (the same tasks were used across the classrooms) to ensure validity in comparing the data set.

All learners had been classified as acquiring low levels of English-speaking proficiency levels by English teachers at the respective schools based on English language performances. Thus, these students were encouraged to participate in the classes by their homeroom teachers. Test scores in English, their English learning history, and available English performance data were used to determine proficiency level (all students occupying the lower 0–50 percentiles). None of the students had lived abroad (in an English-speaking country) and had only been exposed to the compulsory English education provided by the Korean public school system. The lessons were taught by a non-native English teacher-in-training primarily through the TBLT method. She had earned a master’s degree in English education and wrote a thesis using TBL as the main topic. She had taken graduate seminars on TBLT and was familiar with designing and using tasks in classes. She has worked in different middle schools as a fixed-term English teacher for after-school classes and at a private English institute for secondary school students. In contrast to the more traditional English classrooms in Korea, which focus on developing students’ reading and listening comprehension skills, the primary aim of after-school lessons is to develop the speaking proficiency of students. The lessons followed a relatively strong TBLT format (Littlewood, 2011) with the task serving as the main means of language learning to build communicative competence rather than as a class-based adjunct to a more structure-based syllabus (Chen & Wright, 2017). All classroom activities were built around one or two tasks that reflected the needs of the students (Long, 2015). The tasks were developed by conducting needs analysis to align with student needs at the time of instruction (e.g. asking for direction in English). The tasks were goal-oriented and featured a genuinely communicative feature. The students had experienced a weak task-supported approach in regular English classrooms with tasks consisting of pedagogic activities that provided them with a means of practicing target vocabulary or grammar from textbooks.

Table 2. Sample task-based lesson plan.

| Lesson plan | Description | Time duration (hours) |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Tasks | Decision-making task | |
| Topic | Writing letters of advice | |
| Teaching objectives | To give advice | |
| Teaching procedures | <i>Pre-task:</i> 1. Teacher-led discussion: What did we learn last week? What do you say in the following situations? (e.g. <i>I have a headache. – You should go to the doctor.</i>) 2. Teacher provides students with handouts containing key expressions and words that will be used in the task. | 10 |
| | <i>Task-cycle:</i> 3. Teacher gives instructions on how to proceed with the task. | 5 |
| | 4. Students engage in the task in groups. | 20 |
| | 5. One student from the group reports the task results, and the teacher gives feedback. | 5 |
| | 6. The teacher repeats the language in focus and reviews the problems that emerged during the task-cycle. | 10 |

In the after-school lessons, the teacher was given more freedom in deciding the content of the lesson and the appropriate strategy to use. Before each lesson, the teacher spent a considerable amount of time explaining to the students the procedure for the task-based lesson and reviewed the language that students should use during task interaction. For example, when teaching students the use of prepositional phrases for answering ‘where’ questions, the teacher first modeled the task before instructing the students to engage in a fill-in-the-blank task. Upon completion, the teacher checked the answers and repeated the explanation on the use of prepositional phrases. Task repetition was employed as an effective means to focus students’ attention to form (Kim, Jung & Tracy-Ventura, 2017), as shown in the sample task-based lesson plan (Table 2).

The teacher encouraged the students to use English exclusively and minimize the use of the Korean language. In general, the students followed this instruction as evidenced by their interactions (e.g. by apologizing whenever they spoke Korean and asking the teacher for permission to use Korean as necessary).

All recordings were transcribed and analysed using the common CA system (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; ten Have, 2007) and CA methodology (Appendix 1). One adaptation that was made to the transcription conventions was the ‘flat and level’ pitch movements at syntactic boundaries, which are commonly observed in Korean speakers of English. Due to the extremely indexical nature of task-based interactions (Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009), non-verbal communication, task-sheets, and task performance through talk were holistically analysed using Transana software (www.transana.org), which aligns the transcription to the video file. Using a program that enables a time-aligned transcription is strongly

recommended, such that the analyst can review the video/sound file constantly and to avoid working on the transcript alone. The researcher transcribed the data by focusing on the task cycle. Although CA has always been wary of quantification, such as providing inter-rater reliability (Schegloff, 1987, 1993), recent studies have proven that CA can benefit from quantitative methods or 'formal coding' (Stivers, 2015). The present study, however, did not engage in coding or quantification of data because the analytic focus (sequences rather than lexical items or turn designs) would not benefit from quantification (Heritage, 2004). In the current study, the sequences in focus presented 'an immense range of interactional variations in terms of which systematic comparisons may be used both to check and extend particular analyses' (Heritage, 1984, p. 239).

2 Tasks and procedure

Five tasks with different degrees of structure, namely, decision-making tasks, jigsaw tasks, and information gap activities, were selected and revised to suit the learner level, all of which required the students to interact using L2 English. The primary language goals were to give advice to friends regarding various concerns (Task 1, decision-making, group/pair work), to find locations without looking at their partner's map, which contained different information (Task 2, information gap task, pair work), to guess the sentence being described by each group member (Task 3, information gap, group work), to plan a holiday trip as a group (Task 4, decision-making, group work), and to complete stories using picture strips (Task 5, jigsaw, group work). Tasks 1 and 4 were unstructured, whereas the three other tasks were designed to be more structured. Although previous studies used and investigated task structure (Robinson, 2001, 2011; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997), the term has been given various definitions. In the current study, following Tavakoli and Skehan (2005), tasks were classified as either 'structured' or 'unstructured' based on whether a straightforward or correct answer was required. Tasks with no apparent problem–solution structure and without a clear answer, therefore, were considered unstructured. In contrast, the structured tasks presented clear problem–solution schemas and a concrete answer. The emic and holistic microanalyses of each extract used in the study displayed a similar orientation to the different task types.

The learners were grouped into self-selected quads, triads, or pairs. Interactions within each group were video-recorded. Each class began with a pre-task stage where the teacher explained the grammatical forms that will be employed in the tasks (e.g. prepositional phrases and past perfect tense), after which the actual tasks were given. The participants were given no planning times for the tasks, and were, therefore, required to engage in task-related talk immediately after reading the instructions (or after the teacher read the instructions for them). Upon task completion, the teacher checked the outcomes and gave feedback for each group. Twenty-three pair/group task-based interaction episodes were analysed, each of which showed an explicit orientation toward task completion by employing short turns or by making the sequence closure a relevant subsequent activity. Twenty-two of the task episodes displayed similar orientations toward early task completion regardless of the task type. A deviant case analysis (Schegloff, 1968; ten Have, 2007) of one case from the data set in which the participants displayed a more elaborate talk sequence revealed similar orientations toward task completion. As a common practice in

CA, several conversation fragments are provided to illustrate that the findings are not idiosyncratic to those particular interaction episodes (Clift, 2001). Out of the three task completion stages, namely, pre-task, task cycle, and language focus (Willis, 1996), the study focused on the interactions generated during the task cycle stage.

IV Results

The students were found to be overwhelmingly oriented toward ‘task-completion’ as depicted by their engagement in the unstructured and structured tasks. The classroom setting constrained the interaction patterns, which is typical of institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Heritage, 2004). For example, the question-answer sequences employed by the students to complete the task followed the task-in-process; that is, identifying the blank first and then filling it. This tendency is in contrast to task-as-workplan; that is, practicing how people will perform in ordinary conversational settings. Students were inclined to use minimal turns and sequences that resembled the language used in convergent tasks (e.g. minimization and indexicality) as described in Seedhouse (2004). This orientation toward minimization and completion in the classroom reflects how organizations are ‘talked-into-being’ in the day-to-day practices of their members (Boden, 1994). The following text presents representative cases from both the unstructured and structured tasks. Afterward, one deviant case is given.

Task completion as the main goal in unstructured tasks

The most salient feature in the students’ interactions during the unstructured tasks was their orientation toward task completion, for which both extreme and less extreme cases were observed. Nevertheless, all students were deemed more motivated to complete the task using minimal language than engaging in a substantial discussion on the task topic or engage in a negotiation surrounding the disagreement. For example, the following two excerpts demonstrate the students’ orientation to sequence closure rather than sequence expansion when faced with different opinions regarding the decision-making task. Notably, this orientation deviates from the negotiating of differences in ordinary conversations where disagreement brings about sequence expansion (Pomerantz, 1984). In Excerpt 1, M’s rather strong disagreement (line 4, ‘NO:: NO::’) about wearing Korean traditional clothing during a trip to the palace is met with a demand to ‘just wear’ it from Y and G (lines 5–6).

Excerpt 1: Task 4: 2016_K3F3 (18:13–18:28)

- 01 Y: we have to buy a TI::cket for the gyeongbokgung.
 02 M: A:H^
 03 G: I sa:id. We wear hanbok. It’s free.=
 04 M: → =NO:: NO:: I don’t like hanbok.=
 05 G: → =JU[S:T WE:AR.
 06 Y: → [just wear.
 07 G: just wear.
 08 M: I want to wear everland.
 09 G: Okay we wear hanbok. ((writes on task sheet))

To save money on admission, G suggests that they wear *hanbok* to the *gyeongbok* palace (admission is free when tourists visit the palace wearing *hanbok*). As M disagrees by stating her preference ('I don't like hanbok'), the statement should have provided a ripe environment for opinion negotiation (Button & Casey, 1984). However, instead of persuading M or engaging in further negotiation, Y and G collaborate to block M's opinion by repetitively stating 'just wear' in close overlap. M protests by suggesting an alternative (line 8, 'I want to wear Everland'). However, G shuts down the sequence by concluding that they wear *hanbok* using a turn initial *okay* and a final falling intonation (line 9, 'Okay we wear hanbok'). Notably, the sentence 'we wear hanbok' was used to both begin (line 3) and close (line 9) the sequence. Repetition has been observed as a common method used by conversationalists to mark sequence boundaries (Schegloff, 1990). G writes down this information (*hanbok*) on the task sheet without seeking further negotiation.

Similarly, the following example shows students with opposing opinions regarding giving advice to a girl whose mother disapproves of her boyfriend. The task was designed as an open-ended decision-making task with the goal to encourage the use of the modal verb 'should' to practice giving advice in English. After B's relatively strong opinion that the girl should break up with her boyfriend (line 1, 'She (.) should kick off his boy friend- HER boy friend'), a 2-second pause occurs, which projects a dispreferred next action (Pomerantz, 1984). In the following turn, G disagrees: she prefaces her turn with 'I think' and uses 'can' (lines 5–7). When G disagrees, B immediately concludes that they have to decide on one side (line 8, So:: we have to decide one side so::').

Excerpt 2: Task 1: 2017_L2MF (8:01–8:33)

- 01 B: She (.) should kick off his boyfriend- HER boyfriend
 02 What do you think about (.) her=
 03 G: =Ummm::
 04 (2.0)
 05 I think (.) if children like her?
 06 A::nd also they are happy?
 07 Then I think they can live together
 08 B: → So:: we have to decide one side so::
 09 G: yea[:h
 10 B: → [rock scissor paper *hallay*?
 11 'Shall we do rock, paper, scissors?'
 12 ((B glances toward the teacher))
 13 G/B: hahahhh
 14 ((G and B look toward the teacher))
 15 G: Eh[hahahah
 16 B: [Haha °*cincca cincca*°
 17 'really really'
 18 G: >rock scissor paper<
 19 B: hhhahhha

In this interaction, A and B have different opinions regarding the advice that should be given to the girl. B states that the girl 'kick off her boyfriend' (line 1), whereas G

disagrees by saying that ‘they can live together’ if they are happy (line 5). The students were faced with a situation in which they could have negotiated their contrasting views on the relationship between the girl and her boyfriend. Instead of engaging in negotiation through further talk to resolve the different opinions (or incorporate both of their views), B suggests a game of rock–paper–scissor to make the decision (line 10). B’s suggestion is treated as problematic, first, as evidenced by both B’s look toward the teacher (line 9), and second, by their ensuing laughter (lines 12–13). However, immediately after the laughter, B repeated that he was not joking (°*cincca cincca*° ‘really really’), in a soft voice. They proceeded with the rock–paper–scissor game (line 14), where G won. Afterward, they wrote a letter of advice based on G’s view (lines 3–5, ‘if they are happy, they should get married and live together’). At this point, the end-product did not really involve a process of negotiation to reach a shared outcome by practicing English because only a few occurrences of the target grammar form (‘should’) were observed. Notably, when B suggested the rock–paper–scissor game, he used the Korean verb *halay* ‘shall we’ instead of using English. B switched to Korean whenever he produced ‘meta-talk’ (see for example Swain, 1998) to proceed with the task activity (e.g. *halay* = ‘shall we’ and *cincca cincca* = ‘really really’), which tended to move the task more efficiently toward completion.

When students hold the same opinion, the interactional sequences of the tasks were much shorter compared with prior cases. Excerpt 3 was taken from H middle school in which four students were engaged in a decision-making task. In this example, all students agreed that the couple should pursue marriage despite the mother’s objection. When Y provided her opinion ‘I think Goeun should love her boyfri::end’ (line 1), the other students agreed by nodding their heads and producing laugh tokens (lines 3–4).

Excerpt 3: Task 1: 2018_M4G (10:23–10:48)

- 01 Y: uh:: I think (1.0) Goeun should love her boyfri::end
 02 [(2.0)
 03 [(S, G, K nod their heads.))
 04 S,Y: ehehhhh
 05 ((Y looks at the teacher.))
 06 ((T nods her head.))
 07 G: **Me too::**
 08 T: YOU too? What’s your opi[nion]? ((scanning the students))
 09 K: [Me too
 10 T: Really?
 11 S: Me too[(hhh).
 12 G,K,Y: [EHHHAHAHA

Y’s glance toward the teacher in line 5 suggested that the group had reached an agreement and needed the teacher’s approval before moving on to the next step in the task (writing a letter of advice). The teacher nodded her head, which could be assumed to confirm Y’s opinion and encourage further talk from other students. The gesture may also indicate approval of the decision to move onto the next phase of the task. G, who was seated across Y, considered T’s nod as a confirmation and was quick to offer an

agreement ('Me too::') in the next turn. Although the teacher repeated G's agreement using a rising intonation and an emphasis on the pronoun ('YOU too?'), which elicited relevant further talk from G in the next turn (Park, 2013), G remained silent. Instead of providing their own reasons for Goeun to continue the relationship with her boyfriend, K and S were quick to repeat 'Me too' (lines 9 and 11). As the students perceived the teacher's nod in line 6 (following Y's gaze) as validating and confirming Y's opinion, the students may have felt that disagreeing with Y is equal to disagreeing with the teacher. Even when the teacher elicited further talk by explicitly asking for their opinion (line 8, 'What's your opinion?') and questioning the validity of their agreement (line 10, 'Really?'), the students did not produce any further talk regarding their decision. The students' collaborative laughter in line 12 (EHHHAHHAH) could be an indication of their amusement that nobody was able to explain why they agreed. Jefferson (1984) described laughter in such a location after questions as trouble-premonitory responses. However, the laughter was produced involuntarily in this particular interaction without other verbal accounts explaining the troublesome nature of the 'me too' agreements.

The role of the teacher's questions in promoting further interaction between the students can be noted in Excerpt 3. For example, instead of asking the students regarding their opinion as a whole (line 8, 'What's your opinion?'), the teacher could have facilitated the discussion by asking a particular student why she agreed with Y (e.g. G, why do you agree with Y?). Although prior studies have examined the role of teacher questioning (Koshik, 2002; Lee, 2006; Mehan, 1985), how teacher's delivery of the questions may influence TBL interactions in which the students are mostly interacting among themselves have not been examined in depth. Excerpt 3 indicated that the teacher's questions when negotiating in task-based interaction could result in an early closure of the task than encouraging more talk. The data indicated a few moments in which the teacher's ratification of one student's answer during task-based interaction frequently sanctioned the other students from offering other opinions.

One of the key components for success in decision-making tasks is the students' willingness to exchange opinions and collaboratively reach a shared outcome. As found in the current data, however, the students resorted to a rock-paper-scissor game to choose one side (e.g. Excerpt 2) or demanded that the person with a different opinion 'just' follow the opinion of the majority (e.g. Excerpt 1). Therefore, the quick task sequence closure effectively blocked further learning opportunities from task interactions. When everyone agreed (Excerpt 3), the (decision-making) task was completed without the opportunity for students to engage in further communication. These forms of quick completions could motivate the students to agree with one another than to disagree and engage in further meaning negotiations. Therefore, the study inferred that in these types of unstructured tasks, students may orient toward the institutional goal of completing the tasks (i.e. reaching an agreement) rather than using the task to engage in interactions, which may increase learning opportunities through meaning negotiations. However, data from students with high levels of proficiency in English may depict a different picture. These task interactions may, therefore, demonstrate the institutionally oriented nature of TBL in the classroom and the difficulty of successfully implementing tasks to resemble real-world contexts. As Heritage (2004) noted, institutional interactions tend to be constraining and irksome, which enables a reduction of turns compared with ordinary interaction. The

accompanying classroom setting may constrain the interaction to a certain degree, such that the TBL interaction may become ineffective in promoting language development through increased opportunities for meaning negotiation (Moore, 2018) at least for this population of lower level EFL students.

2 Task completion as the main goal in structured tasks

In the structured tasks (i.e. information gap and jigsaw), the main goal was also deemed as efficient task sheet completion using a minimal number of turns, which was in line with the findings of previous studies on TBLT (Jenks, 2009; Seedhouse, 2004, 2005). The students approached these tasks as if they were completing a test (with correct answers) and frequently engaged in playful competition with other group members regarding who finished the task faster. For example, in the following extract, the students were engaged in a paired jigsaw task (task 2), with each student having different missing information on the work sheet. The language focus (i.e. task-as-workplan) was to practice giving street names using prepositions ('It's on 3rd avenue') by answering questions related to a location (e.g. Where is Starlight Videos?). Instead of following the model conversation provided on the worksheet (i.e. Do you know where I can buy Chinese food? – Why don't you try Ming's Dynasty? – It's on 3rd avenue.), which required the students to first provide the name of the place first ('Ming's Dynasty'), the students answered by providing the location first ('It's on 3rd avenue'). This form is an unusual manner of answering 'Where can I . . .' questions. Excerpt 4 begins with Y's question 'Where can I buy some aspirin?' directed toward her partner G.

Excerpt 4: Task 2: 2016_K5G2 (4:25–6:50)

- 01 Y: Where can I get some aspirin.
 02 G: MH:m ((nodding and looks down at her sheet))
 03 → uhm ::, it's – (0.4) it's on the second avenue a :: nd it's next
 04 to the bus station.
 05 Y: m:hmm, a^h (.) wha:t is the name?
 06 G: Name is Albert's parma[i:cy? Pharmacy?
 07 [(G gazes toward the teacher.)
 08 T: Fa- Pharmacy.
 09 G: pharmacy [P,
 10 Y: [A:l?
 11 G: A:lbert's
 12 ((Y cranes her neck to see G's paper.))
 13 G: p, h, [a,r,m:,a,c,y. ((gives out the spelling of the word)
 14 [(((G leans forward and looks at Y's paper.))
 15 T: Do not show hh your pa:per TO your FRIE:ND.
 16 Y: hhh
 17 T: DO NOT [SH:OW.
 18 G: [°tha:t's okay,°
 19 [(0.4)
 20 [(((bell rings))
 21 [(((Y looks at the G's paper and G nods her head.))

- 22 [(0.2)
 23 [((Y erases what she writes.))
 24 Y: hhhehhh ((Y looks up at the teacher))
 25 T: spell out.
 26 G: p,h,(.)a,r,(.) m,a,c,y.
 27 Y: o:kay.
 28 G: °my turn°, mhmm how can I grab a burger?

G registered Y's question ('Where can I get some aspirin') with a confirmation 'Mh:m' and nodded while trying to locate the pharmacy. Using her finger, G found the pharmacy and stated 'It's on the second avenue a::nd it's next to the bus station.' When Y found the correct location, she shouted 'a^h' (line 5) and immediately asked for the name of the place ('What:t is the name?'). The task sequence proceeded in the same order in which the students solved the task rather than following the model conversation. Throughout the task sequence, learning moments related to the word 'pharmacy' were observed. G gazed toward the teacher and used a questioning intonation to ask for confirmation about the pronunciation of 'pharmacy' (lines 6–07) and was able to imitate T's pronunciation in future turns. When Y was unable to spell out the word 'pharmacy', G gave the spelling to Y by pronouncing the individual letters (line 12). Y and G collaborated to obtain the correct spelling right by looking at and showing each other their paper. When the teacher called out to G to tell Y the answer rather than showing her the answer (line 14, 'Do not show hh your pa:per TO your FRIE:NDs'), G whispered that it was okay to look (line 17, '[°tha:t's okay,°]'). When Y did not get the spelling right even after several instances of help from G, the teacher instructed G to spell out the word for Y (line 25, 'Spell out'). Completing the blanks with the correct spelling was crucial for task completion. Thus, the task turns became an interaction focused on spelling a problematic word ('pharmacy') rather than a sequence of question-answer sequences regarding a location or practicing prepositional phrases (task-as-workplan).

Excerpt 5 shows the extent of minimization that occurs in the same jigsaw task. As Y begins to ask for the name of the bike shop (line 35, 'What:t's'), G acknowledges and anticipates this information as being necessary (line 36, 'Yes') and provides the shop name ('name is NIKO BIKES') in complete overlap. As soon as Y writes down this name on her task sheet, she prompts G to ask the next question (line 42, 'your turn').

Excerpt 5: Task 2: 2016_K5G2 (8:20–8:32)

- 28 Y: .tch Whe:re can I rent a bike?
 29 G: [U::mm
 30 [((G points to the name of the buildings with right hand.))
 31 [It's o::n the SECOND avenue,
 32 [((G points the map with left hand.))
 33 A::nd it's behind from highschool.
 34 (0.6)
 35 Y: → m::hmm, [Wha:t's
 36 G: → [Yes, name is NIKO BIKES.
 37 Y: Ni[k?

- 38 [((Y shifts her eye gaze from the paper to G.))
 39 G: N,I,K,O.
 40 [(3.0)
 41 [((Y writes the name of the building.))
 42 Y: [your turn.
 43 [((Y lifts her head and looks at G.))
 44 G: WH:ere I can fi::nd go bowling- where I can go bowling?=-

As these examples show, the student interaction followed the task completion steps in structured tasks: first, find the location (and the number of the building) and, second, fill in the blanks with the name of the building. When faced with difficulties, the students quickly resorted to a quick resolution by directly giving the missing piece of information or asking the teacher for the answer (e.g. through gaze). Although the students had lower English-speaking proficiency compared with peers in the same middle school, they utilized discourse markers, such as 'so' to preface their sequence-initiating actions (i.e. moving on to the next task activity), routine phrases, such as asking and answering questions, and use formulaic phrases, such as 'your turn' and 'my turn' to move the task forward (e.g. Excerpt 4, line 28; Excerpt 5, line 42), which contributed to successful task completion. These turn-taking practices provided equal opportunities for those engaged in the task and facilitated the students' competent management of the task.

In summary, the students displayed a similar task completion orientation and did not always follow the task-as-workplan set up by the teacher for both structured and unstructured tasks. In general, when these types of tasks are given in a classroom setting, the students are oriented toward correctly completing the task, which may result in minimal language use, rather than the use of grammatically correct sentences. Many of the turns were produced as commands in English (e.g. what is NAME) because the turns tend to contain minimal words and had a strong orientation toward progression in the sequence. In addition, the study observed a repeated conversational machinery (e.g. question-answer sequences, explicit orientation to taking ordered turns), which has been recognized as a key characteristic of institutional talk (Heritage, 2004). The students seemed aware of how to achieve the task goal with greater efficiency using limited language resources, which provided evidence that they were being interactionally competent members of the classroom rather than simply failing to follow the teacher's task-as-workplan.

3 Deviant case analysis

The many examples of the structured and unstructured TBL in the previous sections illustrated how these students prioritized the shared institutional goal of task completion in the TBL classrooms, from which an overall pattern of locally managed goal orientation and focus on the priority business at hand was observed. This section highlights a deviant case in which the students engaged in off-task talk to provide a stronger evidence for the completion-orientated nature of the task-based interactions.

The literature on CA describes the examination of ostensibly negative examples as deviant case analysis; that is, an 'analysis of any case that seems to depart from a previously formulated rule or pattern' (ten Have, 2007, p. 151). The purpose of deviant case

analysis is not simply to present outliers and exclude them from the evolving hypothesis. The reason for this notion is that a close examination of ostensibly contradictory cases can frequently reinforce, refine, or broaden the evolving hypothesis by ‘providing the strongest evidence for the analysis because it is here that we see the participants’ own orientations to the normative structures most clearly’ (Sidnell, 2013, p. 80). In the deviant case examined here, an orientation to task completion was observed throughout the entire interaction although an extensive side talk was observed on the students’ investment in a Korean movie star.

In the following example, three students were engaged in a spontaneous conversation to plan a three-day vacation (unstructured decision-making task, Task 4). The students were instructed to complete a schedule sheet and given 50,000 won (approximately 50 dollars) to spend as a group. They were allowed to use cell phones to gather information related to transportation and ticket prices.

Excerpt 6: Task 4: 2018_LG3 (17:01–32:18)

- 01 M: *sukpak* here? ((M points to the worksheet while looking at T))
(Eng.: Sleep)
- 02 Y/G: O::H(hhh).
- 03 T: *sukpak* hhhh
(Eng.: Sleep)
- 04 G: My *Pak Pokem*. hhh
- 05 M: Becu:z-becau:se *cwal[yengi yenge-lo mweci, cwalyengi* ((looks at G))
(Eng.: what is video shoot in English, video shoot)
- 06 Y: cu:z-becau:se chwal- [>no, no, no
- 07 M: *cwalyengi yenge-lo mweyo? cwalyengi*. ((looks toward the teacher))
(Eng.: what is video shoot in English? Video shoot.)
- 08 T: shoot[ing?
- 09 M: [*cwal-yeoung*- shooting=
(Eng.: video shoot=)
- 10 Y: =no, no, wait-wait-wait-wait-WA:IT.
- 11 M: Because, *kwulwumi kulin talbit* (.) camera, here.
(Eng: Moonlight drawn by the clouds)
- 12 T: O:kay, so jus- I will give you like ten- se- seven ten minutes,
13 make a plan and make a presentation.
- 14 G: right.
- 15 Y: we- we, three ((looks at T while pointing to the three group members))
- 16 T: you three, go to **SA:ME** place.
- 17 Y: ah yeah, ah-
- 18 T: yes, it's a group pro:ject.
- 19 Y: oh, oh, WE HAVE TO GO HE:RE. ((points to picture))
- 20 G: First, I think, ma[ybe- >maybe<=
- 21 M: [A::nd go here.
- 22 G: Maybe *kwulwumi kulin talbit* is go afternoon.=
- 23 Y: =Ye::s
- 24 G: because->b[e:cause they<
- 25 Y: [**NO:.**, >**NO NO NO**<
- 26 Y: T[hey sh- shoo:t

- 27 M: [The:y, morn:ing, NO: NO::=
- 28 Y: =Mo::rning, a::fternoon, di:nner [a:ll .hhh a:ll day.=
- 29 G: [ah
- 30 Y: =Yes.
- 31 M: M::hmm, morn:ing, go e::verland and aft[er-
- 32 Y: [No:: no.
- 33 M: because everland °come on° (.) okay.
((lines omitted- students engage in talk about singers who come to Everland))
- 50 G: >You can<, you can write gyeongbokgung one day.
- 51 M: ah, ah- I want to go EVE:RLAND.
- 52 G: *kulem* second day,
- 53 M: Oka::y=
- 54 G: =y:es. One[day is
- 55 M: [No:
- 56 Y: [NO::, Thi:rd Da:y. Third day.
- 57 G: oka:y, okay. ((pointing at the blank))
- 58 >gyeongbokgung, gyeongbokgun, gyeongbokgun< and we have
- 59 to- a::nd we-
- 60 M: HE:Y, HE::[Y, sister
- 61 G: [hey wai:t- wait wai:t
- 62 M: its-
- 63 G: if w[e
- 64 Y: [YO:U write.
- 65 M: S:top stop stop.
- 66 G: we have to- have mo:ney, y'know, mo:ney.
- 67 M: how m- how much? ((looks at the teacher))

In Excerpt 6, the students are engaged in a heated conversation about which places to visit during their trip (Task 4). All the girls were initially excited to visit ‘palace’ where the popular actor *Pak Pokem* was shooting the hit drama *kwulwumi kulin talbit* (‘Moonlight drawn by the clouds’). They began to plan their trip (line 1, *sukpak* here?) even before the teacher finished delivering the task instructions (lines 12–13). When M suggested that they visit the amusement park (‘Everland’) in the morning, G and Y disagreed and stated that they needed to be at the ‘Gyeongbok palace’ all day to see the actor *Pak Pokem*. Although reluctant to agree, M accepted her friends’ decision as demonstrated by ‘okay’ (line 33). However, M later reminded them that she still wanted to go to Everland (line 51, ‘I want to go EVE:RLAND’). G accepted this opinion and suggested that they go to Everland on the second day. Compared with the performance of the same group in other tasks (e.g. information gap and writing a letter of advice), a significant difference was noted in the number of pauses and number of the turns taken by each student. Nearly no inter-turn or intra-turn pauses were observed that could indicate difficulties in interaction (Schegloff, 2007). Instead, the task sequence indicated frequent overlaps and latches between turns in which the students competed for who would be the next speaker.

A notable aspect is the students’ continuous orientation to task completion, as illustrated by their search for the correct translation of the word *cwalyeng* (‘shooting’) (lines 7–9) and directions to one student (line 50, ‘you can write *gyeongbokgung* one day’) to

complete the task sheet. The three students were very excited about planning a trip with a heated discussion about the actor(s) and singer(s) being only a portion of the task. For example, one student asked the teacher for specific details about the task (line 15, 'we-we three?' and line 67, 'How m- how much?') while arguing about what to do on the first day. The teacher also played a role in re-directing the students toward the task by reminding them of the time given for the task completion (line 12, 'O:kay, so jus- I will give you like ten- se- seven ten minutes') and that they should work as a group (line 18, 'it's a group project'). The teacher enacts a form of 'sanctioning' that explicitly marked a departure from the types of contributions that the speakers were expected to make (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

In summary, the students were engaged in the joint accomplishment of the task and were oriented toward task completion throughout the interactions even when discussing their favorite actor and television show. In addition, this example demonstrated the students' distinctive and conflicting objectives; that is, they wanted to establish friendly relationships with their peers, engage in talk about pop culture and share one another's enthusiasm. However, they needed to continuously redirect their contributions to task completion because they were in class, with the teacher playing a role in sustaining such an orientation.

This section presented an analysis of a deviant case in which the students engaged in off-task talk by taking on the identities of teenage friends conversing with one another about popular movie stars. This scenario demonstrated that even while engaging in social talk by evoking different types of roles (learners vs. friends) during the off-task talk, the students remained oriented toward task completion. Moreover, the interactional sequence portrayed how the classroom context is a product of the actors' talk-in-interaction, rather than *a priori* conditions that 'enclose' the interaction (Heritage, 1987).

V Discussion and conclusions

This study aimed to investigate task-based interaction that occurs among lower-level EFL students in the context of the Korean secondary school by, first, comparing engagement in different types of tasks (i.e. structured and unstructured tasks) and, second, displaying the manner in which students' orientation toward task completion through interactional sequence demonstrates talk in classrooms.

Prior studies on task types have suggested that structured tasks provide learners with increased opportunities to engage in meaning negotiation through modified interaction for L2 learning and ultimately SLA (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Pica et al., 2006). However, the current study did not observe this trend. Furthermore, although prior research (Barnes, 2008; Foster & Skehan, 2009) has confirmed that decision-making tasks promote meaningful interactions, the learners in the current study tended to display an orientation toward task completion (through agreement) instead of focusing on negotiation of meaning. In a seminal article on institutional talk and CA, Heritage (2004) explained that institutional talk indicates a reduction in the possible contributions allowed for participants, which could feel irksome and constraining. In the current study, the constraining nature of the classroom tasks was evident in the turn allocation system and the ready agreement in decision-making tasks.

In summary, the interactional patterns in both the structured and unstructured tasks were similar; that is, the students co-constructed their interactions as being task-based, incrementally advanced it turn-by-turn and finally completed the interactions through the outcome of the task. As demonstrated by the deviant case, the students faced distinctive and sometimes conflicting objectives (as friends, classmates, and students), which shaped the produced talk during the specific task activities. The learning potential emerged in a manner that differed from the task design and became dependent on the moment-to-moment co-construction of talk-in-interaction (Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler, 2010, p. 43), mainly to negotiate meaning and/or pronunciation of individual lexical items (Excerpt 4).

Analysis initially suggested that language tasks may provide fewer opportunity for talk and language learning to occur than suggested by previous studies on TBL (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Ellis, 2000; Gass et al., 2005). In the excerpts, although all learners collaboratively completed the task, such collaboration did not guarantee additional L2 learning through increased interactional sequences. For example, instead of generating more talk, the pre-allocation of turns through role assignment (e.g. questioner, answer) was deemed to minimize talk as students produced no more than what was required for task completion (Jenks, 2009). In other words, during these TBL interactions, efficiency appeared to be prioritized over learning.

When students encountered language problems (mostly pertaining to the meaning of a vocabulary or lexical item), they quickly turned to the teacher for assistance rather than attempted to resolve the problem through discussion or sought information from online resources. When disagreements occurred during the decision-making tasks, several students sought to resolve the disagreement through the rock–paper–scissor game (e.g. extract 2) instead of engaging in meaning negotiation. The deviant case illustrated that engaging in extensive discussions during the task-in-process was possible for the students. However, even in this case, they were continuously oriented toward task completion. The participants focused on task completion as the relevant activity and quickly switched to task-based roles (e.g. note-taker and time keeper) to finish the task in a timely manner. Although the form of language use that promotes language learning is prioritized in TBLT (Ellis, 2003, p. 8), these group of students considered the task outcome (as task assessment) of more importance which is occasionally celebrated in the interaction. In the following Excerpt 7, for example, S2 completes the story strip completion task independently while other members in the group watch her align the strips on the desk. In line 2, S2 takes S1's picture strip and places it in the last position of the story.

Excerpt 7: Task 5: picture strip Group 5 OCT

- 01 S2: And chasing just grandfather and grandmother.
02 ((takes S1's strip))
03 S2: and next is:: pig and dog. And last one is::
04 ((places' S1's strip on the desk))
05 S2: this one. FINISHED.
06 S1: Whhaa ((claps her hands))
07 ??: Fini(hh)ish(hhh) ((big smile, throws up her hand))

Instead of objecting, the other members were clearly impressed with S2's speed and celebrated the task completion by producing laugh particles (line 7) along with embodied movements, such as clapping and smiling.

The findings have several implications for the research on TBL and EFL task activities for learners with low levels of proficiency. First, based on the study results, tasks could be designed given the topics of interest to the groups of students involved to promote further interactional sequences or learning opportunities. The effectiveness of classroom instructional designs may be influenced by the type of the selected task, personal investment, and the task topic (Blaz, 2013; Lambert et al., 2017; Liao, 2015; Seedhouse et al., 2020). For example, teenagers may be more motivated to engage in a task surrounding hobbies or food, whereas college students may be more interested in tasks on jobs or careers. In the jigsaw task, for example, students experienced difficulty in differentiating between CDs and DVDs, maybe because they no longer encountered these products and were thus unfamiliar with these concepts. Second, the teacher's talk during TBL interactions appeared to significantly influence the students' talk and the manner in which the tasks were completed (Dao et al., 2017; Samuda, 2015). In the Korean classroom setting employed in the present study, the students viewed the teacher as the sole authority. Therefore, the teacher's responses to the students' questions and any comments made by the teacher during task activities overrode the students' talk that was being produced thus far. In a study on the facilitator's task orientation practices in an L2 bookclub, Ro (2018) examined the effects of different facilitation practices on students; understanding of task answers and concluded that the teachers' instructional practices influenced the degree to which learning occurred. Similarly in this study, task interactions demonstrated how teacher questioning could block further student talk by constraining the type of answer allowed (Excerpt 3). Thus, it is also suggested that teacher's intervention during task interaction should be conducted with care for the sake of assisting instead of 'hampering learner-learner interaction' (Dao et al., 2017, p. 472). Finally, students' familiarity with task performance and awareness of negotiation skills may influence the task interaction. The experience of the students with tasks are usually limited to the regular English classroom, where tasks are allotted very little time (usually less than 10 minutes to complete) with a larger number of group members thus allowing less opportunity for a less proficient student to voice their opinions. Negotiation skills are not given priority in the context of the Korean middle school, where remaining quiet and listening to the teacher are considered polite and desirable (Park, 2013). Such sociocultural factors may have influenced the completion-oriented nature of task type interactions observed among students with low levels of proficiency. It could be suggested that teachers emphasize the importance of negotiation skills prior to giving the tasks to the students by modelling interaction where disagreement occurs (for unstructured tasks) and by providing a script with frequently used expressions (e.g. 'What do you think?', 'I disagree because. . .') that the students may refer to when engaging in task interaction.

One of the limitations of the study was the representativeness of the sample. In particular, the middle school students in these after-school classes tended to be close friends, hold a more positive attitude toward the class, and may have a higher motivation to learn and practice the English language than students in regular English classes. As an

after-school class, the students did not experience limitations that may be common to other English classes in the Korean EFL context (i.e. class size and exam load) as noted in existing studies (Zheng & Borg, 2014). In addition, the students' overall low level of proficiency in English may have influenced the TBL interactions regarding the orientation toward task completion as the students experienced increased difficulty in expressing their thoughts in English. Further studies using a TBL framework may compare the findings with regular English classes for EFL students with mixed level of proficiency. Nonetheless, despite the shortcomings, the study contributes to and continues work on empirically grounded theories of second language talk and learning (Cazden, 2001; Kasper & Kim, 2015; Markee, 2015; Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Wong & Waring, 2020). For example, despite prior studies that suggested TBL as unsuitable for beginner students (Deng & Carless, 2009), the current study demonstrated that these students were able to complete the tasks in a competent manner through peer-interaction which suggests that TBL have a positive role to play in L2 learning. Moreover, the study demonstrated the value of emic, procedural approaches in studying TBL (Kim et al., 2017; Lee, 2007; Mori, 2004; Ohta, 2001; Seedhouse, 2004) and the type of contributions that can be made to enhance the understanding of EFL classrooms.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Yujong Park  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2607-0958>

References

- Al-Gahtani, S., & Roever, C. (2013). 'Hi doctor, give me handouts': Low-proficiency learners and requests. *ELT Journal*, 67, 413–424.
- Atkinson, J.M., & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1984). *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bailey, K.M., & Nunan, D. (Eds.) (1996). *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Balaman, U. (2019). Sequential organization of hinting in online task-oriented L2 interaction. *Text & Talk*, 39, 511–534.
- Balaman, U., & Sert, O. (2017). Local contingencies in L2 tasks: A comparison of context-sensitive interactional achievements across two different task types. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and Literature*, 10, 9–27.
- Barnes, D. (2008). Exploratory talk for learning. In Mercer, N., & E. Hodgins (Eds.), *Exploratory talk in school* (pp. 1–17). London: Sage.
- Blaz, D. (2013). *Differentiated instruction: A guide for foreign language teachers*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Boden, D. (1994). *The business of talk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Breen, M. (1987). Learner contribution to task design. In: Candlin, C., & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Language learning tasks* (pp. 23–46). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Breen, M. (1989). The evaluation cycle for language learning tasks. In Johnson, R. (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp. 187–206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Butler, Y.G. (2011). The implementation of communicative and task-based language teaching in the Asia-Pacific region. *Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 36–57.
- Button, G., & Casey, N. (1984). Generating topic: The use of topic initial elicitors. In Atkinson, J.M., & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action* (pp. 167–190). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bygate, M., Norris, J., & Branden, K. (2009). Understanding TBLT at the interface of research and pedagogy. In Van den Branden, K., Bygate, M., & J. Norris (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching: A reader* (pp. 495–500). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Carroll, D. (2000). Precision timing in novice-to-novice to L2 conversations. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 11, 67–110.
- Carroll, D. (2005). Vowel-marking as an interactional resource in Japanese novice ESL conversation. In Richards, K., & P. Seedhouse (Eds.), *Applying conversation analysis* (p. 214–234). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cazden, C. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Chen, Q., & Wright, C. (2017). Contextualization and authenticity in TBLT: Voices from Chinese classrooms. *Language Teaching Research*, 21, 517–538.
- Chen, J.C., & Kent, S. (2020). Task engagement: Learner motivation and avatar identities of struggling English language learners in the 3D virtual world. *System*, 88, 1–14.
- Clayman, S., & Heritage, J. (2002). *The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clift, R. (2001). Meaning in interaction: The case of actually. *Language*, 77, 245–291.
- Coughlan, P., & Duff, P. (1994) Same task, different activities: analysis of a second language acquisition task from an activity theory perspective. In Lantolf, J.P., & G. Appel (Eds.), *Vygotskian approaches to second language research* (pp. 173–194). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Crookes, G. (1989). Planning and interlanguage variation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 11, 367–383.
- Dao, P., Iwashita, N., & Gatbonton, E. (2017). Learner attention to form in ACCESS task-based interaction. *Language Teaching Research*, 21, 454–479.
- Deng, C., & Carless, D. (2009). The communicativeness of activities in a task-based innovation in Guangdong, China. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 18, 113–134.
- Doughty, C., & Pica, T. (1986). ‘Information gap’ tasks: Do they facilitate second language acquisition? *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 305–325.
- Drew, P., & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1992). *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eksildsen, S.W., & Wagner, J. (2015). Embodied L2 construction learning. *Language Learning*, 65, 268–297.
- Ellis, R. (2000). Task-based research and language pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 4, 193–220.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: Sorting out the misunderstandings. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19, 221–246.
- Fagan, D. (2015). Managing language errors in real-time: A microanalysis of teacher practices. *System*, 55, 74–85.
- Foster, P., & Skehan, P. (2009). The influence of planning and task type on second language performance. In Van den Branden, K., Bygate, M., & J. Norris (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching: A reader* (pp. 275–300). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Gardner, R. (2015). Conversation analysis and orientation to learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5, 229–244.

- Gass, S., Mackey, A., & Ross-Feldman, L. (2005). Task-based interactions in classroom and laboratory settings. *Language Learning*, 55, 575–611.
- Greer, T. (2016). Learner initiative in action: Post-expansion sequences in a novice ESL survey interview task. *Linguistics and Education*, 35, 78–87.
- Hall, J.K., & Looney, S.D. (Eds.) (2019). *The embodied work of teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hall, J.K., & Verplaetse, L. (2000). Second and foreign language learning through classroom interaction. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hellerman, J. (2006). Classroom interactive practices for literacy: A microethnographic study of two beginning adult learners of English. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 377–404.
- Hellerman, J. (2008). *Social actions for classroom language learning*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hellerman, J., & Pekarek Doehler, S. (2010). On the contingent nature of language-learning tasks. *Classroom Research*, 1, 25–45.
- Hellerman, J., Eskildsen, S.W., Pekarek Doehler, S., & Piirainen-Marsh, A. (Eds.) (2019). *Conversation analytic research on learning-in-action: The complex ecology of language interaction 'in the wild'*. Cham: Springer.
- Heritage, J. (1984). A change of state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In Atkinson, J.M., & J.C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 299–345). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. (1987). Ethnomethodology. In Giddens, A., & J. Turner (Eds.), *Social theory today* (pp. 224–272). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. (2004). Conversation analysis and institutional talk: Analyzing data. In Silverman, D. (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 222–245). New York: Sage.
- Jefferson, G. (1984). On the organization of laughter in talk about troubles. In Atkinson, J.M., & J.C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 346–369). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenks, C.J. (2009). Exchanging missing information in tasks: Old and new interpretations. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93, 185–194.
- Kasper, G., & Kim, Y. (2015). Conversation-for-learning: Institutional talk beyond the classroom. In Markee, N. (Ed.), *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction* (pp. 390–408). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kasper, G., & Wagner, J. (2014). Conversation analysis in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 171–212.
- Kim, Y., Jung, Y., & Tracy-Ventura, N. (2017). Implementation of a localized task-based course in an EFL context: A study of students' evolving perceptions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 51, 632–660.
- Koshik, I. (2002). A conversation analytic study of yes/no questions which convey reversed polarity assertions. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 1851–1877.
- Lai, C. (2015). Task-based language teaching in the Asian context: Where are we now and where are we going? In: Thomas, M., & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Contemporary task-based language teaching in Asia*. London/New York: Bloomsbury.
- Lambert, C., Philip, J., & Nakamura, S. (2017). Learner-generated content and engagement in second language task performance. *Language Teaching Research*, 21, 665–680.
- Lee, Y. (2006). Respecifying display questions: Interactional resources for language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 691–713.
- Lee, Y. (2007). Third turn position in teacher talk: Contingency and the work of teaching. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 180–206.
- Leeser, M.J. (2004). Learner proficiency and focus on form during collaborative dialogue. *Language Teaching Research*, 8, 55–81.

- Liao, H.C. (2015). EFL learner perceptions of differentiated speaking assessment tasks. *English Teaching & Learning*, 39, 29–68.
- Littlewood, W. (2011). Communicative language teaching: An expanding concept for a changing world. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Volume II* (pp. 541–557). London: Routledge.
- Long, M.H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Malden, MA: Wiley.
- Long, M.H., Inagaki, S., & Ortega, L. (1998). The role of implicit negative feedback in SLA: Models and recasts in Japanese and Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82, 357–370.
- Markee, N. (Ed.) (2015). *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Mehan, H. (1985). The structure of classroom discourse. In Dijk, T.A. (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis: Volume 3* (pp. 120–131). New York: Academic Press.
- Mondada, L., & Pekarek Doehler, S. (2005). Second language acquisition as situated practice: Task accomplishment in the French second language classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61, 461–490.
- Moore, P. (2018). Task-based language teaching. In Lontas, J.I. (Eds.), *TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Mori, J. (2004). Negotiating sequential boundaries and learning opportunities: A case from a Japanese language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 88, 536–550.
- Newton, J., & Bui, T. (2017). Teaching with tasks in primary school EFL classrooms in Vietnam. In Mohammad, A., & M. Mayo (Eds.), *Recent perspectives on task-based language learning and teaching*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Ohta, A. (2001). *Second language acquisition process in the classroom: Learning Japanese*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Park, Y. (2013). The roles of third-turn repeats in two L2 classroom interactional contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 35, 145–167.
- Park, Y. (2018). Task-in-process during information-gap activities in Koran middle school English classrooms. *English Teaching*, 73, 59–86.
- Pekarek Doehler, S. (2010). Conceptual changes and methodological challenges: On language, learning and documenting learning in conversation analytic SLA research. In Seedhouse, P., Walsh, S., & C. Jenks (Eds.), *Conceptualising learning in applied linguistics* (pp. 105–127). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pekarek Doehler, S. (2013). Conversation analysis and second language acquisition. In Mortensen, K., & J. Wagner (Eds.), *Conversation analysis and applied linguistics*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Pica, T., Kang, H., & Sauro, S. (2006). Information gap tasks: Their multiple roles and contributions to interaction research methodology. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28, 301–338.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In Atkinson, J.M., & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 57–101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ro, E.-S. (2018). Facilitating an L2 book club: A conversation-analytic study of task management. *The Modern Language Journal*, 102, 181–198.
- Robinson, P. (2001). Task complexity, cognitive load, and syllabus design. In Robinson, P. (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 211–266). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, P. (2011). Second language task complexity, the cognition hypothesis, language learning, and performance. In Robinson, P. (Ed.), *Second language task complexity: Researching*

- the Cognition Hypothesis of language learning and performance* (pp. 3–37). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Samuda, V. (2015). Tasks, design, and the architecture of pedagogical spaces. In Bygate, M. (Ed.), *Domains and directions in the development of TBLT* (pp. 271–301). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1968). Sequencing in conversational openings. *American Anthropologist*, 70, 1075–1095.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1987). Analyzing single episodes of conversation: An exercise in conversation analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 50, 101–114.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1990). On the organization of sequences as a source of ‘coherence’ in talk-in-interaction. In Dorval, B. (Ed.) *Conversational organization and its development* (pp. 51–77). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1993). Reflections on quantification in the stud of conversation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 26, 99–128.
- Schegloff, E.A. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction: A primer in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seedhouse, P. (1999). Task-based interaction. *ELT Journal*, 53, 149–156.
- Seedhouse, P. (2004). *The interactional architecture of the language classroom: A conversation analysis perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Seedhouse, P. (2005). Task as research construct. *Language Learning*, 55, 533–570.
- Seedhouse, P. (2011). Conversation analytic research into language teaching and learning. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.), (pp. 345–370). *The handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Seedhouse, P., & Almutairi, S. (2009). A holistic approach to task-based interaction. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19, 311–338.
- Seedhouse, P., Heslop, P., & Kharrufa, A. (2020). Cooking as a language learning task. *TESL-EJ*, 24, 1–13.
- Shintani, N. (2016). *Input-based tasks in foreign language instruction for young learners*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sidnell, J. (2013). Basic conversation analysis methods. In Sidnell, J., & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 77–99). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Skehan, P. (2003). Task-based instruction. *Language Teaching*, 36, 1–14.
- Skehan, P., & Foster, P. (1999). The influence of task structure and processing conditions on narrative retellings. *Language Learning*, 49, 93–120.
- Stivers, T. (2015). Coding social interaction: A heretical approach in conversation analysis? *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 48, 1–19.
- Swain, M. (1998). Focus on form through conscious reflection. In Doughty, C., & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 64–81). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tavakoli, P., & Skehan, P. (2005). Strategic planning, task structure, and performance testing. In Ellis, R. (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language* (pp. 239–276). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- ten Have, P. (2007). *Doing conversation analysis*. London: Sage.
- Van Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. London: Longman.
- Watanabe, Y., & Swain, M. (2007). Effects of proficiency differences and patterns of pair interaction on second language learning: collaborative dialogue between adult ESL learners. *Language Teaching Research*, 11, 121–142.
- Wigglesworth, G. (1997). An investigation of planning time and proficiency level on oral test discourse. *Language Testing*, 14, 85–106.

- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. London: Longman.
- Wong, J., & Waring, H. (2020). *Conversation analysis and second language pedagogy: A guide for ESL/EFL teachers*. London: Routledge.
- Zheng, X., & Borg, S. (2014). Task-based learning and teaching in China: Secondary school teachers' belief and practices. *Language Teaching Journal*, 18, 205–221.

Appendix I

Transcription symbols

Source. Adapted from Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007.

| | |
|----------|--|
| [] | overlap boundaries of talk |
| = | contiguous utterances |
| (0.2) | length of silence in tenths of seconds |
| (.) | micropause |
| ./?/, | falling/rising/continuing intonation |
| :: | sound stretch |
| - | cut-off or self-interruption |
| °..° | portions quieter than surrounding talk |
| WORD | increased amplitude or stress |
| > < | rushed speech |
| hh | hearable aspiration |
| .hh | hearable inbreath |
| (word) | indicated transcriber's uncertainty on the utterance |
| ((word)) | transcriber's commentary, description of events |