Explicit Instruction and JFL Learners' Use of
Interactional Discourse Markers in Extended Tellings

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Introduction

The development of L2 pragmatic competence entails the ability to use a wide range of conversational routines and discourse strategies to manage one's communicative interactions with others. Over the past two decades, researchers have established that a foreign language learner's development of various aspects of pragmatic competence may be facilitated by the instruction of pragmatic routines and strategies in the foreign language classroom (House, 1986, 1996; Tateyama et al., 1997; Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1994; see also Kasper, 1997 for a review of this literature). When such instruction is explicit, it appears to be particularly beneficial since it enables learners to develop an awareness and understanding of the differences between L1 and L2 pragmatic preferences, and thereby "counteract negative L1 transfer through 'noticing' (Schmidt, 1993) and through making attempts to use alternative, more L2 norm-oriented expressions" (House, 1996, p. 247).²

In a comparison of the relative benefits of implicit and explicit instruction, House (1996) reports on two sections (i.e., implicit and explicit) of a 14-week communication course instructed in the use of everyday, conversational routines. Through lectures, handouts and explanatory feedback that provided metapragmatic information on the use and function of these routines, the explicit group had additional opportunities to raise their awareness of preferred L2 pragmatic practices and to "notice" differences between L1 and L2 practices. House argues that the greater improvement shown by the explicit group, particularly in areas where the pragmatic preferences of the learners' L1 differed from those of the target L2, is a result of the learners' heightened awareness of L1-L2 pragmatic differences.

Focusing on a distinct aspect of pragmatic competence, the use of discourse markers in extended tellings, Yoshimi (1998a, 1998b) was unable to replicate House's (1996) findings. During a 16-week course, advanced, English-speaking learners of Japanese were provided with metapragmatic information regarding the use and functions of discourse markers through lectures and discussions of spoken and written texts. However, despite an increase in their use of discourse markers in personal narratives and retellings, this use was more consistent with the pragmatic preferences of the learners' L1 than of the target L2.

In discussing her findings, Yoshimi (1998a) identifies the quantity and quality of the practice and feedback components of

the instructional treatment as potential deficiencies. In proposing a need to expand these aspects of the instructional approach, she notes Tateyama et al.'s (1997) suggestion that communicative practice and corrective feedback may enhance the "noticing" (Schmidt, 1990, 1993) afforded by explicit instruction.³

This paper presents a follow-up study undertaken to determine whether an explicit instructional approach with expanded opportunities for communicative practice and feedback can facilitate learners' development of the target-like use of Japanese discourse markers in the production of extended tellings. In addition, a control group has been added to determine whether progress in the use of discourse markers in extended tellings can occur in the absence of activities designed to raise learner awareness of this aspect of pragmatic competence.

Study design and participants

The study used a pre-test/post-test, experimental/control group design. A storytelling task was administered as a pre- and post-test to all participants in the study. In addition, regular sampling of the experimental group was conducted throughout the semester in conjunction with classroom instructional activities.

Students from three classes of third-year Japanese at the

University of Hawai`i-Manoa participated in the study. All three classes were instructed by experienced instructors who are native speakers of Japanese. One intact class was designated as the experimental group (n = 5), and twelve volunteer participants from the other two classes (n = 4 and n = 8) were designated as the control group. The participants had studied Japanese for an average of five to eight years, including study in high school and extracurricular Japanese school. With the exception of four native speakers of Chinese (two each in the experimental and control groups, respectively), all participants were native speakers of English.

Explicit instruction

The explicit instruction component was provided was added on to the regular third-year curriculum (80 contact hours), and accounted for approximately 30% of the total contact hours. The instruction was developed to provide: a) information about the function and use of the target items (explanatory handout), b) exposure to native models of non-formal, extended discourse and the use of the target items in such discourse (native-speaker model), c) opportunities for planning the production of non-formal, extended discourse (the planning session), d) opportunities for communicative practice of the target items in

conjunction with extended discourse (authentic performances) and e) feedback on the use of target items and the production of extended discourse (corrective feedback sessions). A detailed description of each of these components is provided below.

The explanatory handout

For each target item or set of items, the students were provided with a two- to three-page explanatory handout containing non-technical descriptions of the function(s) of the item(s) in extended discourse; each handout included sample uses of the item(s) in extended discourse, mostly drawn from natural discourse. The target items presented for explicit instruction on the handouts were selected for their relevance to a) the organization and cohesion of extended discourse and/or b) the expression of speaker stance, speaker perspective and/or speaker subjectivity in extended discourse. There were eight handouts in total, approximately one every two weeks.

The native speaker model

The native speaker model (NSM), conducted as an ad-libbed

interaction between two native speakers (usually the instructor and another native speaker), was presented at the beginning of each lesson as an example of the target task for the given lesson (e.g., tell about how you first became interested in studying Japanese, tell a story about your family, retell the story of a favorite book or movie, etc.). All efforts were made to preserve the naturalness of the interaction: there were no prepared scripts, and no conscious effort was made to include the items targeted for explicit instruction in the model. Furthermore, a native speaker, rather than the students, took the role of addressee in order to discourage the speaker from excessive accommodation to the students' speech level.

The NSM was videorecorded so that, after the initial class discussion of the model, the video could be replayed one or more times to provide the learners with additional opportunities to understand the content and/or to notice the structures used.

The planning session

After the presentation and discussion of the NSM, the class was divided into small groups (2-3 students per group) headed by the instructor or a native Japanese-speaking teaching assistant. Each student was then given an opportunity to talk about and/or present her telling in English, and to ask questions about

vocabulary and structure for production of the telling in Japanese. The instructor/assistant provided feedback to each student regarding the organization, content and clarity of the telling. Feedback included suggestions for adding background information about people and places, leaving out tangential material, providing explanations of participants' motives and/or actions, etc.⁵

Authentic performances

For each task, students were provided with three in-class opportunities to perform their planned telling. Since a different conversational partner elicited the telling each time, these opportunities were labelled authentic performances (AP). For each performance, the instructor or an assistant was the primary addressee, with the other students in the group acting as audience. The instructor/assistant provided backchannel responses and occasionally asked for clarification or additional background information, but tended to avoid extensive interaction with the student until she had concluded her telling. The AP sessions were, on average, spaced two class days apart (i.e., days 2, 5 and 8 of a 10-day lesson).

Corrective feedback

Immediately after each AP, the instructor/assistant provided corrective feedback to the student on her production. Feedback focused on the student's use of the target items and on the overall organization and coherence of the telling. Feedback on grammatical and lexical errors was left to the discretion of each instructor/assistant.

In addition to these three rounds of immediate feedback, the instructor also provided a considerably expanded form of feedback the day after the second AP session (AP2). This expanded feedback was prepared after class by the instructor in collaboration with at least one assistant and the researcher (a non-native speaker). It included a transcript of the student's telling (with editing of false starts, hesitations and the like for clarity), feedback on the organization of the telling and the (mis)use of target items therein, and a proposed version of part, or all, of the telling. Revisions in the proposed version addressed: 1) inappropriate or missed uses of the target items, 2) awkward or non-targetlike presentation (especially excessive use of monoclausal sentences), and/or 3) lack of coherence or cohesion in the student's telling. Grammatical errors were also edited.

On the day after AP2, the instructor/assistant who had been the addressee for that session worked with each of the students in her group to review the expanded feedback. This session

constituted an additional opportunity for both supplementary explicit teaching of the target items and for raising student awareness regarding the production of extended tellings.

Control group instructional treatment

The instruction in the control classes did not include any explicit instruction on the production of extended tellings, nor were the target items for the experimental treatment the focal point of any explicit instruction. However, as in the experimental class, the language of instruction in the control classes was predominantly Japanese. Moreover, students in these classes had regular, in-class opportunities for unscripted spoken interaction in small groups with Japanese native speakers who visited the class throughout the semester. Both control and experimental classes covered the same textbook as part of the regular course curriculum.

Data and Analysis

The data for this study are comprised of a) the experimental and control groups' performances on the pre- and post-test storytelling task and b) the experimental group's tellings from

the second AP sessions (AP2) of lessons 2, 4 and 8 (i.e., weeks 3, 7 and 16 of the 16-week course, respectively). The analysis focuses on the learners' use of n desu, n desu kedo, and n desu ne, a set of linguistic items that were introduced to the experimental group in the third week of the semester, and were the target of much instruction and feedback throughout the semester. These three items play important roles in organizing the presentation of an extended telling, and in expressing the speaker's interpersonal orientation in such a telling. Since these functions also render the telling more coherent and engaging for the listener, I will refer to these three items as "interactional markers"; the specific functions of each marker will be discussed below.

I will address the following questions in examining the effects of the explicit instruction on learner production:

- 1) Does explicit instruction result in increased use of interactional markers?
- 2) Does explicit instruction result in accurate use of interactional markers?
- 3) Are some functions of interactional markers more beneficially affected by/resistant to explicit instruction?

In discussing the pre-/post-test data, I will consider only the first two questions, while all three questions will be addressed in the discussion of the experimental group's APs.

Frequency and accuracy of learner use of interactional markers

Quantitative analysis of the learners' use of the target interactional markers in the pre-/post-test storytelling task reveals marked gains by the experimental group on the post-test. Table 1 reveals that the learners in both groups performed the pre-test task with a near-total absence of interactional markers; for both groups, only two in every hundred clauses, on average, ended with an interactional marker. In each of the two groups, there was only one student who produced interactional markers in the pre-test.

Table 1. Mean probability of use of interactional markers by experimental and control groups for pre- and post-tests (clauses with interactional markers/total clauses)

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	
Experimental	.02 (1/62)	.39 (25/64)	
Control	.02 (2/108)	.00 (0/168)	

The frequency of use changes dramatically for the experimental group's performance on the post-test, which shows a mean probability of nearly four in ten clauses ending with an interactional marker. In contrast, there were no interactional markers produced on the post-test by the control group. Notably, all learners in the experimental group contributed to the increased use of interactional markers, with learner use of the markers ranging from 3-7 tokens per learner. The relatively small number of interactional markers produced in this task reflects the abbreviated nature of the telling associated with the task. These figures, then, clearly reflect the beneficial effects of explicit instruction on the use of interactional markers in extended tellings.

This increased use of interactional markers in the post-test by the experimental group is also characterized by a reasonably good degree of accuracy. Accuracy was determined by acceptability judgments from two Japanese native speakers. The percentage of total uses that were determined to be acceptable constitutes the

"success rate" (i.e., total acceptable uses/total attempted uses).

The success rate on the post-test task for the learners in the experimental group is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Success rate for interactional marker use (acceptable uses/total uses) on the post-test for learners in the experimental group

Marker	A1	A2	А3	A4	A5	Total
n desu	50% (1/2)	33% (2/6)	50% (1/2)	75% (3/4)	67% (2/3)	53% (9/17)
n desu kedo	100% (1/1)	100% (1/1)	NA	50% (1/2)	NA	75% (3/4)
n desu ne	100% (2/2)	NA	100% (1/1)	NA	NA	100% (3/3)
All	80% (4/5)	43% (3/7)	67% (2/3)	67% (4/6)	67% (2/3)	63% (15/24)

With one exception (A2), the learners attained at least a 67% success rate in their use of interactional markers. The greatest variability in success rate occurs with the most frequently used interactional marker, n desu where the rate of success ranges from 33% to 75%. 10

The above results demonstrate that the experimental group made significant gains in both the overall frequency and accuracy of the use of interactional markers in the post-test task. In the subsequent analysis, I will examine the learners' in-class authentic performances. This analysis will provide a clearer

picture of how learner use of interactional markers, and learner production of extended discourse in general, benefitted (or failed to benefit) from the instructional treatment.

Learner use of interactional markers in the AP2s

While frequency and accuracy of use of the interactional markers increased over the course of the semester, progress in the use of the items was not consistent across learners. All five learners made use of n desu, but only four used n desu kedo, and n desu ne was used by three learners. Moreover, the patterns of learner production suggest that, by the end of the semester, four of the five learners were generally competent in the use of n desu, but that only two or three made progress in the use of n desu kedo and n desu n.

Learner use of n desu

Of the three markers, *n desu* has the least restricted context of use, and consequently, occured most frequently within the tellings. The explicit instruction handout provided the following

description of n desu:

Following this definition, which highlights the critical role of n desu in creating discourse cohesion, the interactional function of the marker was explained:

...in Japanese, the simplest way to let the listener know you're not yet finished talking is to use *n desu*. Using *n desu* is especially important at points where you are finishing up one part of your story (a particular scene/event, describing an important person in the story) and moving on to the next development.

Illustrative examples of the organizational and interactional functions of n desu in extended tellings were also presented. The explicit instruction of n desu, then, addressed three facets of the discourse function of the marker: the maintenance of discourse cohesion, the segmentation of the story into 'parts' (e.g.,

scenes, events), and the signalling that one's telling is ongoing.

The learners' use of n desu reflects attention to all three of these functions, with this use increasing in frequency and accuracy over the semester:

Lesson 2: 10 uses with a 70% success rate (7/10)

Lesson 4: 20 uses with a 70% success rate (14/20)

Lesson 8: 46 uses with an 89% success rate $(41/46)^{11}$

The excerpt in (1), produced for the final AP2 of the semester, provides an example of the learner's progress in the use of the marker:

(1) Effective use of *n desu*

- 1 sengetsu ni, ano chikaku no puuru de oboreta no- oboreta
- 2 hito no hanashi o tomodachi kara ki- kiita <u>n desu ne</u>.
- 3 otoko no hito wa, ano daibingu toonamento o, aa renshuu suru
- 4 tame ni, puuru e itta <u>n **desu**</u>.
- 5 sorede, ano hito wa, raifugaado ni, iki o tomete daibingu
- 6 toonamento o renshuu shinakereba naranai to, itte,

- 7 raifugaado wa- raifugaado ga, ii yo to itta <u>n desu</u>. itta <u>n</u>
- 8 <u>da kedo</u>, ano otoko no hito wa, hito wa ano renshuu suru aida
- 9 ni, raifugaado ga, mienakatta **n desu**.
- 10 de, sanjuppun gurai no- de- ato, sanjuppun gurai anoo, onna
- 11 no hito wa, onna no hito ga, raifugaado ni sumimasen, ano
- 12 otoko no hito wa, mizu ni nagai- mizu no naka ni nagai itta
- 13 to itte, raifugaado ga, daijoobu, hito ga, renshuu
- 14 shinakereba naranai to kiita to itta <u>n desu</u>.
- 15 soshitara, ano onna no hito wa demo, juppun gurai mizu no
- 16 naka ni ite, mada mada dete konai to itta <u>n desu</u>.
- 17 de ano raifugaado ga, mizu ni haitte ano tasuke ni, tasuke
- 18 ni ittara, shinde ita <u>n desu</u>. ...((continues)) (A2/L8)

Last month I heard a story from my friend about a person who drowned at the pool nearby n desu ne.

A guy went to the pool to practice for a diving tournament $\underline{\mathbf{n}}$ desu.

So the guy tells the lifeguard I have to practice for this diving tournament by holding my breath, and the lifeguard

said, "Alright." <u>n desu</u>. <u>n da kedo</u>. While the guy was practicing, the lifeguard couldn't see him **n desu**.

So about thirty minutes later, a lady says to the lifeguard, "Excuse me, that guy has been in the water for a long time." The lifeguard said, "It's alright, he said he had to practice." n desu.

Then, the lady said, "But he's been in the water for about ten minutes and he hasn't come up yet." n desu.

So the lifeguard got into the water and when he went in to save $\{\text{the guy}\}$, $\{\text{the guy}\}$ was dead $\underline{\text{n desu}}$...((continues))

In (1), A2's use of n desu contributes to both the cohesiveness of his presentation, and the structuring of the events within the telling. At several points in the story, A2 uses n desu to demarcate scene boundaries or notable developments in the telling events (lines 4, 9, 14, 16, 18). These uses of n desu also signal the hearer that the telling will continue. Notably, A2 not only uses n desu effectively, but also distinguishes between

the use of n desu, n desu kedo (lines 7-8, where n desu is repaired to n desu kedo), and n desu n (line 2).

While learner use of n desu was, on the whole, highly successful, there were numerous (n = 14) anomalous uses of the

marker. Eight of these errors occurred in contexts where a variant of n desu (i.e., n desu kedo or n desu ne) was expected, while another four were produced where a conjunctive form (i.e., - te/-tara) was anticipated. It is noteworthy that both the n desu variants and the conjunctive forms have continuative functions, albeit ones that are distinct from that of n desu. Whereas n desu is used to indicate continuity between scene/event boundaries, the aforementioned forms all provide continuity within scene/event boundaries. The learners' anomalous use of n desu, then, suggests two possible gaps in their understanding of the marker: a) an overgeneralization of the continuative function of n desu, and b) an underdeveloped awareness of the boundary-marking function of n desu (i.e., the segmentation of the story into 'parts'). The anomalous use of n desu in (2) reflects both of these gaps:

(2) Anomalous use of *n desu*

((A4 is talking about her interest in dance; she has just explained that she studied hula for six years as a child.))

- 1 demo jyuuissai ni natta toki ni, terebi o mite, Janet
- 2 Jackson to Paula Abdul no ongaku no video mita <u>n desu kedo</u>,
- 3 eeto fura wa ammari shitaku nakatta n desu.
- 4 eeto, dakara, okaasan ni, eeto, Janet Jackson (to) Paula
- ->5 Abdul no dansu o shitai to iimash- itta n desu.
 - 6 dakara eeto jazu no kurasu ni, eeto, irimash- ireta n desu.

(A4/L2)

but when I turned eleven, I watched TV, and saw Janet Jackson's and Paula Abdul's music videos <u>n desu kedo</u>, {after that} I didn't want to do hula much <u>n desu</u>.

so, I said to my Mom, "I want to dance {like} Janet Jackson and Paula Abdul" <u>n desu</u>.

so, {she} enrolled {me} in a jazz class n desu.

In (2), A4 explains how her interest in dance shifted from hula to jazz-dancing, first telling about her loss of interest in hula (lines 1-3), and then explaining how she came to be enrolled in a jazz dance class (lines 4-6). The (2), then, two scenes or

segments of the telling are presented. However, A4's use of n desu divides this portion of the telling into three segments, with the use of the marker in line 5 disrupting the flow of the second segment.

The proposed feedback version in (2') illustrates how the second segment (lines 4-6) can be presented as a single scene.

- (2') Proposed feedback version of lines 4-6 of (2)
 - 4 sore de haha ni Janetto Jakuson to Poora Abudoru no yoo na
- ->5 dansu o shitai to **ittara**
 - 6 jazu dansu no kurasu ni irete kureta <u>n desu</u>.

so when I told my Mom, "I want to dance like Janet Jackson and Paula Abdul", she enrolled me in jazz dance class \underline{n} \underline{desu} .

In line 5, the use of the -tara form (ittara 'when I said')
renders the daughter's request and the mother's response as a
single, connected segment of the telling. Moreover, the causeeffect relationship between request and response is implied by the

-tara form, obviating A4's use of dakara 'so' (line 6 of (2)) to mark the causal relationship between the two events.

Even more prevalent than the anomalous use of *n desu* was the underuse of the marker. Learner underuse is identified by comparing the learner's actual production with the proposed feedback version. Underuse was classifed into two types: a) errors and b) expansions. Errors are learner utterances without an interactional marker that are edited in the feedback version to include one. Expansions, on the other hand, are utterances with an interactional marker that do not appear in the learner's AP, but are added in the proposed feedback version to create a clearer or more effective telling. The content of expansions is either implicit in the learner's telling itself, or based on information provided by the student during the planning session or the first AP session.

There are 41 errors and 5 expansions associated with the learners' underuse of $n \, desu$. Of the 41 errors, 27 occur when a finite verb form (or, on two occasions, a noun phrase) is used instead of $n \, desu$. While one student, whose tellings were characterized by an overall non-production of $n \, desu$ throughout the semester, accounted for 40% (11 of 27) of these underuse errors, ¹⁴ nearly another 40% (10 of 27) of these errors suggest a pattern of strategic $n \, desu$ avoidance on the part of the other learners. In these errors, the finite verb form occurs either in the final utterance of the telling or at the end of a major

segment of the telling. The excerpt in (3) illustrates this type of underuse.

- (3) Non-production of n desu at the end of a telling
 - 1 ano chichi wa ano mookaru? okane ga mookattara ano haha to
 - 2 ue no imooto to boku ni okane o moratta- kureta <u>n desu</u>.
 - 3 ano haha wa ano nihyaku doru o, agete, ue no imooto hyakugo
 - 4 doru mo moratte- agete, haha sanbyaku doru moratte, ue no
 - 5 imooto wa hyaku gojuu doru moratte, boku wa nihyaku doru o
 - 6 kureta <u>n desu</u>.
- ->7 sorede deta toki yori okanemochi ni <u>narimashita</u>. (A2/L4)

When my dad won, he gave my Mom and my sister and I money \underline{n} \underline{desu} .

He gave my Mom \$200.00, he also gave my sister \$105.00, my Mom got \$300.00, my sister got \$150.00 and I got \$200.00 \underline{n} desu.

So compared to when we had left {Hawai`i}, we became rich.

- (3') Proposed feedback version of line 7 of (3)
- 1 dakara, hawai o deta toki yori kanemochi ni natte kaette ->2 kita **n desu**.

So compared to when we had left Hawai`i, we came home richer n desu.

In (3), the learner demonstrates an ability to use n desu to structure his telling (lines 2 and 6); yet the marker is not produced in the telling-final turn (line 7). However, as is reflected in (3'), n desu is expected in this position, serving to bring the final segment of the telling to a close.

This pattern of *n desu* underuse is clearly evident among the telling-final turns of the fourteen APs examined. Eight end with a finite verb (with seven of these being corrected to *n desu* in the feedback version), and four end with a formulaic closing turn (e.g., *owari* 'the end'; *to iu koto desu* 'that's it'). Only two end with *n desu*. While both telling-final *n desu* and telling-final formulaic phrases were modelled in the native speaker models and in the feedback, there was no modelling of telling-final finite verbs. This pattern, then, suggests a strategic non-use of *n desu*, with learners seeking out a linguistic means of signalling

closure to contrast with the continuative function of n desu.

This pattern of learner production is consistent with the gaps in the learners' understanding of n desu that were shown for the anomalous uses of the marker: a) an overgeneralization of the continuative function of n desu, and b) an underdeveloped awareness of the boundary-marking function of n desu (i.e., the segmentation of the story into 'parts'). Notably, this pattern of errors also reflects learner attention to a discourse-level, interactional demand of the task, the closure of the telling. Thus, while this pattern reveals a gap in the instruction of n desu, it also demonstrates that the instructional approach itself successfully engaged the learners in managing the interactional demands of producing an extended telling.

Learner use of n desu kedo

In comparison with learner use of n desu, the use of n desu kedo was more limited (n = 19), but, overall, highly successful: 16 of the 19 uses (84%) were accurate. The lower production of this marker may be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that

n desu kedo has more restricted use than n desu in extended tellings, and thus is expected to appear less frequently. However, as with n desu, the learners showed a strong tendency to underproduce the marker (n = 31). 15

The more limited use of n desu kedo was evident in the explicit instruction, where only one basic discourse function was described for the marker: 16

n desu kedo -- sets up a single point of background
information which the listener requires in order to
understand the subsequent content of the story

This definition was augmented by the following explanation:

In telling a story, you may want to mention a single point of information that will provide the listener with the background necessary to understand why someone in your story (re)acted or felt the way s/he did. In such cases, using n desu kedo in conjunction with that information signals the listener that what you have just said is background information, rather than a new development in or an important part of the story itself.

The high success rate with n desu kedo reflects the learners' competence in using the marker to signal this backgrounding function in their tellings: over 50% (9 of 16) of the successful uses of n desu kedo present "a single point of background information". Moreover, only five of the 30 instances of underuse of the marker involve this function. 17

It is noteworthy that the majority of backgrounding clauses marked by n desu kedo (5 of 9) are used at the opening of the telling to present information about the topic or the setting of the telling, as in (3) and (4), respectively:

(3) Use of n desu kedo to introduce background information relevant to the topic of the telling

((The learner talks about his favorite hobby.))

1 boku wa iroiro na shumi ga aru <u>n desu kedo</u>...((continues))
(A5/L2)

I have several interests **n desu kedo** ...((continues))

(4) Use of n desu kedo to introduce background information relevant to the setting of the telling

((The learner tells the story of "Beauty and the Beast".))

- 1 ee aru hi, ano, hitori no hatsumeika ga, ano: jibun no uma
- 2 de hatsumei taikai ni itta n desu kedo... ((continues)) (A1/L8)

One day, an inventor went to an inventors' convention on his horse n desu kedo...((continues))

There was no instruction on the handout regarding the use of n desu kedo to present the topic or setting of a telling, nor did the examples on the handout reflect this telling-initial positioning of the marker. Thus, the learners' use of n desu kedo to mark background information reflected an uninstructed preference for the positioning (telling-initial) and function (introduce topic/setting) of the marker. This pattern of learner use again suggests learner attention to the discourse-level

interactional demands of the extended telling task, in this case, the communicative need to orient the hearer to the teller's frame of reference (i.e., topic/setting) at the outset of a telling.

Learner underproduction of *n desu kedo* (19 errors and 11 expansions) also reflected a clear pattern: over 73% (22 of 30) of the instances of underproduction (12 of 19 errors and 11 of 12 expansions) were associated with the introduction of a new segment in the telling. In an extended telling, *n desu kedo* may be used to signal the hearer that a new segment -- a change of perspective, a change of scene, a shift to a sub-topic, a reopening of a story ending, etc. -- is being introduced. Missed uses of *n desu kedo* in these contexts may lessen the salience of a scene/perspective shift, which may, in turn, reduce the hearer's ability to follow the development of and/or understand the point of a telling.

An example of this missed use of the segment-introducing function of n desu kedo is provided in (5):

(5) Use of n desu kedo to introduce a new segment in the telling

((The learner, retelling the story of the movie "Beauty and the Beast", explains that, because the Beast had fallen in love with Beauty, he allowed her to leave the castle to

rescue her father.))

- 1 de naze ano:, yajuu san ga ano Belle chan o nante yuu shaku-
- 2 shakuhoo kureta ka to iu to, ano:, (.) kare ga, ano Belle
- 3 chan no koto, (.) koi ni ochite ((material deleted)) suki ni
- 4 natchatta. sugoi tsuyoi ai datta.
- ->5 sore de, kekkyoku, ano ato kanojo oshiro ni modotte,
 - 6 (), ee yajuu kara, mahoo, tokete, de ningen ni
 - 7 modotta. ta <u>n desu</u>.

so why um:, did the Beast what's it called? relea- release Beauty?, um:, (.) he, fell in love, (.) with Beauty ((material deleted)) he fell in love with her. it was an extremely strong love.

then, finally, after that she went back to the castle <u>and</u>,

(), um the spell was removed from the beast, and he became human again n desu.

In lines 1-4, there is a suspension in the story development as the learner explains the Beast's motivation for his release of Beauty. In line 5, the learner initiates the next segment of his telling in which he reports three events: Beauty's return to the

castle, the removal of the spell on the Beast, and the Beast's return to human form. The continuity of these three events, and of the segment overall, is maintained by two -te forms -- modotte 'go back to and' (line 5) and tokete 'remove (the spell) and' (line 6), which effectively mark the segment as a temporally-ordered reporting of the next sequence of events in the movie. This presentation of the segment, however, is problematic since it fails to convey to the hearer that the events reported, more than merely being "the next thing that happens," actually constitute the final resolution of the story (i.e., the Beast, having found true love with Beauty, breaks the spell and returns to human form).

The proposed feedback version in (5') reflects the learner's missed use of n desu kedo to introduce this segment:

- (5') Proposed feedback version of lines 5-7 of (5)
 - sore de, kekkyoku, sono ato kanojo ga oshiro ni
- ->6 modoru <u>n desu kedo</u>,
 - 7 soshitara (), ee yajuu wa, mahoo ga, tokete, de ningen ni
 - 8 modotta. ta n desu. 18

The use of *n desu kedo* in line 6 signals that Beauty's return to

the castle is an event that introduces the next segment; in other words, this event provides a frame within which to interpret the subsequent events. By using *n desu kedo* in this way, the content of lines 7-8 becomes the focus of the telling. In (5'), then, the use of *n desu kedo* (line 6) communicates the salience of the scene shift (i.e., Beauty's return to the castle), thereby addressing the teller's interactional need to prepare the hearer for the culminating events that will bring this segment, and the telling itself, to a close.

The near total non-use of n desu kedo for this segmentintroducing function is, no doubt, attributable in part to the fact that this function was not introduced on the explicit instruction handout. 19 However, it is important to note that learners were at least as likely to exclude segment-introducing information as they were to include it: expansions account for nearly half (11 of 23) of the cases of underuse of segmentintroducing n desu kedo. This suggests that, with respect to the introduction of story segments, the learners were having at least as much trouble providing the relevant segment-introducing information as they were using $n \, desu \, kedo$ to do so. In sum, the pervasive underuse (both errors and expansions) of segmentintroducing n desu kedo would seem to indicate that the learners were not able to manage (and, given the absence of explicit instruction, were possibly not even aware of) the marking of salient segment boundaries in their extended tellings. It remains to be seen in future studies whether learner awareness of these demands, and the role of n desu kedo in addressing them, can be beneficially influenced by explicit instruction.

Learner use of n desu ne

As with n desu kedo, the discourse function of n desu ne is more restricted than that of n desu and therefore is expected to occur with less frequency than n desu in extended tellings. In fact, n desu ne was the least frequently-produced marker (n = 10), with only three learners producing one, three, and six tokens of the marker, respectively. While n desu ne was used with a high success rate (7 of 10 uses), there was also a strong tendency for underuse (18 errors and 4 expansions).

In presenting the function of *n desu ne*, the importance of the marker for managing teller-hearer interaction and for conveying the point of the telling was highlighted both in the abbreviated description of the function of the marker:

 central to the point or meaning of the story itself.

and in the more extended prose explanation:

...the speaker uses n desu ne to make sure that the listener is following before s/he (i.e., the storyteller) moves on to the next part of the story.

These functions were illustrated on the handout in examples where the marker was used in telling-initial position to present

components of the setting that were directly relevant to the point of the telling.

Consistent with the examples on the handout, three of the seven successful uses of *n* desu ne occur in telling-initial position with the function of presenting salient components of the setting. Moreover, two errors of underuse, where ne is produced without n desu, also occur in telling-initial position with this function. An example of the successful use of n desu ne to mark a salient component of the setting is presented in (6):

(6) Telling-initial use of <u>n desu ne</u> to mark a salient

component(s) of the setting

- 1 kono mae no kanshasai yasumi de ano chichi to haha to ue no
- ->2 imooto to isshoni, ano Las Vegas e itta n desu ne?
 - 3 eeto ano chichi to haha wa, boku no tanjoobi tanjoobi no
 - 4 purezento ni, ano boku to, ue no imooto ano Las Vegas e
 - 5 tsurete itta n desu ...((continues)) (A2/L4)

This past Thanksgiving Break, I went to Las Vegas with my mother, father and sister **n desu ne**?

My mother and father took me and my sister to Las Vegas for my birthday present n desu. ...((continues))

The learner's use of *n desu ne* (line 2) establishes the location of the telling and the main participants, highlighting this information as essential to the hearer's understanding of the point of the telling. As the learner's subsequent telling recounts his experience watching his father gamble in Las Vegas, and the way in which the father shared his earnings with each member of the family, it is clear that the information marked by *n desu ne* is indeed important to the point of the telling.

While this telling-initial use of n desu ne was the only one

modelled on the handout, the description of *n desu ne* on the handout did not entail any such limitation; moreover, through the feedback sessions, the learners were exposed to other positionings and uses of the marker. The influence of this aspect of the instructional treatment is evident in the fact that the remaining seven attempts with *n desu ne* (4 of 7 successful) all occur in conjunction with salient events at non-initial positions in the tellings.

The most common function that n desu ne serves in such non-initial positions is the highlighting of an action or event that immediately precedes or, often, leads to a culminating point in the telling. This function was evident in six of the seven remaining uses of n desu ne (three of them successful). Also, two-thirds (12 of 18) of the instances of underuse of the marker occurred in conjunction with this function. Notably, both the use and underuse of n desu ne for this action/event-highlighting function tend to occur in tellings with a relatively elaborated plot. Thus, it is not surprising that Al, the learner who told the most extended and elaborated tellings, accounts for four of the six attempted uses and seven of the twelve underuses, of n desu ne for this function. Al also accounts for all three successful uses of the marker for this action/event-highlighting function.

Examples of Al's successful use and his underuse of the marker are provided in (7):

(7) Successful use and underuse of *n desu ne* to signal an important development in a telling

((Retelling of the movie <u>Beauty and the Beast</u>: Beauty's father, an inventor, gets lost on his way home.))

- 1 tochuu ni ano michi ni mayotte, ano:, soshitara ame ga futte
- ->2 kita n- <u>futte kite</u>
 - 3 ano chikaku no, oshiro? ga atta node, ano oshiro- oshiro- ni
- ->4 hai- haitta n desu ne?
 - 5 demo ano oshiro ni sunderu hitori no yajuu? yajuu ga, ano
 - 6 hatsumeika to atte, ee oshiro ni hairu no wa, dame (da)kara,
 - 7 ano, hatsumeika no hitojichi o totta n desu. (A1/L8)

On the way, he got lost and then <u>it began to rain and</u>, since there was a nearby castle, he entered the castle n desu ne. But the beast that lived in the castle met the inventor and, since it was forbidden to enter the castle, he took the inventor hostage n desu.

In (7), the learner relates a significant development in the story: Beauty's father's being taken hostage by the Beast. In line 4, the learner's use of *n* desu ne marks the father's entry into the castle as significant to the plot development; the dire consequences of the father's action are reported in the subsequent text (lines 5-7). This effective use of n desu ne reflects the functions described in the explicit instruction: drawing the hearer into the story, and marking an event as central to the plot development (i.e., the point of the story).

The learner's underuse of n desu ne (line 2) is evident from a comparison of his text with the proposed feedback version, provided in (7'):

(7') Proposed feedback version of lines 1-4 of (7)

- 1 tochuu de ano michi ni mayotte, ano:, soshitara ame ga futte
- ->2 kita n desu ne?
 - 3 ano chikaku ni, oshiro? ga atta node, sono oshiro- oshiro-
 - 4 ni hai- haitta n desu ne? 21

In (7'), in contrast with the learner's version, both the change in weather (line 2) and the father's entering the castle (line 4) are marked as salient to the plot development. The additional use

of *n desu ne* reflects the fact that the rainfall is, in fact, a key event since it causes the father to seek refuge in the castle. The learner's underuse of the marker here results in a failure to convey this information to the hearer. Instead, in the learner's version, the onset of the rainfall (line 2) is reported with a conjoining -te form, which effectively presents the rainfall as one of a series of undifferentiated, temporally-ordered events.

Five of Al's seven instances of underuse for this function of n desu ne occur with a conjoining -te form, suggesting that he is not always aware of the significance of a given action/event visa-a-vis the plot development. This aspect of Al's pattern of underuse, then, reflects a second critical component of the successful use of the action/event-highlighting function of n desu ne: not only must a teller present a telling with elaborated plot development, but he must also be aware of which actions/events are salient in the plot development. As is evident from the relatively low production of n desu ne in general, and in conjunction with the action/event-highlighting function in particular, the task of producing a coherent, extended telling with even minimal plot development proved to be a significant challenge for most of the learners in the experimental group.

The beneficial effects of explicit instruction

As I have demonstrated above, the experimental instructional approach clearly had an overall beneficial effect on the learners' use of the interactional markers n desu, n desu kedo, and n desu ne in conjunction with the production of non-formal, extended tellings. Learner success in the use of these interactional markers was evident in the learners' handling of both the organizational and interactional demands of the task. On the whole, the learners made effective use of n desu to maintain the flow of a telling and to structure the action/event sequences of the telling (i.e., the boundary-marking function of n desu) in a coherent way. Learner production also reflected general success in the use of n desu kedo for the introduction of background information into the telling. Finally, one of the learners showed a developing proficiency in the use of n desu ne to signal significant plot developments in his tellings.

The instructional approach also seemed to increase learner attention to the interactional demands of the task even in areas where no explicit instruction was provided. The uninstructed pattern of learner usage of *n desu kedo* and *n desu ne* to manage the openings of tellings addressed the interactional need to of establish the topic of the telling and/or provide the hearer with information about the setting. Similarly, the uninstructed (and

in most cases with finite verb forms, anomalous) use of finite verb forms and formulaic phrases in telling-final position preferred by the learners reflects learner attention to the interactional demand of bringing a telling to a close (i.e., signalling an end to the telling). These results support House's (1996) findings that an instructional approach that includes explicit instruction (combined with communicative practice and feedback) heightens learners' ability to attend to the interactional needs of the addressee.

In contrast to the learners' success with these aspects of their tellings, learner production showed considerably less success with the management of organizational and interactional demands relevant to the internal structuring of the telling. Specifically, there was little progress in the learners' ability to mark shifts in scene/perspective or to build up/highlight the point of a telling through the effective use of interactional markers. Although both the explicit instruction and the corrective feedback were directed at these functions of the interactional markers, learner production did not reflect an overall benefit from this focus.

With regard to this result, the possibility of inadequacies in the instruction, feedback, and/or practice components of the instructional approach cannot be discounted. For example, gaps in the explicit instruction handout were noted above (e.g., the segment-introducing function of *n desu kedo* was not introduced; no

example of the action/event-highlighting function of *n desu ne* was provided). Moreover, although these gaps were addressed in the feedback sessions, the amount of instruction each learner received on these points was, effectively, proportional to his/her production of incorrect or missed uses of the interactional markers for these functions.²³ Thus, learners who produced tellings with numerous scene shifts or extensive topic/plot development tended to receive more feedback than those who did not. If feedback is indeed a critical factor in the success of explicit instruction, then this differential in the amount and nature of feedback provided may account, at least in part, for the variability in the learners' use of and success with *n desu kedo* and *n desu ne* for functions related to the internal organization and presentation of the telling.

Finally, the question of time must be considered. The explicit instruction comprised approximately one-third of the eighty instructional hours for the course; since all learners showed some development in their ability to use the interactional markers in managing the demands of the task, it is unclear whether more practice time, or a longer period of instruction would have resulted in greater overall gains. Until these aspects of the experimental treatment are more fully explored, it is premature to suggest that the telling-internal functions of the interactional markers are in some way resistant to the beneficial effects of explicit instruction.²⁴

In sum, there remain many issues to address regarding the variables underlying learner success with this course of experimental instruction. Yet, it is clear that the instructional approach enabled all the learners to improve their ability to manage in target-like ways the most fundamental aspects of the task: openings, presentation of content and closings. tellings were clearly recognizable as such, and, in the words of the instructor the students definitely "sounded like they were speaking Japanese." From this perspective, then, the claims for the beneficial effects of explicit instruction combined with communicative practice and feedback have been shown to be supported for the production of non-formal, extended tellings. At the same time, the gaps in the learners' production reflect the need to further explore the organizational and interactional demands of extended tellings in order to develop more effective materials and approaches for the explicit instruction of this genre. Based on the positive outcomes and general effectiveness of the approach used in this study, the value of pursuing these efforts is evident.

NOTES

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- 2. The potential importance of "noticing" for explicit instruction is also pointed out by Kasper (1997) and Tateyama et al. (1997).
- 3. Both practice and feedback figured importantly in House's (1996) study.
- 4. The picture-guided, storytelling task from Tarone and Yule (1989, p. 173) was used for both pre- and post-tests.
- 5. During the planning session, students often found that their planned telling was "too complicated" or "not very interesting," and would alter the content or nature of the telling.
- 6. "Authentic" refers to the fact that the student was responsible for fully and effectively communicating her telling to an addressee who was not familiar with the content of it.

"Performance" reflects that the students' production was elicited as part of a planned, classroom activity.

- 7. Although the learners received instruction on five interactional markers -- n desu, n desu kedo, n desu ne, n desu yo and n desu yo ne --, they produced only the first three markers in the three APs examined (Lessons 2, 4, and 8).
- 8. The mean probability of the occurence of an interactional marker was calculated by dividing the number of clauses ending with an interactional marker by the total number of clauses (both dependent and independent).
- 9. The mean probability of occurence for the final authentic performance of the semester, a retelling of a favorite movie or television episode, was .38. The fact that the figures for these two highly disparate tasks (i.e., the post-test task and the authentic performance) are virtually identical lends strength to the figure as a reliable indication of learner progress in the use of interactional markers in extended tellings.
- 10. In a relatively short telling, when n desu appears too frequently, the function of the marker will tend to be anomalous. It is this type of n desu overuse that underlies A2's low success rate. Notably, in the more extended tellings of the learners' APs, the success rate for n desu reached 89% in the final lesson of the semester.
 - 11. The increased use of n desu also reflects the production

of increasingly longer tellings.

- 12. The functions of *n desu kedo* and *n desu ne* will be discussed below; -te 'and', and -tara 'when', are clause-linking morphemes.
- 13. In the proposed feedback version, changes to the learner's telling were motivated by awkwardness or unnaturalness of the telling, particularly with regard to the coherence of the telling. However, given the nature of discourse, such awkward or unnatural text may be edited in a number of ways. Since the proposed feedback version constitutes only one possible way of editing a learner's telling, the figures reported for learner underuse must be treated as rough estimates.
- 14. In the APs examined, A3 produced only four instances of *n* desu but, notably, all were accurate. This production is the lowest among the learners, constituting less than half of the total for the next lowest in production.
- 15. Eleven of the 14 tellings required the addition of *n desu kedo;* two of the tellings not requiring remediation were extremely short, underdeveloped tellings from Lesson 2.
- 16. While *n desu kedo* has other functions in extended tellings, the initial explanation of the marker (provided on the handout in the third week of instruction) was limited to this single function. During the semester, other functions were

introduced in conjunction with the feedback sessions.

- 17. The second most common function of n desu kedo (n = 5) was marking a contrastive relationship between states or events in the telling; this reflects the learners' familiarity with the semantic meaning of kedo 'but'.
- 18. The gloss for (5') is equivalent to that for lines 5-7 of (5), except that "then" (i.e., soshitara) replaces the first "and" (i.e., -te).
- 19. It was, however, incorporated into the expanded feedback provided after AP2.
- 20. Often this use of n desu ne creates a sense of suspense in the telling, a signal that something significant is about to happen in the telling.
- 21. The gloss for (7') is equivalent to that for lines 1-4 of (7), except that the second "and" (-te) is best glossed by an intonational pattern that marks an impending, ominous development.
- 22. It is important to note that this sequence of events may be related in a variety of ways that do not employ *n desu ne*. The critical point here is that, regardless of how the events are related, the causal effect of the rainfall and the highlighting of the father's entering the castle as an action that will have serious consequences, must be marked by the teller. Given the organization of the learner's original version in (6), it was determined that this marking could be most economically and

effectively accomplished by the addition of n desu ne.

- 23. Since both the immediate and extended feedback sessions were conducted as small-group activities, there were opportunities for learners to benefit from the feedback provided to fellow learners. However, both Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990, 1993) and Sharwood Smith's auto-input hypothesis (1988, cited in House 1996, p. 246) propose that linguistic development derives from comparing one's **own** output with native production and recognizing the differences, rather than simply being exposed to instruction that highlights these differences. Thus, receiving feedback on one's own production would be expected to have a beneficial effect on the learner, while overhearing feedback to another learner would not necessarily be expected to have this effect.
- 24. In addition to possible inadequacies in the instructional treatment, there are two learner variables that may also be relevant to the results: a) the learner's ability to perform an extended telling in his native language, and b) learner fluency. With respect to the former, it is clear that the ability to tell 'a good story' or provide a clear explanation is not one that all speakers of a language share equally. Any extended telling is, effectively, a performance that may be accomplished with greater or lesser interactional and organizational skill. Since there was no independent measure of this ability, it is not clear whether the learners' lack of progress in using interactional markers to

develop the internal structure of their tellings reflects a general inability to do so (regardless of language), or whether it reflects a more limited proficiency in the use of the markers in conjunction with the production of extended tellings in Japanese.

As for the latter variable, fluency, although no independent measure was taken, there were two learners with extensive prior contact with Japanese native speakers who clearly were the most fluent learners in the experimental group. These two learners consistently produced longer, more elaborated tellings, used n desu in a highly accurate and effective way, and made the most extensive use of n desu kedo and n desu ne for the internal structuring of their tellings. Their extensive, prior interaction with Japanese native speakers may have provided these learners with a heightened awareness of the interactional and organizational demands of extended tellings, and may, therefore, have made them more receptive to the instruction and feedback. Further consideration of both of these variables should be addressed in future studies.

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