

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TALK AS A SIMPLIFIED REGISTER

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Introduction

Language learning has two dimensions: the learners and the environment. The first dimension, the learners, involves whatever learners bring into the classroom: "all the mental and physical machinery." The second dimension includes "the teacher, the classroom and the surrounding community" (Burt and Dulay, 1981). In the past decade there has been a "preponderance of learning - over teaching - oriented research" in second/foreign language education, as documented by Politzer (1981) in his content analysis of four major journals (*The TESOL Quarterly*, *Language Learning*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and *the Modern Language Journal*).

However, there seems to be a shift in research orientation. Hakuta and Cancino (1977) reviewed four analytical approaches used in second-language research: contrastive analysis, error analysis, performance analysis, and discourse analysis. Viewing the shift from one approach to another, one can observe that interest in product oriented research, which has focused on the learner's output, has been moving to interest in input analysis (Long, 1981a).

In light of the recent emphasis on input analysis, Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975), who studied children's L2 acquisition process, emphasized the effects of frequency in input speech. They further commented on the significant role of perceptual salience of forms. Another support of the input emphasis is given by Larsen-Freeman (1978), who discussed explanations of the accuracy order of L2 adults and concluded that "morpheme frequency of occurrence

in native speaker speech is the principal determinant for the oral production morpheme accuracy order of ESL learners" (Larsen-Freeman, 1978: 377-379). In relation to input significance, Krashen (1980, 1981, 1982) describes his "comprehensible input" theory with a formula of "the acquirer's $i+1$ structure" where "i" stands for the stage of the acquirer's interlanguage development. In other words, the classroom input should aim at the level which is a little higher (+1) than the acquirer's level. Schumann (1982: 356), from the position of the language learner, uses the term "intake" by which he means that "in order to communicate they (learners) restrict the amount of input they receive as intake, and then use this restricted intake to produce target language speech."

In a foreign language teaching situation like the teaching of English in Japan, the students' "comprehensible" language input is limited to the classroom. Of course, students have access to language input from other sources, such as foreign movies, TV, radio, or books. However, in terms of oral input comprehensible to various levels of the students' proficiency, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the input is limited to the classroom situation. Therefore, one of the crucial questions for students' language acquisition in Japan is whether or not the input received by students in an educational institution is in the " $i+1$ " range advocated by Krashen. In order to design research concerning the above question, the writer in this paper intends to review 1) various approaches to classroom language, 2) research of foreign language teacher talk as a simplified register, and 3) studies of pedagogical strategies and language functions. At the end, several specific research questions will be presented for future research.

Various Approaches to Classroom Language

Communication in the classroom context can be studied with various approaches. Judging from the review of classroom discourse

by Hatch and Long (1980), classroom communication has been studied in terms of interaction. Some of the major works cited by both Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Hatch and Long (1980) were 1) Flanders (1970) who compared what teachers say in class with the results of student achievements, based on a classification of linguistic data (asking questions, lecturing, giving directions, etc.) and a different level of abstraction (accepting feeling, praising or encouraging, etc.), 2) Barnes (1969) who categorized the questions raised by the teacher (factual, reasoning, open questions, and social questions), and 3) Bellack et al. (1966) who presented a hierarchical structure for lessons with the lowest unit of moves, divided into soliciting, responding, structuring, and reacting. Further systematic discourse analysis of classroom language is presented in detail by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) with the notions of acts, moves, exchanges, transactions, and lessons, hierarchically arranged from a low to a high rank.

In the field of English as a Second Language Fanselow (1977) cautioned against simply subjective and judgmental comments on classroom teachers' performances, and then proposed a descriptive and nonjudgmental framework, the so-called FOCUS (Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings). With this system five characteristics of communication were identified: the source, the medium, the use, the content, and the pedagogical purposes.

Besides the interactional analysis of classroom language, teacher talk can be viewed from the perspective of register analysis. The term "register" was first coined by T. B. W. Reid (1956) to refer to a variety of a language suitable for particular situations. Since then register studies have been refining the concept and establishing the principal situational dimensions for register analysis. Halliday (1968, 1980) made a clear distinction between dialect and register: the former defined as a variety of a language distinguished according to the user and the latter as a variety distinguished according to

use. This distinction was adopted in the work of many linguists.

In the establishment of the principal situational dimensions, there has been some disagreement and overlapping among various researchers. For example, Halliday (1968) proposed three dimensions of register: 1) field of discourse, 2) mode of discourse, and 3) style of discourse (1968: 152), and then refined these parameters as 1) the field, 2) the tenor, and 3) the mode (1980: 12). On the other hand, Ellis and Ure (1969) classified registers within four dimensions: 1) field, 2) mode, 3) role, and 4) formality (1969: 253-254). Hymes (1974) and Fishman (1972) included the following situational dimensions which influence register variations: 1) the speaker and the addressee, 2) their roles in discourse, 3) the discourse topic, 4) the setting of the discourse, and 5) the mode of discourse.

If Ellis and Ure's dimensions are applied to Foreign Language Teacher Talk, register may be characterized as follows: 1) field: teaching a foreign language, 2) mode: mainly spoken two-way interaction with the use of written materials, 3) role: providing grammatical and/or communicative drills, and 4) formality: relatively formal when explaining grammatical structures and more informal when engaged in casual communication. However, this description misses a crucial point in relation to the teacher talk of the foreign language classroom. That is, the addressees of the target foreign language are linguistically limited in competence.

The speech of native adults addressed to those who have limited competence in the language has been investigated as simplified register, e.g., foreigner talk and baby talk (Elliot, 1981; Ferguson, 1981, 1982). The identification of these registers in Ferguson's methodology is made by comparison with "the ordinary conversational language of the community" (Ferguson, 1981: 10). Besides the characteristic of simplification in these registers, secondary or "displaced" functions of register exist. For instance, the

secondary function of baby talk exists in dialogs between owners and pets or between lovers, and foreigner talk may be observed in talking about the speech of foreigners or deviant varieties of speech (Ferguson, 1981: 10).

Even though there seems to be a distinction between teacher talk, foreigner talk, and baby talk in the literature, there are strong similarities in speech modifications among these registers. Furthermore, there seems to be possible overlapping among these registers in a country like Japan when the English language is taught by native speakers of English. It is quite probable that the teacher (native speaker of English) will adjust his/her speech, depending on the linguistic level of the learners. If the learner is a young child, some aspects of baby talk would be absorbed into the adult speech, or if the student is an adult, some characteristics of foreigner talk may emerge in the speech of the native speaker of English, even in the classroom situation.

Future research will be limited to classroom language variation, that is, teacher talk in a foreign language classroom which is a specific case of register study involving a specific situation (teaching and communicating), a speaker (a native or non-native speaker-teacher), and addressees (non-native learners) who are linguistically limited in competence in the target language. Therefore, the adjustment phenomenon in foreign language teacher talk can be studied as a register in the future research. In the following section, studies on simplified register will be reviewed in detail.

Simplified Teacher Talk as a Register

The notion of simplification needs to be clarified here if the accommodation phenomenon in foreign language teacher talk is considered as a "simplified register." In the field of second language learning, Corder (1981) makes a distinction between 1) the accommo-

dated rhetoric register that native speakers use to foreigners and infants, and 2) the simple code that foreigners and infants use. The former is a simplified register, simple enough for the receiver to process, and is characterized as simplified use of the fully complex code. The accommodated rhetoric, he claims, is part of the competence of all adult speakers of a language. On the other hand, the latter code is characterized by the use of a structurally simple code. An assumption for his notion of "simple" and "simplified" is that those (infants and foreigners) who have not mastered the code of the adult or target language cannot simplify the code.

Meisel (1977) proposes two kinds of simplification: restrictive and elaborative simplification. The function of the restrictive simplification is to achieve "an optimal result in communication," reducing the grammar to forms easy enough for the listener to follow. The elaborative simplification is a language learners' strategy that will lead to the complexity of the grammatical system of the language. Therefore, even though Meisel admits the same characteristics among the speech of non-native speakers and foreigner talk, he claims that the "simplified register" that native speaker may use is considered as "restrictive simplification."

The question now is what constitutes simplification. Ferguson (1982: 59) points out "the general agreement" or "consensus" regarding what constitutes simplification and further lists several examples to demonstrate what is complex and what is simpler or simplified. They are a) reduction of inventory (linguistic form), semantic range, or language functions, and b) regularization, i.e., the elimination of alternative structures at certain levels. In the current research Ferguson's notion of simplicity is adopted for the description of foreign language teacher talk.

In the literature of simplified registers, initial works on the descriptive register studies focused on syntax, phonology, mor-

phology, and vocabulary (Ferguson, 1971, 1975, 1977; Henzl, 1973, 1979), but later on, in addition to this aspect, conversational or pedagogical functions (e.g., clarification, repetition, etc.) were also studied (Gaies, 1977; Freed, 1980, 1981). Furthermore, there seems to be an effort to dichotomize the study of modified language by the native speaker into "input" and "interaction" (Long, 1981b) or into "input" and "negotiation" (Scarcella and Higa, 1982).

Long (1981b) categorized the previous studies on this topic into four groups: indirect studies, observational studies, quasi-experimental studies, and classroom studies. Most of the simplified register studies have focused on situations outside the classroom, so the number of classroom studies is limited.

Henzl (1973) is one of the few researchers who focused on foreign language (Czech) teacher register. In her experimental study, the speech of eight native Czech speakers addressed to other native speakers and their speech to a group of American students of Czech were compared on the levels of lexicon, syntax, and phonology. Syntactic complexity was measured by the number of words per sentence, and the number of subordinate clauses. The number of unfinished sentences were also counted to examine the quality of sentence formation.

Henzl (1979) introduced four major differences in a second work: 1) the subjects for the second paper were professional foreign language teachers, unlike the subjects (native speakers of Czech) in the previous study; 2) two more foreign languages (English and German) were added for teacher samples; 3) teachers' speech adjustment was measured, depending on the two levels of language proficiency of the students (advanced and beginning levels), and 4) the verb token/type ratio was introduced as one dependent variable to measure an aspect of verb usage.

In contrast to the three levels of lexicon, syntax, and phonology in Henzl (1973), Gaies (1977) and Freed (1980, 1981) in-

investigated syntactic characteristics in terms of simplified input. The subjects for Gaies' study were eight teachers. Three of them were non-native speakers of English who were highly proficient in English with teaching experience in their home countries, and five of them were native speakers of English with limited prior teaching experiences. Their teacher talk was recorded three times, at the beginning, middle and end of a ten-week period. The first 500 words in utterances containing an independent clause were collected as samples from 24 tapes. These samples were compared with the first 500 words spoken in the practicum class meeting. In Gaies' study syntactic complexity was measured in a detailed way: words per T-unit, ratio of clauses (main and subordinate) in T-units, words per clause, adjective (relative) clauses per T-units, adverbial clauses per 100 T-units, and noun clauses per 100 T-units.

In Freed's (1980) research, approximately 100 utterances of baby talk (mothers' speech to their children) and foreigner talk (native speakers' speech to foreigners) were compared with Americans' speech to Freed herself. The syntactic variables measured were percentage of sentences with one S-node (one main verb), the mean length in words, S-node per average sentence, surface sentence types, and transformational complexity in questions.

The major differences between Freed's 1980 and 1981 papers were 1) the addition of an explicit description of subjects and sample utterances (150 utterances of foreigner talk were studied in contrast to about 100 utterances in the 1980 study), 2) a more explicit comparison of native talk with the other two registers, 3) the addition of statistical probabilities in comparisons, 4) the addition of speculation on why native speakers showed a tendency to change from wh-questions to yes/no questions in their speech to foreign students (that is, native speakers' monitoring of the complexity of wh-questions, and then native speakers' efforts to limit the demand on the foreigners' responses), and 5) a complete

summary of ten functional categories.

Hatch et al. (1978) analyzed three kinds of discourse: 1) the speech of a teacher who was conversing with a beginners' class of English at a community adult school, 2) a discourse between an English speaker and an adult learning English without instruction, and 3) taped telephone conversations between foreign students and public service personnel. The first task, which is most relevant to the present research, simply served to give illustrations of ungrammatical sentences produced by the teacher.

Chaudron's (1982, 1983) interests were focused on the conflict between simplification in the linguistic sense and the cognitive sense, so his constant question was whether or not teacher talk can aid students' comprehension. His main analyses were focused on lexicon in terms of simplification, explanation of difficult terms, and use of anaphoric references.

Chaudron (1982) investigated the variability of teachers' speech to L2 learners, with a focus on vocabulary elaboration. His data on teacher talk came from four schools: a reception school for high-school-age immigrants, two regular high schools for ESL students, and a freshman university program for ESL students. One main difference from other studies is that academic classes such as geography, art, history, were dealt with, instead of language classes.

The range of the structures in vocabulary elaboration in Chaudron's data was immense: e.g., phonological, morphological, syntactic, and discourse characteristics. The semantic-cognitive relationships used in elaboration were subordinate, superordinate and equivalent ones. According to his conclusion, a major problem is that the teacher's over-elaboration of vocabulary will cause the students difficulty in comprehending the teacher's speech, because they can not distinguish whether the added information was redundant or new information.

A major finding from the above research was the predominant agreement that syntactic simplification was observed in teacher talk: shorter sentences, less subordination, and well-formed sentences. Gaies, Freed, and Henzl also found that native speakers adjust the complexity of syntax in their speech, according to the level of proficiency of the addressees. However, none of these studies reports what measurement was used to determine the proficiency levels.

Some discrepancies were identified among the findings of the previous literature. The major one regards the grammaticality of the sentences produced by native speakers. In spite of the dominant trend of grammatical sentences in the classroom situation or in conversational situations, Hatch et al. (1978) found that the teacher (George) used many ungrammatical utterances in the conversational setting, although he spoke grammatically throughout the drill practice. The examples of ungrammaticality were 1) it-deletion (e.g., Is important), 2) copula deletion (e.g., The writing not important), 3) lack of tense marking on verbs (e.g., After she finished, she say, "Oh no!"), and 4) unmarked plural.

When facing this contradictory evidence, one would raise the question why input to NNSs is in some instances grammatical and in others ungrammatical. In an attempt to explain this kind of variation, Long (1983a: 179) presented four factors.

Ungrammatical input was found to be more likely when (1) the NNS has zero or very low SL proficiency, (2) the NS either is or perceives him or herself as being of higher social status than the non-native interlocutor, (3) the NS has prior FT experience, but only with NNSs of low SL proficiency, and (4) the conversation occurs spontaneously, e.g., in task-oriented communication on the factory floor, as opposed to arranged encounters between strangers in the research laboratory (when ungrammatical speech almost never occurs.)

Judging from the previous studies, Long (1983a) stated that factors

1, 2, and 4 seemed to be the "necessary" condition but none of them alone appeared to be the "sufficient" condition for ungrammatical sentences.

Pedagogical Strategies and Language Functions

Gaies (1977) investigated not only syntactic complexity but also communicative and language training strategies which were used for pedagogical purposes: 1) repetition, 2) prodding and prompting, and 3) modeling. As the syntactic complexity depended on the level of language proficiency of the addressees, the frequency of "repetition" was greatest at the beginning class where more than 20% of the subjects' sentences were repeated. This fact allowed the students to have more time to process the input of the teacher talk. "Prompting and Prodding" were the strategies observed at the lower levels of classes and seemed to be more transitional devices. The use of these devices was limited to classroom activities, such as naming concrete objects. "Modeling" was realized in two complementary ways. One was fragmental modeling of a student's complete response, and the other was expanded modeling of a student's short response, such as a word or phrase. The latter modeling appeared at all levels of language proficiency. The purposes of modeling were communicative (to check comprehension) and pedagogical.

Freed (1980, 1981) examined, besides syntactic complexity, the "functional intent of an utterance" to find the relationship between utterances within the communicative context. Some of the major functions were INFORMATION EXCHANGE, CONVERSATION CONTINUERS, CLARIFICATION. In foreigner talk, for instance, the declarative, questions, deixis, and imperatives functioned to convey information (INFORMATION EXCHANGE), while the same surface forms in baby talk served as ACTION DIRECTIVES. Stock expressions and questions served to maintain conversation

in foreigner talk (CONVERSATION CONTINUERS) whereas parents' self-repetitions were the major CONVERSATION CONTINUERS in baby talk. Native speakers' repetition in foreigner talk, on the other hand, functioned as CLARIFICATION.

Chaudron (1982, 1983) with his interest in the function of explanation/elaboration, noticed certain patterns in teachers' questioning: e.g., 1) a general question, followed by more specific questions which appeared to obscure or lose the original basic point, 2) lengthy explanations when terms or relationships between concepts were being explained. Another function of developing a topic was realized in fragmented and casual way which was not always clear to the students.

Long (1981b) dichotomized the native speaker's adjustment phenomena into "input" and "interaction." "Input" was defined as the linguistic form and "interaction" as the functions that were served by the form. In his conclusion he stated that the modification in interaction was more consistent than the modification in input. The interaction patterns he examined in this study consisted of ten: 1) more present (versus nonpresent) temporal marking of verbs, 2) different distribution of questions, statements, and imperatives in T-units, 3) more different distribution of question types in T-units, 4) more conversational frames, 5) more confirmation checks, 6) more comprehension checks, 7) more clarification checks, 8) more self-repetitions, 9) more other-repetitions, and 10) more expansions.

Furthermore, Long (1983b: 138-139) concluded that:

Modifications of the input itself almost certainly help. They are not, however, very consistently observed in studies that seek them, and they are certainly not the only means. Modifications in the interactional structure of conversation are greater, more consistently found, and probably more important.

In this paper, Long categorized the interaction patterns of conver-

sation into three kinds: 1) "strategy," referring to the device that served to avoid conversational trouble, that is, strategy devices mainly concerned with "what is talked about (conversational topic)"; 2) "tactics," referring to the devices that served to repair the discourse, that is, tactical devices primarily concerned with "how topics are talked about"; and 3) the strategies and tactics, "a subset of the modifications of each type" which served both to avoid and repair trouble.

Under the category of strategies, the following five devices were examined: 1) relinquishing topic control, 2) selecting salient topics, 3) treating topics briefly, 4) making new topics salient, and 5) checking the non-native speaker's comprehension. Tactic devices were 1) accepting unintentional topic-switch, 2) requesting clarification, 3) confirming own comprehension, and 4) tolerating ambiguity. The six devices of the strategies and tactics were 1) using a slow pace, 2) stressing key words, 3) pausing before key words, 4) decomposing topic-comment constructions, 5) repeating own utterances and 6) repeating other's utterances.

Based on these initial works, Long and Sato (1983) examined the forms and functions of teachers' questions in and outside the elementary ESL classroom. The analytic framework for these studies of questions was adapted from Kearsley's (1976) definitions of questions, such as echoic and epistemic. Echoic was defined by Kearsley as "those which ask for the repetition of an utterance or confirmation that an utterance has been interpreted as intended" (e.g., Pardon? What? Huh?) (Long and Sato, 1983). Epistemic was defined as "those which serve the purpose of acquiring information" (e.g., referential, display questions, etc.).

One of the results from the classroom situation was that in spite of the emphasis given to the significance of communicative competence by current curriculum writers, classroom teacher talk contains more display questions, that is, known information

questions than referential questions which are focused on real communication. In other words, in the classroom situation, the teacher puts more emphasis on the accuracy of students' utterances, rather than on their communication itself.

Another important finding by Long (1983c) has to do with the task distinction between "one-way" and "two-way" information exchanges. Three tasks for one-way talk were 1) vicarious narrative, 2) giving instructions, and 3) discussion of the supposed purpose of the research. On the other hand, the other three tasks for two-way discourse were conversation and playing two communication games. The statistically significant difference between NS-NS and NS-NNS dyad performances was found on three tasks requiring a two-way information exchange for job completion (Long, 1983c: 213).

Gaies (1982) performed a replication study of Long (1981a) with one modification. NNSs in Gaies's study were undergraduate students who were succeeding in academic courses in college and thus had "considerable proficiency and enjoyed peer status" (Gaies 1982: 75) in contrast to Long's NNSs who were limited in their language proficiency. The conversation pairs consisted of a total of fifteen NS-NNS dyads and ten NS-NS dyads, and the topics that NNSs and NSs talked about were the courses they had taken in college.

The first variable was the proportion difference between present and nonpresent temporal marking of verbs. In Gaies' report the difference (significant at the .001 level) between NS-NS speech and NNS-NS speech was greater than the difference in Long's (1981a). These results show evidence that NS-NNS interaction is characteristically involved with topics in the present, that is, the "here and now" phenomenon.

The second variable was the ratio of topic-continuing moves to topic-nominating moves to evaluate the claim that topics in

NS-NNS interaction tend to be treated briefly. However, Gaies' study did not demonstrate statistical significance in contrast to Long's significant difference.

The third variable was the percentage of topic-nominating moves in question form. Although the almost exclusive use of questions for nominating topics in Long's study was not found, topic-nominations in Goies' study were made by questions more frequently in NS-NNS than in NS-NS interaction. This result may be due to the phenomena that NNS used questions to nominate topics more frequently, unlike the NNS in Long's study.

The last variable was the percentage of question types used in topic-nominations. The distribution of uninverted questions, wh-questions, yes/no questions and tag questions paralleled the findings by Long.

Finally, Gaies gave two sources for the variation of the frequency of the use of discourse modifications by NSs in conversation. One was the proficiency of the NNS. Gaies speculated that "NS discourse modifications are made in accordance with the perceived proficiency of the NNS participant, much as input modifications are geared to the proficiency of the NNS" (Gaies, 1982: 80). Another source for the variation would be the shared knowledge that the participants brought into the conversation. Gaies' subjects were academic peers who had a considerable amount of shared knowledge about the topic, unlike the subjects in other studies.

To summarize, the above adjustment or accommodation phenomena in the early studies focused on linguistic forms, namely, simplification, and in recent research, like Long's and Gaies', interactions seem to have a significant role in modification of the native speech addressed to non-native speakers.

Conclusions

The reviews of the above studies present several important

research questions to the author who is interested in these modification phenomena in the speech of foreign language teachers addressed to NNSs in the classroom setting in Japan. The first one regards "ungrammaticality" of utterances in foreign language teacher talk. It would be probable that the speech in conversation class may include ungrammatical sentences, because of the existence of factors listed by Long (1983a) for ungrammaticality: 1) some of the students at the institute may possess a very low proficiency in English, 2) the teacher perceives his or her social status as much higher than that of the students, and 3) some of the conversation teachers may have a task-oriented communication in class rather than a regular conversation. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether the teacher input may include ungrammatical utterances in an educational setting.

The second question concerns a source of these modification phenomena on the part of the foreign language teachers. Gaies (1982) considers "perceived proficiency" of the NSs to be one source. However, Gaies' claim will bring up several questions. What would make the NS "perceive" the proficiency level of NNSs? Would the NSs react to the NNS's errors in pronunciation, grammar, or lexical choices? (Varonis and Gass (1982) claim that the comprehensibility of NNSs speech to a NS is the main factor for the NSs reaction to the NNS.) How accurate can NS be about their judgment on the learner's proficiency level? For future research the author intends to take the position that the learner's language proficiency to be measured by an actual standardized test is a source for these modifications in NS speech. That is, the level of the students' language proficiency would be treated as the independent variable against these dependent variables (modified input and interaction).

The third research question is derived from the fact that the review of past literature reveals no single study of the modified

speech of NNS teachers (e.g., Japanese teachers) to NNS learners. Even though Corder (1981) insists that foreigners who have not mastered the code of the target language cannot simplify the code, Japanese teachers possess a certain level of interlanguage development as certified language teachers. Compared with the level of their baseline speech, it is probable that they may modify their speech in relation to the proficiency levels of the learners. At the same time just the opposite might occur.

The fourth question is concerned with Long's distinction between one-way and two-way information exchange. It is very likely that in the classroom situation the teacher talk includes both one-way and two-way exchanges. So for future research an attempt should be made to examine differences between oneway and two-way communication.

Finally, there remains the question about whether or not the data from experimental studies would be parallel to those from real classrooms. That is, the foreign language teacher talk in a school environment, unlike other experimental situations, seems to have a unique aspect other than communication. That is, teacher talk involves the pedagogical aspect in conversation: the teacher often brings into the conversation class the so-called "teacher behavior," such as correcting students' mistakes in English directly or indirectly and assisting students to complete unfinished utterances, the so-called "fill-in blanks technique" (Hatch, 1983). This characteristic in teacher talk could be frequent even though it may be unconscious behavior in a casual conversation class where the emphasis is placed on communication. Therefore, this aspect of the teacher's pedagogical behavior must be taken into consideration for the research of foreign language teacher talk.

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