Taking turns in conversation is usually as effortless as breathing. However, few people (and few language teachers) have given any conscious consideration to just exactly how we manage our turn-taking in talk-in-interaction. This chapter makes a case for teaching and practicing the norms of conversational turn-taking in the English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) classroom. It debunks some common misperceptions about the way turn-taking works in conversation and provides a brief overview of a more accurate description of conversational turn-taking, as revealed by studies of conversation analysis (CA). It then offers a series of activities that have been used successfully to sensitize students to the practices of conversational turn-taking, with a particular focus on helping students appreciate the communicative importance of “jumping into” the conversation at the right time.

**CONTEXT**

Initially, the activities described in this chapter were created in response to the needs of first-year university students in Japan enrolled in a conversation course. Class size was around 15, and most of these learners fell into the “false beginner” category, with minimal speaking skills. But perhaps the greatest barrier was the students’ passivity—a characteristic of many students from Asia. It soon became obvious that any conversational skills would need to be grounded in some basic interactional skills. These activities assume little in the way of prior English ability, and with minor modifications they are suitable for learners of most ages and any prior competence.
Popular Perceptions of Turn-Taking

Michael Agar (1994) expresses one of the most common popular perceptions of how turn-taking in conversation works: “Someone talks, and I lie back and listen and let them roll for a while. When they’re done, there’ll be a pause that will flash like a green light to announce that someone else can have the floor” (p. 172).

In this view, participants in a conversation wait for the person who is currently speaking to stop, and then someone else begins speaking. But there are several inadequacies with this explanation. First, it is at odds with the observable facts of most talk. Turns-at-talk are not invariably separated by pauses (or more precisely, gaps). Instead, speakers show an incredible precision in their ability to begin speaking at just the right moment, and a great many speaker transitions are achieved with no gap and no overlap (Jefferson, 1973, 1986; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Even novice nonnative speakers are regularly able to achieve no-gap start-ups in conversation (Carroll, 2000, 2006). This doesn’t mean that gaps don’t occur in talk or that gaps are somehow “unnatural” (or disfluent). What it does mean is that when inter-turn silences do occur, they are heard as intentional, purposeful, and interactionally meaningful.

Second, the wait-for-speaker-to-stop explanation doesn’t specify how a particular person in the conversation ends up with the right to speak next. This might seem obvious if there are only two people. However, even in two-party talk, it is entirely possible for one person to speak and then (often after a beat of silence) for that same person to speak again—effectively taking two back-to-back turns, as A does in lines 01 and 03 in Example 1. Thus, turns-at-talk will not necessarily be distributed in a simple ABABAB pattern.

Example 1 (adapted from Pomerantz, 1984, p. 77; Sacks, 1987, p. 64)
01 A: Do they have a good cook there?
02 (1.7 second pause)
03 A: Nothing special?
04 B: No. Everybody takes their turns.

In multiparty talk, with two or more possible next speakers, the need for a fuller explanation is even more obvious. In naturally occurring conversations with, for example, three people, turns-at-talk are not distributed in a cyclical ABCAB-CABC pattern, although this is often the pattern that language learners fall into during arranged conversations in the classroom. Instead, the turn-taking can appear random, which is the result of the participants following a more complex system. For these reasons, the overly simplistic wait-to-stop explanation of turn-taking is unsatisfactory.

The Conversation Analysis System of Conversational Turn-Taking

In a now classic paper, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974; henceforth SSJ) propose what has turned out to be an extremely robust description of conver-
Taking Turns and Talking Naturally

sational turn-taking, based on recordings of naturally occurring conversations. It is a system in the sense that participants themselves display an orientation to the “rules” in managing their interaction. This system has been shown not only to hold true across a wide variety of kinds of talk in English but also to describe accurately how turn-taking works in conversations in a diverse range of other languages (see also Wilson, Wiemann, & Zimmerman, 1984, for a discussion of competing systems of turn-taking organization).

**Speaker Selection**

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) begin by distinguishing between a turn-taking system for conversation and systems employed for other activities. For example, in bowling the order of who bowls first, second, and so on is decided in advance; it’s preallocated. Some speech events, such as graduation ceremonies, are similarly preallocated. An impromptu system of preallocation can, and often does, develop in English as a foreign language classroom conversations, where students drop into a fixed pattern of “going around the circle.”

In contrast, speaker transitions in naturally occurring conversation are locally managed in the moment-to-moment flow of the interaction. At the heart of the SSJ system is a simple set of three recurrent speaker selection rules, which come into play as each turn-at-talk reaches a point of possible (that is to say, “hearable”) completion (more precisely defined as a transition relevance place, the end of a turn construction unit). The following, in somewhat simplified form, are the rules (Sacks et al., 1974. p. 702).

1a. Current speaker may select next speaker. That is, current speaker may use some technique to direct his or her talk at one particular participant, thereby designating that, and only that, person as the ratified next speaker.

1b. If current speaker does not select next speaker, next speaker may self-select. What this means is that any possible next speaker in the conversation can choose him- or herself as next speaker. Whoever begins speaking first becomes the new current speaker.

1c. If no other participant self-selects, current speaker may, but need not, continue speaking.

**Timing of Speaker Transitions**

Just as important as who speaks next is when the next speaker begins speaking. As mentioned earlier, next speakers regularly time the beginning of their speaking turn to correspond with the exact moment at which the prior speaker brings the prior turn to possible completion; they do so without allowing even the briefest of gaps. This is referred to simply as a no-gap/no-overlap speaker transition. An orientation on the part of participants to no-gap transitions is critical to the
operation of the turn-taking system (and to the organization of preference; see chapter 8 in this volume).

There are, in practice, three ways that any given speaker transition might end up being done: on time, delayed, and early. These three timings for speaker transition (illustrated in Example 2) are not merely random possibilities; rather, they represent systematic alternatives, which strongly project the communicative action to be performed by the forthcoming turn. That is to say, the timing of the speaker transition is an integral part of the linguistic design of the upcoming turn.

Example 2: Timing of Speaker Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On Time</th>
<th>Delayed</th>
<th>Early</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: TALK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: TALK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: TALK (gap)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: TALK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: TALK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: [T]ALK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Brackets indicate simultaneous talk.

Several decades of CA research based on recordings of naturally occurring interaction support the applicability of the SSJ system across a wide range of cultures and languages, including Thai, Korean, Japanese, Finnish, Spanish, Danish, German, Russian, and Arabic. The SSJ system has also been shown to hold true in native speaker–nonnative speaker interactions as well as nonnative speaker–nonnative speaker interactions.

Rationale for Teaching Turn-Taking

If these patterns of turn-taking are so natural and so widespread among the world’s cultures and languages, teachers may wonder why it would be necessary to teach turn-taking in the classroom. The problem is that the organization of traditional pedagogic interaction follows a highly specialized system of turn-taking (see McHoul, 1978; Seedhouse, 2004), in which the teacher largely controls who speaks and when. Students, through a lifetime of exposure to schooling, have learned to check their conversational practices at the door, so to speak. This is equally true for most language classrooms. If teachers hope to have students engage in conversational interaction in the classroom, the first step will be to reintroduce and encourage the practices of conversational turn-taking.

CURRICULUM, TASKS, MATERIALS

The following sections present a series of activities designed to introduce students to the ideas of conversational turn-taking, to sensitize them to the need for (and normative nature of) on-time speaker transitions, and to practice aspects of the SSJ turn-taking system. These activities are fun, require few or no materials, are simple to manage, and can be recycled and adapted week after week. They would
nicely complement any course involving conversation (or more generically, speaking) at any proficiency level from beginning to advanced.

The first activity, Jumping Into a Conversation, provides a visual illustration of the idea of projecting turn completion and emphasizes why this matters. The Speaking in Circles set of activities is designed to sensitize students to the normative nature of on-time speaker transitions—to train them to avoid inter-turn silences (because these are heard by proficient speakers as meaningful). The Fighting for a Turn set of activities practices Rule 1b of the SSJ system (self-selection). This is necessary because the usual norms of classroom interaction strongly discourage self-selection. The final activity, Monitoring the Turn, lets students practice projecting the upcoming completion of a turn and demonstrates that multiple next speaker start-ups are a natural result of the SSJ turn-taking system.

Activity 1: Jumping Into a Conversation

This activity visually illustrates to students the idea that there is just one perfect moment to jump into a conversation, that is, to begin a turn-at-talk. It illustrates the idea of projecting turn completion (in order to be able to start on time), the recurrent nature of turn completion, and the consequences of starting either too early or too late.

This activity requires a long jump rope and a clear space in the classroom or outside. The teacher selects two students to turn the rope. The two rope turners should start by getting the jump rope spinning slowly. The teacher can point out that each rotation of the rope is like one turn-at-talk. On each revolution, as the rope hits the bottom of its swing, the teacher can point out that this is like the end of a turn-at-talk and is the perfect moment to jump in and take a turn. As already mentioned, in the terminology of CA, this is the transition relevance place (TRP), and when doing this jump-rope demonstration with advanced students—or students in an Intro to CA course—the teacher might say, “TRP, TRP, TRP,” each time the rope hits the bottom. As everyone knows, the whole trick to jump-roping lies in projecting when this moment is going to come. A bit too early or a bit too late, and you might trip on the rope. Next, students one by one jump into (and out of) the turning rope. If this is not possible, students clap their hands at the moment they should jump in.

Activity 2: Speaking in Circles

This sequence of activities is designed to sensitize learners to the rhythm of no-gap speaker transitions. The series proceeds from a basic version and with each additional level becomes slightly more complex (and more natural). As students participate in the activities, they quickly realize that to start on time they need to closely monitor the rhythm of the talk by prior speakers in order to project when, in the immediate future, they need to start speaking.
**Level 1**

As suggested by the title, for this activity, students stand in a circle, with the teacher in the middle. The teacher explains that the first student will say, “One,” then the next student in the circle will say, “Two,” and so on up to “Ten.” Then, the next student in the circle starts over with “One.” Note that if there are exactly 10 students, the students count only to nine before starting over. Once they get the idea, the counting should continue, going around and around until the group sounds like one person counting quickly and smoothly to 10. The teacher can demonstrate what counting to 10 should sound like. In order to speed things up, the teacher can clap or tap out a rhythm for the counting. The goal is to get to a speed where there are no silences (gaps) between the numbers.

**Level 2**

Students count in rounds so that more than one person is speaking all the time. This is a great way to sensitize students to what natural conversations often sound like—and what a conversation class should sound like. The same student begins counting, saying, “One,” as in Level 1. Then when the counting gets halfway around, the teacher points to the first student to start the counting off again (in the same direction). At first this causes some confusion, but the students soon get the idea. A group of 10 or more students can manage up to three or four simultaneous rounds. It helps to have students look at the next person as they speak.

**Level 3**

In this activity the numbers are replaced with words in a sentence, for example, “On Saturday, I went to [place name],” with each person saying just one of the words. Or if the teacher prefers, longer sentences might be parsed into chunks, for example, starting with “On Saturday” and each student says one chunk. For the purpose of this activity, however, it doesn’t matter which method is used. Again, the talk should go around and around (using the same place name) until the group starts to sound like one person speaking. The teacher needs to ensure that the number of students isn’t a multiple of the number of words in the sentence (e.g., 12 students, 6 words), because this results in the same student saying the same word over and over. The students continue until they can achieve a smooth joint production of this turn. Next, to make this talk more real, students can be encouraged to think about where they went, then have the final person provide a place name. It is important to make sure that each student has thought of a place beforehand (if necessary, by having students write down their ideas), because there shouldn’t be any pauses in the production of the sentence.

**Level 4**

The process from Level 3 can now be made a bit more interactive and natural by having everyone else in the circle respond with “Oh” when the final speaker says
the place name: Student: “On Saturday, I went to Tokyo.” Chorus: “Oh.” This also has the advantage of keeping all the students on task. There should be no gap between the place name and “Oh” because a silence in this location can be heard as disinterest or disbelief and may have negative implications for the talk.

**Level 5**

Once students are comfortable with previous levels, they can include the use of *um* as a temporary placeholder, for example, in “On Saturday, I went to um . . . [pause] Tokyo.” The same person says “um” and the place name. The English token *um* or *um* should be used rather than the equivalent in the student’s native language, because this is part of English. A further step in this activity is for one person to say, “to um . . .” and then—after a slight pause—have the next person suggests a place name with questioning intonation so that with five speakers, the talk would unfold as follows: A: “On” B: “Saturday” C: “I” D: “went” E: “to um . . .” F: “Tokyo?” Speaker E can then ratify this co-completion through repetition (“Yeah, Tokyo”). Actually, the variations and elaborations on this activity are virtually endless. This type of activity might be used to warm up the class for 5 minutes each day or each week, progressing to more and more natural routines.

**Activity 3: Fighting for a Turn**

The goal of this series of activities is to illustrate the functioning of SSJ Rule 1b (next speaker self-selects) and have students practice self-selection. Students are used to waiting for someone to “pick” them before they respond (SSJ Rule 1a), but this makes carrying on a conversation extremely difficult (and, in fact, turns a conversation into an interview). This series of activities encourages self-selection and demonstrates to students the need to “fight” for a turn-at-talk.

**Level 1**

Three students are arranged on three sides of a desk (or in a circle on the floor). A wadded-up piece of paper (or a small ball) serves as a ball for each group. One person picks up the ball, then firmly places it back in the middle of the desk. Then another person picks up the ball, and so on. The teacher emphasizes that the ball should be moving all the time (like in a game of tennis). The ball resting on the desk would be equivalent to a silence in conversation. To illustrate how the ball should be constantly moving, it’s useful as an initial demonstration to have just two students quickly pick up and put down the ball.

What will initially happen is that students quickly fall into an ABCABC pattern, going around in a circle. Once they do, the teacher can point out what is happening and tell them this doesn’t happen in natural conversation. To drive home this point, the teacher can have one group attempt to have a conversation in the L1 while strictly following the ABCABC pattern. Students will quickly realize how unnatural and impossible this is.
The teacher can explain that students will need to “fight” for their turn-at-talk. No one will “give” them a chance to speak because any possible next speaker may self-select. Once SSJ Rule 1c (current speaker may continue speaking) is included, this means that each time the ball is put down, there are potentially three people (in a group of three) who might take the next turn.

Very quickly a number of interesting situations will emerge. For example, two people will try to grab the ball at the same time (overlapping start-up; see Activity 4), and there will be some physical negotiation about who takes the turn. The students will also learn tricks for putting the ball down and then immediately snatching it up again without allowing the other participants a chance. This also occurs in natural interaction; one technique is the “rush through,” when a person rushes through the end of one turn and quickly into the beginning of another before anyone else has a chance to speak.

It can be fun to organize a whole-class competition for competitive self-selection in this ball-snatching activity. The teacher picks the most competitive student (the one dominating the self-selection) in each group and moves him or her into increasingly more competitive groupings. The teacher can also join the “final battle.”

**Level 2**

Up to now students have been reacting only physically. This time around they are required to say something when they pick up the object (i.e., take a turn-at-talk). An easy way to start is by having each group count one-turn-at-a-time from 1 to 50. That is, someone says, “One,” then someone else says, “Two” (probably another speaker, under Rule 1b, or possibly the same speaker again, under Rule 1c), and so on. One nice demonstration here is for the teacher to time himself or herself counting smoothly to 50, which typically takes approximately 30 seconds. Then students can compete to see which group can come closest to this time. This activity requires that next speakers attend to both the content and the timing of the turn-in-progress in order to project when they can begin as well as which number they will need to say. The groups can race each other for the fastest time.

If students are fighting hard enough for a turn-at-talk, the teacher should hear multiple instances of overlapping talk. The teacher should assure the students that this is perfectly natural. Also, the teacher needs to make sure that they don’t fall back into an ABCABC (around the circle) pattern of preallocated turn-taking.

I have experimented with removing the ball during this game and having the students take “free turns,” but this almost always results in massive and lengthy overlap, which is to say, shouting matches. Also, if this self-selection counting activity is done with the whole class (as one group), there will be some students who never self-select. One solution is to begin with all the students standing up, then one by one, as they take a turn and say a number, they sit down. Only the students still standing are part of the pool of possible next speakers, so eventually
everyone has to speak. Once all the students are sitting down, someone stands up to say the next number, and so on.

Level 3
Once students have grasped the idea of continuous no-gap self-selection, the teacher can give them something a bit more turn-like to say. It helps to start with something easy, such as “I like [food item],” for example, “I like apples.” The teacher needs to demonstrate to students that they should be saying the first word (I) at the very moment that they start to pick up the ball and that they should be placing the ball back on the desk just as they complete the final word of the turn.

Another easy turn, even for beginners, is “I wanna go to [country name].” The teacher can adjust the difficulty of the turn format to suit the students’ level. For example, advanced-level learners might (eventually) be constructing turns like “What I really hate(d) about high school is/was . . .” The game is the same; it’s just that the turns are longer.

After they have played this game for a while, problematic turn-taking strategies may become apparent. For example, students might begin holding their hand over the ball while thinking of what to say. The teacher can demonstrate that anyone can (legitimately) snatch the ball away from under another student’s hovering hand. That is, holding a hand over the ball is not the same as officially beginning a turn-at-talk, so during this time someone else may self-select.

After pointing this out, the teacher can show students a trick that all proficient speakers of a language know: Pause after starting the turn—not before. Have them grab the ball as they begin to say the “I” in, for example, “I want to go to . . .” and only then pause to think how to finish the turn. Once a student has grabbed the ball, it is officially his or her turn until he or she puts the ball back down. If a silence (technically, an inter-turn pause) develops during the production of the turn, this silence officially belongs to the current speaker. This would be a good time to introduce the use of um in word searches (Carroll, 2005, 2006).

Level 4
In the lower level tasks so far in Activity 3, the students have been employing only a one-rule turn-taking system, namely SSJ Rule 1b (self-selection), although they may have also been occasionally following SSJ Rule 1c (taking two or more turns in a row). At this point SSJ Rule 1a (current speaker may select next speaker) can be reintroduced. To illustrate this rule, the teacher has students go back to the first silent version of the game. This time, however, the teacher explains that instead of placing the turn on the table, they can also, if they want, hand the turn (i.e., the ball) over to a specific participant. The choice is always the same at the end of each turn: Either place the turn on the table (in which case, any possible next speaker can self-select) or hand it directly to another participant.

Once students get the idea, the spoken turns, as in prior variations, can be reintroduced, for example, “I’d like to visit [place].” At the end of the turn, the
current speaker can either place the ball back on the desk or hand it to a specific participant. The most common technique for selecting the next speaker is the use of eye contact, perhaps accompanied by a device such as “How about you?” (Note that in naturally occurring interaction, speakers may only employ How about you? after a next speaker fails to self-select or to respond when selected.) If the current speaker doesn’t specifically select someone, any next speaker can self-select. At the end of each turn, the alternatives are the same: Hand the ball to someone or put it back on the table.

Note that a self-selecting next speaker may elect to use his or her entire turn to select another next speaker, as C does in the final turn of Example 3:

Example 3
A: I like pizza.
C: I like hamburgers. How about you? (looks toward B)
B: I like sushi.
C: I like . . . um . . . spaghetti.
B: I like chocolate cake. What about you? (looks toward A)
A: I like donuts.
C: What do you like? (hands the turn to B)

Level 5
At this point, the talk is still relatively artificial. Although there are many reasons for this, one obvious problem is that the participants are still occupying their turns with an extremely limited set of turn types, such as statements of likes and questions selecting a next speaker. They are also not displaying any kind of uptake of the prior speaker’s turn. In naturally occurring conversations, news telling (e.g., telling one’s likes or dislikes) is regularly acknowledged in the next turn with an oh (i.e., a change-of-state token; Heritage, 1984; see also chapter 12, in this volume, on listener response tokens). Oh can serve as a complete turn in its own right, but it can also make a substantial claim on the production of further talk, such that the person (or persons) who says “Oh” may well go on to produce a further turn-at-talk, as in Example 4:

Example 4
A: I like pepperoni pizza.
B: Oh, I just had pizza last night.

One particularly common thing to do following a statement of an opinion (or in CA terms, an assessment) is for the next speaker to respond with an agreeing or disagreeing second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984). By adding in this third turn type, participants can now create much more natural-sounding interactions, as in Example 5 (note that B’s “Oh, I love pepperoni pizza!” is actually an upgrade):
Example 5
A: I like pepperoni pizza.
B: Oh, I love pepperoni pizza!
C: I like ramen. What do you like?
B: I like octopus sushi.
C: [[Oh, me too!]
A: [[Eew! Yuck!

(Double brackets indicate that these last two speakers started speaking at the same time.)

If the participants are really paying attention and competing hard for the turn, that is, if they are actually trying to project the end of current speaker’s turn, overlapping talk may occur, as in the last two lines of Example 5. This is perfectly all right and in fact is completely natural in conversation. The idea of multiple next-speaker start-ups is also demonstrated in Activity 4.

There is obviously still a long way to go, but if students are producing similar interactions within this activity, they have already accomplished a great deal. They are monitoring the moment-by-moment development of the turn-in-progress; evaluating it for grammatical, intonational, and pragmatic completion; gearing up for on-time, no-gap, no-overlap speaker transitions; using oh tokens; agreeing and disagreeing; and managing overlapping talk. And if students can do all this, they are probably ready for some short free conversation. But before that, there is one more activity that teaches self-selection, which is so vital to conversational interaction.

Activity 4: Monitoring the Turn
The goal of this activity is to give students practice in monitoring the talk-in-progress for points of possible upcoming completion. It also demonstrates that one natural outcome of the SSJ turn-taking system is that several speakers might, if they feel they have something relevant to say, self-select at the same time. This activity is designed to result in instances of multiple simultaneous next-speaker start-ups and to reinforce the idea of self-selection.

For this activity, the teacher needs multiple sets of 5 index cards each, with each card containing one of the following items written on one side: three, red, Yuko, London, pizza (or other generic responses; see this chapter’s Appendix at www.tesolmedia.com/books/pragmatics2 for sample materials). There should be enough sets so that each student has one card. For example, for 30 students, six sets are required. Students stand in a circle with the teacher in the middle. There should be more than one student who has each answer (e.g., two or more students will have the London card) so that there will always be two or more students who have a relevant answer to any question.

The teacher asks a question for which one of the cards will be the obvious
answer, taking care not to direct the question to any particular student (e.g.,
with eye contact) because this would defeat the purpose of the activity, which is
to promote self-selection. The following questions can be used to start with and
then replaced with other questions that fit the answers:

- Q: What time does the party start? A: 3
- Q: What color was the car? A: Red
- Q: Who did you go with? A: Yuko
- Q: Where are they going this summer? A: London
- Q: What are we having for dinner? A: Pizza

The students need to monitor the unfolding turn-in-progress and think about
whether their card is a possible answer to the question. If they have a relevant
answer, they jump in. If everything goes well, there should be two (or more)
students calling out simultaneous answers, with no gap between the question and
the response.

**REFLECTIONS**

The activities in this chapter have been designed to teach and practice the norms
of conversational turn-taking, which lie at the heart of conversational interaction.
In particular, these activities focus heavily on encouraging self-selection, because
next-speaker self-selection, which is so common in conversation, is suppressed
within the turn-taking system typical of traditional (teacher-dominated) classroom
interaction.

For the most part, these activities are not specific to any culture or language
and as such are as relevant to the teaching of any language as they are to teaching
ESOL. The SSJ turn-taking system also provides a relevant baseline for the teaching
of more specialized interactional genres (e.g., discussion) and particularly the
sorts of discussion skills relevant to English for academic purposes. Discussion
is, in many respects, a different activity than casual conversation and can involve
distinct turn-allocation systems, but the SSJ system provides a baseline for com-
parison. Furthermore, the orientation to no-gap speaker transitions (and the
organization of preference discussed in chapter 8, in this volume, which crucially
depends on this orientation) is relevant to a wide range of goals related to English
for specific purposes, from the teaching of medical interaction to English for tour-
ism. Silence in interaction is heard as purposeful, and unintended inter-turn gaps
can lead to significant intercultural and pragmatic failures.

The activities presented in this chapter focus on aspects of interaction that
are beyond the traditional boundaries of language as commonly perceived. Few
language teachers think of the orientation to no-gap speaker transitions as part
of the core conversational grammar of language. Yet in many ways, it is as funda-
mental as any other part of grammar and plays a key role in the use of language
for successful interaction. The activities in this chapter also suggest, as least in
terms of teaching spoken interaction, that there needs to be a stronger emphasis
on teaching the practices of interaction. Indeed, research from the field of CA
suggests the need to reconceptualize language as a much broader phenomenon.

The basic environment for language development is oral interaction, and the
turn-taking system is its core form of organization. Without a thorough under-
standing of this system, conversation could be problematic. Language teachers
often talk about “getting back to basics.” Well, the turn-taking system is part of
the basics and belongs on every conversation teacher’s syllabus.

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