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Wait-time in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context: A conversation analytic perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to discover to what extent native ESL teachers utilize wait-time in their classes and to what extent wait-time gives way to more student contribution. Wait-time is considered as a part of classroom interactional competence, and relevant utilization of it may improve learning in the classroom. Accordingly, six classroom hours of data were analyzed via Conversation Analysis (CA) and whether teachers implement wait-time or not during their lessons were analyzed qualitatively. The participants of the research are teachers and students in a higher education setting in the UK. In order to analyze the data collected, all the videos were transcribed in accordance with the conventions of the Conversation Analysis (CA). The findings suggest that the teachers frequently implement wait-time in their classes. It has been found that wait-time usually leads to students' contribution in language classes, which may lead to creating space for interaction and language learning.

Note(s) from the author(s)
≫ This paper does not require an ethics approval document according to ULAKBIM's (TR INDEX) new coverage criteria as the data were collected before 2020.

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Ethics statement: I hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.
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Akademik amaçlı İngilizce bağlamında bekleme süresi: Konuşma analizi bakış açısı

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı İngiliz uyruklu ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmenlerin sınıflarında bekleme süresini ne derece kullandıklarını ve kullanımları sonucunda öğrencilerin derse yaptıkları katılımın ne derece arttığını saptamaktır. Bekleme süresi, sınıf içi etkileşimsel becerinin bir parçası olarak kabul edilir ve yerinde kullanımı sınıf içi öğrenmeyi artırabilir. Bu amaçla, 6 ders saatlik veri Konuşma Analizi'ne göre analiz edildi ve öğretmenlerin derslerini işlerken bekleme süresini uygulayıp uygulamadıkları nitel yaklaşımla incelendi. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Birleşik Krallık'taki bir yüksek öğrenim bağlamında öğretmenlerden ve öğrencilerden oluşmaktadır. Toplanan verileri analiz etmek için tüm videolar Konuşma Analizi prensiplerine göre yazıldı. Veri analizinin sonucu, öğretmenlerin sıklıkla bekleme süresini uyguladıklarını göstermiştir. Bekleme süresinin dil sınıflarında etkileşim ve dil öğrenmeyi sağlayan öğrenci katılımına zemin hazırladığı bulunmuştur.

Introduction

Many approaches and methods have been developed in order to discover the best way to learn-teach foreign languages. In the methods era, firstly the grammar-focused methods such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM) were in fashion. Then, communication-focused methods such as Direct Method (DM), Community Language Learning (CLL), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged consequentially. As Atar (2016) stated, "initial studies usually focused on grammar and formal aspects of language use in classrooms, but in recent decades the focus has shifted to communication and interactional skills" (p. 1). In the beginning, writing and reading skills were in demand, however, listening and speaking skills gained importance in language teaching eventually. Hence, it can be inferred from this change that interaction has become in vogue in language classrooms. Many scholars also touch upon the importance of communication in learning. To illustrate, Ellis (2000) stated that "learning arises not through interaction, but in interaction" (p. 209). It means that students learn better in a social environment rather than only speaking to someone. Hall (2008) stressed the interaction "in language classrooms" (p. 7) and Vygotsky (1978) argued for Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) within the scope of the social interactionist theory based on the idea of communication between the learner and a more knowledgeable other. That is why language classes must be the center of communication including student-student or teacher-student. Myslihaka (2016) also claimed that using more interaction is beneficial in order to create a student-centered lesson. Walsh & Li (2013) highlighted the significance of interactional competence for more successful classrooms in terms of learning. Choudhury (2005) emphasized the teacher's role in fostering classroom interaction by suggesting that "one of the most important keys to create an interactive language classroom is the initiation of interaction by the teacher" (p. 77).

Wait-time which means the pauses for a few seconds (3-5 for this study) between teachers' utterance and students' contribution can be offered as an important way of increasing communication in language classrooms. As it is suggested by Alsaadi & Atar (2019), wait-time is "the extended time of three to five seconds" after teacher initiation (p. 53), which may be an effective factor contributing to classroom interaction. That is to say, it can be a part of successful classroom interaction. The pauses of teachers that allow learners to speak can create meaningful conversations in the classroom. In this way, meaningful conversations make a ground for learning (Atar & Seedhouse, 2018; Walsh, 2011). Arguably, if teachers allocate enough wait-time for students, their readiness required to answer a question may be improved and it may result in further interaction. In classroom interaction, wait-time can be effective. It can be elaborated in the following definition by Duncan and Southon (2006) as well: "wait-time is the amount of time after an initial question has been posed before the teacher answers it him or herself; repeats, rephrases, or adds further information to the question; or accepts an answer from a student" (p. 1). Besides, it is defined in different ways by several scholars. The scholars conducted studies on wait-time defined the term in various explanations. Considering different definitions will be useful to comprehend the scope of the term. For this reason, the wait-time perceptions of Rowe, Lake, and Fowler are specifically given in Figure 1 below by Tobin and Capie (1983) (as cited in Alsaadi & Atar, 2019, p. 54).

Rowe's defitions of wait-time			
Wait-time I:	Teacher question	pause	Teacher or student talk
Wait-time II:	Student response	pause	Teacher comment or question

Lake's defitions of wait-time			
Teacher wait-time:			
Example 1:	Student talk	pause	Teacher talk
Example 2:	Teacher talk	pause	Teacher talk
Student wait-time			
Example 1:	Teacher talk	pause	Student talk
Example 2:	Student talk	pause	Student talk

Fowler's defitions of wait-time			
Teacher reaction wait-time			
Example:	Student talk	pause	Teacher talk
Student reaction wait-time			
Example:	Teacher talk	pause	Student talk
Teacher-initiated wait-time			
Example:	Student talk	pause	Student talk
Student-initiated wait-time			
Example:	Teacher talk	pause	Teacher talk

Figure 1. Definitions of wait-time

Rowe (1974a, 1974b) groups wait-time in two types including the pause that teacher gives before student's initiation and the pause after student's commencement before teacher's initiation. In other words, Rowe (1986) describes as "there is a threshold value below which changes in wait-time produce little effect and above which (2.7 seconds) there are marked consequences for both teachers and students" (p. 43).

Regarding Lake's definition (1973), it can be inferred from the Figure 1 that he categorized wait-time as two components which are "teacher wait-time" and "student wait-time". In "teacher wait-time" there are two examples containing the orders student-pause-teacher and teacher-pause-teacher. In addition, in "student wait-time" there are also two examples comprising the orders teacher-pause-student and student-pause-student. Considering Fowler's (1975) definition of wait-time, it can be expressed that he divided wait-time into four categories which are teacher reaction wait-time, student reaction wait-time, teacher-initiated wait-time, and student-initiated wait-time.

The definitions offered above in the Figure 1 are developed through the first one by Rowe (1974a, 1974b, 1978); the researcher attempted to determine a general classroom interaction design by means of over 6 years of study implemented on the science lesson. She discovered a system throughout the classroom talks and called it as "wait-time". Rowe (1986) indicates that there are certain influences of wait-time on both students and teachers. In the literature, there are numerous studies on wait-time including both positive and negative findings and perspectives towards it. Considering the studies with the positive outcomes, a plethora of studies can be mentioned (e.g., Alsaadi & Atar, 2019; Altiere & Duell, 1991; Aras, 2007; Baysen & Baysen, 2010; Davenport, 2003; Mak, 2011; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Riley, 1986; Rowe, 1974a, 1974c, 1986; Samiroden, 1983; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Şahin, 2015; Tobin, 1986; Tobin & Capie, 1982, Yaqubi & Rokni, 2012; Yataganbaba & Yıldırım, 2016) while there are also those with the negative outcomes (e.g., Duell, 1994, 1995; Honea, 1982; Ingram & Elliott, 2015; Matt & Shannon, 2007).

Morgan & Saxton (1994) perceive that wait-time is "an active silence" in which students can think and develop a response for the question posed (p. 80). It can be considered that those muted moments are not passive waitings, but they are active engagements. While waiting, the students are in a process in which they decode the question and create the best answer for it. Furthermore, Aras (2007) also contributes to the positive effects of wait-time on students by stating that "this study indicated the importance of providing a better learning opportunity for students by extending the wait-time as a teaching variable in language classrooms" (p. 69). The study shows that wait-time is a useful tool for EFL classes. Moreover, Mak (2011) suggests that wait-time use can be an effective way in lowering students' anxiety and gaining their confidence. To exemplify, a student with speaking anxiety may feel anxious when a question is asked to him/her; however, using wait-time can help the student for preparing his/her answer. In this way, wait-time can increase self-confidence as lowering anxiety. Melder (2011) also results his study with the positive findings on applying "increased wait time into everyday practice of the classroom" (p. 3). In accordance with the research by Melder (2011), extended wait-time rather than brief wait-time can be quite useful in each class. Additionally, the findings of Yataganbaba & Yıldırım's study (2016) reveal that "limited wait-time" prevented students' classroom contribution. This finding also refers to Melder's (2011) in terms of promoting extended wait-time. In addition, Şahin (2015), in his study on teacher questioning, finds out that sufficient wait-time allocates time for teachers "to ask better and longer guiding questions" (p. 109). Regarding Şahin's (2015) study, wait-time can be helpful for teachers as well. Therefore, it can be inferred from this study that making use of wait-time is advantageous for both students and teachers.

In contrast, Allwright (1988) states that wait-time can be useless based on his own experiences with an ESL student. Duell (1994, 1995) also claims that wait-time use at university level can decrease higher cognitive achievement. In a study on teachers' perspective on wait-time, it is found that teachers may feel anxiety while implementing wait-time in their classes (Honea, 1982). Another research conducted by Tincani & Crozier (2007) indicates that while brief wait-time can be beneficial for children, extended wait-time can be useless. Thus, it can be interpreted that wait-time has been perceived as both beneficial and useless at increasing student interaction in classrooms.

In the literature, most of the previous studies have been mentioned. Considering current reports on wait-time, the literature is quite limited, especially done on language classrooms. When these points are taken into consideration, this paper will provide a fresh perspective and fill a gap in the literature.

Research questions
1.   Do the native ESL teachers in the UK utilize wait-time in their classes?
2.   Does wait-time give way to more student contribution?

Methodology
Regarding the literature, there have been plenty of studies done on wait-time; however, the current research specifically focuses on the influence of utilizing wait-time on ESL classes by experienced British teachers at university level. The purpose of this qualitative

research study was to discover to what extend native ESL teachers utilize wait-time in their classes and to what extent wait-time gives way to more student contribution. In this way, the following steps are completed.

Participants and context

The study was conducted in a university setting consisting of around 15 students per class in Newcastle, UK. It was an English for Academic purposes higher education setting. The students had been learning English as a second language to proceed to their degrees at undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate level. The classes were mostly consisted of Asian students studying Economics in the preparatory classes of the university. They had been taking the language courses including reading, writing, listening, and speaking integrated with the courses belonging to the Department of Economics. In consequence, the education system in the university was based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The teachers were experienced teachers who were native speakers of English. These teachers were observed in different lessons which were speaking, listening, and writing.

Data collection

The data were collected through video recordings via 2 video recorders and 2 audio recorders. The data include six classroom hours (each session lasts around 50 minutes) based on non-participant classroom observations. No observational guidelines were used as Conversation Analysis methodology relies on the emic perspective, which requires analyzing the recordings from the perspective of the participants. While collecting data, the classroom had been recorded from two opposite angles via two different cameras in order to obtain the best vision and also the voices in the classroom had been recorded through two audio recorders. The lessons were implemented as block lessons (2 lessons without a break). Hence, the classrooms had been recorded for each session. In a detailed way; the first session had been recorded for 1 hour and 34 minutes, the second session had been recorded for 1 hour and 36 minutes, the last session had been recorded for 1 hour and 52 minutes. The observations were conducted in a non-participant setting without using any checklist. In other words, the classroom recordings had been done in the most natural way paying attention not to affect both the students and the teachers involved. In order to obtain more reliable data, three different teachers were monitored in dissimilar classroom settings than each other.

Data analysis

The data collected via recordings were analyzed through CA (Conversational Analysis) conventions. The following framework of Seedhouse (2004) (cited in Seedhouse & Sert, 2011) was utilized as it provides a patterned way for analyzing the data from a conversation-analytical perspective. Conversation Analysis studies rely on a detailed transcription of the data as no detail can be dismissed (Liddicoat, 2011).

> *1) There is order at all point in interaction: Talk in interaction is systematically organized, deeply ordered and methodic.*

2) Contributions to interaction are context-shaped and context-renewing: Contributions to interaction cannot be adequately understood except by reference to the sequential environment in which they occur and in which the participants design them to occur. They also form part of the sequential environment in which a next contribution will occur.
3) No order of detail can be dismissed a priori as disorderly, accidental, or irrelevant (Heritage 1984, p. 241): CA has a detailed transcription system, and a highly empirical orientation.
4) Analysis is bottom-up and data driven: The data should not be approached with any prior theoretical assumptions, regarding, for example, power, gender, or race; unless there is evidence in the details of the interaction that the interactants themselves are orienting to it. (Seedhouse & Sert, 2011, p. 1-2)

In the first article, it is explicated that interaction occurs between its two components which are sender and receiver in a certain way. Thus, it can be examined in accordance with the conventions of it. In the second article, it is mentioned that the elements causing communication are formed based on the context. In other words, the context containing sender, receiver, channel, and setting has an impact on the message that will be sent. As the participants, sender and receiver will create contributions to interaction by communicating. Regarding the third article, it is significant to consider every single detail, even if there are accidental, irrelevant, and disorderly ones. Therefore, not a minute detail can be neglected. In the last article, it is highlighted that Conversation Analysis pursues a bottom-up, data driven path which means that the analysis is done pursuant to what is found from the data. It concentrates on the pure data collected without any restriction applied beforehand. Firstly, the data is collected, then the study is shaped by means of the findings.

The transcription conventions of Jefferson (2004) were used to code the data. While coding the data, a specific transcription language was used. For instance, the lines were written on the left and the speakers' names are only coded as T (Teacher) and S (Student). If there were more than one student, they were named as S 1, S 2 etc. In order to indicate the length of a pause the periods were simply used. As an important point, the moments occurring wait-time were displayed through the small arrows.

Findings

The study was conducted in order to observe if the native ESL teachers utilize wait-time in their classes and if wait-time gives way to more student contribution. As a result of the data collection process through six classroom hours records, it is reached that all three teachers (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C) who lecture in the videos made use of wait-time in their lessons. When the data were analyzed through transcribing the videos, it is revealed that the teacher participants (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C) got benefit from wait-time in their classes. Considering each time they paused enough, Teacher A regarded wait-time 11 times in a block class consisting two classroom hours, Teacher B applied 6 times in a block session including two classroom hours, and Teacher C implemented 30 times in a block lesson containing two classroom hours; in total 47 times in three block lessons comprising 6 classroom

hours. Throughout the sessions which were conducted by Teacher A and Teacher B, each time the teacher waited for the student to talk led a way to classroom interaction. Furthermore, the students got confidence to talk more and tried to answer the teachers after their encouraging pauses.

To illustrate, it can be examined in the following extract from Teacher A's class.

Extract 1.
Teacher A's writing class

```
1 T:  give examples (.) it does not give a definition (.)    doesn't
      explain how it works (.) and it doesn't talk about types of
      business (.) so what's the second section doing (.) er (.) (Bert)
      (3)→ (3.5)
2 S:  (definition of franchising)
3 T:  yeah (.) thank you (.) yeh quite a long definition (.)
```

In the instance offered above, the teacher's wait-time is demonstrated through the arrow. In addition, the student's contribution to the conversation is offered after the arrow. The long version of the response cannot be given due to the student's low voice. As Mak (2011) indicated that wait-time can help students gain their confidence to talk; even if Teacher A directly says his name, the student can prepare a long answer without any hesitation by means of the wait-time given in the Extract 1.

Extract 2.
Teacher A's writing class

```
1 T:  these two here (.) they are all (.)(2.0) all (.) what
      → (2.7)
2 S:  all restaurant
3 T:  absolutely (.) or some kind of fast food (.) fast food outlets (.)
      um
4 S:  ((speaks in Chinese))
```

Considering Extract 2, it can be interpreted that the student finds the answer by the help of Teacher A's directing pauses. Wait-time which Teacher A applied in the Extract 2 is shown through the arrow. As a response to the teacher's question, the student gave the answer saying "all restaurants". As Morgan & Saxton (1994) offered, wait-time fosters students to use the silence in an active way.

Extract 3.
Teacher A's writing class

```
1 T:  absolute (.) er (.) yes (.) the police catch me (.) mmm the police
      ((holds hand up))
      → (2.0)
2 S:  stopped you
```

```
3 T:    absolutely yes (.) a police lady
```

Regarding the Extract 3, it can be inferred that Teacher A allows the students to answer his question with the help of both wait-time and using his gestures and body movements. That is to say that, Teacher A chooses the way letting students guess rather than completing the sentence himself as a spoon-feeding activity. On the contrary, even though Teacher C regards wait-time in classroom interaction, out of 30, only 7 times she gets a response back from the students. The reasons behind this situation can be interpreted in terms of some other factors such as students' level of proficiency, speaking ability, anxiety, etc.

Extract 4.
Teacher C's listening class

```
1 T:          When you put this information together…
2 T:          What do you think about all?
       → (11)
3 T:          Do you think he is…?
```

In the Extract 4, Teacher C gives a pause for 11 seconds, however, she cannot get an answer from the students. At this point, it is crucial to generate a plan B in order to overcome the silence in the classroom. In the Extract 4, she asks more questions to make the question straightforward. As Şahin (2015) touched upon, wait-time can allocate time for teachers to generate better guiding questions. In the Extract 4, Teacher C also gets benefit from wait-time to establish more effective questions.

Extract 5.
Teacher C's listening class

```
1 T:          Do you think that he is qualified enough to talk about
     climate change
       → (3.7)
2 S:           Yes
3 T:          (indistinctly speaking) Yes, why? (2)
4 S:          (student explains indistinctly)
```

Focusing on the Extract 5, it can be monitored that the pause of Teacher C allowed the student to think and find the right answer. In addition, it gives way to classroom interaction. Therefore, Teacher C took advantage of the ways she improved to handle silent classes. As Alsaadi & Atar (2019) suggested, extended wait-time can be beneficial for raising the classroom interaction.

Discussion

The findings of the current research revealed that the native ESL teachers in total 47 times implemented wait-time in their classes in order to advance interaction by students in the classroom. In accordance with the Extract 1, Extract 2, and Extract 3, it can be inferred that the teachers' use of wait-time allows the students to think a while for formulating their answers

and then to respond to the teacher. Considering the Extract 1, 2, 3, and 5, wait-time had positive influences on the students in contrast to Allwright's study (1988). To elaborate, using wait-time provided the ESL students with necessary time to think and consist their sentences. Additionally, there was no clue that the students' higher cognitive achievements decreased by contrast with Duell (1994, 1995). Regarding the teachers' perspective towards utilizing wait-time in their classes, it can be inferred from the classroom records that the teachers seemed cheerful and qualified counter to the study by Honea (1982).

According to Extract 4, wait-time may not always serve the teachers' aim. At this point, some other strategies can be developed to break the silence. To illustrate, Teacher C uses her own techniques. She does not expose the answer instead she clarifies the question by asking more questions on it. Atar & Seedhouse (2018) also suggest using "further resources when students fail to answer" (p. 145). For instance, another question was posed to reveal the student's answer by Teacher C in the Extract 5. She got benefit from asking more questions that led students to propose explanatory responses. In order to deal with this problem, every teacher can develop his/her way of fitting their students best and meeting their needs; however, the questions they choose must be in point. As Good and Brophy (2000) offer that teacher questions "appear to be rather mechanical time-filling rather than thought-provoking" (p. 11), it is important to find the right time to ask the right question leading the student to the accuracy.

Consistent with the Extract 5, it can be monitored that Teacher C's pause makes a ground for a classroom interaction which means elaborative answer rather than a simple answer. The situation can be also observed when it is looked at the Figure 2.
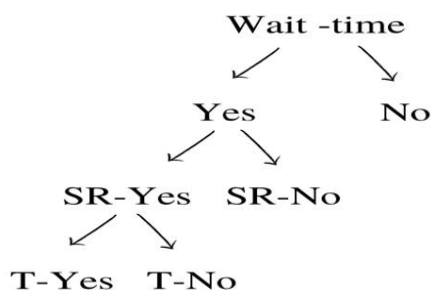

Figure 2. Explanation of the Extract 5

Considering the Figure 2, it can be said that there is a wait-time serving the teacher's aim because when the teacher applies the pause, the student takes part in the conversation, after that the teacher goes on the explanation. There may be some further issues to consider utilizing wait-time in the classroom. To exemplify,

> "Through interactions with others, we not only engage in socialisation, but we also talk institutions into being. Social institutions, including parliaments, courtrooms, and schools, have become the institutions they are and will be

through social interactions. This also includes language classrooms." (Sert, 2015, p. 10)

Considering the quote given above, as a convention of the institutional talk, it cannot be given such kind of pauses in a daily conversation in different contexts. However, in a language classroom, it can be helpful to implement wait-time in terms of classroom interaction since second language classroom is an institution with its own rules and conventions. All in all, it can be said that the findings of the current research have parallelism with the review of the literature in terms of positive outcomes (Alsaadi & Atar, 2019; Altiere & Duell, 1991; Aras, 2007; Baysen & Baysen, 2010; Davenport, 2003; Mak, 2011; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Riley, 1986; Rowe, 1974a, 1974c, 1986; Samiroden, 1983; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Şahin, 2015; Tobin, 1986; Tobin & Capie, 1982; Yaqubi & Rokni 2012) of wait-time.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the native ESL teachers took advantage of wait-time while teaching English to foreigners. As a result, they achieved to create a learner-centered classroom environment and encouraged their students to respond with the help of providing them with only 3-5 seconds after asking a question. The research conducted demonstrated that the impact of wait-time on classroom interaction should not be underestimated because it is a beneficial and an easy way to increase student contribution to the lesson especially in language classes. Briefly, wait-time can be quite helpful for both teachers and students in order to increase classroom interaction and student contribution throughout the lessons.

As observed in the Methodology, the study has some limitations such as limited grade range, student profile, teacher profile, etc. For further studies, the current study can be a model. In addition, limitations cannot be neglected. The study could be conducted with a different group of participants whose profiles are not the same with this one, and also the classroom observations are restricted to 6 classroom hours due to the facilities. That is to say, the study can be applied on a different group in a different place in a dissimilar way.

Suggestions

There are also specific suggestions for scholars in this report. The study can be conducted with a larger group in terms of better results. Therefore, the number of the participants including the teachers and the students can be increased in order to reach more generalizable findings. For further studies, it can be suggested that throughout the data collection, the teachers' compensation strategies for the unsuccessful pauses can be examined in more depth and detail.

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