The Conversational Use of Reactive Tokens in Taiwanese [1]

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Abstract

This study investigates the conversational use of reactive tokens (RTs) in Taiwanese. The data consist of a two-hour recording of radio call-in programs. There are altogether 4517 utterances transcribed, with 52 speakers involved, 48 of them being male. The framework is based on Clancy et al.'s study (1996). In the coruse of classification, however, some of their definitions of RTs are shown to be problematic. First, Taiwanese RTs are not necessarily "continuers" because 29% of them are followed by extended talk by the same speaker. Second, RTs are not necessarily affirmative in nature. In some contexts, discoursal negatives (e.g. 'boe7' & 'bo5') also qualify as RTs. Third, the location of an RT candidate seems to outweigh its semantic meaning. Fourth, following their definitions strictly would lead to a rather serious conflict between form and function. Further clarification is hence required. The results are as follows. The presence of RTs in Taiwanese telephone conversation is indeed massive. An RT occurs every 3.83 IUs. When deprived of visual aids, Taiwanese speakers are in fact, far more verbally active in giving interactional support. Next, the RT use is observed to be affected by channel of communication, degree of familiarity or formality, the topic, the interactants' communicative intentions and skills of turn management, and personal styles. The tendency to place RTs at transition relevance places is clear. 93% of them appear after pragmatic completion points. Moreover, the distribution is somehow related to such interactional devices as utterance-final particles and tag/confirmation questions. Last, the vast majority of the 334 non-floor-supporting RTs occur affter possible global pragmatic completion points.

Keywords: Reactive Tokens, Transition Relevance Places, Pragmatic Completion Points, Grammar and Interaction

Introduction

Over the past few years, reactive tokens (RTs) have attracted much interest. One of the most representative studies in this topic is Clancy et al. (1996), which initiates to define RT as a short utterance produced by an interlocutor who is playing a listener's role during the other interlocutor's speakership. In their cross-linguistic study, the use of RTs in Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and English is compared and the rate of RTs in Mandarin conversation is found to be the lowest. It is therefore implied that "interactional and affective considerations" do not play so important a role in Mandarin or any other Chinese language conversation as they do in Japanese or English (p.380). Such a conclusion about Mandarin conversational use of RTs is highly questionable because it is based on an analysis of a "23-minute" tape of "face-to-face" conversations between "21" Mandarin speakers. The sample is not representative enough. Moreover, it is very likely that other variables such as channel of communication, relationship between the participants, topic, etc. come into play, thereby making the interpretation of the results extremely complicated. More studies are therefore required to fur-

ther confirm, clarify, or revise their findings. However, no systematic work has been done on RTs in any Chinese language, as pointed out by Clancy. "This by itself is an interesting fact, suggesting that RT use is not perceived as a predominant feature of Chinese language use (p.381)." This present study is hence conducted in order to render a more detailed analysis (both quantitative and qualitative)

of RTs in Taiwanese, one of the Chinese dialects, hoping to gain a better understanding of the way RTs work in Taiwanese conversation. The findings of Clancy et al. (1996) will be re-examined. In addition, we will undertake a criticism over both the criterion of classification and the theory proposed by Clancy et al. so as to bring out several points of theoretical importance.

Data

As is known to every sociolinguist, whether an analysis reveals anything true to a particular speech community depends on its sampling. Only when the sample selected is representative enough can the results be claimed to represent the "norm" of the community. Undoubtedly, the data in Clancy et al.'s study are completely "authentic." However, detailed transcription is extraordinarily time-consuming. As a consequence only 23 minutes of Mandarin conversations between friends (including 9 females and 12 males) is fully transcribed. The length of the data and the speakers involved can hardly be considered representative. Moreover, the lack of native speakers' intuition and related studies on RT use in Mandarin Chinese might cause their analysis to run the risk of being partial.

As native speakers of Taiwanese and linguistics majors, our knowledge about Taiwanese grammars leads us to doubt if we are more passive in interaction than Japanese or English speakers. Our assumption is that we could be as responsive and active in conversation as they do, but the main strategies we adopt to interact with our interlocutors might be different from theirs. For example, in face-to-face conversation, we could use nodding, facial expressions, eye contact or gestures to show understanding, approval, or confirmation. To eliminate the effects of these possible non-verbal elements on use of RTs, we choose to restrict the channel of communication to radio call-in speech. This is motivated from our agreement with Schegloff's (1996:99-104) argument that the grammars are, in fact, composed of a variety of elements, including **non-lexical sounds** like "*uh*", units of **conduct** like "same turn repair initiation" (e.g. glottal or dental stops, or some sound cut-offs or sound stretches, even though they are apparently not

phonemic for English), try-marked **intonation, pause** for evidence of recognition, **gestures, stress, accent,** the unarticulated **facial expressions, smiles,** or **laughters.** Before we claim with confidence our findings as part of the grammars, we must manage to control to some extent the variables that affect the use of RTs. In view of this, the analysis of this present study is based on a total of a two-hour recording of radio call-in programs,[2] which were dominantly conducted in Taiwanese. There are altogether **4517 utterances** transcribed, with **52 speakers** involved, 48 of them being male and 4 female.

All of the data have been fully transcribed according to Du Bois et al. (1993) transcription system, which recognizes both turns and intonation units as basic elements of conversational language. For transcription conventions and list of abbreviations, see the Appendix. The romanization of Taiwanese generally follows that of the Church system as seen in Cheng & Cheng (1978), with 2 major changes for ease of typing: first, _o_ as in _ko_ (姑) and _o_ as in _ko_ (哥) are not differentiated; second, nasalization of vowels is indicated with a capitalized "N" instead of a superscript "n."[3]

The advantage with our method is that the participants must interact through "**vocal**" channel. Hence non-vocal variables that may be used as interactional support can be disregarded. Furthermore, in the whole tape, there are only two program hosts. All the other speakers call in to talk with them. We could see the same persons show very different frequencies of RT use when conversing with different interlocutors, so we can further explore what factors cause the variation. In other words, the data provide an opportunity for an in-depth case-by-case analysis of Taiwanese RT use.

Framework and Classification

So far, our main concerns are two-fold. First, we want to know how many RT types there are in Taiwanese conversation and if there is any systematic difference between Taiwanese RTs and those of Mandarin Chinese, English and Japanese. At the outset, we followed the framework of Clancy et al. and classified the RTs in the data into the proposed 5 categories. Yet in course of classification, we encountered some problems, which in turn pushed us to revise the definitions. (For the revised criterion of classification, see Section 5.) Second, we intend to find out where RTs are typically placed: at points of possible transition from one speaker to another (i.e. CTRPs--complex transition relevance places) or during another speaker's turn. In the light of our data, however, we find the notion of CTRP is too vague to operate. What is the manifestation of CTRP in spoken Taiwanese? Further clarification is required.

Backchannels (BCs)

As defined in Clancy et al. (p.359), "If the RT is a non-lexical vocalic form, and serves as a 'continuer', display of interest, or claim of understanding," we code it as a backchannel, as in (1-2). Typical BCs in Taiwanese are presented in Table 1.

Table 1   Typical Backchannels in Taiwanese

Taiwanese Backchannels	Frequency of Occurrence	
hm / hng / m / ng	237	43.9%
haNh / heN3 / heN7 / he3	203	37.6%
heNh / haN3 / haN7	39	7.2%
ho3 / ho7	40	7.4%
hoNh	9	1.7%
laughters	12	2.2%
Total	540	100.0%

*A general principle of our coding is that when the same RT occurs in a sequence, no matter marked by a falling intonation at the end or not (e.g. 'hm hm hm'), it is counted only once.

(1)   1   J: 這咱這個＜核四廠＞我是有聽在講
              hoNh,
  >   2   A:heN3.
      3   是.

Among them, [heN7], [heN3] and [he3] are regarded as coming from the same segment /heN/ because the variant forms, motivated from modification of intonation or ease of articulation (e.g. drop of the final consonant), do not change the core function of /heN/ as a BC. The same is true of /haNh/, /hoNh/, and /ho/. As for [hng] and [hm], they have very similar phonetic realizations (both having a nasalized vowel) and perfectly identical function (as a BC). As a result, they are classified into the same subcategory.

One problem found in the data is that Taiwanese BCs are not always "continuers". Though 68.1% of the BCs (368/540) are immediately followed by speaker changes, the remaining 31.9% (172/540) are followed by more talk by the current speaker. We wonder if there is any pattern behind. The answer seems to be positive. Below we try to depict the pattern.

(I) The backchannel under discussion is followed by another RT and thus form a RT cluster or an extended RT, e.g. (1) 2-3.

(II) When the preceding utterance reaches a so-called "global" pragmatic completion point, the RT is usually followed by a full turn, as in (2)6. According to Ford & Thompson (1996:150-151)[4],

"Pragmatic completion can be thought of in both 'local' and 'global' terms. Local pragmatic completion points are points at which the speaker is projecting more talk, but at which another speaker might reasonably take a minimal turn, such as offering a continuer, display of interest or claim of understanding. This type of pragmatic completion is thus a location at which another speaker could offer a small, non-floor-taking turn. ...An utterance was judged to be pragmatically complete in a more global sense if it had the property of not projecting anything beyond itself in the way of a longer story, account, or other agenda."

Example (2) well illustrates this idea. The local pragmatic completion points of the primary speaker A's talk are marked by a greater-than sign (>) and the global ones a double greater-than sign (》) :

(2)　1　A: 這眞簡單 la. >
　　　2　K: heN3.
　　　3　A: 橫的 hoNh.
　　　4　K: heN3.
　　　5　A: 橫的復給箍一輪仔就好 a3 la .》
> 　　6　K: 對 a7.
　　　7　　就是講這款代誌伊也作會出來.
　　　8　　復會擋 <履勘>.
　　　9　　講復會擋通過.
　　　10　我感覺是足奇怪的代誌 la.

(III) The backchannel 'ho' indicates not only reception of the message, but also a change of information state on the part of the speaker. Therefore it usually projects more talk about this discovery or new information state as in (3), or some negotiation begging utterance, checking if what he heard is right. If this is the case, 'ho' is usually followed by an utterance copied from the prior talk, as in (4), or by another question, as in (5).

(3)　1　L: <兩個五個月. 兩個三個月>.
> 　2　A: ho7.
　　3　　<兩個五個月. 兩個三個月>.
(4)　1　K: 我 54 歲.
　　2　A: haN5?
　　3　K: 54.
> 　4　A: ho7:.
　　5　　54 歲. ((repetition of the prior talk))
(5)　1　C: a1 這陣給罷免掉敢亦復有挽救的機會？
　　2　A: ..啥 a1 有挽救的機會？
> 　3　　ho7.
　　4　　你講伊 a1 會使作抑是選就對不？
　　　　((Question))
　　5　C: 對.

(IV) When the BC is used to respond to an imperative, a greeting, or a question (i.e. when inserted into an adjacency pair), it sometimes projects more talk (i.e. the second pair part) by the ongoing speaker.

(imperative)1　G: 我有一個問題要請教一下
　　　　　　　　hoNh.
> 　　2　A: heN3. 勿彼客氣.
(greeting)　1　B: eN3, {陳桑} 你好.
> 　　2　A: heN3. 你好.
(question)　1　h: e3, __(N)你振德兄 hioh?
> 　　2　A: heN3. 我陳振德.

Reactive Expressions (REs)

Clancy et al. define RE to be a short non-floor-taking lexical phrase or word (p.359), as shown by (6)3, (7)2, (8)3. Typical reactive expressions in our data are those found in Table 2.

Table 2　Typical Reactive Expressions in Taiwanese

Taiwanese REs	Frequency of Occurrence	
是	281	45.7%
好	200	32.5%
對	32	5.2%
按爾 (o3/hoNh/hioh)	50	8.1%
有影 (o3) / 眞正的 (o3)	7	1.1%
無 / boe7 / be7	12	2.0%
others (explicit expressions)	33	5.4%
Total	615	100.0%

(6)　1　E: <我是說趁這個機會讓我講一下>.
　　2　　┌<發洩一下>.
> 　3　A: └ 是.
　　4　E: ┌<不然不能平衡>.
　　5　A: └ 好.
(7)　1　A: 多謝你.
> 　2　f: a3, boe7 boe7 boe7. ((hang up))
(8)　1　A: 伊這這每一工的行程攏無同.
　　2　d: 按爾好, 按爾好.
> 　3　　┌我了解.
　　4　A: └hoNh.

In speech, the most frequently occurring copula '是' is often used as an RE, indicating that the

message is being taken and the primary speaker can go on with his talk. If this is the case, it has nothing to do with the truth condition or the epistemic attitude of the speaker, but has become an interactional device like a BC. The second most frequent RE is '好', which means 'good' semantically but is often used in conversation as a pre-closing marker pragmatically (cf. Lee 1993). Since there are ambiguous cases where these two functions are hardly discernible, we count them all as REs. The category of 'others' includes explicit short utterances, as in (8)3, which do not claim for the floor but express understanding or acknowledgment just as typical BCs do. Note that in some contexts, even negatives (e.g. the discoursal '無' & 'boe7') may be used as REs. For instance, 'boe7' in (7)2 is not negation of the addressee's talk, but a mitigating device. It is a formulaic expression, in response to the gratitude and consolation uttered by the addressee, so as to make the speaker appear humble and good-mannered, thereby minimizing the potential disturbance (cf. Chang 1997). Though semantically negative, it is definitely intended to be cooperative and supportive. In other words, Taiwanese RTs are usually supportive, but not necessarily affirmative.

Another thing worth mention is about the floor structure in Taiwanese conversation. Some of the REs are found to form the so-called 'loop sequence' in our data. According to Iwasaki (1997:661),

"the loop sequence refers to successive exchanges of BC signals, and may be understood as a locally managed turn-taking pattern. ...The loop sequence is a pattern which provides participants with an opportunity to negotiate the next floor holder, who will subsequently control and develop the floor. A loop sequence appears when the current floor holder suggests a transfer of floor, or when the current floor supporter returns a floor which has been transferred to him inadvertently, or when participants jointly produce utterances in a rapid succession (open floor)."

See examples (9) & (10)

(9) 1 F: a1 歸個日本人歸個攏看對彼去 .

	2	a1 實在有影會買命 boe?
	3	⌐眞正有影 hoN —
	4	A: └是 . 算講 hoN, 失面子 la.
	5	F: haN5 ?
>	6	A: 失面子 la. ((explicit RE))
>	7	F: heN3. ((BC))
>	8	...就對不 a3. ((RE))
>	9	A: hm. ((BC))
	10	F: e3, a1 這路煙 khoh8 仔也給人偷拿 la.

In example (9), not knowing F is making an extended speech, A responds to F's question (IU-2) with an RE (IU-4), followed by another phrasal assessment. Yet F didn't hear it clearly because of the overlapping, so another backchannel with a modified intonation (IU-5) is used to make a question. Then A repeats his assessment (IU-6). F involuntarily responds with a backchannel (IU-7) and after a short pause, F comes to realize what it means. He enthusiastically utters another RE (IU-8) to show his strong agreement. Here A has an opportunity to seize the floor if he wants; however, he simply lets it go by giving a backchannel turn (IU-9), so another speaker change results.

(10)	1	C: 無 la.
	2	伊這陣 a7 無按怎 .
	3	a1 就干乾豎在彼曝日頭 .
	4	曝作憨人耳 .
>	5	A: 按爾 o3? ((RE: ask for confirmation))
>	6	C: heN7 a7. ((B: give up his primary speakership))
	7	A: boe7 要緊 .
	8	若有任何狀況 hoNh.
	9	C: hm.
	10	A: a1 此這個街頭記者才麻煩報來 .

In example (10), A, the non-primary speaker, is asking for confirmation with an RE (IU-5), which at the same time gives his addressee a chance to indicate a problem if there should be any. C responds with a backchannel (IU-6), giving up his speakership to A, so A becomes the primary speaker in the following talk. To sum up, the REs like " 按爾 o3/hoNh/hioh, 有影 (o3) & 眞正的 o3" are often used to initiate a loop sequence. They are candidates of the "loop-head".

"The loop sequence is a turn-taking pattern

consisting of a consecutive backchannel and back-backchannel expressions, produced by different speakers. The first backchannel expression, which is directed to the preceding or concurrent utterance by the other speaker, is identified here as the 'loop-head' and the second one (back-backchannel) which is directed to the 'loop-head' is identified as the 'loop-tail' (Iwasaki 1997:673-74)."

Repetitions

"If the non-primary speaker reacts by repeating a portion of the speech of the primary speaker, we coded it as a repetition (Clancy: p.361)." There are altogether 55 instances of repetition in our data, usually suffixed with such UFPs as 'o3, hoNh, hio, & a3', as in (3)3, (4)5, (5)2, (11)4.

    (11) 1 A: 這敢開始在用 a3?
          2 X: 昨昏開始.
          3 A: haN3!
    >   4   昨昏開始在用 o3?
    (12) 1 A: a1...這要按怎改善？
    >   2 M: 要按怎改善？
          3   這...根本你要按怎改善.
          4   這你要按怎處理都完全 hoNh --
          5   已經 hoNh --
          6   若照我的情形看法 hoNh.
          7   無敲掉一定無可能 e3.

The repetition in (11) is both an RT and a confirmation request. On the one hand, it indicates reception of the message; on the other, it leaves the addressee an opportunity to attend to this request. In other words, it also functions as a loop-head, a turn-management strategy that offers the speaker a chance to turn his role as a passive listener into an active question-asker.

One thing deserving our attention is that the function of a particular repetition could be diverse although our current interest is confined to that as an RT. When inserted into different discourse slots, or accompanied by proper body languages, the repetition -- (12)2 -- performs functions other than confirmation request. The interpretation relies on the subsequent factors: who utters the repetition? Is it the first time that it appears in the discourse or the second/third time? Is the repeated utterance

a statement or a question? Does it co-occur with any particles? Apparently it is a very interesting topic for further exploration, but we suggest another study for fear of deviating from our present focus.

Collaborative Finishes (CFs)

"When the non-primary speaker finishes a previous speaker's utterance, we coded it a CF" (Lerner 1987, 1989, 1991). In our data, two kinds of CF are found. One is that both parties offer the finishes almost simultaneously, as in (13), and the other is that the prior speaker has difficulty finding out the exact phrase, the next speaker helps him out by giving the intended finish, as in (14). There are only 7 instances of CF. This is probably due to their lack of familiarity.

    (13) 1 A: 你 hoNh 會記 e2 <身份證字號> 報
                予 ┌伊查 –
    >   2 E: └查.
          3   我予 in 查.
    (14) 1 E: 是不是愛寄去<環保聯.. ┌署> –
    >   2 A: └ <聯盟> .
          3 E: 抑是寄去你彼？

Doubtlessly, all these 7 CFs are placed at non-CTRPs. They occur while the primary speaker is still talking or searching for words. Since the placement of CF is predictable, it's better for us to distinguish it from the other types of RT when we discuss the distribution.

Resumptive Openers (ROs)

According to Clancy et al., 'RO' refers to a type of non-lexical element used at turn initial position. Its function is to acknowledge the prior turn and commence a new turn. It differs from the other RTs in that they do not pass a turn-taking opportunity. To be brief, they are marked by the following features (p.362-364):

1. They are realized in short, non-lexical vocalic forms.
2. They tend to appear as a separate intonation unit.
3. Normally only short pauses occur after an RO.
4. They appear at the beginning of a new turn.

Table 3 Typical Resumptive Openers in Taiwanese

Typical ROs	Frequency of Occurrence	
a2 / a3	8	30.8%
oa2 / oa3	8	30.8%
o3 / ho3 / hoNh	10	38.4%
Total	26	100%

(15) 1 A: 多謝你的意見 .
> 2 f: a3, boe7 boe7 boe7.
(16) 1 A: e7... 若依卓榮泰議員的意見 .
2 這條歸氣封起來 la.
3 al 作觀光點 la.
> 4 k: ┌oa2! 且這濟錢 --
5 A: └al 變 --- al 變台北的＜萬里長城＞ .
(17) 1 A: al 電腦卡哪會吃入去 ？
2 X: al...錢對彼扣去 a7.
> 3 A: o3!
4 按電腦卡頂頭直直給你扣錢 o3.

These ROs are the so-called utterance-initial particles. '*Oa2*' is an exclamation over something unexpected, and '*o3*' signals a change of information state on the part of the speaker. Though 8 instances of *a2/a3* act as BC, as in (15), in most other instances, they are used as "global boundary markers", indicating the following talk belongs to an ideational structure distinct from the prior talk (cf. Li et al. 1995).

There might be three problems with this category. First, given the definition as such, this category is almost identical with BC. The only distinction lies in whether the given RT is followed by a full turn. Yet as proved before, BCs are not necessarily continuers. That means their distinction is blurred in the light of our data. As a result, the main issue at this point is either to combine these two categories or revise the definition. Second, some of the RO candidates are found to appear at non-turn-initial points, e.g. (18)5:

(18) 1 J: 我看連＜捷運系統＞ 這個簡單的物件 都出代誌 a3.

2 A:heN3.
3 J: al 這擺 .
4 我看這若出代誌 .
> 5 o2 ↑ 臺北市、臺北縣、 al 臺灣省的 人不愛死翹翹 ？
6 A:這不但 (na7) o3.

Should '*o2*' in this instance be coded as an RO? If yes, that means the definition is problematic. If otherwise, then a conflict between form and function arises. Is it the position or the core semantic meaning of the form itself that counts since there is no apparent meaning difference between this '*o2*' and the '*o2*' as an RO? Our solution is NOT to code it as an RO, for we think it is a response to the talk of the speaker himself, rather than the recipient. In other words, the location where the RO candidate situates is considered more crucial. Third, we find ROs may even include such "lexical" forms as the discoursal negation marker '無' in (19), which satisfies the second to fourth conditions except the first.

(19) 1 A: 這著愛問消防隊看勿 .
2 這消防檢查不知通過未 ？
> 3 V: 無 la.
4 我這嘛是感覺講＜捷運＞開彼濟錢落 去 .
5 哪會講那路 —
6 A: heN3.
7 哪會出入攏同一個出口 hoNh?
(20) 1 A: 這公平委員會會來取締 neh.
> 2 o: boe7 la.
3 咱有申請牌照 a3.

In (19), '無' is a marker of implicit denial. What is denied is beyond the line, i.e. *A*'s assumption that *V* should follow the topic *A* proposes and offer the answer. Yet *V* is still preoccupied with the problem he has discovered, so he is not only denying *A*'s assumption (i.e. perfunctorily reacting to *A*'s question) but also trying to get *A* back to the prior topic. To us, its function to deny implicitly (as a response) is not so salient as its function to change the topic and get the primary speakership. This case reveals a gray zone where the function to acknowledge what is just said and the function to begin a full turn share a border. Should we code it as an RO? Note that '*boe7*' in (20) is a negation of *A*'s propo-

sition. Negation of this kind remains at the ideational level, rather than the discourse level, so it is not coded as an RO. To sum up, this category provokes controversial discussion over what is an RT. Now that the frequency of occurrence found in our data is negligible, we decide to leave it for future study.

Complex Transition Relevance Places (CTRPs)

Our second concern is to find out where non-primary speakers tend to place their RTs. Is it true that they usually occur at CTRPs? Before we can prove this, what CTRP means in terms of our data must be made clear first. Based on Sacks et al. (1974), the end of a turn constructional unit (TCU) is termed a TRP, i.e. a place where a speaker change might occur. Sacks et al. do not give a clear picture about what exactly defines a TCU, but it is assumed that grammatical units play a major role. Ford & Thompson (1996) take up Sacks et al.'s study and find that these 'turn units' are in fact best thought of as being complex, i.e. they include intonational and pragmatic cues as to where they will end. Their data show that intonational and pragmatic completion points select from among the many more numerous syntactic completion points to form the so-called 'CTRP'. Yet of the 3 types of completion, syntactic completion points alone are the least reliable indicators of any other sort of completion, because the vast majority (98.8%) of

intonational completion points are also syntactic completion points, but the reverse is not the case. Only 53.6% of the syntactic completion points are also intonational completion points. As for the other types of completion points, their interdependence has been recognized. Pragmatic completion was found to presuppose intonational completion. That is, every point of pragmatic completion is also, by definition, a point of intonational completion (154-155).

Basically we agree with their viewpoint about CTRP, but we maintain that there is no need to think of turn unit to be complex. "Pragmatic cues" alone are good enough for the recipient to project a transition of turns (i.e. TRPs) because (1) every point of pragmatic completion point is also a point of intonational completion, but not vice versa; (2) syntactic completion points are not reliable indicators of the other sort of completion. They are better considered a cognitive constraint, restricting speaker onset at non-syntactic completion points unless there is good reason. This might hold true of intonational completion as well. The key notion in relation to distribution being simplified as such, we arrive at the following hypothesis: (1) except CFs, most of the backchannel turns occur in the clear immediately after "local" pragmatic completion points; (2) most of the extended backchannel turns and full turns occur after "global" pragmatic completion points. For the results and discussion, see Section 4.2 & 4.3.

Findings

The frequencies of various types of RTs found in our study as well as those found in Clancy et al.'s are presented in Table 4:

Table 4 Frequencies of Taiwanese & Mandarin RT Types

RT Types	Taiwanese Data		Mandarin Data (by Clancy)	
Backchannels	540	43.4%	17	47.2%
Reactive Expressions	615	49.5%	11	31.1%
Repetitions	55	4.4%	2	5.8%
Collaborative Finishes	7	0.6%	3	8.9%
Resumptive Openers	26	2.1%	5	14.5%
Total	1243	100.0%	38*	107.5%*

*The actual raw number of RT in Clancy et al.'s is 35, but no explanation is given for this. Perhaps it is because some RTs are classified into more than one category.

Unlike the findings in Clancy et al., the most frequent RT type in Taiwanese conversation is RE (or lexical BCs) instead of non-lexical BCs, and the least frequent type is CF. This could be attributed to the "formal" style of the call-in program, which is broadcast to the public and the conversational participants are either strangers or casual acquaintances. A lack of familiarity prevents the speaker from projecting what his partner intends to say. Even if he could, he might well choose not to interrupt on account of social manners unless his partner explicitly appeals for his help (e.g. search for words). Another contrast between Clancy et al.'s study and this one lies in the percentage of ROs (i.e. 2.1% : 14.5%). Again it is due to the formal situation and the distant relationship between the interlocutors. While talking to close friends, we usually feel free to show our emotions, so interjections, exclamations, or exaggerated expressions occur more frequently. That means a higher chance for presence of ROs. Yet we are usually more reserved when talking with strangers, so the frequency of ROs is reduced.

Frequency of Taiwanese Reactive Tokens

Though Clancy et al. claim that the ratio of RTs to SCs provides a frequency measure that is relative to the overall amount of all types of SC, it is not always a reliable index of close interaction. For instance, the average RT frequency per SC in Conversation #10 is 27.3%, yet the average RT frequency per IU is only 8%, the lowest. Listening to the tape, we find the caller is eager to tell her experience to the program host, speaking in such a fast tempo that she doesn't leave her partner much chance to give either a continuer or a floor-taking turn. Therefore, to detect if the participants interact closely, the average RT frequency per IU is, in fact, more effective, so Table 5 below shows not only the ratio of RTs to Speaker Changes (SCs) but also RTs to Intonation Units (IUs) of the fifty transcripts.

Table 5   The Ratio of RTs to SCs and RTs to IUs

Conv. No.	IUs	SCs	RTs	RTs/IUs(%)	RTs/SCs(%)
1. A - B	138	12	3	2.1	25
2. A - C	118	61	32	27.1	52.5
3. A - D	70	37	17	24.3	45.9
4. A - E	82	43	19	23.2	44.2
5. A - F	170	35	21	12.4	60
6. A - G	81	39	20	24.7	51.3
7. A - H	31	14	6	19.4	42.9
8. A - I	58	25	11	19.0	44.0
9. A - J	74	24	11	14.9	45.8
10. A - K	112	33	9	8.0	27.3
11. A - L	134	63	30	22.4	47.6
12. a - b	55	29	13	23.6	44.8
13. a - c	82	46	24	29.3	52.2
14. a - d	89	48	26	29.2	54.2
monologue	51				
15. a - e	174	104	52	29.9	50.0
16. a - f	136	69	38	27.9	55.1
17. a - g	147	71	37	25.2	52.1
18. a - h	159	103	54	34.0	52.4
19. a - i	141	68	38	27.0	55.9
monologue	68				
20. a - j	27	14	10	37.0	71.4
21. a - k	49	26	14	28.6	53.8
22. a - l	133	62	34	25.6	54.8
23. a - m	42	30	16	38.1	53.3
monologue	66				
24. a - n	95	60	37	38.9	61.7
25. a - o	204	104	55	27.0	52.9
26. a - p	183	91	46	25.1	50.0
27. a - q	71	54	30	42.3	55.6
28. a - r	32	20	10	31.3	50.0
29. a - s	75	30	15	20.0	50.0
30. a - t	34	20	12	35.3	60.0
31. a - u	34	22	12	35.3	54.5
32. a - v	76	28	27	35.5	71.1
33. a - w	35	22	7	20.0	31.8
34. a - x	44	32	13	29.5	40.6
35. a - y	64	44	24	37.5	54.5
36. a - z	41	26	12	29.3	46.2
37. a - M	79	53	29	36.7	54.7
38. a - N	18	12	6	33.3	50.0
39. a - O	29	13	9	31.0	69.2
40. a - P	101	48	26	25.7	54.2
41. a - Q	87	47	25	28.7	53.2
42. a - R	53	33	19	35.8	57.6
43. a - S	52	30	16	30.8	53.3
44. a - T	169	69	37	21.9	53.6
45. a - U	29	14	7	24.1	50.0
46. a - V	67	46	22	32.8	47.8
47. a - W	64	38	21	32.8	55.3
monologue	38				
48. a - X	143	59	32	22.4	54.2
49. a - Y	13	8	5	38.5	62.5
50. a - Z	68	37	25	36.8	67.6
monologue	32				
Total*	4262	2126	1114	26.1 (3.83)	52.4 (191)

* not including the four monologues (255 IUs)

The total numbers of IUs, SCs and RTs are 4262, 2126, and 1114 respectively. The amount of SC per total number of IUs is 49.9% (i.e. there is a SC every 2 IUs), much higher than the 28.7% in Clancy et al.'s study. The ratio of all RTs to all IUs is 26.1%. That means one RT occurs every 3.83 IUs. To divide the length of the 50 transcripts (95 mins) by all the RTs, the result is 5.12. That is to say, about every 5 seconds, there is an RT taking place in our data. Such a high frequency of occurrence is really astounding. The ratio of RT per total number of SCs is 52.4%. In other words, 52.4% of the SCs serve to support the primary speaker. Compared with the strikingly low average RT frequency in Mandarin in Clancy et al.'s study (i.e. 10%), this ratio is more than its five times.

Table 6   The RT Use Between the Two Program Hosts

Conv. No.	IUs	SCs	RTs	RTs/IUs(%)	RTs/SCs(%)
1-11 (host 1)	1068	386	179	16.8	48.6
12-50 (host 2)	3194	1740	935	29.3	53.7

Table 6 clearly illustrates the difference in RT use between the 2 program hosts. The second one obviously uses more RTs than the first. Essentially 53.7% of the SCs in his dialogues (#12-50) serve to support the primary speaker. Every 3.27 IUs, there is an RT, while this average is increased to 5.95 IUs in the first program host's dialogues (#1-11). Clearly, the second program host plays a more active role in giving response. This could be attributed to personal styles.

Meanwhile, with respect to the average RT frequency per IU and per SC, the range of variation within the second program host's dialogues is from 42.3% to 20%, and from 71.4% to 31.8%. Despite the same person, there is still great variation of RT use when he talks with different callers. What causes the variation? Based on our observation, three things may influence the RT use. First, the more common knowledge about the current topic the interlocutors have, the more RTs will

probably be found. Take Conversation #33 for example.

(#33) 1 w: 振德兄 o3?
       2   我誰你知無？
       3 a: haN5?
       4 w: 我誰你知無 la ?
       5 a: e7.. 歹勢.
       6   你這個收音機吱吱叫.
       7 w: al 這嘛無 a3 la.
       8 a: hm hm.
       9 w: 我那工不是有敲電話去你的服務處？
      10 a: 服務處？
      11 w: 我嗎有過去 al.
      12 a: 按爾 o3?
      13 w: heNh a7.
      14 a: 多謝你. 多謝你.
      15 w: 有無？
      16   我那個姓吳的無？
      17 a: heNh.
      18 w: ..al... 這陣 .. 這陣是在講啥主題 a3?
      19 a: haN5?
      20 w: 這陣是在講啥主題？
      21 a: 麻煩你你這個復聽看勿 e3, 好無？好. 多謝你.
      22 w: a3, boe7 boe7 boe7.

The caller "w" calls in and asks the host to guess who he is. Being unable to recognize the caller, the host shows hesitation. Then "w" tries to give hints by a series of questions, which obviously confuse the program host even further. Then he asks what they have been talking about. The host comes to know at this point that "w" has no idea at all about the topic under discussion, so he asks "w" to continue listening to the program and then hangs up. As a result, the frequency of RT is one of the lowest. Conversation #17 is another example, illustrating a lack of common interest.

(#17) 1 g: al 我我就給伊講 {因為我不服}.
       2   我才會無給伊簽 a7.
       3   對無？
       4   我講 -- {我再講一個例子}.
       5   我講算講 hoNh.
       6   我這嘛我也無犯法 la.
       7   我也無偷無搶人 a3 hoNh.
       8   我講警察你若給我 chang (抓) 去 le3.

9   一定要招我簽 le3.
10   我講我簽落.
11   我是不是有代誌.
12   對無?
13   .. 對無?
14 a: hng hng.
15 g: 所以我感覺 hoNh.
16   {目前的交通警察非常惡劣.
17   他拿到你的駕照執照之後.
18   不管你三七二十一} la.
19   a1 攏無通仔予你講就對 la hoNh.
20 a: hm.
21 g: 所以我感覺 hoNh.
22   這嘛這嘛這政府 hoNh.
23   若無下台 hoNh.
24   我甘願 hoNh －
25   我足不滿就對 la.
26 a: 是. 好. 感謝你.

The caller, a taxi driver, calls in to complain in an agitated tone about having been given a ticket for parking on the roadside. He tries to justify his violating the traffic law and then starts to abuse the policeman. Without common ground with the caller and knowing it is inappropriate to agree with him on the radio, the host gives BCs indicating reception of the message only when necessary (i.e. when there is a longer pause, waiting for his reaction). He avoids commenting on the complaint. That is why the ratio of RT per IU is below average and most of them are non-lexical BCs. A contrastive example is Conversation #39.

(# 39) 1 O: a1 逐家要選.
2   愛選這個. 阿扁仔 la.
3   a: hng.
4   O: a1 陳定南 la.
5   a: 是.
6   O: a1 這藍美津 la.
7   a1 陳振德.
8   a1 高雄 hel 張俊雄 hio?
9   a: 是.
10   張俊雄.
11 O: 對.
12   這幾個 a3.
13   愛予著就對 a3 la.

The topic is about the coming election. Now that the host is running for the office in Taipei City

Council, this topic is of great interest to him, especially when the caller advocates that the audience vote for him. The ratio of RT per SC in this transcript is 69.2%, the third highest.

Second, the RT use is also influenced by the interlocutors' communicative intentions and skills of turn management. As mentioned before, the female caller in Conversation #10 sets her mind on speaking out her experience. The strategy she uses is to make long utterances, speaking in a fast speed and making the pause after each intonation contour as short as possible, so that she can keep on holding the floor. In other words, the communication is intended to be one-way. She only wants someone to listen to her. By contrast, Conversation #27 is a different example.

(# 27) 1 q: 那路 ... 咱愛了解 hoNh.
2   黃大洲 hoNh.
3   a: heNh.
4   q: 在創這個 {捷運} hoNh.
5   a: 是.
6   q: 是為咱好.
7   a: heNh heNh.
8   q: 按怎講 ne3?
9   咱愛稍給了解一下.
10   咱這嘛台灣的 {旅行業} hoNh.
11 a: hng.
12 q: 應該是到那路 {飽和點} a3 la.
13 a: 是是.
14 q: 我自底是在 {旅行業} 作事 (sih8) 的 la.
15 a: heNh heNh.
16 q: 我這嘛按算要開一間 {馬特拉旅行社} 。
17 a: hoNh hoNh hoNh.
18 q: a1 要 {推出} 一個 {特案} hoNh.
19 a: hm.
20 q: 就是 {捷運一日驚魂之旅} la.
21 a: hoNh.
22 q: a1 這嘛 {黃大洲} 伊創這個 《case》 出來 hoNh.
23 a: hng.
24 q: 就是要給咱 {開闢財源} la.
25 a: 是是.
26 q: 咱要了解一下.
27 a: 是是.
28 q: 為咱好 neh.

29 a: hm.

The caller *q* calls in to announce a special plan, i.e. to organize a travel agent. Of course, he is not being serious about this project but is being "ironic". His intention is to make his humor be appreciated, so he slows down with his talk, making short utterances with discernible pauses at completion points. Such negotiation begging markers as '*hoNh*' and UFPs as '*la & neh*' are used many times to solicit interaction. The communication is intentionally two-way, so the ratio of RT per IU is the highest (42.3%).

Finally, the RT use is related to indiosyncracies as well. As illustrated before, some of the people play a more active role in supporting the primary speaker's turn while the others don't. Some of them use interactional devices (e.g. '*hoNh, neh, leh,* 是無？對不？有無？是不是？對不對?? etc.) more often than the others. Besides, the caller's experience sometimes counts, too. If he never called in before, he might get nervous while delivering his talk because he knows he is allowed only a very short while. Under the time pressure, the chance is that he forgets what to say when his line is connected. If this is the case, there are usually more pauses, repairs, repetitions in his talk. The caller can just concentrate on his own part -- how to make his points clear -- so the whole burden of interacting with the conversational participant falls mainly on the host. No wonder most of the RTs are uttered by the latter.

Distribution of Taiwanese BCs and REs

Among the five RT types, BCs and REs are the most frequent, constituting 91.9% of the RTs. The other three types constitute only 8.1%. Moreover, owing to its inherent properties, the placement of CFs is already predictable. Mostly, they occur at non-TRPs, i.e. while the primary speaker is still within his turn, as shown by (14)1-2 & (15)1-2. Repetitions are by no means uncommon, but their members form an open class. The number of 55 (instances found in the data) is too small to make any strong claim. Consequently we decide to put them aside for the time being. The category of RO is problematic since it is followed by a full turn. In fact, it is an area where a floor-taking turn and a floor-supporting turn intersect. This is an inevitable dilemma for dichotomy. Before a more satisfactory way of classification is figured out, we will focus on the placement of the two favored RT types -- BC and RE -- with respect to the primary speaker's turn. We are interested in knowing their distribution, i.e. after points of intonational completion, pragmatic completion, or the primary speaker's negotiation signals (including '*hoNh*', UFPs, tag questions, and topic marker '*a3*').

Table 7 Distribution of Backchannels & Reactive Expressions

	Backchannels (540)		Reactive Expressions (615)	
Intonational Completion Point	529	98.0%	607	98.7%
Pragmatic Completion Point	490	90.7%	584	95.0%
Negotiation Marker: *hoNh*	146	27.0%	206	33.5%
Utterance-Final Particles	138	25.6%	160	26.0%
Tag/Confirmation Questions	64	11.9%	37	6.0%
Topic Marker: *a3*	6	1.1%	3	0.5%
Other RTs	36	6.7%	52	8.5%

Table 7 shows that *Intonational Constraint* remains extremely active in determining the placement of BC and RE. Only a very small portion of them (1.6%) violate this constraint. With respect to TRPs, the overwhelming majority of them (90.7% of the BCs & 95% of the REs) are found to occur at pragmatic completion points, but notice that BCs (9.3%) are more likely to appear at *non-pragmatic completion points* [e.g. (2)3-4] than REs (5%). This is because they are non-lexical and the recipient does not usually attend to them. In other words, BC is more powerful in "permeating" the turn space of another speaker.

So far the results here conform to the findings in Clancy et al.'s. "In Mandarin, the production of RTs after non-final IUs is extremely rare. The tendency to place RTs at CTRPs is strongest among the Mandarin speakers (p.377)." "Mandarin interactional style favors conversational participants not infringing on the other's turn space. RT use, particularly without waiting for a transition point, is seen as presumptuous, intrusive, and even rude or impolite (p.382)." We do agree with them that the distribution of RTs in our data could be attributed to our "cultural expectation," yet we should also bear in mind that this only applies to "formal situations" or "participants who are not familiar with each other" and thus try to be as polite as possible (which is, in fact, equivalent to social distance). This may not be true of intimate friends, who are observed to be more likely to interrupt in conversation (either to express support, to refute, to change the topic, etc.). Would they be regarded by their partners as impolite, anti-social or incompetent? Would their "deviations" from the rules be taken as problems that call for special repair measures? Apparently our cultural expectations about how people should behave in talk vary with the social variables (e.g. degree of formality, degree of familiarity, social status, topic, setting). Moreover, we contend that, in terms of interruption, one motive could be more intrinsic than cultural expectations. As proposed in Power & Martello (1986:37),

> "once an utterance is under way, it is not usually interrupted without special reason; other participants who were planning to speak usually withdraw.... The general **principle   of**

rational behavior applying to this situation is that one should try to avoid wasted effort, since in this case any action causing an effort (having been invested by another participant) to be wasted would be not just inefficient but also inconsiderate. It seems clear that in most cases, the interruption of an utterance during the first few words would oblige the speaker either to abandon it or to begin it again, thus relegating the part already delivered to wasted breath."

In fact, their line of explanation, apart from **economy**, also accounts for those cases where interruption is acceptable. "If the speaker's utterance is unnecessary, or ineffective, or not directed to the goal of highest priority, principles of rationality and cooperativeness may warrant or indeed oblige interruption." (Power & Martello 1986:37)

Another important finding is that more than 65% of the RTs are placed after explicit interactional devices. Among the UFPs, '*hoNh*' is the most frequent signal of a speaker change. Li (1998:83) argues that '*hoNh*' is a discourse marker which signals the speaker's communicative intention for potentially necessary negotiation, which in turn is motivated by the dynamic nature of interactional communication. By means of it, an interaction effect is created, showing that the speaker is not merely talking from his own perspective, but has constantly kept the hearer in his mind and is actively inviting his participation. In other words, besides the function as a negotiation begging marker, it projects a point of turn transition. No wonder RTs often follow. The second most frequent UFP preceding RTs is '*la*', which also plays an irreplaceable role in interactional communication. Li (1996a: 83-84) points out that '*la*' performs the basic function of marking finality of a unit of talk in discourse.

> "In terms of the procession of discourse, the end of a speech unit may or may not be overtly marked, because often the content, prosody, as well as other contextual features may help to signal unit division. Thus the use of such an overt marker is by no means obligatory. Yet, when the speaker believes that there is the necessity to explicitly mark the ending of a unit

so that the structure of discourse can be clearly discerned by the hearer and no confusion will result, such as when the unit is rather long, or structurally more difficult to process, or when there may be a **turn transition** or shift of topic, he will tend to use the marker of finality *la.*"

The third most frequent turn management strategy is tag / confirmation questions, which comprise the *first adjacency-pair part*, thereby *marking TRPs.* They are used to trigger interaction, e.g. (#33)15-17, (#17)12-14. As regards the rest of the UFPs (cf. Li 1996b), *'ma'* is a marker of common ground. The speaker uses it to appeal to the addressee's shared knowledge. The *ma*-suffixed utterances usually indicate what is conveyed is a matter of course to not just the speaker but also the recipient. They both are on the same ground. If the recipient would like to appear cooperative in the talk, he usually yields a backchannel turn right after this particle, so as to support the primary speaker. The UFPs *'neh & leh'* are often used to indicate a focus of interest to the recipient. The *neh/leh*-suffixed utterances usually convey information that the speaker subjectively believes to be new & interesting to the addressee (i.e. these two particles do not put the addressee in the speaker's focus of attention so much as *'hoNh, haNh, hioh'* do in terms of the participation framework.) However, since they mark

the new information, though from the speaker's perspective, a cooperative interlocutor tends to yield a floor-supporter thereafter, e.g. (#27)28-29. The UFP 'o3' is often used to form confirmation questions, e.g. (#33)12, (11)4. The speaker might have just arrived at a new information state, no matter because of the prior talk or the things he saw in his surroundings, so he is checking with his recipient if what he heard/saw is right. This accounts for why it is followed by RTs.

6.7% of the BCs and 8.5% of the REs follow another RT. This means 7.6% of the RTs are extended RTs. The slightly higher frequency of the *former over the latter is probably due to the fact* that the members of the latter are more limited.

Distribution of the 334 Non-Floor-Supporting RTs

As mentioned in Section 3, about 334 RTs (29%) are not floor-supporting turns, i.e. they are either followed by other types of RTs (forming an extended RT) or by a full turn. We are curious to know two things. First of all, what are they composed of -- non-lexical backchannels or lexical backchannels (including the remaining four types)? Secondly, where do they frequently occur with respect to the primary speaker's turn? What is the percentage of them that are placed at global pragmatic completion points? The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8   Distribution of Non-Floor-Supporting RTs

Types of RT	Backchannel	RE and Other RTs	Total
Frequency of Occurrence	172 51.5%	162 48.5%	334 100.0%
Global Prag. Com. P.	162 94.2%	152 93.8%	314 94.0%
Local Prag. Com. P.	4 2.3%	5 3.1%	9 2.7%
Non-Prag. Com. P.	6 3.5%	5 3.1%	11 3.3%

Table 8 shows that when a non-primary speaker wants to respond to the primary speaker's turn and at the same time begin a new turn, he is more likely to use BCs than the other RT types. It is inferred here that the favored sequence of RT is [BC + RE].

94% of the floor-taking RTs are found to appear after possible global pragmatic completion points, e.g. (2)5-6. The remaining 6% are mostly CFs or misplacement, i.e. the onset of the turn by the current speaker is placed either earlier or later than the anticipatory completion points (cf. Lerner 1996).

It has been acknowledged in Ford and Thompson (1996:152) that there are 3 types of turns -- full turns, backchannel turns, and laughters. From an interactional point of view, how does the speaker judge when to yield a backchannel turn and when a full turn? How do they manage the turns? As a matter of fact, there are various cues (e.g. grammatical, intonation, and pragmatic) that not only project the possible speaker transition point but also the preferred turn shape. In our study, the possible local pragmatic completion point [e.g. (2)1, the end of a clause] is a projectable place for speaker onset, yet the preferred turn shape is a short, non-floor-taking turn since the turn-so-far projects something more beyond itself. The primary speaker's intention to make an extended turn is obvious. In order not to make the communication unilateral, the recipient is often observed to make use of this juncture to offer interactional signals (to show acknowledgment, understanding, appreciation, interest, etc.), passing the floor onto the primary speaker again, or to give substantive backchannels, especially those that take the form of a question, so as to take the floor back later on. When the turn-at-talk comes to a possible global pragmatic completion point [e.g. (2)5, the end of a larger unit of talk], a full turn usually follows. It is the recipient's turn to contribute to the talk. Interestingly enough, these two kinds of completion points are often marked by some grammatical interactional devices (e.g. discourse markers, UFPs, tag questions, etc.) that explicitly call for interaction.[5]

Conclusions

The major findings and suggestions in this study are summarized as follows:

(1). Some of the definitions of RTs are problematic when applied to our data. First, RTs are not necessarily 'continuers' because 29% (334/1155) of them are followed by extended talk by the current speaker. Nevertheless, the contexts where such non-floor-supporting RTs might occur are somehow predictable: (i) when occurring right after the first adjacency pair part, the RT may project the second pair part; (ii) when its immediately preceding utterance reaches a possible global pragmatic completion point, the RT is often followed by a full turn; (iii) those RTs (e.g. 'ho, o2, o3, oa2') that indicate a change of information state on the part of the speaker usually project more talk about the new information state; (iv) the RT is followed by another RT and forms an RT cluster. Second, RTs are not necessarily supportive (i.e. message reception does not always mean agreement or support), let alone affirmative. Third, if an RO itself, rather than the end point of its prior talk, projects a new turn, it should not be coded as an RT because the most crucial feature of RT (i.e. floor-supporting) is refuted here. Next, in the course of coding, we find the location of an RT candidate seems to outweigh its intrinsic meanings. In other words, RTs are context-sensitive. When they are placed differently, say, within the internal turn space, their function as RT disappears accordingly. Last, our findings prompt us to reconsider what constitutes an RT. Clearly the five categories do not fit well with our data. For instance, many REs (e.g. 是) in the corpus are found to serve as BC in some contexts, indicating acknowledgment and contributing nothing to the advancement of the proposition, and as RE (e.g. assessments) in other contexts, retaining most of its semantic properties. Likewise, a repetition form does not usually function as RT. The functions of an RO form also fluctuate between BC & RO. The determination relies wholly on the upcoming text, i.e. if it is followed by more talk by the same

speaker. The conflict between form and function is conspicuous. If we stick to Clancy et al.'s definitions, our categorization would become form-oriented. How shall we accommodate the framework? Now that all the 5 categories share the function of backchanneling in common, our solution is *to reduce them into one, namely, BC in a broad sense.* Such BCs are context-bound (almost unanimously in turn initial position) and take different forms, including non-lexical (originally the BCs & some ROs), lexical (originally the REs), and phrasal (originally the REs, CFs, & Repetitions). Each of these forms may cast some influence on its function. Non-lexical forms are purely vocalic, so they are often propositionally irrelevant, whereas lexical and phrasal forms fluctuate in between. The contexts where they occur may either activate or cancel *their intrinsic semantic meaning. To sum up,* our solution maintains the distinction between form & function and simplifies the categorization. In the meanwhile, the risk of claiming dogmatically that repetitions are RTs can be skillfully averted.[6]

(2). The presence of RTs in Taiwanese telephone conversation is indeed massive. Nearly every 5 seconds comes an RT. Every 3.83 IUs does an RT occur. More than half of the speaker changes in the data are intended for backchannel turns. When deprived of visual aids, Taiwanese speakers are, *in fact, far more "verbally" active in interaction* than expected. The implication is that to get a whole picture of how Taiwanese use RTs in face-to-face communication, it is essential to incorporate studies on non-verbal resources for interaction.

(3). The RT use is observed to be influenced by channel of communication, social variables (e.g. degree of familiarity or formality, social status) , the topic under discussion, the interactants' communicative intentions and skills of turn management, and personal styles. Further study in a sociolinguistic perspective *is hence suggested.*

(4). The tendency to place RTs at TRPs is

clear. 93% of them appear after pragmatic completion points. However, compared with REs, BCs are more likely to appear at non-pragmatic completion points. Yet the frequency of BCs (9.7%) in our data is lower than expected. This is probably because most of the callers are well-prepared, which can be *proved by the length of their utterances -- much* longer than those in a completely spontaneous conversation, in which the interactants must spend time coming up with ideas and organizing them. The pauses are apparently shorter and talking speed faster, so only a small number of BCs occur at non-TRPs. In addition, more than 65% of the RTs are found to follow explicit markers that call for interaction, such as *'hoNh, la, ma, o3, neh, leh, a3,'* tag/confirmation questions. Further study on the correlation between RTs and the discourse *markers is suggested.*

(5). 94% of the non-floor-supporting RTs occur after global pragmatic completion points. It is therefore inferred that there exists a *Pragmatic Constraint,* which refrains the conversational participant from yielding an extended turn (or a full turn) unless the talk-so-far has reached a possible global pragmatic completion point, projecting nothing more beyond the final component of the utterance. This constraint, motivated from consideration of turn-management, interacts with the *Cooperative Principles,* the *Politeness Principles,* and the *Principles of Rationality and Economy.* The hierarchy of them varies according to the participants, setting, situation, and context. The lower the Constraint /Principles are in the hierarchy, the more violable they are. For example, when there is a time limit set for the talk, the *Principles of Economy* might be placed higher than the *Pragmatic Constraint.* Yet when a subordinate talks to his boss, this Constraint is supposed to be observed more by himself, rather than by his boss. To sum up, these interactions *exhibit the dynamic nature of communication.*

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Notes

1. We are grateful to Prof. Biq Yung-O for her enlightening comments on the first draft of this paper.

2. Though the tape is two hours long, there are some monologues by the program hosts and some conversations conducted mainly in Mandarin. The total length of Taiwanese conversations is therefore reduced to about 95 minutes.

3. The conventions are based on Li (1998:107).

4. It is a pity that the study doesn't give any concrete example to illustrate this term. All the examples center around local pragmatic completion points.

5. For lack of time, the respective frequency of all the grammatical, intonational and pragmatic completion points in the whole transcript has not been calculated yet. As a consequence, how these different boundary points are actually handled in conversation is left for further study.

6. RT can be manifested by repetitions, but not all repetitions are RTs.

Appendix

{carriage return}	intonation unit	RT: reactive token
--	truncated intonation unit	BC: backchannel
:	vowel lengthening	RO: resumptive opener
[ ]	speaker overlap	CF: collaborative finish
.	final intonation	RE: reactive expression
,	continuing intonation	IU: intonation unit
?	appeal intonation	SC: speaker change
_(N)	long pause	UFP: utterance-final-particle
...	medium pause	
..	short pause	
=	continue the prior interrupted speech	
< >	code switching to Mandarin	
{ }	code switching to Japanese	
《 》	code switching to English	
(( ))	researcher's comment	
>	utterance under discussion	

台語回應訊號初探

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　　本研究旨在瞭解台語回應信號 (Reactive Tokens) 在會話中的使用情形。本文的語料採自收音機的叩應節目，內容長約兩小時，總共轉寫了 4517 個語調單位，含括 52 位說話者，其中 48 位為男生。初步的分類大致參考 Clancy 等人 1996 年的研究架構。然而在分析過程中，我們發現一些定義上的問題：㈠回應信號並不一定表示說話者都會讓出發言權，有 29% 的說話者並未將發言權交還給主要的說話者。㈡回應信號並非都是肯定的，在某些情境下也可以是否定詞。㈢在決定某個回應信號是否真為回應信號時，其出現的位置似乎比本身的語意更具決定性。㈣若嚴格遵守 Clancy 等人所提的定義，則形式和功能之間會有明顯的衝突，顯然我們需要另一套分類的方法。本研究結果如下：在台語叩應電話交談中，回應信號的出現頻率非常顯著；大約每 3.83 個語調單位就有一個回應信號出現。可見在沒有視覺管道時，台語使用者在交談互動中，其實遠比 Clancy 等人所觀察到的國語使用者要活躍的多。另外回應信號的多少也與溝通的媒介、言談者之間的熟悉度、場合的正式性、話題、溝通的目的和技巧、以及個人風格有關。一般而言，台語使用者傾向將回應信號 (93%) 放在理想中的話輪轉換處 (TRPs) 之後。如果說話者在回應信號之後繼續說話時，我們發現這經常是因為上一個說話者的話輪已經到達了一個高層次的語用結束點 (possible global pragmatic completion point)。

關鍵詞：回應信號、理想中的話輪轉換處、語用結束點、文法與互動