GRAMMAR AND LEXIS IN INTERACTION: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS
OF TALK IN SMALL GROUP WORK IN ESL CLASSES

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how adult L2 speakers deploy grammatical and lexical resources in organizing their conjoined participation in text-based, task-oriented small group work. Nine hours and seventeen minutes of video recordings of twenty reading circle activities from three college-level ESL classes constitute the data for the study. Using conversation analysis as an analytical framework, the study addresses two research foci: grammar-in-interaction and lexis-in-interaction.

When perturbations or disfluencies occur as the first speaker is in the midst of producing her turn-construction unit (TCU), which is not uncommon in L2 talk, an opportunity space is available for the second speaker to make a mid-TCU entry. Five actions that can occur in such an opportunity space are described: collaborative completion, handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover, and curtailment. In collaborative completion, the second speaker brings the first speaker’s TCU to grammatical or pragmatic completion to achieve various interactional functions. Handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover, and curtailment, on the other hand, are actions deployed to indicate that speaker transfer is relevant or is effected so that the first speaker can abandon a perturbation-filled TCU that she has much trouble in constructing.

What emerges from such grammatical and turn-taking practices is an image of the participants as L2 learners who, with emerging interactional competence, and through collaborative efforts, are able to resolve grammatical difficulties in TCU construction on some occasions while on other occasions having to resort to circumvention strategies due to a lack of grammatical or linguistic resources. This study thus presents a more complete
picture of L2 speakers’ grammatical and interactional competences than previous CA studies.

In lexis-in-interaction, analytic attention is turned to how epistemics impacts lexis-focused interactions. Specifically, three practices are described: uncertainty-marking, letting-it-pass, and understanding check questions. Uncertainty-marking is deployed by the speaker to initiate repair on a lexical item, whose pronunciation, form, meaning, or use she is uncertain about, and to elicit other-repair. Letting-it-pass and understanding check questions are practices deployed by the discussion leader to conceal her unknowing status or to uphold a dissembled knowing status with regard to the definition of a particular lexical item. The analysis of these practices demonstrates that opportunities for vocabulary learning is intimately bound up with the participants’ practical concerns of their epistemic status in relation to the target word and to each other as members or leaders of a discussion group.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Delineating the scope and the aims of the study

Conversation, or talk-in-interaction more generally, is an activity that involves much give-and-take and finely-tuned coordination between two or more participants, and therefore, is collaborative and co-constructed by nature. Participants in conversation construct their turns at talk incrementally through turn-constructional units (TCUs), which can be brought off at lexical, phrasal, clausal, or sentential levels (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). In other words, turns at talk are constructed word by word, phrase by phrase, clause by clause, or sentence by sentence. Participants regularly attend to the emerging structure of utterances as well as the visual conduct of their co-participants and display their understanding of what transpires in talk by designing sequentially responsive actions (Goodwin, 1979; 2007; Hayashi, 2003a; Schegloff, 1987; Sidnell, 2011).

Given the physical co-presence of at least two participants in face-to-face interaction and the way turns at talk are constructed, when a participant encounters a problem that hinders the progressivity of talk – for example, when she\(^1\) gets stuck in the midst of an utterance production or when she is uncertain about a particular lexical item, which is not uncommon in L2 talk that involves novices – she can turn to other participants for help or they can come to her assistance voluntarily based on the vocal or visual conduct that signals help is needed. That is, participants in face-to-face interaction

\(^1\) Throughout the dissertation, I will use the third person singular pronouns “she” and “her” as generic pronouns to refer to both sexes to avoid the cumbersome “he or she,” “s/he,” or “his and her.”
can work in concert with other participants to co-construct their utterances and vocabulary in talk and to manage any problems that may arise.

Grammar in interaction and lexis in interaction, therefore, are the dual research foci of this dissertation study. Specifically, using the framework of conversation analysis (CA), this dissertation study aims to bring to light how college-level ESL students deploy grammar and lexis as resources in organizing their conjoined participation in task-oriented, text-based small group work. I will demonstrate how the students collaboratively complete each other’s ongoing utterances, deploy turn-taking skills to bypass the difficulties in utterance construction, and orient to uncertain or unknown lexical items as occasions where they display or conceal their epistemic status. The analysis of the various orientations the students display toward grammar and lexis in interaction will have important implications for communicative and interactional competences, L2 identities, turn-taking practices, task-based language teaching, and SLA – implications that I will discuss in the Discussion and Conclusion chapter.

1.2 The organization of the dissertation

In Chapter two, I survey CA literature in three areas deemed relevant to the current inquiry: grammar in interaction, lexis in interaction, and L2 interaction. Chapter three describes data collection, the structural organization of the reading circle activities from which the data for the study was collected, my dual role as teacher and researcher in the study, transcription, and CA as a method of data analysis. The next four chapters, Chapters four to seven, are devoted to data analysis. Chapters four and five focus on grammar in interaction. They also constitute Part I of the dissertation – “Grammar in Interaction: How Grammar Intersects with Turn-Taking Practices.” Chapter four
describes how the participants seize upon the opportunity spaces arising in TCUs-in-progress to collaboratively complete each other’s utterances to achieve various interactional purposes. Chapter five describes how the participants use these same opportunity spaces to perform actions other than collaborative completion to achieve speaker transition in mid-TCU and to relieve themselves or other participants of the burden of having to grammatically complete perturbation-filled utterances. Chapters six and seven make up Part II of the dissertation – “Lexis in Interaction: How Epistemics Is Managed in Lexis-Focused Interactions.” Chapter six describes how the participants use uncertainty-marking, a practice of self-initiated repair to frame their doubts about the correctness of a lexical item or to indicate their lack of one in the midst of utterance production and to invite other repair. In chapter seven, the analytic focus turns specifically to the discussion leaders and describes the practices that they use to conceal their unknowing status or to uphold a dissembled knowing status in relation to a lexical item and vis-à-vis other participants in the word definition check activity.

Chapter eight concludes the dissertation. It summarizes the main findings of the study, discusses its contributions, and outlines the directions for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This dissertation study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do L2 speakers accomplish collaborative completion? What actions do they achieve by collaboratively completing each other’s utterances? What other actions besides collaborative completion can be performed at the opportunity space? What do these actions reveal about grammar, turn-taking practices, and interactional competence?

2. How do L2 speakers initiate repair and elicit assistance when they encounter lexical difficulty in constructing their TCUs? How does L2 speakers’ epistemic status influence the repair outcomes in lexis-focused interactions? How do discussion leaders manage their epistemic status in a word definition check activity? How are their [k-] and [k+] stances enacted in interactions?

3. Based on the ways in which the participants co-construct grammar and lexis in interaction, what can be said about L2 interactional competence and L2 identities? Whether or not, and if so, how do the participants orient themselves to learning opportunities in the interaction? What pedagogical implications can be derived from the study?

To answer these questions, I survey CA literature in three major areas of research that are relevant to the current inquiry: grammar in interaction, lexis in interaction, and L2 interaction. In the area of grammar in interaction, I first present a CA view of grammar and tease out the relationship among TCUs, grammar, and turns-at-talk, three
analytic concepts that will figure prominently in data analysis. I then focus on collaborative completion in L1 interaction, a grammatical practice in which two participants jointly construct a single utterance.

In the area of lexis in interaction, I present a brief overview of a few major strands of lexis-focused studies in CA before turning to word searches and reference recognition, two strands of lexis-focused research that are directly relevant to the current study. Word searches are a kind of repair, and in order to embed them in a larger context of discussion, I provide an illustration of some key notions in repair. Since a key element in word searches and reference recognition is the participants’ epistemic status vis-à-vis each other and in relation to a particular lexical item under discussion, I also review CA’s literature in the treatments of the participants’ knowledge status, or epistemics, in interaction. Repair, word searches, reference recognition, and epistemics in interaction will form the background for the second focus of my inquiry.

As the study focuses on how the participants use grammatical and lexical resources in organizing their participation in small group work in the classroom, it also situates itself within CA’s studies on L2 interaction. I offer a brief overview of L2 interaction before reviewing two lines of CA research in this area. In one line of inquiry, CA researchers offer insights into how L2 competence and the identity categories of native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) should be reconceptualized. In the other line of inquiry, CA researchers illustrate how the participants change their interactional practices or behavior over time or orient themselves to learning opportunities through participation in talk. I conclude the chapter by once again presenting research questions that will guide the inquiry.
2.2 Grammar in interaction

2.2.1 An overview and some illustrative studies

Grammar is deployed by participants in organizing linguistic elements into TCUs, utterances, and turns-at-talk. It has been considered a fundamental resource in the organization of social interaction since the early days of CA research (Sacks et al., 1974), and has received sustained research attention over the past few decades (Ford, 1992; Hayashi, 2003a, 2005; Hellermann, 2005; Mazeland, 2012; Schegloff, 1979; Wong, 2004; 2005; see also some of the contributions in the edited volumes by Ford, Fox & Thompson; 2002; Hakulinen & Selting, 2005; Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). In essence, CA’s view of grammar is a grammar for interaction and of interaction. It holds that grammar emerges from interaction at the same time while it is being deployed as a resource in organizing interaction. Therefore, rather than being a static entity, grammar is dynamic and open to interactional contingencies, responsive to recipient reactions, designed to accomplish actions, and amenable to adaptation and collaboration (Schegloff, 1996d).

The vulnerability of grammar to interactional contingency is well manifested in the impact that same-turn self-repair has on the grammatical structure of utterances-in-progress (Schegloff, 1979). Consider the following example:

(1) [Data from Schegloff, 1979, p.264]

\[\text{Agnes: } \text{Chop // it.} \]
\[\text{Martha: } \Rightarrow \textit{Tell me, uh what- d'you need a hot sauce?} \]
\[\text{(0.5)} \]
\[\text{Agnes: } \textit{t'hhh a Taco sauce.} \]

In the arrowed turn, Martha cuts off after the interrogative word \textit{what}, thus changing what is on its way to be an interrogative question into a yes/no question.
Examples like this abound in conversation. A participant can also halt the progress of an utterance by engaging in a word search, and after the target word is found, resuming the suspended talk. Or she can conduct self-repair by deleting, inserting, or re-ordering various elements within the utterances (for a description of various techniques used in performing same-turn self-repair, see Schegloff, 2013). Self-repair, then, allows the participants to reconstruct, revise, and reorder the grammatical elements, and thus the structure of an ongoing utterance in a myriad of ways. This is different from the “neat” syntax as represented in researcher-invented, well-crafted sentences. As self-repair can occur in any utterance, Schegloff (1979) proposed a “syntax-for-conversation” that takes the relevance of repair into consideration.

Turns-at-talk are always directed to and designed for some recipients, and as a participant uses grammar to construct a turn, she takes recipient reactions, both verbal and nonverbal, into consideration. Here is a classic example from Goodwin (1979):

(2) [Data from Goodwin, 1979, p. 99]

Goodwin devoted a full-length article to analyzing how the utterance gets constructed. Here I can only provide a brief summary. John and Beth are husband and wife and they invite Don and Ann, also husband and wife, to their place for dinner. The data is taken from their dinner conversation. It is an announcement by John that says I gave up smoking cigarettes one week ago today actually. The speaker’s gaze is marked above the utterance. The line under a name indicates the duration during which the
speaker’s gaze is on a particular recipient – for example, we can tell that John’s gaze is on Don when he produces the first segment of the utterance.

Goodwin demonstrated that John produces the utterance increment by increment as he takes into consideration who is his intended recipient as determined by whether mutual eye gaze is established and who is a knowing or unknowing recipient with regard to the information he packs into the utterance. Goodwin pointed out that John’s giving up smoking is news to Don, a dinner guest who John has not seen for quite a while. However, as John shifts his gaze from Don to Beth, Johns’ wife, he has to entertain the fact that Beth is a knowing recipient with regard to his quitting of smoking, and that one does not announce as news something others have already known. His next segment of the utterance – *one week ago today* – is designed just with Beth, his intended recipient, in mind. It announces an anniversary of the event, something that Beth may not necessarily know. However, recipiency (Goodwin, 1981) cannot be established as Beth gaze is on something else. Not being able to secure Beth’s gaze, John shifts his gaze to Ann, an unknowing recipient, and produces the terminal item in his utterance *actually*, which, according to Goodwin, converts a “discovery” (of the anniversary) into a report of fact. In short, the grammatical structure of John’s utterance, and the information conveyed therein, emerges as a result of John’s accounting for the verbal and nonverbal responses of his recipients as well as their respective epistemic status concerning what he has to announce.

In a similar vein, Schegloff (1987) presented a single case analysis of how, in the midst of producing an assessment, a participant registered a lateral head movement of his
recipient as a sign of disagreement, and so changed the grammatical trajectory of his utterances in order to elicit agreement.

The above studies by Goodwin (1979) and Schegloff (1987) also illustrated that grammar is designed to accomplish social actions. The action orientation of grammatical design was also demonstrated in a study by Ford, Fox, and Thompson (2002) who showed when a response is not forthcoming from a recipient, the participant can use a grammatical increment – a small grammatical unit syntactically tied to a previous utterance – to pursue a response. Here is an example from their study.

(3) [Data from Ford, Fox & Thompson, 2002, p.20]

John: how are you feeling?
(0.4)
→ these days,
Ann: Fas:t. I can't-1 don't have a waist anymore,

John’s question – *how are you feeling?* – is syntactically, prosodically, and pragmatically complete and a transition of speakership is relevant next. However, a response is not immediately forthcoming from the recipient and a gap of 0.4 second elapses. John then adds an increment *these days*, a unit that does not constitute a TCU in this case, but is syntactically tied to his prior question, in pursuit of a response. Following the increment, Ann offers a response.

As grammar is constructed in the physical co-presence of two or more participants, it also opens itself to the possibility of collaborative construction. Collaborative completion (e.g., Lerner, 1991, 1996) is such an example. It is a practice in which a speaker starts a turn at talk, but before she brings the TCU to completion, another speaker comes in to complete the utterance for her. That is, it is a practice in which two speakers collaboratively complete a single utterance. More will be said on this in Section 2.2.3. I
now turn to TCUs, turns-at-talk, and grammar and tease out their relationships. These concepts will figure prominently in the analysis of data.

2.2.2 TCUs, turns-at-talk, and grammar

The TCU is an important component in the organization of turn-taking in conversation as laid out in Sacks et al.’s (1974) seminal paper. Borrowing terminologies from linguistics, Sacks et al. defined TCUs as any unit-types actualized at the lexical, phrasal, clausal, and sentential levels in talk. In other words, a TCU can consist of just one lexical item, such as a standalone yes or no in response to a yes/no interrogative, or a phrase, a clause, a sentence.

Once a TCU is started, it follows a certain grammatical trajectory to a completion point. A recipient can analyze the emerging grammatical structure used to organize the TCU to project what it takes for the TCU to arrive at a place of possible completion. A possible completion point of a TCU constitutes a transition-relevant place where speaker transfer can, but need not, take place. It is called “possible completion” because it may not be actualized as the “real completion” due to interactional contingency. For example, a speaker can talk past a possible completion point of a TCU by adding more grammatical components to carry the TCU-in-progress further along. Consider an example from Sacks et al.

(4) [Data from Sacks et al. 1974, p. 708]

A: What's yer name again please [sir, B: ]

[F. T. Galloway]

A comes to a place of possible completion in the TCU when he/she produces the word please. It is syntactically and pragmatically complete as a request, and this is also B’s projection as he/she starts to speak at that point. However, A does not stop there, but
goes on to add a term of address. This results in some minimal overlap. Cases like this are not interruptions as the start-up by the next speaker occurs at a transition-relevant place.

Sacks et al. (1974) pointed out that the reason why speaker transfer takes place overwhelmingly at the transition-relevant place with no gap or overlap or with minimal gap or overlap in conversation is because participants utilize grammar as an important resource in projecting a possible completion point for the TCU before it is actualized. While Sacks et al. focused on syntax as a resource for TCU projection, later researchers (Ford & Thompson, 1996) found that it is the combination of grammar, intonation and pragmatics that projects possible completion points for TCUs.

According to Sacks et al. (1974), each speaker is entitled only to one TCU, and at the possible completion of the TCU, speaker transfer can take place. When speaker transfer happens at the possible completion point of a TCU, that single TCU constitutes a turn-at-talk and performs an action. The initial entitlement to one TCU means that building a turn consisting of multiple TCUs or a “multi-unit” turn (Schegloff, 1996d) is a collaborative achievement among co-participants. For example, Schegloff (1982) demonstrated that tokens such as “uh huh” are produced by a recipient of a spate of talk as “continuers” to acknowledge that a multi-unit turn is unfolding and that she allows the speaker to continue by uttering “uh huh” and by withholding taking a full turn.

In his 1996d paper, Schegloff revisited the concept of TCU and pointed out that although linguistic concepts such as “phrase,” “clause,” and “sentence” were borrowed in defining the TCU, they should not be interpreted as “static syntactic objects of much linguistic theorizing (p.56),” but rather as constructs appropriated for CA use, and should
be understood within CA’s theoretical and methodological prescriptions. In the same
paper, and as a rejoinder to a linguist’s question about whether TCUs share any
commonality except for intonation and possible completion, a question that hints at TCUs
as too vague and evasive to be a useful analytic unit, Schegloff pointed out that “they
(TCUs) are productions whose status as complete turns testifies to their adequacy as units
for the participants (p.112, emphasis in the original).” Schegloff’s response points to the
fact that TCUs are first and foremost unit-types deployed by the participants to organize
their social interaction. Therefore, it is their units, and the task for the analyst is to
unravel how the participants use TCUs as the basic building blocks in constructing turns-at-talk to engage in social interaction and to get things done.

To sum up, in interaction the natural “habitats” that “house” grammar are the TCUs
(Schegloff, 1996d). Grammar (along with intonation and pragmatics) allows participants
to project a place of possible completion for a TCU where speaker transfer can occur. A
TCU, therefore, is also a place where grammar and turn-taking intersect with each other.
A TCU can be a turn on its own. A turn can also made up of multiple TCUs. Each
speaker is entitled to only one TCU, and to talk past the possible completion point of a
TCU is a collaborative achievement. TCUs are units deployed by participants to
accomplish various social actions.

### 2.2.3 Collaborative completion in L1 interaction

As is clear from the above overview, grammar in interaction is a broad research
area. In this study I focus on a particular practice of grammar in interaction called
collaborative completion.
Collaborative completion was first identified by Sacks in his lectures (1992). In a series of publications Lerner (1987, 1989, 1991, 1996) further expanded this line of work. Collaborative completion, which is also interchangeably termed “joint production,” “co-participant completion,” and “anticipatory completion,” is a practice in which a speaker starts a turn at talk, but before she brings the TCU-in-progress to completion, another speaker comes in and completes the unit. This indicates that occasions arise when speaker transfer does not occur at a place of possible completion, and that two speakers can collaboratively complete a TCU.

A typical example of collaborative completion commonly found in English L1 conversation is what Lerner called compound TCUs that are composed of two syntactic units such as [if X + then Y] and [When X + then Y]. To illustrate, here is an example from Lerner and Takagi.

(5) [Data from Lerner & Takagi, 1999, p.53]
1  David: so if one person said he couldn’t invest
2       (.)
3  Kerry: then I’d have ta wait

Here a single TCU is jointly constructed by two participants. The syntactic format of the [if X + then Y] structure allows Kerry to anticipate that upon the completion of the if X component, the then Y component will follow. When the first component of the compound TCU is brought to completion and the second component is not immediately forthcoming, as evidenced by the micro pause in line 2, Kerry comes in and offers the second component.

Based on the fixed syntactic structures of compound TCUs, participants can offer robust projection as to where collaborative completion can occur and in what form it takes. In addition to compound TCUs, Lerner (1987) also identified some “unprojected
opportunities” for collaborative completion, which includes repetition, pause, terminal item completion, and more. Compared with compound TCUs, these productional features of conversational interaction are less robust in their projection in terms of the place and form that collaborative completion can take place. They are more a matter of contingent joint completion at junctures where opportunities arise.

Working with Japanese data, Hayashi (2003a; for collaborative completion in Japanese L1 conversation, see also Hayashi, 1999; Hayashi & Mori, 1998) found that collaborative completion also occurs in Japanese conversation. However, due to the fact that Japanese is a postpositioned language, and that connectives such as “if” “because” and “although” are often placed at the end of a clause, participants rarely orient to compound TCUs as a locus or opportunity space for joint production of utterances. What is more common in the Japanese data is terminal item completion, that is, a speaker contributes one or two items to another speaker’s TCU-in-progress somewhere near the TCU’s possible completion point and brings it to completion. In addition, Hayashi also demonstrated that grammatical structure is not the sole resource that projects space for joint syntactic production. Participants also draw extensively on shared knowledge and embodied action as resources in organizing their conjoined participation in emerging utterances and to achieve social actions.

Collaborative completion has also been identified in talk in institutional settings such as the classroom and writing tutorials. In the former, Lerner (1995) showed that teachers use collaborative completion as a turn-taking strategy to invite student participation. A teacher can initiate a TCU and halt in the midcourse of its production with a sound stretch and an upward intonation as a signal for students to join in to
complete the utterance-in-progress. In the latter setting, Koshik (2002) found that writing tutors regularly employ “designedly incomplete utterances” to prompt ESL tutees to seek out grammatical and lexical errors in their writing drafts. However, as Koshik pointed out, despite some resemblance on the surface, collaborative completion in an instructional setting is different from that in conversation. The major difference is well reflected in the epithet “designedly incomplete utterances,” which indicates that there is a “designed” or “intentional” dimension to the incompleteness of the teacher’s utterance. The teacher knows well what it will take to complete the utterance and can do so on her own. By designing the utterance as incomplete, she invites participation from her student. Therefore, unlike collaborative completion in conversation, where joint utterance production is usually a feature of interactional contingency, designedly incomplete utterances are one of the pedagogical devices in teachers’ interactional toolbox.

It should be noted, however, that collaborative completion is not obligatory, but optional (Lerner, 1991). The second speaker can either seize on the opportunity space to bring the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress to completion, or she can let the opportunity pass by. In the conclusion section of a paper that illustrates the structural features of different kinds of compound TCUs, Lerner (1991) remarked that

(though a compound turn-constructional unit-in-progress provides an opportunity for anticipatory completion, it does not require it; that is, the opportunity is sometimes taken and sometimes not taken. (And the opportunity space can indeed be used for other actions besides anticipatory completion.) Completion of a compound turn-constructional unit-in-progress by another participant is
sequentially possible but not necessarily sequentially required or implicated (p.454).

Lerner’s quote indicates that besides collaborative completion, other actions can also be performed at the opportunity space. However, he did not illustrate what other actions can possibly be performed. I will take up what he left off in this study.

To my knowledge, no systematic studies have been conducted on how ESL students use collaborative completion as a resource in organizing talk in task-oriented group work, and therefore, it is also unknown whether L2 collaborative completion exhibits the same characteristics as its counterpart in L1 interaction. A systematic investigation into the interactional practice will enhance our understanding of for what interactional and pedagogical purposes, under what sequential environments, and in what manners L2 speakers deploy the practice. This in turn will offer important implications for L2 interactional and grammatical competences at the level of utterance construction. It will also form the basis for a comparative look into L1 and L2 collaborative completion.

Based on the review of the literature, a few questions arise: How do L2 speakers accomplish collaborative completion? What actions do they achieve by collaboratively completing each other’s utterances? What other actions besides collaborative completion can be performed at the opportunity space? What do these actions reveal about grammar, turn-taking practices, and interactional competence?

Collaborative completion and other actions performed at the opportunity space will be the first focus of this study. I now turn to the second focus – lexis in interaction.
2.3 Lexis in Interaction

2.3.1 An overview

Just like grammar, CA’s view of lexis is also a lexis in and for interaction. A category of lexis that has received much research attention in CA is what can be broadly termed “discourse markers” or tokens, which include, but not are limited to, “oh” (Heritage, 1984a; 1998), “well” (Schegloff & Lerner, 2009; Kim, 2013), “I don’t know” (Beach & Metzeger, 1997; Weatherall, 2011) “actually” (Clift, 2001), “yeah” and its variants (Jefferson, 1985, 1993; Wong, 2000b), “uh huh” and its variants (Schegloff, 1982; Goodwin, 1986b), “really?” and other newsmarks (Heritage, 1984a; Jefferson, 1981; Maynard, 2003). CA researchers have demonstrated that these discourse markers or tokens are deployed by participants to serve various interactional functions and that their action import is understood with reference to their sequential positions.

Other than discourse markers and tokens, certain lexical expressions have also attracted research attention. Pomerantz (1986), for example, referred to lexical expressions such as “perfectly,” “forever,” “everyone,” and “completely innocent” as “extreme case formulations” and showed that they were used by participants to justify claims. Drew and Holt (1988, 1998) studied idiomatic expressions in conversation and demonstrated how they were used to launch complaints or achieve topical transitions.

A third strand of lexis-focused study in CA is what is known as membership categorization analysis (MCA), which has its origins in Sacks’ lectures (1992). At the risk of simplification but for the purpose of brevity, the central idea of MCA is that there are many different ways that a person can be categorized and that the act of categorizing has social consequences. For example, a biology professor can also be a golfer, a mother, a wife, a feminist, a Weis shopper, a vegetarian, a classical music aficionado, a 45-year-
old Caucasian female, and so on. Each of these categories is “inference rich” (Sacks, 1992, p. 40), which means that upon its mention a common stock of cultural knowledge that is conventionally associated with the category can be invoked. As the same person can be categorized in numerous ways, and as not all categories are relevant on all occasions, how that person is categorized on certain occasions can be interactionally consequential. A recent example of membership categorization attempt that set off a political firestorm is a reference by a senior Italian senator to the country’s first black minister as resembling an orangutan (Mackey, 2013).

MCA is controversial because there is a potential danger of reading data-exogenous cultural information into a category, thus imposing analysts’ own (biased) interpretations on the interaction, which runs counter to CA’s principle that data analysis should be based on participants’ orientations and that any analytical claims should be grounded in data and warranted by data (for a criticism of the analytic practice of MCA, see Schegloff 2007a; for a defense of MCA and a formulation of its research method and agenda, see Stokoe, 2012; see also rejoinders to Stokoe’s article in the same special issue in *Discourse Studies*). Controversial as it is, MCA continues to flourish as a line of CA research and enjoys popularity among some CA researchers, especially those whose research interests lie in the intersection between gender and interaction. Focusing on gender categories “boys,” “girls,” “men,” “women,” “husband,” “wife” “blokes,” “chicks” and the like and the interactional work they are deployed to accomplish, these researchers have brought to light how gender bifurcation, gender stereotypes, gender identities, and sexual identities and ideology are talked into being in conversation (e.g.,
Kitzinger, 2005, 2007; Stokoe, 2008; see also contributions in the edited volume by Speer & Stokoe, 2011).

As can be seen from the above broad overview, like grammar in interaction, lexis in interaction is also a large research area. Two lines of lexis-focused research in CA that are directly relevant to the current study are word search and reference recognition, which I will take up in detail in two separate sections below.

2.3.2 Repair and word search

2.3.2.1 Repair

Word search is a kind of repair. I will first illustrate some key notions in conversational repair before taking up word search. In conversation, when participants encounter problems in speaking, hearing and understanding, they can recourse to a systematic mechanism to address these interactional hitches. This “self-righting” mechanism is called repair (Schegloff, Sacks, & Jefferson, 1977; see also Schegloff, 1979; 1992; 1997; 2000; Kitzinger, 2012; and the edited volume by Hayashi, Raymond, & Sidnell, 2013). The source that causes the trouble of speaking, hearing or understanding is referred to as “the trouble source” or “the repairable.” The speaker of the trouble source is called “self” and all other speakers are referred to as “other.” Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson (1977) distinguished among four types of repair depending on who initiates repair and who conducts the repair proper: self-initiation, self-repair; self-initiation, other-repair; other-initiation, self-repair; other-initiation, other-repair. Based on where repair is initiated in reference to the trouble source turn, distinction is made among same-turn repair, transition space repair, next turn repair, and third turn repair. When the speaker of the trouble source, or self, initiates repairs, it occurs predominantly in the
same turn, the transition space, or the third turn. The transition space refers to an
opportunity space following the possible completion of the trouble source turn and the
beginning of the next turn. Self can seize on this opportunity to initiate repair on her own
talk if she has not done so within her turn space. By contrast, when other initiates repair,
it occurs predominantly in the next turn, that is, in the turn subsequent to the trouble
source turn. Repair can result in an outcome with the troubles successfully resolved or
fail with repair effort aborted. The window, or opportunity space, for catching problems
of hearing and understanding in interaction is quite narrow and there is structural pressure
for repair to be conducted as close as possible to the trouble source. Once the opportunity
space is passed, initiating repair will become sequentially irrelevant.

Schegloff et al. (1977) also noted that there exists an organized preference for self-
repair over other-repair. The first opportunity to catch and fix any problems lies within
the same turn. An additional transition space is available for self-repair when self does
not catch or fix the problems within her turn space. They also observed that when other
initiates repair in the next turn, she allows a gap to elapse to create a transitional space for
self to catch her problems, indicating an orientation by other toward a preference for self-
repair. In addition, other-repair often assumes a mitigated form, appears in a rather
restricted set of sequential environments, and is oriented to by self as indicating
disagreement. All these point to other-repair as a dispreferred action. However, toward
the end of their paper, Schegloff et al. pointed out that, in child-parent interaction or other
interactions that involve “not-yet-competent” speakers, other-repair may be quite
frequent and even preferred as it serves as “one vehicle for socialization.”
2.3.2.2 Word search

The phenomenon of word searching was first described by Sacks (1992) in his lectures. However, although Sacks made explicit reference to a search for word, this phenomenon was discussed under the topic of collaborative utterance production. It is in their 1977 paper that Schegloff et al. first identified word search as a repair practice that “can occur if an item (e.g. a word) is not available to a speaker when ‘due’ ” (p.363).

Here are two examples from their paper.

(6) [Data from Schegloff et al., 1977, p.363]
Clacia: B't, a-another one theh wentuh school with me - wa:s a
girl na:med uh, (0.7) °W't th' hell wz er name. °Karen.
Right. Karen.

(7)[Data from Schegloff et al., 1977, p.363]
Olive: Yihknow Mary uh::: (0.3) oh:: what was it. –
Uh:: Thom:pson.

In each case, the name of a person which should be due next is unavailable, and the participant engages in a search that results in a successful solution.

Schegloff (1979) pointed out that word searches are repair initiations that have a “forward orientation” in that rather than producing the bit of talk that is due next, the speaker fills the slot with non-lexical speech perturbations such as sound stretches, pauses, inbreaths, or vocalizations *uh, uhm* and its variants, which signal that she is having trouble in finding a word or words to forward the progress of talk. The speaker can resolve the problem on her own by yielding a search solution as in fragments (6)-(7) – a case of same-turn self-initiation and self-repair par excellence. Or a search solution is not yielded and the searcher can turn to a co-participant for assistance, which can result in a case of self-initiation, other-repair.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1986) investigated word searches as embodied activities that involve not just verbal behavior, but also nonverbal behavior such as facial
expressions and gestures. They demonstrated that visually a participant in a word search can be observed to withdraw her gaze and assume a “thinking face,” indicating that a “solitary search” is in progress. The co-participants usually keep their gaze on the searcher during this phase of the search to indicate that they are in on the search activity, although no mutual gaze is established. When a solitary search yields no results, the searcher can deploy other verbal or bodily conduct to invite the co-participants to join in the search process. This indicates that word searches, as a form of repair initiation, abide by the preference organization of the repair mechanism, namely, self-initiation and self-repair is preferred over self-initiation and other-repair (Schegloff et al., 1977). The speaker is left to search for a candidate solution on her own and other participants enter to assist in the search effort only when the speaker signals that assistance is needed. This preference organization in word searches has also been attested to in both L1 and L2 Japanese conversation (Hayashi, 2003b on L1 Japanese conversation; Hosoda, 2000 on L2 Japanese conversation) and L2 Italian conversation (Chiarenza, 2010).

Most studies on word searches in L2 interaction involved the pairing up of native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) or L1 and L2 speakers (e.g., Brouwer, 2003 on Danish NSs and NNSs; Chiarenza, 2010 on Italian L1 and L2 speakers; Hosoda, 2000 on Japanese L1 and L2 speaker; Kurhila, 2006 on Finnish NSs and NNSs; Park, 2007 on English NSs and NNSs). Kurhila (2006) examined “substantial” word search sequences by Finnish NSs and NNSs. Her study on word searches was situated within the larger context of how understanding was achieved between NSs and NNSs in conversation. Therefore, by “substantial” word searches she meant those word search sequences that involved the concerted effort by NSs and NNSs in the search process to
resolve a lexical problem and to achieve understanding. She found in her data that word searches were predominantly initiated by NNSs, indicating an imbalance in linguistic knowledge, and that they were regularly “flagged” by interrogatives, explicitly announcing that the speaker encounters a lexical problem. The three common word search strategies the NNSs used were loan words, Fennicized words, and negating a semantically contiguous referent through the not X, but Y format. By using these strategies, the NNSs not only narrowed the domain for search, but also invited the NSs in the search process.

Chiarenza (2010) offered a detailed study of the sequential organization of word search sequences in both L1 and L2 Italian conversation. She described the different phases in typical word search sequences, including the onset, the search process, and the search resolution. In terms of the interaction involved L2 Italian speakers, she found that, although linguistically limited, they were competent interlocutors availing themselves of all verbal and nonverbal resources available in their pursuit of resolutions when encountering lexical difficulty.

Brouwer (2003) investigated word search sequences with the participation of Danish L1 and L2 speakers with an eye to discovering what kind of word search sequences, if any, provided opportunities for learning. She found that the participants engaged in word search sequences for different interactional purposes and that not all word search sequences created learning opportunities for L2 speakers. She concluded that only sequences of word search that exhibited these two characteristics were conducive to L2 learning: “(a) the other participant is invited to participate in the search, and (b) the interactants demonstrate an orientation to language expertise, with one participant being a
Brouwer emphasized that the novice/expert pair did not have to correspond to the NS/NNS pair. Rather it could be a NNS/NNS pair with unequal distribution of linguistic knowledge.

Although not focusing on what affordances word search sequences offered for language learning, but on how searching for words was sequentially organized and what verbal and nonverbal resources English NSs and NNSs drew on to arrive at search solutions, Park (2007) demonstrated that the unequal distribution of knowledge, in terms of both content and language, was oriented to as a resource by the participants in their organization of the word search activities and played a crucial role in determining the search outcomes. The NNSs in Park’s study were experts in content knowledge. They encountered lexical difficulty when attempting to construct their utterances in English. The NSs, on the other hand, were experts in English, but lacked the content knowledge that the NNSs attempted to convey. Park showed in her analysis that this two-way unequal, but complementary distribution of knowledge shaped the structure of word search sequences in which the NNSs made effort in describing the content while the NSs ventured guesses of candidate solutions for the NNSs to confirm or reject.

Several important observations follow from the above studies on word searches. One, all the studies on L2 word searches involved the paring up of NS and NNS or L1 and L2 speakers. Two, there is a describable sequential organization to the word search activity (Chiarenza, 2010; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Park, 2007). Three, searching for words is an embodied activity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Chiarenza, 2010; Park, 2007). Four, participants orient themselves to unequal distribution of knowledge in word searches (Brouwer, 2003; Kurhila, 2006; Park 2007), especially an orientation by L2
speakers to L1 speakers as linguistic experts (Kurhila, 2006; Park 2007). Five, as a repair practice, word searches abide by the preference principle in the repair mechanism, that is, a preference for self-repair over other repair (Chiarenza, 2010; Hayashi, 2003b; Hosoda, 2000).

2.3.3 Reference recognition and achieving reference

Another strand of lexis-focused CA research that is relevant to the current study is person reference (Enfield & Stivers, 2007; Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007; Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996c). Referring to person by names, pronouns, descriptors, or some other means is an indispensable ingredient in daily conversation, and there is systematics as to how this can be accomplished (Schegloff, 1996c). Sacks and Schegloff (1979) formulated two preference principles that govern how participants make reference to person in conversation – the preference for minimization and the preference for recipient design. The preference for minimization states that a minimized form of reference should be used. For example, use the name “Nathan” rather than the descriptor “the mechanic who lives down the street” when Nathan is a know referent to the recipient. The preference for recipient design, on the other hand, states that the speaker should take the knowledge status of the recipient of a particular referent into consideration and produce a reference form that is recognizable to the recipient. Sacks and Schegloff (1979) pointed out that when the two principles are in conflict, the principle of minimization should be relaxed for the purpose of recipient design. For example, if on its first mention, the referent “Carol” is not recognizable to the recipient, then a descriptor “the woman you met on Friday’s party” or the like should be used to achieve recognition and to form the basis for subsequent reference.
In a later paper, Schegloff (1996c) expounded on some of the practices the participants adopt in achieving references in conversation. Of interest is his distinction between “locally initial reference” and “locally subsequent reference,” that is, in conversation there is a sequential position where a reference is first mentioned and a position where it is subsequently mentioned. In the initial position, a name or a descriptor is usually used, and in the subsequent position a pronoun is commonly used. Schegloff pointed out that when a locally initial reference is used in a locally subsequent position or vice versa, then the reference form is being used to do more than just referring. One of the anecdotes that he used for illustrative purpose concerns the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Following the event, the question “Is he still alive?” could be put by one stranger to another without specifying who “he” was. According to Schegloff, on the mention of the subsequent reference form “he” in a locally initial position, a shared frame of mind was activated and a sense of a community united in a catastrophic historical moment was evoked. The two preference principles in person reference were also borne out in subsequent studies across many different cultures (see contributions in the edited volume by Stivers & Enfield, 2007).

Most CA studies in this domain, however, have focused on how person reference is achieved or deployed in conversation. Kim (2009, see also 2012) extended the scope of CA research on the recognition and achievement of person reference to the recognition and achievement of any references, namely, references made to persons, objects, places, and actions. Using data from English conversations organized for learning purposes between an English L1 tutor and his tutees, two Korean teenage boys who were sojourning in the U.S. with their father, Kim examined how the achievement of initial
reference was sequentially organized and how the participants worked in concert to seek resolutions when initial reference posed a recognition problem. She demonstrated that the process of achieving reference recognition is also the process whereby the knowledge status of the participants with regard to the particular referent at issue is gauged, negotiated, and revised. By situating her study within the domain of reference recognition, Kim went beyond word searches and included initial lexical recognition in L2 interaction within the framework of her study.

2.3.4 Epistemics in interaction

As Park (2007) and Kim (2009) – and to some extent Brouwer (2003) and Kurhila (2006) – showed, the unequal distribution of knowledge among the participants or their imbalanced knowledge status with regard to a particular lexical item is an essential element in lexis-focused interaction. In this section, I will provide an overview of CA’s tradition in the treatment of knowledge or epistemics in interaction.

CA does not treat knowledge as a mental or psychological construct, but as procedural displays in talk-in-interaction and bodily conduct that are observable and analyzable with the tool of CA. From early on, CA researchers have been interested in the relationship between a speaker’s epistemic access and its relation to the design of talk – that is, how much knowledge or information a participant has in a certain domain can influence the unfolding of talk (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011a). In social interaction, there are practices that speakers can use to indicate how much access they and their co-participants have to a particular domain of knowledge. Preannouncement (Terasaki, 2004[1976]), for example, is a practice regularly deployed by a speaker to gauge how much access another speaker has to a particular event. By asking “Do you
know what happened to Jim today?” a speaker is in fact gauging the newsworthiness or tellability of the event. If the answer is affirmative, it blocks the telling because the recipient has already indicated access. If the answer is negative, what follows is likely a “go-ahead” response from the recipient and the telling proceeds. A speaker can also use a practice called “my side telling” (Pomerantz, 1980) to indicate his or her limited access to a certain event. By formulating limited access, the speaker elicits information from a recipient. For example, “I stopped by your office today, but you were not in” can elicit from the recipient an explanation as to why she was not found in her office. In a classic study that we reviewed earlier, Goodwin (1979) illustrated how a speaker designed a single utterance increment by increment based on the recipients’ visual conduct and their differential access to the information to be conveyed through the utterance. Goodwin’s study demonstrated the point that how much the recipients know can impact the structure of an emerging utterance and the propositional content conveyed therein. In his study of the change-of-state token “oh,” Heritage (1984a) demonstrated that participants orient themselves to knowledge transmission through the use of “oh.” In uttering “oh” as a receipt of information, a speaker registers that information has been transferred and she is now duly informed. All these studies demonstrate how participants’ knowledge states are constructed on a moment-to-moment basis in interaction.

Participants’ orientation to epistemics in interaction can perhaps best be captured in the concept of “recipient design.” In defining the concept, Sacks et al. (1974) wrote that “(b)y ‘recipient design’ we refer to a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants” (p.727). It is a broad
concept and can cover a vast range of conversational activities. No matter how broad it is, however, the concept entails assumptions made by a speaker about a co-participant in terms of her epistemic status in a certain domain, and based on these assumptions, or presumed “common ground” (Clark, 1996), the speaker can design turns-at-talk that are sensitive to the co-participant’s epistemic status. For example, if both speakers A and B know a person by the name of “Kate,” referring to that person by that name alone would achieve recognition in conversation. However, if Kate is an acquaintance of speaker A, but unknown to speaker B, then in first mentioning Kate to speaker B, speaker A would have to rest on some descriptor such as “Kate, one of my former co-workers” for recognitional purpose (see Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996c). The use and design of person reference or descriptor, then, reflects a speaker’s assumption about the shared knowledge, or lack thereof, that she has with a co-participant about a certain person. A speaker’s assumptions of, and sensitivity toward, a co-participant’s knowledge states in a certain area extend far beyond person reference to include various aspects of conversational activities such as making assessments (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006), designing and interpreting questions (Heritage, 2012a; Heritage & Raymond, 2012), and negotiating one’s relative rights and authority in certain epistemic domains (Kamio, 1997; see also the edited volume by Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011b)

Compared with the encompassing “recipient design,” Heritage (2012a, 2012b) proposed two specific analytic concepts in CA’s investigations of epistemics in interaction: epistemic status and epistemic stance. According to Heritage, epistemic status is a speaker’s knowledge states in certain domains vis-à-vis other speakers. A speaker can
be more knowledgeable [k+] or less knowledgeable [k−] in a certain epistemic domain, and this imbalance of knowledge not only exists on a gradient, but is a relatively stable and enduring feature that participants orient to in talk-in-interaction. For example, when speaker A, who is from Mexico, talks to speaker B, who is from Cambodia, about Cambodian food taboo, it can be expected that speaker A will regularly defer to speaker B with regard to the knowledge and authority in the topic under discussion. Epistemic stance, on the other hand, refers to epistemic status in interaction. That is, epistemic stance is how one enacts one’s epistemic status in turns-at-talk. In the aforementioned example, for instance, speaker A from Mexico and speaker B from Cambodia can enact epistemic stances that are congruent with their [k+] and [k−] status in the cultural domain under discussion. However, Heritage pointed out that one’s epistemic stance is not always congruent with one’s epistemic status – that is, one can claim to know more or less than one does, thus “dissembling” an epistemic stance that is incongruent with one’s epistemic status. Managing epistemic congruence and incongruence, then, is also one of the interactional businesses that participants regularly engage in.

The importance of epistemics in interaction is such that Heritage (2012b) wrote of an “epistemic engine” that drives interaction. He pointed out that the imbalanced epistemic status between participants can lead to sequence expansion while the arrival at a balance can eventuate in sequence closure. In addition to exerting an influence on sequence development, epistemics also plays an important role in action formation (see Schegloff, 1996a for an illustration of action formation). When it comes to interpreting what action a question performs, for instance, Heritage (2012a) pointed out that epistemics overrides linguistics. Since not all interrogatives are produced to seek
information, knowing the epistemic status of the speaker can help determine whether a question is asked to seek or assert information. For example, if speaker A has always known that speaker B is a Christian, then the question “Are you a Christian?” put to speaker B by speaker A can be understood as performing any action other than seeking information – she can, for example, censure speaker B for having said or done something that is uncharacteristically Christian by asking such a question. On the other hand, a declaratively formatted statement, when formulated by speaker A to convey information that falls within the epistemic domain of speaker B – for example, “you went to the Dean’s office today,” can elicit a confirmation from speaker B. By confirming a declaratively formatted statement, speaker A asserts her privileged access to the event speaker A describes. Labov and Fanshell (1977) termed such a statement “B-event statement” (cf. Pomerantz, 1980).

Relating epistemics in interaction to word searches and reference recognition, it is easy to see that they are closely intertwined. The process of searching for a word or achieving lexical recognition is also a process whereby the participants enact their [k-] or [k+] stance in relation to a particular lexical item and display their [k-] or [k+] status in relation to each other. Their [k-] or [k+] status is what drives lexis-focused interactions.

Repair, word searches, reference recognition, and epistemics in interaction will form the background for the second focus of the study. By examining lexis-focused interaction, I seek to answer these questions: How do L2 speakers initiate repair and elicit assistance when they encounter lexical difficulty in constructing their TCUs? How does L2 speakers’ epistemic status influence the repair outcomes in lexis-focused
interactions? How do discussion leaders manage their epistemic status in a word definition check activity? How are their [k-] and [k+] stances enacted in interactions?

As this study is situated within the domain of L2 interaction, and aims to illustrate how L2 speakers orient themselves to learning opportunities arising from interaction, I now turn to survey the literature in this domain of study.

2.4 L2 interaction

2.4.1 An overview

Early CA research focused on L1 English talk-in-interaction and had a monolingual bias (Firth, 1996; Wagner, 1996, 1998; Wong & Olsher, 2000). With the global spread of English and an increasing adaptation of English as a lingua franca among speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds for various communicative purposes, calls have arisen to examine how English is used by multilingual speakers as a localized and situated communication system (Canagarajah, 2007) and whether CA can take up the challenge of analyzing English as a lingua franca in L2 talk (Firth, 1996; Wagner 1996, 1998; Wong & Olsher, 2000; for a rejoinder to Wagner 1996; see Seedhouse, 1998).

In their oft-cited 1997 paper, Firth and Wagner brought to task the practice in cognitively-oriented SLA research of using NSs to serve as idealized models, against whose competence NNSs’ competence in an L2 is measured. On such a measurement, the overwhelming majority of L2 speakers fail miserably. What arises out of such SLA research is an image of L2 speakers as deficient learners or communicators. To redress the bias, Firth and Wagner argued that the scope of SLA research be broadened to account for language use in social interaction and to adopt a “participant-relevant perspective” to some hardcore SLA concepts such as “NS,” “NNS,” and “interlanguage.”
Their sentiments were shared by other socially-oriented SLA researchers who also drew attention to the disservice of such a portrayal of L2 speakers and proposed that L2 competence be reconceptualized (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006; Lee, 2006b).

These discussions concerning L2 interaction, L2 competence, and L2 identities have found resonance in a growing body of research that uses CA to account for L2 use and learning in and outside classroom settings over the past fifteen years (Brouwer, 2003; Brouwer & Wagner, 2004; Carroll, 2000; Hall, 2007a; Hauser, 2005, 2013; He, 2004; Hellermann, 2006, 2007, 2008; Hellermann & Cole, 2009; Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Hosoda, 2000, 2006; Kasper 2004; Kim, 2009, 2012; Koshik, 2002; Kurhila, 2006; Lazaraton, 2003, 2004; Lee, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2010; Markee, 2000, 2004, 2008; Mori, 2002, 2004, 2007; Mori & Hayashi, 2006; Mori & Hasegawa, 2009; Seedhouse, 2004; Seo & Koshik, 2010; Wong, 2000a, 2000b; Waring, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013; Young & Miller, 2004; see also contributions in edited volumes by Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Hall, Hellermann, & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Nguyen & Kasper, 2009; Pallotti & Wagner, 2011; Richards & Seedhouse, 2005). Here I will offer a survey of two lines of CA studies in L2 interaction. In one line of inquiry, CA researchers demonstrate how the interactional competence of L2 speakers and the identity categories of NNS should be understood in the detail of interaction. In the other line of inquiry, CA researchers document how L2 speakers use or learn a language through their participation in interaction. It should be noted that the two lines of CA research are not clearly demarcated. Some CA studies that focus on issues of NS and NNS identities also simultaneously address issues related to L2 use and learning, and vice versa. The separate treatment is to highlight their respective focus and emphasis.
2.4.2 NS and NNS identities in L2 talk

It is CA’s methodological insistence that the relevance of any identity categories to interaction, including those of NSs and NNSs, be demonstrated in the detail of interaction (Schegloff, 1991; see also an interview with Schegloff by Wong & Olsher, 2000). This means that when adopting a CA lens to L2 interaction, analysts should bracket the a priori assumption that because a certain stretch of talk involves some NSs and NNSs, the identity categories of NSs and NNSs can be indiscriminately drawn upon as a resource to explain what goes on in the interaction. Rather, analysts should endeavor to demonstrate whether the participants themselves orient to such identity categories, and if so, how those identity categories are manifested in the particulars of interaction and become consequential for the development of talk.

Three orientations that CA researchers adopt toward the issues of L2 competence and L2 identities can be identified: the competence orientation, the difference orientation, and the linguistic asymmetry orientation. In competence-oriented studies, researchers focus on the interactional dexterity with which L2 speakers engage in interaction (e.g., Carroll, 2000 on novice L2 speakers’ capability in precision timing in turn entry), or demonstrate what is often mischaracterized or misinterpreted as negative features of L2 talk such as disfluencies (Carroll, 2004), L1 phonological transfer (Carroll, 2005), and lexical gap (Olsher, 2004) under the high-power lens of CA turns out to be interactional resources or highly coordinated actions by L2 speakers. By redressing the mischaracterizations or misinterpretations, and by demonstrating what L2 speakers can competently accomplish in interaction, competence-oriented CA studies call into question the view of L2 speakers as deficient learners and communicators.
The difference orientation, on the other hand, concentrates on how NSs and NNSs interact differently, and by adopting different interactional practices, NNSs are shown to construct their identities as NNSs or L2 learners. Wong (2000a), for example, studied delayed next turn repair initiation by NNSs whose L1 was Mandarin Chinese in their English conversation with NSs. She found that following a turn by the NSs, the NNSs first claimed understanding by uttering some acknowledgement tokens. The NNSs then initiated repair after a short pause, thus retroactively revising their early claim of understanding and orienting to the NSs’ turn as the trouble source that needed repairing. This practice of doing next turn repair initiation was not found in L1 conversation. By virtue of their interacting differently, Wong argued that the speakers constructed themselves as NNSs or L2 learners.

Drawing on the same data source, Wong (2000b) examined in another study the use by NNSs of sentence-medial “yeah.” The token was preceded by some speech perturbations, but following its production, repair solutions were found and NNSs continued with their talk. Wong pointed out that this sentence-medial token was seldom used by L1 speakers, and on the few rare occasions where it was used, it was deployed for different interactional purposes. Based on the sequential environment the token was used – preceded by perturbations but followed by repair solutions and hitch-free ensuing talk, as well as their nonexistence in L1 talk, Wong argued that the use of the token had a “presentational function,” one that presented an image of NNSs as competent interlocutors who were capable of managing interactional hitches.

The third orientation, an orientation toward linguistic asymmetry in L2 interaction, takes repair sequences as the locus of investigation. It is through a repair that focuses on
linguistic correctness, initiated mostly by L2 speakers, that the participants’ differential language expertise is invoked and becomes relevant for the interaction (Hosoda, 2006; Kasper, 2004; Kurhila, 2004; Li, 2013). Studies that adopt this orientation demonstrate that the identity categories of NSs and NNSs are not relevant on all occasions, and that a place where their relevance can be located is repair sequences with the linguistic correctness of L2 speakers as the focus of interaction.

In sum, this line of CA inquiry contributes to the discussions concerning L2 competence, L2 identities, and L2 interaction by locating competence and identities in the particulars of interaction.

2.4.3 L2 interaction and language learning

2.4.3.1 L2 interaction and learning as change over time

Another line of CA research is using CA to document language use and learning in and outside instructional settings. While there is no dispute about the value of using CA in illustrating how L2 speakers use language and other semiotic resources in organizing their participation in various pedagogical or non-pedagogical activities, it is contentious whether CA can be used to address the issues of language learning – if learning is to be understood as a cognitive problem-solving process or as development or change in behavior and practice over time, and thus distinguishes itself from in situ, moment-to-moment language use (Gass, 2004; Hall, 2004; He, 2004; Kasper, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lee, 2010). As CA is not a theory of learning, but a sociological theory that aims to explicates how participants accomplish various social actions through interaction, CA researchers with learning-as-change-over-time as a research agenda tend to draw on exogenous theories and concepts, such as situated learning, the community of practice, peripheral
and full participation associated with Lave and Wenger (1991) to explain development and change (Brouwer & Wagner, 2004; Herllermann, 2006, 2007, 2008; Hellermann & Cole, 2009; Young & Miller, 2004). The practice of wedding CA to exogenous theories in order to explain language learning and development has drawn fire from other CA researchers (Hauser, 2011, 2013; Lee, 2010), who either questioned whether this is a felicitous and feasible undertaking (Lee, 2010), or criticized the practice of researchers’ being led by a pre-determined theory and fitting their data to that theory (Hauser, 2011, 2013).

Indeed, the use of CA to account for change and development is fraught with challenges. Researchers need to identify a particular behavior or practice as the object of study and to trace change or development over time. This necessitates the examination of “comparable sequential environments” (Kim, 2009, p.45) where the object of study will appear across different points of time for comparative purposes. The challenge for such an undertaking is enormous because, due to interactional contingency, it is difficult to hold sequential environments constant on different occasions of interaction (Kim, 2009, Lee, 2010). Even what looks like highly conventional conversational routines such as telephone openings and closings can exhibit variability from one occasion to another. Lee (2010, pp. 407-408), for example, reanalyzed two excerpts from Brouwer and Wagner (2004) that featured telephone openings by the same two participants on two different occasions and contended that what was claimed to be a change in the L2 speaker’s behavior by the authors could be attributed instead to the speaker’s contingent response to a prior turn. Lee’s reanalysis highlights the point that CA is best equipped to track how participants display their understanding to each other and constantly revise and update
that understanding within the local sequential environments of the prior turn, current turn, and next turn on a single occasion of interaction. The understanding displayed, revised, and updated by the participants is local and can only be understood within the local sequential environments. Comparing a behavior or practice by the same speaker on two different occasions can predispose researchers to treating two unique, dynamic sets of sequential environments as stabilized and equalized objects while ignoring how a particular behavior or practice arises as a response to its uniquely local sequential environments. Due to this reason, any claim of change or development can be easily refuted as the same speaker acting differently on two different occasions. That is, the speaker just acts differently at two different points of time, rather than improving their behavior or practice from point A to point B.

The question then arises as to whether CA researchers will be able to make a strong case for change and development if quantification is used. For example, if we are able to use descriptive statistics to show that a particular L2 speaker behaves poorly for a certain number of times at a certain sequential location for the first few weeks, and then shows steady improvement in a certain number of cases over a period of time, will we be in a better position to claim that change has taken place?

Writing on the topic of CA and quantification, Schegloff (1993) noted that even when researchers work with large amount of data, they work with collections of single cases, and that they should submit each single case to careful analytic scrutiny before they make claims about patterns of action and interaction. He cautioned that quantification should not be used at the expense of single case analysis, “but rather is built on its back” (p.102). This indicates that while CA is not against quantification in
principle, it offers an injunction against the potential risk of putting the cart before the horse.

Relating Schegloff’s (1993) comments on quantification to the question raised earlier, we will find that using quantification does not allow researchers to eschew treating each target object as a single case. And this necessarily directs us back to the challenge mentioned earlier – the infelicitous practice of comparing behavior or practice across interactional occasions in order to seek evidence of change or improvement while ignoring the local sequential environments from which each behavior or practice arises. In addition, the use of counting and coding in this way can also result in a reductionistic category system (Psathas, 1995, p.8) that crudely groups certain behavior or practice into a category without much regard for the local contexts.

A recent development in this strand of CA research is to use longitudinal data to address L2 speakers’ development in the use of formulaic expressions over time (e.g., Hauser, 2013). Since lexical items and grammar are relatively stable objects amenable to categorization and quantification as opposed to the more dynamic and contingently-produced interactional practices and behavior, this seems to be a promising direction to pursue. However, since learner’s development in grammar and lexis has been extensively studied by other approaches in SLA, how CA can contribute to new knowledge remains to be seen.

2.4.3.2 L2 interaction, participation, and learning opportunities

Compared with treating learning as change or improvement over time, CA is more apt as a tool to document learning as a “socially situated activity” (see Mori, 2007 for CA’s two different conceptualizations of learning: learning as change over time and
learning as socially situated activity). Conceptualizing learning as a socially situated activity resonates with the metaphor of learning as participation in sociocultural theory (Sfard, 1998; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) or the sociocultural-theory-inspired ideas of learning as participating in the “oral practices” (Hall, 1993), “interactive practices” (Hall, 1995), or “discursive practices” (Young, 2009) of a certain community. By participating in a target language community, the participants bring their sociocultural history to bear on the interactive process, jointly create shared meanings in their face-to-face encounters, define and redefine who they are to each other, and co-construct a social world that includes myriad practices (Hall, 1993, 1995).

However, despite some affinity, sociocultural-theory-inspired participation is not entirely the same as CA’s participation. While the former underscores that language use and participation in the practices of a target language community are informed by the participants’ biography and history and at the same time governed by the social and cultural conventions of the target community (Hall, 1993, 1995, 1997; Young, 2009), the latter examines the participants’ specific conduct to demonstrate how participation is manifested at the micro level of interaction (Goodwin, 1986a, 2007; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004) and avoids invoking history and culture to explain participation unless they are oriented to by the participants as relevant.

CA’s notion of participation has its roots in Goffman’s theorizing on social interaction, especially his groundbreaking work on “footing” (Goffman, 1981), in which he formulated specific speech roles for speaker and hearer in face-to-face encounters and added lamination to what would have otherwise been two monolithic concepts. In his framework, a speaker can be an animator, an author, and a principal of an utterance that
she produces or all of these at the same time; a hearer can have a ratified status as an addressed recipient or an unaddressed recipient, or an unratified status as an over-hearer or eavesdroppers.

Although Goffman dissected various speech roles speaker and hearer can take on when they participate in social interaction, he did not demonstrate how speaker and hearer interact with each other in real time and how they build social actions based on each other’s contributions. Drawing inspirations from Goffman’s framework, Goodwin (2007, p.24) offered an alternative, CA’s view of participation, in which participation is “analyzed as a temporally unfolding process through which separate parties demonstrate to each other their ongoing understanding of the events they are engaged in by building actions that contribute to the further progression of these very same events” (see also Goodwin, 1986a; Goodwin & Goodwin 2004). In this formulation, speaker and hearer are accorded an active role in the interactive process, each monitoring the other’s ongoing action in order to make relevant contributions.

Along the line of CA, then, learning as participation is understood as how through an interactive process of participating in a particular activity, the participants jointly negotiate, create, obstruct, stifle, or let pass opportunities for learning (Brouwer, 2003; He, 2004; Kim, 2012; Li, 2013; Mori, 2004; Waring, 2008, 2009, 2011; Walsh, 2002). According to Allwright (2005, p17), “(o)pportunity makes no assumptions about causality, about whether or not learning actually takes place, or why.” By shifting their attention to learning opportunities and how they are oriented to by the participants in interaction, CA researchers are able to focus on the process of learning as exhibited in the
participants’ specific, observable conduct in the sequential organization of their talk without having to account for learning outcomes or whether learning has occurred.

Situated in the domain of L2 interaction, this study aims to answer the following questions: Based on the ways in which the participants co-construct grammar and lexis in interaction, what can be said about L2 interactional competence and L2 identities? Whether or not, and if so, how do the participants orient themselves to learning opportunities in the interaction? What pedagogical implications can be derived from the study?

2.5 Research questions

This study attempts to address two research foci: grammar in interaction and lexis in interaction. It also aims to contribute knowledge to CA’s research’s on L2 interaction. The research questions have been raised at the beginning of the chapter and at the end of each section where CA studies in a particular domain of inquiry were reviewed. Here I will present the three subsets of questions as a whole. They will guide the dissertation study.

1. How do L2 speakers accomplish collaborative completion? What actions do they achieve by collaboratively completing each other’s utterances? What other actions besides collaborative completion can be performed at the opportunity space? What do these actions reveal about grammar, turn-taking practices, and interactional competence?

2. How do L2 speakers initiate repair and elicit assistance when they encounter lexical difficulty in constructing their TCUs? How does L2 speakers’ epistemic status influence the repair outcomes in lexis-focused interactions?
How do discussion leaders manage their epistemic status in a word definition check activity? How are their [k-] and [k+] stances enacted in interactions?

3. Based on the ways in which the participants co-construct grammar and lexis in interaction, what can be said about L2 interactional competence and L2 identities? Whether or not, and if so, how do the participants orient themselves to learning opportunities in the interaction? What pedagogical implications can be derived from the study?
Chapter 3

Data and Method

3.1 Data

3.1.1 Data for this study

Video-recordings of a pedagogical activity called the reading circle from three college-level ESL classes taught by myself, the researcher in a large public university in the U.S. form the data base for this study. Class A was an elementary level reading class with an enrollment of three, Class B an intermediate level reading class with an enrollment of seven, and Class C an elementary writing class with an enrollment of nine. The nineteen participants were all first-year undergraduate students at the time of data collection and represented eight countries of origins: Cambodia, China, Egypt, Haiti, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea. The participants spoke various L1 and shared English as an L2. Since these were reading or writing classes, the levels of these classes should not be taken as an indicator that reflected the participants’ level of competency in English speaking. Indeed, due to a number of different factors, such as their length of stay in the U.S. and their educational experience in English, the speaking competency levels among the participants varied greatly. Some had native-like fluency, while others were just beginners.

The reading circle was an activity designed to engage the participants in text-based or text-related group work. The participants were assigned to sit in groups of three to five around a desk or several assembled desks and worked together on tasks related to a reading selection. Except for a few articles, which were designated by me, most of the reading pieces for the reading circle activities were selected by the participants.
themselves with my approval. In the latter case, a particular participant was designated as the leader, who was responsible for selecting an article of two to three pages in length and preparing a handout. The handout included four sections. Section one was vocabulary. In this section, the leader listed five to ten difficult vocabulary items from the article with definitions provided (for Class C) or not provided (for Classes A & B). Section two was paraphrasing. In this section, the leader identified two to three difficult sentences from the article, which would form the basis for the paraphrasing exercise in group work. Section three was comprehension questions. In this section, the leader designed four to six comprehension questions, the answer to which could be located directly in the article. Section four was discussion questions. In this section, the leader came up with four to six discussion questions based on the article. Different from comprehension questions, discussion questions were open-ended and had no correct answers. The purpose of this section was to prompt discussion related to issues raised in the reading. Once the handout was completed, the leader would send it to me for feedback.

The participants from Classes A and B were asked to read the articles and completed all the exercises and questions in the handouts before coming to class; the participants from Class C read the articles together in class, and once they completed the readings, they would proceed to work on the exercises and questions in the handouts together. In all classes, and during the reading circle activities, the leaders were responsible for leading and facilitating the discussions. As a group, the participants worked together on the exercises and questions in the handouts.

Twenty reading circle group discussions were video recorded, eleven from Class A, three from class B, and six from Class C, and yielded a total of nine hours and seventeen
minutes of video data. The lengths of the group discussions ranged from sixteen minutes to forty-four minutes. Table 3.1 below provides information about the source, topic, and length of each of the twenty reading circle discussions.

Table 3.1 Source, Topic, and Length of the 20 Reading Circle Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Length (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>Social networking</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kidney transplant</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to spot a liar</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender and communication style</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic food</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ways of life in Cambodia</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food or pets</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese wives</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human trafficking and prostitution</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sleep and college success</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>1989 democratic movement in China</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American families</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food or pets</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C</td>
<td>Nature or nurture (group one)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature or nurture (group two)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetarianism (group one)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetarianism (group two)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity and language learning (group one)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity and language learning (group two)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2 My role as teacher and researcher

My dual role as teacher and researcher in the study raises some concerns such as whether the student were coerced to participate, how I managed data collection, and how the students reacted to the presence of the recording equipment. Prior to data collection, I explained to the students the purpose of the study and their rights and obligations as participants. I made it explicit that their participation in the study was voluntary and that their participatory status would not affect their grade for the course. All the students,
except one from Class C, agreed to participate and signed the consent form. The data involved the non-participatory student was not included in this study.

On the reading circle day, I arrived to class about ten to fifteen minutes earlier, arranged the desks and chairs into a round-table configuration for each discussion group, and set up the camera on a tripod. When the students arrived, they were seated in groups with their respective leaders. As class A had only three students, they formed a stable group throughout the semester. I brought in one camera to record the group. In Class B and Class C, with an enrollment of seven and nine respectively, the students were arranged to sit in two groups. For Class B, I brought in only one camera to record one of the groups. For Class C, I brought in two cameras so that both groups were recorded. The makeup of group members was not fixed in Class B and Class C, but varied from one reading circle activity to another.

Once the students were seated, I adjusted the angle of the camera to ensure that all group members were captured. Two digital audio recorders were placed on the top of the desk of each group to capture the audio, which complemented the sometimes-not-so-good sound quality of the cameras. After I pressed the record button of the camera and the digital audio recorders, the students were instructed to begin their group work.

I told the students that they were free to ask me any questions during the discussion. I also walked around the class or from one group to another from time to time to monitor their progress. When the reading circle activities ended, I pressed the stop button of the camera and the digital audio recorders. Other class activities ensued from there. In this way data collection was managed in a way to keep the disruption to the normal flow of classroom pedagogical activities to a minimum.
As I was the instructor of these courses, I would be in the classrooms whether or not data was being collected; therefore, my presence as a researcher should not influence the way the students interacted with each other. The presence of the recording equipment, however, which would not have been there if data collection had not been planned, does raise the concern of “observer’s paradox” (Labov, 1972). When viewing the video recordings after all data collection was over, I did not find any instances in which the students verbally oriented to the presence of the recording equipment in Class A and Class C. That is, they did not make explicit reference to the presence of the camera or audio recorders in their talk. They seemed to be comfortable with being recorded. By contrast, in Class B it was observed that a few students oriented to the presence of the recording equipment on a few occasions by, for example, making faces to the cameras, or picking up one of the audio recorders and shoving it to the front of a speaker’s mouth as if doing an interview. As this study is situated within the theoretical and methodological framework of CA, the spontaneous performance of the students, or their visual and verbal orientations to the presence of the recording equipment, does not “contaminate” the data as it would be for certain sociolinguistic studies. This is because CA advocates “unmotivated looking” (more on this in Section 3.2.2.), and CA researchers do not (usually) have a pre-specified research agenda before data collection. Phenomenon of interest arises from the repeated viewings of the data. In the case of students’ performance in front of the camera or into the audio recorder, for example, if this is what interests the researcher, she can identify all the instances and conduct a CA analysis. As this study focuses on grammar and lexis in interaction, observer’s paradox or the students orientations toward the recording equipment is not relevant.
3.1.3 The overall structural organization of the reading circle activity

As is clear from the above description, the reading circle activity was dictated by a pre-determined agenda – the exercises and questions in the handout, and the participants’ job was to offer responses to the exercises and questions and complete the tasks together. The participants were designated different roles in the group work prior to the interaction as discussion leaders or group members, which had implications for their respective rights to turns. In general, as someone who was instructed to lead and facilitate the discussion, the discussion leader was the one who led the group through the exercises and questions one by one. She would read out an item from the handout, wait for a group member to volunteer a response, or nominate someone when no one self-selected. Then in a round-robin fashion, everyone in the group would offer a response. When a question-answer sequence came to an end, the leader would close the sequence by initiating a move to the next item.

A series of question-answer sequences then formed the overall structural organization of the activity, and the participants went through these sequences to complete the designated tasks. It should be noted that while this characterization offers an overall picture of the structural organization of the activity, it necessarily oversimplifies what went on in the interaction. There was much room for contingency in the response slot, which could be further expanded into longer sequences that involved confirmation checks, understanding checks, questions, answers, agreement, disagreement, stories telling, and more. In a word, turn-taking could be up for grabs in the response slot. This is especially true with the discussion questions. Due to its open-ended nature, the discussion questions could generate talk that resembled conversation. For example, in
response to the question of what wedding customs were like in their home countries, the participants could invoke personal experience and share their stories. In such case, correctness or incorrectness was longer an issue. Everyone was free to ask questions and make assessments, and they could collaboratively move the talk forward by transitioning from one subtopic to another. The predestinated roles of discussion leaders and group members were put on hold and not oriented to as relevant. Therefore, although certain turns were pre-allocated, and roles predestinated, turn-taking organization in this activity was not entirely institutional. Conversation was possible.

3.1.4 Transcription

I viewed the recordings repeatedly, identified all the focal sequences, and transcribed them using a transcription notation system developed by Jefferson (2004) (see Appendix A). When relevant, the participants’ embodied actions, such as their eye gazes, facial expressions, head movements, gestures, and body positions were also described using descriptive language.

All the participants were L2 speakers of English, and most of them spoke English with phonological features of their L1. Syllable or phoneme omissions or mispronunciations were not uncommon in the speech of some of them. In most cases, these did not seem to pose a problem of understanding for the recipients and were not oriented to by them as relevant to the interaction. For this reason, standard orthography, rather than eye dialect – that is, the use of nonstandard spelling to represent the phonological features of the actual speech produced by the participants, was used to transcribe the data. However, when a certain pronunciation became an issue – for example, when a speaker initiated self-repair on the pronunciation of a particular lexical
item to indicate her uncertainty about how the word should be correctly pronounced, or when a mispronunciation posed an understanding problem for the recipients – IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols (see Appendix B) were used to capture the exact ways in which the lexical item was pronounced.

3.2 Method of analysis

3.2.1 CA as a theory and method

As an approach to analyzing talk-in-interaction, CA has its roots in ethnomethodology, a line of sociological thought pioneered by Harold Garfinkel. The word “ethnomethodology” is made up of “ethno” and “methodology” and means members’ methods. It studies the methods and processes whereby social order and social structures are rendered visible in the concrete and observable behaviors and activities of members of society (Garfinkel, 1967; for a more accessible account of ethnomethodology see Heritage, 1984b; Sharrock & Anderson, 1986; see also Seedhouse 2007; and the rejoinder to Seedhouse by Hall, 2007b), and constitutes a radical departure from Parsonian social theory in which social structures and social order are theorized to be the results of members of society internalizing social and cultural rules. Rather than adopting a top-down approach that assumes the a priori existence of social structures and their influence on members’ activities, ethnomethodology takes a bottom-up approach that accords members of society an agentive role, and studies how social order and social structures are created through members’ actions.

This bottom-up approach to study members’ methods was adopted by the founders of CA, Harvey Sacks and his associates Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. They took conversation as their object of study and investigated how social action is accomplished
and social order talked into being through interaction between members of society. They, along with later generations of CA researchers, developed CA into a distinctive and robust research program. In its development of over four decades, CA’s influence has gone beyond sociology, its home discipline, and gradually spilled over into other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, communication, linguistics, and applied linguistics.

The central goal of CA is to describe the practices and methods that participants use in organizing talk-in-interaction and bodily conduct and the procedures whereby these verbal and nonverbal behaviors are rendered as intelligible, orderly social actions by other participants (for introductory texts to CA, see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Liddicoat, 2007; Psathas, 1995; Sidnell, 2010; ten Have, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010). Underlying the method is the assumption that talk is a rule-governed and orderly phenomenon. Seemingly trivial conversational features such as a micro pause, a false start, or an overlap, and minute embodied actions such as a shift of eye gaze, a change in body position, or a head nod can all carry significant meanings that can impact the trajectory of talk, and thus should not be dismissed a priori as irrelevant to the analysis.

CA emphasizes an *emic* perspective to data analysis (Markee & Kasper, 2004; ten Have, 2007), that is, it requires that analysts strive to show participants’ understanding of or their orientations to what happens in the interaction. Any analytic claims that analysts make have to be endogenous to data – namely, based on data and validated by data. Participants construct their interaction turn by turn; therefore, their understanding of what goes on is also displayed in the sequential organization of turns. Through the current turn, the speaker displays her understanding of the prior turn. At the same time the current turn
serves as the context on the basis of which a recipient can design her turn as a relevant next action, thus showing her understanding of the current turn. The understanding or orientation is constantly renewed as the interaction unfolds. The job of analysts is to show how such an understanding is mutually achieved, modified, and renewed sequentially (for a clear overview, see Heritage 1984b, Chapter 8).

CA also emphasizes that analysts bring to light the action orientations or implications of social interaction. To reveal what social ends the participants accomplish through interaction, analysts need to demonstrate how a range of semiotic resources are assembled piece by piece temporally and sequentially by the participants, and explore what social actions the thus-assembled resources amount to.

Thanks to the accumulative works in CA over the past four decades, a wide range of interactional practices have been identified, fundamental among which are the practices of turn-taking (e.g., Jefferson, 1973; Sacks et al. 1974; Lerner, 2002, 2003, 2004), sequence organization (Schegloff, 2007b), repair (e.g., Schegloff et al., 1977), action formation (e.g., Drew, 1987; Schegloff, 1996a), and overall structural organization (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Robinson, 2012). In a recent paper, Heritage (2012b) proposed that there is an “epistemic engine” that drives talk, that is, epistemics or what participants know or do not know and how much they know in certain epistemic domains can play an important role in propelling the unfolding of sequence organization. Drawing on and proceeding from this accumulative, rich body of analytic resources in talk-in-interaction, this dissertation study aims to bring to light the methods and practices that ESL students deploy in organizing grammar and lexis as they emerge in talk in their participation in task-oriented small group work.
3.2.2 Analysis of data

In examining the data, I adhered by CA’s analytic principle of “unmotivated looking.” That is, I did not approach the data with a well-defined research agenda or a set of a priori theories. Rather I viewed the video recordings repeatedly. It was through repeated viewings that the target phenomenon of collaborative completion first caught my attention. I identified all the instances of collaborative completion, transcribed the focal sequences in which collaborative completion occurred. Following the identification and transcription of the focal sequences, I went back to the videos and viewed each focal sequence repeatedly and carefully. It was through the repeated and careful viewings of the focal sequences that I started to notice the different interactional functions that collaborative completion served. I identified all the functions, categorized the data, and looked for deviant cases. I then selected some focal sequences, analyzed them in detail to illustrate each interactional function that collaborative completion served.

In the process of viewing and analyzing the data, I also noticed that the majority of instances of collaborative completion occurred when perturbations surfaced in the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress. However, not all perturbations in TCU-in-progress elicited collaborative completion. This observation prompted me to look for what other actions might be performed by the speakers in the same opportunity space. A close scrutiny of the data yielded four other interactional practices: handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover, and curtailment.

I used the same procedures to identify the other interactional practices: uncertainty-marking, letting-it-pass, and understanding check questions. The superordinate categories of “grammar in interaction” and “lexis in interaction” represented my attempt to impose
some order on the various interactional practices that I had identified. That is, rather than
knowing a priori that I would be looking for grammar in interaction and lexis in
interaction in the data, these two research foci emerged from data analysis.

In analyzing the data, I adhered to CA’s insistence on an *emic* perspective (Markee
& Kasper, 2004; ten Have, 2007). I looked at the current turn and next turn in the focal
sequences and tracked the understanding that the participants displayed to each other as
the interaction unfolded. I described what transpired in the interaction and what actions
were accomplished by the participants. My analysis drew on CA’s analytic terminology
and findings in turn-taking practices, repair practices, sequence organization, action
formation, overall structural organization, and other domains.

As CA advocates unmotivated looking, which brackets the relevance of any a priori
theory to explain what happens in the interaction, any attempt to link the analysis to a
particular theory should be done post analytically (Kitzinger, 2008b). That is, based on
the analysis, researchers can discuss its relevance for a particular theory or area of study.
I will make this analysis-theory-implications linkage attempt in the Discussion and
Conclusion Chapter, where I discuss the contributions of the study by exploring its
implications for L2 identity construction, interactional competence and grammatical
competence, task-based language teaching, and SLA.
4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I take Lerner’s (1989) definition of collaborative completion in English L1 interaction as a point of departure; examine some excerpts of collaborative completion from my L2 data against the L1 definition; and propose a more encompassing definition of collaborative completion to accommodate my L2 data. This will form the backdrop for my own inquiry. I then turn to investigate the different interactional functions that collaborative completion serves. Based on my careful scrutiny of the data, I identify four functions: collaborative completion as a means to facilitate the progressivity of talk; to hamper the progressivity of talk; to co-opt affiliation and agreement and to reassert one’s stance; and to display the second speaker’s epistemic stances. I will illustrate these functions one by one.

4.2 Defining L2 collaborative completion

In defining collaborative completion, Lerner (1989) wrote that

(i) n the course of one speaker’s turn, a next speaker begins to speak, producing an utterance which is a syntactically fitted continuation of the current speaker’s utterance-in-progress. This second utterance preemptively completes the turn-constructional unit of the just prior speaker… (p. 173)

Two grammatical elements are essential in the definition. First, the utterance by the second speaker has to be syntactically fitted to the utterance-in-progress by the first
speaker; second, the utterance by the second speaker has to bring the utterance-in-progress by the first speaker to grammatical completion.

As Lerner focused on L1 English speakers, whose grammatical competence in the L1 is taken as a precondition for participating in talk-in-interaction, it is sensible to ask what happens when such competence cannot be assumed on the part of the participants – as, for example, in the case of novice L2 speakers (Firth, 1996; Mori & Hayashi, 2006; Wong, 2000a; see also Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011 for an overview of interactional competence and L2 interaction).

For L2 speakers who deploy collaborative completion in talk-in-interaction, the question then is one of whether they can produce a completing utterance that both syntactically fits to the utterance-in-progress and brings it to grammatical completion. To get a first glimpse into the question, here are some examples from my data.

(1) To help them find a job [PAHF 1612-1620]
1 Abr:  yea: : : : : : : : : h (1.2) that way:: (. ) u:: h (0.8) they:
2 Rai:  don:: : ’t have to do (0.5) [to sell their daughters. ]
3 [like a problem ]
4 → with the money (itself).
5 Abr:  yeah.

(2) Cat and dog [FOP 0852-0907]
1 Jul: I’m gonna say like uhm: (1.2) dogs and cats are
2 like domestic animals; (0.9) not like (. ) pigs
3 and sheeps and everything else. I mean you can
4 have like a pig or a sheep in (0.7) like
5 in: [:
6 Per:  [can be your pet:]
7 (0.5)
8 Jul: be your pet like in your (. ) bed or in your house

(3) But most of them [GAC 1643-1653]
1 Rai:  yeah, me too. I think like (1.1) not like (0.2)
2 every: (. ) man feel uncomfortable in asking for help,
3 .hh[hhh ]
4 Abr:  [“but” most° °° of them°°
5 Rai:  yeah, but most of them yeah.
All the arrowed turns in fragments (1)-(3) are collaborative completions of sorts. Yet they do not quite measure up to the grammatical criteria as laid out in Lerner’s (1989) definition. In fragment (1), the utterance in lines 3-4 is not syntactically tied to the TCU in lines 1-2. It takes additional parsing effort to tease out their grammatical relationship. Nevertheless, the recipient orients to it as such by uttering an acknowledgment token (line 5). In fragment (2), the utterance in line 6 is not grammatically fitted to the TCU in lines 3-5. However, the recipient orients to it as a completion, or at least as a partial completion, and incorporates it into his utterance in line 8. In fragment (3) the arrowed turn is grammatically tied to the prior TCU-in-progress. Yet it does not grammatically complete the TCU-in-progress.

A quick glance at these data fragments reveals that although the completing utterances produced by L2 speakers carry some L2 grammar features and may fall short on the criteria of syntactic fitness and/or grammatical completion in relation to the TCUs-in-progress, propositionally they can be understood as tied to or completing the TCUs-in-progress and they are oriented to by the recipients as such. Therefore, the grammatical criteria may have to be relaxed when considering data from novice L2 speakers.

Lerner (1996; see also 1999 with Tagaki) also distinguished among three major sequential environments where participants can contribute a completing utterance: word searches, collaborative completion, and grammatical increments. When constructing a TCU, a speaker can encounter some difficulty in finding the element that is due next, as evidenced by some speech perturbations. This creates an opportunity space for a recipient, who can come in to provide the searched-for item. Lerner called this a word search.

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2 Detailed analysis of fragments (2) and (3) will be presented in later sections and analytical arguments will be offered to support this claim.
When a TCU is still in progress, a speaker can enter to offer a completing utterance that brings the TCU-in-progress to completion. This is called collaborative completion. When a TCU has already been brought to completion, a speaker can add an additional syntactic unit to the just-completed TCU. This is called a grammatical increment.

In distinguishing collaborative completion from word searches, Lerner (1996) pointed out that while a word search can be an occasion for collaborative completion, as in cases where the item searched for is the terminal item of a TCU, it often involves only the production of the item searched for and the participant who proposes the candidate solution does not go on to produce the remainder of the TCU for the prior speaker.

Consider a data fragment from Lerner:

(4) [Data from Lerner, 1996, p.261]
L:  he said, the thing thet- thet- sad about the uhm black uhm (0.3)
P:  muslims,
L:  muslims, he said is thet they don't realize ...

Here the speech perturbations show that L is searching for a word. Following a pause of 0.3 second, P proposes a candidate solution, which is accepted by L. L then continues with the halted TCU.

In my L2 data, however, such distinctions are not always easy to maintain. Here is an example:

(5) Strike [PAHT 2411-2423]
1  Abr:  u::::h (0.2) like a group of person .hhh go to
2  the:::: (1.1)((on "the" Abril shifts gaze from Leakena and
3    looks upward))
4  Rai:  →  the government place [/strein/ and then suggest ]=
5  Abr:  [to government place suggest]<
6  Rai:  →  =no [mo::re .hh [sexual harassment] [or no] like=
7  Lea:   [o::h you wh- you mean uh ]((Leakena lowers head))
8  Abr:  [ye::::s:::::*: ] [like ]=
9  Rai:  →  ={(0.4)} freedom.
10 Abr:  ={[like ] (0.6) [yes ]}
In line 2 the sound stretch and the pause indicate that the participant has trouble in forwarding the talk and a word search is in progress. In line 4 another participant makes an entry and provides not just the item searched for but adds much more information to bring the TCU to completion (lines 4, 6, 9). This example shows that the boundary between collaborative completion and a word search may be quite blurred. Examples like this abound in my data.

As for the third sequential environment, namely, adding a grammatical increment to a just-completed TCU, it distinguishes itself from the first two sequential environments in its implications for speaker transitions. While in collaborative completion and word searches speaker transitions occur not at the possible completion point of a TCU, but somewhere within the TCU, in the case of grammatical increments speaker transitions occur after the TCU is brought to completion. Here is an example of a grammatical increment:

(6) I don’t forget where I came from [CDM 1608-1628]

1 Van: look listen I don’t forget where I came from .hhh
2 the point is that I left (0.6) from my country
3 when I was like (0.2) ten (0.3) or whatever .h so
4 I don’t like really .h when I >when I was in my
5 country I didn’t really care about what was going
6 on,< because I was young, I don’t like (0.4) >all I
7 do is just like go to school and come back eat .(<
8 and (.)(that’s what I] do. but m- (0.5) well=
9 Mar: [tch hhhhh ]
10 Van: may[be my parents- ]
11 Mar:⇒ [and play games.]
12 Van: yeah.

The grammatical increment in the arrowed turn is an addendum to the utterance in lines 6-7 – all I do is just like go to school and come back eat. It is a delayed increment in that the first speaker has brought the TCU, to which the increment is syntactically tied to, to completion and moves onto produce some new TCUs. Despite the interruptive nature
of the increment, however, the first speaker produces an acknowledgement token *yeah* (line 12), thus acknowledging the second speaker’s contribution.

The distinction in speaker transitions that occur *within* or *after* a TCU is important as it has different social-sequential implications. Despite their different implications for speaker transitions, however, the three different kinds of collaborative utterances share one major similarity, that is, they each do not constitute a TCU, but rather are part of a TCU, and their sequential and social import has to be understood in relation to the TCU of which they are a part.

In this study, I will consider all the three sequential environments in which collaborative completion happens to accommodate L2 data. I define collaborative completion in L2 interaction as a practice in which two participants – referred to as the first speaker and the second speaker – jointly construct a TCU. The first speaker initiates a TCU, and while the TCU is still in progress, halted due to some perturbations, or just brought to completion, the second speaker offers a completing utterance that is grammatically or propositionally tied to the in-progress, halted, or just-completed TCU to bring the TCU to completion, or to grammatically extend the completed TCU. A completing utterance is not an independent grammatical unit and does not constitute a TCU in and of itself. It has to be understood as grammatically or propositionally tied to a TCU-in-progress, a halted TCU, or a just completed TCU.

With this definition of L2 collaborative completion in mind, we now turn to examine the various interactional functions that it serves in L2 talk.

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3 I follow Hayashi (2003a) in making this distinction.

4 In the case of adding a grammatical increment, even though the first speaker has brought the TCU to completion, by adding an increment, thus extending the just-completed TCU, the second speaker retrospectively orients to the just-completed TCU as incomplete. In this sense, we can say that they jointly construct a TCU.
4.3 Facilitating the progressivity of talk

4.3.1 Introduction

In this section, I examine how, when the progress of a TCU by the first speaker is halted due to some perturbations, the second speaker takes it as an opportunity space for turn entry to offer a collaborative completion that brings the TCU to completion, thus facilitating the progressivity of talk. I compare this function of collaborative completion with word searches and discuss their similarities and differences. I also discuss the implications of this turn-taking and grammatical practice in relation to two preference principles: the preference of self-repair over other-repair (Schegloff et al., 1977) and the principle of an entitlement to one complete TCU by a speaker (Sacks et al., 1974).

4.3.2 Analysis

Fragment (7) comes from a larger discussion based on a reading about prostitution and human trafficking in Cambodia. It is reported in the article that some parents are wheedled to sell their young daughters into prostitution. One of the discussion questions asks the participants to share their ideas about what measures the government should take to help the parents and to stop human trafficking. The fragment represents part of the response to the question. We join the discussion as Leakena, the discussion leader, reads out the question from the handout.

(7) To help them find a job [PAHF 1510-1620]

1) Lea: 
2) (reads) and what can the government do to help
3) the parents .hhhhhh and to stop human trafficking.
4) (1.3)
5) Abr: 
6) (reads) the government should (0.3) give the parents
7) an incentive °°incentive°°
8) Rai: or (0.8) it (   ) like (0.4) fi:nd the program or
9) community to promote the::: : it’s like (0.4)
10) consequences .hhhhhh abou::: :t s::: : the::: ::
11) khh.hhhhhhhhh prostitution↑ (0.7) what’s going on
12) like (1.0) find a- like people want to talk to the
13) parents .hhha::: :nd like (0.2) teach them:
Lea: uh huh
Rai: more (0.3) education about the- those stuff.
Abr: yes. (0.6) and also m (. ) m yeah the: government can (0.7) like help (0.4) them (0.9) and (0.2) or something.
Abr: and (1.0) like (1.9) yeah with (1.6) like money or something.
(2.0) (Abril gazes at Leakena during the 2-sec pause, Leakena also gazes at Abril but offers no verbal or nonverbal uptake)
Abr: an::::::d (1.5) to::::: (2.6) u::hm (0.3)
(on “and” Abril puts on a thinking face; on “to” she moves left hand in repeated beats; at the onset of the 2.6-second silence, she lowers her head)
Rai: or to help them find a job ((on “help” Abril raises head to meet Rainsey’s gaze))
(0.4)
Rai: like
Abr: yea::::::h (1.2) that way: (. ) u::hm (0.8) they: don::::::::t have to do (0.5) [to sell their daughters.]
Rai: [like a problem ]
Abr: with the money (itself).
Rai: yeah.

In lines 4-5, Abril self-selects and reads the answer to the question from her handout. She points out that the parents should be given incentive (line 5) but does not expound on what she means by that. Rainsey follows up with her answer (lines 6-11) and prefaxes it with the connective or (line 6), thereby presenting her answer as an alternative to, and different from, Abril’s. She emphasizes the importance of promoting the parents’ awareness of the consequences of prostitution through community efforts and educational programs. To Rainsey’s response, Abril gives an agreement token yes and goes on to add that the government should help the parents by giving them money (lines 16-19), which is probably an explication of what she means by giving the parents incentive, an answer that she read directly from the handout a few moments earlier. Note how the response is full of perturbations. It betokens that an intense word search activity is involved for Abril to produce the response.

Upon the completion of the delivery of her answer, Abril shifts her gaze to Leakena, the discussion leader, and a response from Leakena is invited. However, despite the fact
that mutual gaze is established, Leakena does not offer any verbal or nonverbal uptake, and a 2.0-second silence elapses. Abril orients to the lack of uptake from Leakena by adding an increment in line 22 in pursuit of a response (Ford et al., 2002). She starts the increment with a prolonged and. On the production of and, Abril puts on a “thinking face” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986). A pause of 1.5 seconds follows before she proceeds to produce to with a sound stretch. As she produces to, she moves her hands in repeated beats, as if outwardly representing her “thinking effort” in search for the next element due. However, no result is yielded and a long pause of 2.6 seconds ensues, at the onset of which Abril starts to withdraw her gaze and lower her head. She breaks the 2.6-second silence with a vocalization uhm but is unable to produce the next bit of talk and another silence follows. Her gaze remains withdrawn at this point. The vocal and visual conduct of Abril indicates that despite an intense solitary search activity, she is unable to carry the increment forward to a point of completion. Just at this point, Rainsey enters and offers a collaborative completion – or to help them find a job (line 26). On the production of help Abril raises her head to meet Rainsey’s gaze. On the completion of Rainsey’s completing utterance, there is a lack of immediate uptake from Abril, and Rainsey continues her talk following a 0.4-second pause. Upon Rainsey’s uttering of like (line 29), Abril interrupts by producing a prolonged acknowledgement token and moves on to provide an upshot of the talk – that with the kind of help proposed by Rainsey, the parents will not be cajoled to sell their daughters (lines 30-31).

In a strict sense, Rainsey’s completing utterance does not grammatically fit to Abril’s increment-in-progress, which is and-prefaced – and to (line 22). Rainsey’s completing utterance, on the other hand, is or-prefaced. By using the connective or rather
than and, Rainsey presents helping parents find jobs as an alternative suggestion to the suggestion of simply giving them money, as proposed by Abril in the prior utterance. Designed in this way, Rainsey’s completing utterance achieves two social actions. One, it completes Abril’s halted increment-in-progress and offers Abril a way out of the interactional deadlock. Notice that following the completing utterance, Abril produces a delayed acknowledgment token and moves ahead with the talk. Two, it trades on the interactional occasion to present her view on the issue, one that is different from Abril’s. Recall that earlier in the episode Rainsey also used an or-prefaced response (lines 6-11, 14) to accentuate the alternativeness of her proposal. This indicates that the or-prefaced completing utterance, despite the fact that it does not grammatically fit to the increment-in-progress in a strict sense, is motivated by interactional considerations.

In this instance, the visual and verbal conduct of Abril exhibits the signature characteristics of a word search. Yet, it seems clear that what she is searching for is not just a particular word. In fact, her halted increment and to provides few clues as to what word she is searching for. Recall that Abril initiates her and-prefaced increment because her earlier answer to the question does not receive an uptake from the discussion leader, Leakena. The and-prefaced increment is introduced to add some further idea to her earlier oriented-to-as-inadequate answer to elicit a response. Rainsey’s completing utterance – or to help them find a job – offers just such an idea. To be able to make such a collaborative completion, Rainsey must monitor the unfolding interaction closely and make a situated judgment of what has halted the progress of Abril’s talk.

Fragment (8) is drawn from the same larger discussion as fragment (7). Prior to the fragment, Leakena and Rainsey engaged in a collaborative telling about how the
information presented in the reading – that forced prostitution and human trafficking is rampant in Cambodia – is already outdated as it describes a situation that was true about one or two decades ago. The recipient of their telling is Abril. We join the interaction as Leakena is trying to explicate an effort undertaken by the Cambodian government to eradicate illegal establishments such as Karaoke bars and brothels where most of the enslaved prostitutes were housed.

(8) Those kind of place [PAHF 2557-2631]

Many perturbations and hedges can be found in lines 1-3 as Leakena attempts to recall the exact year of the narrated event. She finally settles on the year of 2003 and hedges it with I guess (line 3). With the time of the event having been established, Leakena moves on to name the place – Tuol Kok (line 4), a red light district in the capital city of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. The pronoun it in line 4 refers anaphorically to Tuol Kok and is produced as the subject of a new TCU-in-progress. What is produced following the subject it is a compound verb used to have, indicating a past ownership or existence. However, Leakena cuts herself off before she pronounces in full the final consonant /v/ in the verb have (line 4) and conducts a self-correction that changes it used
to hav- into it still having it (lines 4-5). Following a brief inbreath, she conducts yet another self-correction, changing it still having it into it still have (line 5).

Leave aside the grammatical accuracy of the verb forms. It is clear from her self-correction attempts that Leakena is searching for the right tense for the verb have. Yet, despite three candidate tenses – simple past, present/past progressive and simple present, proposed one after another by Leakena herself, none seems to be a satisfactory solution. Following a 1.2-second silence, Leakena utters I mean hhhh (lines 5-6), foreshadowing that another self-correction or search for solution is underway. Accompanying the self-correction attempts is a series of intricate bodily conduct – Leakena rolls up her eyes and stares up at the ceiling momentarily before she lowers her head and covers her face with her right hand while smiling (lines 6-8). These embodied actions indicate that she is in the middle of a word search but gets mired in something of a deadlock. Just at this juncture, Rainsey comes in and furnishes the verb have with an object those kind of place – referring to illegal establishments such as Karaoke bars and brothels, that syntactically completes the troubled TCU-in-progress.

Note here what Leakena is having trouble with, and is searching for, is the correct verb tense for the word have. Rainsey does not come in with a candidate solution for the verb tense. Instead she offers a completing utterance and brings Leakena’s halted TCU to completion. Rainsey’s completing utterance achieves three important interactional actions. One, it sequentially deletes Leakena’s repeated, but futile, attempts in self-correction. Two, it moves the telling forward, thus prioritizing the progressivity of narration over grammatical accuracy. Three, by virtue of what it does in one and two, it offers a way to get Leakena out of an interactional deadlock. Indeed, following Rainsey’s
completing utterance, Leakena utters an appreciative acknowledgement token *yeah* in a smiley voice while shifting her gaze to Rainsey, nodding (line 10). She abandons the self-correction attempts and continues with the telling. It is through later telling, specifically through her deployment of a contrastive connective *but* (line 11) and the time adverbial *right now* (line 11) that the time reference which caused so much trouble a moment earlier is finally resolved, for Leakena as well as for other participants.

In this instance, Leakena not only displays verbal and bodily conduct that is characteristic of a word search, but demonstrates what she is searching for through repeated self-correction attempts. Yet, rather than providing the searched-for item, Rainsey privileges the progressivity of talk by offering the next element due through her completing utterance, which reflects her situated judgment of what it takes to complete the halted, troubled TCU.

The next fragment presents an instance of a completing utterance occurring within an extended word search sequence. The completing utterance turns out to be a crucial resource in resolving the search. The fragment is drawn from a larger discussion based on the same reading as in fragments (7) and (8). Prior to the fragment, Rainsey and Leakena gave their opinions on the issue of forced prostitution and women’s position in society and suggested ways to change the situations. We join the interaction as Leakena elicits Abril’s opinion on the issue (line 1).

(9) Strike [PAHT 2326-2437]

1 Lea: what about you. do you-what do you think.
2   (1.1)
3 Abr: ((clears throat)) ((clicks tongue)) I think u:::h like
4 (1.0) we can:::::: (1.1) like to like u:::hm (1.7)
5 li::ke (1.0) when you:::::: (2.0) uh ((indistinctive,
6 quiet talk)}(2.7) e::n when you (0.9) talk to the
7 government, like not talk like (0.3) like *huelga*
8 (0.7) °heh heh° ((following the production of *huelga*, Abril
9 laughs quietly, gazes at Leakena, and leans backward))
Abril initiates her response with an epistemic marker *I think* (Kärkkänen, 2003) to mark what follows as her personal perspective. She then produces the next element of talk (*we can*, line 4); but after some perturbations, she abandons *we can*, and restarts her TCU with *when you* (line 5). What follows is an extended word search activity, as indicated by the sound stretches, the long pauses, and the inaudible self-talk. In lines 6-7, Abril recycles the TCU beginning *when you*, pauses for 0.9 second, and finally comes up with the next element of talk – *talk to the government*. However, she quickly rejects the word *talk* as appropriate for her purposes, and switches into Spanish to produce an alternative *huelga*. Perhaps realizing that Leakena and Rainsey do not speak Spanish and will not recognize the Spanish word, following the production of *huelga*, Abril laughs.
quietly and leans backward (lines 8-9). Indeed, after a short pause, both Leakena and Rainsey initiate repair (lines 11-13). Instead of repeating the Spanish word, which would display an orientation to the repair initiation as betokening trouble in hearing, Abril embarks on what seems to be an attempt to explain the meaning of the Spanish word (line 14). This demonstrates her orientation to the other two participants as non-Spanish speakers and their trouble as one of understanding.

However, what Abril produces in line 14 – the inbreath, the preface well, and the prolonged vocalization, except for its indication that a repair attempt may be underway, does not result in any semantically substantial content that may assist the recipients in the understanding of the trouble source. In response, Leakena proffers a candidate understanding, produced in a rising intonation (line 15). That Leakena is able to come up with the word conversation (line 15) as a candidate understanding is not random. If we look back at Abril’s self-repair initiation in line 7, we will find that she uses a format that approximates it’s not X, but Y. As Kurhila (2006) demonstrated in her study that involved L2 Finnish speakers, it’s not X is one of the most frequent formats adopted by L2 speakers in word searches. The format enables a speaker in a word search to mention and negate X, a reference that is semantically related or close to the target reference that is being searched for. The use of this format can significantly narrow the range of search for other participants.

What is different in our case here is that Abril not only used the it’s not X, but comes up with the solution herself – except that the solution is a Spanish word unrecognizable to Leakena and Rainsey. Therefore, when Leakena proposes conversation, a word that is semantically close to talk, as a candidate understanding for
huelga, she capitalizes on the resource provided by the self-repair format thatAbril deploys.

To Leakena’s candidate understanding, Abril gives an emphatic no (line 16). She then proceeds to try to define the word huelga – .hhhhhh like you know .hhh when::: a group of persons, uh like (0.6) do like (0.8) (lines 16-17, 20). She does quite a bit of searching before coming up with a “generic” word do. It is generic in the sense that, except for filling the predicate slot indicating an action, it does not provide any information as to what specific action these groups of people actually perform. However, with this additional resource, and in combination with the resource provided through the it’s not X, but Y format that Abril deployed earlier, an inference can be made: huelga means when a group of persons talk to the government, not talk, but Y. It is probable that this is the kind of inference that Rainsey relies on when she offers a candidate understanding /strein/ (line 21), which will turn out later to be a mispronunciation of strike, the English translation for huelga, and the word that is being sought.

Perhaps due to its mispronunciation, the word is not recognizable to Abril and does not receive a rejection or confirmation from her. In line 25-26, Abril repeats part of her TCU in lines 16-17, 20, and replaces the generic verb do with go – u:::h (0.2) like a group of person .hhh go to the::: (1.1). With the replacement, the action is now specified. What projectably follows will be the name of a place that these people go to. Again, Abril has trouble in assembling the next bit of talk. There is a sound stretch on the article the, and a gap of 1.1 seconds ensues (line 26). Abril’s gaze is on Leakena, but on the production of the article the (line 26) with a sound stretch, Abril withdraws her gaze and looks upward, indicating a solitary search in progress. At this juncture, Rainsey comes in
with a completing utterance – the government place /strei/ and then suggest no mo::re .hh sexual harassment or no like (0.4). freedom (lines 28,30,33), which brings Abril’s TCU-in-progress to completion. Rainsey’s completing utterance not only provides the name of a location – the government place, which is projectable to follow go to the:::: (1.1) (lines 25-26) in Abril’s TCU-in-progress, but also further specifies their purpose of going there through vivid examples – /strei/ and then suggest no mo::re .hh sexual harassment or no like (0.4). freedom. Abril immediately accepts Rainsey’s completing utterance by repeating after her, and she does so by speeding up her pace of delivery – to government place suggest (line 29). Note that Abril does not include /strei/ in her repetition. This is further evidence that she does not recognize /strei/, let alone /strei/ as a mispronunciation of strike.

Rainsey’s completing utterance is a pivotal resource that breaks the ice in the interactional deadlock and generates a lot of overlapped talk. As Rainsey produces sexual harassment (line 30) as an example, Abril responds in overlap with a prosodically-emphasized yes (line 32). She adds a sound stretch to both the vowel /e/ and the consonant /s/ to tailor its duration to that of sexual harassment, and after Rainsey gives freedom (line 33) as another example and brings the TCU-in-progress to completion, Abril offers another emphatic yes (line 34). Rainsey’s completing utterance also touches off recognition in Leakena, who, in overlap with Rainsey and Abril, utters a change-of-state token oh (line 31) (Heritage, 1984a). The searched-for word, however, is not immediately forthcoming. After the change-of-state token, Leakena goes on to say you wh- you mean uh and in the meantime withdraws her gaze and lowers her head in a search (line 31). And just at the completion point of Rainsey’s completing utterance, she
comes up with the word that has been collaboratively, painstakingly sought by the group – *strike* (line 35), which is immediately confirmed by both Rainsey and Leakena (lines 36-37).

Compare the confirmation by Rainsey and Abril. While Abril’s confirmation follows the canonical format of yeah + a repetition of what is to be confirmed (line 37), Rainsey’s confirmation takes the form of an assertion: *it’s strike* (line 36), which claims her epistemic independence, that is, her recognition and knowledge of the word is independent of Leakena’s solution for the word search and regardless of the fact that she mispronounced the word earlier.

With the reference problem having been solved, and after some initial perturbations, Abril resumes the TCU in lines 3-4, which was halted for the word search. Although she does not repeat *I think*, she does recycle *we can* and uses it as the beginning of her TCU – *we can do that* (lines 39-40), with *do that* referring to *go on a strike*. She then goes on to add another TCU to complete her response to the answer. It is a short response compared to the repair/word search sequence, which spans 34 transcription lines, from line 5 to line 38.

This instance shows how a collaborative completion plays a crucial role in a word search process. For Abril, her trouble seems to be one of memory, namely, she cannot recall the English word for *strike*; for Rainsey, while she can recognize what Abril means by relying on the sequential context, she mispronounces the word. It is not until Rainsey offers a completing utterance to complete Abril’s TCU-in-progress, thus giving a clear illustration for the Spanish word *huelga*, that Leakena is able to come up with a correct candidate solution.
Like in the above two instances, one participant (Abril) in this instance shows visually and verbally signs of troubles in forwarding the talk. Another participant (Rainsey) deploys all the verbal and nonverbal resources that are made available by the other participants in the sequential contexts and orients to the search as one for a definition rather than just for a location phrase. It is the definition of Huelga, offered through the form of a collaborative completion, which touches off recognition in Leakena, who proffers a candidate solution that is subsequently accepted by all. Following the word search resolution, Abril resumes her response to the question. The completing utterance, therefore, facilitates the progressivity of talk by providing a crucial resource.

### 4.3.3 Discussion

A few important observations can be made about the above three instances. First, the completing utterance is offered at a point where there is a halt in the progress of a TCU and the first speaker exhibits both verbal and visual signs of great difficulty in furthering the talk. Second, the second speaker enters the turn space “uninvited,” that is, when a mid-turn entry is made by the second speaker to offer a completing utterance, the first speaker’s gaze and body orientation indicate that a solitary search is still in progress. Third, despite the “uninvited” nature of the completing utterance, it is accepted by the first speaker either immediately or belatedly and the progress of talk is forwarded thereafter.

The above observations raise important questions about two preference principles: one, the preference for self-repair over other-repair (Schegloff et al., 1977); two, the principle of an entitlement to a complete TCU by a speaker (Sacks et al., 1974). As my analysis has shown, the first speaker initiated repair, but while she was in the midst of a
search for a repair solution, a collaborative completion was offered as a kind of uninvited other-repair. Rather than resisting or rejecting the other-repair offered by the second speaker, the first speaker accepted the repair solution with an acknowledgement token and moved forward with the talk. This indicates that in a pedagogical setting and with novice L2 speakers, the preference principle of self-repair over other-repair may need to be relaxed or even reversed (cf. Kurhila, 2001; Hosoda, 2000 for a preference for self-repair in L2 interaction; see Schegloff et al., 1977, p. 381 for comments on other-repair as a device frequently adopted for socializing “not-yet-competent” speakers; see also Norrick, 1991)

The collaborative completions that we examined also have implications for the principle of an entitlement by a speaker to one complete TCU in talk. To put it in another way, this principle states that a selected speaker has the right and obligation to complete a TCU, and speaker transfer occurs when the TCU is brought to a point of possible completion. With L1 English data, Lerner (1987, 1991) has demonstrated that this principle needs to be relaxed, because speaker transitions can and do occur mid-TCU and two speakers can jointly construct one TCU through the practice of collaborative completion. The analysis of L2 data in this section adds to Lerner’s finding that the preference for TCU progressivity may be prioritized over a speaker’s right and obligation to a complete TCU. In other words, when a speaker has trouble in bringing a TCU to completion, a preference for progressivity overrides a speaker’s entitlement to complete the TCU on her own.

Stivers and Robinson (2006) investigated sequential environments in which speakers respond to requests for information in multiparty talk. They pointed out that a
selected speaker has the right and obligation to speak next and to provide relevant
information. It follows that two preference principles are in operation in such sequential
environments: the principle for the selected speaker, not others, to speak next and the
principle for that selected speaker to provide a relevant response to the request. When the
selected speaker speaks next and provides the relevant information, both principles are
satisfied and the talk proceeds without hitches. However, when the selected speaker does
not or cannot provide the relevant information beyond the transition-relevant place, the
two principles are in conflict and a decision needs to be made about which principle
should be prioritized. In such circumstances, it is the principle of responding to the
request in the interest of furthering the talk that is prioritized. That is to say, a non-
selected speaker can take over the right to turn and supply a response for the sake of
progressivity when a selected speaker fails to do so. In line with Stivers and Robinson’s
finding, my finding suggests that the progressivity of talk is not only to be prioritized at
transition-relevance place between turns, but also within a speaker’s turn space.

The kind of collaborative completion that we examined in this section, qua the
sequential environments in which it occurs and the functions it serves, exhibits the
characteristics of two different interactional practices. In terms of the visual and verbal
conduct of the first speaker, it is akin to the typical behaviors of a speaker who is engaged
in a word search, as described in Goodwin and Goodwin (1986). Yet what is being
searched for is not a particular word or reference, but an idea (fragment 7), a correct verb
tense (fragment 8), or a definition (fragment 9). The second speaker monitors the talk-so-
far closely, orients to the verbal and visual conduct of the first speaker, makes a situated
judgment of what is being searched for and supplies a candidate solution accordingly that
brings the halted TCU to completion. In terms of its grammatical relation to the halted TCU, it is similar to the practice of collaborative completion as described by Lerner (1987, 1989, 1991, 1996).

The kind of collaborative completions described in this section, therefore, is a hybrid interactional practice that combines the characteristics of a word search and collaborative completion. In terms of action orientation, it is an uninvited but welcomed other-repair that prioritizes the progressivity of talk.

A completing utterance, however, is not always designed in such a way as to fit a halted TCU both grammatically and propositionally and is accepted by the first speaker wholeheartedly. A completing utterance can contain some inapposite elements in its design. Due to this as well as the first speaker’s subsequent response to it, the progress of talk can be hampered. In the next section, I examine the sequential environments in which such collaborative completions occur and the first speakers’ subsequent responses to them.

4.4 Hampering the progressivity of talk

4.4.1 Introduction

Talk-in-interaction is possible because there is much give and take going on between or among participants. What coordinates the give and take in talk-in-interaction is an intricate set of rules that normatively describes how turns at talk are allocated and how transition of speakership occurs (Sacks et al., 1974). Sacks et al. (1974) pointed out that a speaker is entitled to only one TCU and speaker transfer occurs at the possible completion place of the TCU. It follows that to take a turn at talk any incipient speaker should be able to project the possible completion place of a TCU before its actualization.
The temporal unfolding and the projectability of talk are two elements that make it possible for a speaker to project a transition relevance place. Temporal unfolding or progressivity of talk means that talk, once started, moves forward word by word, phrase by phrase, and utterance by utterance in a directional fashion toward a possible point of completion (Hayashi, 2003a, pp.9-11). Projectability of talk allows participants to anticipate what is to follow in talk by analyzing what has already happened in it—for example, by analyzing a pause, a word selection, an intonation, a cut-off, some grammatical components, some sequences of talk, some bodily conduct, etc., participants recognize the actions achieved through these verbal, nonverbal and visual conduct and make prediction and inference about some forthcoming elements, components and actions in talk. The no-gap, no-overlap speaker transfer or speaker transfer with minimal gap or overlap indicates that speakers can project the possible completion of a TCU before it is being actualized. The projectability of talk, therefore, provides an important resource for speaker transition as well as for action recognition and production. However, projection does not provide mechanical prediction. Contingency is an equally important feature of talk (see Ford, 2004, Chapter 2 in 2008 for a discussion on the relationship between the two concepts; see also Lee, 2007; Schegloff, 1996b). For example, while a question projects an answer as a next relevant action, it does not prescribe a specific form or format that the answer has to assume. How the answer is composed can contain elements of contingency.

Projection and contingency figure prominently in the practice of collaborative completion. To enter the first speaker’s turn space, the second speaker has to rely on projection to decide the when and the what. The when concerns at what point in talk it is
an appropriate opportunity to enter another’s turn space whereas the *what* is about in what form the contribution is going to take. The execution of these two elements requires that the second speaker recognize what has been said, how it has been said, and what action is accomplished so far in the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress and anticipate what is to be said and what action is to be accomplished.

However, given the contingency of talk, the trajectory of talk projected and produced by the second speaker may not always be in line with what is projected or actualized by the first speaker. When this discrepancy happens, it becomes relevant for the first speaker to accept, reject, or disregard the discrepancy. In this section, I examine how through collaborative completion, discrepancy in projection is manifested between the first speaker and the second speaker and how the first speaker accommodates to the second speaker in changing the grammatical structures of her emerging utterances through self-repair, and in conducting a self-repair, the progressivity of talk is hindered.

4.4.2 Analysis

In fragment (10) Rainsey, Abril, and Leakena are discussing whether the university administration should get involved in students’ sleeping habits as a response to the problem of sleep deprivation prevalent among college students.

(10) TV, video game, and Facebook [SACS 2324-2453]

1  Rai:  it’s hard to tell people to go to sleep and like
2  you’re already [adult].h [you are already in college]=
3  Abr:                  [((nods))  ((nods lightly))]   
4  Rai:  =[like    ](0.9)=
5  Lea:  [uh huh]
6  Abr:  [you know::,    ]
7  Rai:  =[you won’t a kid anymore. it’s like (.). you have to
8        decide what is good for you what [is not       ]so:::
9  Abr:                  [m hm ((nods))]   
10  Rai:    (1.7)
11  Lea:  e:::h ( )-
12  Lea:  I think that should (.). like (1.5) should (1.8) like em
13  high school students (0.8) should have a lesson on that
Rainsey speaks first. Her point of view is that the campaign is not practical and may even be inappropriate not only because *it’s hard to tell people to go to sleep* (line 1) but also because college students are adults who should be responsible for their own behavior (lines 2, 4, 7, 8). Head nods and continuers (Schegloff 1982) are offered by Abril (lines 3, 9) and Leakena (line 5) at various points during Rainsey’s talk that show their understanding that a multi-unit turn is in progress. In line 6, following a halt in Rainsey’s TCU-in-progress, Abril comes in to offer what is hearable as a completing-utterance-in-progress, but in overlap with Abril, Rainsey resumes her talk. Abril drops out of the overlap and lets Rainsey continue. Rainsey then brings her multi-unit turn to completion in line 8 with an elongated *so* that indicates the unstated upshot of her prior talk and invites recipient response (see Raymond, 2004, pp.186-189 for an illustration of this function of *so*). However, neither Abril nor Leakena responds and a 1.7-second gap elapses (line 10). Rainsey then self-selects and continues, but not far into her turn she is interrupted by Leakena (lines 11-12) who launches a multi-unit turn to present her opinion. Leakena shifts the focus of the discussion from college students to high school students and argues that high school students should *have a lesson on that* (line 13).
My analytic focus is on the completing utterances by Rainsey in line 19 and by Abril in line 20 as well as Leakena’s subsequent response to the completing utterances. I will first look at what leads up to Rainsey’s completing utterance. To explain what she means by *have a lesson on that* (line 13), Leakena gives young age as a reason and their being prone to TV addiction as another (lines 14, 16-17). These two reasons are introduced by *cause*, the phonologically reduced form of the connective *because*, and realized through the use of the same grammatical structure: *subject + be predicate*, a structure that is used to describe the characteristics or attributes of the subject. In addition, both utterances end in an upward intonation. These productional features seem to project that a reasons-in-a-series format is in progress, and it is likely that Leakena is on her way to add a third to that series before she continues to produce the *effect*-component of the compound TCU. Alternatively, the two reasons may constitute the *cause*-component of a compound TCU, and what is projectably to follow is the *effect*-component. However, upon the production of *television* (line 17), Rainsey chimes in with a completing utterance (line 19), which pushes the TCU-in-progress into a different grammatical trajectory. A couple of factors may have contributed to the creation of a sequential environment that invites a completing utterance from Rainsey. First, the word *television* is produced with a very long sound stretch, indicating that Leakena may be in search for the bit of talk that is due next. Second, Leakena shifts her gaze to Rainsey on the production of *television*. The aforementioned vocal and visual conduct converges to create a sequential environment that invites a conditional turn entry by Rainsey.

Rainsey’s completing utterance, *or video game* (line 19), displays her understanding that a list construction (Jefferson, 1991) is underway, and that *television*
is the first item on the list that enumerates things that high school students can easily get addicted to, and to which she can add another item through a collaborative completion. As she produces the second item to the list, Rainsey shifts her gaze to Abril (line 19). The gaze shift in turn invites Abril to join in. Indeed, following Rainsey’s second item to the list, Abril adds a third – *Facebook* (line 20), and upon the delivery of this item, Abril thrusts her upper body backward, puts on a mild smile, while gazing at Leakena, as if to visually mark the mention of *Facebook* as a noteworthy “discovery” that merits a response from Leakena. Leakena, however, does not respond to Rainsey’s or Abril’s contribution.

Note that as Rainsey shifts her gaze to Abril in line 19, Leakena also follows Rainsey by turning her head to shift her gaze to Abril, and following Rainsey’s second item to the list (line 19), Leakena launches an *and*-prefaced unit (line 21), which results in an overlap with Abril’s proposed item (line 20). The overlap prompts Leakena to abandon her unit-in-progress. The *and*-prefaced unit, though not materialized to a point of completion due to abandonment, nevertheless suggests that Leakena is moving ahead without explicitly acknowledging Rainsey’s contribution.

A silence of 0.7 second ensues (line 22) after Leakena drops out of the overlap and abandons her *and*-prefaced unit, during which Leakena lifts her head and rolls her eyes up to look toward the ceiling with her lips parted as if ready to speak (line 23). She then recycles the previously abandoned *and*, produces it with a very long sound stretch, and follows it up first with a *yeah*, and then with *internet* (line 24) – another item to the list. After that she moves on to produce yet another elongated *and*, pauses for 0.8 second (line 24), and follows it up with *tee vee* (line 25) – a further item to the list, albeit one that has
been produced earlier by herself. She then brings the TCU to completion by adding a “generalized list completer” (Jefferson, 1991) – or something like that.

The verbal and visual conduct of Leakena (line 23) following Abril’s contribution of the third item to the list (line 20), as elaborated above, demonstrates that, similar to what she did to Rainsey’s contribution earlier, Leakena does not explicitly acknowledge Abril’s contribution. Instead she moves on to produce her own next bit of talk – here the addition of her own items to the list. Although not explicitly acknowledging Rainsey and Abril’s contributions, Leakena does accommodate to the grammatical trajectory change initiated by both of them by contributing relevant items to the list and brings the TCU-in-progress to completion.

By claiming that Rainsey and Abril initiate change to the grammatical trajectory through their contribution utterances, I am taking the analytic stance that Leakena is not on her way to construct a list when she produces television. If this stance cannot be sufficiently warranted at the moment the word is produced, then with access to what transpires later in the interaction, more evidence emerges to buttress such a stance. First, and as has already been emphasized, Leakena does not explicitly acknowledge Rainsey and Abril’s contributions, even when Abril’s enthusiastic contribution strongly registers the relevance of a response. This seems to suggest that there is some sort of “resistance” on Leakena’s part for the turn entries by Rainsey and Abril. Second, the perturbations in Leakena’s talk, such as the sound stretches and pauses, along with her bodily conduct, as she attempts to come up with her own items to be added to the list, are a clear indication that she does not have those items “pre-planned” in her head, but has to search for them as a reaction to the interactional contingency created by Rainsey and Abril. Of particular
interest is her production of *tee vee* in line 25. It shows that the search is futile and she has to resort to an earlier item that she had produced herself. Third, upon the completion of the list, Leakena does not go on to add a third to the reasons-in-a-series format or produce the effect-component to bring the compound TCU to completion. Instead she initiates a so-prefaced TCU to provide an upshot of the talk, re-accentuating that because of their being young, high school students should learn about the importance of having sufficient sleep (lines 25-27). By initiating a new TCU, Leakena leaves the prior compound TCU-in-progress incomplete. This indicates that, in managing a local grammatical disruption, Leakena is not only diverted from, but seems to be incognizant of, a larger grammatical trajectory that she has set out to build. Finally, it can be argued that, although Rainsey orients to a prolonged sound stretch and Leakena’s gaze shift as the when to enter the turn space, her entry is premature. Jefferson (1991; see also Lerner, 1991) pointed out that a major characteristic of a list construction is its three-partedness – that is, a list usually, but not always, consists of three parts. Upon the production of the second part, a recipient can project that a list is in progress and a third part is underway, and at which point she can enter to offer whatever she projects to be the third part. Here is an example from Lerner (1991, p. 448):

(11) [Adato (simplified)]
A: Well it's a, it's a mideastern yihknow it's - they make it in
   Greece, Turke::y,
B: Armenia

In Rainsey’s case, she enters Leakena’s turn space prematurely before there is any structural indication that a list is underway.

Based on the above evidence, it can be argued that Leakena is not on her way to construct a list when she mentions *television*. Rainsey and Abril’s contributions disrupt
the grammatical trajectory of Leakena’s compound TCU-in-progress and prompt
Leakena to go to great lengths to accommodate to such a change by fitting her ongoing
talk to the newly emerged structure. The accommodation leads to a series of self-repair
initiations that hamper the progress of talk.

If in the previous fragment, the issue is one with the *when*, in the next fragment,
what the first speaker has to manage is the *what* of a completing utterance by the second
speaker. The fragment is taken from a discussion based on an article about how family is
differentially structured among four racial/ethnic minority groups in the United States:
African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans. The
discussion group is composed of three participants: the group leader Martin and two other
members Julio and Perla. Martin initiates the group work by briefly summarizing the
main idea of the reading to the whole group.

**African American fathers [DIF 0257-0334]**

1. Mar: and also uhm (0.2) and the Latino (0.4) families
2. (0.2) . hhhh uh (0.7) they pretty much showed us
3. how uh (0.5) the father like (. the (0.6) the
4. strongest (1.0) person in the house right?
5. ((Julio withdraws gaze from Martin on “strongest”; Martin
6. shifts gaze from Julio to Perla on “person”))
7. (0.6)
8. Per: °°mm°° ((nods slightly))
9. (0.3)
10. Jul: it’s the one who leads the family.
11. Mar: yeah like has (0.2) like the:: the father has a
12. big responsibility (1.1) ((during the 1.1-sec silence
13. Martin and Julio establish eye contact and Julio nods)) like
14. to take care of his family.
15. (1.1) ((Martin’s gaze is on the handout on the desk))
17. (1.4) ((Martin’s gaze remains on the handout))
18. Mar: unlike (0.3) the:: African American,(0.6)
19. Jul: ➔ it’s the woman.
20. Mar: fathers. ((Martin shifts gaze from handout to Julio))
21. (0.6)
22. Mar: uh:::?
23. (0.3)
24. Jul: it’s the woman.
25. (0.5)
In lines 1-4 Martin continues with the summary, pointing out that the father is a dominant figure in Latino families. Following Julio’s gaze withdrawal and moving toward the possible completion point of his turn, Martin shifts his gaze from Julio to Perla and holds it on her as he goes on to produce a single-word tag question right, appended to the end of the turn in pursuit of a confirmation. Martin’s eye gaze selects Perla as the next speaker (Lerner, 2003) and a response to the tag question becomes relevant next. Perla’s non-lexical response mm (line 8) comes after a 0.6-second delay, accompanied by a slight head nod, and is produced in a low volume to the point of inaudibility. It is a less-than-enthusiastic response, indicating a lack of commitment. By contrast, although not a selected speaker, Julio volunteers a sentential response (line 10) that formulates the father as a figure who leads the family (line 10), thus aligning himself with Martin’s summary.

Note in the next bit of talk how Martin designs his turn-in-progress through a series of grammatical increments (Schegloff, 1996d). He first responds to Julio’s formulation with an acknowledgment token yeah (line 11), and, following some false starts, elaborates that the father has a big responsibility (lines 11-12). He then pauses and shifts his gaze to Julio, who looks up to meet his gaze and nods (lines 12-13). With Julio’s recipiency secured (Goodwin, 1981), Martin adds the first grammatical increment, the complement – like to take care of his family (lines 13-14). A 1.1-second pause (line 15) then ensues, during which Martin holds his gaze on the handout in front of him on the desk. Then comes the next increment – pretty much (line 16), used to qualify the claim
that he has just made – that is, it is \textit{pretty much} the case that it is incumbent on a Latino father to attend to the well-being of his family. Another long pause (line 17) follows before the next increment – \textit{unlike} (0.3) \textit{the:: African American} (0.6) \textit{fathers} (lines 18 and 20) – is produced. It should be noted, however, that this increment is not produced continuously without gap. There is a 0.6-second pause following the production of the word \textit{American} (line 18). In addition, a completing utterance by Julio (line 19) intervenes before the final word of the increment \textit{fathers} is delivered (line 20). That is to say, Julio takes \textit{unlike} (0.3) \textit{the:: African American} (0.6) (line 18) as the preliminary component of a compound TCU-in-progress and enters the turn space following the pause to bring the TCU to completion by adding the final component – \textit{it’s the woman} (line 19). With the contribution, a joint utterance is constructed – \textit{unlike} (0.3) \textit{the:: African American}, (0.6) \textit{it’s the woman}. Following Julio’s contribution, however, Martin proceeds to produce the terminal item \textit{fathers} (line 20), thereby yielding a grammatical increment \textit{unlike} (0.3) \textit{the:: African American}, (0.6) \textit{fathers} that is syntactically tied to his prior utterance. That the two participants proceed from the same bit of material but arrive at different final forms raise an important question about projectability, that is, what in the sequential environments and in the turn-so-far that allows Julio to project a turn shape that is different from its actualization by the first speaker. To answer the question, let me present in a “cleaned up” version of how Martin constructs his turn incrementally:

```
the (Latino) father has a big responsibility
(1.1)
like to take care of his family
(1.1)
pretty much
(1.4)
unlike (0.3) the African American (0.6) fathers
```
Note that there is a considerably long pause before the production of each increment. Except for the pause (line 12) before the first increment, during which mutual gaze is established between Martin and Julio and a head nod is produced by Julio, during the other two pauses (lines 15, 17) Martin’s gaze is on the handout in front of him and no non-verbal responses are produced by either Julio or Perla. This demonstrates that the increments are not produced to pursue responses in this case (cf. Ford et al., 2002), but to add additional information to what has been previously stated. The incremental construction of the utterance reflects how Martin uses grammatical resources to organize his emerging turn-at-talk and to display his knowledge of the reading bit by bit.

The grammatical unit – *unlike* (0.3) the:: *African American* (0.6) fathers – is identified as an increment syntactically tied to Martin’s prior utterance because we, as analysts, have the benefit of full access to the whole interactional episode as fait accompli. As such, we can trace forward or backward to examine the trajectory of the utterance – for example, to see how it is assembled word by word and carried through to a point of completion or how it is positioned in relation to the utterance that comes before or after it. For the recipient of the utterance in the interaction, however, he is partially denied such a benefit. While he does have access to what has already been spoken, he cannot foretell for sure what final form the utterance-in-progress will assume. He has to follow the temporal unfolding of the utterance-in-progress closely, attending to all interactional minutia, while using the knowledge of talk-so-far at his disposal to project the shape of the next bit of talk. Such projectability is subject to constant revisions and modifications in order to accommodate interactional contingencies.
With this in mind, we now turn to the question of what prompts Julio to produce the completing utterance at that particular sequential position. Compared with the first increment (*like to take care of his family*, lines 13-14) and the second increment (*pretty much*, line 16), which each show a clear grammatical relation to what precedes them, the third increment (*unlike (0.3) the:: African American, (0.6) fathers*, lines 18, 20) poses a much more difficult parsing problem for its recipient due to its productional features. Note that there is a gap of 0.6 second between *unlike (0.3) the:: African American* and *fathers*. Before the word *fathers* is delivered, it is difficult to establish the unit’s grammatical status as an increment. *Unlike (0.3) the:: African American* is produced in a continuous intonation contour, projecting that more words are forthcoming. The 0.6-second pause may indicate that a word search is underway. That Julio allows a gap to elapse before contributing his utterance shows that he analyzes *unlike (0.3) the:: African American* as an incomplete unit and gives Martin time for the search. It is only after 0.6 second has passed and nothing is forthcoming from Martin that Julio enters Martin’s turn space. But rather than completing the incomplete component – *unlike (0.3) the:: African American, (0.6) by, for example, adding a word such as fathers or families, Julio adds a second component to the incomplete first component. The joint utterance thus yielded – *unlike (0.3) the:: African American, (0.6) it’s the woman* – shows that Julio parses the unit *unlike (0.3) the:: African American* not as being on its way to be an increment, but as a new TCU-in-progress, a prepositional phrase that introduces a racial minority group whose family structure is distinctive from that of Latinos, and to which he adds *it’s the woman* to complete the TCU.
Following Julio’s contribution, Martin goes on to produce the terminal item *fathers* with a falling intonation. With the production of this word, the grammatical status of the unit as an increment is established. Martin does not continue with his talk after the delayed completion, neither does Julio, and a gap of 0.6 second follows. Then Martin initiates repair by using an open-class repair initiator (line 22) (Drew, 1997). Julio orients to Martin’s trouble as one of hearing by repeating his completing utterance (line 24). Receiving no uptake from Martin (line 25), Julio re-analyzes Martin’s trouble as one of understanding by elaborating on his completing utterance (line 26), which elicits an agreement token from Martin (line 28). Martin’s trouble in understanding is due in large part to the different final forms that the same utterance-in-progress assumes, and hence different propositional contents, realized through the respective completion by Julio and himself. While Martin’s focus is still Latino fathers, contrasting them with African American fathers through an increment, Julio turns the utterance-in-progress into a new TCU, introducing into the talk information about African American families that have not been mentioned by Martin in his prior summary – that is, in contrast to Latino families, where the fathers lead the families, women of African American families are the ones who take up the role of breadwinners, a piece of information that is presented in the reading.

In this instance, the first speaker does not change the structure of his emerging utterance to accommodate to the second speaker’s completing utterance, but the completing utterance by the second speaker does cause some understanding problem for the first speaker and a repair sequence is initiated to resolve the understanding problem. In initiating repair, the progress of talk is hindered.
Like fragment (12), fragment (13) presents an instance in which the *what* of a completing utterance is brought to the fore. Unlike fragment (12), however, the completing utterance in fragment (13) hinders the progress of talk at both the structural and propositional levels. The fragment is drawn from a larger discussion organized around the question cited verbatim as follows:

In paragraph 7, the author raises a question “If we eat pigs, sheep, fowl and rabbits, then why not dogs and cats?” What is your answer to the question? Is it easy to distinguish between pets and non-pets, or animals that are for human consumption? Why or why not?

Before the discussion, all the participants had read an article from the opinion section of a newspaper that raised important questions about the cultural practice of cat and dog eating brought to the U.S. by some immigrants. With regard to the question whether it is easy to distinguish between pets and non-pets, the group members Vannara, Aaron, Julio and Perla were divided in their answers, with Vannara and Perla giving an affirmative answer while Julio and Aaron said “no.” Vannara claimed no knowledge when being prompted by Aaron for an explanation as to why she believed it was easy to distinguish between pets and non-pets. She indicated that she wrote “yes” to the question on the handout but did not know how to justify the answer. We join the interaction as Perla aligns herself with Vannara by saying that she also writes a “yes” to the question (line 1).

(13) Cat and dog [FOP 0846-0911]
1 Per: I put yes too.
2 (2.0)
3 Van: yes, because? ([Vannara shifts gaze from handout to Julio])
4 (1.1)
5 Aar: now you [talk about the (. second question.]
6 Jul: [I’m like- I’m gonna say: ]like
7 um: (1.2) dogs and cats are like domestic animals¿
Vannara’s *yes, because?* in line 3 is a solicitation for assistance in justifying why it is easy to distinguish between pets and non-pets, a task that she made explicit earlier that she could not complete on her own. In saying *yes, because?* she shifts her gaze from the handout to Julio. The reason that she shifts her gaze to Julio, thus selecting him as the next speaker, may be because Julio is the discussion leader and is more likely than anyone else to be able to offer a justification. However, as noted earlier, Julio has a different answer to the question than Vannara; therefore, how to justify a position on Vannara’s behalf that is opposite to his own may not be something that he has entertained beforehand. Indeed, the design features of his multi-unit turn in lines 6-10 fully demonstrate the “extemporaneity” of the undertaking. First, he starts with *I’m like*, cuts off, and repairs it into *I’m gonna say*: (line 6) that prefaces his justification/argument-in-progress, suggesting what is to follow is just something off the top of his head. Second, he categorizes cats and dogs as domestic animals that are distinctive from pigs and sheep and all the other animals (lines 7-9) – a first step to distinguish pets from non-pets by using prototypical examples of animals that belong respectively to the categories of pets and non-pets. However, as he continues to build his argument by saying *I mean you can have like a pig or a sheep in (0.7) like in::* (lines 9-10), he encounters difficulty in bringing his utterance to completion. He pauses for 0.7 second after producing the word
He then utters a delaying device _like_ before repeating the word _in_ with a sound stretch. These interactional features indicate that he is in the midst of a word search.

Perla takes this as an opportunity to enter Julio’s turn space and offers a collaborative completion – _can be your pets_ (line 11), a pro-drop utterance that is not syntactically tied to Julio’s TCU-in-progress, which requires a noun or noun phrase to serve as the object for the preposition _in_ for grammatical fitness and completion. Though not a syntactic continuation of Julio’s TCU-in-progress, the composition and position of Perla’s utterance make it analyzable as a collaborative completion. First, Perla’s utterance comes at a point where Julio’s TCU-in-progress is halted for a word search, and therefore it can be viewed as a candidate solution for that search. Second, it is a pro-drop utterance. One may conjecture whether it is a transfer from Spanish, Perla’s L1. A thorough survey of the database, however, does not yield another instance of pro-drop used by Perla, which indicates that the pro-drop utterance is designed specifically for this particular sequential context. By using a pro-drop utterance to complete a halted TCU, Perla treats the dropped subject as retrievable from the just-prior sequential context – that is, the halted TCU. It is apparent enough in this case that the dropped subject is _a pig or a sheep_. By implicitly extracting _a pig or a sheep_ from Julio’s halted TCU while disregarding all the other elements, Perla changes not only the syntactic structure of Julio’s TCU, but also its propositional content. Combining the retrieved subject with Perla’s contribution, what results is a proposition that claims _a pig or a sheep can be your pets_. If such a proposition is accepted, then the argumentative trajectory of a TCU that is projected to distinguish cats and dogs from pigs and sheep, thus pets from non-pets, will be altered altogether.
It becomes relevant next for Julio to accept, reject or disregard Perla’s contribution.

In line 13, Julio accepts Perla’s contribution by partially repeating it – he drops the auxiliary verb *can* and repeats the remainder of the completing utterance *be your pets*, and to which he adds *like in your (.) bed or in your house*. The way that Julio constructs his utterance in response to Perla’s completing utterance demonstrates that he not only accepts Perla’s contribution by changing the syntactic structure of his halted TCU but also successfully resolves his word search by coming up with a candidate solution (*like in your (.) bed or in your house*, line 13). By incorporating Perla’s completing utterance, Julio yields an argument that states that *a pig or a sheep can be your pets in your bed or in your house*. This contradicts what he set out to argue earlier that *dogs and cats are like domestic animals® (0.9) not like (.) pigs and sheeps and everything else* (lines 7-9), which places cats and dogs in the category of pets and pigs and sheep and everything else in the category of non-pets.

Do the participants not recognize the problem? How is this piece of interactional puzzle solved? In partial overlap with Julio’s turn in line 13, Vannara aligns herself with Perla and Julio by saying *they can be your friends* (line 14), they referring to *a pig or a sheep* while *friends* is just another way to talk about pets. Therefore, what Vannara does here is akin to repeating what Perla and Julio have just said except that she fills the empty subject position with a pro term and replaces the word *pets* with *friends*. This is evidence that she does not recognize any problem in the way the argument is being constructed.

After Julio and Vannara both drop out of the overlap, a 0.7-sec pause ensues (line 15), then Julio speaks. He responds to Vannara’s overlapped utterance by partially repeating it, but self-interrupts as he is producing the word *your*. The cut-off is followed by a *yeah*
and a short pause. That Julio cuts himself off before producing the word *friends* indicates that he has trouble with it, and the nature of the trouble is revealed in his next bit of talk. He starts an *actually*-initial TCU that is composed of only two components: the adverb *actually* and a noun phrase *the cat and the dog*. In her research on the interactional deployment of *actually*, Clift (2001) found that when placed TCU initially, *actually* can be used to mark a revision of a speaker’s prior stance. Here it seems that Vannara’s reference to pigs and sheep as friends, a reference that simply confirms Perla’s and Julio’s prior position, has touched off Julio’s recognition that it is problematic to refer to pigs and sheep as friends, and by extension, as pets, and therefore a revision is made to replace the problematic reference and to change his position. The repair is rather succinct and does not get elaborated or receive an uptake from other participants. Whether or not Perla and Vannara recognize the problem is unknown. With the repair, however, the interactional puzzle is partially solved – at least Julio comes to recognition that he has taken the argument in the wrong direction.

What then could Julio have possibly searched for at the juncture when the perturbations occurred and when Perla made a mid-turn entry to offer a collaborative completion that changed the trajectory of the argument? To shed more light, I will present another fragment that occurs about a minute after the above fragment. What immediately follows Julio’s self repair in line 16-17 is a remark by Vannara who claims that cats “stink” and that she does not like them (data not shown). Aaron then suggests that they move onto the next question, which asks each participant to share their knowledge about some “unconventional meat” that people in their own country eat. Vannara mentions that monkey and horse meat is consumed by some rural folks in her
country, Cambodia, to which Aaron reacts strongly. He raises a challenging question that if people can eat monkeys and horses, why not cats and dogs. Aaron’s question resonates strongly with the pets and non-pets question. It is in this context that Julio, Vannara, and Perla team up against Aaron by arguing that cats and dogs are pets, but monkeys and horses are not. Here is part of the argument:

(14) Monkey and horse [FOP: 1016-1024]

1 Jul: a monkey is not is not your pet;
2 (0.5)
3 Jul: \(\downarrow\)you are not gonna have like a monkey in your
4 \(\uparrow\)house, >you are not gonna have a<- like you
5 may have a horse in your house but
6 [(               )     ] in your [be::d
7 Per: [it’s like your friend.]         [>you’re not gonna<]
8 eat your [frie:::nd
9 Jul:          [>are you gonna eat] your friend?<

A brief summary of what happens in the fragment will serve our purposes here. It is clear that Julio’s criterion for distinguishing between pets and non-pets is whether they can be kept in the house or allowed to share the bed with people. This is not a hard-and-fast criterion, but can be adjusted to serve his interactional purposes. He rules out moneys as pets on the grounds that they are not kept in the house. However, as he proceeds to apply the same criterion to horses to exclude them as pets, he runs into a problem and cuts himself off mid-turn to revise his position (lines 4-6), arguing that horses can be kept in the house – probably meaning a barn near or attached to a farm house, but not in bed.

Relating this fragment to the previous one, it can be concluded that Julio “goes with the flow” as he constructs his argument. The impromptu nature of his argument – in addition to those already mentioned earlier – is manifest in the constant revisions of positions and in his bending himself to accommodate a collaborative completion by Perla that is propositionally inapposite for the argument that he attempts to build on Vannara’s behalf.
With knowledge from this fragment, a brighter light is shined on the piece of interactional puzzle from the previous fragment. In line 10, when Julio’s TCU-in-progress is halted by a word search, he is in fact searching for a criterion to distinguish pets from non-pets. He might have been heading toward something like *I mean you can have a pig or sheep in your house – house* meaning perhaps a barn near or attached to a farm house – *but not in your bed*, and from here he may go on to argue that unlike pigs and sheep, cats and dogs can be bedmates. Perla’s intervening completing utterance might have interrupted Julio’s “train of thought.” As he accepts Perla’s completing utterance, he also changes the direction of his argument subliminally, and he does so without realizing that he is now talking about pigs and sheep rather than cats and dogs. It is not until after he drops out of the overlap with Vannara and repeats Vannara’s overlapped talk as a form of acknowledgment does he recognize that a problem has occurred, hence the delayed self-repair.

A question that remains is why Perla contributed such an utterance at that point. Can it be possible that she had meant the dropped subject to refer to cats and dogs rather than pigs and sheep? If that was indeed the case, then it was not how Julio understood it to be. If he had understood the dropped subject as referring to cats and dogs, he would not have initiated a self-repair toward the end. Why Perla contributed such an utterance to complete Julio’s halted TCU remains a puzzle.

In this instance, the first speaker’s accommodation to the completing utterance propositionally derails the argument that he attempts to construct. While the succinct self-repair at the end of the episode acknowledges the mistake and revises the prior stance, it does nothing to modify and consolidate the argument. Through a self-repair, the
structural progressivity of talk is hampered. In this sense, it can be argued that the
completing utterance hinders the progressivity of talk at both the structural and
propositional levels.

4.4.3 Discussion

In all the three instances above, collaborative completions occur at such
opportunities spaces as sound stretches, pauses, and repetitions, which is similar to the
instances that we examined in the last section. Visually, however, the first speakers in
this section do not display bodily conduct characteristic of word searches such as
withdrawing gaze, putting on a thinking face, lowering head, rolling up eyes, or using
gestures. In fact, the perturbations are quite brief and the first speakers can resolve the
searches on their own and forward the halted TCUs to completion – as in fragments (12)
and (13). In fragment (10), a series of word searches by the first speaker are in fact
generated by her accommodation to the second speaker’s completing utterance.

Different from the instances in the last section, in this section the second speakers
have issues with the when or the what of their completing utterances. They project
different turn shapes for the TCU-in-progress than the first speakers due to either a
premature entry, as in fragment (10), or a production of an utterance that is not
grammatically and/or propositional fitted to the halted TCU, as in fragments (12) and
(13).

Lerner (1987, 1989) referred to collaborative completion as a “collaborative turn
sequence” composed of two turns. In the first turn the second speaker brings the first
speaker’s TCU-in-progress to completion, while the second turn is a receipt slot in which
the first speaker’s acceptance or rejection of the completer supplied by the second
speaker is made relevant. This point has already been fully demonstrated by the examples in the last section. Lerner also illustrated that through a technique called “delayed completion,” the first speaker can sequentially delete the relevance of the second speaker’s completer. Consider the following example:

(15) [Labov:TA]

C:  Fact I said tuh Larry yuh don't think it's· thet- y'know thet
the kids thet'r skinny, (0.7) are gonnuh yihknow haftuh worry
about it. They c'n eat twice iz much iz you.
D:  en it doesn't mean[anything
C:  →  [en not gain wei::ght.

(Lerner, 1989, p. 174)

After the second speaker D enters to offer a completion, the first speaker C continues to supply a completion of his/her own in the arrowed line. By filling the receipt slot with a delayed completion, C not only sequentially deletes the import of D’s contribution, but retrospectively renders the contribution as interruptive (Lerner, 1989).

In the instances we examined in this section, when there is a discrepancy in the projection and actualization of turn shapes between the first and the second speakers, or when the completing utterance by the second speaker turns out to be grammatically and/or propositionally unfitted to the halted TCU, what the first speaker could have done would be to continue with a delayed completion, thus rendering the contribution by the second speaker as sequentially irrelevant while without having to explicitly reject it. In fragment (10), for example, after Rainsey’s and Abril’s intervening contributions, Leakena could have continued by adding a third reason to the reasons-in-a-series format, or by adding an effect-component to bring the TCU to completion. In fragment (13), Julio could have offered the candidate solution for his word search in the receipt slot – the candidate solution alone, thus disregarding Perla’s intervening contribution. While
fragment (12) is a delayed completion par excellence, Martin initiates a repair on Julio’s completing utterance following his own completion and offers a delayed acceptance of Julio’s contribution as soon as the understanding problem is resolved. In so doing, Martin does not sequentially deletes Julio’s completing utterance through a delayed completion.

The analysis and discussion above suggest that, despite the infelicity of the *when* and the *what* in the design of a completing utterance, the first speakers are shown to try to reorganize the grammatical structure of their emerging utterance to accommodate to the completing utterance – as in fragments (10) and (13), and as a result of making grammatical accommodation, the progressivity of talk is compromised. Collaboration, however, is promoted as progressivity is undermined. In fragment (12), although the first speaker does not change his emerging grammatical structure to accommodate the second speaker’s completing utterance, he nevertheless acknowledges the sequential import of the completing utterance by initiating a repair. In initiating a repair, progressivity is undermined, but intersubjectivity is enhanced.

It should be noted, however, that the infelicitous completing utterances are not designed to “purposefully” create road blocks in talk. On the contrary, they are designed in the first place to further the progress of halted TCUs. It is the infelicitous design of the *when* and the *what* in the completing utterance s as well as the first speaker’s subsequent response to them that combine to create disruptions in the progress of the talk. It can be argued, then, that when discrepancy in turn projection occurs, and when there are issues of the *when* and the *what* with the second speaker’s completing utterance, accommodation, collaboration, and intersubjectivity are prioritized over progressivity. The privilege of accommodation, collaboration, and intersubjectivity over the
progressivity of talk can be explained by the preference principle – an outright rejection or sequential deletion of the relevance of the first speaker’s completing utterance in the receipt slot constitutes a dispreferred action, whereas an acceptance, accommodation in the spirit of collaboration, and pursuit of intersubjectivity are preferred actions.

A third function of collaborative completion is co-opting affiliation and agreement and reasserting one’s stance – a theme that will be treated in the next section.

4.5 Co-opting agreement and affiliation and asserting one’s stance

4.5.1 Introduction

As the current study focuses on text-based or text-related discussions, the participants are asked frequently to take up a stance toward, air a viewpoint on, or make an assessment of, a certain object, event, person, state of affair, etc. When a position is taken, a point of view is expressed, or an evaluation is made, an agreement or disagreement is often the next relevant action. Both Lerner (1987) and Hayashi (2003a) have studied how participants in daily conversation deployed collaborative completion to convert a dispreferred action into a preferred action – for example, to convert disagreement into agreement or other-correction to self-correction. In this section, I examine how L2 speakers use collaborative completions to co-opt affiliation and agreement and to reassert their stances and perspectives in small group work.

4.5.2 Analysis

Fragment (16) is part of a larger discussion based on an article about prostitution and human trafficking in Cambodia. It opens with Leakena, the discussion leader, asking a prepared question from the handout. The questions *What do you think about this article?*
How do you feel about it? ask the participants to share their evaluation of, stance and reaction toward, the article.

(16) On the world [PAHF 0923-1031]

Lea: (treads) what do you think about this article. how do you feel about it.

Rai: I think it’s really interesting↑ (0.2) because I ne:ver

know that’s (0.3) in my own country have a lot of

pro[(h)stitutes like tha(h)t,] .hhhh like (0.2).hhhh=

Abr: [heh huh huh heh ]

Rai: =and the eich ai vee:: you know stuff like (.)
a lot of trafficking (0.5) .hhh a::::nd (0.5) I feel
sad and sorry to those girls, they get so oppressed
without freedom and have like en violence.

Lea: uh huh

(1.7) ((Abril raises head to meet Rainsey’s gaze, smiles and nods)

Abr: [yeah:: ](.) u::hm I think (0.9) it’s u::::hm=

Lea: [what about you.]

Abr: =(1.5) interesting, (0.9) e:::h it’s good (0.6) it’s
good to know:: about(0.3) u:::h (0.4) this kind of
situations.

(1.5) ((Abril and Rainsey gaze at each other; Rainsey puts on a
straight face))

Abr: u:::[hm but-]

Rai: [(i- it’s] happened around the world [like every]=

Abr: [yea:::h ]

Rai: =country °they have°

Abr: yeah. it’s good to know (.). what is going (0.8)
on ]

Rai: ➔ [“on ]the world”]=

Abr: =on the world. .hhhhhh a:::nd (0.5) yes I feel like

(1.3) sad an:::d (1.8) u::::hm (1.6) like bad (.)

about these girls.

(0.9) ((Rainsey nods repeatedly)

Rai: [yeah.]

Lea: [yeah.] I feel the same too.

Rainsey self-selects and begins to answer the question (line 4). She assesses the article as really interesting (line 4) on the grounds that it presents information about prostitution, HIV, and human trafficking that she did not previously know to have existed in her country. She uses an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) never (I ne:ver know, lines 4-5), delivered with an emphatic tone on the first syllable and a sound stretch on the first vowel, to underscore her past innocence of the information presented in the article. Note that prostitution is the first item on a list of social issues that Rainsey
mentions, and she punctuates it with laughter (line 6) to mark it as a delicate matter (see Haakana, 2001 for how patients use laughter to mark delicate matters in medical consultations). Indeed, prostitution, and HIV transmission through prostitution as well as human trafficking (lines 5-6, 8-9) – mentioned subsequently by Rainsey, are social issues that can evoke association with the seamy side of society and thus do not reflect well on one’s country. Rainsey orients herself to the sensitive nature of these social issues through her laughter.

Having answered the first question, Rainsey continues to answer the second question by taking up a sympathetic stance toward those girls who are sold into prostitution, exploited, deprived of freedom, and victimized by violence (lines 9-11). She uses sad and sorry (line 10) to convey her emotional states toward those girls.

I will now turn to examine the response by Abril to see how it leads up to Rainsey’s completing utterance in line 27. Shortly after Rainsey’s response, the floor passes to Abril, who, with considerable perturbations that indicate an intense word search activity, finally assembles an utterance that expresses her stance (yeah::(.) u::hm I think (0.9) it’s u::hm (1.5) interesting, (0.9) e::h it’s good (0.6) it’s good to know:: about(0.3) u::h (0.4) this kind of situations, lines 14, 16-18). It should be noted that it seems that Abril might have abandoned interesting in favor of good as the assessment term, but the numerous perturbations that punctuate the utterance – the long pauses, the false start, the vocalizations, etc. – makes interesting not hearable as an abandoned term, but one used in parallel with good. Furthermore, this kind of situations is an equivocal referential expression, open to different interpretations. Based on the article and on what Rainsey has just said, the referential expression can be interpreted as referring to the existence and
prevailing of prostitution, HIV, and human trafficking as a social reality in Cambodia, or alternatively, it can be understood as referring to the draconian situation that those who are sold into prostitution in Cambodia find themselves facing. The knowledge of either situation, when associated with assessment terms such as *interesting* and *good*, as deployed by Abril in her answer, can be disastrous, which is all the more so when the recipients of the answer are from Cambodia. Abril might not have meant it this way when she set out to construct her response, but with the limited linguistic and interactional resources that she has at her disposal, what she de facto constructed results in a response that displays an insensitive stance that can be understood along these lines: that it is interesting and good to know about prostitution, HIV, and human trafficking in Cambodia, or 2) that it is interesting and good to know about the human suffering brought on by forced prostitution. The interpretations can portray Abril as a person without compassion.

If Abril had recognized the ambiguity inherent in her response and its susceptibility to negative interpretations, she would have set the record straight by resorting to the repair mechanism by performing a self-repair immediately – for example, by explaining what she really meant. Evidence from the interaction, however, suggests otherwise. In line 18, Abril brings the turn to completion with a terminal intonation and a transfer of speaker becomes relevant. However, neither Rainsey nor Leakena speaks and a gap of 1.5 seconds (line 19) follow. During the gap, Abril and Rainsey sustain mutual gaze, with Rainsey keeping a straight face all along (lines 19-20). The silence and Rainsey’s facial expression forebode a dispreferred response. At the same time, the lack of immediate
uptake from Rainsey and Leakena also gives Abril an opportunity to self-repair to convert a disaffiliating stance into an affiliating one.

In line 21, Abril produces a vocalization, followed by a *but*, but she abandons whatever she is about to say due to an overlap with Rainsey, who launches a new turn at this point. Although abandoned prematurely, the deployment of the contrastive connective *but* seems to project that Abril can be heading toward revising her previous stance or stating something that contrasts with what she previously said to counterbalance the effect. Rainsey’s turn, on the other hand, shows how she orients herself to Abril’s prior response. She first points out that *i-it’s happened around the world* (line 22), implying that the specific social problems under discussion are not peculiar to Cambodia, but exist on a worldwide scale. Then she upgrades the claim by using an extreme case formulation (*every country*, lines 22, 24) to implicate all countries in the world.

To Rainsey’s claim and its subsequent upgraded version, Abril responds with acknowledgment/agreement tokens (lines 23, 25). With the acknowledgment/agreement tokens, one would expect that Abril would go on to produce some agreeing utterances to affiliate herself with Rainsey. Yet, what she does is to recycle the grammatical structure and the assessment term that she has used in her prior response (*it’s good to know (.) what is going (0.8) on*, lines 25-26), replacing *this kind of situations* with *what is going on*. Partially overlapped with Abril’s turn is Rainsey’s completing utterance *on the world* (line 27), which is quite intriguing in its design. In terms of grammar, the correct preposition to collocate with *the world* should be *in – in the world*. Note that there is a pause of 0.8 second between *going* and *on* (lines 25-26). When Abril produces *going* and pauses, it can be projectable that the next element due is *on*. The pause provides an entry
point for Rainsey to assist in the word search. Note how Rainsey’s *on* is overlapped with Abril’s *on*. They are being produced at the same time; therefore, *on* can be understood as a candidate solution that Rainsey comes up with for Abril’s word search. However, Rainsey enters the turn space not just to help resolve a word search problem, but to do other things as well. In other words, she capitalizes on the word that is due next – *on*, combines it with a completing utterance – *in the world*, but drops the *in* in the course of production, and creates a “contextually contingent grammar” to accomplish other social actions.

What then are some social actions that Rainsey accomplishes via the completing utterance? As previously noted, Abril’s utterance, *it’s good to know (...) what is going (0.8) on* (lines 25-26), is basically a repetition of what she has said earlier and does not take up an affiliating stance with Rainsey. Rainsey’s completing utterance, *on the world* (line 27), therefore is another effort to reassert her perspective in pursuit of affiliation. By attaching a location prepositional phrase to Abril’s utterance-in-progress, Rainsey changes not only the meaning of the utterance but also the footing (Goffman, 1981) for Abril. With *on the world, what is going on* is no longer uniquely Cambodian, but has a worldwide resonance – a point that was emphasized by Rainsey a moment earlier in response to Abril’s disaffiliating utterance. The change in meaning in turn repositions Abril as someone who adopts a global perspective and takes the stance that knowledge about another part of world is a good virtue. In lines 28-30, Abril accepts Rainsey’s completing utterance by repeating it and goes on to express her sympathy for those girls who were forced into prostitution – an affiliating stance that immediately elicits verbal and non-verbal agreement from both Rainsey and Leakena (lines 31-33).
This instance shows how a participant uses collaborative completion as a device in pursuing affiliation and reasserting her stance. In the next instance, a participant is shown to convert an imminent disagreement into an agreement, thus recruiting the discussion leader to stand together with her against an opposing participant. The fragment presents part of a response to the discussion question that asks the participants’ opinions about whether every man feels uncomfortable when they ask for help. The reading on which the discussion is based is an excerpt from the book *You Just don’t Understand* by Deborah Tannen (1990) that sets out to illustrate the relationship between gender and conversational styles. Through an example of a couple who get into an argument about whether or not they should ask for directions when getting lost while driving, Tannen illustrates that men are status- and power-oriented creatures while women are inclined to intimacy- and solidarity-building. According to Tannen, for men, a trivial matter like asking for directions, thereby acknowledging that they lack information and need assistance from another person, can make them feel that they are one down in the hierarchy. The discussion question in the fragment below is based on this example. We join the discussion as Rainsey, the discussion leader, reads out the question from the handout (lines 1-2).

(17) But most of them [GAC:1624-1659]

1  Rai:  ((reads)) number two, do you think every man feels
2   un- uncomfortable when they ask f- k for help?
3   (0.9) ((on “for,” Rainsey shifts gaze from handout to Abril))
4  Abr:  most of them.
5   (0.9)
6  Rai:  you think most of them?,
7  Abr:  yeah::
8   (.)
9  Rai:  [“they” = ]
10  Abr:  [=yeah. ]
11  Lea:  [I don’t think] it’s all the “peop--” all the men
12   .hhhhhhhh (0.2) ((clears throat)) (0.8) ((clears throat))
13   it’s depend on eh (0.8) person. ((Leakena’s gaze cast
14   downward the whole time when talking))
Rainsey turns to gaze at Abril.

Abril: yea::h. (gazes at Rainsey)

Rainsey shifts her gaze to the handout.

Rainey: yeah, me too. I think like not like every man feels uncomfortable in asking for help.

Abril: but most of them

Rainey: [they try to make themselves look] like they just don’t want to ask.

Abril: .hh

Rainey: [theye know everything.]

Abril: .hh

Rainey: yeah.

When Rainsey is about to finish reading the question from the handout, she raises her head and directs her gaze toward Abril, who is thus selected as the next to speak (line 3). The question is a yes/no question and calls for a yes/no answer. Note also that an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), every man (line 1), is used in the question. A yes to the question would result in an extreme opinion that claims every man feels uncomfortable when asking for help. A no, on the other hand, can leave open the question of folk statistics – if not every man, then how many? Most, many, some, or something else? Of course, the way that the question is designed does not require folk statistics as a component in the answer. It is optional. With this in mind, we will find that Abril’s answer – most of them (line 4) – is a nonconforming answer (Raymond, 2003). It does not include a no but implies it. It conveys something to this effect: no, I don’t think every man feels uncomfortable in asking for directions, but most of them do. Her answer, therefore, leaves the first component unarticulated and comes directly to the folk statistics component. Through her answer, Abril makes her stance public. What is relevant next is an agreement or disagreement with the stance or at least an acknowledgment of it.

In line 6, rather than offering an agreeing or disagreeing response or an acknowledgement token, Rainsey does a confirmation check by repeating Abril’s answer
and prefacing it with you think. Note that it is with a continuous intonation contour that
the word them is produced, indicating that the TCU is still ongoing. Yet, in line 7, Abril
produces a confirmation token yeah and preempts the completion of Rainsey’s turn. After
a brief pause, Rainsey initiates a new turn, but just after she produces they (line 9),
referring back to most of them perhaps to continue to pursue the incomplete action of the
prior TCU, Abril preempts the completion of the turn again with yet another affirmative
answer. Through a preemptive affirmative answer, Abril orients to Rainsey’s TCU-in-
progress as another confirmation check. The two confirmation checks displace an action
that is supposed to be due, namely, an agreement or disagreement with Abril’s publicly
displayed stance conveyed through her answer to the question. As Schegloff (2007b)
pointed out, the displacement of a response in the second position, by virtue of its
breaking the contiguity of the sequence, is often a pre-sequence to disagreement.
Although here the response is in the third position – question → answer (conveying a
stance) → confirmation check – the same point applies, that is, Rainsey’s confirmation
checks are pre-disagreements.

In overlap with Rainsey’s second confirmation check attempt and Abril’s
affirmative answer, Leakena gives her response (lines 11-14). She prefaces her answer
with the epistemic marker I don’t think (Kärkkäinen, 2003) to mark what follows as
representing her perspective. Although she replaces every man with all men, both are
extreme case formulations that express the same meaning, that is, just like Abril, Leakena
gives a negative answer to the question except that her no is explicitly stated in I don’t
think whereas Abril’s no is implied. What distinguishes Leakena’s answer from Abril’s is
that while Abril offers a folk statistics that estimates the proportion of men who are
reluctant to seek help, Leakena resorts to a more cautious tack by using *it depend* (line 13), an expression that does not commit herself to any statistical estimation. Through her answer, Leakena conveys a cautious, uncommitted stance in contrast to Abril’s confident, committed stance.

Perhaps because Leakena lowers her head with her gaze cast downward all the while when she is speaking and no mutual gaze is established, following Leakena’s answer, Rainsey shifts her gaze to Abril (line 15), who orients to the gaze shift as a solicitation of a response and produces an agreement token *yeah* (line 16). Does this mean that Abril has changed her position to affiliate herself with Leakena? What transpires in the next stretch of talk suggests otherwise.

Following Abril’s agreement token, Rainsey shifts her gaze to the handout and produces her response that affiliates herself with Leakena – *yeah, me too* (line 18). Her next TCU is a negation of the proposition proposed in the question (lines 18-19), thus further affiliating herself with Leakena. An audible long inbreath (line 20) then ensues, indicating that Rainsey is about to initiate her next TCU. Just at this point, Abril enters with a completing utterance – *but most of them* (line 21). Although produced in a low, trailing off voice, and not grammatically extending Rainsey’s TCU – a verb *do* would be required in this case to extend the TCU (*but most of them do*) – Abril’s completing utterance preempts Rainsey’s next element of talk, which can be something in further affiliation with Leakena. Via a preemptive contribution, Abril reasserts her stance that was expressed earlier. According to Lerner (1987), through anticipatory completion, a second speaker says something that she believes the first speaker is about to say and brings the TCU to completion, and through this practice, the second speaker speaks the
mind of the first speaker, so to speak. Here, through a completing utterance, Abril puts her words into Rainsey’s mouth and presenting the stance as Rainsey’s own. It will achieve the double actions of co-opting Rainsey – if Rainsey accepts her completing utterance – while avoiding a flat disagreement with Leakena.

Indeed, in line 22, Rainsey accepts Abril’s completing utterance by repeating it, and uttering two acknowledgement tokens _yeah_ prepositioned and postpositioned respectively in relation to the completing utterance. She then launches into a telling that extends beyond the data fragment (lines 24-25 and data not shown) of how men always pretend to know everything and are unwilling to ask. Following Rainsey’s acceptance of her completing utterance, Abril laughs and her laughter overlaps with the beginning of Rainsey’s telling.

Finally, we will look at an instance in which a participant uses collaborative completion, inter alia, to nip an emerging disagreement in the bud and to co-opt agreement. The fragment is drawn from a larger discussion on Cambodian and Mexican cultures and opens with the discussion leader, Leakena, reading out a discussion question from the handout. The question consists of two sub-questions. The first sub-question asks whether the information presented in the article about the average marriage ages for men and women in Cambodia is still true today. The second sub-question asks about the common marriage age in Mexico. It is apparent that the questions invoke cultural knowledge that divides the three participants into two categories: cultural insiders and cultural outsiders. The fragment below is part of the response to the first sub-question. Therefore, only two cultural insiders – Rainsey and Leakena – talk substantially, while
the outsider Abril only contributes minimally. Despite being insiders, Rainsey and Leakena disagree with each other on their answer to the question.

(18) Still [WOLIC: 2451-2552]

Rai:  (**treads**).hh it is said in the article that a man usually marries between the ages of nineteen and twenty five .hh a girl between the age sixteen and twenty two. .hh is this still true today. in Mexico, but- what’s common marriage age.

Lea:  I think(**Leakena yawns**) I think it’s not (0.5)=

Rai:  [>(I dunno) I-<]

Lea:  =[really tru:::e, but it’s::::

Rai:  → still.

Lea:  [It’s- ]

Rai:  [I think] it’s still.=

Lea:  =it’s still (. ) it’s still for teenager who:’s not ma- tha- who not like .h getting marriage like (0.6).hhhh and then they just run away with each other.

Rai:  

Lea:  

Abr:  (**smiles and nods**) yeah.

Lea:  [*that’s what I think*]

Rai:  [I think especially ]u:::hm the- the- (0.4)

the one that got (0.4) married really young age and they live in the countryside↑

(1.0) (**Rainsey turns to gaze at Leakena**) Lea:  (**nods slightly**) Rai:  yeah. their parents don’t really you know their (0.4) family don’t really have (0.3) that much money:

they just wanna (. ) them to get married and .hghhh

Rai:  I dunno work or something=

Abr:  =uh huh

Rai:  yeah. that’s why the- I dunno and they didn’t go to school (1.1) so:::

Lea:  mm

Rai:  yeah.

Leakena starts her answer with a typical epistemic marker I think (line 6) to indicate that what follows represents her perspective (Kärkkäinen, 2003). She continues to produce the next bit of her answer it’s not, pauses for 0.5 second (line 6), and then resumes her talk. Rainsey, who uses the pause as an opportunity to enter Leakena’s turn space, also launches her turn of talk. This results in an overlap and is resolved with Rainsey abandoning her TCU-in-progress while Leakena continues with her answer (lines 7-8). Rainsey’s abandoned partial TCU, I dunno, I- (line 7), is delivered in an
extremely fast pace to the point of being slurred. *I dunno* is a variant of *I don’t know*, a phonological reduction of the latter. Previous research has shown that *I don’t know* can be deployed in the second position as a response to assessments (Beach & Metzger, 1997). In conversation, when an assessment is made, it makes agreement or disagreement relevant next (Pomerantz, 1984). Since *I don’t know* indicates insufficient knowledge, it can be used as a response to an assessment to avoid disagreement and to close down the sequence. In the case here, the answer to the question calls for a personal judgment of whether the information presented in the reading is true or false when applied to the current day Cambodian society, so it is an assessment par excellence. However, Rainsey’s *I dunno*, rather than coming in the second position as a response, is produced at a point when Leakena’s TCU-in-progress is temporarily halted. To determine its sequential import, it is necessary to examine more closely the sequential environment in which it is produced.

In line 6, Leakena produces *I think it’s not* and then pauses for 0.5 second. Although Leakena’s TCU is still in progress and is being halted only temporarily, from the negative marker *not*, it is projectable that Leakena is giving a negative answer to the question, that is, she is making an assessment that the information in the article does not hold anymore today. It is at this point, at the earliest possible opportunity where Leakena’s stance is made projectably available that Rainsey comes in with her *I dunno*. Given that Rainsey is a cultural insider who is expected to have her own judgment on the information, and considering the sequential position of the utterance, *I dunno* seems to be a precursor, rather than an avoidance, of disagreement. In other words, instead of being backward-looking to indicate an insufficient of knowledge of the information on which
Leakena makes her assessment, thus avoiding a disagreement, *I dunno* is forward looking, forecasting that a disagreement is on the way (cf. a different function of forward-looking *I don’t know* in Weatherall, 2011).

How, then does Leakena orient to Rainsey’s *I dunno*? Leakena makes her stance explicit in the first TCU (*I think it’s not (0.5) really true*, lines 6, 8), a stance that negates the truth value of the information as applied to current day Cambodian society, but in the aftermath of the intervening *I dunno* by Rainsey, Leakena initiates her next TCU with the connective *but* and goes on to say *it’s* (line 8) with a sound stretch on the consonant -s. This seems to indicate that Leakena orients to the disagreement-implicativeness of Rainsey’s intervening utterance and is attempting to revise her stance to some extent to avoid disagreement. Again, taking a perturbation – the sound stretch in this case – in Leakena’s TCU as an entry point, and at the earliest possible opportunity where it is projectable that Leakena is downgrading her assessment, Rainsey upgrades her stance by offering a collaborative completion: *still* (line 9). Note that the contribution is a single lexical item produced with a prosodic emphasis and a falling intonation. The prosodic features give the word a definitive, assertive touch. Grammatically, it is tied to Leakena’s TCU-in-progress: *but it’s* + *still*, although it does not bring the TCU to completion. If we look back at the question in line 4, we will find that the word is being extracted from the question: *Is this still true today?* It is apparent that, if Leakena accepts the completing utterance by Rainsey, she will place herself in an interactional paradox. A moment ago, she just said that *I think it’s not really true* – a negative answer to the question, if she follows up with, *but it’s still* (true) – a positive answer to the question, she will be contradicting herself. How then, does she resolve the interactional dilemma?
One easy solution would be to ignore Rainsey’s completing utterance and proceeds instead with her own TCU. This, however, is not what Leakena opts for.

Following Rainsey’s completing utterance, Rainsey and Leakena launch into talk simultaneously (lines 10-11). While Leakena recycles it’s, cuts off, and yields the turn to Rainsey, Rainsey upgrades her stance by repeating the word still, packaging it into I think it’s still. It is grammatically incomplete because a predicate is missing. The addition of true – I think it’s still true – for example, would make the utterance grammatically complete. Yet the fact that the utterance ends with a falling intonation suggests that despite being grammatically incomplete, the TCU is nevertheless marked as intonationally and pragmatically complete. The word true seems to be designedly left out. If true had been included, it would constitute a frontal disagreement, a strongly dispreferred action (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987). The incompleteness of the utterance leaves open the possibility that the final turn shape is for the participants to project – for example, it can be I think it’s still true, or I think it’s still true in some areas, or I think it’s still true to some extent in certain areas. This suggests that even though Rainsey upgrades her stance, thus her disagreement with Leakena, incrementally – from the disagreement-implicative I dunno, to an emphatic completing utterance still, and to the repetition of still in a grammatically incomplete utterance that stresses her perspective on the issue – she takes care not to deliver an outright disagreement that directly counters Leakena’s previously stated stance.

In line 12, Leakena accepts Rainsey’s completing utterance by saying it’s still, pauses briefly, and then restarts. Intriguingly, she leaves the TCU-in-progress at that without adding true as the predicate, intimating that even though she makes concession
on her original position, she is careful not to overtly self contradict. What follows are a series of perturbations that break her utterance-in-progress into fragments that are beyond comprehension (lines 12-13). Extracted from the fragments are these recognizable elements: teenagers, who, not, like, getting marriage. Based on these elements, it seems that Leakena is attempting to say that it’s still (true) for teenagers who do not like to get married, and then they just run away with each other. If this is indeed what she wants to say, then somebody must have wanted to force them into marriage – presumably their parents. This is not an arrangement that they want, so they run away. Such an interpretation, however, does not make sense because it’s still true refers to the fact that getting married at young ages – 16 to 22 for women and 19 to 25 for men (lines 1-4) – is still true today in Cambodia.

We hit a dead end here. It is a jumble of undecipherable fragments and we have to leave them at that. However, one thing that the fragmented productional features of Leakena’s TCU-in-progress do tell us is that in backing down from her original stance, while taking up the stance imposed on her by Rainsey, which happens in a few short seconds, Leakena is caught short on having the linguistic, interactional, and perhaps more importantly, substantive resources to elucidate or buttress her revised position.

How do other participants orient to Leakena’s response? Abril utters an acknowledgement/agreement token yeah while smiling and nodding (line 17). This verbal and nonverbal behavior of hers claims rather than demonstrates understanding (Sacks, 1992; see also Koole, 2010). Rainsey does not claim or demonstrate understanding. Rather she launches her own telling, explaining that getting married early is still true for those who come from families with limited wherewithal in the countryside (lines 19-21,
Rainsey’s telling gives full expression to the interactional function of the grammatically incomplete, but intonationally and pragmatically complete utterance *still* as well as the epistemically-marked, similarly grammatically incomplete, but intonationally and pragmatically complete utterance *I think it’s still*. It shows that while she disagrees with Leakena, her disagreement is not without mitigation. The grammatically incomplete design is to leave room for just such a mitigated disagreement. Rather than a full-scale disagreement as can be expressed through *I think it’s still true*, Rainsey’s telling is a qualified assessment and disagreement that conveys something to this effect: *I think it’s still true with some people in some areas.*

### 4.5.3 Discussion

In the instances examined in this section, the completing utterances all fall short on the grammatical criteria of either syntactic fitness or completion. Some of them carry apparent L2 grammar features – for example, *on the world*. Yet, a close examination revealed that not all syntactic unfitness or incompletion are symptomatic of L2 grammatical errors. Some of the “unfitness” or “incompletion” might have been motivated, and can be explained, by interactional considerations. It is through the deployment of syntactically “unfit” or “incomplete” completing utterances that the second speakers achieve the intricate work of co-opting affiliation and agreement. This suggests that some infelicitous features of grammar may be deployed to serve interactional purposes, and their forms and functions have to be understood within specific interactional contexts in which they are deployed, and that a decontextualized parsing or a premature designation of a grammatical feature as peculiarly L2 grammar feature without considering its sequential context can be analytically unproductive and
misleading. This call to caution, however, is not the same as claiming full linguistic and interactional competence for the L2 participants. As I have also shown in the analysis, both Abril and Leakena were caught short on the linguistic, interactional, and substantive resources in the interaction. In Abril’s case, it led to an inadvertently insensitive, disaffiliating stance, and in Leakena’s case, a grammatically fragmented utterance that is inapprehensible. Instead it is a call to a sequential-contextual sensitivity in the analytic treatment of L2 grammar-in-interaction.

Like in conversation, in small group discussions in this pedagogical setting, affiliation and agreement are preferred actions. When an assessment is made, a stance is taken, and a point of view is expressed, an affiliation or agreement is expected; and when a disaffiliation or disagreement is imminent, speakers are shown to use various devices, key among which is collaborative completion, to convert an emerging dispreferred action into a preferred one. What makes collaborative completion a powerful co-opting device is that it can be used to intervene at an opportune moment to change the grammatical trajectory of a TCU that embodies or forebodes a disaffiliating or disagreeing action and makes it relevant next for the disaffiliating or disagreeing party to either accept or reject such a change. Since rejection is a strong dispreferred action, the first speaker usually accepts the completing utterance, and in accepting the completing utterance, they also accept the first speaker’s position. For the first speaker, it is a co-option in a dual sense. Like in the last two sections, acceptance of the completing utterance is the preferred action even if an acceptance means a change of one’s perspective or stance.

In the next section, I examine how the second speakers use collaborative completion to mark their epistemic stances.
4.6 Marking one’s epistemic stance

4.6.1 Introduction

As collaborative completion is a practice in which the second speaker completes an utterance for the first speaker, one interactional concern for the second speaker is whether what she offers in the form of a completing utterance does indeed speak the first speaker’s mind. In other words, in order to complete an utterance for the first speaker, the second speaker needs to make inferences about what the first speaker is about to say, and to what extent the inferences reflect the mind of the first speaker is an interactional concern for the second speaker.

Based on the resources, such as the immediate sequential context, the emerging grammatical structure, and her prior knowledge or experience that are available to her when making her inferences, the second speaker can take up either an assertive or uncertain stance toward her inferences. When she is certain about her inferences, she adopts an assertive stance by producing the completing utterance in a falling intonation; when she is not sure about her inferences, she takes up an uncertain stance by producing the completing utterance in a rising intonation. In this section, I will illustrate how these epistemic stances of the second speakers are enacted in the flow of interaction.

4.6.2 Marking an assertive stance with a falling intonation

When the first speaker encounters some difficulties in bringing her utterance to completion, but the sequential context and the emerging grammatical structure have provided enough clues about what she is about to say, the second speaker can come in to offer a completing utterance. In such a situation, the completing utterance is produced in a falling intonation. Fragment (19) is an example.
(19) School work [SACS 0843-0858]
1 Lea: ((reads)) so how do you balance school work and
2 social life.
3 (2.3)
4 Abr: I think I spent more time doing (1.9) u:::h
5 (0.6) social life (0.4) [than t (0.6)
6 Lea: [hehe
7 Rai: \rightarrow [school work=.
8 Lea: ([
9 Abr: =school work.

In lines 1-2, Leakena, the discussion leader, reads out a question from the handout.

Following a pause of 2.3 seconds (line 3), Abril self-selects by providing a response
(lines 4-5). She deploys a comparative grammatical structure to organize her response –
more X than Y. Her response is punctuated with pauses. After producing the than, to the
end of which she adds an additional explosive /t/ sound, a pause of 0.6 second follows
that creates an entry point. Rainsey comes in to offer a completing utterance – school
work (line 7), produced in a falling intonation. It is clear that Rainsey relies on the
sequential context or, more specifically, the question raised by Leakena (lines 1-2) and
the emerging comparative structure of Abril’s response to arrive at her inference.

Fragment (20) represents a similar example:

(20) At high school [SACS: 700-731]
1 Rai: because like college is like way different from
2 high school=
3 Abr: =eh huh=
4 Rai: =like (0.5) like everything is due in the same
5 time like fina::l paper:::s like presentations
6 all like due at the same time you [have to]=
7 Abr: [Yeah ]
8 Rai: =like manage your time (0.5) very well .hhhhhh
9 [to be ]able to like
10 Abr: [eh huh]
11 Abr: and at [first when]= when::: (0.5) we just came=
12 Rai: [(
13 Abr: =to college we think that .hhh we can do:::hhh (1.1)
14 ah like the same (0.7)[as at high school]=
15 Rai: \rightarrow [as at high school]=
16 Abr =[(like two-) two hours before the cla:ss or .h[h a]nd=
17 Rai: =[ (  ) ]
18 Abr: =>it’s not like that.<
19 (0.4)
20 Rai: yeah
Rainsey is talking about how time management is a much more demanding skill at college than at high school because the sheer amount of work one has to complete (lines 1-2, 4-6). In lines 6, 8-9, Rainsey provides an upshot of her talk by pointing out the importance of time management skills. However, before she completes her utterance, Abril interrupts to embark on a narrative telling. She uses the plural first person pronoun we (lines 11, 13) to narrate the time management experiences of first-year college students, herself and Rainsey included, who are in transition from high school to college and have yet to learn to adapt to the new environment. In line 15, when a pause of 0.7 second occurs in Abril’s utterance, Rainsey comes in to offer her completing utterance – as at high school, produced in a falling intonation and in precise sync with Abril, who also produces exactly the same element of talk. Two factors contribute to the synchronous and uniform production. One, the sequential context has already established the focus of contrast: time management at college versus that at high school. Two, the comparative grammatical structure the same as makes precise projection possible. After the same is produced, what is strongly projectable to follow is the as component. Like in fragment (19), in this fragment Rainsey relies on the sequential context and the emerging grammatical structure to arrive at her inference.

Let us examine one more example:

(21) Breakfast [SACS 1853-1905]

1 Rai: and when you got to eat like breakfast you have to
2 eat it every day, if not you are gonna get hungry.
3 Lea: "eh [huh"
4 Rai: [this is what happen t(h)o m(h)e.
5 Abr: [eh huh
6 Rai: [if I eat breakfast like for two days I have to-
7 (. ) get like (.) eating [every day.
8 Abr: \[continu(ously).
9 Rai: **yeah continuously**
Here Rainsey is talking about how when eating breakfast has been established as a habit, one has to cling to it, and how a disruption of the habit can cause discomfort (lines 1-2). She then presents herself as a living testimony to the importance of keeping this routine habit (lines 4, 6-7). In line 6-7, she deploys a compound TCU (Learner, 1991). The preliminary component of the compound TCU establishes a hypothetical situation in which she eats breakfast for two days, the final component deploys a modal verb have to to indicate that a habit has been established and it has to be continued. Some perturbations can be observed in the latter part of her utterance. When she reaches the word eating (line 7), what is projectably forthcoming is an adverbial phrase used to describe the frequency of eating. At this point, Abril comes in to offer her completing utterance – continuously (line 8), produced in a falling intonation and in overlap with Rainsey’s own completion – every day. Rainsey then acknowledges Abril’s contribution in line 9. Like in the last two examples, in this example Abril depends on the sequential context and the emerging grammatical structure to arrive at her inference.

Fragments (19)-(21) show that the second speakers recourse solely to the immediate sequential context and the emerging grammatical structure of the first speaker’s utterance-in-progress to arrive at their inferences and to adopt an assertive stance. Occasions also arise when the information needed in order for the second speaker to offer a completing utterance is not available in the immediate sequential context, but has to be derived from the second speaker’s direct or indirect experience. In such cases, the completing utterances are also produced in a falling intonation. Fragment (22) offers such an example. In the fragment the participants are talking about American wedding customs.
Rainsey attempts to describe the custom of garter throwing, but has a lexical gap for the term *garter*. Lines 1-4 show her effort to overcome the lexical gap by using descriptions. As she is describing that “it” is something that a “husband” removes from a bride’s leg (lines 2-3), she encounter difficulty in completing the utterance (lines 3-4). In line 5, Abril offers a completing utterance – *from your leg*, produced in a falling intonation. The completing utterance is accepted by Rainsey in line 6.

As *garter* constitutes a lexical gap for Rainsey, and she has to depend on description to get her idea across, the provision of a completing utterance in this context demonstrates that Abril has prior knowledge of garter throwing as a wedding custom. By producing the completing utterance in a falling intonation, Abril asserts a certain stance toward the subject matter.

Fragment (23) is a much more obvious example in which the completing utterance is offered because the second speaker has authoritative knowledge about what is to be conveyed through the first speaker’s utterance. It is taken from a larger discussion about the role that religion plays in a society.

(22) Garter [WOLIC 1810-1819]
1  Rai: I don’t know what it called something we: have
2   like .hhh em a husband has to take has to take
3   something out from your um (0.5) I don’t know
4   kind of like heh=
5  Abr: =from your leg.
6  Rai: $ye(h)ah (.) your leg.$
7  Abr: yeah.

(23) Catholic [WOLIC: 3429-3437]
1  Rai: ((gazes at Abril)) how like (0.5) in Mexico ih most of
2   the- most of you guys is uhm (0.3)((gazes upward))
3  Abr: → Catholic.
4  (0.6)
5  Rai: [oh Catholic]
6  Rai: [((nods)) ]
Rainsey initiates a turn with a *wh*-question word *how*, but she abandons this turn beginning after a delaying device *like* and a pause of 0.5 second and restarts the turn that is on its way to take the shape of a declarative utterance (lines 1-2). In line 2, after producing *most of you guys is*, Rainsey utters a vocalization *uhm* and pauses for 0.3 second. And just as she gazes upward in search for the next element due, Abril comes in with a completing utterance *Catholic* (line 17), produced in a falling intonation, and brings Rainsey’s TCU-in-progress to completion.

The discussion is about religion, and the emerging grammatical structure of the utterance indicates that what follows is likely to be a religious attribute used to describe Mexicans. However, even with this contextual and grammatical information, quite a few candidates such as Christians, Catholic, and Muslims are possible in this syntactic slot. That Abril is able to provide *Catholic* as a candidate completer with certainty is due to her prior knowledge. In fact, Rainsey’s utterance-in-progress is on its way to be a B-event statement (Labov & Fanshell, 1977), that is, a statement that describes something that falls within Abril’s epistemic domain and thus places her in an authoritative position to confirm or disconfirm. To be more specific, by virtue of being a Mexican, Abril is in a position to confirm or disconfirm a statement by a non-Mexican that describes an attribute that most Mexicans are purported to have. It is only that Abril does not wait for Rainsey to complete the utterance, but seizes upon the opportunity space to help bring the utterance to completion and to claim an assertive stance toward the subject matter.

Fragments (22) and (23) show that when a participant produces a collaborative completion in a falling intonation, she takes up an assertive stance toward the subject matter. However, such stance is not fixed, but can be subject to change, especially when a
participant is not certain about her prior knowledge. Fragment (24) is such an example. It is taken from a discussion based on a reading selection about the Chinese government’s crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest. The three participants Aaron, Vannara, and Martin were non-Chinese, and they did not learn about the incident until they read the article. That is, their knowledge of the political incident came exclusively from the reading.

(24) Protest [CDM: 0953-1009]

1 Aar: eh: (.) like (.) a group of students they came out to protest (0.5) right? (0.3) and then the Chinese military .hhhhhhhhhhhh they:: [most of- ]=
2 Van: ➔ [>beat them up.<]
3 Aar: =them (0.6) they killed all of them.
4 (0.2)
5 Van: ↓why.((in a surprising tone))
6 (0.5)
7 Aar: because (0.8) because they:: (1.0) (pro-) because they protest (   )

In lines 1-3, Aaron offers a summary of what happened on the Tiananmen Square based on what he learned from the reading. Aaron’s inbreath and the sound stretch on they are signs of trouble that open up an opportunity space for turn entry in line 3. Vannara comes in to offer a completing utterance – beat them up, thus constructing her version of the event, namely, the Chinese military beat the students up. In partial overlap with Vannara’s completing utterance, Aaron moves forward with his own telling. His version of the event is that the military killed all the students (line 5). While the crackdown did result in causalities that were much more serious than how Vannara has presented it through her completing utterance, Aaron’s extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) – all of them – is no doubt an exaggeration of the event. Nonetheless, in a surprising tone and with an emphatically falling intonation, Vannara asks Aaron why (line 7). The question demonstrates that rather than casting doubt on Aaron’s version of
the event, Vannara accepts it as is and defers to Aaron as someone who is in a position to explain why this happened. Vannara’s surprising tone also indicates that the killing is new information to her – recall that her version is that the students were beaten up.

This indicates that, although initially taking up an assertive stance, Vannara is not certain about the information she gathered from the reading.

The three instances of completing utterances in fragments (22)-(24), like those in fragments (19)-(21) are all produced in a falling intonation, and they present an assertive stance of the second speaker toward the proposition conveyed through the utterance.

Through epistemic stance taking, each of the participants orients to garter throwing, or the religious makeup of Mexico, or Tiananmen Square crackdown as something within their epistemic domain.

4.6.3 Marking an uncertain stance with a rising intonation

When the second speaker does not have prior knowledge of or direct access to what is to be said by the first speaker, but nevertheless ventures a completing utterance, the completing utterance is produced with a rising intonation to mark the second speaker’s uncertain stance. Consider example (25).

(25) Some places [WOLIC 0554-0714]

1  Rai:  .hh a:nd uhm (0.3) I- I kind of surprised when
2  I read the essay in Cambodia it is not polite to
3  have eye contact with someone who (0.5) is older
4  [(as a-)] (0.3) or someone who is (. ) considered=  
5  Lea:  [older ]  
6  Rai:  =as a superior. .hhhhhhhh I don’t think so, I’ve
7  never heard that befo:re[like-]  
8  Lea:  [I-] (0.3) maybe it’s
9  (.in:::(1.2)(Leakena gazes upward during the 1.2-sec
10 Pause))
11 Abr:  some places?=  
12 Lea:  =I don’t know=maybe like (. ) you::: (1.0) giving:::
13  Like some attitude, and th:en
In lines 1-4, 6-7, Rainsey expresses her surprising and disbelieving reaction toward a piece of information that she comes across in the reading – that in Cambodian culture it is impolite to have direct eye contact with someone who is senior in age or status. In response, Leakena seems to disagree with Rainsey and thus aligns herself with the reading, but she does so with mitigation. As can be seen in line 8, After dropping out of the overlap with Rainsey and following a brief pause, Leakena restarts her turn with the word *maybe* to qualify what she is about to say. Her utterance, however, is filled with disfluencies. There is a sound stretch on *in*, and then a gap of 1.2 seconds follows, during which Leakena gazes upward in a search for words (line 9-10). This creates an opportunity space for mid-turn entry. In 11, Abril comes in to offer a completing utterance, produced in a rising intonation, and brings Leakena’s utterance to syntactic completion.

The collaboratively completed utterance expresses the idea that avoiding direct eye contact may be true in some places in Cambodia. As someone who is from Mexico and not familiar with Cambodian culture, Abril is venturing a guess about a culture that she knows little about, and she marks the completing utterance with a rising intonation to indicate her uncertain stance toward the subject matter. Indeed, her guess may not be correct, as it is not accepted by Leakena, who in line 12 recycles the qualifier *maybe* but abandons the original syntactic structure in favor of a new one, thus rendering Abril’s completion as irrelevant.

Fragment (26) is a similar case. Prior to the fragment, Leakena had recounted her story of having to burn the midnight oil in order to cram up for the finals.

(26) Dizzy [SACS 0413-0449]

1  Lea: and then (1.0) like (.) when I wake up, .hhhh I
2  feel so exhausted, (0.3) like (.) no: : : : : : : (0.5)
power at all::: and the::n:: (0.4)((clears throat))
(1.0) u:hm (0.9) like I feel like (1.3) even though
I::: like (..) can walk to class=I don’t- but I don’t
feel sleepy at all.
(1.0)
Lea:  yeah:: but I feel (..) I feel like it’s like (.)
Rai:  dizzy?=
Lea:  = I have no (..) I have no sense in (..) my body
at [a(h)] heh heh .hh heh heh
Rai:   [you know, it’s like [(0.4) she go (blank), like-
Abr:    heh heh heh .hh heh heh
Lea:  yea:::h.
(0.9)
Lea:  [I can’t feel anything in my body.
Abr:  [heh heh .hhhh he

In lines 1-6, Leakena continues to tell the other participants about the consequences
of her sleep deprivation. She felt “exhausted,” had “no power,” but nevertheless “walked
to class” and “did not feel sleepy.” After a 1.0-second pause, she continues with the
telling by saying yeah::: but I feel (..) I feel like it’s like (.). The disfluencies indicate
troubles in utterance completion. At this moment, Rainsey steps in to provide a
completing utterance – dizzy (line 9), produced with a rising intonation.

Only Leakena herself could have direct experience of her physical conditions.
Therefore, when Rainsey offers dizzy as a candidate completer, she is venturing a guess
based on Leakena’s prior telling and about something that she could not have directly
experienced. She marks her uncertain stance by using a rising intonation. Her completer
is not accepted by Leakena, who goes on to provide her own version of how she felt
(lines 10-11).

Let us examine another example. In fragment (27), Abril is telling her Facebook
story.

(27) My Facebook [SNW: 1639-1659]
Abr:  .hh uhm (0.2) in my Facebook,
(0.5)
Rai:  uh huh
(0.4)
Abr:  uhm .h I put my (..) num- (0.3) I put my:: (1.0)
As Abril recounts that she revealed her phone number on her Facebook (lines 1, 5-6), Rainsey provides continuers (lines 3, 8) (Schegloff, 1982), demonstrating understanding that a multi-unit turn is ongoing. In line 9, after a brief inbreath, Abril goes on to produce the beginning of her new TCU – *and then*, projecting that the event due next is temporally subsequent to the event of her having disclosed her phone number on Facebook. However, Abril has trouble in forwarding the storyline, as evidenced by the long pause and the elongated vocalization (line 9). Rainsey enters the turn space and provides a guess – *one guy* – the possible subject of the TCU-in-progress. As Abril is recounting a personal story that Rainsey does not have access to, Rainsey’s guess is a wild one at best, and Rainsey orients to her epistemic uncertainty by delivering the utterance in a rising intonation, awaiting a confirmation from Abril.

Latched onto Rainsey’s guess is Abril’s production of the next element in talk – *they* (line 11), the possible subject of the TCU-in-progress. As no person reference other than Abril herself has been made in the foregoing telling, the deictic use of *they* is a little out of context. Hearing Rainsey’s guess, Abril cuts off, and after a brief pause, utters a confirmation token *yeah* (line 11), thus accepting Rainsey’s rendition of the event – namely, Abril put her number on Facebook, *and then one guy X*.

After the confirmation token, Abril does not proceed immediately to produce her next element of talk. A pause of 0.2 second develops, and in line 13, Rainsey goes on to
provide the $X$ component. Interestingly, she drops *one guy*, the candidate subject proposed by herself earlier, and adopts the one proposed by Abril, *they*. By using *they*, Rainsey orients to Abril’s cut-off utterance in line 11 as incomplete. Note that when Rainsey’s guess, *one guy* (line 10), is confirmed by Abril, the range of what can projectably happen next is significantly narrowed down – what could *one guy* who got a telephone number from a girl’s Facebook possibly do? Drawing on her knowledge and experience as a Facebook user as well as on gender relationship, Rainsey advances the storyline further in the form of a completing utterance– *they stalked it and they called it?*, delivered in a rising intonation (line 13). This is once again confirmed by Abril (line 14).

In this example, Abril is telling her personal story about Facebook, an experience that is unknown to Rainsey, and Rainsey displays her orientation to the epistemic imbalance by delivering her completing utterance in a rising intonation for Abril to confirm.

Fragments (25)-(27) show that the second speakers display sensitivity toward experience or information that is inaccessible to them, and they mark their uncertain stance by producing the completing utterances in a rising intonation. Now I will turn to a deviant case.

Prior to fragment (28), Vannara, the discussion leader, read out from the handout a discussion question that was designed in order to elicit from the participants their knowledge of the political system in their own country and how the political system impacted the country’s economy. After reading out the question, Vannara claimed that she did not know what the political system was in Cambodia, her home country. She justified her lack of knowledge by saying that she left the country many years ago. This,
however, did not get her off the hook. Aaron reacted in strong disbelief and asked “you
don’t read about your country?” When a negative answer is offered by Vannara, Aaron
admonished Vannara not to forget where she came from. Just at this point, Martin came
in and, in a jocularly and mockingly exaggerated manner, pointed his fingers at Vannara
while reenacting Aaron’s admonishing words. The following fragment presents
Vannara’s response to the reprimand from her peers.

(28) I don’t forget where I came from [CDM: 1608-1636]
(Van=Vannara    Mar=Martin    Aar=Aaron)

1  Van:  look listen I don’t forget where I came from .hhh
2     the point is that I left (0.6) from my country
3     when I was like (0.2) ten (0.3) or whatever .h so
4     I don’t like really .h when I >when I was in my
5     country I didn’t really care about what was going
6     on,< because I was young, I don’t like (0.4) >all I
7     do is just like go to school and come back eat (.)<
8     and (.)[that’s what I] do. but m- (0.5) well=
9       [tch hhhhh     ]
10    Mar: [and play games.]
11    Van: yes. well maybe my parents- 
12    Mar:->
13    Van: that, but not me (0.4) (even) here I don’t care
14    Van: about like what is going on in United States
15    Van: *I like* >okay I don’t care just go to school.

Faced with an identity-implicative reprimand, verging on being an accusation, that
she forgets where she comes from, Vannara sets out to build a defensive account to
deflect the reprimand. First she denies point blank that she forgets about her country. She
then resorts to age as a membership categorization device (Sacks, 1992), with herself
being an incumbent in the category of children while her parents are members of the
category of adults. As a child in the category of children back in Cambodia, like any
other typical child in the category, Vannara describes herself as exclusively (all I do,
lines 6-7) category-bound to such routine activities as go to school come back and eat
(line 7), which precludes an interest or participation in what is going on outside of the
home and school. By contrast, as members of the category of adults, Vannara attributes to
her parents the category-boundedness of *maybe worry about that* (lines 12-13), *that* referring to the politics of the country. Drawing on membership categorization, then, Vannara justifies her lack of knowledge of Cambodia’s political system when she was a child living there, implying that it was not her fault because what went on at the national level was something that fell completely outside of a typical school child’s domain of knowledge and experience.

Upon the completion of Vannara’s production of the category-bound activities in lines 6-8, Martin utters some laugh tokens (line 9), and in interruption, he produces a completing utterance in line 11 – *and play games*, designed as an additional item to be added to the list of activities that Vannara mentions she typically did as a school child in Cambodia. It is obvious that Martin does not have access to the details of Vannara’s early life in Cambodia many years earlier. The fact that, despite the lack of access, he is nevertheless able to offer a completing utterance that describes a particular aspect of her early life suggests that he orients to the activities mentioned by Vannara not as uniquely bound to her as an individual, but as something that is typically bound to, and shared by, any school child of her age. In other words, through a completing utterance, Martin displays his understanding of the social action that Vannara attempts to accomplish through the description of the category-bound activities. Whether or not Vannara did indeed play games when she was little is no longer important. What is important is that just like such routine activities as going to school, returning home, and eating, playing games can be an indispensable part of many a school child’s daily life, activities that are not even tangentially related to the country’s political system.
Martin’s is a delayed collaborative completion in that Vannara has already completed the list, brought the TCU to completion, and initiated a new TCU where she brings up her parents as a contrast (lines 8, 10). In response to Martin’s delayed completing utterance, Vannara nevertheless produces an acknowledgement token yes (line 12) before moving on with her interrupted account (lines 12-15).

In this example, the completing utterance – and play games, is used by Martin to describe Vannara’s childhood experience, an experience that he cannot possibly has access to. Yet, rather than using a rising intonation to mark the epistemic imbalance, Martin produces the utterance in a falling intonation. This falling intonation displays his orientation to Vannara’s telling as not so much about some individual experiences, but about collective childhood experiences, shared by anybody who has gone through that age period. This example, then, is not a violation of epistemic stance taking marked by rising or falling intonation in the production of collaborative completion, but a reinforcement of it.

4.6.3 Summary

In this section, I have demonstrated that there are regularities as to whether the second speaker produces her collaborative completion in a falling or rising intonation. I have shown that the second speaker conveys her certainty or uncertainty about her inferences through intonation. When the immediate sequential context and the emerging grammatical structure of the utterance, or her prior knowledge and experience, provide enough clues for the projectability of an utterance, she produces the collaborative completion in a falling intonation to mark her assertive stance. However, as one’s prior knowledge is not always reliable, I have also demonstrated that an initial assertive stance
can be subject to change through interaction. On the contrary, when what is conveyed through the first speaker’s utterance is something inaccessible to the second speaker, the second speaker produces a collaborative completion in a rising intonation to mark her uncertain stance. I analyzed a deviant case to show that when the second speaker produces in a falling intonation a collaborative completion that addresses the first speaker’s private experience, it serves other interactional functions. Overall, this chapter shows that, when producing a collaborative completion, the second speaker displays sensitivity and orientation to whether the proposition conveyed through the completing utterance falls within or outside her territory of information (Kamio, 1997).

4.7 Summary and concluding remarks

In this chapter, I took up the task of investigating how collaborative completion is deployed by L2 speakers to organize their participation in small group work in ESL classrooms. I took Lerner’s (1989) definition of collaborative completion as a point of departure. Compared with L1 collaborative completion, which specifies that the second speaker produces an utterance that is a syntactical continuation and completion of the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress, I demonstrated with L2 data that the criteria of syntactic fitness and completion need to be relaxed.

In addition to a proposed relaxation of syntactic requirements, I also revisited the distinctions among word searches, collaborative completion, and grammatical increments and argued that while the three interactional practices have different implications for speaker transitions – an important distinction that merits analytic attention, they share the commonality of being an element of talk that does not have an independent grammatical status and their sequential-social import has to be understood by reference to the TCU to
which they are a part. I also demonstrated with L2 data that the distinction between word searches and collaborative completion is quite fuzzy.

I then defined L2 collaborative completion in a way that at once reflects relaxed criteria on syntactic fitness and completion required of L2 speakers and broadens the scope of investigation to entertain all the three sequential environments in which the practice of two speakers co-producing a single utterance is accomplished in talk-in-interaction.

Having defined L2 collaborative completion, I proceeded to examine four different functions of collaborative completions: collaborative completion as a means to facilitate the progressivity of talk; to hamper the progressivity of talk; to co-opt affiliation and agreement and to reassert one’s stance; to mark one’s epistemic stances.

The analysis and discussion of the first function – collaborative completion as a means to facilitate the progressivity of talk – centered on the observed interactional phenomenon in which the progress of the first speaker’s TCU is halted due to some perturbations, and as the first speaker exhibit great difficulty in forwarding the talk, the second speaker comes in to offer a completing utterance to bring the halted TCU to completion. The analysis demonstrated that visually the first speaker is shown to exhibit bodily conduct characteristic of the embodied actions of a speaker who is searching for words. Yet, what is being searched for is not a particular vocabulary item as commonly observed in word searches in conversation. Rather the first speaker is searching for an idea, a definition, or a correct verb tense. The second speaker monitors the interaction closely, makes a situated judgment as to what the first speaker is searching for, and then enters the turn space in the middle of the first speaker’s solitary search to offer a
completing utterance that brings the halted TCU to completion. The first speaker responds with an acknowledgment token, accepts the completing utterance, and proceeds with the talk. By offering a completing utterance that forwards a halted TCU to completion, the second speaker facilitates the progressivity of talk. I characterized this function of collaborative completions as a hybrid practice that combines the characteristics of word searches with those of collaborative completion. In the light of the findings, I revisited two preference principles: the preference of self-initiation and self-repair over self-initiation and other repair and the principle of the entitlement by a speaker to complete a TCU. I argued that both principles need to be relaxed or revised in an L2 pedagogical context. Other repair, even when uninvited, is preferred over self-repair when an L2 speaker exhibits considerable trouble in coming up with a repair solution on her own. In a similar vein, progressivity is prioritized over a speaker’s right to bring a TCU to completion when the speaker exhibits great difficulty in bringing a TCU to completion on her own.

The second function – collaborative completion as a means to hamper the progressivity of talk – as its name suggests, is antithetical to the first function. Two important analytic concepts – projection and contingency – guide the analysis of the data in this section. When making a mid-turn entry to offer a completing utterance, the second speaker has to rest on the projectability of talk to determine the when and what. The when means when to enter the first speaker’s turn space while the what means what form the completing utterance should assume. However, contingency can trump projection in talk, and L2 speaker can have problems with the execution of the when and the what in interaction. The analysis showed that the second speaker projects and produces a
different turn shape for the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress than the first speaker does or would have projected and produced. Rather than rejecting or disregarding the second speaker’s infelicitous completing utterance, the first speaker was shown to go to great lengths to make accommodation to the second speaker by changing her emerging grammatical structure, integrating the completing utterance into her utterance, or initiating repair in order to understand the completing utterance. By accommodating to the second speaker’s infelicitous completing utterance, the first speaker prioritizes collaboration and intersubjectivity over progressivity. That collaboration and intersubjectivity are privileged over progressivity can be explained by a preference principle: despite the infelicity of a completing utterance, its acceptance is preferred over its rejection or deletion. I also pointed out that “hampering the progressivity of talk” can be a misnomer to describe this function of collaborative completions because the completing utterances, no matter how inapposite they turn out to be, are not created in the first place by the second speaker to “purposefully” stymie the progressivity of the first speaker’s talk, but rather to facilitate it. It backfires because of the design features of the when and the what of the completing utterance and the first speaker’s subsequent response to it.

Co-opting affiliation and agreement and reasserting one’s stance are other functions of collaborative completions that I examined. What informs the analysis in this section is the preference organization that speakers use to interpret and enact conversational actions. In group discussions, the participants are frequently asked to evaluate, take up a stance toward, or express a viewpoint about a reading, a person, an event, or some current state of affairs. When an evaluation is made, a stance taken, and a viewpoint expressed, an
affiliation or disaffiliation, agreement or disagreement become relevant next. The analysis showed that like in ordinary conversation, the participants orient to the preference principle that disaffiliation and disagreement should be minimized or avoided. The adherence by the participants to this preference principle is manifested in how they use collaborative completions, inter alia, to convert an imminent disaffiliation or disagreement into an affiliation or agreement. In the light of the findings, I argue that collaborative completion is a powerful device in co-opting affiliation and agreement for two reasons. One, a completing utterance can change the grammatical trajectory of the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress, and in changing the emerging grammatical structure, the second speaker also changes the propositional content of the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress, hence the first speaker’s position or stance. Two, a completing utterance makes an acceptance or rejection relevant next, and since a rejection is strongly dispreferred, an acceptance is expected. In accepting the completing utterance, the first speaker is won over, and the second speaker reasserts her stance through a dual co-option. As some of the completing utterances deployed to achieve co-option contain visible L2 grammar features and/or fall short of the syntactic fitness and completion criteria in relation to the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress, I called for, and demonstrated in my analysis, a sequential-contextual sensitivity to the analysis of completing utterances to determine whether the non-native like grammatical features are simply L2 errors or are motivated by interactional considerations.

The last function of collaborative completion that I examined is marking one’s epistemic stances. I showed that the second speakers display great epistemic sensitivity toward the completing utterances that they produce. When they are not certain about the
proposition conveyed through their completing utterances, they produce them in a rising intonation. Otherwise, they produce them in a falling intonation.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that it is not uncommon for disfluencies to occur in the middle of a L2 speaker’s utterance. When this happens, an occasion arises for collaborative completion. The various interactional functions achieved through the deployment of co-participate completion indicate that L2 speakers are capable of using grammatical and turn-taking resources in coordinating their participation in group work.
Chapter 5

When an Utterance Is Syntactically Incomplete: Handover, Turn-Terminating Yeah, Takeover, and Curtailment

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter four, I have demonstrated how, when perturbations occur in the first speaker’s talk, thus indicating troubles in completing an utterance, the second speakers can come in to offer a collaborative completion. This presents collaborative efforts between two speakers to complete one single utterance. However, collaborative completion is not obligatory, but an interactional option. In the conclusion section of a paper that illustrates the structural features of different kinds of compound TCUs, Lerner (1991) remarked that

(t)hough a compound turn-constructional unit-in-progress provides an opportunity for anticipatory completion, it does not require it; that is, the opportunity is sometimes taken and sometimes not taken. (And the opportunity space can indeed be used for other actions besides anticipatory completion.) Completion of a compound turn-constructional unit-in-progress by another participant is sequentially possible but not necessarily sequentially required or implicated (p.454).

Although Lerner’s observations are about compound TCUs in L1 conversation, they can also be applied to collaborative completion in L2 data. It follows then that when perturbations occur in the first speaker’s TCU, it can constitute an opportunity space for a mid-TCU entry by the second speaker. This opportunity is sometimes acted upon and sometimes not.
What is of particular interest is Lerner’s parenthetical remark –“(a)nd the opportunity space can indeed be used for other actions besides anticipatory completion.” The question arises as to what other actions besides collaborative completion can be performed at those opportunity spaces. Lerner did not answer the question in his study. I will take up where he left off and empirically demonstrate with my L2 data four other actions that can be performed at the opportunity spaces besides collaborative completion. I will also demonstrate how grammar intersects with the turn-taking practice in these actions.

The four actions are handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover, and curtailment through an acknowledgment token. Handover and turn-terminating yeah are actions initiated by the first speaker within her own turn space when perturbations occur, and they lead to the abandonment of a syntactically incomplete utterance. Takeover and curtailment through an acknowledgment token are actions initiated by the second speaker within the first speaker’s turn space, and they result in a transition of speakership before the first speaker’s troubled TCU-in-progress is brought to syntactical completion. I will illustrate these actions one by one.

5.2 Handover

Handover is a practice in which the first speaker, through verbal and/or visual means, invites the second speaker to take over the turn when she has trouble in bringing an utterance to completion, an invitation that the second speaker accepts and the handover of turn is accomplished. Consider fragment (1).

(1) Kidney and miracle [KT 1412-1448]
1 A: ((reads)) after you read the article, what is
2 your opinion about donating kidney and about
3 mira- miracle.
4 (6.2)
5 Rai: m::: (0.5) ((smack of tongue)) (0.7) I feel
6 touched by that and eh .hhhh John’s (0.5)
7 he did like .hhhh really nice, he don’t care
8 himself like (selves), (0.9) and um (1.5) and
9 u::m (6.5) ((during the 6.5-sec pause, Rainsey
gazes at the handout))
10 Rai: $\rightarrow$ \{ (Rainsey shifts gaze from handout to Abril) \}
11 Abr: $\rightarrow$ \{ (Abril shifts gaze to Leakena) \}
12 Rai: that’s it.
13 Abr: **(you?)**
14 (1.0)
15 Lea: \{ (Leakena gives her response) \}

After the discussion leader Abril reads out the question from her handout (lines 1-3), a long pause of 6.2 seconds follows (line 4). Then Rainsey self-selects to offer her response. She expresses her emotional state toward the reading and describes John’s kidney donation as a selfless act (lines 5-8). As she attempts to extend her turn into the next TCU – (0.9) and um (1.5) and u::m (6.5) (lines 8-9), she encounters great difficulty, as evidenced by the vocalizations and the long pauses. During the 6.5-second pause, Rainsey gazes at her handout (lines 9-10). Then she shifts her gaze from the handout to Abril (line 11), still not being able to bring the turn to completion. This shift of eye gaze occurs after a long and fruitless word search, and Abril orients to it as an invitation for her to take over. She does so by shifting her gaze to Leakena (line 12), thus selecting her as the next speaker. These two consecutive shifts of eye gaze – from Rainsey to Abril and from Abril to Leakena – accomplish the handover of turn from Rainsey to Abril, and from Abril to Leakena. What is interesting is that following the shift of eye gazes Rainsey and Abril each produce a bit of talk that gives a verbal interpretation to the action import of their respective shift of eye gaze. Rainsey utters that’s it (line 13) while Abril asks Leakena to respond by producing an almost inaudible you (line 14) in rising intonation.
Let us consider another example. Prior to fragment (2), Rainsey and Abril had offered responses to Leakena’s question about the content of the reading. The fragment opens with Leakena giving her own response.

(2) Harmful effects of social media [SNW 1532-1550]

```plaintext
1  Lea:  what I have is li::ke it’s about harmful of
2    social media (0.3).hhh site (0.5) or Internet.
3 (0.6)
4  Rai:  eh huh
5  Lea:  →  it’s really harmful to: (1.8) people thaat
6    →  you know, (1.2) I don’t kn(h)ow hhhhe hehehe
7    →  [.hhh hehehe ((toward the end of “I don’t know”
8    →  Leakena shifts gaze to Rainsey))]
9  Rai:  [yeah=it’s like different way, [they can harm=
10  Lea:  ]yep
11  Rai:  =you in different way=
12  Lea:  =eh huh
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Leakena summarizes the content of the reading in lines 1-2 and further expands on her contribution in lines 5-6. The relative pronoun *that* in line 5 projects the unfolding of a *that*-clause. Yet, following its production Leakena has trouble in completing the clause. She utters a discourse marker *you know*, pauses, and then makes a no-knowledge claim – *I don’t know* (line 6). As she says *I don’t know*, she starts to laugh while shifting her gaze to Rainsey (lines 6-8). Rainsey orients to this verbal and visual behavior of Leakena’s as inviting her to take over the floor. In line 9, Rainsey initiates a turn by saying *yeah=it’s like different way, they can harm you in different way*, which is not a syntactic completion of Leakena’s previously incomplete utterance, but an acknowledgement of and an elaboration on what Leakena said earlier. By handing the floor over to Rainsey, Leakena relieves herself of the burden of constructing a turn that she has much trouble with.
A similar example can be found in fragment (3), which is part of the response to a question that asks the participants to ponder about involuntary prostitution and women’s position in society. Prior to the fragment, Abril and Rainsey had offered their response.

(3) Judgment on women [PAHT 2000-2035]
1 Lea: .hhhh peole think that ((clears throat)) (0.5) back
2 then yeah it was like um people think that .h
3 women have like (0.2) no power than a man.
4 Abr: yeah
5 Lea: → .hhh and (0.5) they judged women by (0.7) I don’t
6 → know (2.1) ((toward the end of the 2.1-sec pause,
7 → Leakena shifts gaze to Rainsey))
8 Rai: it’s like (0.2) woman is not (0.3) important (.)
9 at all, like just like (2.5)
10 Lea: .hh especially (0.2) [the like-] I’m a (0.3) gir:l
11 Rai: [it’s- ]
12 Lea: who have no education is easily for .hhh em other
13 Rai: people to trick them or something like that.
14 Lea: uh huh
15 Lea: yeah.

The opening lines of the fragment show that Leakena is offering her response (lines 1-3), an action that she continues into lines 5-6. Following the preposition by in line 5, however, Leakena’s turn construction effort is disrupted by a pause, a no-knowledge claim – I don’t know, and then a longer pause (lines 5-6). Not being able to complete the turn, Leakena shifts her gaze to Rainsey (lines 6-7), who orients to Leakena’s verbal and visual cues as inviting her to assist. She takes up the invitation by initiating a turn (lines 8-9) which, although not a syntactic completion of Leakena’s incomplete turn, does hold onto the same topical line. However, like Leakena, Rainsey also encounters difficulty in bringing her turn to completion. Following a pause of 2.1 second, Leakena comes in to take over the floor.

In this case, by inviting Rainsey to take over the floor, Leakena relieves herself of the burden of constructing a turn that seems difficult for her. When Rainsey encounters a similar difficulty in turn construction following the takeover, Leakena’s syntactically
incomplete utterance has already been rendered sequentially irrelevant, and Leakena is able to step in and initiate a new turn to move the talk forward.

Fragments (1)-(3) demonstrate that when encountering troubles in completing an utterance, rather than resolving the problems on her own and moving forward with the talk, the first speaker resorts to verbal and visual cues to invite the second speaker to assist. The second speaker accepts the invitation not by offering a collaborative completion, but by selecting another speaker to speak (fragment 1) or by initiating a new turn (fragments 2-3). The right to turn is thus handed over from the first speaker to the second speaker and the first speaker’s troubled utterance is left syntactically incomplete.

5.3 Turn-terminating yeah

In addition to handover, turn-terminating yeah is another systematic practice deployed by the participants to abort a troubled turn. Fragment (4) is an example.

(4) Animal rights [FOP 1710-1729]

In line 1, Leakena asks the other participants to summarize the reading. Rainsey self-selects and offers a succinct summary, saying that the reading is about animal rights (lines 3-4). She then elaborates by pointing out that some animal meat that “we” don’t usually eat is being consumed by others – making reference to the practice of cat and dog eating in some cultures mentioned in the reading (lines 3-6). Rainsey and Leakena are in mutual gaze midway through Rainsey’s talk. In line 6, when Rainsey produces it,
Leakena begins to nod. *It* is produced with a continuous intonation contour, indicating more talk is forthcoming. Following *it*, Rainsey utters a delaying device *like*, upon whose delivery she shifts her gaze from Leakena to the handout. A long pause of 2.1 seconds then ensues, during which a search for the next element of talk is in progress. The search, however, comes up empty, and Rainsey utters a *yeah*. Immediately following the *yeah*, she stops talking and shifts her gaze from the handout back to Leakena. A gap of 1.4 seconds elapses, and then Abril self-selects to offer her response.

Fragment (5) illustrates a similar use of *yeah*.

(5) It depends [ABT 1319-1338]

1  Abr:  ((reads)) do you agree or disagree with abortion.
2  Lea:  ((Click of tongue)) .huhhhhh I both agree and both
3  (0.3) I mean both agree [and disagree
4  Rai:  [°(   )like °
5  (0.6)
6  Rai:  [it’s i-
7  Lea:  [yeah
8  (0.2)
9  Rai:  depend on the situ[ation
10 Lea:  [yea:::h
11 Abr:  [depend on the case
12 Rai:  and depend on like (0.2) yea:h.
13 ((on “yea:h” Rainsey shifts gaze to handout and nods))
14 (1.5)
15 Abr:  [why.
16 Rai:  [they-
17 (2.2)
18 Rai:  because ((continues talking))

As a response to Abril’s question *do you agree or disagree with abortion* (line 1), Rainsey offers a relativist answer, saying that it depends on the situation (lines 6, 9). In line 12, she extends her turn into the next TCU by saying *and depend on like (0.2) yea:h*. As can be seen, she has trouble in finding a noun or noun phrase to follow the preposition *on*. In its place are a delaying device *like* and a short pause. Rainsey then terminates the syntactically incomplete utterance with a *yea:h*, upon whose delivery she shifts her gaze to the handout while nodding. No one speaks during the next 1.5 seconds (line 14). Then
Abril self-selects by saying *why* (line 15) in an attempt to elicit further talk from Rainsey. Just as Abril begins to speak, Rainsey also starts up, and the two overlap with each other. This causes Rainsey to cut off after *they* (line 16), a word that does not appear to be a syntactic continuance of her previously incomplete utterance, but the beginning of a new turn.

A similar function of *yeah* can also be observed in fragment (6). Prior to the fragment, Rainsey proceeded from the assumption that men and women have different ways of communicating and thinking, and based on this assumption, she asked the other participants whether they believed these differences negatively influence their relationship.

(6) Communication [GAC 2052-2134]

1 Lea: I- I don’t (.) think it’s (1.0) it’s a big deal about it ’cause everyone have a different .hhh opinion. and if you (0.7) guy like in a relationship .hhh want share other=and (.) if someone (0.5) doing bad stuff or .hhhhhhhhhhh hhhhhh it just that um (1.1) the other (.) you know, gonna say s- you know, (0.5) teaching you or::: telling you to- like a good thing. to change (0.6) yourself.

10 (1.0)

11 Lea: [yeah.

12 Abr: [like /kəmˈʃjʊnərˈkjuərɪʃən/ / kəmˈʃjʊnər-/ 

13 Lea: [communication.

14 Rai: [communication.

15 Abr: [communication (0.3) [between each other=

16 Lea: [communication=

17 Abr: → =[anːː]:::d (1.3) *yeah.*

18 Lea: [yeah]

19 Lea: yeah.

In lines 1-9, Leakena offers her response to the question. In line 12, Abril attempts to offer a confirmation check, but she mispronounces *communication* as /kəmˈʃjʊniˈkjuərɪʃən/, which leads to other-corrections by Leakena and Rainsey (lines 13-14). In partial overlap with Leakena’s and Rainsey’s other-corrections, Rainsey pronounces the word again, this time correctly, before she goes on to produce the next bit of talk –
communication (0.3) between each other and (1.3) yeah (lines 15, 17). This represents Abril’s understanding of what Leakena has just said and is being offered for Leakena to confirm. As can be seen from the transcript, there is a sound stretch on the and, after which comes a pause of 1.3 seconds. Then Abril terminates her turn with a yeah (line 17). In line 19, Leakena closes the sequence with a confirmation token.

Fragments (4)-(6) demonstrate that when a speaker encounters difficulty in bringing an utterance to completion, one practice that she can adopt is to prematurely terminate the utterance with a yeah. The yeah is preceded by some sorts of perturbations such as sound stretches, delaying devices, vocalizations and pauses. Following the yeah, the speaker stops talking and speaker transition can occur at this point.

In her study of English conversation that involved NSs and NNSs whose native language was Mandarin Chinese, Wong (2000b) found that sentence-medial yeah was produced in repair segments in the same turn in the NNSs’ talk. She observed that some perturbations preceded the token yeah. After the production of yeah, repair or no repair followed and the talk continued – that is, whatever troubles the speakers might have had before the yeah, they were resolved following the production of the yeah, and the talk continued. Wong pointed out that this sentence-medial use of yeah seldom occurred in NSs’ talk, and that when it did occur on some rare occasion, it was used to serve a different interactional function. For this reason, she proposed that the yeah served a “presentational” function. By using the yeah in this way, the NNSs presented an image of themselves as someone who was capable of managing glitches in talk.
As fragments (4)-(6) show, a pause of varying durations precede the *yeah*, indicating a word search in progress. Following the *yeah*, the first speaker stops speaking and a pause follows before transition of speakership occurs (fragments 4-5) or transition of speakership occurs immediately (fragment 6). There is no NSs’ talk to compare with in this study. However, to my knowledge, no published studies have reported this turn-terminating function of *yeah* in NSs’ talk. It is likely that the token is deployed specifically by L2 learners to mark the end of a search, to terminate a syntactically incomplete utterance, and to signal to other participants that the floor is now open.

5.4 Takeover

Takeover is an action initiated by the second speaker. It takes place when the second speaker enters the first speaker’s turn space and initiates a new sequence, thus taking over the turn from the first speaker. Fragment (7) is an example. It is drawn from a larger discussion based on an article about social networking. We join the conversation as the participants are working on a paraphrasing exercise.

(7) Identity thieves [SNW: 0620-0706]

1 Lea: (reads) social networking is a dream come true for
2 identity (0.9) thieves millions of people sharing
3 endless amounts of personal information right out
4 in the “o (0.7) pen.” hhhhh so (0.9) what is it try
5 to say.
6 (1.8)
7 Abr: it’s like u:::hm (1.2)the social net- (0.6)
8 networking (0.5)is like a world (0.7) like (0.6)
9 they (1.5) u:::hm::(2.5) *I don’t know* (0.5)
10 like (0.3) (((Abril and Rainsey face and gaze at each other
11 on “uhm” in line 9. At the onset of the 2.5-sec silence, Abril
12 shifts gaze sideways then lowers head and Rainsey withdraws gaze
to look at handout)))
13 Rai: ➔ I think it’s like uhm (0.3) when you://// for example
14 when you put something on Facebook or Myspace or
15 Twi[[ter, ] .hh you put your information in there,=
16 Abr: [uh huh]
17 Rai =.hhhh so like .hhhhh (0.2) it’s like you share::::
18 (0.4) your personal information to everybody.
In lines 1-5, Leakena reads out a sentence from the handout and asks the other two participants to paraphrase it. Abril self selects and attempts to give a paraphrase (lines 7-13). However, her turn is punctuated with many long pauses, exhibiting great trouble in forwarding the progress of the talk. Up until the production of the vocalization *uhm* in line 9, Abril and Rainsey face each other and maintain mutual gaze. A pause of 2.5 seconds follow the vocalization, and at the onset of the silence, Abril first shifts her gaze sideways then lowers her head to cast her gaze downward. At the same time as Abril shifts her gaze sideways, Rainsey also withdraws her gaze, lowers her head to gaze at the handout.

Abril maintains the same posture – head lowered and gaze cast downward – until line 10, indicating that she is still in a solitary search. Seeing that Abril is unable to move her talk forward, Rainsey initiates a turn and offers her own paraphrase of the sentence.

A similar case of takeover happens in the following fragment, also during a paraphrasing exercise:

(8) Perspective [GAC: 0411-0425]
1   Abr:  I don’t get it, this.
2       (1.0)
3  Rai:  >it’s like< *uhm::: (1.4) like (0.3) uhm a man
4       like (0.8) ((Rainsey gazes at handout))
5  Lea:  do you know [perspe-] (0.4) you know perspective=
6  Rai:                  [(     )] ((Rainsey raises head to gaze at Leakena))
7  Lea:  =right?
8       (0.5)
9  Abr:  pers (1.4)
10  Lea:  perspe[ctive.
11  Abr:  [perspective. uh [huh.
12  Lea:  yea:h
13  Rai:  °yeah.°

In line 1 Abril claims non-understanding. The deictic *this* refers to a sentence taken from the reading that the participants are asked to paraphrase, and is quoted in full here:

*From this perspective, finding one’s own way is an essential part of the independence*
that men perceive to be a prerequisite for self-respect. In lines 3-4, Rainsey sets out to explain what the sentence means to Abril. Her difficulty in organizing her utterance is demonstrated in the perturbations. Across the two transcription lines, the only substantial item she is able to produce is what seems to be the subject of her TCU-in-progress – a man. Following the production of the subject, there is a pause of 0.8 second. At this point, Leakena initiates a question directed to Abril, asking Abril whether she knows the word perspective (line 5). By initiating a question within Rainsey’s turn space and directed it to Abril, Leakena takes over the task of explanation from Rainsey.

Something similar happens in fragment (9) during a response to a comprehension question.

(9) Speak Spanish [IALL: 1037-1111]
1 Mal: ((reads)) wh- why do you think it’s hard for
2 Richard to speak Spanish?
3 (4.9)
4 Wad: eh eh because [he::: (1.1) he::: sin- (2.2)
5 ((at the onset of the 1.1-sec pause, Wadi withdraws gaze,
6 and lowers head close to desk))
7 Won: ➔ he’s in a country that speaks Eng- or only English
8 outside, so uhm it would be only inside their Spanish
9 community ( ) is very limited in America, which is
10 mostly English. that’s why it’s hard for Richard to
11 speak English there.
12 Wad: and since he was young (0.4) he start- (0.5)
13 with English

Wadi’s utterance in line 4 is a response to Malik’s question in lines 1-2. After some turn-initial perturbations, he produces because, a standard format in response to a why-question, and proceeds to produce he, the subject of the TCU-in-progress. Yet he encounters difficulty in producing the next element of talk from that point onward as demonstrated by the sound stretch on he, the pause, the repetition, the cut-off, and a long pause of 2.2 seconds. At the onset of the 1.1-second pause, he withdraws his gaze and
lowers his head close to the desk in a solitary search for word. At this point, Won takes
over the floor and gives his own response to the question.

Fragments (7)-(9) show that, when the progress of a TCU is halted, and when a
speaker is still in the process of searching for words, rather than making a mid-turn entry
to offer a collaborative completion, another speaker can initiate his or her own turn, thus
leaving the halted TCU incomplete and accomplishing speaker transition. In these cases,
speaker start-up is not at a possible transition relevance place – a violation of turn-taking
rule that can be labeled *interruption*. However, it is not certain whether this is an apt label
to describe such a practice of speaker transition in such situations. Notice that all the
tasks in the above fragments seem to predispose the participants to constructing a multi-
unit turn as a response, yet all the participants exhibit great trouble in constructing their
first TCU, let alone forward a multi-unit turn of talk to completion. They have not
produced anything semantically substantial either in their first TCU-in-progress to create
a felicitous condition for collaborative completion. In a sense, the takeover of the turn by
another speaker lifts those participants out of the interactional deadlocks (cf. Section 4.3)
and allows them more time to organize their responses. If we look back at fragment (9),
we will find that after Won’s response (lines 7-11), Wadi resumes his right to turn by
supplying his response, this time with much fewer perturbations. Note that he prefaxes
his turn with *and*, indicating that he accepts Won’s intervening response and builds his
own as an addition to Won’s.

Let us re-examine fragment (8) as well, reproduced as fragment (10) below, but
showing in full what transpires after Leakena takes over the floor from Rainsey.

(10) Perspective [GAC: 0411- 0448]
1  Abr:   I don’t get it, this.
2       (1.0)
After confirming that Abril knows the word *perspective*, Leakena initiates a turn that seems to be on its way to offer a paraphrase of the sentence (line 15). Yet she, too, has trouble in forwarding the talk, and a pause of 2.5 seconds develops. At this point, Rainsey enters with a collaborative completion (line 16). Note that her TCU beginning *like a man* is recycled from her previous TCU in lines 3-4 before the turn takeover occurs. This time she brings her TCU to completion, albeit with some perturbations. In line 23, Abril displays her understanding by uttering a change-of-state token *oh* (Heritage, 1984a) followed by *okay*.

The revisit of these two instances demonstrates that the takeover of turn by the second speaker from the first speaker may give the first speaker time to reorganize the halted utterance, and when the second speaker finishes his or her turn, speakership is transferred back to the first speaker, who can often overcome the initial trouble in their TCU construction. The takeover, therefore, is not interruptive but cooperative and affiliative in nature (see Kitzinger, 2008a). For this reason, even though speaker transfer
does not happen at a transition relevant place, I propose *takeover* in lieu of *interruption* as a more felicitous term to describe the action.

Takeover and handover are similar in many aspects. They are actions initiated at the opportunity spaces in the first speaker’s TCU, which leads to transitions of speakership and leaves the first speaker’s incomplete utterance incomplete. Their major difference is that while in handover, the second speaker takes over the turn through the first speaker’s invitation, in takeover the transition of speakership from the first speaker to the second speaker occurs uninvited.

5.5 *Curtailment through an acknowledgment token*

When the first speaker has difficulty in bringing a turn to completion, another common practice is for the second speaker to produce an acknowledgement token such as *okay*, *yeah*, and *uh huh* to claim understanding despite syntactic incompletion and to achieve speaker transition. I call this practice curtailment. Fragment (11) shows how the acknowledgment token *okay* in the arrowed turn serves such a function.

The fragment shows Abril, Leakena, and Rainsey toward the end of a word definition activity. Prior to the excerpt, the three participants had gone through the vocabulary list for the reading. As the word definition activity was drawing to an end, Leakena, the discussion leader, checked with Abril whether she had any difficulty in understanding any of the words they had just reviewed. We join the interaction as Abril singles out the word *harassment*.

(11) *Harassment [SNW 0444-0512]*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abr: <em>(points at handout)</em> what about this one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lea: <em>(reads from handout)</em> harassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abr: uh huh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lea: [like-]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abr: [it’s-] (0.4) uh [huh
Rai: [you beat somebody] (0.2) like
you bother: like .hhhhh (0.8) like
[you are annoying. okay]
Abr: [you are annoying. yeah]
Lea: but it’s in like an illegal way
Abr: il[legal
Lea: [il]legal
Rai: [yeah
Lea: its- (0.9) it’s like not just like a frien:::d
(0.4) annoying you °it’s not (0.4) [that mean°
Abr: [no-
Lea: yeah
Abr: it’s something [mo:::re
Lea: [it’s like- ( ]
Rai: [more like- (0.4)
deeper than that like (0.4) e:::h (2.0)
Abr: (1.0) ((Abril withdraws gaze from Rainsey; Rainsey follows
suit; they both gaze at their own handout))
Abr: (0.8)
okay.
((talk continues))
Lea: is there any other word you don’t understand?

The interaction shows that Abril gets herself actively involved in the process of co-
constructing the word meaning. In line 11, she offers a collaborative completion in
overlap with Rainsey’s contribution, showing her agreement with Rainsey that “annoying”
is a definitive element of what constitutes a harassing behavior. And as Leakena goes a
step further by pointing out that for any annoying behavior to be counted as a form of
harassment, it has to be “illegal” (line 12), and that it does not include the kind of
annoying behavior commonly found between friends (lines 17-18), Abril aligns herself
with Leakena by saying no- it’s something mo:::re (lines 19, 21). What projectably
follows the elongated more is an adjective, but it is not forthcoming. In lines 23-24,
Rainsey steps in to offer a collaborative completion, supplying deeper as a candidate
solution. Rainsey’s completing utterance comes to a point of possible completion at
deeper than that (line 24). However, she does not stop at that point but continues to hold
onto her turn, attempting to expand the turn-in-progress into the next TCU by uttering a
delaying device *like*, followed by a short pause, an elongated vocalization *eːːː:h*, and then a 2.0-second pause (line 24). Rainsey’s attempt to extend her turn indicates that she orients to the candidate solution as inadequate in some way and deems further expansion needed. However, the next TCU does not materialize, what occurs in its place are some speech perturbations.

In line 25, Abril produces an acknowledgement token *okay*. Note that the *okay* is produced following a 2.0-second silence, which indicates that Abril orients to Rainsey’s utterance as syntactically incomplete and waits for its completion. It is only after no more talk is forthcoming that she produces the acknowledgment token to show that although the turn is incomplete, understanding is claimed. Following the acknowledgement token, Abril withdraws her gaze from Rainsey, and Rainsey follows suit (lines 26-27). The withdrawal of eye gazes suggests that both participants orient to the sequence as coming to a close regardless of the syntactic incompletion in the previous turn.

A similar example can be found in the next fragment, which is drawn from a discussion based on a reading selection about the nature and nurture debate. The participants are responding to a discussion question that asks for their opinions about whether psychopaths are born or made. To set the ground for the discussion, the discussion leader, Idris, first asks the other participants to define what a psychopath is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Idr:</td>
<td>first what is a psy- psychopath. ((Idris gazes at Won))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Won:</td>
<td>Joker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aki:</td>
<td>tch heh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Idr:</td>
<td>Joker=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aki</td>
<td>=<strong>heh</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ain:</td>
<td>what is it? ((Aini gazes at Idris))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Idr:</td>
<td>people I don’t know like sick people who like to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>kill anːːːd (0.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13 Ain:  →  o:kay=
14 Won:  =do you see Dark Knight, right?
15                  ((talk continues))

As Idris raises the question, he gazes at Won’s direction (line 1), thus selecting
Won as the next speaker. Following a pause of 1.5 seconds (line 2), Won speaks and
offers Joker as a definition (line 3). Joker is a fictional character from the hugely popular
Hollywood movie Dark Knight and is a psychopathic clown whose cruelty knows no
bounds. The movie was released just a year before this talk occurred. By making
reference to a movie character that is something of a prototype of the category
psychopath, Won demonstrates his grasp of the meaning of the word psychopath.
However, Won’s response falls short of being an adequate answer to the definitional
question. It is more apt as an answer to “who can be an example of a psychopath?” than
to “what is a psychopath?” To understand the relevance of his response, one would have
to have a good grasp of the word psychopath as well as the movie character Joker.

In line 8, Aini initiates a repair (what is it?) She gazes at Idris as she asks the
question and Idris also raises his head to meet her gaze. Aini’s repair initiation, however,
seems to be ambiguous in terms of what it targets as the trouble source. The source of
ambiguity can be attributed to the pronoun it, which can be understood as referring to
Joker, or more broadly to the definition itself. In the former understanding, it is the word
Joker that has posed a hearing or understanding problem. In the latter understanding, the
trouble implicates both words – that is, Aini has trouble with both words, and her repair
initiation, positioned 2.1 seconds after a sequence devoted to defining a particular
vocabulary item, is deployed to invite Idris to redefine the word.

It is the latter understanding of the repair initiation to which Idris orients himself.
In lines 11 and 12, Idris redefines psychopaths. His turn comes to a point of possible
completion at *who like to kill*, a defining characteristic of psychopaths. However, he does not stop there but extends his turn into the next TCU by producing an elongated *an::d*, followed by a 0.8-second pause, in what appears to be an attempt to bring up further definitive characteristics of psychopaths in addition to the one just mentioned. Following the pause, no further talk is forthcoming, and Aini curtails Idris’ attempt by uttering an *o:okay* (line 13) that suggests although the turn is incomplete, it is adequate as a definition, and understanding is claimed.

Like *okay, um hm* or its variants can also be used to serve this interactional function. Fragment (13) is taken from a larger discussion on the topic of gender and conversational styles (Tannen, 1990). Specifically, it is part of a response to a comprehension question that asks why men do not want to ask for directions. Prior to the fragment, Leakena had self-selected and read the answer from her handout which was a direct quotation from the reading, a syntactically challenging sentence. Rainsey, the discussion leader, then asked Abril to answer. Rather than giving an answer, Abril said that her answer is “the same” as Leakena’s. Orienting to this as an insufficient answer, Rainsey asked to confirm whether Abril indeed shared the same idea with Leakena, to which Abril gave an affirmative response. It is in this context that Rainsey launches the following sequences.

(13) Asking for directions [GAC:1329-1415]

1  Rai:  in the book. (0.3) as (. ) they say that u:hm
2  (1.4) u:hm: (0.3) because they think that .hhhh
3  (0.6) when they ask the question, somebody is gonna
give (. ) their the wrong directions that’s why they
don’t want to ask (. ) the questions.
4  (1.4)
5  Abr:  u::h
6  Rai:  and they think that like (0.2) .hhhhh they try– they
7  try to fi– figure it out by (0.2) themselves. they
don’t want to ask any questions. (1.0) they might
8  think that .hhhh they are gonna real uhm:: give them
9  a wrong direction or just say like (0.3) just say oh
10  that way and that way if they ask.
11  (1.8)
In lines 1-5, Rainsey refers to the book as the source of information and explains that men do not want to ask for directions because they are afraid that they may be given the wrong direction. A pause of 1.4 seconds follows (line 6) and Abril utters a non-committed sounding *uh* (line 7). Rainsey orients to the long pause and Abril’s non-committed vocalization as an indication of non-understanding and launches a second attempt of explanation (lines 8-13). In lines 15-18, Abril demonstrates her understanding by providing an upshot of what Rainsey has just said. Her turn, however, is not grammatically complete. After the adjective *wrong* (line 17), a noun or noun phrase is missing. A pause of 0.5 second follows the word *wrong*, but Abril is unable to come up with a lexical item to fill that syntactic slot. At this point, Rainsey utters an acknowledgment token *um hm* to indicate that syntactically incomplete notwithstanding, Abril has demonstrated her understanding. Following the acknowledgment token, a gap of 0.7 second elapses, and neither Abril nor Rainsey orients to pursuing the missing word as a relevant next action. In line 22, Rainsey reiterates that the information can be found in the book, which elicits an acknowledgment token from Abril, and the sequence is bought to a close.

Fragments (11)-(13) show that each acknowledgment token in the arrowed turn constitutes a full turn itself. Following its production, the second speaker does not attempt to produce further talk. This indicates that speakership is subject to renegotiation,
and the first speaker or any other participant can speak at this point. If they do not, the second speaker can continue. In fragment (11), following the acknowledgment token in line 25 and the participants’ withdrawal of their eye gazes, Abril utters another *okay* (line 28), and then the floor goes to a third participant, Leakena, who initiates another question directed at Abril (line 30). In fragment (12), it is also a third participant, Won, who takes up the floor by initiating a question (line 14) following Aini’s acknowledgement token. In fragment (13), a pause of 0.7 (line 20) follows the acknowledgement token (line 19), and no one takes up the floor. In line 21, the second speaker continues to speak.

Next I will show one example in which the first speaker speaks again following the second speaker’s acknowledgment token to complete the previously incomplete utterance.

(14) Parent [WOLIC 0340-0419]

1  Abr:  when we were little, (0.5) like six, seven, or eight, (0.7) {{clears throat}} they let us go (.)
2  outside to play with (0.5) the other:: (0.8)
3  Lea:  m [hm
4  Abr:   [children. .h but um (0.9) {{click of tongue}}
5   (1.4) I think it depend (of) (0.6) each people
6   or each parent; but (.). some of them don’t care
7   about if they are playing with boys,
8  Lea:  m hm
9  Abr:  with girls, but some of them like my mum, (0.5)
10   she always: u:m get angry [whe:n whe:n (0.8)=
11   Lea:  [m hm
12  Abr:  =she saw me playing with boys [heheh
13  Lea:  [m:::h {{Leakena nods and starts to withdraw gaze from Abril}}
14  Rai:  yeah.=
15  Abr:  =yeah.
16  Lea:  that’s what every (.). parent (0.5) {{Leakena’s gaze is cast downward; Abril’s gaze is on Leakena}}
17  Abr:  → yeah.
18  Lea:  "do"
19  Rai:  but in here {{continues talking}}

Abril is recounting parental monitoring and whether children were allowed to play outside the home and in mixed-gender groups in Mexico (lines 1-3, 5-8, 10-11, 13). Her telling comes to an end when she invokes her own childhood experience and says that her
mother would become angry when she saw her playing with boys (lines 10-11, 13). As a response, Leakena says *that’s what every parent* (0.5). Although the turn is not brought to syntactic completion, it can be gathered from the sequential context that Leakena is attempting to normalize Abril’s mother’s reaction by pointing out that all parents would react in the same way. Following a 0.5-second pause, and when no further talk is forthcoming from Leakena, Abril curtails the incomplete turn with a *yeah* (line 20).

In line 21, and following the production of the acknowledgment token, Leakena takes up the floor and supplies the missing word *do*, thus completing a previously incomplete utterance. What is worthy of note is the low volume in which *do* is produced. Since the acknowledgement token has already marked the prior syntactically incomplete utterance as pragmatically complete, *do* can be considered an “extra” here whose presence or absence makes no difference. Furthermore, short as it is, the acknowledgement token constitutes a full turn on its own; therefore, coming after the intervening acknowledgement token, *do* can be considered one turn too late, or “out of turn,” so to speak. Based on this, it can be argued that the low voice in which *do* is produced displays Leakena’s orientation or sensitivity to the “extra” and “out-of-turn” status of *do*.

Fragment (15) presents a similar but somewhat different case.

(15) Unresponsible [AB 2853-2914]

```
1    Lea:  I hate the guy: that said that oh like when they
2        know the girlfriend [ () like pregnant, .hh[hhhhhs-
3    Abr:        [uh huh
4    Rai:                [ehk
5    Lea:        =and then they to:ld (0.6) her::: to (). get
6    Rai:               [ehk
7    Lea:               [(God).
8    Abr:             [o:::h no:::
9    Lea:               [my god I hate that so much.
10   Lea:   (0.6)
11   Rai:              ehehuh [heheh
12   Lea:           [that is- (0.3) un like (1.5)
```
Leakena expresses her strong aversion toward “guys” who talk their girlfriends into an abortion after finding out they are pregnant (lines 1-2, 5-6). Her telling elicits evocative responses from Rainsey and Abril (lines 7-8). In overlap with Rainsey’s and Abril’s responses, Leakena upgrades her stance of aversion by producing an expletive – *my god*, followed by a statement – *I hate that so much* (line 9). Stress is placed on the word *hate* whose force is further accentuated by the intensifier *so much*. The tying device (Sacks, 1992) *that*, or the object of the verb *hate*, refers back to the behavior of “the guys.” With this utterance, Leakena’s morally repugnant stance toward “the guys” and their behavior is in full view. In line 12, Leakena initiates a turn with the same tying device *that*, followed by *is* and then some perturbations, indicating that she has trouble in bringing the turn to completion. The use of the tying device, however, gives some clues that her utterance-in-progress is likely to continue the same topical line.

When no further talk is forthcoming from Leakena, and a pause of 1.5 seconds elapses, Rainsey offers an acknowledgement token *yeah* (line 13) in an attempt to curtail Leakena’s word search effort and to treat the syntactically incomplete utterance as pragmatically complete. As soon as Rainsey produces *yeah*, however, Leakena has also resolved the search and come up with the word *responsible* (line 14), whose production results in partial overlap with Rainsey’s *yeah* in line 13. It should be noted that *responsible* is the second component of the target word that Leakena had intended to produce. The first component *un* is produced in line 12 amid the perturbations. Following the production of *responsible*, Leakena initiates a self-repair by putting the two components together into one single word *unresponsible* (line 14).
Like _do_ in fragment (14), _unresponsible_ is produced in a low voice. By the time _unresponsible_ is produced, Leakena has already dropped out of the overlap. The low volume in which _unresponsible_ is produced indicates that, despite the overlap, Leakena still orients to the curtailing function of the acknowledgement token and treats the post-acknowledgement-token element of talk, which syntactically completes the previously incomplete utterance, as an “extra” and as being produced a bit too late.

Fragments (14) and (15) demonstrate that following the production of the acknowledgement token by the second speaker, the first speaker has the option of continuing to complete the just-prior incomplete utterance. This interactional option is possible because while the acknowledgement token curtails a syntactically incomplete utterance, it does not initiate an action that moves the talk forward and makes syntactic completion an irrelevant next action. Compare the following example:

(16) Busy with work [WOLIC 0047-0111]

1. Rai: after you like (0.5) seven↑ or eight (. ) years
2. old, (0.3)
3. Abr: m [hm
4. Rai: [your parents don’t really (1.1) took- you know
5. like take care of you like a babysitter. .hhh
6. [like jus- they just let you um play outside,=
7. Abr: [m hm
8. Rai: = (0.6) and=
9. Abr: =eh
10. (0.6)
11. Rai: because they busy with their work, so they don’t-
12. (0.5) they just (0.3)
13. Abr: (and) did you play with (0.5) girls or: (. ) with
14. boys too.
15. Rai: well most of the time it’s girl ((continues talking))

Rainsey is telling Abril that when children are seven or eight years of age in Cambodia, their parents will set them loose to play outside the home (lines 1-2, 4-6). The telling continues in lines 11-12, but Rainsey has trouble in bringing the utterance to completion. She first says _they don’t_, then cuts off (line 11). After a 0.5-second pause,
she restarts, changing into *they just* (line 12), then pauses again. Rather than producing an acknowledgment token, Abril curtails Rainsey’s turn by initiating a question that makes Rainsey’s answer relevant next (line 13-14), thus excluding the possibility for Rainsey to complete her previously incomplete utterance in the next sequential position. Indeed, following Abril’s question, Rainsey goes on to offer an answer (line 15).

Before concluding this section, let us examine one more fragment to consider further an important assumption that a curtailing acknowledgment token embodies – that despite its syntactic incompletion, a curtailed utterance is pragmatically complete.

(17) Others [JW 1212-1248]

With the collaboration of Rainsey, Leakena asks Abril whether her mother just stayed home to be a caretaker or held a job outside (lines 1-6). Abril responds by saying
that her mother stayed home (line 7). In line 10, Leakena initiates a confirmation check to see that Abril’s mother indeed did not go to work, to which Abril gives a negative answer – *my mum no* (line 11). She then extends her turn further into the next TCU *but* (0.9) *others:* (0.9) (lines 11-12). The sound stretches and the pauses indicate that Abril has trouble in furthering the progress of her turn. Rather than offering an acknowledgment token to curtail Abril’s word search effort and to claim understanding, Leakena demonstrates non-understanding by singling out the word *others* as the trouble source (line 13). This generates an extended repair sequence, and Leakena’s sequence-closing acknowledgment token is withheld until line 30.

This example shows a sequential environment in which a curtailing acknowledgment token could have been an interactional option. However, what materializes is a repair initiation that targets an understanding problem. This demonstrates that not all syntactically incomplete utterances are readily understandable to the recipients or are treated by the recipients as pragmatically complete. When non-understanding occurs, an acknowledgment token is usually withheld. This in turn strengthens the analytic claim that when an acknowledgement token is produced following a syntactically incomplete utterance, it embodies an implicit claim that syntactic incompleteness notwithstanding, the meaning the utterance conveys is clear to the second speaker.

With the analysis of the above excerpts, we arrive at a full picture of the acknowledgement tokens such as *okay, um hm,* and *yeah* as they are used in the practice of curtailment. They are produced by the second speaker in a sequential position following the first speaker’s syntactically incomplete utterance. A silence of some
duration, which belongs to the first speaker’s turn and indicates a search for the next
element of talk is in progress, precedes the production of the acknowledgment token.
That the second speaker allows gap to develop suggests that they orient to the first
speaker’s utterance as syntactically incomplete and waits for its completion. The silence
is broken when the second speaker steps in and produces an acknowledgment token to
indicate that although syntactically incomplete, the utterance is pragmatically adequate.
The first speaker can claim her right to speak again following the acknowledgement
token to complete the prior incomplete utterance, and when she does, she displays her
orientation to the action import of the acknowledgement token by speaking in a low voice.

Curtailment through an acknowledgement token is not obligatory; other actions are
possible in such a sequential environment. Through curtailment, the second speaker helps
put an end to a word search effort that may turn out to be fruitless and propel the talk
forward. It conveys an assuring message to the first speaker that however imperfect the
utterance is, it is perfectly understandable. At the same time, it leaves open the option for
the first speaker to continue to complete the not-yet-completed utterance following the
interpolation if this is something she opts to do. Therefore, it can be argued that, like
takeover, curtailment is not interruptive, but collaborative and affiliative.

Curtailment through an acknowledgement token shares some similarities with turn-
terminating *yeah*. In both practices, a token is deployed to terminate or curtail a troubled
utterance, and following its production a transition of speakership can occur. The
interactional effect is the abandonment of a syntactically incomplete utterance. A major
difference is that, while turn-terminating *yeah* is initiated by the first speaker within her
own turn space to terminate a troubled utterance and to extricate herself from the
difficulty of turn construction, curtailment through an acknowledgment token is initiated by the second speaker within the first speaker’s turn space and it helps free the first speaker from the trouble of turn construction.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have described four actions that can take place within the turn space of the first speaker: handover, turn-terminating *yeah*, takeover, and curtailment through an acknowledgement token. When disfluencies and pauses occur within the first speaker’s turn space that suggests difficulties in turn completion, the first speaker can abandon the syntactically incomplete utterance by handing the turn over to the second speaker or by terminating the turn construction effort through the use of a turn-terminating *yeah*. The same opportunity spaces are also available to the second speaker, who can make a mid-TCU entry to take over the turn from the first speaker or to utter an acknowledgment token that curtails the first speaker’s troubled utterance.

These practices of turn-terminating *yeah* and curtailment through an acknowledgment token demonstrate L2 learners’ nuanced understanding of the relationship between grammar and turn-taking. The use of the turn-terminating *yeah* by the first speaker displays her understanding that an utterance needs to be brought to completion before speaker transition can occur, and therefore, when she has trouble in completing an utterance, she produces a turn-terminating *yeah* to mark the end of her turn and to signal to others that the floor is now open. The use of a curtailing acknowledgment token by the second speaker also demonstrates her orientation to the syntactical completion of a TCU as a transition relevant place. She waits for a silence of some duration to elapse in the first speaker’s turn space. It is until no talk is forthcoming from
the first speaker to complete the utterance during the silence that she produces the acknowledgment token. At the same time, the use of a curtailing acknowledgment token also allows the first speak to complete her just-prior incomplete utterance in the next position following the interpolation if that is what she chooses to do.

The use of the practices of handover and takeover, on the other hand, demonstrates L2 learners’ skills in using the turn-taking system as a resource in coordinating collaborative action. In handing over the turn to the second speaker, the first speaker can abandon an utterance that she has trouble in constructing. In taking over the turn from the first speaker, albeit uninvited, the second speaker gives the first speaker time to re-organize her talk. Through handover and takeover, the progressivity of task-oriented talk is forwarded regardless of the glitches within individual speaker’s turn.
Chapter 6

When a Participant Is Uncertain about a Lexical Item: Uncertainty Marking

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe an interactional practice called uncertainty-marking, a practice of self-initiation of repair on a particular reference by L2 speakers to elicit other-repair. I first distinguish between try-marking (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) and uncertainty-marking. Then I define uncertainty-marking and delimit the scope of the chapter before I take up data analysis. Four sections are devoted to data analysis. In the first section of data analysis, I examine how the participants uncertainty-mark the pronunciation of a lexical item and elicit other-repair. The second section of data analysis investigates how the participants produce a partial word or a close proximity of a target word, and uncertainty-mark it to invite other-repair. The third section of data analysis focuses on how a full word is uncertainty-marked and how other-repair is recruited. In the final section of data analysis, I describe how, when a lexical item is not accessible or available, the participants deploy gestural uncertainty-marking to elicit assistance from others. Following data analysis, I discuss the similarities and differences between uncertainty-marking and word searches as well as the usefulness of introducing uncertainty-marking as an analytic concept to investigate repair practices in L2 talk. Based on the analysis, I also look into the relationships among participants’ epistemic status, repair outcomes, and learning opportunities. I conclude the chapter with a summary.
6.2 Try-marking and uncertainty-marking

In their seminal paper that expounds how reference to person is organized in conversation based two preference principles – the principle of recipient design and the principle of minimization, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) introduced the term try-marker, which they defined as a practice that “(w)hen recognition is in doubt, a recognitional with an accompanying (questioning) upward intonational contour, followed by a brief pause (or “try-marker”) may be used” (p.15). Consider the following example:

(1) [Data from Schegloff & Sacks, 1979, p.19]

A: ... well I was the only one other than the uhm tch Fords?, Uh Mrs. Holmes Ford? You know uh// the the cellist?
B: Oh yes. She's she's the cellist.
A: Yes
B: ye//s
A: Well she and her husband were there....

Here A first mentions the target reference the Fords, delivered in an upward intonation, thus entertaining the possibility of the reference being unrecognizable to the recipient. Indeed, there is no uptake from B. A then tries the full name, delivered once again in an upward intonation. When recognition is still not achieved, A proffers a descriptor that invokes the person’s profession, upon the delivery of which B claims recognition.

Try-markers therefore are recipient designed. They take into consideration the possibility that the use of a certain person reference may pose a recognition problem for recipients. When a try-marker is confirmed by recipients, it indicates that intersubjectivity has been achieved and that the talk can proceed, but when no recognition is indicated, a sequence devoted to resolving the referential problem usually ensues. Try-markers therefore involve a speaker positing an epistemic relationship between herself and a recipient, with the speaker in a [k+] position and the recipient in a [k-] position. A
quote from Sacks and Schegloff (1979) aptly captures this relationship: “(u)se of such a form (try-marker) is understood to be appropriate if a speaker anticipates that the recognitional form being used will on this occasion, for this recipient, possibly be inadequate for securing recognition” (p.18). To wit, when a speaker posits a possible [k-] status for a recipient with regard to the recognitional form being used, she is well justified in using a try-marker. The positing of an imbalanced epistemic relationship between a speaker and a recipient, therefore, is an important dimension in the practice of try-marking.

In the CA literature, however, there has been a tendency to use try-markers to describe practices that disregard the epistemic relationships between interlocutors. Specifically, try-markers are also being increasingly used to describe a practice in which the epistemic relationship between a speaker and a recipient is reversed, that is, [k-] for the speaker and [k+] for the recipient. To illustrate, I will compare two examples.

Fragment (2) is extracted from a discussion in which the participants compare the difference in size of some agricultural produce grown in the U.S. and in Cambodia. Prior to the fragment, Rainsey pantomimed to demonstrate how big lemons could be in the U.S. and how small they were in Cambodia. It generated a round of laughter. As the laughter winds down, a gap of 1.1 seconds ensues. Then, Leakena speaks.

(2) Cucumber [OF 2639-2652]

1 Lea: → [like a cucumbers?
2 [((Leakena’s gaze is on Rainsey; she also lifts left hand from lap, puts thumb and index finger into contact to form a ring shape to depict a cucumber))
3 (0.5)
4 Rai:  eh huh
5 Lea:  [yeah [cucumber ]
6 [((Leakena shifts gaze to Abril])
7 Rai:  [oh my God it’s] so big.
8 Lea:  it’s like (1.2) our: : : : : : size is like this[and=  
9 Abr:  [uh huh
10 Lea:  =this small,}
Leakena mentions *cucumbers* (line 1), another item of agricultural produce. She produces the term in an upward intonation\(^5\) while gazing at Rainsey (lines 1-2).

Accompanying the production of her utterance is her hand gesture. She lifts her left hand from the lap and puts her thumb and index finger into contact to form a ring shape in depicting a cucumber (lines 2-4). Following a short pause (line 5), Rainsey utters *eh huh* (line 6) to indicate recognition. After securing cognition from Rainsey, Leakena shifts her gaze to Abril while producing an acknowledgment token *yeah* followed by a repetition of the word *cucumber* (lines 7-8). The shift of the eye gaze and the repetition of the lexical item seem to be an attempt to elicit recognition from Abril. However, in partial overlap with Leakena’s turn, Rainsey starts to speak, exclaiming *oh my god it’s so big*, which continues the topical line of comparing the size of agricultural produce. This indicates that Rainsey interprets Leakena’s mention of cucumber in a rising intonation as a means to secure recognition, and once recognition is achieved, what projectably follows will be a continuation of the same topic (see Kim, 2009 for the use of try-marker in topic initial position to check recognition). Rainsey’s action projection is confirmed by Leakena who, following Rainsey’s exclamation, goes on to compare the size difference in cucumbers in Cambodia and the U.S. (lines 10, 12, 14).

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\(^5\) This should be distinguished from “uptalk,” a high-rising question tone at the end of declarative utterances that are popular among young Americans nowadays. As Eckert and McConnell (2003, pp. 173-176) noted, this high-rising terminal was identified by Lakoff (1975) as one of the linguistic features that indexed women’s “weakness” and “powerlessness.” The media was quick to pick up on the practice and referred to it as “uptalk” to derogatorily associate it with the speech style of “Valley Girl.” Nowadays uptalk has lost its gender and geographical connotations as it becomes more and more common in the speech of young male and female Americans.
In this instance, Leakena formats her turn in line 1 as a try-marker. She presupposes a possible [k-] status for Rainsey with regard to the reference cucumbers, a presupposition that is disconfirmed by Rainsey’s subsequent claim of recognition.

Consider a second example taken from the same discussion:

(3) Conventional [OF 2356-2412]

Leakena proposes her own theory of why, within the same kind of agricultural produce, there exists a vast difference in size. Her theory is that conventionally grown produce – referring to produce grown on chemical fertilizer – is much bigger than that which is organically grown (lines 1-4, 7-8). As can been seen from lines 2-4, the word conventional is not smoothly delivered and sounds somewhat disconnected, and it ends in an upward intonation contour. Moreover, on the last syllable, Leakena tilts her head toward Rainsey. The verbal and nonverbal behaviors combine to indicate that Leakena is uncertain about the word and is eliciting assistance. Following a 0.4-second pause, Rainsey responds by repeating the word in a falling intonation and with fluent delivery that serves not only to confirm but to provide a model as well. Indeed, Leakena offers an acknowledgement token and repeats the word, this time fluently, before she proceeds to produce the disrupted turn. By marking uncertainty through various verbal and nonverbal means with regard to the target reference, Leakena presupposes a [k+] status for Rainsey,
while placing herself in a [k-] position. Through her response, Rainsey confirms the presupposition.

As clear from the above analysis, there are areas of convergence and divergence between the practice represented in examples (1), (2) and that in example (3). They converge on the interactional focus that is accorded to a particular reference, the upward intonation with which that particular target reference is produced, and the interactional function of the intonation in inviting response. Perhaps due to these similarities, some CA researchers use “try-marker,” or its morphological variants such as “try-marked” (intonation), “try-marking,” “to try-mark” as a blanket term to describe these two practices or aspects of them.

The lumping together of these two distinct practices under the same umbrella term, however, has grossly obscured their differences and blinded us to the different interactional work that they each is employed to achieve. To differentiate, I will call the practice as represented in example (3) uncertainty-marker or uncertainty marking6. There are many differences between a try-marker and an uncertainty-marker, but one fundamental difference between them is their positing of an opposite epistemic relationship between a speaker and a recipient – speaker [k+] / recipient [k-] in try-marker vis-à-vis speaker [k-] / recipient [k+] in uncertainty-marker, a difference that has important implications for the sequential organization of talk. In this chapter, I investigate how

6 Schegloff et al. (1977, pp. 378-380) used this term in a broad sense to refer to practices by means of which the participants hedge or soften the force of other-repair in conversation. Based on their formulations, uncertainty markers seem to be equal to hedging devices. One example from their data is the other-repair format “you mean X?” where “X” is the repair proper. The force of other-repair is mitigated by the uncertainty markers “you mean” and the question intonation. According to Schegloff et al., with such uncertainty-marked modulations, the speaker does not “assert,” but rather presents her version of repair as a candidate to be accepted or rejected. We will see a couple of cases of such uncertainty-marked other-repair later in the chapter. In this chapter I investigate uncertainty-marking as a self-repair practice.
uncertainty markers are deployed by L2 speakers as a practice for marking their uncertainty about a certain reference to elicit other participants’ repair assistance.

6.3 Defining the interactional phenomenon and delimiting the scope of the chapter

When novice L2 speakers participate in talk, there are occasions when they are not certain about how to pronounce a word, what the correct form of a word is, or whether a word they produce is correct in form and appropriate for the context. When this occurs, speakers often produce a candidate pronunciation, a candidate version of a word or part of it, which can be close to or remote from the target pronunciation or word, and indicate their uncertainty about the soundness or appropriateness of their candidate versions through prosodic features, gestures, or meta-linguistic markers. There are also occasions when speakers lack a word to refer to an object, person, or concept. When this occurs, she can use gestural depictions (Streeck, 2009) in combination with prosodic features, other embodied actions, or meta-linguistic markers to mark that a word is not accessible or available to her and that while she can depict that object, person, concept through gestures, she is uncertain how to name it in a word in the L2. I call these practices uncertainty marking.

As its name suggests, there must be something to be marked in the first place – be it a pronunciation, a partial word, a full word, or a gestural depiction in lieu of a word that is inaccessible or unavailable – and be marked with uncertainty. This excludes cases of word searches where a speaker indicates that a word search is in progress, but does not produce a candidate solution herself, or cases where the speaker yields a candidate solution, but does not mark the candidate solution with uncertainty. In the former, there is
no candidate to be marked, and in the latter, the candidate is not marked with uncertainty.

The following two fragments are illustrations of excluding cases.

(4) Mountain Dew [SACS: 1304-1331]

Lea: (read) .hh what do the students in this ar-

article do to keep themselves awake in class.

(0.5) .hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh((raises head from text))

u:mm:h one of the- (0.5) one of the girls in

this article said that she: .hhhhhhhh she like

u:mm:mmhm ((Leakena poses a thinking face))

Abr: \rightarrow "drink"((Abril gazes at Leakena))

Lea: she drink coffee and then she need a ((smack of tongue))

a Mountain Dew\rightarrow in order to [keep her awake. ]

Rai: [yeah, it’s like uh]

(0.5) caffe:ne (0.8) "all this"

After reading out loud the question that asks what some staying-awake measures are adopted by college students, Leakena, the discussion leader, raises her head from the text and mentions a girl in the article as an example (lines 1-6). In lines 5-6, Leakena has trouble in finding the element of talk that is due next – a verb to follow the subject she. Orienting to Leakena’s sound stretches, inbreath, restarts, and “thinking face” as signs of a word search in progress, Abril proposes the verb drink as a candidate solution (line 7). Leakena accepts Abril’s contribution by incorporating drink into her TCU-in-progress and brings it to completion (lines 8-9).

In this instance, although sound stretches, inbreath, restarts, and a “thinking face” can be taken as signs that indicate trouble or uncertainty, no candidate version of the searched-for word is produced by the speaker herself. Consider a different example:

(5) False and fake [SNW 1711-1732]

Abr: and I had a- (0.5)I had (0.3) a problem with Facebook

(0.5) in::: (0.6) two months ago. hh

(1.3)

Rai: what is it a[bout.]

Abr: [with]

(0.6)

Abr: \rightarrow u:mm::: (0.2) some girls (0.4) make a Facebook (0.4)of

(1.4) u:mm::: (1.3) false Facebook. ((on “of” in line 7 Abril

starts to move her index finger as if trying to spell out the word that

she is searching for; her eyes are closed as she does the spelling
Abril proffers a topic (Schegloff, 2007b) in lines 1-2 by saying that she had a problem with her Facebook. This elicits a go-ahead prompt from Rainsey in line 4. In lines 7-8, as Abril embarks on the telling, she encounters a retrieval problem and engages in a word search. She first says \textit{u:m::: (0.2) some girls (0.4) make a Facebook (0.4) of (line 7). But instead of continuing with the telling, she initiates a self-repair by adding a modifier false to Facebook. False is the target reference that causes the retrieval trouble. On of in line 7 Abril starts to move her index finger as if trying to spell out the word that she is searching for. Her eyes are closed as she does the spelling gesture. On producing false she opens her eyes and gazes at Rainsey. Note that although false is the target word that Abril is searching for, she does not mark it with uncertainty on its delivery. Rather false and Facebook are produced as a single phrase with a flat and smooth intonation contour. The recipient, Rainsey, does not orient to false as uncertainty-marked, either. In response, Rainsey adds a grammatical increment to continue what Abril leaves off in line 8 and formats it as a confirmation check for Abril to confirm. Cases like this, therefore, are not uncertainty markers.

Compared with try-marking, which can be straightforwardly described as a practice by means of which a speaker produces a target reference with an upward intonation to elicit recognition from a recipient, uncertainty-marking is a practice that marks the speaker’s uncertainty not just through an upward intonation, but a host of other verbal and nonverbal behavior as well. While a speaker can produce a target reference and simply use an upward intonation to mark her uncertainty with regard to that target
reference – a possible source for some to treat try-marking as an umbrella term to refer to both practices, in most cases a speaker draws on many more verbal and nonverbal resources to mark her [k-] status with regard to the target reference. These various resources are often combined as a whole to do uncertainty-marking. In other words, while upward intonation is an important resource for uncertainty-marking, it is not the only, and sometimes not the necessary, resource that a speaker deploys in her uncertainty-marking practice.

In essence, uncertainty-marking is a kind of self-initiated repair practice. Like other kinds of self-initiated repair, it may lead to self-repair, may be aborted, or elicit other-repair (Kitzinger, 2012). In the current chapter, I focus on only those cases where uncertainty-marking elicits confirmation, disconfirmation, or some forms of other-repair.

6.4 Analysis

6.4.1 Uncertainty-marking a pronunciation

Most cases of pronunciation uncertainty-markers occur as the participants are reading a text. In fragment (6), Rainsey is reading a passage from the handout for the other participants to paraphrase.

(6) Advocate [OF 0647-0654]

1 Rai: however, (0.6) adv- (0.6) advoca- (0.4) “advocate?”
2 (on “advocate” Rainsey lifts head from handout and shifts gaze to Leakena)
3 Lea: um hum (with accompanying head nods; gaze on handout)
4 Rai: advocate of organic and local food... (continues reading)

The word that causes trouble is advocate. Rainsey produces the first syllable then cuts herself off on /v/ as she is on her way to produce the second syllable (line 1). After a pause of 0.6 second, she attempts to sounds out the word again but aborts the effort before the whole word is produced in full. Then following a brief pause, she sounds out...
the word again, this time in a much lower voice and with an upward intonation (line 1).

On the production of the word, she also raises her head from the handout and shifts gaze
to Leakena in pursuit of confirmation (lines 1-3). As Rainsey’s pronunciation is already
target-like, Leakena simply utters a confirmation token accompanied by head nods (line
4). With Leakena’s confirmation, Rainsey returns to the reading by first repeating
*advocate* – this time without any trace of tentativeness or uncertainty – before she
continues on with the rest of the passage (line 5).

Fragment (7) shows another example of how a participant uncertainty-marks the
pronunciation of a target word. It is taken from the comprehension question section of a
reading circle activity that features a series of question-answer sequences.

(7) Advantage [SNW 1442-1530]
1  Lea:  so as you all- (0.5) have read this story (1.9) so
2     what u::hm:: this story is basically about.
3   (1.2)
4  Rai:  the consequences about the social networking?
5   (2.8)
6  Lea:  °um:::° ((nods))
7  Abr:  (yeah)
8   (1.1)
9  Lea:  how about y(hh)ou heheheheheheh .hhhh
10 Abr:  → yes. uhm::: (4.8) how do you say uh /əvæn/- not
11 ∵ (2.3) /əvæntɪdʒə/ ((on “how” in line 10 Abril starts to
turn head toward Leakena; on “uh” her gaze is on Leakena;
following “not” Leakena tilts head slightly toward Abril))
12 ∵ (0.5)
13 Abr:  >I don’t know, °how to say°< (5.2) ((on “how” Abril
14 sets hand into motion to pick up a pencil; during the
5.2-sec pause she writes on handout))
15 Lea:  advantage,
16 Abr:  uh huh
17 (1.4) ((Abril erases the word))
18 Abr:  yeah
19 (1.3) ((Abril continues erasing))
20 Lea:  advantage o::f::::
21 (1.2)
22 Abr:  using this::: social network
23 (0.6)
24 Lea:  uh huh, okay
25 Abr:  I don’t know
The fragment opens with the discussion leader, Leakena, throwing out a question that asks the participants to talk about the main idea of the reading (lines 1-2). After Rainsey volunteers her answer in line 4, Leakena turns to Abril (line 9). Abril first utters a yes (line 10) in response to Leakena’s solicitation. She then produces an elongated vocalization, followed by a prolonged silence of 4.8 seconds (line 10). The silence is broken by an assistance-invitation question how do you say uh (line 10). As Abril issues the question, she starts to turn her head toward Leakena. On the vocalization uh, her gaze meets Leakena’s. Abril then verbalizes /əvæn/ or avan – what seems to be the first two syllables of the target word. But she cuts herself off at that point and negates what she just produced with a not. Following the delivery of not, Leakena tilts her head slightly toward Abril, displaying heightened attention. After a pause of 2.3 seconds, Abril hesitantly produces a candidate version of the target word that sounds something like /əvæntiː dʒə/ or avanteeger, with the stress placed on the third syllable. Her candidate pronunciation, however, does not elicit recognition from Leakena.

Not being able to secure recognition from Leakena, Abril produces a no-knowledge claim I don’t know and issues another assistance-invitation question how to say. As she delivers the question, she sets her hand into motion, picking up a pencil and starting to write on her handout. Although the cameras view does not capture what she writes, it is likely that she is writing down the target word with which she has trouble in pronouncing. Indeed, upon the completion of Abril’s writing, Leakena sounds out the target word advantage, which is receipted with two confirmation tokens from Abril (lines 19, 21).

The uncertainty-marking and the other-repair it generates constitutes a side sequence (Jefferson, 1972) that disrupts the progressivity of the major activity – the
offering of an answer to the question. In line 23, Leakena uses a designedly incomplete utterance (Koshik, 2002) to invite Abril to complete the answer, an invitation that Abril takes up, and the sequence progresses toward closure.

In this instance, uncertainty is marked through a panoply of verbal and nonverbal features: the trial production of the candidate word, the cut-off, the hesitancy or tentativeness in Abril’s voice as she produces the target word, the pauses, the use of meta-linguistic markers, and the resort to the writing mode. It is through these rich resources that Abril accomplishes uncertainty-marking that elicits other-repair.

Let us consider another example. Fragment (8) below is part of a discussion based on a reading selection about the organic food movement in the U.S. Rainsey is the discussion leader. We join the interaction as Rainsey reads out from her handout two discussion questions that invite the participants to talk about what makes organic food popular and share their personal viewpoints about organic food (lines 1-2, 3).

(8) Healthier [OF 2116-2136]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>(reads) why are (.) organic food so popular. and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>do you think about organic food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>and what do you think about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>it’s the same thing because (0.2) u::hm they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>(0.8) hel- /heltər/? ((on “they” in line 6 Abril lifts her head and stares upward; on /heltər/ she shifts her gaze to Leakena))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>yeah [because] like [people::e ] think that organic=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>[healthy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>[/heltər / ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>food is /harti/ than the conventional [food. ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>[heltər ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>an::d (0.3) yeah [I think tha-&lt;] I think (0.3)=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>[ye::s:: ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>=the: organic food is more (1.4) <strong>( )</strong> (0.7) is good for your (0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>it’s (. ) [yeh:h]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>[body ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>ye[ah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>[it’s good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second why in line 1 is a slip of tongue, which Rainsey corrects to what in line 3. After a 2.5-second silence, Abril self-selects and offers a response to the first question. She starts off by saying it’s the same thing (line 6). To understand what she means by this, a little background information is needed. Prior to the current discussion, the benefits of organic food were extensively discussed by the three participants, not the least among which was health-related benefits. It’s the same thing, therefore, serves a dual function. On the one hand, it is a “tying device” (Sacks, 1992), referring back to what was previously discussed; on the other hand, it serves as a harbinger, prefiguring that what is to be said is a rehashed idea. Indeed, Abril cites being healthy as the reason that makes organic food popular.

The word healthy is our target phenomenon and a close look is in order. As Abril starts to speak, her gaze is cast downward (Figure 6.1). Following the tying device/harbinger, there are some perturbations in Abril’s speech as she tries to organize her response. There is a sound stretch on becaus::e, followed by a short pause, and then a prolonged vocalization (line 6). Then as Abril produces they (line 6), she lifts her head and gaze and stares upward while putting on a “thinking face” (Figure 6.2). The productional features of Abril’s speech and her bodily conduct indicate that she is searching for the next bit of talk. A pause of 0.8-second follows (line 7), during which Abril maintains her staring-into-the-midair posture. The search finally yields a result. Abril resumes her talk by saying hel- (line 7) (Figure 6.3), cuts off, and proceeds to produce the target word – /helər / – in full with an upward intonation. As she
enunciates the word, she pokes her head forward and directs her gaze to Leakena who is sitting across from her on the other side of the desk (Figure 6.4). Mutual gaze is now established between the two.

As can be seen, the word *healthy* is uncertainty-marked. It is preceded by a word search, and when a candidate solution is yielded, Abril exhibits uncertainty as to how it should be pronounced. She cuts herself off on the first trial, and on the second trial she pronounces the word incorrectly, confusing the dental fricative consonant /θ/ with the alveolar plosive consonant /t/. It is possible that Abril is using the comparative form of the word here, namely, *healthier*, but drops the vowel sound /i/. Her version of *healthier* thus sounds like *helter*. As Abril produces the word incorrectly with an upward
intonation and pokes her head forward to gaze at Leakena, she invites other-repair from Leakena (cf. Seo & Koshik, 2010, in which head pokes without accompanying speech are used as a device for other-initiated, self-repair) and defers to Leakena as someone who is in a position to offer a correction.

On the production of healthier, Abril’s TCU is grammatically and pragmatically complete and a transfer of speakership can occur at this point. The recipients are faced with the option of responding either to the major course of action that Abril’s contribution pursues – the formulation of a personal opinion in responding to a question – or to the repair initiation. Here we observe a spontaneous division of labor between Rainsey and Leakena. While Rainsey responds to Abril’s opinion formulation with an agreement token and a reformulation of what Abril has just said (lines 9, 12), Leakena takes up the task of correcting Abril’s pronunciation (line 10), although she provides the base form of the word rather than its comparative form. Abril orients to Leakena’s correction by attempting to model after her pronunciation (line 11), but ends up in pronouncing the word in exactly the same way as she did a moment earlier.

Leakena’s correction and Abril’s unsuccessful imitation are in overlap with Rainsey’s ongoing TCU (lines 9-11), indicating that the talk now schisms (Egbert, 1997) into two different directions with two disparate agendas. The tension between the major course of action and the correction activity, however, is resolved very quickly. Leakena shifts her gaze to Rainsey after producing the model pronunciation (Figure 6.5). Abril follows suit as she is still in the midst of repeating after Leakena (Figure 6.6).
It happens that Rainsey’s pronunciation of *healthy* is also not target-like. As she incorporates the word into her ongoing TCU, she pronounces it as */harti/ or */harty* (line 12). In line 13 in overlap with the terminal item of Rainsey’s TCU, Abril enunciates *healthier* again, possibly in imitation of Rainsey, but ends up producing a version that is as the same as she did earlier. Neither Leakena nor Rainsey attends to Abril’s pronunciation at this point, and the correction/imitation sequence ends here. The major activity, however, continues for a few more seconds as Rainsey and Abril rehash the old idea and produce agreement tokens in alignment with each other (lines 15-27).

In the above three instances, I have shown how through the practice of uncertainty-marking, a participant elicits attention to, and other-repair of, the pronunciation of a particular word that she has trouble with. The same practice can also be applied to a partial word or a close proximity of a target word.

6.4.2 Uncertainty-marking a partial word or a close proximity

Due to retrieval difficulties, L2 speakers sometimes can only retrieve a partial word or produce a candidate version that they believe to be a close proximity of the target word. In such cases, they can uncertainty-mark the partial word or the close proximity to elicit other-repair.
Prior to fragment (9), Rainsey made some comments about how conventional agriculture uses much pesticide and fertilizer that contain harmful chemical substance to boost productivity. As a result, the environment is polluted and human health jeopardized.

Abril aligns herself with what Rainsey just said by offering an example.

(9) Weak [OF 2239-2304]

Abril points out that her grandmother has a strong constitution and is resistant to illness (lines 1, 4, 6). In line 10 as she proceeds to explain why such is the case by using a reason clause introduced by because, her sound stretch on the word caus::::::::e, a phonological reduction for because, provides Rainsey an opportunity to make a mid-turn entry and completes the rest of the TCU for Abril (line 11). Rainsey’s completion is not intelligible on tape, but based on Abril’s response in line 12, we learn that it is accepted as a valid rendition of what Abril was about to say. Following the acceptance of Rainsey’s completion, a brief pause ensues. Then Abril continues with the telling by contrasting herself with her grandmother (lines 14-15).
On *like* in line 14, Abril moves her right hand from her lap to above chest level (Figures 6.7-6.8). During the 0.7-second pause, she holds the hand there, indicating a word search in progress. The search results in a word that sounds like /wi:/ or *wee*, which is produced twice in succession in a low voice and with an upward intonation, and as Abril moves from the first trial to the second trial, the volume of her voice decreases even further. Accompanying the production of the uncertainty-marked word is Abril’s facial gesture and gaze – she squints her eyes and gazes at Leakena (Figure 6.9), a trademark uncertain look seeking a confirmation or invites a correction.

Abril’s pronunciation /wi:/ *wee*, without the consonant /k/, albeit not quite target-like, is nevertheless a close proximity, and based on the contrastive structure that organizes her telling – that her grandmother is very *stro::::::ngly* (line 4), but she is more *wee* (lines 14-15), the recipients can glean enough clues to infer what is being said. In line 16, Leakena delivers the target word *weak*, which Abril accepts immediately by following it up with a repeat (line 17). As she repeats the word, she sets her hand, which is being held above chest level, into rapid motion, first thrusting it forward in Leakena’s direction, with the thumb, the index finger, and the middle finger extended while the ring finger and the small finger flexed toward the palm to form a pointing gesture (Figure 6.10), then withdrawing it quickly and returning it to her lap (Figure 6.11). The message that the hand gesture conveys is one of “you got it” or “that’s it.”
The repair sequence does not stop in line 17 with Abril’s repeat. Rather it is expanded further by Rainsey who inflects *weak* into its comparative form *weaker* and completes the halted TCU for Abril (*weaker than her*, line 18). Note that the comparative word form is part of Abril’s original turn design – *I’m more like (0.7)* ḏ/wiː/ʔ oo/wiː/ʔ oo (lines 14-15). What Rainsey does is to upgrade the correction after Leakena has provided the base form. Abril accepts Rainsey’s upgraded correction and TCU completion with a partial repeat and a post positioned *yeah* (line 19) before she goes on to state the reason for why she has a weaker constitution than her grandmother, attributing the blame to chemically contaminated food that she consumes.
If the above fragment demonstrates a successful repair outcome through uncertainty-marking a partial word, fragment (10) below presents a case that involves multiple uncertainty-markers, but nevertheless fails to resolve the referential problem. In the fragment, Leakena offers thoughts on the altruistic behavior of John, a real-life character portrayed in the reading selection who donated one of his kidneys to a stranger.

She encounters a referential problem in the midst of her telling.

(10) Intestine [KT 1448-1607]

1 Lea: I think John is like (1.1) s::: such a nice person
2 .hhh the reason why he (0.5) donate (0.6) the kidney
3 (0.8) to::: (0.2) the person he::: (0.3) don’t
4 really know because (1.0) .hmmm he’s (.) like (0.9)
5 he’s::: (0.6) it’s happened to his family and his
6 (0.3) the f- u::m f:: friend that who he know .hmmm
7 had the same like kind of situation,
8 Abr: uh huh
9 Lea: an::::d (0.3) the:::n (1.5)he just- at least he give
10 → one of like (1.7) of his um (1.6) body::: (0.5) what is
11 → it [called?
12 Rai: [part of the body? ((on “part” the door opens))]
13 Lea: yeah, part of- (0.5) (an uninvited guest enters) the body,
14 ((the talk is interrupted by the unexpected intrusion;
15 15 seconds of irrelevant talk deleted))
16 Lea: even though he give uhm uhm:: part of he uhm ins what
17 → is it called? /instind3/?
18 (2.0) ((Leakena gazes at Rainsey))
19 Lea: ((in Khmer)) Kreng Knong
20 (1.2)
21 Lea: [u:::h
22 Rai: [intest
23 Lea: in- (0.7) in[-tes       ]tine?
24 Rai: [>no *no no°<]
25 Rai: no [that’s not or]gan.
26 Lea: [/[instint/?   ]
27 (0.7)
28 Lea: eh whatever .hmmm
29 Rai: [the inside bo(h)dy part,
30 [uh he hehehe
31 Abr: [hehehehe
32 Lea: [ye:::h
33 (0.6)
34 Lea: an:::d it’s nothing::: affect his body: **you know**
35 Rai: ye[ah
36 Lea: [yeah
37 (0.6)
38 Rai: if he can (0.4) just save (.). somebody (.). life.
Leakena first praises John for being a nice person (line 1). She then characterizes his behavior as a kind of reciprocal altruism – that is, what motivated him to donate his kidney is that his family members and friends had benefited from other organ donors (lines 2-7). In lines 9-11, as she re-mentions the act of John’s organ donation – an unspecified word is repeated (lines 9-11) – she encounters a referential problem and self-interrupts the ongoing turn to pose an assistance-invitation question.

In response, Rainsey offers part of the body as a candidate solution delivered in an upward intonation for Leakena to confirm. By changing one of his body into part of the body, the repair solution seems to be geared more toward fixing a grammatical problem than a referential one. Yet, the repair solution is accepted by Leakena (line 13). It should be noted, however, that an interactional interlude occurs at this sequence of the talk. Just as Rainsey starts to offer her candidate solution in partial overlap with Leakena’s turn (lines 11-12), the classroom door is opened (line 12), which prompts Rainsey to turn her head. Therefore, her response is being delivered while she shifts her gaze from Leakena toward the door. As Rainsey turns her gaze away, Leakena also follows suit. On yeah (line 13), she starts to turn her head, and on part of (line 13) her gaze is in the direction of the door. The cut-off and the short pause that follows may be caused by the sudden sight of an uninvited guest walking into the classroom (line 13). Except for the visible perturbation in her speech production, it is unclear how else this disruption may have impacted the way Leakena formulates her response to Rainsey’s candidate solution – for example, does it impact the substance of her response? While there is no answer to the question based on what is observable, what can be confidently stated is that, although
accepted, Rainsey’s candidate solution does not resolve Leakena’s referential problem, a project that Leakena continues to pursue in the ensuing talk.

Following the unexpected disruption, Leakena resumes the talk by recycling and modifying the previously halted TCU – even though he give uhm uhm:: part of he uhm ins what is it called? /instinəz/ (lines 16-17). She produces a candidate solution for the search /instinəz/, which sounds like instinge, and uncertainty-marks it with an upward intonation, inviting confirmation or repair.

The target reference that Leakena produces, however, causes recognition difficulty for Rainsey, as evidenced by the long silence (line 18). Not being able to secure recognition, Leakena switches into Khmer, producing Kreng Knong, a term (line 19) that is the equivalent of inner organs or viscera in English. This prompts an English translation from Rainsey, who produces intest as a candidate translation (line 22), a partial word that is likely heading toward intestine. Drawing on the partial word that Rainsey offers, Leakena goes on to produce the whole word intestine with an uncertainty-marked intonation (line 23). However, just as Leakena is on her way to produce the word, Rainsey cuts in to deliver three nos in rapid succession (lines 23-24). Getting out of the overlap, Rainsey accentuates her disconfirmative stance by stating matter-of-factly: no that’s not organ (line 25), which flatly denies intestine as the appropriate translation for the Khmer word.

In response to Rainsey’s disconfirmation in line 24, Leakena gives the search project a final try. She comes up with a candidate reference that sounds like instint, delivered in yet another uncertainty-marked intonation (line 26), and in partial overlap with Rainsey’s ongoing turn in line 25. Note that instint is only a minor modification of
instinge. This shows a certain degree of persistence in Leakena’s belief that the target reference should not be too far off from the uncertainty-marked candidate versions that she offers.

Due to the overlap in talk (lines 25-26), it is not clear whether or not Leakena can hear the word *organ* – although it must be stressed that Rainsey’s overlapped talk comes off quite clear on tape. What happens next is that, despite being mentioned in Rainsey’s utterance in line 25, the word *organ* is not oriented to as the target word by either of the participants and a pause of 0.7 second elapses. Receiving no uptake from Rainsey on her uncertainty-marked candidate reference *instint*, Leakena gives up the search altogether by saying *eh whatever* (line 28). In line 29 Rainsey proposes the inside body part as a candidate solution, adding a jocular flavor to the otherwise frustrated and frustrating search. This sets herself and Abril, who has not spoken at all during the entire sequence, into a round of laughter (lines 30-31). Her candidate solution is laughable perhaps because it is a lengthy descriptor, and an unidiomatic one at that.

Leakena receipts Rainsey’s descriptor with an acknowledgment token (line 32), then returns to complete her halted compound TCU, which has been disrupted by the repair sequence, by saying *an::d it’s nothing:: affect his body*: (line 34). With this, what Leakena is up to interactionally is brought into light. She had attempted to make the point that even though John donated one of his kidneys, it did not affect his health. But rather than recycling the term *kidney* (line 2), which she had used earlier, she attempted to use a different word to convey something to this effect: even though John gave up one of his organs, his heath was not affected.
The referential problem then is one of Leakena trying to retrieve a word which
sounds like instinge, intestine, or instint and which she believes means organ. It is highly
possible that the target word Leakena is searching for is intestine, which she mistakenly
takes to mean organ. Rainsey catches the mistake when she proposes but then
immediately negates intestine as the target word. However, perhaps due to a limited
lexicon, she is somewhat dictated by the search territory that Leakena stakes out and is
unable to break out of it by pointing out Leakena’s possible source of mistake and by
recommending organ as the candidate reference. In this sense, it can be argued that both
participants hold a [k-] status with regard to the uncertainty-marked word. This [k-] status
leads the participants to disregard the target word organ when it is already under their
nose.

6.4.3 Uncertainty-marking a full word

A full word can also be uncertainty-marked. Compared with the previous two kinds
of uncertainty-marking, however, it is not always easy to determine the source of trouble
when a full word is being uncertainty-marked.

Prior to the fragment (11), Rainsey and Leakena embarked on a telling about how
agricultural produce at home contrasts with that in the U.S., emphasizing size differences.
Rainsey mentions lemons and Leakena brings up cucumbers, both pointing out how
lemons and cucumbers in Cambodia are diminutive when compared with their colossal
counterparts grown in the U.S., a contrast that is further dramatized by their animated
gestures. Rainsey’s mentioning of lemons is probably what touches off the following
telling by Abril.

(11) Guava [OF 2653-2706]
1    Abr: yeah=my grandmother "is uh like farmer"
Abril says that her grandmother is a farmer and grows lemons and guava (lines 1, 3-4). *Guava* is the reference that causes trouble in production. After mentioning *lemons*, Abril pauses briefly, utters a delaying device *like*, pauses again for 0.5 second before she produces the target word *guava* with an upward intonation, which is followed immediately by a repeat of the word in a trailed off voice that is barely hearable (lines 3-4). Despite the fact that Abril produces the first *guava* with an upward intonation, she does not wait for a pause to follow before producing a repeat. This suggests that the upward intonation is not designed to elicit recognition, but to indicate uncertainty. That a repeat of the word is produced in a trailed off voice is further evidence that Abril is unsure of the target word. Abril’s gaze is on Leakena as she produces the two instances of *guava*, and Leakena’s gaze is also on Abril during this time, a mutual gaze that they maintain in the ensuing 0.6-second pause (lines 4-6).

As a confirmation or disconfirmation is not forthcoming from Leakena (line 6), Abril shifts her gaze from Leakena and looks upward (line 7). She blinks her eyes rapidly and says in a soft voice *I don’t know* (line 7), a post-positioned no-knowledge claim after
two trial productions of the target word and in response to an absence of confirmation or
disconfirmation – a further bit of evidence that Abril is uncertain about the target word.

Guava is indeed a kind of fruit and it fits perfectly in the context in which it is
being used – a second item in a list of fruit that Abril mentions her grandmother grows.
The source of trouble with the word, therefore, is not easy to determine. It can be trouble
with pronunciation, word form, or whether the signifier thus produced refers to the
signified that Abril intends.

In line 8, Rainsey seems to attempt to repeat the target word, but does so
incorrectly, and she abandons the attempt after producing a syllable that sounds like gal.
Following a brief pause and a delaying device like, Rainsey offers a candidate
understanding – avocado, a kind of fruit, but one different from guava. Rainsey’s
candidate understanding suggests that she does not recognize the word guava and that she
infers Abril’s uncertainty-marked word to be a kind of fruit based on the contextual clues.
It is likely that she just comes up with a random guess for Abril to confirm.

A pause of 0.4 second follows and no response is forthcoming from Abril (line 9).
In pursuit of a response, Rainsey asks explicitly what it is that Abril mentioned (line 10),
a question that invites a repeat or an explanation from Abril. Rather than responding to
the question, Abril confirms Rainsey’s candidate word by saying like tha:::t yeah (line

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7 The word avocado is produced with a rising intonation. It thus conveys Rainsey’s uncertain stance about
whether or not her candidate understanding is correct. Despite an uncertain stance being enacted, this,
however, is different from uncertainty-marking as a practice described in this chapter. For one, Rainsey is
not uncertain about the pronunciation, the form, or the meaning of avocado. From the sequential context
and the productional features in which avocado is produced, we learn that the word is well within her
epistemic domain or that she holds a [k+] status toward the word. For another, avocado is not an instance of
self-repair, but one of other-repair. Therefore, the rising intonation functions like a hedging device as noted
in Schegloff et al. (1977). It is used to modulate her degree of confidence or certainty about the correctness
of the word as a candidate understanding. See also note 6.
a qualified confirmation that foregrounds the qualified element by prepositioning it and backgrounds the confirmation token by postpositioning it.

The qualified confirmation *like that yeah* does not confirm that *avocado* is exactly the term that Abril uncertain-marked earlier, nor does it disconfirm that it is not. Rather it hints at closeness or proximity, akin to saying “that sounds like it” or “that sounds close.” It is highly likely that *avocado* is not a recognitional reference to Abril. If Abril offered an unqualified confirmation, she would commit herself to accepting *avocado* as the target word, which is different from the one that she uncertainty-marked; an unqualified disconfirmation, on the other hand, would lead to sequence expansion, making it relevant to reengage with the word *Guava* that none of the participants is certain about or recognize. What the qualified confirmation does here is to allow Abril to close down the repair sequence without making an epistemic commitment to the two words that she is uncertain about.

Rainsey and Leakena do not seem to orient to Abril’s qualified confirmation as problematic, as they both nod following Abril’s confirmation (lines 12-13). There are a few opportunity spaces for them to pursue reference recognition – see the pauses in lines 13, 15, and 17. However, none of them orients to this as a course of action. In line 18 Rainsey self-selects and launches a telling about her grandmother, thus closing the side sequence (Jefferson, 1972) and continuing with the grandmother topic.

Like in fragment (10), this instance shows that when all the participants hold a [k-] status toward a certain word, the repair sequence engendered by uncertainty-marking does not produce a successful repair outcome. Consider another example of how a full word is uncertainty-marked.
The discussion is about abortion, and Abril is presenting a hypothetical scenario in which the participants are victims of rape. As can be seen from the transcript, Abril has great difficulty in assembling the utterance. The target reference comes in line 9 after an intense search. Abril first produces *rape you* in a very low voice, then repeats the word *rape* in an even lower voice. This is followed by another trial production of the word in a further trailed-off voice to the point of inaudibility. Abril conveys her uncertainty with the target reference through an ever dwindling voice volume each time the reference is being produced.

Note when Abril initiates self-repair on the target reference, she interrupts the progress of the first component of her compound TCU, the *if*-clause. That is, at the time when the self-repair is being initiated, Abril’s turn is not yet brought to completion. However, registering the uncertainty-marking nature of Abril’s speech production that invites a confirmation, in line 10 Leakena offers a response infiltrated with laugh tokens. She repeats the word *rape*, utters a confirmation token *yeah*, and repeats the first component of Abril’s compound TCU – *if some rapes you*. With Leakena’s confirmation,
Abril goes on to produce the final component of her compound TCU in line 15, formatting it as a declarative question with a rising intonation that invites a confirmation or disconfirmation, to which Leakena offers an affirmative response (line 18).

In this instance, like in the last instance, the nature of trouble is unclear, as the reference is correctly enunciated and appropriately used. However, through uncertainty-marking, Abril elicits a confirmation from Leakena. Let us examine one more example.

Before fragment (13), Leakena told Abril that in Cambodia it was all right for girls of seven or eight years of age to play with boys in mixed gender groups, but when they “grow up,” meaning when they were “ten, eleven or twelve years old,” socializing with boys became taboo and was sanctioned by their parents because “they were scared something bad might happen.”

(13) Hypocrite [WOLIC 0209-0247]

1  Lea:  I mean if you hang out with a guy: .hh and then
2       older people see you: like someone who know your
3       parents and see you hang out with a guy or
4   → something like that, .hh they’re gonna say (1.0)
5   → .hh [what- what is- ]=
6  Rai:      [some bad stuff.]
7  Lea: → =what is the word I forgot the vocabulary word like
8   → they say something behind your back or something?
9   (0.4)
10  Lea: → last [semester?]
11  Rai:  .hh I [think mh mm ] that word I forge- I=
12  Lea: [I forgot that word]
13  Rai: =forgot it too. like yeah [this-
14  Lea: → [/haipkrirt/? n[o?
15  Abr:       [/haipkrirt/
16  Rai: → eh (. ) hypocrite, right?=  
17  Lea: =[hypocrite]
18  Abr: [hypocrite]
19  Rai: [{} ]
20  Lea: [something like that]
21  Rai: you know, in front of you they (. ) go[o:d
22  Lea: [they are
23   good [bu:::t] (0.4) then:
24  Abr: [m hm ]
25  Abr: yep
In lines 1-5, Leakena explains the social consequences that girls have to face if they are caught red-handed by older people in their defiant act of socializing with boys. As she formulates the consequences, or what the older people will say in such circumstances, she encounters a referential problem and pauses for 1.0 second (line 4). Taking Leakena’s 1.0-second pause as an opportunity space, Rainsey enters to offer a collaborative completion (line 6) and brings Leakena’s TCU to completion. As Rainsey offers her collaborative completion, however, Leakena also resumes talking by launching a word search, making it explicit that she has difficulty in retrieving a vocabulary item that conveys the meaning of *they say something behind your back or something* (lines 5, 7-8). This results in overlap (line 5-6). After dropping out of the overlap, Leakena presses forward with the word search effort and sequentially deletes the relevance of Rainsey’s contribution.

Receiving no immediate response from the other participants in her word search (line 9), Leakena continues the response-soliciting effort by adding a grammatical increment (Ford et al., 2002), reminding the other participants that it is a vocabulary item that they learned “last semester” (line 10). This invokes some shared learning experience and elicits a response from Rainsey who also claims forgetfulness.

In line 14, Leakena’s search yields a result and she offers a candidate solution produced with a non target-like pronunciation /haipəkrait/, which sounds like *haiperkrite*. The word is uncertainty-marked. Leakena produces it in an upward intonation and follows it up with a self-negating *no*, also produced in an upward intonation, to entertain the possibility that the candidate solution may be incorrect and to invite confirmation or disconfirmation.
In response, while Abril simply repeats the word with the incorrect pronunciation after Leakena in line 15, Rainsey offers the correct version of the word *hypocrite* (line 16). However, it appears that she is not certain about her version of the word either, and she marks her uncertainty by producing a tag question *right* (line 16), seeking confirmation. In lines 17 and 18, and in overlap with each other, Leakena and Abril offer confirmation by repeating the word. With the confirmation, the search is concluded, and the uncertainty collectively cleared away. In lines 21-23, Rainsey and Leakena resume the major course of action disrupted by the word search and demonstrate their understanding of the word *hypocrite*.

So far we have examined how the participants uncertainty-mark the pronunciation of a target word, a partial word or a close proximity of a target word, and a full word to elicit other-repair. We now turn our analytic gaze to how the participant accomplish uncertainty-marking to elicit assistance when a word is inaccessible or unavailable.

### 6.4.4 Uncertainty-marking a word that is inaccessible or unavailable

In L2 talk that involves novice speakers, it is not uncommon for occasions to arise where a word is inaccessible or unavailable to a speaker. When this occurs, the speaker can rely on gesture to depict the target word – if it is depictable – to recruit assistance from co-participants in a search for the target word. I will refer to these gestural depictions as gestural uncertainty-markings. Gestural uncertainty-marking does not mean that a speaker is uncertain about how to depict a word through gesture – although this can happen; nor does it mean that uncertainty-marking is accomplished through only gesture. Rather it means that a word is not accessible or available, and that in lieu of the target word, a gesture that depicts the word is deployed by the speaker to convey to the co-
participants that she has trouble in coming up with the word or does not know how to say
the word and that assistance is needed. Like other cases of uncertainty-marking we have
examined, gestural uncertainty-marking is also a holistic practice that is accomplished by
drawing on a host of verbal and nonverbal resources.

Before we proceed, it is necessary to point out that not all gestural depictions
performed in lieu of a word or words are being used to do uncertainty-marking. In his
study of L2 interaction among Japanese students of English, for example, Olsher (2004)
introduced and analyzed an interactional practice called embodied completion, a hybrid
interactional practice in which a speaker starts a turn, but before the turn reaches its
possible completion, the speaker stop speaking and completes the turn with an embodied
action. In other words, a speaker’s turn is composed of a partial turn plus an embodied
display. Now let us examine three cases of gestural uncertainty-marking.

Prior to fragment (14), Abril’s topic proffer (Schegloff, 2007b) that we had a cows
in my house piques the interest of Rainsey and Leakena, who take it up by asking a series
of questions. We join the interaction when Leakena asks how Abril feeds the cows.

(14) Corn [OF 3307-3327]

1   Lea:  how do you feed them a cow.
2   (1.0)
3  Abr:  → eh u::::::h (0.6) with en::::::: (1.0) you know
4  → the corn?
5      (0.3)
6  Abr:  → the:::
7  Rai:  the c[orn? Oh] the [the yellow corn?]
8  Lea:  [uh huh ]
9  Abr:  → [the::: the       ]
10 Abr:  (0.6)
11 Abr:  → yeah but u::::::m
12 Rai:  the the (0.3) [(   )       ]
13 Lea:  [the top part?]
14 Abr:  eh [yea:::h]
15 Lea:  [the top] part?=  
16 Abr:  with tha:::::::t and all the:
17 (1.0) and all the things like
18 Rai:  like [grass?]
19 Lea:  [grass?
20  Abr:  yes:::;
21    (1.1)
22  Rai:  that’s organic.
23    (0.3)
24  Abr:  it’s organic, yeah.

In response to Leakena’s question, Abril first produces a couple of vocalizations, pauses for 0.6 second, and utters *with*, projecting what is forthcoming is the target reference (line 3). However, in lieu of the target reference, Abril produces another elongated vocalization followed by a pause (line 3), indicating trouble in accessing or retrieving the target reference. Figure 6.12 shows Abril’s posture on the production of *with*. When she utters the prolonged *en:::* (line 3), she raises her right hand from the lap to reach the ear level and holds it there during the 1.0-second pause (Figure 6.13). She then issues a knowledge check question (Kim, 2009) to check on the other participants’ epistemic status with regard to the word *corn* (lines 3-4). On *corn* (line 4), she starts to move her hand, and as she produces the elongated *the:::* (line 6), she moves her hand up – palm half open, fingers flexed inward as if loosely grabbing something (Figure 6.14) – down and then up again. This gestural depiction serves two interactional functions. One, it specifies the referential meaning of *corn*. *Corn* can refer to corn as a plant, corn on a cob, an ear of corn, or corn kernels. What the gesture depicts seems to be the corn plant or part of it such as its stalk. Through such a gestural depiction, Abril anticipates possible referential confusion. Second, in combination with the elongated *the:::*, which projects what comes next is the target reference and at the same time indicates a word search is in progress, the gestural depiction not only marks the unavailability of the projected term, but also indicates that what is being gutturally depicted is the target reference.
The gestural uncertainty-marker invites assistance. In line 7 Rainsey offers a candidate understanding – *the corn? Oh the the yellow corn?* On the second *corn*, she puts the tips of her thumb and the index finger into contact to form a ring shape, indexing an ear of corn or a cob of corn (Figure 6.15). As Rainsey speaks, Abril shifts her gaze to her. In partial overlap with Rainsey’s turn, Abril utters *the::: the* (line 9), on whose delivery she raises her right hand above the head, in a grabbing-gesture (Figure 6.16) similar to that in Figure 6.14, and then makes a downward movement. This is another attempt to depict the corn plant or part of it such as its stalk or tassel and to uncertainty-mark that a reference is not available, thus inviting assistance.
Dropping out of the overlap, Abril first proffers a confirmative reply to Rainsey’s candidate understanding (yeah, line 11), perhaps confirming that Rainsey is right on target when she recycles the term corn, then she uses but (line 11) as a contrastive marker to suggest that it is not corn on a cob, as Rainsey gestured, but something else as depicted through her own gesture. On but, she also raises her right hand above her head in a loose-fist shape as if holding something (Figure 6.17). She holds the gesture while producing the vocalization u:::m (line 11). This elicits a guess from both Rainsey and Leakena (lines 12-13).

As Rainsey starts to speak (line 12), Abril withdraws the gesture and turns to gaze at her. At the onset of the 0.3-second pause in Rainsey’s turn (line 12), Abril sets her hand into motion, raising it above her head once again. Just at this moment, Leakena chimes in to offer her candidate solution the top part (line 13), which results in overlap with Rainsey’s ongoing turn (lines 12-13). As Leakena produces the candidate solution, she mirrors Abril’s corn plant gesture by forming a grabbing gesture of the hand and moves it up and down while gazing at Abril (Figure 6.17). As Leakena is performing her hand gesture, Abril withdraws her raised hand and turns to gaze at her, uttering a confirmation token (yea:::h, line 14) accompanied by head nods. In line 16, Abril uses a “tying device” (Sacks, 1992) or a “locally subsequent” reference term that, referring back to the top part that Leakena proposes. This indicates that she orients to the referential problem as being solved.

In this instance, through gestural depictions, sound stretches, vocalizations, and other verbal and visual conduct, the participant uncertainty-marks that a word is not available and that assistance is needed. Although, a candidate solution is proposed and
accepted, it is not the target reference sought after in a strict sense. Rather it is a
descriptor invented on the spot to meet the needs of the communicative situation. Due to
the [k-] status of the participants, recognition is achieved, but the target reference is not.
This is redolent of what happens in fragment (10) where Rainsey invents the descriptor
the inside body part to resolve the referential problem. Consider another example.

In fragment (15) Rainsey is talking about how the same behavior can be evaluated
differently in the U.S. and Cambodia in terms of politeness. The behavior concerned is
for younger people to sit on the arms of a sofa while older people are sitting on the sofa
proper. According to Rainsey, such a sitting arrangement is considered normal in the U.S.
when space is limited whereas in Cambodia it is considered disrespectful toward the
older people.

(15) Sofa [WOLIC 0907-0933]

1    Rai: and here it’s like (0.3) we don’t care even though
2        like ( ) we can sit you know on the sofa right?
3    → we have [no s]pace to sit=we sit on this .hhhh=
4    Lea: [uh huh]
5    Rai: =what is it called the m
6    (1.5)
7    Abr: the thing
8    Rai: yeah. the the hand of the sofa like around it we
9    can sit on it?
10   Abr: uh [hm
11   Rai: [yeah. we just sit on it=it’s like (0.3) and it’s
12        like the people that older than you sit like .hh up
13        like on the [ so]fa .hhhh but (.) in Cambodia this=
14   Abr: [yeah]
15   Rai: means disrespectful.
16   Abr: .hhhhh ↑o::::::h↓
17   Lea: y[eah
18   Rai: [yeah

The arm of a sofa is what causes referential trouble. We will consider how Rainsey
deploys gesture as an uncertainty-marker in inviting assistance for a word search.
Figure 6.18 shows Rainsey’s posture as she just begins to speak. On *on the sofa* in line 2, she brings both hands to the front of her and above the table, palm down, indexing
the surface of a sofa (Figure 6.19). As she says *we have no space to sit* (line 3), she turns her hands over, with both palms facing up (Figure 6.20). Then she turns hands over again, this time with palms facing down, while lifting the right hand to a higher level and making a couple of lateral movement as she says *we sit on this* (line 3) to index the arm of a sofa (Figure 6.21). This is followed by an assistance-invitation question *what is it called*, a definite article *the*, and a vocalization *m* (line 5). On the delivery of this utterance, Rainsey leans her body slightly backward (Figure 6.22). During the 1.5-second pause (line 6), she tilts her head and gazes at Leakena while making a couple of lateral movements of the hand, again to index the arm of the sofa (Figure 6.23). The assistance-invitation question prefigures an upcoming referential problem, while the gestural uncertainty-marker is used to index part of a sofa whose name is not available to Rainsey.

Although Rainsey selects Leakena as the helper, it is Abril who responds. As Abril says *the thing* (line 7), a generic word in lieu of a specific name, she lifts her right arm from the desk and places the back of her left hand in contact with the side of the arm, then moves the hand back and forth a few times to demonstrate that “the thing” is what the arm of a person gets into contact with when sitting on a sofa (Figure 6.24). Through the use of a generic word and a gestural depiction to indicate what *the thing* is, Abril demonstrates her understanding of what part of a sofa Rainsey is referring to and at the same time indicates a lexical gap. This candidate understanding is accepted by Rainsey, who utters *yeah*, and goes on to say *the the hand of the sofa like around it we can sit on it?* (line 8). On *the the hand* she bends the left palm and makes a backward movement, and returns it to the same position and makes another backward movement (Figures 6.25-6.26). If the previous two gestural depictions, by Rainsey and Abril respectively, depict
the arm of a sofa in a one-dimensional fashion by indexing its surface, then with this
gestural depiction, Rainsey invokes a three-dimensional shape of the arm. What is
noteworthy is that Rainsey mentions the hand, a close enough item to the target reference.

In this instance, Rainsey draws on meta-linguistic markers and gestural depictions
to uncertainty-mark a reference that is unavailable to her and to elicit assistance.
Although due to the participants’ equal [k-] status with regard the reference, the search
yields no result, one of the participants demonstrates that she does understand what part
of the sofa Rainsey is talking about through a gestural depiction. What is interesting is
that while Rainsey comes up with, perhaps incidentally, a close enough reference – the
hand of the sofa – in the flow of interaction, neither she nor her recipients display
heightened attention to it. This, again, is reminiscent of fragment (10) in which the target
reference organ is in sight, but ignored.

In fragment (16), Abril is describing some wedding customs in Mexico.

(16) Boutonnière [WOLIC1724-1819]
1 Abr:  a::::n:::::::::d (1.0) I don’t know how to explain
2 you, but (0.8) u:hm (1.5) our tradition is (. ) like
3 (0.9) you see the:: mh (0.9) ((tongue clicks)) (1.3)
4 the:::::::: (1.4) bride, (0.6)
5 Rai:  uh huh ((nods))
6 Abr:  u:::::h an:::::::d (0.7) she::: is supposed to:::::::
7         have a flower or something [in:::::::::::::      
8 Rai:                         [uh huh .hhh you have to]
9         throw i[t?
10 Abr:  [your hands. .hhh and then yeah you
11 [have to throw it ]
12 Rai:  [( ) it’s like Ameri]cans culture,= I think you
13 guys [seem similar]
14 Abr:  [and also::: ] (0.4) the:::::: (0.9)[boy
15 Rai:           [the guy?
16 Abr:  [the guy,]
17 Rai:  [o:::h ]>I know I know< what you mean [you have ]=
18 Abr:  → ([on “the thing” Abril’s both hands are in front of her left
19 → Chest])
20 Rai:  =to take-
21 (1.0) ((Rainsey and Abril gaze at each other))
22 Abr:  → u:::h it’s something like (0.9) ((during the 0.9-sec pause
23 → Abril places both hands once again on her upper left chest))
Abril describes the tradition of bouquet toss at weddings, and quite a bit of overlapping talk can be observed in the transcript as Rainsey competes for tellership (lines 1-13). In line 14, Abril turns the focus of her telling to the boy – here meaning the bridegroom. Rainsey announces that she “knows” what Abril is about to say and competes for tellership once again (lines 17, 21). Following the mention of the bridegroom, Abril utters the thing (line 18). In the meanwhile, she raises her hands, her fingers bended into a fist-like shape, to the upper chest level (Figure 6.27). While the generic noun the thing is a placeholder for the reference, the gesture indicates where the reference can be located – that is, it is an object worn on the upper left chest, here possibly indexing a boutonnière, a small, decorative flower that the bridegroom wears in a buttonhole on his wedding suit.

Spotting Abril’s gesture, Rainsey cuts-off (line 21). A 1.0-second pause follows, during which the two enter into a state of mutual gaze (line 22). As Rainsey does not display recognition, Abril continues to give description in search of recognition. With the target reference still not available, Abril says uh it’s something like (0.9) (line 23),

Figure 6.27  Image 27

Figure 6.28  Image 28
during the 0.9-second pause, Abril places her hands again on the upper left chest and hold them there (Figure 6.28). This gestural uncertainty-marker leads to a guess by Rainsey, who proffers *clip* (line 25) as a candidate solution for Abril to confirm. As Abril’s response is not immediately forthcoming (line 26), Rainsey offers yet another guess *a pin* (line 27). But just as she starts her turn, Abril also begins to speak, offering a qualified acceptance (line 28).

At this point, it seems clear that the term *boutonniere* is not available to either Abril or Rainsey. Although Abril knows the signified, the signifier is not available to her. She uncertainty-marks the signified through a gesture as a means to elicit assistance. Yet Rainsey does not recognize the object being indexed through the gesture, let alone come up with the correct reference. What is interesting is that Abril confirms Rainsey’s guess with a qualified acceptance, acknowledging that what Rainsey proposes is a close guess, but not the exact object that she indexes through her gesture. This is a case of letting it pass (cf. Firth, 1996) and is reminiscent of fragment (11) where *guava* is the uncertainty-marked reference.

In this instance, reference is not achieved, neither is recognition. Abril continues speaking in lines 28-29. From the partial turn – *somp: e boys: u:::m (1.5) they:::::::* – a repeat of the subject of the halted TCU in lines 14, 16, it appears that Abril closes the search sequence following the qualified acceptance of Rainsey’s candidate solution by resuming the telling. However, before she can complete her TCU, she is interrupted by Rainsey, who cuts in during Abril elongated *they* (line 29) to take over the speakership to continue the line of action that she initiates in lines 17, 20 (lines 30-32).
The above three instances show that through gestural uncertainty-marking, the speakers recruit assistance from the co-participants in their searches for words, and the search outcomes are to a large extent determined by the co-participants epistemic status with regard to the target reference.

6.5 Uncertainty-marking and word searches

In Section 6.3, in delimiting the scope of the chapter, I have pointed out some of the differences between uncertainty-marking and word searches through the analysis of some examples. In this section, with the benefits of uncertainty-marking having been described and analyzed, I pursue the comparative undertaking further. Specifically, I will illustrate the major areas of convergence and divergence between uncertainty-marking and word searches.

A major area of divergence between uncertainty-marking and word-searches is that uncertainty-marking covers some international phenomena that fall outside the scope of word searches. For example, and as the analysis has shown, when the participants are uncertain about the pronunciation of a particular word as they are reading out loud from a handout, the word is already available to them, and no searches are involved. What is at issue is the pronunciation. In such cases, the participants can uncertainty-mark the word in various ways – for example, through repeated trial production of the word with rising intonation – to elicit help from other participants. There are also cases where the participants produce a word that is correct in terms of pronunciation, form, and use, but nevertheless uncertainty-mark it through a host of verbal or nonverbal means – as in the case of rape. A search may or may not be involved in such cases. To the extent that
uncertainty-marking is used to describe these interactional phenomena, we may say that it is a distinct interactional practice from word searches.

A major area of convergence, on the other hand, is that uncertainty-marking can be considered a particular way of doing word searches. To be more specific, uncertainty-marking can be used to describe a particular subset of interactional practices subsumed under the blanket term word searches. It is concerned with those cases of word searches in which the searchers are able to produce a candidate solution on their own – which does not have to be the exact solution sought after, but can be a partial word, a close proximity, a coinage, or a gestural depiction in lieu of the target word – and mark it with uncertainty. Cases of word searches such as those in which the searchers embark on a search but yield no results on their own, or when a result is yielded, but is not marked with uncertainty are not within the scope of uncertainty-marking.

Based on the above, the relationship between uncertainty-marking and word searches can be demonstrated in Figure 6.29 below.

![Figure 6.29 Uncertainty-marking and word searches](image)

Word searching is a broad term. When a next bit of talk is due but is not forthcoming, and the participants fill the slot with silence, sound stretches, vocalizations,
or delaying devices, these can all be taken as signs that a word search is in progress. As numerous such occurrences are expected in L2 talk, using word searches to describe all of them or attempting to focus on each and every instance of them does not appear to be analytically helpful. To narrow the scope of research, Kurhila (2006), for example, chose to concentrate her word searches study only on “substantial” word searches, or instances of word searching in which the speakers recruited search effort from the recipients.

By focusing on a specific kind of word searches, uncertainty-marking helps narrows the scope of study. As a particular way of doing word searches, some features of uncertainty-marking are instrumental in eliciting assistance and in determining the direction and the outcome of the search. By proposing a candidate solution – be it a candidate pronunciation, a partial word, a close proximity, or a gestural depiction – the searchers stake out the territory of the search and point the recipients in a certain direction for searching; and by marking the candidate solution with uncertainty, the searchers invite confirmation, disconfirmation, or repair from the recipients. In fragment (9), for example, by producing the partial word /wi:/ with a rising intonation, Abril conveys to the recipient that the target reference should be something close to the candidate solution that she proposes and at the same time elicits assistance. With the partial word that Abril produces as well as the sequential context, Leakena is able to offer the correct solution weak; and based on Leakena’s solution, Rainsey turns the base form of the adjective weak into its comparative form so that it grammatically fits Abril’s utterance-in-progress.

Compare what may happen when the searcher yields no result and a candidate solution is suggested by a recipient.
(17) Propaganda [SACS 2416-2453]

1  Rai: I think it’s like they still want to do it in
college, they just like- .hhhhhh try to
help promote it like (0.6) uhm::: (1.7)like (0.8)
4 I dunno try to like promo:te like (0.3)
((Rainsey’s gaze is on Abril during the 0.3 sec pause))
5
6  Lea: → [propa]ganda? ((Rainsey shifts her gaze to Leakena))
7  Rai [e:::h]
8  (1.7) ((Leakena tilts her head to establish mutual gaze with
Rainsey; both smile; at the end of the 1.7-sec pause, Rainsey
shifts her gaze away from Leakena))
9
10  Lea: → remember that word?
11  (0.3) ((Rainsey shift gaze back on Leakena))
12
13  Lea: → propaganda? ((Rainsey’s gaze remains on Leakena))
14  Rai: ((Rainsey shifts gaze to Abril)).hhhh [I dunno try to like]=
15  Abr: ((Abril nods)) ["eh hmº publicity ]
16
17  Rai: =(0.3) to::::: (1.7)like motivate students to like
18  (0.7) like u:hm (0.9) teach them the lesson like
19  >I dunno< .hhh like (0.8) what ( ) is like (0.4)
20  get enough sleep or something like that, .hhhh but(0.7)
21
22  Abr: m hm.

In this fragment, Rainsey is voicing her opposing stance toward the idea of college administration intervening in students’ sleeping habit. Do it in line 1 refers to the intervention. In lines 2-4, she encounters difficulty in constructing her utterance. She first says try to help promote it like (lines 2-3). Then after some disfluencies, she restarts and changes it into try to like promo:te like, followed by a short pause (line 4). At this point, Leakena comes in and offers a candidate solution propaganda (line 6), produced with a rising intonation for Rainsey to confirm whether this is what she is searching for. A gap of 1.7 seconds elapses (line 9), but no response is forthcoming. Leakena interprets the silence as a sign of nonrecognition and asks explicitly whether Rainsey recalls the word,

---

8 Like avocado in fragment (11), propaganda is being ventured as a guess or a candidate solution, and a rising intonation is used to mark Leakena’s uncertain stance as to whether her candidate solution is correct or acceptable. She holds a [k+] status toward the lexical item, and so this is not a case of uncertainty-marking as described in this chapter. Neither is this a case of try-marking – note that Leakena does not posit a [k-] status for Rainsey in relation to the word. Since her rising intonation is to elicit a confirmation or rejection from Rainsey, we can argue that she in fact posits a [k+] status for Rainsey.
thus invoking some shared learning history (line 12).\textsuperscript{9} When there is still no response from Rainsey to indicate recognition (line 13), Leakena produces the word again, this time with a try-marked intonation\textsuperscript{10} (line 15) in yet another attempt to elicit recognition. Rainsey disregards Leakena’s attempt by resuming her talk. She abandons the search for the next-due element following promote and reconstructs her utterance by replacing promote with motivate and forges ahead with her talk. After some perturbations, she finally concludes her talk at line 21. What is of interest is that, just as Rainsey resumes her talk in line 15, Abril produces publicity (line 16) in overlap with Rainsey’s talk to indicate her recognition of the word propaganda.

In this instance, no candidate solution is proposed by Rainsey herself, and the range of candidates that can fit in that slot is potentially large. Leakena’s candidate solution is a guess at best. What also complicates the picture is that Rainsey does not recognize the proposed word and Leakena’s repeated pursuit of recognition, especially her invocation of a shared learning history, brings Rainsey’s (unwarranted) [k-] status into the open. Rainsey’s withholding of responses when responses are due is perhaps an attempt to conceal her [k-] status (more on this in Chapter 7).

In addition to showing that there is a wide range of possibilities when the parameter of search is not delimited by the searchers through some sort of candidate solution, this instance also attests to the fact that there are many different kinds of word searches. When the recipient proposes a candidate solution that is unrecognized by the searchers –

---

\textsuperscript{9} A bit of ethnographic information on this: propaganda was a new vocabulary item that the students learned in one of the previous lessons. I spent quite a bit of time in explaining the differences between propaganda and publicity.

\textsuperscript{10} As mentioned in Note 4, when propaganda is produced with a rising intonation in line 6, Leakena posits a [k+] for Rainsey. However, when no recognition is indicated after a few tries, Leakena produces the word again here in a rising intonation. From the sequential context, we can conclude that she now posits a [k-] status for Rainsey and is try-marking the word here.
like in this instance – how the searchers respond is a kind of word search sequence worthy of study on its own terms.

In sum, there are areas of convergence and divergence between uncertainty-marking and word searches. In the area of convergence, uncertainty-marking can be considered a particular kind of word searches. As word searches cover a wide range of interactional phenomena, breaking them down into different subsets of practices for the purposes of description and analysis can contribute to a better understanding of word searches as a practice in general and their use in L2 talk in particular. This chapter is an attempt in this direction.

6.6 Participants’ epistemic status, repair outcomes, and learning opportunities

As the analysis has shown, while the speaker can rely on different resources to uncertainty-mark a lexical item and provide important clues for the recipients’ repair operations, the repair outcomes also crucially depend on the recipients’ epistemic status with regard to the target lexical item. Table 6.1 presents a summary of the cases where the repair operations lead to successful outcomes. As can be seen, of the seven cases, five (fragments 3, 6, 7, 8, and 13) exhibit the speaker’s trouble with pronunciation. In these cases, the whole words are sounded out by the speaker with versions of pronunciation that deviate in varying degrees from the target versions of pronunciation. In fragment (12), although the source of uncertainty is not clear, the speaker also produces the full word. The only exception is fragment (9), in which the speaker produces only a partial word. Taken together, in almost all these cases, the speakers produces a version of the target word, a close proximity of it, or part of it and uncertainty-marks the candidate version, and by so doing, she provides maximum clues about the target word that she is
having trouble with. The recipients, on the other hand, draw on the clues offered by the speaker and offer either a confirmation or a correction. The correction in turn is accepted by the speaker. In all these cases, there is an unequal distribution of knowledge between the speaker and the recipients – [k-] for the speaker and [k+] for the recipients.

To the extent that doubts about lexical items are dispelled through the recipients’ confirmations, and that errors are corrected by the recipients and accepted by the speaker, we can claim that all these cases provide opportunities for vocabulary learning.

Table 6.1 Uncertainty-Marked References with Successful Repair Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Target reference</th>
<th>Source of uncertainty</th>
<th>Repair outcomes</th>
<th>Speakers (S) and Recipients’ (R) epistemic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>Advantage</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>Healthier</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Successful (?)</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Word form; speaker produced a partial word</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>Unclear; speaker produced the full word</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>Hypocrite</td>
<td>Retrieval &amp; pronunciation; speaker produced the full word with mispronunciation</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 presents a summary of the cases where recognition is achieved but reference is not found despite some intense searches. This is because the speaker mistakes one reference for another, as in fragment 10, or because the references are simply not available to the speaker and the recipients, as in fragments (14) and (15). Depending on the perspective that we adopt toward the interaction, these repair
sequences can be deemed as successful or unsuccessful. From the standpoint of whether mutual understanding has been achieved, the repair outcomes can be considered successful as intersubjectivity is established. That is, although a reference is not available, the recipients demonstrate understanding of what the speaker is talking about. From a learning perspective, however, these outcomes are far from being satisfactory as no opportunities have been created for learning new vocabulary. Whether successful or unsuccessful, however, these cases share one common feature – that is, there exhibits a high degree of persistence on the part of the speaker and recipients to pursue understanding, with the speaker offering description of the target reference, while the recipients offer guesses and demonstrating understanding. Although references are not achieved, a willingness to engage in the search process is observed.

Table 6.2 Uncertainty-Marking with Alternative Repair Resolutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Target reference</th>
<th>Source of uncertainty</th>
<th>Repair outcomes</th>
<th>Speakers (S) and Recipients’ (R) epistemic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>Intestine (mistaken as organ)</td>
<td>Word form &amp; word meaning</td>
<td>Recognition achieved; a descriptor “inside body part” proposed</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>Corn plant/corn stalk</td>
<td>Word unavailable</td>
<td>Recognition achieved; a descriptor “the top part” proposed</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>Arms of a sofa</td>
<td>Word unavailable</td>
<td>Recognition achieved; “the hand of the sofa” is incidentally invoked in the description</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One may tempt to argue that although the target references are not found, the lexis-focused interactions that uncertainty-markings generate will no doubt heighten the participants’ attention to their lexical gap. Noticing, as Schmidt (1990) pointed out, plays an important role in language learning. This may constitute another kind of learning opportunity. However, noticing a gap is one thing, and filling that gap is another. If the participants cannot resolve the gap on the spot when the gap becomes relevant, the likelihood of it being addressed by them later is subject to chance. Here is an example in support of the argument.

Recall in fragment (10) Leakena mistakes the word *intestine* for *organ*, and she also has trouble with the exact form of *intestine*, proposing *instindge* and *instint* as candidate solutions. This is not the only occasion that *intestine* becomes a trouble source for Leakena. Three weeks prior to fragment (10), Leakena encountered trouble with the same word as she offered a telling about some unconventional food consumed by Asian people.

(18) Instin [FOP 4121-4141]
1  Lea:  u::m (0.8) our Asian people eat like a chi:cken::
2     like u::m (0.9) in how you say that ehm (1.4)
3     like e::hm (1.4) chicken hear:::t or::
4  Rai:  o::h [like a liver? like the]
5  Lea:  → [like- the ins- /ins]tin/?
6          (0.2)
7  Lea:  → [/instin/?
8  Rai:  [in-
9          (0.2)
10 Lea:  yeah [(  )
11 Rai:  [yeah/instin/ like (0.5) in that part? it really
good though huh [hehehehe
12 Lea:  [hehehehe
13 Abr:  heh heh

No detailed analysis will be attempted. Suffice it to say that Leakena seems to be searching for a term that can be used to describe the inner organs of a chicken. After some search effort, she comes up with a candidate solution and produces it with a rising
intonation in lines 5 and 7, which sounds like *instin*, an incorrect form for *intestine*.

Nevertheless, it is accepted by Rainsey who repeats the (incorrect) word and goes on to make an assessment, presumably about how good it tastes (lines 11-12).

A comparison of this fragment with fragment (10) will show that despite a three-week interval, Leakena’s [k-] status toward the target word remains unchanged. This suggests that even though Leakena might have noticed a lexical gap on the first occasion of interaction, she might not have attended to it after class by, for example, searching for the correct word in a dictionary.

Table 6.3 presents a summary of the cases where repair outcomes are unsuccessful. As can be seen, in both cases, recognition is not achieved, nor is the target reference found. And in both cases, the speaker adopts a letting-it-pass strategy – that is, rather than delving deeper into the referential problem, the speakers seem to try to circumvent it.

Table 6.3 Uncertainty-Marked References with Unsuccessful Repair Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Target reference</th>
<th>Source of uncertainty</th>
<th>Repair outcomes</th>
<th>Speakers (S) and Recipients’ (R) epistemic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>Guava (Avocado proposed as a candidate understanding)</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Recognition not achieved; let it pass</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>Boutonnière</td>
<td>Word unavailable</td>
<td>Recognition not achieved; let it pass</td>
<td>(S) K- (R) K-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A speculation of the speaker’s adoption of a circumvention strategy is that it has to do with her limited linguistic ability. Once a speaker uncertainty-marks a reference, she invites other repair. However, when recognition is not immediately indicated by the recipients in the next turn, some inserted repair sequences may follow, which requires
that the speaker be able to describe in detail what she is searching for, which in turn requires some degree of linguistic competence on the part of the speaker. Fragment (19) gives such an example.

It is taken from a discussion based on a reading about the gloomy life circumstances of Japanese wives who suffer from what is called a “husband retirement syndrome.” Prior to the segment below, Rainsey has just offered a comparative description of what the lives of young couples and older, retired couples are like in Cambodia. Leakena, the discussion leader, asks Abril to describe the situation in Mexico.

The segment begins with Abril trying to give a description of the young couples.

(19) Liberal [JW 1113-1143]

1   Abr:  I think (0.7) the:::(2.2) young couples,(0.4)
2       ((Abril left elbow rests on table; her chin rests on
3       left hand))
4   Lea:  uh huh
5       (0.7)
6   Abr:  um::::::(1.8)they are more (1.6) um::::::: (1.7)
7       → like liberal ((on "more" Abril releases her hand from
8       chin and stares upward; she shifts gaze to Rainsey after
9       producing "liberal"))
10      (1.1)
11   Lea:  heh? ((on "heh", both Leakena and Rainsey poke head toward
12       Abril; Abril’s gaze remains on Rainsey))
13       (0.7)
14   Abr:  → /li:bərə/?
15       (0.4)
16   Abr:  → /li:bərəl/?
17       (1.0)
18   Rai:  like?
19       (0.4)
20   Abr:  ""I don’t know""
21       (3.1) ((During the 3.1 sec silence Abril withdraws gaze from
22       Rainsey and fixes it on the handout in front of her on
23       the table))
24   Lea:  what is it? ((Leakena pokes head toward Abril))
25       (0.4)
26   Abr:  → /li:bərə/ ((Abril gazes at Leakena))
27   Rai:  like indepen[dent?
28   Abr:  [inde[pendent, inde]pendent ((nods))
29   Rai:  they don’t care much about the:(0.3)
30   Abr:  yea:h
A quick glance will show that Abril’s descriptions in lines 1, 6-7 are full of perturbations such as long pauses, sound stretches, and vocalizations. She finally arrives at a descriptive term *liberal* and brings her TCU to completion (line 7). In line 11 Leakena initiates repair by uttering an upward intoned *heh*. On the production of *heh*, Leakena and Rainsey poke their head toward Abril, indicating they both have trouble with the prior talk (Seo & Koshik, 2010).

Abril judges the nature of the trouble to be one of hearing and repeats *liberal* (line 14). Abril’s pronunciation of *liberal* in line 14 is not quite target-like. She lengthens the short vowel /i/ while dropping the dark /l/ at the end of the word, making *liberal* sound like *leabra*. Receiving no recognition from Rainsey and Leakena, Abril repeats the word again, this time with the dark /l/ more clearly enunciated (line 16). There is still no uptake from the recipients, indicating non-recognition (line 17). It is not clear whether it is the non-target-like features of Abril’s pronunciation that cause the recipients’ recognitional trouble or it is due to the fact that *liberal* is not part of the their vocabulary. Whichever is the case, a simple repeat of the word does not seem to be an effective repair.

In line 18, Rainsey uses an upward intoned *like* to invite further repair. Rather than taking up the repair invitation, and adopting other means of repair such as spelling out the word, defining it, or describing some of the common attributes that liberal people are believed to possess, Abril utters *I don’t know* (line 20) in *sotto voce* and withdraws her gaze from Rainsey to cast it on the handout in front of her on the desk, a gazing posture that Abril keeps for 3.1 seconds (lines 21-23). Abril’s claim of no knowledge and withdrawal of gaze as a response to Rainsey’s repair initiation suggests a disengagement from the repair sequence on her part.
Leakena, however, does not let go. In line 24, she issues another repair initiation accompanied by a head poke toward Abril that prompts Abril to look up from the handout and shift the gaze to her. Once again, Abril offers a repeat of the word (line 26), which, if still eliciting no recognition, will push the interaction into a more uncertain territory. Abril’s recourse to the same repair strategy despite multiple failed attempts suggests further that defining, explaining, or elaborating *liberal* is indeed beyond her competence. At this juncture, Rainsey proposes *independent* as a candidate understanding produced in an upward intonation (line 27), which is immediately confirmed by Abril, as evidenced by her repeats of the word in partial overlap with Rainsey’s turn (line 28).

*Independent* is not a synonym for *liberal* and therefore it may be a random guess on Rainsey’s part. Yet, it is immediately accepted by Abril. This may be because *independent* and *liberal* belong to the same class of words, and like *liberal*, *independent* also falls on the positive side of the spectrum when used to describe people. Moreover, an acceptance of the term would put an end to the repair sequence that has engendered so much trouble for Abril. However, the repair sequence does not end with Abril’s acceptance of the candidate understanding. Rainsey does a post-expansion (*they don’t care much about the:*). *They* refers to young couples in Mexico, a category of people that Abril was describing a few moments ago. This is a B-event statement (Labov & Fanshell, 1977), albeit an incomplete one, because Rainsey is venturing information about people of whom she has little knowledge, but about whom Abril is well-informed due to her membership status. The statement seems to be heading toward describing an attribute of this category of people, an attribute that people who are independent should possess or exhibit. It seems that Rainsey does the post-expansion in order to double check
with Abril that *independent* is indeed the reference or at least a synonym to the reference that Abril produced a moment ago, one that caused a recognitional problem for her and Leakena.

As can be seen from the transcript, Rainsey’s B-event state is not brought to completion. She produces *the:* with a sound stretch (line 30), indicating she has trouble in finding the next word due – presumably a noun or noun phrase in this case. Without the noun or noun phrase, the meaning of the B-event statement is not clear. That is, what attribute Rainsey is going to mention is unknown, let alone whether that attribute can be associated with the young couples who are believed to be *independent*. Yet, once again, Abril produces an agreement token *yeah* (line 31) so that she can bring the post-expansion to a close.

This instance shows that even though Abril knows the word *liberal*, the limited linguistic resources at her disposal prevents her from explaining what the reference means to the recipients, and what she does is to eschew the task by accepting the recipient’s incorrect candidate understanding.

To sum up, not all uncertainty-markings, or more generally, not all incidental lexis-focused interactions, create learning opportunities in L2 talk. This is in line with Brouwer’s (2003) findings with regard to word search sequences. She found that two conditions must be met for word search sequences to be occasions for language learning: 1) both parties must be involved in the search; 2) there must be an unequal distribution of linguistic knowledge between the participants. Her research involved NS and NNS pairs. The findings of this chapter suggest that to apply the two conditions to NNS-NNS talk, the second condition needs to be modulated: the epistemic gradient must be steep
between the two participants, so that when a reference is unavailable, the one on the [k+] end can come to assistance. In addition, a third condition needs to be met: the participants must demonstrate a certain degree of linguistic ability and, more importantly, a willingness to engage in the search process despite a handicapped [k-] status.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I examined how the participants used multiple verbal and visual resources in uncertainty-marking a particular reference and eliciting other-repair from their co-participants. I started by differentiating uncertainty-marking from try-marking, pointing out that while there are similarities between the two, they are two essentially different interactional practices, with the fundamental difference lying in the epistemic relationship that each practice posits for the speaker and the recipient. I then defined uncertainty-marking and demarcated the scope of the section. Through analysis, I demonstrated how the participants drew on a plethora of prosodic, meta-linguistic, and gestural resources to uncertainty-mark a pronunciation, a partial word or a close proximity of a target word, a full word, and an inaccessible or unavailable word to invite other-repair. Although uncertainty-marking places the speaker in a [k-] position and posits a [k+] for the recipients, the analysis showed that this is not true in all cases. The recipients’ epistemic status with regard to the target reference is central to the repair outcomes. When the recipients hold a [k+] status, the repair is often successful. However, when the recipients, like the speaker, also hold a [k-] status, the repair outcomes are often not desirable. The epistemic status of the recipients is also closely related to whether reference and recognition are both achieved.
Based on the analysis, I compared uncertainty-marking with word searches and pointed out that there are areas of convergence and divergence between the two practices. In the area of convergence, uncertainty-marking is a particular kind of word searches. I also argued that as word searches refer to a whole range of searching behavior, dividing them into different subsets of practices for the purposes of study can be beneficial.

Based on the analysis, I also discussed the relationships among the participants’ epistemic status, repair outcomes, and learning opportunities. When there exists epistemic asymmetry between the speaker and the recipients with regard to a certain reference – the speaker being in a [k-] position and the recipients in a [k+] position, and when the speaker can offer maximum clues about the reference through uncertainty-marking, the repair outcomes are often successful, and such repair sequences also provide opportunity for learning. On the contrary, when the speaker and the recipients hold a [k+] status toward a certain reference, the repair outcomes are often unsuccessful. In conclusion, I pointed out that for uncertainty-markings, or incidental lexis-focused interactions more general, to be occasions for learning opportunities, the participants must be on the two ends of a steep epistemic gradient, and that they, especially the one who holds a [k-] status, must demonstrate a willingness in participating in the search process.
Chapter 7

When a Discussion Leader Is Uncertain about the Definition of a Lexical Item: Letting It Pass and Understanding Check Questions

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I turn my analytic attention to an exclusively lexis-focused activity that I will call word definition check activity. The word definition check activity is part of the reading circle activities. Prior to the group work, and as part of the homework, the participants were instructed to look up some new words from the reading selection in a dictionary, choose a definition that best fit the context for each word, and write down the definition. The new words were all bolded and underlined in the text to enhance the salience of the context in which they appeared. In addition, they were listed in a section in the handout where ample space was provided following each word so that the participants could write down the definition that they gleaned from the dictionary.

In class, led by the discussion leader, the participants went through the vocabulary items one by one. In a typical word definition check sequence, the leader initiated the sequence by nominating a particular word to be defined, the other participants volunteered their definitions, and the leader moved on to close the sequence.

A close examination of the data revealed that the participants strongly oriented themselves toward the activity as one of achieving sameness while avoiding differences. That is, when all the participants had the same definition for a particular word, they proclaimed sameness regardless of meaning, correctness, context, or understanding. When different definitions were offered for the same word, a common strategy they
adopted was to let it pass (cf. Firth, 1996). The job for the discussion leader was easiest when sameness was proclaimed. When different definitions were offered, however, her job became much more complicated. In such situations, the other participants could turn to her as an authoritative source for confirmation or disconfirmation and made her knowledge, or lack thereof, of the target word relevant. Alternatively, the leader could also take the initiative in engaging with the differences, which similarly made her knowledge, or lack thereof, of the target word relevant.

In this chapter, I will describe two practices deployed by the discussion leader to manage her epistemic status in the activity: the use of a letting-it-pass strategy to conceal her \([k-]\) status and the use of understanding check questions to uphold her dissembled \([k+]\) status. To situate the description and discussion of these two practices within the larger context of the word definition check activity, I will first demonstrate how the participants display strong orientations toward sameness while avoiding differences in the activity.

### 7.2 Strong orientations to achieving sameness

There are three ways in which the participants display their strong orientations toward sameness: by proclaiming sameness, by locating partial sameness and ignoring

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11 Firth (1996) identified “let it pass” as one of the maxims in lingua franca talk, the other being “make the other’s abnormal talk appear normal.” In short, he used letting it pass to refer to an interactional phenomenon in which a problem of hearing or understanding arises in interaction but is not oriented to by the hearer as relevant at that particular moment and thus no repair is initiated. It is not until later when the problem resurfaces in interaction and poses a problem that repair is initiated. In this sense, we can say that the interactional practice of letting it pass is retroactively identified through a delayed repair. In this chapter, I use letting it pass to refer to an interactional phenomenon in which the participants demonstrate an unwillingness to engage in resolving the differences in word meaning. That is, in the vocabulary exercises there is only one possible correct definition for a particular word in a particular context. However, when the participants offer different versions of definition for the same word, rather than resolving the differences and agreeing on a definition for that particular word, a common strategy they adopt is to move on to the next vocabulary by ignoring the differences. Letting it pass, as is used in this chapter, therefore, does not refer to the same interactional phenomenon as in Firth.
differences, and by claiming sameness in the face of utter difference. I will illustrate these orientations one by one.

7.2.1 Proclaiming sameness

When the participants happen to have gleaned the same definition from the dictionary for the same target word, a common practice for them is to proclaim sameness and then move on. Consider fragment (1).

(1) Incest [ABT 0225-0236]
((By 1967, a number of states had modified their laws to allow abortion in cases of substantial risk to a woman's mental or physical health, cases of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, and cases of a fetus with serious physical defects.))

1 Abr: incest.
2 (1.3)
3 Lea: sexual in::: (.) intercourse between close relate
4 4 person.
5 (1.1)
6 Rai: → yeah. I got the [same thing.
7 Abr: → [uh huh I got the same thing.

Abril reads the target word incest out from her handout (line 1), and Leakena volunteers her definition (lines 3-4). Rainsey utters an agreement token and goes on to proclaim I got the same thing (line 6). In partial overlap with Rainsey turn, Abril makes the same claim. The definition-check sequence is then brought to a close. Consider another example.

(2) Intimacy [GAC 0244-0257]
((By the paradox of independence and intimacy, there are two simultaneous and different metamessages implied in asking for and giving information. Many men tend to focus on one, many women on the other))

1 Rai: intin gn (.) intimacy?
2 (0.6)
3 Lea: a state of being intimate?
4 (0.3)
5 Rai: yea:h it’s like- (0.8)
6 Abr: I [have the same.]
7 Rai: [(]
8 (1.3) ((Rainsey nods))
9 Rai: how abou::t ne::: nego (.) [negotiate-
The fragment opens with Rainsey, the discussion leader, nominates *intimacy* as the word to be defined (line 1). Leakena volunteers the definition that she gleaned from a dictionary which defines intimacy as *a state of being intimate* (line 3), a definition that is circular in that it invokes the adjective form of the target word to explain its noun form. The definition, therefore, does not assist one in understanding the target word unless one already understands what *intimate* means. This, however, does not seem to concern the participants. Rainsey offers an agreement token *yeah* in response to Leakena’s definition and continues on with what is likely to be an echoing response to Leakena’s definition (line 5). However, she self-interrupts in mid course and a pause of 0.8 second emerges (line 5). At this very moment, Abril pronounces that she has the same definition (line 6), thus aligning herself with Leakena. As Abril speaks, Rainsey also resumes her talk, resulting in overlap. What Rainsey produces in overlap sounds like two words, but is unintelligible on tape (line 7). Following Abril’s pronouncement of having the same definition, Rainsey nods (line 8) and moves onto the next vocabulary item (lines 9-11), indicating that a consensus is reached and the sequence is closed.

The participants’ orientation toward sameness can also be exemplified by a collaborative completion in the following example.

(3) Prevalence [HTAP 0317-0329]

((Partially as a result of the publicity of the **prevalence** of HIV/AIDS in Thailand, Cambodia, India and the Dominican Republic have emerged as new travel destinations for pedophiles in the 1990s))
The fragment opens with the discussion leader, Leakena, nominates *prevalence* as the vocabulary item to be defined (line 1). Abril volunteers a response (lines 3-4). As she reads the definition from the handout, she shows some disfluencies, as evidenced by the sound stretch on *or* (line 3) and the pause of 0.7 second (line 4) that follows. Rainsey takes the pause as an opportunity to enter into Abril’s turn space and proffers a collaborative completion: *widespread* (line 5). At the same time as Rainsey offers the collaborative completion, Abril also goes on to produce *widespread* (line 4), the terminal item in her definition, which results in perfect overlap with Rainsey’s contribution. The synchronous production of the same term indicates that the two participants have exactly the same dictionary definition for the word *prevalence*. Perhaps amused by their “same-mindedness,” Rainsey bursts out laughing (line 7), which in turn elicits some reciprocal laughter from Abril (line 8). The discussion leader Leakena accepts the definition by smiling and nodding (line 9) before she moves onto the next vocabulary item (line 10).

The above three instances show that the participants strongly orient themselves to the word definition check activity as one of achieving sameness. As soon as sameness is proclaimed, a definition-check sequence is closed down. There is a noticeable lack of orientation to word meaning *per se*, or to whether a genuine understanding of the target word has been achieved.
7.2.2 Locating partial sameness and ignoring differences

The participants’ orientation to achieving sameness is so strong that they sometimes listen for key words in definitions and use them as the grounds for claiming sameness while ignoring other differences. Fragment (4) is a case in point.

(4) Stewardship [OF 0402-0432]
((However, the main thrust of the organic and local-foods movements, independent of the question of enhanced personal health, is **stewardship** of Earth))

As Rainsey reads out the word *stewardship* to be defined, she encounters some difficulty with the pronunciation (line 1). Following a short pause (line 2), she pronounces the word again with an uncertainty-marked intonation (line 3) and receives a confirmation from Leakena (line 4). In overlap with Leakena’s confirmation, Abril begins to volunteer her definition, which is quite long and not fluently delivered (lines 5-8). Rainsey utters a vocalization *en* with a terminal intonation (lines 10) to acknowledge Abril’s contribution. She then proceeds to offer her own definition prefaced by *I got* (line 10).

More examples will be given later, but for now suffice it to say that *I got* or *I get* is frequently used by a participant in this activity as a preface to her definition to accentuate its difference from the one or ones that has or have been previously offered by other
participants, or to contrast \textit{what I got/get} versus \textit{what you got/get}. I will call it a \textit{difference-implicative} preface. It is not clear how much or whether Rainsey understands Abril’s definition, but her \textit{I got} preface seems to indicate that she views her definition as different from Abril’s.

As Rainsey delivers her definition, she encounters perhaps a pronunciation problem and cuts herself off (line 11). Abril comes in and takes over the floor by saying \textit{yeah responsible} (line 12). And as she says so, she points her pencil at the handout (line 12). Although from the camera view it cannot be seen what exactly in the handout Abril is pointing her pencil at, based on the verbal production that accompanies the gesture, it can be inferred that she is pointing at the word \textit{responsible} that appears in her version of the definition (see line 5). Thus, through her verbal and nonverbal production, Abril extracts a key word out of both definitions, emphasizing the possible convergence between them. To Abril’s interruptive response, and in a transitional overlap (Jefferson, 1982), Rainsey utters an acknowledgement token (line 13) and then continues to bring the disrupted definition to completion (lines 13-14).

Note that Abril’s contribution (line 12) comes at a point where Rainsey has not yet brought her definition to completion, and its full meaning is yet to be seen. Note also that although Rainsey projects her version of definition to be different from Abril’s through the use of a difference-implicative preface \textit{I got} (line 10), she offers an acknowledgement token when Abril proclaims sameness by extracting the word \textit{responsible} from the definitions. Following the completion of her definition delivery, Rainsey does not take up the issue of differences, either. A pause of 1.5 seconds elapses (line 15) and Rainsey initiates a move to the paraphrasing exercise (line 16).
There is no evidence in the interaction to show that the two participants fully understand each other’s definition. Yet, their behaviors seem to indicate that sameness – no matter how local it is – is being privileged over difference.

### 7.2.3 Claiming sameness in the face of difference

Occasions also arise when the participants claim sameness in the face of perceptible differences. Fragment (5) is a case in point.

(5) Nephrologist [KT 0220-0235]

**The nephrologist explained that her best shot for regaining her health was to receive a living kidney, which would function better and longer than a cadaveric kidney**

```
1 Abr: okay the next one is (. ) ne ( . ) phrologist?
2 (0.8)
3 Abr: nephro°°logist°°
4 Rai: a medical doctor who specialize in kidney care;
5 (0.6)
6 Abr: \( \text{(click of tongue)} \) yeah. the branch of medical
7 science that deals with the kidney.
8 (0.3)
9 Rai: \( \text{(nods)} \) uh huh yeah. (inods)
10 (2.0)
11 Abr: the next one,
```

The target word to be defined is *nephrologist* (line 1). Rainsey offers her definition in line 4 while Abril offers hers in lines 6-7. As can be seen from their respective definition, Rainsey has the correct answer. Abril’s definition is for *nephrology*. Yet, what is interesting is how they receipt each other’s definition. In response to Rainsey’s definition (line 4), Abril offers an agreement token *yeah* (line 6), indicating she agrees with her definition. However, she does not stop there, but goes on to offer her own definition which does not define *nephrologist* but *nephrology* (lines 6-7). Yet, interestingly Rainsey also receipts Abril’s wrong definition with an agreement token accompanied with head nod (line 9).

Let us examine another example.
The target word is *conventional*. After Abril offers her definition in lines 6-7, Rainsey proffers her definition, prefacing it with *I got* to indicate that she has a different answer (line 9). Indeed, what she has is a far cry from what Abril previously offered. If the definition chosen by Abril is still somehow marginally related to the word-in-context it purports to define, then the one chosen by Rainsey is completely off the mark. Yet, as a response, Abril points to her handout and confirms Rainsey’s definition. As the participants’ handouts were not collected as part of the data, we can only conjecture that Abril might have written down more than one definition for the target word. That may explain why she is able to point to her handout and echo with Rainsey when Rainsey produces a different definition than the one she just produced a moment earlier. Abril’s echoing response can be interpreted as *I got this, too*. This is another case of sameness being achieved at the expense of context.

If achieving sameness is what motivates the participants, then when different definitions are offered, one common strategy the participants adopt is to let it pass.
7.3 Letting-it-pass as a collaborative achievement

More often than not, letting-it-pass is a collaborative achievement with cooperation among all the participants. Fragment (7) presents such an example.

(7) Organic [OF 0008-0034]
((Organic foods are produced without using antibiotics in animal feed, genetically engineered organisms, chemical preservatives, radiation, or artificial pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers))

Following Rainsey’s question (line 1), Leakena self-selects and proffer her definition for the word *organic* (lines 3-4). Abril producing an agreement token *yeah* (line 6), aligning herself with Leakena. With a prompt from Rainsey (line 7), Abril offers her definition. She first announces that she has the same definition as Leakena’s and goes on to read the definition from her handout (lines 9-11). Rainsey then prefaces her definition with *I got* (line 13) to project the forthcoming of a different definition. Indeed, how she defines *organic* is different from Leakena and Abril. As she reads out the definition, she stumbles over the pronunciation of the word *organism* (lines 13-14). For the first two trials, she cuts herself off on the second syllable. On the third trial, she does not pronounce the word correctly. Finally, on the fourth trial, she produces a near target-like pronunciation with an uncertainty-marked intonation. In response, Leakena offers a
confirmation token and repeats the target word. This is followed up with two
acknowledgement tokens by Rainsey and Abril respectively, and the sequence is closed.

Rather than engaging with the difference and deciding how the word should be
defined based on the context, the participants focus on a pronunciation issue. And when
the pronunciation issue is resolved, the sequence is closed. The participants choose to let
it pass in the face of two apparently different definitions for the same word in the same
context. Of course, a look at the sentence will demonstrate that none of the participants
has chosen the right definition for that particular context.

In the next instance, each participant offers a different definition for the target word.

(8) Sharply [ABT 0156-0226]
((People hold sharply different views on whether or not a fetus should be protected))

1  Abr:  the next word is (. ) sharply.
2      (1.8)
3  Lea:  having a- (. ) thi::n cutting edge or a fine
4      (. ) point¿
5      (1.2)
6  Rai:  I got sh- (0.2) uhm clearly (0.2) and distinct
7      (0.2) distinctly set forth, (0.3) °I dunno°
8      (1.0)
9  Abr:  m[:]:::
10  Rai:  [it’s-]
11      (1.1)
12  Rai:  °°what you got°°
13  Abr:  I got the- (0.7) terminating (0.3) in
14      an edge or point.
15      (0.6) °(Rainsey nods)°
16  Abr:  not blu::nt or rounded. ((on “rounded” Abril shifts
17      gaze from handout to Rainsey))
18      (0.9)°(Rainsey nods slightly; Abril shifts gaze back to
19      handout)°
20  Abr:  °°okay°°

The target word is sharply. Leakena offers a definition which defines the adjective
form of the word as in a sharp knife (lines 3-4). Rainsey follows up with her definition
(lines 6-7). Note that an agreement token is absent from her turn design, and she frames
her definition with the difference-implicative turn initial I got, suggesting that her
definition is different from Leakena’s. Rainsey’s definition – clearly and distinctly set forth – offers another meaning for *sharp* as in *a sharp contrast*. Albeit being a definition for the adjective form of the target word *sharply*, Rainsey’s definition fits the context better than Leakena’s definition. Yet, following the proffer of her definition, Rainsey says *I dunno* (line 7) in *sotto voce*, a no-knowledge claim that marks her uncertainty with regard to correction of the definition.

In lieu of an agreement token *yeah* or its variants, Abril produces an elongated vocalization *m:------:*(line 9) to augur difference. This prompts Rainsey to make a request that Abril present her version of definition (line 12). Prefaced by *I got*, Abril gives a version that is different from that offered by Leakena and Rainsey. She first reads *terminating in an edge or point* (lines 13-14), pauses briefly (line 15), then adds *not blunt or rounded* (line 16). Abril’s definition defines *sharp* as in *the sharp corner of the table*, which is quite remote from the context. On *rounded*, Abril shift her gaze from the handout to Rainsey and is met with a slight head nod by Rainsey that claims understanding or indicates acknowledgement (lines 16-18). Abril then utters a closure-relevant *okay* (Beach, 1993) to signal that the sequence devoted to defining *sharply* is coming to an end and a transition to the next vocabulary is underway (line 20).

In this fragment, three different definitions are presented. No agreement token is offered; no explicit evaluative stance as to the soundness of the definition is taken; no questions are raised about the meaning of the definition and about how it may fit the context. By not resolving the differences, and not understanding the word meaning in context, the participants collaboratively let an unsure word pass.
Beneath the veneer of letting-it-pass hides the [K-] epistemic status of the participants. That is, they are not certain about whether they have the correct definition and what the definition really means, which in turn indexes a lack of understanding of the target word in context and a difficulty in deciding which definition to choose from among the multiple entries under the target word in the dictionary.

While holding a [k-] status toward the target word has a stake for everyone, it is more so for the discussion leader, for she is the one who is oriented to by the other participants as holding a [k+] status. Managing not to reveal her [k-] status becomes an interactional concern for the leader.

### 7.4 Managing epistemic status as the leader’s interactional concern

#### 7.4.1 Letting-it-pass as a means to manage the leader’s [k-] status

Occasions arise when the participants are in doubt about whether they had gleaned the correct definition for a target word. When this occurs, they often turn to the discussion leader for confirmation. This presupposes a [k+] status for the leader.

However, rather than holding a [k+] status with regard to the target word as presupposed by the other participants, the leader can hold a [k-] status. Withholding response and letting it pass become interactional moves that the leader deploys to manage her [k-] status.

Consider fragment (9).

(9) Frame [GAC 0144-0200]

((If relations are inherently hierarchical, then the one who has more information is **framed** as higher up on the ladder, by virtue of being more knowledgeable and competent.))

1 Rai: how about framed?
2 (0.6)
3 Rai: /freiməd/?
4 (1.0)
5 Lea: placed within a context
6 (1.5)
As lines 5, 8, 9, and 11 show, Leakena and Abril offer two different definitions for the target word *frame*. Rainsey receives Leakena’s definition with an agreement token while provides no verbal or nonverbal uptake to Abril’s definition. Following a short pause in line 12, she initiates a move to the next vocabulary item (line 13). In so doing, she avoids engaging with a different definition by letting it pass.

Consider another example, presented in fragment (10).

(10) Ionizing radiation [OF 0229-0306]
((For example, in the 1990s, during the development of U.S. federal standards for organics, there was an attempt to allow irradiation of food (sterilization using high levels of *ionizing radiation*) into the definition of “organic.”))
nod slightly})
After Rainsey nominates ionizing radiation as the target word to be defined (line 1), Leakena offers her definition in an upward intonation, seeking confirmation from Rainsey (line 3). As no response is forthcoming (line 4), Leakena shifts her gaze from the handout to Rainsey and delivers the candidate definition once again in an upward intonation in pursuit of confirmation (lines 4-6). As Rainsey keeps her gaze on her handout and no mutual gaze can be established, Leakena shifts her gaze back to the handout in the mid course of repeating her candidate definition (lines 6-8). A gap of 1.4 seconds then emerges (line 9), during which Rainsey produces a slight head nod, which is almost imperceptible (lines 9-10). The avoidance of mutual eye gaze, the withholding of a response to Leakena’s first offering of a candidate definition, and the response to Leakena’s second offering in the form of an almost imperceptible, non-committed head nod all demonstrate that Rainsey is withholding taking up a stance toward Leakena’s definition.

In line 11, Abril offers her definition by reading out loud from the handout. The definition, however, is not for the target word, but for organic farming – Abril has made a mistake by skipping to the next vocabulary item on the list without realizing it. Upon the completion of the delivery of her definition, Abril shifts her gaze from the handout to Rainsey in pursuit of confirmation (lines 15-16). Again, Rainsey’s gaze is on the handout in front of her and mutual gaze cannot be established. A pause of 0.9 second emerges and no response is forthcoming from Rainsey (line 15). It is obvious that Rainsey is once again withholding taking a stance toward a just-given definition, one that is totally irreverent and blatantly wrong.
Following the pause, Rainsey offers her definition (lines 17-19), prefaced by *I get,* stressing that what follows is her version of the definition and that it is different from those offered by Leakena and Abril. Toward the end of the delivery of her definition, Rainsey raises head from the handout and shifts gaze to Abril (lines 19-21). The two enter into a state of mutual gaze that lasts only very briefly, during which Abril does not offer any kind of uptake. Rainsey then quickly withdraws her gaze and shifts it back to the handout (lines 22-23). The withdrawal of gaze suggests that, rather than pursuing an understanding from the recipient, Rainsey seems to avoid such an undertaking.

By now three different definitions have been put on the table. The task becomes one of determining whose definition is correct. However, this is not the trajectory that the interaction follows. A silence follows Rainsey’s definition (line 22), broken by Abril’s cough (line 24). As Abril coughs, Leakena begins to nod, with her gaze fixed on the handout (line 24). Another silence ensues (line 25). Then Rainsey speaks again, repeating the word *radiation* (line 26), but adding nothing new and substantial to the definition. Abril produces slight head nods as Rainsey speaks. In line 29, Rainsey closes the sequence by moving onto *organic farming,* the next vocabulary item on the list. It is until then that Abril realizes she has given the wrong definition earlier to the target word (data not shown).

Throughout the fragment, the participants do not demonstrate that they understand the target word. Although Rainsey gets the correct definition, whether she truly understands the word is questionable. This is manifested not only in her withholding of response – for example, in the form of either an agreement or disagreement – toward the definitions offered by the other two participants, but also in her avoiding pursuing an
understanding of her definition from the participants when an understanding is not shown. Withholding response when response is called for, therefore, is an interactional move that the leader deploys in letting the differences pass.

Of course, the leader alone cannot achieve letting it pass. The other two participants also play their part in the process. For example, rather than raising questions in the face of three different definitions and pursuing a correct answer, they nod away the difference. Their nodding, therefore, is in collaboration with Rainsey in letting an unsure vocabulary item pass. Consider another example.

(11) Abhorrent [FOP 2249-2326]
((In some cultures, dogs live outdoors and are used solely for guarding property. In others, they are a source of nutrition and even a delicacy. Abhorrent as that might seem, we have to respect that.))

2. (3.1)
3. Rai: dis- ting (.) disgusting (and that) feeling extremely dislikes. ((on “extremely” Rainsey shifts gaze from handout to Leakena))
4. (1.1) ((at the onset of the 1.1-sec pause Leakena lifts gaze from handout to take a quick peek at Rainsey then returns gaze back to handout))
5. Abr: ((clears throat))
6. (0.2)
7. Abr: [{( }]
8. Rai: [{( }]- dislike something? ((Rainsey’s gaze is on Leakena who keeps gaze on handout))
9. (1.4)
10. Rai: right? ((Rainsey gazes at Leakena whose gaze is on handout))
11. (1.4)
12. Abr: feeling extremely dislike (0.7) or (abhor)
13. (0.5)
15. (1.1)
16. Lea: like (0.8) hhhh (4.4) ((during the 4.4-sec silence, the three participants focus gaze on their own handout; at the end of the silence Leakena lifts head from handout and makes a query to the instructor) is::: :::::::: abhorrent is um::: (0.3) like destable- des um (0.4) detesable? detestable?
17. (0.5)
18. Ins: detestable, yeah.
The target word to be defined in this fragment is *abhorrent* and the discussion leader is Leakena. In lines 3-5, Rainsey reads the definition from her handout. Toward the end of the delivery of the definition, she shifts her gaze from the handout to Leakena in seeking confirmation (lines 4-5). Leakena lifts gaze from her handout, takes a quick glance at Rainsey, and immediately returns gaze back to the handout without providing any verbal uptake (lines 6-8). Receiving no uptake, Rainsey reformulates the gist of her definition, delivered in an upward intonation in a continuing pursuit of confirmation (line 12). As Rainsey speaks, she gazes at Leakena, who keeps her gaze on the handout and mutual gaze cannot be established (lines 12-13). A pause of 1.4 seconds emerges (line 14) and still no response is forthcoming from Leakena. Rainsey then adds a tag question as an increment in further pursuit of a response (line 15). However, Leakena still keeps her gaze on the handout and offers no response (line 15). In line 17, Abril self-selects and reads her definition, which returns out to be in agreement with the definition that Rainsey offered a moment earlier.

Since the two participants have already offered their definition, some sort of response from the discussion leader is expectable. In line 19, Leakena starts off with *detes*, but cuts herself off, and restarts her turn with the canonical, difference-implicative turn initial *I got* that we have seen many times in the previous examples. Following *I got*, she gives a one-word definition to abhorrent – *detestable*.

*Detestable* is a synonym of *abhorrent*, and like *abhorrent* it can be defined as – to follow Rainsey and Abril – *feeling extreme dislike*. At this point, it becomes palpable that although Leakena noted down *detestable* as the definition for *abhorrent*, she does not know or perhaps forgets – if she had looked up *detestable* in the dictionary as well – the
meaning for the word. It follows then that she does not know what \textit{abhorrent} really means either.

If in fragment (10) we can only claim that there is no evidence to suggest that the participants truly understand the target word. In this fragment, and at this point of the interaction, we can state with confidence that Leakena hold a \textit{[k-]} status toward the target word. This explains why responses are withheld when they are made relevant, why gaze remains withdrawn when a state of mutual gaze is called for, and why she frames her definition as different from those offered by Rainsey and Abril.

Following Leakena’s offer of her definition, no uptake is forthcoming from the other two participants (line 20). In line 21 Leakena continues speaking by starting off with a \textit{like}, which looks like the initiation of a turn to explain further what \textit{detestable} or \textit{abhorrent} means. However, the turn does not materialize in this way. Following \textit{like} come a short pause, then some inbreath, and then a long silence, during which all the three participants focus their gaze on their own handout (lines 21-22). The silence indicates that both Rainsey and Abril hold a \textit{[k-]} status toward \textit{detestable} as well. If they had recognized the word, a claim of sameness of the different versions of definition would have been made.

Leakena breaks the silence by enlisting assistance from me (lines 23-26). Note how she formats her query – \textit{is: abhorrent is um: (0.3) like destable- des um (0.4) detesable? detestable?} (lines 24-26), which can be translated as \textit{Does abhorrent mean detestable?} This yes/no interrogative calls for a yes/no answer or confirmation or disconfirmation. The design of the question masquerades Leakena’s \textit{[k-]} status toward \textit{abhorrent} and \textit{detestable}. Without access to the prior interaction, and thus having no
knowledge of what gives rise to the query in the first place, I give an affirmative answer (line 28), which affirms Leakena’s definition as correct. Given that Leakena frames her definition as different from the version offered by Rainsey and Abril, the affirmation of her definition by me serves to negate Rainsey and Abril’s definition. And since Abril and Rainsey do not understand what detestable means – nor does Leakena – this is a case of letting-it-pass par excellence, with my unwitting participation.

Leakena’s turning to me for assistance may be due to fact that she gets stuck in the middle of a turn that looks like an attempt to explain the word detestable, an attempt that she needs to accomplish, or her [k-] status will be revealed. By having me confirm her version of the definition, she not only conceals her [k-] status, but also successfully establishes a dissembled [k+] status.

7.4.2 Understanding check questions as a means to uphold the leader’s dissembled [k+] status

Fragments (9)-(11) show how the discussion leader “passively” conceals her [k-] status by withholding response and withdrawing eye gaze when response is due and eye gaze is expected. In this section, I will examine an interactional move in contrast to letting-it-pass – deployed “proactively” by the discussion leader, and realized through the use of an understanding check question in the form of do you know what it means? and its variants – to manage her epistemic status.

Understanding check questions are deployed by the leader in various sequential locations to perform a multitude of interactional work. Here I focus on two sequential locations. One, after a participant offers a definition, the leader responds to it with an understanding check question; two, following her own proffer of a definition, the leader
issues an understanding check question, directed to one of the participants. In the former, an understanding check question makes a demonstration of understanding from the definition-provider relevant, and based on the understanding displayed, or lack thereof, the leader can decide on the next course of action. In the latter, an understanding check question is asked to elicit a positive response and to coerce consensus from another participant with regard to the version of definition that the leader offers.

7.4.2.1 Understanding check questions following a participant’s provision of a definition

In the arrowed turn in fragment (12), Leakena asks an understanding check question following Rainsey’s provision of a definition.

(12) Nitpicking [JW 0044-0119]
((It devolved over time, she said, into demands for his meals and nitpicking over the quality of her housework))
The target word is *nitpicking* and Abril volunteers her definition first (lines 1-5). Following Abril’s proffer of her version of definition, there is a lack of verbal and nonverbal uptake from both Leakena and Rainsey (lines 6-9), a silence that is reminiscent of some of the letting-it-pass scenes that we have examined. Perhaps because of the lack of an uptake, Abril utters a no-knowledge claim in *sotto voce* to express her uncertainty about the correctness of the version of definition she just offered (line 10). In line 12, Leakena asks Rainsey to give her definition, a request to which Rainsey complies. Following Rainsey’s delivery of her definition (lines 14-16), Leakena issues an understanding check question – *do you know what is it mean?* (line 18).

Although formatted as a *yes/no* question, a *yes*, or a claim of understanding alone would not suffice in this case. The question calls for a demonstration of understanding. In lines 20-21, Rainsey registers the import of Leakena’s question by reformulating the definition through the use of a down-to-earth example worded in plain language, thus demonstrating her understanding of the definition. This reformulation elicits what seems to be a two-word confirmation check from Abril (line 23). *The moving*, placed within a parenthesis in the transcript, presents a best guess of what Abril is trying to say. If *the moving*, delivered with an upward intonation, is indeed what Abril is saying, then it is out of context and makes no sequential sense. It poses an understanding problem not only for the analyst, but for the recipient, Rainsey, who gazes at Abril but provides no uptake (lines 24-25). A 2.2-second gap elapses, toward the end of which Leakena lifts her head from the handout, shifts her gaze to Rainsey, and starts to nod (lines 25-27). Taking Leakena’s nodding as a sign of acknowledgement, Rainsey repeats the key word
complain from her reformulated definition (lines 28-29), a word that is purportedly a synonym for nitpick. In line 31, Leakena accepts Rainsey’s plain language version of definition through a reformulation, incorporating the key word complain. The sequence is thus brought to a close.

Two observations can be made about the understanding check question deployed by Leakena in this instance. First of all, it carries a heavy pedagogical overtone and is redolent of those used by teachers in an instructional context (see Waring, 2012 for how teachers use understanding check questions in ESL classrooms). We can easily link this fragment to a classroom episode in which a student responds to the teacher’s question by, for example, reading a paragraph verbatim from the textbook. In response, the teacher may issue an understanding check question, asking whether or not the student truly understands what the paragraph means. This makes relevant a demonstration of understanding of the textbook paragraph by the student. In the classroom scenario, the teacher acts as an arbitrator who will adjudicate, based on the student’s response, whether genuine understanding has been demonstrated. In our case here, this is what Leakena does when she accepts Rainsey’s answer in line 31. However, if the student claims no knowledge, the teacher will need to recruit help from other students or take it upon herself to explain what the paragraph means. In our case here, if Rainsey professed no knowledge, then it would become incumbent on Leakena to explain what the definition means.

Due to its pedagogical functions, understanding check questions, therefore, presuppose an epistemic asymmetry between the question issuer and the respondent, with the question issuer in a [k+] position and the respondent in a [k-] position. In the case of
our participants, by asking an understanding check question following the proffer of a
definition, Leakena places herself in a [k+] position in relation to the definition offered
and the definition providers in a [k-] position unless the [k-] status is disconfirmed
through a demonstration of understanding. That is, by asking an understanding check
question, Leakena conveys to the definition provider that she \textit{knows} what the definition
means. However, just as the definition provider’s [k-] status, as presupposed by the
understanding check question, can be disconfirmed or confirmed through the
demonstration of understanding or profession of no knowledge, the presupposed [k+]
status of the discussion leader can also be subject to an interactional test, for as Heritage
(2012a) pointed out, a speaker can dissemble her epistemic status.

Another observation concerns the sequential position of the understanding check
question and the interactional function it serves. I have demonstrated in Sections 7.2 and
7.3 that the participants display a strong orientation toward the activity as one of
achieving sameness. When sameness is located in the definitions, even if only partially,
proclamers of sameness are made and agreement tokens offered. By contrast, when
differences are so vast and sameness cannot be detected and achieved, what the
participants often do is to withhold agreement tokens or any kind of response, verbal or
nonverbal, and to let it pass. Here, as a response to a definition just offered, the
understanding check question is not doing proclaiming sameness, the default action when
sameness is detected. For this reason, it can be argued that, like withholding response or
letting-it-pass, the question is being deployed because no sameness has been located.

The question then arises as to why not just withholding response or letting it pass,
but rather the understanding check question in this place at this moment – the classic CA
question of “why that now” (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The rest of the section will be
devoted to the search for an answer to this question.

But for now, let us take a look at how the word definition check sequence is
sequentially organized in this instance: 1) definition offered → 2) understanding check
question → 3) demonstration of understanding through reformulation → 4) locating of
sameness and acceptance of reformulation.

As can be seen, it is in move 3, a move in which Rainsey demonstrates her
understanding of the definition through a reformulation that allows Leakena to locate
some elements of sameness, accept the definition, and close the sequence.

In this instance, Leakena’s presupposed [k+] status relative to the original
definition of the target word offered by Rainsey is not subject to an interactional test
because the occasion does not call for such a test. Rather her presupposed [k+] status is
upheld through her acceptance of Rainsey’s reformulated definition.

What, if, following the understanding check question, Rainsey had made a no-
knowledge claim or professed ignorance? This is exactly what happens in the next
example and Leakena’s presupposed [k+] status is subject to a test.

(13) Levy [SNW 0155-0312]
((In Minnesota, tax agents reportedly levied back taxes on a longtime tax evader after he
announced on his MySpace page that he was moving back to the state and would be
working as a real estate broker))

1 Lea:  levied,
2     (1.3)
3 Rai:  forci- (0.5) forcibly (0.5) imposed or
4     collection often (.) a tax.
5     (1.7)
6 Lea:  m:::
7     (1.6)
8 Lea:  ⇒ you know what it means?
9     (0.7)
10 Rai:  uh uhm, not sure (0.3) heh heh heh .hhhh
11 Lea:  .hhhh [okay
12 Rai:  ["what does that mean."]
Lea:  ((Leakena switches into Khmer; 9.1 seconds of talk not transcribed))
Rai:  a:::h like (0.4) when you not pay: like (0.6)
      like (0.4) for example like a house if you not
      pay like [.hhh all the money: (0.3) when: (.)=
      [uh huh
Rai:  =like (0.3)
Lea:  uh huh=
Rai:  like every month they gonna (0.7) like (1.8)
Lea:  ((tongue clicking)) take [<all over>
      ]>take it- take it back.<]
Rai:  [right?
Lea:  [yea::h
(0.8)
Lea:  take [everything back=you know what=
Rai:  [yeah
Lea:  =it mean? ((Leakena gazes at Abril))
      []
Abr:  [((Abril keep gazes on handout and offers no uptake))
Rai:  when you like (.) you buy a car and you didn’t pay
      for like (.) two months or three months they gonna
      take [it back.
      ]>take it- take it back.<
Abr:  [you have- (0.2) to: back the: (0.7) °car°
      [ha:h?
      (1.3)
Abr:  I don’t know.
      (0.8)
Abr:  I don’t understand.
      (0.4)
Rai:  you don’t understand?
      (0.4)
Abr:  >no. no.<
      (0.6)
Abr:  when- when you buy the- a car, (0.6)
Rai:  yeah .hh [and you have like-] (0.3) you don’t=
      [and then ]
Rai:  =have money to buy like everything right?
      [you pay=
      ]>no. no.<
      [uh huh
Lea:  [no. no.
Rai:  =like a monthly p- [payment.
      (0.4)
Lea:  [yeah for example, like
      a [{ )
Rai:  [yeah it’s a money payment so .hh if you don’t
      pay:: them like (0.4) two or three months they
      gonna (0.3) take it back.
      (0.3)
Abr:  .hhh oh::: okay.
Rai:  °yeah yeah°
Abr:  >okay okay<

I consulted the Khmer-speaking participants, Leakena and Rainsey, but they were unable to provide a Romanized version of what Leakena said in Khmer here. However, they explained that Leakena is telling Rainsey what the word levy means. An English translation would be “when you buy a car, and you don’t pay a monthly payment, they will take it back.”
What is nominated as the target word in this fragment is *levied* (line 1), the simple past form for *levy*. In lines 3-4, Rainsey reads her definition from the handout. Following the definition, a silence of 1.7 seconds follows, broken by Leakena’s elongated vocalization *m:::* (line 6). Then another silence of 1.6 seconds emerges. The silences and the vocalization suggest sameness has not been located and augur that Leakena’s version of definition is different from that of Rainsey’s. Rather than proffering her definition as the next course of action, Leakena poses an understanding check question (line 8), requesting a demonstration of understanding. Rainsey provides a negative response (line 10) and passes the ball back to Leakena by asking *what does that mean* (line 12). The question indicates that Rainsey defers to Leakena as someone who knows the answer. This in turn is evidence that the understanding check question embodies a presupposition of a [k+] status for the question issuer.

Leakena offers her explanation to Rainsey in Khmer (lines 14-15, see also footnote), upon the completion of which Rainsey utters a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984a) (*a:::*h, line 16) to indicate that she is now informed of the meaning of the definition. Rainsey then translates into English what Leakena has just told her for Abril’s benefit (lines 16-18, 20, 22, 24), who is a Spanish L1 speaker and does not understand Khmer.

I will not go into detail with the rest of the interaction. It suffices for our purposes to just give a brief summary of what happens. Basically, Rainsey tries to get it across to Abril, with occasional collaboration from Leakena, that when someone buys a house/car on an installment payment plan, but does not pay on time in accordance with the terms agreed upon, he or she will risk losing the house/car. It takes a few rounds of back-and-forth before Abril claims understanding.
From Rainsey’s translation, it can be told that Leakena does not so much explain the definition that Rainsey offers, but proffer her version of definition through a specific example. According to *American Heritage Dictionary, 5th edition*, *levy* can be used as an intransitive verb to mean “to confiscate property, especially in accordance with a legal judgment.” This might have been the definition that Leakena had jotted down in her handout. However, a quick glance at the sentential context in which the word appears will reveal that it is Rainsey, not Leakena, who has the correct definition.

What, then, does this fragment tell us? Pedagogically, and on a positive side, an understanding check question changes the dynamics of the interaction. Rather than a glaring absence of negotiation as we have witnessed in the letting-it-pass episodes, the understanding check question leads to an admission by the definition provider that she does not understand the definition she gleaned from the dictionary, and the open admission of ignorance encourages collaborative effort to achieve understanding. If nothing else, the sheer length of the transcript shows the amount of effort that is being put into negotiation among the participants. On a negative side, however, the understanding check question allows Leakena to dissemble a [k+] status. That is, she may not understand the version of definition that Rainsey offers, either. However, rather than taking on a [k-] status by saying, for example, *I don’t understand. Can you elaborate?*, Leakena issues an understanding check question that presupposes a [k+] status on her part in relation to the definition offered and is able to pass with that status because both Rainsey and Abril hold a [k-] and are not in a position to challenge or disagree. Like in the last instance, Leakena’s presupposed [k+] status is upheld. And worst of all, a correct definition is thus brushed aside, and a wrong definition introduced.
Unlike the above two instances, the next fragment shows that it takes quite a bit of interactional work for the leader to uphold her dissembled \([k+]\) status.

(14) Delicacy [FOP 2212-2248]
((In some cultures, dogs live outdoors and are used solely for guarding property. In others, they are a source of nutrition and even a \textit{delicacy})

1 Lea: ((looks at handout)) what about u::m::: (0.6) delicacy?
2 (1.6)
3 Lea: *delicacy*
4 (0.5)
5 Rai: quality of being delicate;
6 (1.5)
7 Abr: yeah the quality of being delicate.
8 (1.4)
9 Lea: \(\rightarrow\) do you know what it’s mean?
10 (0.7)
11 Abr: delicate like (1.5) fragile; (0.9) *fragile*
12 Rai: it’s goo::d stuff like quality;
13 (1.8)
14 Lea: it’s like (0.4) hurtful to other.
15 (4.4) ((Leakena and Rainsey gaze at each other; Abril’s gaze is on handout))
16 Lea: like offensive
17 (1.3) ((Rainsey and Abril gaze at Leakena while Leakena’s gaze is on Rainsey))
18 Lea: hurtful to other. ((Leakena and Rainsey in mutual gaze))
19 (0.3)
20 Lea: \(\rightarrow\) ((turns to gaze at Abril)) you know what it means?
21 Abr: uh huh
22 Lea: *okay*

The target word is \textit{delicacy}. After Leakena nominates the word to be defined (line 1), Rainsey volunteers her definition in line 5. Abril aligns herself with Rainsey by uttering an agreement token \textit{yeah} and reads out the same definition from her handout (line 7). It is in this context of sameness having been achieved by Rainsey and Abril that Leakena issues an understanding check question (line 9). In response to the question, Abril offers a synonym to the target word (line 11) while Rainsey reformulates the definition using plain language (line 12). A third turn follow-up is due from Leakena at this point, one that would, as pointed out earlier, adjudicate whether understanding has been demonstrated.
Following a pause of 1.8 seconds, Leakena utters *it’s like (0.4) hurtful to other* (line 14), a definition that is different from those offered by Rainsey and Abril. Moreover, Rather than the usual difference-implicative turn initial *I got*, the definition is prefaced by *it’s*. The difference between the two lies in the degree of assertion they each make of the definition they preface vis-à-vis those offered by the other participants. While the *I got*-preface does not make any claim about the correctness of the definition it prefaces, but stresses instead that this is “my” version and it is different from “yours,” the *it’s*-preface underscores the correctness of the definition it prefaces vis-à-vis the other definitions, asserting that *it’s* X and, by implication, not Y, Y referring to those definition previously offered by the other participants.

What can be made of a third turn follow-up that is syntactically packaged in this way? Unlike in fragment (12) where Leakena is able to extract some element of sameness from Rainsey’s reformulated definition, in this fragment, she seems unable to locate any element of sameness in the reformulated definitions by Abril and Rainsey; and unlike in fragment (13) where she can pass with a dissembled [k+] status due to Rainsey and Abril’s [k-] status, here because both Abril and Rainsey have demonstrated their understanding of what the dictionary definition means through their respective reformulation – although it happens that, regardless of the same dictionary definition, they each understand the definition in a different way, what Leakena can do is to present her version of definition. Yet, since the understanding check question has already presupposed a [k+] status for her, which makes it relevant for her to take up an evaluative stance as to whether understanding has been demonstrated by the Rainsey and Abril, she has triple interactional tasks to manage in the third turn follow-up – to make an
evaluation of whether understanding has been demonstrated; to present her own
definition; and to uphold her presupposed \([k+]\) status.

Leakena’s third turn follow-up *it’s like (0.4) hurtful to other* (line 14) is designed
just to manage the triple interactional tasks – it presents Leakena’s version of definition;
with the assertion-implicative *it’s-*preface, it takes up an evaluative stance that Rainsey’s
and Abril’s demonstrated understandings are incorrect, and that the correct understanding
of the target word *delicacy* should be *hurtful to other*; and by virtue of the evaluative
stance taken, Leakena’s presupposed \([k+]\) status is upheld.

Following Leakena’s third turn evaluation, some sort of receipt from Rainsey and
Abril is expected – for example, an agreement token, a question, or even a disagreement.
However, what follows is a long pause of 4.4 seconds (lines 15), during which Abril’s
gaze is on her handout while Rainsey and Leakena are in a state of mutual gaze (lines 15-
16). There is no verbal or nonverbal uptake from Rainsey. In pursuit of a response,
Leakena reformulates the definition (line 17). Another silence ensues (lines 18), during
which both Abril and Rainsey gaze at Leakena while Leakena’s gaze is on Rainsey (lines
18-19). Again, despite the gaze, there is no uptake from Abril and Rainsey. Leakena then
repeats the definition (line 20). As she repeats the definition her gaze is on Rainsey who
also gazes at Leakena. Still no uptake is offered (line 21). Then Leakena turns toward
Abril and issues another understanding check question – *you know what it means?* (line
22).

In the CA literature that addresses itself to interaction in daily conversation, a
silence in lieu of a response when a response is due is usually taken as a harbinger of
disagreement. In the context of this word definition check activity, however, that is not
the only way a silence can be interpreted. For example, in the letting-it-pass episodes, we have seen that a silence can indicate that a response is being withheld, which in turn indicates the [k-] status of the participants with regard to the definition offered and the target word. Here the silences following Leakena’s third-turn evaluation/proffer of her definition can be interpreted in either way – as prefiguring disagreement or as withholding response due to non-understanding.

Interestingly, it is to the latter interpretation of the silences that Leakena orients herself. She reformulates the definition following the first silence (lines 15, 17), and following the second silence (line 18), she repeats the definition (line 20). When a third silence emerges (line 21), she turns toward Abril and issues an understanding check question (line 22).

Note that Leakena could have oriented to the silences as heralding disagreement, especially after her first two attempts to elicit a response had failed. For example, in lieu of an understanding check question, she could have posed a question such as *do you agree?* to elicit the other participants’ opinion. However, doing so would open herself to possible disagreement that poses a threat to the [k+] status she upholds. The understanding check question allows Leakena to disregard the disagreement potential of the silences and reasserts her version of definition as being *the* definition. That is, by asking an understanding check question in this sequential slot, Leakena upgrades the assertion of the correctness of her version of definition. At issue now is not about whether to agree or disagree – there is no room for that, but to understand. Therefore, although formatted as an understanding check question, there is a degree of coercive force embedded in the question. Registering the coercive force conveyed through the
understanding check question that prefers a positive answer, Abril complies by uttering *uh huh* (line 23) to claim understanding. Leakena then closes the sequence (line 24).

Leakena’s definition is thus imposed and her dissembled [k+] status upheld. A quick glance at the sentential context will reveal that none of the participants, including Leakena herself, has the correct definition for the target word.

With three examples analyzed, we can address the question of *why that now*. The understanding check question holds the definition provider responsible for demonstrating an understanding of the definition they just offered. Based on whether or not or how understanding has been demonstrated by the definition provider, the discussion leader can take her next course of action. So in fragment (12), we see that the discussion leader accepts the reformulated definition as the next course of action; in fragment (13), she offers her own definition; and in fragment (14), she imposes her definition. Because the understanding check question presupposes a [k+] status for the discussion leader, no matter what her next course of action is, it is designed to uphold her [k+] status. So in fragment (12), we see that she upholds her [k+] status by accepting the definition provider’s reformulated definition as correct; in fragment (13), she upholds her dissembled [k+] status by capitalizing on the definition provider’s [k-] status; in fragment (14), she upholds her [k+] status by imposing her version of definition as the correct definition when in fact it is not.

The understanding check question, then, is a stepping stone toward power yielding for the discussion leader. It prefigures the unfolding of a “leader knows best” interactional dynamics.
7.4.2.2 Understanding check questions following a leader’s provision of a definition

In Section 7.4.2.1, I have focused primarily on understanding check questions as they are posed by the discussion leader in the sequential slot after a definition has been offered by another participant. In fragment (14), however, I have shown that an understanding check question is also being deployed in a post-difference position, that is, in a sequential position after the discussion leader has offered her own (different) definition. Another example of post-difference understanding check question is analyzed below, as it gives a vivid picture of how the discussion leader dissembles a [k+] status.

(15) Slur [JW 0204-0248]
((After several months, she developed stomach ulcers, her speech began to slur and rashes broke out around her eyes.))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lea:</th>
<th>looks at handout</th>
<th>what about number five /slɔr/¿</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>slur¿</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>I guess.</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>m:::[: : : : : : : ]</td>
<td>(1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>[eh</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>insulting ((gazes at Leakena))</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rai:</td>
<td>is it insulting ((Leakena keeps her gaze on handout))</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>sinuation (1.1) or allegations about (.) someone</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>that is less likely (1.0) to insult (0.7) &quot;yeah&quot;</td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>or damage.</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>what I have is to pass over lightly or without due-</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>mention.</td>
<td>(2.9) ((Abril and Leakena are in mutual gaze))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>do you understand?</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>no:::</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>but do you understand what she [(0.2)(   )</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>((Leakena sticks out her little finger of the right hand, which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>is holding the handout, and points it toward Rainsey following</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>the production of the “she”))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Abr:</td>
<td>[uh huh yeah]</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>okay</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Lea:</td>
<td>it’s the same thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The target word is *slur*. As can be seen, Abril defines it as *insulting* (line 10) and Abril defines it as *insinuation (1.1) or allegations about (. ) someone that is less likely (1.0) to insult (0.7) °yeah° (0.4) or damage* (lines 14-16). In lines 18-19, Leakena offers her definition which she prefaces with *what I have is*, a variant of the difference-implicative preface *I got/I get: what I have is to pass over lightly or without due- (1.0) mention*.

A long silence of 2.9 seconds emerges following Leakena’s proffer of her definition, during which Abril and Leakena are in a state of mutual gaze (line 20). Yet there is no verbal or nonverbal uptake from Abril. Like in fragment (18), Leakena orients to the silence as an indication of possible non-understanding and issues an understanding check question – *do you understand?* (line 21).

Abril takes the question as a genuine inquiry into her epistemic state regarding the version of definition that Leakena just offered and utters *no::: * (line 22), thus professing not knowing. However, instead of explaining to Abril what her version of definition means, Leakena issues another understanding check question – *but do you understand what she [ (0.2) ( )*. Following the production of *she*, Leakena lifts her right hand which is holding a handout from the desk, sticks out her little finger, and points it in the direction of Rainsey (lines 24-27). Although a word is unintelligible on tape (line 24), it can be inferred that Leakena is referring to the definition offered by Rainsey.

What interactional work does Leakena’s second understanding check question do? By referring to Rainsey’s definition, Leakena circumvents the task of having to explain to Abril her version of definition, a definition that she probably does not understand herself. Moreover, the reissue of the understanding check question prefaced by a *but* tilts the
question strongly toward a yes as an answer. In other words, the second understanding check question retroactively indexes the first understanding check question as not a genuine inquiry, but one that prefers a yes as an answer.

Registering the yes-tilting nature of the question, Abril utters an uh huh, followed by a yeah (line 28) even before Leakena brings her turn to completion (line 24). In line 30, Leakena produces a sequence-closure relevant okay, and then goes on to announce that her definition and Rainsey’s definition are the same thing (line 32). However, contrary to her claim, her definition is a far cry from Rainsey’s definition. If there is any similarity at all, it is between Rainsey’s definition and Abril’s definition. They at least have the key word insult in common. A look at the sentential context once again reveals that none of the participants has the correct definition for the target word.

This example vividly illustrates how a discussion leader can use an understanding check question to mask her [k-] status relative to the definition she gleaned from a dictionary, how she also uses the same question to dissemble a [k+] status. When the recipient’s orientation to the understanding check question demands that she truly demonstrate her [k+] status, she reissue the question and designs it in a way to prefer a yes as an answer to continue to uphold her [k+] status.

7.5 When the leader says she does not know

The interactions we have examined so far paint a pedagogically unflattering picture of the word definition check activity. It is mechanical, stifling, even repressing on occasions, and in most cases devoid of negotiation of meaning. Fragment (16) represents one of the few exceptions.

(16) Xenophobic [FOP 1852-1952]
((Though many might dismiss the measure as xenophobic, the issue deserves serious debate because it forces us to define our societal values and live by those standards))

Leakena is the discussion leader and the target word is xenophobic. Rainsey offers her definition in lines 5-6. Abril aligns herself with Rainsey by uttering an agreement token yes (line 8). She then goes on to repeat the key word foreign people (line 11) from Rainsey’s definition. What is significantly different from the other episodes we have examined is that, in the context of sameness having been achieved by Rainsey and Abril, Leakena first makes a no-knowledge claim in line 16 to express her epistemic uncertainty before she proceeds to offer her definition prefaced by the difference-implicative I put. Leakena’s version of definition is thus doubly mitigated, first by a no-knowledge claim, then by a difference-implicative preface.
Perhaps due to Leakena’s mitigations, and thus her reduced epistemic certainty about the correctness of her version of definition, and also perhaps due to a failure to detect any sameness in Leakena’s definition-so-far (lines 16-17), Rainsey comes in, as Leakena pauses briefly in the midst of producing her definition (line 17), and says really? (line 18), which calls into question the correctness of Leakena’s definition.

Rainsey’s question prompts Leakena to turn to the handout to flip through the pages, presumably to locate the context in which the word appears (line 21). Rainsey follows suit (line 24). By line 26, all the three participants have all flipped through their handout and focused their gaze on a particular page in their respective handout and a long silence of 19.5 seconds elapses.

In line 27, Leakena breaks the silence by eliciting assistance from me. I not only explain what the word means, but also give a mini-lecture on the word formation of xenophobic, illustrating with examples (data not shown).

This is the only example in the database in the word definition check activity in which the participants turn to the textual context as the potential source to resolve their difference in word definitions – albeit a difference that they fail to resolve on their own and have to turn to the instructor for assistance. This example compellingly shows how a simple I don’t know by the discussion leader and a really? by a recipient can change the interactional dynamics and contribute to the pedagogical outcome of a definition-check task.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter, I focused my analysis on how the discussion leader manages her epistemic status in a word definition check activity. To situate the leader’s actions within
the larger context of the activity, I set out to demonstrate that the participants orient
themselves overwhelmingly to the activity as one of achieving sameness and avoiding
difference. When the same definition is offered by different participants for the same
target word, agreement token is offered and sameness proclaimed. The participants listen
for and extract common keys words from different versions of definition and used them
as the basis for proclaiming sameness. The Orientation toward achieving sameness is so
strong that the participants claim sameness even in the face of glaring differences. Since
achieving sameness is what motivates the participants, the analysis also showed that,
when confronted with different versions of definition for the same target word, one
common strategy adopted by the participants is to collaboratively let the differences pass.

Based on the picture that emerges from the larger context of the activity, I analyze
and discuss how the discussion leader manages her epistemic status in the activity.
Specifically, I examined two systematic practices deployed by the leader: letting-it-pass
and understanding check questions. The analysis showed that the leader deploys letting-
it-pass when she wishes to conceal her \(k-\) status in relation to a particular version of
definition or a particular target word. Compared with letting-it-pass, a more proactive
device in the leader’s toolbox is the understanding check question, deployed to allow the
discussion leader to gauge what the next course of action she should take to uphold her
(dissembled) \(k+\) status and to achieve or coerce sameness.

The orientations that the participants display toward the word definition check
activity showed that they understand the activity to be 1) an answer-check activity rather
than one that provides opportunities for negotiation of word meanings; 2) an occasion
that they should conceal their [k-] status; 3) and an epistemic arena where the leader knows best.

The analysis raises many pedagogical questions such as task design and modeling, the choice of dictionaries, the training of how to use a dictionary, the role of a discussion leader, and the meaning of participation, questions that I will address in the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter.
Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the study and discuss its contributions and implications. In particular, I relate the analysis to “post-analytic” (Kitzinger, 2008b) and learning-relevant concepts such as communicative competence, interactional competence, L2 learner identities, task-based language teaching, and CA-for-SLA. I also point out the directions for future research.

8.2 Summary of findings

In Chapters 4-5, or Part I of the dissertation, I demonstrated that in L2 interaction that involved novice participants, it is not uncommon for the participants to encounter difficulty in constructing their TCUs, as evidenced in various signs of perturbations or disfluencies such as sound stresses, pauses, cut-offs, and repetitions. These perturbations or disfluencies constitute the opportunity spaces where a range of actions can be performed by the participants. I described five of such actions: collaborative completion, handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover, and curtailment through an acknowledgement token (curtailment for short).

In Chapters 6-7, or Part II of the dissertation, I examined how epistemics impacts lexis-focused interactions. In Chapter 6, I investigated how L2 speakers use uncertainty-marking to initiate repair on a word, whose pronunciation, form, meaning, or use they are uncertain about, and to elicit other-repair. In this Chapter 7, I focused my analysis on an exclusively lexis-focused activity called word definition check activity and
demonstrated how the discussion leaders manage their epistemic status in interaction by deploying the interactional practices of letting-it-pass and understanding check questions.

The various interactional practices deployed by the participants in the data analysis chapters are summarized below in tables. Table 8.1 presents a summary of L2 collaborative completion.

Table 8.1 A Summary of Collaborative Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional function</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating the progressivity of talk</td>
<td>When perturbations or disfluencies occur in the first speaker’s talk, the second speaker enters the first speaker’s turn space to bring the TCU to completion. Speaker transition occurs in mid TCU. Progressivity is privileged over a speaker’s entitlement to one TCU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampering the progressivity of talk</td>
<td>The second speaker projects a different turn shape for the first speaker’s TCU-in-progress when contributing a completing utterance. The first speaker accommodates to the second speaker’s completing utterance by changing the grammatical trajectory of her TCU-in-progress or by initiating repair. The progressivity of talk is thus hampered, but collaboration and intersubjectivity are privileged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-opting affiliation and agreement and reasserting one’s stance</td>
<td>The second speaker contributes a completing utterance to nip an emerging disagreement or a disaffiliating stance in the bud and to assert her stance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking one’s epistemic stance</td>
<td>The second speaker produces a completing utterance in a rising or falling intonation to enact her uncertain or assertive stance toward the proposition conveyed through the completing utterance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2 below represents a summary of the findings of the four actions performed at the opportunity space when perturbations or disfluencies occur in the first speaker’s TCU.
Table 8.2 The Four Actions Performed at the Opportunity Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional practice</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handover</td>
<td>The first speaker relieves herself of the burden of having to complete a perturbation-filled TCU by inviting the second speaker to take over, thus accomplishing the handover of turn upon the second speaker’s acceptance of the invitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn-terminating yeah</td>
<td>The first speaker relieves herself of the burden of having to complete a perturbation-filled TCU by producing a <em>yeah</em> to indicate the effort to complete a TCU is abandoned and speaker transfer is relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeover</td>
<td>When the first speaker encounters trouble in constructing a TCU, the second speaker can initiate a turn to take over the floor as well as the task. Takeover is uninvited by nature, but it presents the second speaker’s collaborative effort in helping the first speaker abandon a perturbation-filled TCU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtailment through an acknowledgement token</td>
<td>When the first speaker encounters trouble in constructing a TCU, the second speaker can produce an acknowledgement token to curtail the first speaker’s TCU construction effort to indicate that understanding has been achieved despite the fact the first speaker’s turn-at-talk is grammatically incomplete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 offers a summary of the findings of the interactional practice uncertainty-marking.

Table 8.3 A Summary of Uncertainty-Marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual distinction, analysis, and discussion</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try-marking &amp; uncertainty-marking</td>
<td>When a lexical item is try-marked, the speaker places herself in a [k+] position while positing a [k-] status for the recipient in relation to the lexical item. When a lexical item is uncertainty-marked, the speaker places herself in a [k-] position while positing a [k+] for her recipient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty-marking as a self-repair practice</td>
<td>When a speaker uncertainty-marks the pronunciation of a word, a partial word, and a full word, she enacts an uncertain stance toward the correctness of the uncertainty-marked item and invites other-repair. When a word is unavailable or inaccessible, the speaker can also use gestural uncertainty-marking to invites other-repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty-marking &amp; word searches</td>
<td>There are areas of convergence and divergence between uncertainty-marking and word searches. Some cases of uncertainty-marking does</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
word search not involve a search for words, in this sense, uncertainty-marking is a distinct practice from word searches. When uncertainty-marking involves a search for words, it can be considered a particular type of doing word searches. As word searching is a broad domain of practice, breaking it down into subsets of practices as objects of analysis can enhance our understanding of word search as a practice in general.

Uncertainty-marking, repair outcomes, and learning opportunities The recipient’s epistemic status toward the target word to a large extent determines the repair outcomes. When the recipient holds a [k+] status, the repair outcomes are successful. When the recipient holds a [k-] status, however, the repair outcomes are often unsuccessful. It is proposed that in order for uncertainty-marking to provide learning opportunities, there must be a steep epistemic gradient between the speaker and the recipient, and that the speaker must have a certain level of linguistic competence and demonstrate a willingness to participate in the interaction.

Table 8.4 summarizes the two interactional practices deployed by the discussion leaders to conceal their [k-] status or uphold a dissembled [k+] status.

Table 8.4 Interactional Practices Deployed by Discussion Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional practice</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letting-it-pass</td>
<td>When different versions of definition for a lexical item are offered, the discussion leader withholds her response and eye gaze or directly initiates a move to the next lexical item, thus letting pass the opportunity of resolving the differences and of vocabulary learning. The discussion leader uses this practice to disguise her [K-] status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding check questions</td>
<td>When different versions of definition for a lexical item are offered, the discussion leader asks an understanding check question to decide her next course of action. Understanding check questions are asked to uphold the leader’s dissembled [K+] status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Contributions and implications of the study

In this section, I discuss the contributions of this study to six areas of research: collaborative completion, conceptual distinction in CA research, turn-taking practices in the classroom, the relationship between communicative competence, interactional competence, and L2 identities, task-based language teaching, and CA-for-SLA.
8.2.1 Contributions to collaborative completion as an interactional practice

This study constitutes the first systematic attempt to study collaborative completion in interactions comprising small group work in ESL classes. The findings demonstrate that unlike in L1 English conversation, where the most common opportunity space for collaborative completion is located in compound TCUs (Lerner, 1987, 1991), in task-based small group interaction, the most common opportunity space is located in perturbation-filled TCUs. This suggests that L2 speakers orient to disfluencies in an ongoing TCU as an opportunity space for the joint construction of a single utterance to achieve various social actions. The findings also demonstrate that unlike collaborative completion in L1 conversation, where the second speaker’s completing utterance is a syntactic continuation and completion of the first speaker’s TCU, these dual syntactic criteria need to be relaxed to accommodate to L2 speaker’s grammatical competence. This, however, is not the same as saying that all cases of syntactic unfitness and incompleteness in completing utterances in L2 talk can be attributed to L2 speakers’ limited grammatical competence. As the analysis also showed, some of the syntactic unfitness and incompleteness are designed as such to achieve delicate social actions. Another major difference between L1 collaborative completion and L2 collaborative completion is that, unlike in L1 collaborative completion, where a distinction can easily be made between word searches and collaborative completion (Lerner, 1996; Lerner & Tagaki, 1999), L2 collaborative completion, qua the sequential environment in which it occurs, often assumes the characteristics of both word searches and collaborative completion.

One of the four interactional functions of collaborative completion described in the study – hampering the progressivity of talk – is likely to be unique to L2 talk. It reflects how the second speaker infelicitously parses and projects the grammatical trajectory for
an ongoing TCU and how the first speaker accommodates to the second speaker’s infelicitous parsing and projection to privilege collaboration or achieve intersubjectivity.

All these findings contribute to an understanding of how, as an interactional practice, L2 collaborative completion deployed by L2 speakers in small group work in the classroom is different from L1 collaborative completion in conversation.

8.2.2 Contributions to some conceptual distinctions in CA

This study contributes to the CA literature by making several conceptual distinctions. In describing uncertainty-marking as a practice of self-initiated repair, I distinguished uncertainty-marking from trying-marking, and uncertainty-marking from word searches. I also distinguished uncertainty-marking as a practice of self-initiated repair from uncertainty-marking as a practice of other-initiated repair as illustrated in Schegloff et al. (1977). It is beyond the scope of this study, but to better distinguish uncertainty-marking as a practice of self-initiated repair from uncertainty-marking as a practice of other initiated repair, the latter can be called “hedge-marking,” as its function is to qualify or modify the second speaker’s degree of confidence or certainty with regard to her proposed candidate solution. While these pairs of practices share some commonalities, they are different practices, and a conceptual distinction contributes to our better understanding of each of the practice as a distinctive practice.

8.2.3 Contributions to turn-taking practices in the classroom

This study presents new findings on turn-taking practices deployed by L2 speakers to participate in task-based small group work in classroom settings. In a contribution to an edited volume that takes up a comparative perspective to CA, Schegloff (2009, pp.358-359) revisited the final section of the seminal turn-taking paper (Sacks et al., 1974)
and urged CA researchers to conduct comparative investigations into how different turn-taking practices operate in different speech-exchange systems, a call that was made in the turn-taking paper. He lamented that thirty years after the publication of the paper, their call had been by and large unheeded, and that for those who conducted research on data drawn from speech-exchange systems other than ordinary conversation (e.g., meetings and classrooms), they either did not pay attention to the differences or simply imported the turn-taking rules of conversation into a different speech-exchange system in order to explain what happens. Part I of this dissertation, in which turn-taking practices are shown to intersect with grammar, is a response to Schegloff’s call. It offers a glimpse into how turn-taking practices operate among novice L2 speakers as they engage in small group work in the classroom. In the practices of collaborative completion, takeover, handover, turn-terminating yeah, and curtailment through an acknowledgment, we found that turn transitions occur in mid TCUs or in non-transition-relevant places. L2 speakers deploy these turn-taking practices either to collaboratively complete each other’s utterances or to move the talk forward by abandoning or helping others abandon a turn or a task that are difficult to construct or complete. The practice of turn-terminating yeah, for example, is likely to be a turn-taking practice employed uniquely by L2 speakers to indicate that effort to construct a perturbation-filled TCU is abandoned and speaker transfer is relevant at a non-transition-relevant place. More research along this line can be conducted in the future to document other turn-taking practices deployed by L2 speakers as they participate in small group work.
8.2.4 Contributions to communicative competence, interactional competence, and L2 identities

By presenting analysis of five different actions – collaborative completion, handover, turn-terminating *yeah*, takeover, curtailment – which the participants perform in comparable sequential environments, this study contributes new understanding to communicative competence, interactional competence, and L2 identities.

Communicative competence was proposed by Hymes (1972) to refer to a speaker’s competence in using language and grammar in social contexts, which was a radical departure from Chomsky’s notion of competence as underlying knowledge or a mental construction. In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers in SLA and language testing further developed the notion of communicative competence by specifying and refining its various components (e.g., Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1982). Canale and Swain (1980), for example, proposed grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence as the three components that made up communicative competence. Canale (1983) later revised the model by adding an additional component: discourse competence, or cohesion and coherence.

In CA, the notion of interactional competence (e.g., Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011) is preferred over communicative competence. While the two seem to have some overlap, they are not entirely the same. Although categories such as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence are used, the various communicative competence models do not get down to the level of interactional specificity in CA terms. Using CA as a framework, Wong and Waring (2010) proposed a four-component Model of Interactional Practices that includes turn-taking
practices, sequencing practices, overall structuring practices, and repair practices. Their model seems to stake out the territory where a speaker’s interactional competence can be investigated from a CA perspective.

Part I of the study, which investigates how grammar intersects with turn-taking practices, offers some insights into how some components of these two models are intertwined. As the analysis showed, collaboratively completing an utterance for another speaker is no mean feat for a novice L2 speaker. To do so, she needs to pay attention to the emerging structure of the utterance, decide on an appropriate occasion for a mid-TCU entry, gauge whether the proposition to be expressed through the completing utterance falls within or outside her epistemic domain, and project the action import of the emerging utterance so that she can contribute a completer that either continues the course of action charted by the first speaker or changes the course of action to co-opt affiliation and agreement. These various cognitive operations have to be performed simultaneously and often within split seconds, and therefore they require a certain degree of grammatical sophistication and turn-taking competence.

Like collaborative completion, handover, turn-terminating yeah, takeover and curtailment are actions where grammar also intersects with turn-taking practices. Different from collaborative completion, however, these actions are performed either by the first speaker, as in the case of handover and turn-terminating yeah, or by the second speakers, as in the case of takeover and curtailment, so that the first speaker can abandon a troubled TCU. In other words, through these four actions, the participants deploy turn-taking practices as a resource in circumventing their own difficulties or assist others in
circumventing the difficulties in turn construction. What results in most cases are abandoned, grammatically incomplete utterances.

What emerges from such grammatical and turn-taking practices is an image of the participants as L2 learners who, with emerging interactional competence, and through collaborative efforts, are able to resolve grammatical difficulties in TCU construction on some occasions while on other occasions having to resort to circumvention strategies due to a lack of grammatical or linguistic resources. Such, I believe, presents a more balanced and dynamic picture of L2-learners-in-interaction than previous CA studies (cf. Carroll, 2000; 2004, 2005; Olsher, 2004; Wong, 2000a, 2000b).

8.2.5 Contributions to task-based language teaching

Another area to which this study makes contributions is task-based language teaching. As second and foreign language teaching shifts from a teacher-centered pedagogy to a student-centered pedagogy that accords small group and pair activities an important pedagogical role, tasks have become a pedagogical centerpiece in many language classrooms and attracted increasing research attention in recent decades (e.g., Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Foster & Skehan 1996; Kinginger, 1994, 1995; see also contributions in Crookes & Gass, 1993; Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001). By engaging students in tasks, it is hoped that ample opportunities for interaction and negotiate of meaning will be created and language acquisition facilitated (Ellis, 2003).

An important contribution made by CA researchers to task-based language teaching has been their deployment of the analytic tool of CA to reveal how learners engage in tasks *in situ*. The focus on learners’ orientations and actions in tasks by CA researchers is a focus on “task-in-process,” as opposed to “task-as-workplan,” a distinction made by
Breen (1989) to refer to task as is understood and carried out by learners versus task as conceived by researchers and teachers. Shifting their analytic attention to task-in-process, CA researchers have shed light on how language learning tasks are contingently constructed by the participants on a moment-to-moment basis (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Kasper, 2004; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Seedhouse, 2005), how learners develop their practices in task opening over time (Hellermann, 2007), and how there exists a discrepancy between task-in-process and task-as-workplan (Mori, 2002).

In analyzing how the participants engage themselves in the word definition check activity, this study adds to this small but growing body of CA’s research on task-in-progress and offers important pedagogical implications. The word definition check activity had been designed with the aim of helping the participants to learn new vocabulary. Yet, the participants oriented to the activity as one of achieving sameness rather than one for them to resolve potential differences and to discuss how word meanings are derived from contexts. This substantiates previous CA’s findings on how a careful examination of the participants’ talk-and-other-conduct-in-interaction can reveal a discrepancy between task-as-workplan and task-in-process (e.g., Mori, 2002). The video recordings were not viewed by me until the course was over, and the problem was not detected for early intervention. The participants would have benefited from the activity if their attention had been drawn to what went wrong in their patterns of participation and what the purposes of the activity were.

Related to the patterns of participation is the discussion leader’s orientation to her role in the activity. It was specified in the guidelines for the reading circle activity that
the role of the leader was to facilitate the discussion. Yet, the analysis showed that a
dynamics of “letting-it-pass” or “leader knows best” informed much of the interaction,
and that concealing a [k-] status or upholding a dissembled [k+] status became a
dominant interactional concern for the discussion leader. This suggests that the
participants did not grasp what it meant to facilitate a discussion. A teacher-led
discussion on what it meant to be a leader and to facilitate group discussion would have
been helpful. In addition, it would have also been helpful to point out to the participants
that it was perfectly alright to say “I don’t know” and profess one’s ignorance. The
analysis of fragments (16) in Chapter Seven demonstrated that a simple “I don’t know”
by a discussion leader could lead to a collective attempt to return to the sentential context
to resolve the differences.

The analysis of task-in-process in the word definition check activity also offers
some conjectures as to what might have gone wrong in task-as-workplan. For example,
although most of the reading selections had been selected by the students themselves,
their difficulty might have been above the participants’ level of reading competence. And
what had been considered to be “basic” skills and thus taken for granted, such as looking
up a word in a dictionary and what it means to participate in group work, turned out to be
problematic for the participants and thus should have merited some instructional attention.

On the surface, looking up a new word and deciding on a meaning that best fits the
context seems an easy enough task. Yet, for the novices, what looks like an easy task can
be otherwise. First, they need to have a good grasp of the immediate context – the
sentence – in which the new word appears. This can be something of a challenge
especially when the syntax of the sentence is convoluted and when there is more than one
new word in the sentence. Second, the polysemy of a new word, as represented by multiple entries in the dictionary, can make the pick-and-choose process cognitively demanding, thus adding further to the challenge. Third, since definitions in most dictionaries are presented in a condensed and abstract manner, themselves containing potentially new words and concepts for the participants, understanding the definitions themselves can pose a problem, let alone the words that these definitions serve to explain in the first place.

Of course, these possible difficulties occurred outside of the classroom and behind the camera. What the camera could capture, and what was available for our scrutiny, was the interaction during which the participants shared the product of their individual work, a process, when examined carefully, indirectly indexed the difficulties that the participants encountered in understanding the text and the new word, as well as in gleaning the correct meaning from the dictionary when they worked individually on the task. Therefore, it would have been beneficial to the participants if some learner-friendly dictionaries had been introduced, guidance of how to use a dictionary had been provided, and easier reading materials had been selected.

To sum up, the analysis of the participants’ orientation to the word definition check activity offers pedagogical implications for reading materials and dictionaries selection, the need to offer guidance to how to use a dictionary, and the need for instructions on what it means to participate in group work and to be a discussion leader.

8.2.6 Contributions to CA-for-SLA

Finally, by bringing to light how the participants orient themselves to learning opportunities that arise from lexis-focused interaction, this study contributes knowledge
to research in CA-for-SLA (Kasper, 2006, 2009; Kasper & Wagner, 2011; Markee & Kasper, 2004; Markee, 2008). 13

As the analysis showed, the patterns of participation and the learning opportunities in the lexis-focused interactions are in a large measure structured by epistemics. In the uncertainty-marking sequences, when the uncertainty-marked lexical item is immediately recognizable to the recipient, a confirmation, disconfirmation, or repair will follow, which creates learning opportunities for the speaker, as any doubts she has about the lexical item will be dispelled and any mistakes she makes will be corrected. However, when the uncertainty-marked lexical item is not recognizable to the recipient, the interaction is likely to develop into two different directions. In one direction, the participants collaboratively embark on a lengthy word search sequence; in the other direction, the speaker adopts a letting-it-pass strategy by offering a qualified, somewhat ambiguous confirmation to a random, but incorrect, guess by the recipient and the search sequence is closed. It is speculated that the letting-it-pass strategy is adopted by the speaker because she lacks the linguistic resources in describing the target reference, and letting it pass allows her to disengage from the search sequence without making a strong epistemic commitment. Whichever direction into which the interaction develops, however, the end result is the same – that the signifier or the target reference is not achieved. From a vocabulary learning perspective, then, these lexis-focused interactions do not provide opportunities for learning.

13 Presumably when the participants completed each other’s utterances to achieve various social actions, they also participated in the negotiation of meaning and thus created opportunities for language learning. But since I have explored the implications of collaborative completion in Section 8.2.4 in connection to communicative competence, interactional competence, and L2 identities, areas of research that can also fall under SLA, broadly conceived, I will not repeat myself here. In this section I focus on lexis in interaction and its implications for CA-for-SLA.
Brouwer (2003) formulated two conditions that need to be met in order for any word search sequences to create opportunities for learning: 1) the search must not be solitary but involves other participants; and 2) there must be an unequal distribution of knowledge among the participants. The analysis of the uncertainty-marking sequences confirms her findings. Yet, to apply the conditions to uncertainty-marking sequences in L2 interaction, I proposed that the second condition be modified and a third condition be added. In terms of creating opportunities for vocabulary learning, an unequal distribution of linguistic knowledge is not enough, it is better when there is a steeped epistemic gradient between the participants, with one on the [k-] end and the other on the [k+] end, so that when one participant does not know how to say such commonly used words as “corn stalk,” “the arms of a sofa,” “intestines,” and “inner organs,” the other can offer assistance. In addition, a third condition must be met: the participants must demonstrate a certain degree of linguistic ability and, more importantly, a willingness to engage in the search process despite a handicapped [k-] status.

A willingness to engage, not in the search process, but with the different versions of definition and the textual context in which the target lexical item appears can also be a condition that must be met in order for the word definition check activity to create opportunities for vocabulary learning. What we observed in the interactions, however, is either an unwillingness to engage on the part of the discussion leader, as in the case of letting it pass, or to engage through coercive understanding check questions so as to uphold the discussion leader’s dissembled [k+] status. Through these interactional practices, what had been intended as opportunities for vocabulary leaning was turned into mere occasions for epistemic enactment and management by the discussion leaders.
The lexis-focused interactions, incidental or preplanned, were supposed to provide opportunities for vocabulary learning. The fact that many of these interactional occasions were not oriented to by the participants as such prompt some reflections.

In uncertainty-marking sequences, as attention to a particular lexical item is incidentally occasioned, and when the uncertainty-marked item is not immediately recognized by the recipient, it requires that the speaker can rise to the challenge of the interactional contingency by using some descriptive language to accurately describe the item so as to provide clues to other participants and to facilitate the search process. As the analysis of some fragments showed, the ability to use descriptive language in the search process seemed to be lacking in some of the participants. This indicates that novice L2 learners can benefit from understanding how uncertainty-marking sequences or, more broadly, word search sequences are sequentially organized, what practices lead to successful outcomes, and what do not. They will also benefit from some explicit instructions on how to use descriptive language to describe what they are searching for and to narrow down the parameter for the search. In the meantime, it should be made explicit to them that the instructor is always available for assistance if their search does not yield an outcome.

8.3 Directions for future research

As the discussion in Section 8.2.4 showed, L2 speakers can use their competence in turn-taking practices to compensate for their own or their co-participants’ lack of grammatical or linguistic resources to move the talk forward. This indicates that in talk-in-interaction, interactional competence and grammatical competence are distributed among the participants, and that it is possible for one to be interactionally competent
without being grammatically competent on occasions. This raises a few intriguing question about the relationship between interactional competence and grammatical competence: Are they disparate competences or competences that are closely intertwined? Can we talk about interactional competence without taking grammatical competence into consideration? If grammatical competence and interactional competence are closely intertwined, then how exactly they intersect with each other, where the loci of such intersection are, and how analysts can use the tool of CA to document them? Future research can take up these challenges.

Another future research direction is using CA analysis for pedagogical interventions. For example, as uncertainty-marking or, more broadly, word searches, as well as word definition check activities can provide potential opportunities for vocabulary learning, authentic video footage of how L2 speakers engage in these events or activities can be shown to ESL students. Guided by the instructor, the students can analyze how a particular lexis-focused event is sequentially organized, what specific practices help produce successful outcomes, and what practices lead to unsuccessful outcomes. Based on the analysis, the students can reflect on how they would have acted differently in certain pivotal sequential junctures to move the interaction in a more pedagogically beneficial direction. In combination with the analysis and the reflections, the instructor can also introduce some useful linguistic resources and repair strategies that are useful in such lexis-focused events. In other words, interventional CA studies (for CA’s interventional studies in a variety of institutional contexts, see the edited volume by Antaki, 2011; for a CA interventional study in pragmatic assessment in L2 interaction,
see Cheng, 2013) with an eye to improving L2 speakers’ practices in lexis-focused interactions is a promising direction of research to pursue.

Teachers can also benefit from a CA-informed analysis of the video footage of students’ small group work. While some CA studies have demonstrated how teachers can improve their teaching practices by conducting microanalysis of teacher-student interaction (e.g., Lazaraton & Ishihara, 2005), the findings of this study point to the need for teachers to keep tabs on what happens when students are put to work in groups so that early intervention can be implemented when needed. A microanalysis of student group work will give the teacher a clear idea of how students orient to the tasks at hand, how they understand their roles in relation to each other, and how they manage their epistemic status in interaction. All this plays a crucial role in determining the learning outcomes of group work. As more emphasis is given to student autonomy and student-centered pedagogy in L2 classrooms, and as quite a portion of classroom time is devoting to small group work, teachers can improve tasks, intervene to change group dynamics, and give prompt and necessary guidance based on the findings of their CA-informed microanalysis of student group work so as to felicitate teaching and learning.
APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTION NOTATIONS
(Based on Jefferson, 2004; Hepburn & Bolden, 2012)

[  ] A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.

]  ] A right bracket, when marked, indicates the point of overlap offset.

=  = Equal signs indicate no break or gap between two turns or between parts of one turn.

(2.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate a silence or a gap measured by tenths of seconds.

(.) A period in parentheses indicates a micro-pause, a hearable silence that is less than two-tenths of a second.

:: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the colon row, the longer the prolongation.

.  . A period indicates a falling intonation contour, but not necessarily an assertion.

?  ? A question mark indicates strongly rising intonation, but not necessarily an interrogative.

,  , A comma indicates slightly rising intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary and not necessarily marking that the speaker is continuing.

¿  ¿ An inverted question mark indicates a pitch rise that is stronger than a comma but weaker than a question mark.

Word Underlining indicates stress or emphasis.

WORD Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.

°word° Degree signs are placed around talk that is markedly quiet or soft.
Double or triple degree signs indicate a particular quiet and soft voice, sometimes to the point of near inaudibility.

An up arrow indicates a sharp upward shift in pitch.

A down arrow indicates a sharp downward shift in pitch.

The greater-than and less-than symbols are placed around a stretch of talk to indicate that the talk is speeded up or rushed.

The less-than and greater than symbols are placed around a stretch of talk to indicate that the talk is slowed down, compared with the sounding talk.

The less-than symbol by itself indicates that the immediately following talk is jump-started.

A hyphen indicates a cut-off.

Dollar signs are placed around a stretch of talk to indicate a smiley voice or suppressed laughter.

Double parentheses are used to mark a transcriptionist’s description of events.

An empty parenthesis indicates that the transcriber was unable to make out what was said.

The letter h indicates hearable aspiration (breathing). The more the letter h, the longer the aspiration.

A period before the letter h indicates hearable inhalation or in-breath. The more the letter h, the longer the inhalation

A letter h placed within a parenthesis inserted within a word indicates hearable aspiration. This often happens when a speaker talks while laughing at the same time.
hah/heh  *huh/hah/heh/hih* are used to transcribe laughter.
<table>
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<th>Examples</th>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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