# THE COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF INTERACTION IN MULTIPARTY, SECOND LANGUAGE, ORAL ASSESSMENT TASKS.

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# Abstract

In the last 50 years, the number of students opting to study at a university outside of their country of citizenship has risen significantly, with the vast majority choosing to study in English-speaking countries, such as the UK, Australia, the USA, and Canada (Wingate, 2014). For some of these students, English is their L1; however, for a significant number, English is instead their second (or even third or fourth) language. It is often the case, however, that students in this latter category do not meet the relevant academic and/or language proficiency requirements for *direct* entry to their university of choice. Therefore, it has become increasingly commonplace for many international students with English as an L2 to first enrol on programmes at university-affiliated Higher Education (HE) institutes before progressing to their chosen degrees.  On these programmes, which can last from as little as six weeks up to a full academic year, students typically take classes in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) alongside lectures and seminars related specifically to their intended degree subjects. The objective on such programmes is to help students achieve the relevant academic and language proficiency scores they need to progress to the partner university. An important part of this process, in terms of EAP provision, involves the assessment of students' speaking skills in end-of-term tests, which have increasingly taken the form of group-based tasks (designed to better reflect the interactional demands of a university seminar than, say, an oral proficiency interview), in which test-takers must collaborate to solve a problem, reach a consensus, or discuss a topic of contemporary importance. However, how test-takers collaboratively manage interaction in this type of HE assessment setting remains comparatively under-researched.

As such, the current study uses Conversation Analysis (CA) to exam how L2 test-takers, in these group-based, oral assessments at a university-affiliated HE institute in the UK, co-manage interaction to ensure timely, equitable task completion. My analyses focus on how test-takers coordinate their talk-in-interaction when attending to three salient, recurring aspects of task management. These are: (1) the maintenance of progressivity, (2) the management of affiliation during disagreement sequences, and (3) the negotiation of deontic rights. Findings demonstrate the complex interactional work involved in each of the above and from this some pedagogical implications and possible contributions to assessment are discussed.

This study adds to the body of L2 oral assessment research by redressing an imbalance between paired (whether examiner-examinee or examinee-examinee) and group-based assessments, in which the former has received greater attention. Furthermore, the current study expands the scope of research on group-based L2 oral assessment formats by analysing how such assessment tasks are interactionally managed in a hitherto underexplored HE setting. The current study also sheds light on how L2 learners manage 'convergent' tasks (that is, tasks that require learners to solve a problem or reach a consensus), which have received comparatively little attention when compared to the more pervasively researched 'divergent' task type (e.g., debates).

# Acknowledgements

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# Disclaimer

Sections of this thesis appeared in Stephenson (2020) and Stephenson and Hall (2021), which were published during my doctoral candidature.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Setting the Scene

The number of students enrolled at universities outside of their country of citizenship rose from 0.8million in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011 (OECD, 2013), with the greatest movement of foreign students being into universities in English-speaking countries (Wingate, 2015). Indeed, 40% of worldwide international student enrolment can be explained by increases in Canada, Australia, Ireland, the US, and the UK (ibid.). This trend has continued in more recent years, as exemplified by data from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA, 2022), which shows that, in 2022, there were 486,868 Sponsored study visas granted for the UK – a 71% increase from 2019 (the last full year before the pandemic). Indeed, the number of international students in the UK studying at undergraduate (UG) level alone has risen by 24.1% since the 2016/17 academic year (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2022), meaning that international UG and PG students now make up 22% of the overall HE student population in the UK (Bolton and Lewis, 2022).

In line with this rise in international student enrolments in Anglophone countries, there has been a concomitant increase in the range of support efforts provided by universities. This comes, namely, in the form of various in-sessional and pre-sessional courses at university-affiliated HE institutes (Leyland, 2021), wherein students are offered help with their English alongside provision in their chosen subject area and, more broadly, with their academic skills and institutional knowledge (Leyland, 2020). This is designed to promote success on international students' destination course at the partner university. The setting for the current study is one such type of pre-sessional course (that is, a programme designed for students not yet enrolled at their target university – cf. *in*-sessional) known as an International Foundation Year (IFY) programme. On these IFY programmes - designed for students who wish, after completion of the course, to enrol on the first year of an undergraduate degree -  learners receive provision in academic writing, reading, speaking, and listening alongside a range of subject lectures and seminars related to their chosen degree programmes. For example, the test-takers in this study were not only enrolled on compulsory modules in EAP (English for Academic Purposes), but also – as their programme

was an IFY in Business and Humanities - on modules in Accounting and Business Studies (for students intending to study at undergraduate level within the Business school) and Sociology and Cultural Studies (for those students who intended to study a Humanities subject).

Although a minority of students on these IFY programmes have already attained the requisite language proficiency scores (from, e.g., IELTS of TOEFL exams) they need for direct entry to the university - and so are here primarily to attain the requisite *subject* scores - the majority do not yet possess the required language proficiency scores for matriculation. In the case of this study the students must, by the end of their IFY, achieve an IELTS equivalent of 6.5 average across the four sub-skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) with no individual sub-skill lower than 6.0.

However, despite the increasing number of international students enrolled at these HE university-affiliated institutes, there has so far been few investigations (one known exception being Al Abbas, 2019) into the in-house assessments at such institutions. Indeed, one form of assessment that is particularly under-researched is the group-oral-exam format adopted at such institutes in the UK, North America, China, and elsewhere. As such, this study contributes to the small but expanding body of research (see, e.g., Gan, 2010; Gan, et al., 2008; He and Dai, 2006; Stephenson, 2020; 2021) that employs Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine how L2 test-takers manage their interaction as they jointly navigate the collaborative exigencies of these high-stakes, oral assessments.

## 1.2. Research Questions and Objectives

The current study analyses how L2 test-takers collaboratively manage interaction during group-based assessment tasks as part of an EAP course at a university-affiliated, HE institute in the UK. The study draws on data from 10 hours of video-recorded group-oral-assessments involving 85 test-takers (24 assessment groups of 3-4), with each assessment lasting between 12 to 15 minutes (for groups of 3 and 4, respectively).

To begin with, the following general research question was adopted:

*How do L2 test-takers collaboratively manage interaction in a multi-party, oral assessment task?*

However, based on early noticings during my preliminary analysis, three sub-questions were devised to help answer the primary research question above. These are as follows:

Sub-RQ1.   How do test-takers maintain progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test?

Sub-RQ2.   How do test-takers manage affiliation in disagreement sequences?

Sub-RQ3.   How do test-takers negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group?

In answering the abovementioned questions, the objectives of this study are to raise awareness to learners, teachers, and assessors of the salient features of interactional competence (IC)[1] by identifying the recurrent interactional repertoires (Hall, 2018) that test-takers draw upon in order to collaboratively coordinate and jointly accomplish these group-based oral assessment tasks. In doing so, I also aim to provide insights into the ways in which EAP practitioners can better operationalise the IC construct in creating more accurate rating scales/assessment criteria and more principled, data-driven training materials for use in communicative L2 classroom contexts. I also hope to make the case for the veracity of this group-based, convergent (i.e., decision-making, problem-solving) interactive oral assessment (IOA) format over, for example, the more pervasive OPI (oral proficiency interview) and paired IOA formats in preparing learners for entry into tertiary education. Findings derived from the aforementioned research questions should also answer a call from interaction-based, educational researchers to better understand the exigencies of multi-cultural student group work in HE (see, e.g., Popov *et al*. 2012).

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[1] See section 2.7.

## 1.3. Organization of the Thesis

So far in this chapter, the context of the research has been described and the objectives and research questions have been presented. In this final section, the organization of the thesis will be outlined.

Chapter 2 will provide a review of the research literature relevant to the current study. It begins with a discussion of the literature on L2 oral assessments, with a particular focus on those that have adopted a CA methodology. After this, the literature on the CA notion of progressivity will be reviewed. In this section, I will first consider studies on progressivity in institutional settings in general, before moving on to discuss studies that have considered progressivity in specific educational and assessment contexts. After this, there is a review of the CA literature regarding disagreements in both educational and other settings, which is followed by a discussion of the related CA notions of affiliation and alignment. The subsequent section then considers the literature related to the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction. It begins with a definition of the term 'deontics', which is followed by (1) an explanation of the related concepts of entitlement and contingency, (2) a general review of studies on deontics in different institutional settings, and (3) a discussion of the scant research on deontics in the specific domain on education. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the aforementioned topics, in Section 2.5.4.

Chapter 3 follows with a description of the methodological approach adopted within this study. In this chapter, the ethnomethodological foundations of Conversation Analysis are discussed (Section 3.2.), before moving on to describe the fundamental interactional structures in CA (i.e., turn-taking (3.3.1), sequence organization (3.3.2), and turn design(3.3.3.) in Section 3.3. The sub-section on sequence organization is divided into further sub-categories covering the adjacency pair, the organization of preference and dispreference, and progressivity. After this, there is a discussion on the reliability, validity, and generalizability of CA analyses (Section 3.4.) followed by a consideration of some of the

criticism and limitations of this methodological approach in Section 3.5. This is followed by a chapter summary.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the research design of the study. As such, it starts by providing an overview of the research setting (Section 4.2.) and the participants (Section 4.3.). Following this, issues regarding data recording and ethical considerations are discussed (Section 4.4.) before moving on to consider the research process of transcription and analysis in Section 4.5.

Chapter 5 examines how test-takers manage progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test. In the test, the test-takers have either 12 or 15 minutes (for groups of 3 and 4, respectively) to discuss all options on their assessment crib sheets and jointly decide on one to recommend. Therefore, there is a need for test-takers to speak for as close to the time limit as possible, ensuring that they neither finish the test too early, nor run out of time before a decision has been reached. Findings demonstrate how test-takers manage this constraint of the timeframe of the test by (1) expediting talk when a fellow test-taker is speaking too slowly or taking too long to complete their turn, (2) slowing down and recalibrating talk when a fellow test-taker announces their final decision or attempts to elicit the final decision of another test-taker prematurely, and (3) by calling for options to be eliminated when talk has stalled. In such instances, test-takers initiate progressivity to manage their talk and align it with the institutional constraints of the timeframe of the task.

In Chapter 6, I consider how test-takers manage affiliation in disagreement sequences. Though disagreements are an expected feature of interaction here they can still have a face-threatening potential, which, if not managed effectively, can hinder test performance. Test-takers must, therefore, manage the competing needs of expressing their disagreement where necessary while yet orienting to the collaborative exigencies of the assessment task. Findings demonstrate how test-takers manage these competing demands when disagreeing, by (1) invoking shared knowledge, (2) upgrading epistemic rights, and (3) asking rhetorical questions. Each of these disagreeing acts, it is argued, can be classified as a form of 'inclusive disagreement', in that they each 'acknowledge another's view, [or at least do not directly dismiss it], while constructing a potentially disagreeing position' (Waring, 2001: 33).

However, though each disagreeing act is formatted so as to minimize dispreference, heighten inclusivity and, therefore, increase the likelihood of affiliation, my analysis of test-takers' responses reveals that strategies (2) and (3) most consistently elicit overt displays of affiliation from fellow test-takers, while strategy (1), on the other hand, was found to be the least successful in terms of affiliation, as it is most often met with a need for further facework by, or with incredulous responses from, fellow test-takers.

The final analytic chapter - Chapter 7 - explores how test-takers negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group. Preliminary findings indicated, in line with current research on deontics, that a central locus of negotiation over deontic rights is the adjacency pair; in particular, directive-initiated adjacency pairs. As such, three directive sequence types were identified for analysis. These include sequences in which deontic rights are negotiated by; (1) accepting a directive, (2) rejecting a directive, and (3) responding to a directive with another directive. Findings demonstrate how, in sequences (1) and (2), respectively, test-takers were able to either cede the full share of deontic rights to the issuer of the directive or cede none. However, sequence (3) demonstrates a way in which test-takers can endorse or reject a directive, and its concomitant claim of proximal deontic rights, in an altogether more egalitarian manner, distributing the share of deontic rights evenly between test-takers. This latter means of negotiating the relative distribution of deontics rights, therefore, is argued to be most commensurate with the collaborative, joint nature of the task.

Following my three analytic chapters, in Chapter 8 I provide a discussion of the research findings (Section 8.2) before moving on to consider some of the contributions to (1) the notion of Interactional Competence (Section 8.3.), (2) interaction research (Section 8.4.), and (3) the study's pedagogical implications (Section 8.5). These sections are followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research (Section 8.6.). I then conclude the thesis in Section 8.7. ('Final Remarks').

# Chapter 2. Literature Review

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature related to research on interactive (1) oral assessments (IOA) for second language (L2) learning, (2) progressivity, (3) (dis-) agreements, (4) deontics, and (5) the construct of interactional competence, which are all of relevance to this study. Section 2.2. considers first the role of IOAs in general HE settings (2.2.1.) and then, specifically, in language proficiency contexts (2.2.2.).  Here, it will be argued that more interaction-based research is needed on group-based oral assessments, especially within HE settings, where the test-takers are enrolled on preparatory EAP courses, as is the case in the current study.

Section 2.4., on the other hand, begins by explicating the relevance of progressivity in educational settings, before then considering the research that has been conducted on this topic within the general CA literature. After this, I turn my attention to CA studies on progressivity in educational contexts, before ending with a review of the scant CA literature on progressivity in oral proficiency assessment settings. Based on this scarcity of studies, I argue that more research is needed specifically on how test-takers maintain progressivity during such time-limited oral assessment tasks.

Section 2.5., surveys the literature on (dis-)agreements, starting with a consideration of studies on disagreements in the general CA literature (section 2.5.1), before moving on to look at disagreements in educational settings in general and then on oral assessment settings, in particular (section 2.5.2.). In Section 2.5.3. (and 2.5.3.1.), I then consider the related CA concepts of alignment, affiliation, and preference structure. As will be shown, while the existing literature on disagreements provides us with useful taxonomies and insights into the correlations between different assessment formats and the frequency and type of disagreements they elicit, there is little CA-based research out there that illuminates (i.e., from a test-taker perspective) the types of disagreements that are most effective at securing affiliation from co-participants. It will be argued in this section, therefore, that more CA-based research is required on the types of disagreement that are most congenial

to the collaborative exigencies of contemporary group-based oral assessment formats in current HE settings.

Section 2.6. begins with an explication of the relevance of the deontic domain for the current study. This is then proceeded by a definition of deontics (section 2.6.1.) and a discussion of entitlement and contingency (section 2.6.2.). After this, there is a review of the general CA literature on deontics (section 2.6.3.), which is followed by a discussion of the few CA studies that have so far considered the deontic domain in educational settings (section 2.6.4.). Based on the scarcity of studies on deontics in educational settings - and the non-existence of studies on the deontic domain in oral assessment settings - I argue for the need to conduct detailed interaction-based research on how test-takers negotiate deontic rights during the interactional unfolding of group-based oral assessment tasks.

Finally, Section 2.7., discusses the construct of Interactional Competence (IC), by first tracing its development (2.7.1.), before then considering the research surrounding it in L2 education, generally, (2.7.2.) and in L2 oral assessments (2.7.3.), specifically. Again, it will be argued here that more research is needed on group-based oral assessments, especially within HE settings.

## 2.2. Research on Interactive Oral Assessments

Oral assessments can be defined as any form of assessment in which a test-taker's primary response to a task is verbal (Joughlin, 1998). While these assessments are used in a number of different settings, as will be discussed below, they all measure one (or a combination) of two distinct qualities, namely: (1) test-takers' command of the oral skills of communication and/or (2) test-takers' command of content 'as demonstrated through the oral medium' (ibid.: 267). Some oral assessments can be purely monologic (e.g., a recorded presentation or a picture narration task (see, e.g., the tasks in Hsieh (2017)); however, *interactive* oral assessments (IOAs) are either purely dialogic (e.g., a discussion, an interview, a roleplay) or include both a monologic and a dialogic component (e.g., a presentation with subsequent Q&A). In what follows, the focus will be solely on this latter  dialogic variety, considering

first the literature on IOAs in general educational and professional training contexts, before moving on to consider the research on the use IOAs in measuring of L2 oral proficiency.

## 2.2.1. IOAs in HE contexts

Critical thinking and persuasive communication are essential for effective collaborative and interpersonal skills, and, as such, are desirable attributes for HE graduates (Tan et al., 2022). It is no surprise, then, that much of the adoption of IOAs can be seen within universities. As such, there has been an increased focus in the research literature on the features of IOAs in HE, some of which will be explored in this section.

Sotiriadou et al. (2020) reported on their experience of using IOAs on undergraduate Business degrees. In doing so, they found that the inclusion of IOAs within a suite of other authentic assessment methods helped prevent academic misconduct. Furthermore, they found that IOAs were effective at enabling students to develop their communication skills, their professional awareness and identity, and, as a result, their employability. Data was gathered by asking participants to complete a questionnaire directly after taking the IOA, with questions designed to elicit their perceptions of both the assessment's authenticity and its academic integrity (definitions of these two concepts were provided).

Tan et al. (2022), too, have commented on the ability of IOAs to encourage graduate attributes such as collaborative skills, professional communication, and critical thinking (see, also Cranmer, 2006). Their study, like Sotiriadou et al's, focussed on undergraduate cohorts; in this case, those studying either Occupational Therapy, Transport Management, or Nursing. In contrast to Sotiriadou et al (2019), however, who only surveyed students, Tan et al. collected additional qualitative and quantitative data from five assessors and three module leaders involved in the administration of the IOAs. The student and assessor data was collected via questionnaire (cf. Sotiriadou et al. ibid), whereas data was collected from the Module Leads via a reflective discussion facilitated by the primary researcher. With each form of data collection, however, the objective was the same: that is, to elicit the respondents' evaluation of the *fidelity* of the IOA, a concept that was operationalised in terms of (1) the extent to which it was possible for students to express themselves, (2) the

extent to which the assessment was perceived to be authentic, and (3) whether or not the assessment helped students to gain professional skills and knowledge. The thematic analysis of the questionnaire and discussion data revealed that IOAs were seen to (1) promote 'deep learning', and (2) reflect working in the real world. However, it is worth noting that responses from the Nursing students - whose IOAs were the only ones conducted in a paired (examiner – examinee) format - were less positive than those of the Occupational Therapy and Transport Management students, whose IOAs were both set in a group context, thus raising interesting questions concerning the efficacy of polyadic vs dyadic IOA formats.

The ability of IOAs to better reflect working in the real world identified in Tan *et al*'s study is further corroborated in a study by Beccaria (2013). In his study, which focussed on students enrolled on a course on Psychopathology, the IOA in question took the form of a *viva voce[2]*, modelled on that used by the Royal College of Australian and New Zealand Psychiatrists[3], in which students must interview an actor portraying a patient. Findings showed that students (through their course evaluation questionnaires) were extremely positive about this form of assessment, claiming not only that it prepared them for their future practice but also that it gave them an 'authentic insight into their chosen profession' (p. 141). Thus, the use of an IO, in this context[4], can be seen to serve a dual purpose, in that it both provided a method of assessment and facilitated learning.

As we can see, then, IOAs are used in a number of different HE and professional training settings and seem to, among other things, offer a way of (1) mitigating academic misconduct (Sotiriadou et al., 2019), (2) promoting deep learning (Tan et al., 2022), and (3) providing an authentic insight into interaction in the target setting (Beccaria, 2013). So far,

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[2] This translate literally as 'with living voice' and is typically used to describe an oral examination undertaken to gain an academic qualification.

[3] It is common for prospective medical practitioners (nurses and GPs, for example) to be assessed using an OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination). This involves a series of short, simulated interactions with either real patients or actors standing in as real patients. In the case of the OCSE used by the Royal College of Australian and New Zealand Psychiatrists, this involves students interviewing an actor portraying a patient with a moderate to severe mental health diagnosis (Beccaria, 2013: 140).

[4] For a similar study on the use an IOA in a HE medical context, albeit from an examiner's perspective, see Yaphne and Street's (2003) paper on the use oral assessment as a component within the MRCGP (Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners) examination.

however, we have yet to consider one of the most salient functions of IOAs; that is, as a method of measuring second language (L2) oral proficiency. Therefore, in what follows, I will review some of the existing literature on IOAs, specifically in L2 assessment contexts.

### 2.2.2. Language Proficiency IOAs

IOAs have long been used as a measure of L2 oral proficiency, whether in the form of examiner-led interviews, paired interactions between two examinees, or, as is increasingly the case, in the form of group-based discussions, such as those within this thesis. Indeed, one such recent study that has focussed on a group-based IOA is Crosthwaite *et al.* (2017). In their study, the researchers used a combination of concurrent think-aloud verbal protocols and post-hoc interviews to examine how raters determine a test-taker's (in this case, students on an EAP course in Hong Kong) ability to argue for their stance and explain academic concepts during a 25-minute academic group tutorial assessment. From their interviews and think-aloud protocols with assessors, they were able to identify significant differences in terms of how individual raters conceptualise and then judge test-takers' presentation of their stance. Analysis of the data also uncovered how raters were sensitive to whether or not the test-takers used the specific linguistic resources they were taught during their time on the EAP course[5]. Furthermore, because language (the linguistic features deployed) and stance (the content of their arguments) were separate features in the assessment criteria the researchers reported that, when language-related issues prevented raters from identifying the overall stance inherent in a test-taker's turn, students were oftentimes 'penalized twice for stance and language issues' (p. 10). To resolve this, the researchers recommend that language and content concerns be merged into a single criteria, and that scalar judgements (e.g., usually . . . , always . . . ) be replaced with more detailed, tangible "can-do" statements.

May (2011) has also considered rater conceptions in IOAs, albeit in a paired speaking assessment. In her study, May used raters' recorded summary statements, notes, and

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[5] It should be pointed out that the raters/examiners in this study were also the examinees' EAP teachers.

stimulated verbal recalls to identify which features of interactional competence (IC)[6] they deemed most salient. Findings from the stimulated verbal recall and raters' notes revealed that, in most cases, the assessors had fleshed out the three-part conceptualisation of interactional competence (see footnote 5) to include their own understandings of how (1) understanding the interlocutor, (2) responding appropriately, and (3) using appropriate communicative strategies were manifested in the unfolding test-based discourse. In other words, the concept of IC was seen by examiners as being more complex than described in the existing criterion. On a practical level, May suggests that these findings could be used as a basis from which to development a rating scale that more accurately encompasses the complexity of interaction in paired speaking tests; while from a theoretical perspective, the findings have the potential to help researchers better define and operationalise the construct. Furthermore, findings offer support for the claim that the paired speaking test format elicits a wider range of interactional features (e.g., conversation management, challenging of disagreeing with a partner, asking for clarification, and being able to handle being disagreed with or challenged (p.140)) than possible in an OPI (oral proficiency interview).

In addition to these studies on rater effects/conceptions within IOAs, there has also emerged a body of research concerned with the supposed validity of such oral assessments. For example, He and Dai (2006), using a 170,000-word corpus of test performance and data taken from post-test candidate questionnaires[7], examined the validity of the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) group discussion assessment in China. Findings from the corpus data, which was used to measure the number of interactive language features (ILFs) present – namely, those related to supporting, challenging, persuading, modifying, and negotiating meaning – found that the incidence of these features was very low. This, the authors claim, points to a discrepancy between what the test designers intended the task format to elicit and the test performances themselves. Findings from the test-taker

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[6] This was operationalised in the assessment criteria as the test-taker's ability to (1) understand the interlocutor's message, (2) respond appropriately, and (3) use communicative strategies appropriately. For a more detailed elucidation of this concept see section 2.7.
[7] 'Designed to elicit information regarding the candidates' perception of the CET-SET group discussion and how they dealt with it' (He and Dai, 2006: 378). Test-taker perceptions have elsewhere been recommended as an essential resource in terms of evidencing construct validity (see, e.g., Messick, 1989).

questionnaires suggest that this low degree of interaction may be down to one, or a combination, of a number of factors, including: a lack of confidence/interest, an interpretation of the task as an assessment event instead of as communicative interaction, and a tendency to produce extended turns at talk. The authors conclude with the observation that one cannot expect conversational features to appear in speaking tests just because partners with equal social power are introduced (He and Dai, 2006)[8]. This suggests that group size (i.e., dyadic vs. polyadic) and role distribution (symmetric vs. asymmetric) in IOAs may be of less importance than task type and topic.

Other more recent studies that explore the construct validity of IOAs have also utilized language corpora. For example, Crosthwaite and Raquel (2019) used a corpus of more than 20 hours of L2 production to determine the linguistic features involved in the successful accomplishment of an assessment task based on an academic group tutorial discussion[9]. From the detailed cross-sectional data afforded to them by the corpus analysis, the researchers found that, above all else, test-takers' frequent use of interactive and interpersonal metadiscourse had the most positive impact on raters' perception of success in academic discussion. In contrast, instances of (dis)fluency or L2 errors 'were not necessarily primary indicators of student success or failure' (p.54). As metadiscourse – that is, linguistic features that shift or pursue a topic, organise speech, and draw attention to specific content – is a common feature of lectures and seminars, Crosthwaite and Raquel argue that their findings (i.e., that metadiscoursal features were the aspects of test performance rated most positively by the assessors) provide tentative evidence to support this assessment's validity argument; in other words, as the authors put it, that 'features of performances [...] concur with the theoretical construct' (p.55).

While the studies discussed above (Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.) offer researchers valuable insights into different aspects surrounding IOAs (e.g., examinees' (Sotiriadou *et al.,* 2019)

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[8] It is worth noting that a divergent task-type (a discussion) is used in the CET-SET. The assessment format in the current study, however, is *convergent* (a problem-solving, decision-making task, where the test-takers must reach a group consensus). Previous studies have shown that convergent task types elicit 'higher quantity and quality negotiation work [than in] divergent tasks' (Long, 1990: 44), and that learners demonstrate 'greater cognitive and social engagement' (Dao, 2017).
[9] For a similar study, see LaFlair and Staples (2017).

and assessors' (Tan *et al.,* 2022) perceptions of their fidelity; their authenticity (Yaphe and Street, 2003), validity (He and Dai, 2006; Crosthwaite and Raquel, 2019), as well as issues pertaining to raters perceptions and decision-making (May, 2011; Crosthwaite *et al.*, 2017)) none illuminate how the test-takers *themselves* make sense of these assessment tasks through the unfolding of their talk-in-interaction. In other words, most of these studies examine IOAs from an *etic* rather than an *emic* (i.e., participant-relevant) perspective. Conversation Analytic studies of IOAs, on the other hand, take an emic approach to the study of oral assessments and, as such, demonstrate that CA is a far more suitable methodolgy (as opposed to those featuring questionnaires, post-hoc focus groups, reflective discussions, and language corpora) with which to address the key research aim of the current study: that is, to understand how test-takers themselves *collaboratively manage interaction*. With this in mind, the following section will explore a number of CA studies that have focussed on interaction in a range of IOA formats, namely, (1) OPI, (2) paired, and (3) group-based.

## 2.3. CA studies on IOAs

In line with the development of Conversation Analysis (see, e.g., Sacks *et al.,* 1974) over the years, more researchers have now begun to adopt this methodology to examine how real-life interactions unfold during different IOA formats. The testing formats in question have included (1) oral proficiency interviews (OPIs) (Seedhouse, 2013; Lazaraton, 1996; Kasper and Ross, 2007), in which a test-taker is interviewed by an examiner, (2) paired assessments (Decasse and Brown, 2009; Galaczi, 2013; He and Young, 1998; Okada, 2010), in which two test-takers interact (with varying degrees of involvement from an examiner) to complete a task, and (3) group-based, i.e., polyadic, assessments (Gan, 2010; Gan *et al.*, 2008; He & Dai, 2006; Luk, 2010; Leyland *et al.*, 2016), in which a group of students (3 or 4, usually) must work together in order to solve a problem, reach a consensual decision, or discuss, for example, a topic of contemporary importance. In what follows, the CA-based literature surrounding each of these interactive oral assessment formats will be considered in turn.

### 2.3.1. Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Assessments

Oral proficiency interviews have been used since as far back as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, the tests focussed mainly on pronunciation and dictation, however, at around the time of the second world war, there was a shift to a focus instead on test-takers' ability to interact (Fulcher, 2003). Since then, they have grown in use and are the chosen oral assessment format for several organizations and assessment bodies including ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

The IELTS speaking test (IST) is the 'most widely used proficiency test for overseas applicants to British Universities' (Seedhouse in Ross and Kasper, 2013). As such, it has received much attention from CA researchers interested in test talk as a variety of interaction (e.g., Kasper and Ross, 2001, 2003; Brown, 2003; He and Young, 1998; Lazaraton, 2002). These exams consist of encounters between one examiner and one candidate and last for approximately 11 and 14 minutes. The test has three main parts, each of which is designed to fulfil a specific function in relation to 'interaction pattern, task input, and candidate output' (Seedhouse and Egbert, 2006: 4). In Part 1, candidates must answer questions about themselves, their jobs/studies, their home, and their interests. In Part 2, candidates are given a verbal prompt by the examiner and must talk about a particular topic for c.1-2mins (after 1-minutes' preparation). In Part 3, the candidate and examiner engage in a discussion 'of more abstract issues and concepts which are thematically linked to the topic prompt in Part 2' (ibid).

Studies on IELTS and other OPI assessments have analysed features of interaction such as interlocutor (i.e., examiner) support (Lazaraton, 1996), repair practices (Kasper and Ross, 2001), miscommunication (Kasper and Ross, 2003), and preference organization (Lazaraton, 1997), among others. In these, and other, studies researchers have often compared the test-talk elicited in OPI settings with that of ordinary, mundane conversation – and, while there are differences in analytic approach – what is common across these studies is the finding that the discourse in OPIs differs from that of ordinary conversation in terms of participants' speaking rights (see e.g., Gablasova and Brezina, 2018; Okada, 2010). For example, while in OPIs speaking rights are distributed asymmetrically (i.e., the interviewer has the sole right to initiate turns and determine topics), conversely, in ordinary

conversation, participants have '*equal rights* to take a turn and initiate a topic' (Okada, 2010: 1647 – my emphasis). This has led some to the criticize the 'weak construct validity of OPIs' (ibid.) and to propose the adoption of other, more naturalistic, formats such as paired and group-based speaking assessments.  This has resulted in an increase in paired and group-based oral assessment formats being adopted, especially in EAP settings, such as the one in the current study, where the latter format has been implemented to broaden the focus to not only testing students' L2 speaking abilities but also their ability to engage in multiparty negotiations during subject-related tasks, such as one might find in a typical university seminar setting.

### 2.3.2. Paired Oral Assessments

In contrast to OPIs, the interaction in paired speaking tests has been argued to 'better resemble natural conversation' (Ducasse and Brown, 2009). Furthermore, in a study by Brooks (2009), who compared the OPI and paired formats, it was found that the latter produced more interaction, more negotiation of meaning, and higher OP scores, as well as 'increased opportunities for test takers to display their conversational management skills' (Galaczi, 2008: 92). In the peer-to-peer interaction of paired oral assessments, candidates have also been found to enact more balanced, symmetric roles (Eygud and Glover, 2001) and to produce a wider variety of functions (Lazaraton, 2002) and interactional patterns (Saville and Hargreaves, 1999 in Brown and Ducasse, 2009).

In Galaczi's (2004) study on paired candidate discourse, four main patterns of co-construction were identified: collaborative, asymmetric, parallel, and blended. In collaborative patterns, both test-takers introduce topics and develop their partner's topic. In asymmetric patterns, on the other hand, there is a dominant and a passive speaker, with the former contributing more to the task, while the latter orients to a 'reactive role' (p.400). In parallel patterns, test-takers demonstrate an ability to initiate topics but do not respond to or develop their partner's initiation. This has been referred to elsewhere as a 'solo vs. solo' performance (Storch, 2002). Finally, in the fourth pattern of interaction (i.e., 'blended'), test-takers manifest features associated with two of the interaction patterns above (i.e., a combination of collaborative, parallel, or asymmetric). Of these four patterns of interaction, Galaczi highlighted that asymmetric dyads were 'potentially the most

problematic from an assessment perspective' (Galaczi, 2004: 112 in May, 2009: 401). This is because in a dominant-passive role distribution the passive speaker may have fewer opportunities to demonstrate their linguistic proficiency to the examiner(s). As Galaczi (2004: 110) herself puts it, the 'fundamental issue here is one of fairness: How can we be sure that paired test takers receive equal opportunities to display their speaking skills?'.

Critics of dyadic assessment formats (e.g., Norton, 2005; Foot, 1999) have noted similar concerns regarding the extent to which test-takers have equal opportunities to demonstrate their oral proficiency, while He and Young (1998) have highlighted a problematic aspect of paired assessments that relates to the way in which spoken output is co-constructed (i.e., jointly produced) in the exam, but later test-takers' scores are assessed *individually*. Galaczi (2004) addresses this by recommending that a multiple task format is incorporated. This, she suggests, would redress potential participation inequalities by providing adequate opportunities for contribution in other, more examiner-led, tasks. Indeed, this is the solution adopted by the Cambridge FCE speaking test, which now has a multitask format designed to minimize interactional imbalances between the test takers. In this exam, if a test-taker is found to dominate in one of the tasks, this can be redressed in a later task by the examiners, who have been trained to 'afford equal opportunities to both test takers and to elicit the best possible performance from each' (Taylor, 2001 in Galaczi, 2004: 110).

However, in HE preparatory settings such as that in the current study - where EAP test-takers are expected not only to demonstrate their language proficiency but also their academic skills in subject-related tasks – the use of paired oral assessment and OPI formats has declined, with institutions favouring group-based formats. These group-based formats, the argument goes, offer greater construct validity insofar as they better reflect the type of interaction that the test-takers will be expected to participate in in seminars once they progress to university. After all, the measure of any quality assessment is the extent to which it tests 'how well learners fare when using English in their *target situation'* (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998: 210 – my emphasis). The next section, therefore, will consider the research conducted thus far on such group oral assessment formats.

### 2.3.3. Group Oral Assessments

Since the early 1990s, the use of peer interaction formats in both classroom-based and public tests has grown (Philp et al. 2013), with the Certificate of Advanced English (CAE) (Taylor, 2000) and the College English Test (CET) in China (He and Dai, 2006) both adopting group-based, task-oriented, peer interaction formats as part of their speaking assessments (see also Gan et al., (2008) on the Hong Kong Certificate of English Examination). This has particularly been the case on EAP courses at English-medium universities and their affiliated language schools, which have witnessed an increased adoption of group-based oral testing formats in recent years, due in large part to this format's ability to reflect more closely the type of interaction that takes place in a university seminar setting. For this reason, there is a need to conduct more interaction-based research on EAP testing in such HE settings.

In Gan's (2010) study on interaction in group oral assessments he claims that this format 'authentically reflects candidates' interactional skills and their moment-by-moment construction of social and linguistic identity' (p.599). Similarly, Gan *et al* (2008) argue that opportunities for authentic conversation are far greater in small peer groups than in teacher-/examiner-led contexts. This, they claim, is due to a tendency in peer-group interactions for greater sense making and meaning negotiating resulting from test-takers' collective responsibility (absent in teacher/examiner-led formats) for 'managing talk and determining the direction of the discussion' (p.317). As such, group-based oral assessments formats are ideal for testing both the academic (and EAP language) skills that prospective university students require to successfully participate in university seminar discussions.

Adams (2004) and Tsui (2001) have also found that learner-learner interactions in group-based tasks are more effective at encouraging higher-level syntactic forms and at facilitating genuine conversation, respectively. As such, group-based assessments have been argued to help test-takers develop 'discourse competence rather than only linguistic competence' (Gan *et al*, ibid: 317), which 'may mean an enhancement of the validity of […] score-based inferences' (Bonk and Ockey, 2003; 90). Indeed, this discourse competence is particularly relevant in EAP context, where learners are not only expected to improve their linguistic competence but also their subject-specific academic competencies.

Some researchers, however, have voiced concerns about group-based oral assessment formats. For example, Swain (2001: 277) questions the extent to which it is possible to interpret interaction among multiple test-takers as 'an indication of *individual* performance ability' (my emphasis). Berry (2000), too, has called into question the complex relationship that can exist between the characteristics of one test-taker and the rest of the group, and the effects that this can have on individual performance. In her study, she found that introverts' scores were lower when placed in a group with a low mean level of extraversion and were increased when placed in a group with a high mean level. Inversely, extroverts were found to score higher when placed in a low mean extraversion group and lower when placed in a high mean extraversion group. Concerns regarding test groupings, in terms of both differences in the ability of candidates (Foot, 1999) and candidates' degree of familiarity with their partner(s) (O'Sullivan, 2002), have also been raised. Luk (2010), on the other hand, has interrogated the perceived authenticity of group-based test-talk, finding that in many cases there can emerge a 'ritualized, contrived, and colluded' form of interaction, due to test-takers prioritising impression management - i.e., 'the impression of being effective interlocutors for scoring purposes' (Luk, 2010: 25) - over authentic communication. This, of course, has implications for the development of students' L2 oral proficiency, as well as for test construct validity.

As we can see, then, there has emerged over the last twenty years or so a growing body of interaction-based research on L2 oral assessments. As noted above, however, much of this research has concerned itself with the more pervasive OPI and paired formats. Of those studies that have examined group-based oral assessment formats, the majority have focussed on either secondary education settings (e.g., Gan *et al*., 2008; Gan, 2010; Luk, 2010 – see also Sundqvist, 2009; Sandlund and Sundqvist, 2011) or general English assessments (see, e.g., Taylor (2000) on the Cambridge Assessment of Spoken English). For this reason, there is a need to conduct more interaction-based research on EAP testing in such HE settings as that found within this thesis. The insights gleaned from such studies could contribute to the development of more refined interaction-oriented criteria (May *et al*., 2020) and to our understanding of how test-takers respond to different task demands (Jenks, 2007). Furthermore, research of this microanalytic variety could be used to develop in-depth, awareness-raising training materials (see, e.g., Lam (2019)) that go beyond low-

resolution abstractions of student discourse and useful stock phrases to instead provide an insight into the ebb-and-flow of real-life group interactions grounded in authentic excerpts from the target setting.

## 2.4. Progressivity: Definition and its Relevance for the Current Study

In time-limited, oral, L2 assessments, test-takers must ensure that they complete the task within the given timeframe. At the same time, however, they must also ensure that the task is not completed prematurely. In other words, if a test-taker (or group of test-takers, in this instance) is given 15 minutes to reach a decision or solve a problem, there is an expectation that this time should be maximally utilised; after all, if it is not, and a group of test-takers complete their assessment task within, say, the first five minutes, they run the risk of providing the assessor with insufficient spoken output with which to determine an appropriate score. As such, the ability to 'manage trouble and maintain progressivity […] becomes crucial' for test-takers in these assessment settings (Coban & Sert, 2020: 65). Indeed, this orientation to the timeframe of assessment tasks has been explicated in other studies, such as Greer (2019), who analysed the ways in which test-takers oriented to the assessment clock/timer as means of closing L2 tests.

According to Schegloff (2007: 14) 'moving from some element to a hearably-next-one with nothing intervening is the embodiment, and the measure of, progressivity'. This 'nextness', or 'successiveness', is fundamental in any form of talk-in-interaction (Stivers & Robinson, 2006; Hosoda & Aline, 2013) - occurring at the level of both turn construction and sequence structure - and is involved in the resolution of interactional trouble. An example of such interactional trouble that is particularly relevant in L2 assessment settings, and particularly related to progressivity, is when 'there is a gap (i.e., a very long silence) in talk, where no parties contribute to the ongoing interaction in the relevant next sequential slot' (Coban & Sert, 2020: 65). In these moments of 'topic attrition' (Heritage, 2012), or 'topic hold' (Jefferson, 1984) test-takers must restore progressivity, contribute to the topic, and establish mutual understanding.

Interactional trouble in institutional settings refers to 'the emergence of a temporary misalignment in the unfolding of an interactional and pedagogical activity, which is oriented to by participants as such through verbal and nonverbal means' (Sert, 2015: 58). As mentioned above, one such manifestation of these interactional troubles is prolonged silence; though, this is by no means the only way in which troubles are signalled. Participants have also been found to signal forthcoming trouble with smiles (Sert and Jacknick, 2015), gaze aversion (Sert, 2013), and lateral headshakes (Sert and Walsh, 2013).

## 2.4.1. Studies on Progressivity in Institutional Settings

In the CA literature, progressivity has been considered in several different institutional settings, including paediatric encounters between parents, children, and physicians (Stivers and Robinson, 2006) and in classroom interactions (Hosoda and Aline, 2013). In each of these studies, the preference for progressivity has been shown to be 'endemic to the organization of conversation at the level of both turn construction […] and sequence structure' (ibid. p.70). What has also been found is that the preference for progressivity exists alongside other preferences; namely, the preference for a selected speaker to speak next (Heritage, 2007). However, although these preferences co-exist in conversation, it has been revealed that in environments where they collide (e.g., in situations where, for whatever reason, a selected next speaker cannot, or does not, respond), there is 'a systematic preference for the provision of an answer over the preference for the selected next speaker to respond' (Stivers and Robinson, 2006: 386). In other words, in such cases, non-selected speakers treat it as preferable to attend to the progression of the sequence rather than to delay it further in favour of waiting for the selected next speaker to respond. This is the case not only in situations where no response is forthcoming, but also in situations where the selected next speaker orients to responding but shows difficulty in doing so (ibid.).

## 2.4.2. Progressivity in Educational Settings

One study that has analysed the preference for progressivity in an educational setting is Hosoda and Aline (2013). In their study, which focussed on question-answer sequences

between teacher and student in a primary school English-as-a-foreign-language class in Japan, found that in this institutional setting, participants prioritised 'the preference for a selected student to respond over the preference for progressivity' (p.63). This is interesting as it runs counter to findings from studies on other settings, which have revealed that the opposite holds true: i.e., that the preference for progressivity instead overrides the preference for the selected speaker to speak next (see, e.g., Stivers & Robinson, 2006). In this study, however, the preference for the selected recipient to speak next was oriented to not only by the teachers, who repeatedly pursued a response, but by the other students in the class, who were found to whisper 'off-record' assistance to the selected student rather than answering the teacher's question themselves. While Hosoda and Aline (2013) suggest that this de-prioritising of progressivity is consistent in the 'sub-variety level of context' (p.82) and can be observed, regardless of subject, in most teacher-fronted classrooms, they nonetheless highlight how, at the *intra-institutional* level, the order may be different. This latter contention is supported by a preliminary analysis of non-teacher-fronted university students' group discussions, in which it was found that, in instances where a selected speaker displayed difficulty in providing a response, a non-selected student would occasionally provide an 'on-record' answer, thus prioritising progressivity over the preference for a selected recipient to respond.

Greer and Leyland (2017), too, have considered how progressivity is maintained in educational settings; though, in their study, the focus was on interaction between teachers. In their study, they found that to further talk, participants would occasionally orient to 'environmentally available text' (p.200), for example, in a book or on a computer screen. From this they suggested, therefore, that textual objects can 'become an affordance for turn progressivity' (ibid.).

Much less is known, however, about the ways in which participants maintain progressivity in the specific setting of oral assessment tasks. What little research does exist on this topic will be discussed next.

2.4.3. Progressivity in Oral Assessment Tasks

While several studies have considered learner-learner interactions in oral assessments (e.g., McNamara, 1997; Huttner, 2014; Gan, 2010; Gan, et al. 2008, Galaczi, 2008; He and Young, 1998; Okada, 2010; Lam, 2018), there has so far been little attention paid to the ways in which progressivity is maintained in such settings. In the group assessments tasks in this thesis, however, where there is no teacher involvement in the interaction and, therefore, only the test-takers to ensure that talk does not stall, it is particularly important to understand how the tests-takers *themselves* successfully (or otherwise) maintain progressivity.

One recent exception to this dearth in research on progressivity in assessment settings are Coban and Sert (2020), who have investigated the interactional resources used to maintain progressivity in moments where talk has stalled in paired, L2 speaking assessment interactions at a Turkish university. Findings from this study corroborated previous analyses (see Sert and Jacknick, 2015; Sert and Walsh, 2013) in uncovering some of the ways in which participants signal forthcoming trouble (e.g., through smiles, laughter, lateral headshakes, and gaze aversion). However, what may of greater relevance, here, is their illumination of the interactional resources used to *maintain progressivity* after interactional troubles. In this regard, test-takers were found to employ collaborative turn sequences, sub-topic transitions, and formulations of understanding after displays of difficulty to ensure that talk progressed.

Interestingly, however, these resources for maintaining progressivity were not equally effective. For instance, sub-topic transitions that did not orient to the original trouble sources were found to 'bring forth weak topical alignment and low mutuality, because test-takers [did] not engage with each other's ideas' (p. 83; see also, Galaczi, 2008). On the other hand, demonstrations of understanding (e.g., *you mean* + reformulation) resulted in 'relatively higher alignment and achievement of understanding' than *claims* of understanding (e.g. *I understand you*) which, rather than fuelling topic *development*, most often resulted in sequence closure followed by the initiation of a new topic. Most effective among these resources was the use of collaborative sequences (including, e.g., turn completions), which were found, whether deployed at a lexical or sentential level, to both

(a) help the interaction progress and (b) facilitate shared understanding, since they make receipts of completion relevant.

While, for reasons already stated, the maintenance of progressivity is a pressing concern for test-takers and a fruitful area for further research, there are other areas that are also pertinent to those involved in oral assessment tasks. For example, many group oral assessments require test takers to debate a topic of contemporary importance or - as is the case in this thesis - to solve a problem and reach a consensual decision. As such, it is expected that test-takers be able to disagree with one another and subsequently work through these disagreements in pursuit of the overarching assessment goal: that is, collaborative task accomplishment. In what follows, then, I will discuss some of the existing literature on disagreements.

## 2.5. Disagreements and (dis-)affiliation

In convergent task types of the like considered in this thesis, test-takers are required to express and defend their opinions in pursuit of the overarching goal of negotiating a consensual decision. As such, the ability to disagree effectively – that is, in a way germane to the collaborative dimensions of the task – is consequential for successful task completion and 'solidarity between participants' (Heritage & Raymond, 2005 in Koskinen & Stevanovic, 2021: 2). As Kreutel (2007 in Gablasova & Brezina, 2018: 70) puts it, there 'is a social threat that comes from the fact that in expressing an opposing view we may challenge the accuracy or credibility of the previous speaker', which makes disagreeing a complex, potentially face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987) act that requires careful management and linguistic coordination. After all, if a speaker expresses her disagreement directly and without mitigation, she risks sounding 'too harsh or even rude' (ibid.) – this could be particularly detrimental, here, in an assessment setting where the focus is on collaborative and equitable task accomplishment.

One way of orienting to the collaborative requirements of the task and mitigating this social threat is by formatting one's disagreeing turn in a way that minimises dispreference and, therefore, increases the likelihood of an affiliative response from fellow test-takers. It is in

this regard that the related aspects of (dis)agreement and (dis)affiliation are pertinent to such assessment-based interactions. Indeed, this is one important aspect that the current thesis hopes to shed light on. Therefore, in what follows, we will consider how these features of interaction have been treated thus far in the conversation-analytic literature.

### 2.5.1. CA Studies on Disagreement

*Agreements and disagreements are performed, by and large, with second assessments*
(Pomerantz, 1984: 63)

Studies concerned with agreeing and disagreeing in talk-in-interaction have based their analyses around speakers' use of 'assessments'; that is, evaluative comments made to 'construct solidarity, express resistance, and display disaffiliation with one another' (Cheng, 2013: 1). Through such assessments, speakers are said to position themselves in relation to others and the phenomena being assessed, thereby establishing the extent to which the way they view the world differs from their fellow speakers.

In her influential paper on the linguistic resources involved in agreeing and disagreeing with prior assessments, Pomerantz (1984) found that there were several types of disagreement, ranging from weak to strong. Weak forms included more mitigation to simultaneously convey an oppositional standpoint while yet reducing potential conflict by downplaying the challenge to the previous speaker. The primary mitigation technique discussed in her study was the agreement-preface; that is, the use of an agreement phrase preceding a marker of disjunction (e.g., *I see what you mean, but . . . / I agree, however . . .*) to create the impression of partial agreement and downplay the disagreeing turns' intensity. Further mitigating strategies within disagreeing turns included phrases such as *maybe* and *I don't know*, which indicate uncertainty, as well as delays and hesitation, which signal not only that the disagreeing turn is dispreferred (Waring, 2001) but also 'the speaker's reluctance and discomfort at disagreeing' (Gablasova & Brezina, 2018: 71). Strong forms of disagreement, on the other hand, were characterized by the use of explicit tokens of disagreement (e.g., *I disagree*) and by the absence of any further mitigation.

While disagreements have most often been treated as face-threatening acts (FTAs) that are dispreferred (Pomerantz, 1984), Georgakopoulou (2001, 1882), in her study of informal Greek conversation between young people, stresses the importance of understanding that the face threat of any act, 'rather than being intrinsically defined, is inextricably bound up with the contextual exigencies of the speech event in which the act occurs'. Similarly, Hüttner (2014: 1) calls into question broad-brush conceptualisations of disagreements as dispreferred, face-threatening acts, stating that 'this perception does not adequately reflect the importance of disagreeing for many types of interaction, such as problem-solving and decision-making'. Georgakopoulou (ibid) extends this line of thinking further by suggesting that any conceptualisation of a face-threatening act should avoid postulating *a priori* concepts such as solidarity (for a similar argument see Kappa, 2016) and politeness in favour of considering its 'interrelations with local interactional goals and functions' (1882-3).

Let us consider, then, several studies that have focussed on (dis-)agreements with regards to the interactional goals and functions specific to L2 classroom- and assessment-based interaction.

### 2.5.2. Disagreements in Educational Interaction

In their longitudinal study of the disagreements of L2 learners of English, Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) found that most learners started the study with strong forms of disagreements; that is direct formulations with little or no elaboration or mitigation. However, learners were shown to elaborate their disagreements over time in four main ways: by (1) increasing the amount of talk, (2) including agreement as well as disagreement components (cf. Pomerantz, 1984; Kreutel, 2007; Pochon-Berger, 2011), (3) using multiple turn structures to avoid disagreement, and (4) postponing disagreement to a later position within their turns (cf. Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011). However, while extending and corroborating previous research on disagreements, Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury's (2004) study lacks ecological validity insofar as the data is taken from interviews between L2- and native speakers of English that were set up specifically to elicit oppositional talk.

Since then, however, several studies have investigated disagreements in less experimental, more naturalistic, educational settings, such as in tutorless problem-based learning tutorials (McQuade et al., 2018), peer review sessions (O'Donnell Christoffersen, 2015), L2 oral examinations (Hüttner, 2014; Gablasova & Brezina, 2018; Leyland *et al.*, 2016) and L2 classroom discussions (Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011; Fujimoto, 2012; Sharma, 2012; Hosoda & Aline, 2015).

McQuade et al.'s (2018) study of tutorless problem-based tutorials is particularly relevant to the current thesis in that it (a) centres around a problem-based task (b) is group-based and (c) features no tutor involvement. In this study, McQuade et al., found that the most prevalent formulations of disagreement were:

1. Agreement-preface formulations (again cf. Pomerantz, 1984)
   - *Yes, but . . .*
   - Knowledge appreciations: *I see what you mean, but . . .*
2. Invoking physical resources (e.g., the worksheet)
   - *But it says on the worksheet . . .*
3. Referencing external expert (the tutor)
   - *But he/she said . . .*
4. Referencing external (non-tutor) sources
   - *Dan said there are X*

While the researchers acknowledge that PBL interactions, given their theoretical foundations, may hold disagreement to be a less sensitive act than in other pedagogical settings, they nonetheless found that disagreement sequences do not always unfold in this (disagreement-friendly) way. On the contrary, it was found that 'whilst disagreements were frequent occurrences throughout, […] students made continual orientation to institutional politeness, where formulations were highly indirect and avoidant of explicit forms' (p.239).

From reading much of the relevant literature on disagreements in educational settings (e.g., Bell, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004; Kreutel, 2007; Gablasova & Brezina, 2018), one

could be tempted to take it as given that, in all cases, lower proficiency speakers disagree in a direct, under-elaborated, unmitigated manner, while higher proficiency speakers use weaker, more mitigated, elaborated formulations. However, while this may be true in most circumstances, evidence suggests that this is not always the case. For example, in a study by Bavarsad et al. (2015) it was found that Persian EFL learners made use of more mitigating strategies in their disagreements than their American L1 English-speaking counterparts. Furthermore, in Pekarek Doehler and Pochon-Berger's (2011) study of beginner and advanced German-speaking learners of L2 French, it was found that – while there was a propensity for lower-level learners to use strong, unmitigated, turn-initial disagreement formats – advanced-level learners *also* made use of these strong formulations; though they were used less frequently, and many other techniques were also used. Nevertheless, this is interesting as it suggests that 'nonmitigated disagreements […] do *not necessarily reflect* a lack of interactional competence or linguistic means but might be used in a way that is appropriate in specific sequential environments' (p.223 – my emphasis). Though Kreutel (2007) labels EFL learners' use of unmitigated disagreement formulations (e.g., "no") as 'undesirable', Hellerman (2009) – in line with Pekarek Doehler and Pochon-Berger's (ibid) contention that unmitigated disagreements may be appropriate in certain sequential environments – found that, in the L2 classes he examined, "no" was not dispreferred. In this context-sensitive conceptualization, unmitigated disagreement formats, rather than necessarily being a sign of early learning, may instead be seen as a particular norm within a classroom community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Indeed, this is echoed in Sharma's (2012) analysis of disagreement episodes during small group discussions in an advanced L2 writing class, in which he found unmitigated disagreements to be frequent throughout his data and concluded that they were, in fact, an 'expected and preferred pedagogical practice' (p.24).

Having considered some of the literature that has focussed on disagreements in a classroom setting (e.g., Bell, 1998; Kreutel, 2007; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011; Sharma, 2012), let us now turn our attention to how disagreements are coordinated in the linguistic environment of L2 oral assessments.

Studies on disagreements in L2 oral assessments are scarce (though see Hüttner, 2014; Gablasova & Brezina, 2018; Leyland *et al.*, 2016). However, one such study that has considered this setting is Hüttner's (2014) investigation of the disagreement sequences of advanced German-speaking learners of English. In her study, which analysed disagreements across three different oral exam formats (1. paired student interaction, 2. teacher-led interview, and 3. role play with teacher), it was found that 'the choice of examination format constrains the range and type of disagreement trajectory enacted by learners' (p. 1). For example, in the two teacher-led formats, students did not initiate any disagreements. In fact, in the interview format students did not even produce *any* dissenting turns – a finding that Hüttner (ibid: 25) attributes to the constraints of 'the power relationship between teacher and student'. Instead, students treated their teacher's disagreeing turn as an 'other-correction' (Schegloff et al., 1977) and acknowledged that the teacher was correct. In the role play format, students produced dissenting turns *in response* to dissent from the teacher by, for example, adding explanation and developing their arguments. However, it was only in the paired exam that students *initiated* disagreement. These student-initiated disagreements were largely of two types: *contradiction* and *counterclaim* (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998). In contradictions, the speaker negates the proposition expressed by the prior speaker, e.g.:

```
    T1 C: He thinks you guys hate him
    (0.4)
→   T2 M: I don't hate him. I think –
                (From Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998: p231).
```

Whereas in counterclaims, the speaker proposes an 'alternative claim that does not directly contradict nor challenge' a previous claim (ibid: 231). For example:

```
    T1 M: I- I haven't got an objection to a ten-thirty phone and
          eleven-thirty come in (1.3) seems halfway between your
          present curfew and your friends' some of your friends'
          curfew.
→   T2 C: Yeah, but it's- it's still not, hhhh. (0.8) what I like
                (ibid.: 232)
```

Hüttner (2014) found that contradictions were proffered in response to both factual statements and evaluation/opinions, whereas counterclaims tended only to appear in response to the latter. In terms of mitigation, contradictions were most often unhedged when responding to a factual statement and hedged when responding to an opinion. Disagreement types such as 'irrelevancy claims' (statements asserting that the previous claim is irrelevant) and 'challenges' (questions that imply that the previous speaker cannot provide evidence for his/her claim) (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998), however, were rare. This was due, arguably, to 'the collaborative nature of the assessment itself' (Hüttner, ibid.: 25). Despite the greater diversification of disagreement in the paired exams, Hüttner found that, in this format, most cases of disagreement were quickly and superficially resolved, suggesting that 'one key element of disagreeing, i.e., resolving a conflict by taking both opposing stances into account, [was] missing' (p.26).

One study that has focussed on disagreement sequences in L2 oral assessment interactions since Hüttner's is Gablasova and Brezina (2018). Their study, which draws on a corpus of over 1,900 L2 speakers of English interacting with examiners in the GESE (Graded Examinations of Spoken English) exam administered by Trinity College London, focusses on the disagreement construction 'yes-but'; specifically, differences in its frequency of use and production across three different proficiency levels. The data are drawn from two dialogic tasks: discussion and conversation. In the discussion task candidates bring a topic to the exam to talk about with their examiner; in the conversation task they talk about a topic of general interest preselected from a list known to the candidate. Both tasks last approximately five minutes. Findings indicated that there was an increase in the number of contrastive stance constructions with 'but' (including 'yes-but') in line with the relative proficiency of the speaker, from lower-intermediate (CEFR B1) and intermediate (CEFR B2) to advanced (CEFR C1 and C2). Furthermore, as the level of proficiency increased, speakers were found to use a wider range of expressions for the 'yes'/'yeah' component, such as 'It's true but' and 'I see your point but'. Higher proficiency, too, correlated with greater frequency and complexity in terms of the mitigation/modification included in the focal disagreeing turn (e.g., use of delays, hesitations, and lexical downtoners such as 'I think', 'maybe', 'that would depend' etc.). As such, this study's findings are in line with Bardovi-

Harlig and Salbury's (2004), in which changes to L2 speakers' disagreement formulations were tracked as their proficiency increased over time.

As we can see, then, both contextual differences (e.g., exam format – Hüttner (2014)) and speaker proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004; Gablasova & Brezina, 2018) can affect how disagreements are formulated. However, in the case of the latter, one should avoid the assumption that un-mitigated formulations *necessarily* reflect an early stage of learning in favour of adopting a more fine-grained conceptualisation of the context-sensitivity of disagreements; one that acknowledges possible variations in certain communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hellerman, 2009; Sharma, 2012). Studies have also shown (e.g., Hüttner, 2014) that the origin of disagreement (e.g., a factual statement or an opinion) can affect the composition of the subsequent focal disagreeing turn and the overall trajectory of the disagreement episode itself (Sharma, ibid.). One such community of practice that requires more research, however, is that of HE preparatory assessment settings, in which the speaking tests considered in this thesis take place.

### 2.5.3. CA Studies on Affiliation (and Alignment)

In the CA literature, affiliation and alignment are often treated as allied concepts. However, recent studies (e.g., Stivers, 2008; Stivers et al., 2011) have begun to explicate their distinction from one another. The first to attempt such an explication of the two concepts was Stivers (2008), who, in her study of mid-telling environments during storytelling, distinguished affiliation as the hearer's support of the *affective stance* of the storyteller, and alignment as the hearer's support of the storytelling activity itself, i.e., of 'its structural asymmetry' (Lee & Tanaka, 2016). Stivers extended these distinct conceptualisations of affiliation and alignment in later papers, treating alignment 'as the structural level of cooperation and affiliation as the affective level of cooperation' (Stivers et al, 2011). This has not always been the case in the CA literature, however. For example, in Maynard's (1984) study of bargaining sequences, a second speaker is said to evaluate (i.e., at the *affective* level) a previous turn positively or negatively by displaying 'alignment or non-alignment with the initially exhibited position' (p.84 in Wasson, 2016: 388). This over-simplified treatment of alignment as positive and non-alignment as negative does not account for how an aligning response can yet signal disaffiliation with the prior speaker.

Within Stivers' (2008; Stivers, et al., 2011) conception, on the other hand, disaffiliative responses (e.g., disagreements) can still *align* with the prior turn at a structural level insofar as they '[move] the sequence forward' (Ibid.).Researchers have since begun to adopt Stivers' (2008; 2011) conceptualisations, with Huttner (2014), in her study of disagreements during assessed L2 interactions, conceding that 'linguistic alignment can express an interpersonal affiliation *despite* content-related disaffiliation' (my emphasis).

### 2.5.3.1. Affiliation, Alignment, and Preference Structure

The notions of affiliation and alignment have also been closely tied to the conversation analytic concept of preference structure. For example, Heritage (1984) describes preferred responses (to, e.g., requests, assessments, offers, etc.) as 'affiliative actions which are supportive of social solidarity' and dispreferred actions as disaffiliative and, therefore, 'destructive of social solidarity' (p.268). In addition, Pomerantz (1984) – though not using the term affiliation - suggests that agreements with prior assessment are preferred, while disagreements with prior assessments are dispreferred. Schegloff (2007), on the other hand, has since categorised preferred responses as any response 'embodying alignment with the project of the initiating action' (Lee & Tanaka, 2016: 2); though these aligning, preferred responses need not necessarily affiliate with the prior speaker. Dispreferred responses instead distance the speaker from the initiating action at a structural level, though they likewise are not necessarily disaffiliative at the emotional level of cooperation. What all this shows, then, is that the organization of preference is 'intimately woven with social affiliation and structural alignment' (Lee & Tanaka, ibid: 2).

As stated above, the need to maintain progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test and to disagree in a way germane to the test's collaborative exigencies are of significance to test-takers. However, as the test-takers are not told how to reach a consensual decision (i.e., there are no codified stages that test-takers must work through, nor is there any assistance from the examiner) and as no roles such as leader or chairperson are preassigned, it is each test-taker's responsibility to jointly coordinate/negotiate how the group set about successfully accomplishing the task. It is in this regard the deontic domain of interaction comes to the fore.

## 2.6. The Deontic Domain in Interaction

In several oral assessment formats, such as teacher/examiner-led interviews, teacher/examiner-led student pair work and various role play tasks, test-takers orient to and co-construct a hierarchical, 'asymmetric role distribution' (Gablasova & Brezina, 2018). However, in group-based assessment tasks such as those considered in this thesis, where no roles (e.g., chairperson, leader etc.) are preassigned and there is no teacher/examiner involvement in the task-based interaction, there exists instead a *prima facie* flat, symmetric role distribution[10]. In such settings, each test-taker is equally entitled to determine how the task is approached, opening, closing, or recalibrating local sequences of action where necessary. This requires test-takers to negotiate amongst themselves how the task will be completed and, as such, brings the deontic domain to the fore. In this section, therefore, we will consider how the subject of deontics has thus far been treated in the CA literature.

## 2.6.1. Defining Deontics

Deontic modality (from the Greek *deon* 'duty') is concerned with the 'necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents' (Lyons, 1977: 823). In CA studies, it has been conceptualised as 'participants' social orientation to their own and co-participants' authoritative capacities' (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012); that is, to their responsibilities and rights in connection to what is 'normatively desirable' or to what *should* or *should not* be done (Stevanovic and Svennevig, 2015). As such, it is concerned with future actions and how they are brought about in interaction.

When a speaker attempts to bring about some such future situation by either suggesting (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012):

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[10] It is worth noting, however, that hierarchical relationships are local accomplishments and even in settings where there appears, prima facie, to be a pre-established hierarchical relationship between participants (e.g., between a manager and a member of her team) this relationship can be rendered neutral by such local exigencies as, for example, differential epistemic access (Asmuß and Oshima 2012). This, presumably, holds true for interactional settings in which there is a flat relationship structure between participants, i.e., a symmetrical relationship may be rendered asymmetric.

```
Should we?
```

requesting (Curl & Drew, 2008):

```
Can we?
```

proposing (Stivers & Sidnell, 2016):

```
We can
```

or issuing stronger 'need reports' (Kendrick & Drew, 2016):

```
We need to
```

the speaker makes a claim of deontic rights relative to their co-participants. It is then up to their co-participants to endorse, circumvent, or reject outright the first speaker's deontic claim.

Actions such as those presented above, along with commissives such as offers and invitations, belong to 'one single extended family of action' (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014: 624) known as 'directives' (Stevanovic, 2013), And, as they are concerned with the bringing about of future situations by inducing the recipient to perform an action (Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015), directive-initiated adjacency pairs have been taken as a central locus in the negotiation of deontic rights (see, e.g., Stevanovic, 2013; Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012; Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015). The future actions that such directives invoke can relate to either the immediate future (and thus make a *proximal* deontic claim) or refer to actions to be carried out in the more distant future (and thus make a *distal* deontic claim) (Stevanovic, 2015; though see also Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1987 on *immediate* and *remote* proposals).

## 2.6.2. Entitlement and Contingency

When considering such negotiations over deontic rights, the related concepts of entitlement and contingency are often discussed (see Heinemann, 2006; Craven & Potter, 2010). For example, directives formatted as a 'need report' claim high entitlement (and, therefore, make a strong claim of deontic rights) because they do not treat the outcome as dependent (i.e., *contingent*) on the approval of the recipient. However, proposal formats, which exist at the other end of the deontic gradient, have been said to make a claim of low entitlement (and entail a weak claim of deontic rights) in that they treat the outcome as contingent on recipient approval (Stivers & Sidnell, 2016).

The degree of entitlement claimed, however, does not only vary across such different directive actions; it can also vary, via turn design, within the same action type. For example, Heinemann (2006), in her study of Danish interactions between elderly care patients and their home help assistants, points out how requests formulated with a negative interrogative syntax (e.g., `couldn't you pass the salt?`) claim higher entitlement than requests formulated with a positive interrogative syntax (e.g., `could you pass the salt?`). The notion of entitlement invoked in this study, and others, has a direct relation to deontics (Thompson, Fox, and Couper-Kuhlen 2015). Put simply: high entitlement turn formats entail a strong claim to deontic rights, whereas low entitlement turn formats entail a weak claim (ibid: 265).

### 2.6.3. Research on Deontics

The topic of deontic rights and responsibilities emerges out of earlier CA studies on the use of power, that is, the bringing about of consequences, in various interactional settings. The findings from these studies, which have focussed on medical encounters (Lindstrom and Weatherall 2015; Perakyla 1998; Landmark, Gulbrandsen, and Svennevig 2015; Ekberg and LeCouteur 2015), business meetings (Clifton et al. 2018; Svennevig and Djordjilovic 2015), church planning meetings (Stevanovic 2011, 2013, 2015), and everyday conversation (Zinken and Ogiermann 2011; Shoaps 2017; Antaki and Kent 2015), have shown how participants' orientations to, and negotiations of, their own and others' authoritative capacities within interaction are as subtle and complex as their epistemic equivalents.

In each of these studies, it has been shown how hierarchical relationships are local accomplishments and that, even in settings where there appears, *prima facie*, to be such a pre-established hierarchical relationship (e.g., between a manager and a member of her team), this relationship can be rendered neutral by such local exigencies as, for example, differential epistemic access (Asmuß and Oshima, 2012). Although not elucidated in the studies mentioned above, the inverse presumably holds true, i.e., *prima facie* symmetric relationships (like those in the dataset of this thesis), can presumably be rendered *asymmetric.*

### 2.6.4. Deontics in Educational Settings

Recent work on talk-in-interaction in educational settings has tended to focus more on epistemics (see Sert and Jacknick 2015; Solem 2016; Gablasova et al. 2017) than deontics. This may come as no surprise, as many interactional phenomena associated with classroom-based learning are somehow related to knowledge. For example, the key institutional features of teaching interaction in terms of Mehan's (1979) IRE (initiation, response, evaluation) sequence are concerned with assessing whether students are knowledgeable in some matter, which may account for why epistemic considerations have been so central to CA analyses of educational settings. However, epistemics may be of less relevance in L2 assessment settings, where the focus is on learners' language skills and interactional competence (Hall, Hellerman, and Pekarek Doehler, 2011) rather than on what they know.

One study, however, that has considered deontics in an educational setting is Ishino and Okada (2018), who considered how teachers establish a particular deontic status for students to encourage active participation. This relatively recent CA notion of 'deontic status' is defined by Stevanovic and Peräkylä (2014) as:

*The position that a participant has in a certain domain of action, relative to his/her co-participants [...], based on the participants' personal history, along with their relative positions in the societal and institutional structures, [which is] continuously modified in the turn-by-turn sequential unfolding of interactions* (p.190).

In Ishino and Okada's (ibid.) study, it was found that teachers' lexical choices for referring to a student – that is, using an alternate recognitional (e.g., 'fool', 'expert in chemistry')

instead of 'default student reference forms' (p.95) (e.g., 'Mister X', 'Miss Y') – helped construct a deontic status for the student 'at that moment of classroom activity' (p.108), which could be subsequently used by the teacher as a resource with which to manage student participation. However, while this study is interesting and illuminates an aspect of the deontic domain in educational settings, it is yet another example of an analysis of deontics in talk-in-interaction in which the focal setting contains a *prima facie* asymmetric role distribution (i.e., teacher – student) between participants, telling us nothing of how learners *themselves* negotiate their deontic rights in relation to each other.

In such highly task-oriented settings as the oral assessments considered in this thesis, where it has been suggested there is a 'greater likelihood of directive formulations' (Craven and Potter 2010, 439), floor management – that is, an interlocutor's understanding of how the task should be completed and their attempts to move said task forward (see Jenks, 2007) – comes to the fore, even if such abilities are not an official target of assessment. It is in this respect that deonticity, 'what will or should be done in the future' (Thompson, Fox, and Couper-Kuhlen 2015, 264), becomes relevant. However, as indicated thus far, there has yet to be a study that has considered the role of deontics in oral assessment settings or, in fact, in any setting - outside of those concerned with child interactions (see, e.g., Goodwin and Cekaite 2012) - in which there is a flat relationship structure (i.e., a symmetric role distribution) between participants. Indeed, much of the research carried out on the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction has thus far focussed on settings that contain a *prima facie* hierarchical relationship - e.g., between doctor-patient (Landmark *et al*. 2015), parent-child (Zinken and Ogiermann, 2011) and director-faculty member (Clifton, *et al.* 2018). The current study, therefore, not only considers a hitherto underexplored setting in analysing the negotiation of deontic rights in an oral assessment context, but it also contributes to a broader field of research by considering deontics in a setting where there exists a *prima facie* flat relationship structure between participants (i.e., the test-takers, here, are peers).

## 2.7. Interactional Competence

This section considers the concept of Interactional Competence (henceforth, IC). In sub-section 2.7.1., a definition and some background will be provided. After this, in sub-sections 2.7.2. and 2.7.3., respectively, studies on learners' IC as demonstrated in L2 educational

settings, generally, and L2 oral assessments, specifically, will be explored. I conclude by arguing that more research is needed on IC within HE EAP testing settings.

## 2.7.1. The concept of IC

Spoken interaction is a complex and fundamental part of human sociality. This complexity is evidenced by its co-constructed and dynamic nature; in other words, it emerges, evolves, and is, importantly, *shared* by interlocutors (Galaczi and Taylor, 2018). Early conceptions of spoken language ability, however – especially those operationalised in L2 speaking tests – focussed heavily on fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary, and grammatical structures (Walsh, 2011). This, as a result, meant that considerations pertaining to how well a candidate can *interact* and 'co-construct meaning' (ibid: p.2) in appropriate, context-sensitives way were at best ancillary and, at worst, not addressed. In other words, the complex and co-constructed nature of spoken interaction was dismissed in favour of a focus on *individual* performance.

However, if the goal of L2 education is to prepare learners to be effective communicators outside of the classroom, then focussing on accuracy and fluency *alone* is insufficient (Young, 2011). This is because effective communication involves being able to *interact* and *collectively* reach an understanding. As such, interactants must be (not only sufficiently fluent and accurate but also) able to, for example, repair breakdowns, clarify meaning, pay attention to the local context, and demonstrate that they have understood (Walsh, 2011).

This realization (i.e., of the importance of *interactional* ability in defining the concept of L2 spoken proficiency) in the L2 teaching, testing, and learning community, led some (e.g., Kramsch, 1986) to call for L2 practitioners to focus less on developing students' accuracy and more on developing their '*discourse aptitude* in and through the foreign language' (p.370 – my emphasis). Kramsch (ibid.) dubbed this aptitude a learner's 'interactional competence' (IC)[11] and proferred this construct as a critical response to the prevailing

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[11] Although Kramsch (1986) was the first to use the term 'Interactional Competence', see Hymes (1972) for an earlier argument (contra to Chomsky, 1966) for the central role that social knowledge plays in the appropriate use and understanding of utterances in context. Hymes labelled this '*communicative* competence'. IC, however, can be differentiated from CC on the grounds of the former's emphasis on the *dialogic* nature of

proficiency models of the time, which saw language learning/teaching as an input-output process 'guided by a linear acquisition of grammatical structures' (van Compernolle, 2020).

IC can be understood as a learner's ability to co-construct interactional repertoires[12] with their interlocutors in the L2 (Markee, 2008; Hall, 2018) that are in line with the specific cultural/institutional contexts in which the interactions occur (Young, 2008); that is, as the ability to co-construct interaction in a purposeful and meaningful way (Galaczi and Taylor, 2018). IC, then, can be thought of as the mutual and reciprocal relationship between linguistic and interactive resources (e.g., knowledge of turn-taking systems, sequential organization, rhetorical scripts, and so on[13]) and 'the contexts in which they are deployed' (Young, 2008: 100) – compare, for example, the different constellation of interactive features involved in, say, ordering a coffee vs. consoling a friend.

Since Kramsch's paper, a number of researchers (e.g., Markee, 2008; Young, 2011; Hall and Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Galaczi and Taylor, 2018; Lam, 2018; May *et al.,* 2020) have contributed to the definition of the IC construct and continued to better operationalise it in language learning, teaching, and testing settings by identifying the myriad interactional resources learners draw on in their interactions with others. In what follows, I will consider some of these studies; first in the context of the L2 classroom (section 2.7.2.) and, secondly, in the specific context of L2 oral assessments (2.7.3.).

### 2.7.2. IC in L2 education

The ability to manage turn-taking is fundamental to successful social interaction. However, this can be a complex process, particularly in an L2. It involves minute coordination among participants through the monitoring of ongoing talk for possible transition relevance points (TRPs – see Chapter 3), organizing transitions, and minimizing both overlaps and gaps in talk

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competence. While CC acknowledges the social dimensions of competence, it does not go beyond situating this competence within the individual. Therefore, unlike IC, it does not view competence as a jointly constructed, local accomplishment but as a stable trait within the individual.

[12] i.e., The semiotic resources and interactive practices that underly turn-taking systems, action sequencing, and conversational repair (van Compernolle, 2020).

[13] Also, the lexis and syntax specific to the practice, the recognition/production of boundaries between speech activities, and topic management (Young, 2002).

(Pekarek Doehler and Pochon Berger, 2015). As such, this feature of IC has received attention in the interaction-based, L2 education literature.

Cekaite (2007), for example, investigated a child's L2 IC – in particular, her turn-taking skills – as they developed throughout her first year in a Swedish immersion classroom, using a combination of microanalytic CA and ethnographic fieldwork analyses. Results demonstrated how participation in multi-party teacher-led activities enabled the learner to develop her IC in terms of turn-taking. However, the author notes that the learner's development (from 1. Quiet and compliant to 2. Noisy and, finally, 3. A skilful participator) was not unilinear, suggesting that an L2 learner can position themselves differently within a classroom community 'depending in part on his or her interactional skills' (p.59). From this, the author counsels against viewing L2 novices' identities as fixed entities, dissociated from their participation in classroom activities, and suggest more work be undertaken to discover how different classroom participation frameworks (dyadic, polyadic, teacher-led, student-led etc.) might lead to different developmental trajectories and to distinct interactional language learning possibilities over time.

Van Compernolle (2020), too, has focussed on the IC feature of turn-taking (in particular, turn allocation – i.e., selecting the next speaker), albeit in an elementary Spanish course for US university students. In this study, which again adopted a CA methodology, the researcher set out to investigate the extent to which a Dynamic Strategy Interaction Scenario (DSIS)[14] task aided learners in expanding their interactional repertoires (here, their ability to effectively select next speaker). The task, which was based on DiPietro's (1987) strategic interaction approach, consisted of three stages: (1) a rehearsal, where students could plan suitable language to use in, (2) a performance, during which students carry out the communicative exchange, and (3) a debriefing, in which students receive feedback from students/instructors (in this case, the researcher). Results indicated that multiple iterations of DSISs did, indeed, mediate learners' appropriation of different turn allocation practices, thus expanding their interactive repertoires and, in turn, developing their IC. The writer

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[14] DSISs are a type of Vygotskian (1978) concept-based instruction in which learners are encouraged to focus on both meaning and form during communicative tasks (see, e.g., van Compernolle, 2018).

concludes by calling for further research into the role that task repetition plays in developing leaners' IC.

Task-based approaches to L2 teaching and learning (see, e.g., Breen, 1987; 1989; Ellis, 2018; Ellis *et al.,* 2020; Long, 1990; Samuda and Bygate, 2008; Seedhouse, 2005a), such as that used in van Compernolle's (2020) study, have become increasingly commonplace in the last thirty or so years. It is no surprise, then, that the ability to interact competently in task-based classroom scenarios has become an important requirement for modern day L2 learners, and, that being the case, that there has emerged a concomitant interest among IC researchers in the interactive resources that learners draw on to negotiate the demands of task-based classroom interaction. Indeed, one such researcher that has investigated interactional repertoires and IC in a L2 classroom task-based setting is Hellermann, who has focussed, in particular, on how learners open tasks (2007) and disengage from them (Hellermann and Cole, 2008). Findings from these studies, which both adopt a longitudinal, conversation analytic approach, highlight the important role that repeated participation in teacher-assigned, task-occasioned classroom routines play in the development of learners' IC over time. Such routine, task-based interactions, Hellermann and Cole (2008: 210) argue, 'give learners the opportunity to work with and negotiate norms of turn-taking, negotiating meaning, and meta-talk about language and tasks', thereby facilitating language use in the accomplishment of locally contingent social actions and, as such, encouraging the expansion of interactional repertoires and the development of IC.

Other studies on the development of IC in a L2 classroom-based settings, which have focussed, among other things, on features of IC such as disagreeing (Pekarek Doehler and Pochon Berger, 2011), formulating requests (Al-Gahatani and Roever, 2012) and repair (Hellermann, 2009), also attest to this view of language learning as a situated, contingent act that involves developing the ability to engage *jointly* with others. As such, these interaction-based studies, taken together, create a picture of language learning - in line with Kramsch's (1986) notion of IC – as a dynamic (i.e., non-linear) process (cf. van Compernolle, 2020) 'inextricably embedded and configured within social practice' (Pekarek Doehler and Pochon Berger, 2011: 206).

### 2.7.3. IC in L2 oral assessments

Much of the research on IC in assessment settings has focussed on determining what counts as effective and desirable features of IC (Luk, 2010), in order to better operationalise the construct for the development of assessment criteria (May *et al.*, 2020) and preparatory training materials (Jones and Saville, 2016; Lam, 2019). For example, in a recent study by Ross (2018), which drew on CA excerpts of OPI interactions, the author considered the extent to which listener responses (e.g., backchannels such as 'yeah' and 'uhum') were potentially relevant as a facet of IC. Findings uncovered that opportunities to demonstrate IC through listener responses were contingent on the task type chosen by the examiner within the OPI format, and that most instances of back-channel behaviour actually occurred during *between*-task interactions with the examiner. This, the author points out, suggests that listener response might not be 'consistently observable as [a] rateable aspect of proficiency' (Ross, 2018: 372). It is suggested, therefore, that more research be undertaken before it can be confidently concluded that listener response constitutes a stable and salient independent facet of IC. Such research would need to determine whether the relative presence/absence of listener responses could discriminate differences in task success in the exam.

Roever and Kasper (2018), too, have discussed the feasibility of IC as a target construct in speaking tests. In their study, they drew on illustrative cases in datasets from a range of FL classroom contexts to make inferences regarding observable features of L2 IC that could be potentially differentiated and, therefore, measured in an assessment task. To make their case, they focussed, in particular, on prefaces to requests as a potential (measurable, observable) feature of L2 IC. In doing so, they presented a cross-sectional analysis of request sequences across (1) low-level, (2) intermediate, and (3) advanced-level learners of L2 English and Arabic, demonstrating that these sequences existed on a continuum of complexity. In other words, low-level learners opted for no preface[15], while intermediate

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[15] The excerpt that is used to demonstrate a minimal, mitigating pre-sequence to a request from an intermediate learner (of English, in this case) is take from Al-Gahtani and Roever (2012: 54) and is presented here:

```
1        IMD: excuse me doctor
```

learners did include a preface, but these were limited and minimal. Advanced learners, on the other hand, deployed a more complex constellation of features including greetings and 'pre-pre-' sequences (Schegloff, 2007), in which a learner might first enquire about that day's classes before making their request to the teacher. Based on these observations, they argue that speaking tests be set up in order to make aspects of test-takers' IC visible and scorable by, for example, eliciting request sequences. However, to facilitate this, they concede that examiners would require extra training in terms of how to 'flexibly adjust their actions (questions, instructions etc.) and action formats to the local contingencies' (p. 349). Despite the potential challenges concerning assessor training, however, they nevertheless conclude by calling for future research on IC in oral assessments to 'cast the net wider', considering not only other visible, measurable spoken features of IC, but also other *non-verbal*, semiotic resources that interactants might draw on (e.g., gaze, body position, and gestures).

Galaczi (2013) also adopted a cross-sectional approach to investigate the interaction co-constructed by learners at different proficiency levels (see, also, Youn, 2019). However, unlike in Roever and Kasper's (2018) study, the data here was taken from actual interactions in a paired speaking test. Similar to Roever and Kasper's investigation, though, was the aim to provide insights into the conceptualization of IC and its key distinguishing features across proficiency levels. Findings from Galaczi's (2013) study suggest that IC is a broad concept, one that comprises not only interactional features such as topic development (i.e., initiating and responding) but also active listening (cf. Ross, 2018) and turn-taking management. Such insights, the author suggests, give us a more comprehensive understanding of IC, a development which she points out could have potential implications in terms of both developing descriptors of interactional skills for use in assessment scales and for developing more suitable provision for learners in communicative classrooms.

As we can see, then, there have been a number of studies on IC in classroom and assessment settings over the years. However, few of these focus on HE/EAP settings. Of those studies that do focus on an HE setting (see, e.g., the body of work on Japanese as a

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   2      INT: yes (.) come in
   3      IMD: I wa:ss absent (.2) since last two wee::ks (.) I want handout
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second language classes for study abroad students at Japanese universities – e.g., Ishida, 2009, 2011; Masuda, 2011; Taguchi, 2014), the courses on which the learners are enrolled focus on general conversational language use (i.e., not on the use of language for academic purposes). Furthermore, in the literature on IC in assessment settings, the focus has predominantly been on general English examinations (i.e., IELTS and Cambridge CAE - not EAP), and there is, in addition, much more of a focus on the OPI (Ross, 2017; Okada, 2010; Okada and Greer, 2013) and paired (Galaczi, 2008; He and Young; 1998; May, 2009; Youn, 2019) IOA formats compared to the group-based format. There remains, therefore, a need for more interaction-based research on group-based, oral assessment in HE/EAP contexts. Findings from such studies, I suggest, could be utilized in a number of important ways; namely, to better understand and operationalise the IC construct for learner and assessor training, and to improve the veracity of assessment tasks and, in particular, rating scales/criteria for use in the oral assessments on preparatory L2 EAP programmes.

## 2.8. Summary

This chapter has outlined some of the research on (1) oral assessments (both generally and within a CA framework), (2) progressivity, (3) disagreements, (4) the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction, and (5) on the concept of Interactional Competence (IC), in both classroom and assessment settings. In each of the sections above, I have endeavoured to review the relevant literature, contextualise the current study, and elucidate research gaps and possible contributions. Having now established the aims of the current study and positioned it in relation to previous research, the next chapter will introduce the methodolgy, Conversation Analysis (CA), which will be used to achieve the aims set out above.

# Chapter 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Introduction to Conversation Analysis

This study adopts a Conversation Analytic (CA) methodology to examine how L2 test-takers co-manage interaction during group-based, oral assessments at a university-affiliated HE institute in the UK. CA was chosen as it 'favours naturally occurring data rather than 'experimental' or 'researcher-provoked' ones' (ten Have, 2007: 9). As such, it allows the researcher - through direct observation of natural interaction, i.e., interaction that is not 'staged' - to study 'the basic ways in which speakers coordinate their talk' (Hepburn & Potter, 2021: 3).

In the CA tradition, talk-in-interaction is seen as a situated achievement rather than a product of external forces or personal intentions (ten Have, 2007). The aim of CA, as such, is to 'reveal the tacit, organized reasoning procedures which inform the production of naturally occurring talk' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 1), in a detailed, granular manner that does not 'gloss or idealize the specifics of what [it] depict[s]' (Heritage, 1984: 234)[16]. This is facilitated by what may be the primary methodological trait of CA; that is, that research is based on transcribed video recordings of actual interactions. This allows CA researchers to report on what people 'actually do and say rather than on what people *report* they do and say' (Lester and O'Reilly, 2019: 9 – my emphasis).

It is important to point out that CA is only 'marginally interested in language' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 14). Instead, the actual object of study is how people jointly accomplish ordinary social activities (Heritage, 1984); that is, in how social actions/activities are *interactionally organized*. This leads us to a fundamental assumption regarding conversation within the CA paradigm: i.e., that 'social action and interaction […] exhibit organized

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[16] Though the goal of CA is to pursue the analysis of discourse in this strictly empiricist manner, some researchers question this methodology's ability to be fully objective. For example, McCullin (2021) points out that the course of creating a transcript involves numerous subjective decisions about what to include (or not). Similarly, Weber (2003) highlights that while the initial stage of CA research (unmotivated looking) can be epistemically neutral and unprejudiced (i.e., not contingent on preoccupations and preconceptions), data analysis does not occur without 'preparation on the analyst's part' – i.e., deciding what exchanges to make a record of, asking for individuals'' permission to record, and making the recording itself, have consequences for 'the nature of the data that the Schegloffian analyst examines at stage I'.

patterns of stable, recurrent structural features' (Heritage, ibid.), or, as Sacks (1992: xlvi) puts it, that there is 'order at all points.'

In the CA tradition, then, the analyst attempts to understand social order by studying the methodological procedures that people themselves deploy *in situ* to 'render their local circumstances intelligible' (Hoey and Kendrick, 2017). This approach to studying behaviour from a participant-relevant perspective is known as the *emic* viewpoint (Seedhouse, 2004). This is vital in distinguishing CA from other methodologies that instead adopt an *etic* viewpoint; that is, from approaches that study behaviour from a *researcher-relevant* (Markee, 2013) perspective. *Emic* descriptions 'provide an internal view' (Pike, 1967: 38), whereas *etic* descriptions are 'in principle universal' and 'can be formulated prior to any particular analysis' (ten Have, 2007: 34). CA rejects this latter approach and is interested, instead, in the procedural infrastructure of action *as seen from a member's perspective.*

It is precisely this commitment to an emic (i.e., participant-relevant) perspective that led to CA being chosen as the sole methodology for this thesis over, e.g., Discourse Analysis (DA)[17]. While it is not uncommon for Discourse Analysts to study interaction, they nonetheless do so from an etic (i.e., researcher-relevant perspective). However, as this thesis is specifically interested in *how the test-takers themselves* make sense of the ongoing interaction in these assessment tasks – i.e., in how they *collaboratively* construct meaning and negotiate their intersubjective understanding – CA, with its analytic mechanisms for ensuring that a researcher's interpretations of the interaction match (and are, indeed, grounded in) those of the participants themselves (see, e.g., the 'next-turn proof procedure'[18] (Sacks et al, 1974)), was considered the most suitable methodology with which the meet the aims of this study.

Having introduced the methodology adopted in this study and briefly contrasted it with that of other approaches, I will now outline its conceptual origins and basic principles.

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[17] See, e.g., Schiffrin et al. (2005).
[18] See Section 3.4.2.

## 3.2. The Origins and Development of CA

CA has its origins in Sociology, tracing its roots to both 'Garfinkel's ethnomethodology [(see section 3.2.1.)] and Goffman's interaction analysis' (Lazaraton, 2002: 29). It was developed in the 1960-70s, principally by Harvey Sacks; however, he was later joined in this endeavour by his colleagues Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff (see, e.g., Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). As Seedhouse (2004) points out, Sacks' innovation can be seen as the result of three converging factors. These were: (1) his acquaintance with Harold Garfinkel, (2) his decision to investigate how social interaction is organized 'by analysing naturally occurring mundane talk', and (3) the (for the time) 'new technology of audio recording', which allowed this type of analysis to take place. In the next section, we will explore this first factor by outlining the important role that Garfinkel's (1967) *ethnomethodology* (EM) had on Sacks and the development of the CA enterprise.

### 3.2.1. CA's Ethnomethodological Foundations

Although there has been some dispute over the years concerning the EM/CA relationship, there can be little doubt that Harold Garfinkel's EM was 'a major influence in the emergence of the CA paradigm' (ten Have, 2007: 43). For that reason, in what follows I will describe the backdrop from which EM (and by extension CA) emerged and outline its basic epistemological and theoretical principles.

EM emerged at a time when American Sociology was dominated by quantitatively oriented approaches, wherein 'presumably objective categories were applied to data' (Lester and O'Reilly, 2019: 11). Key amongst the proponents of this quantitative, *etic* approach to the study of social order was the sociologist Talcott Parsons (1937). In the then-dominant Parsonian sociological tradition, social order was seen as imposed by 'an *external* framework […] or a shared set of values acquired through education and socialization' (vom Lehn, 2016: 15 – my emphasis), wherein members 'unthinkingly acted out the macro rules of society'(Seedhouse, 2004: 4).

Garfinkel (1967), however, rejected this Parsonian perspective and proposed a form of analysis that could, from an *emic*, bottom-up perspective, 'catch at the procedures by which

actors analyse their circumstances and devise and carry out courses of action' (Heritage, 1984: 9). In other words, he rejected an external (i.e., analyst) perspective in favour of an *emic* or (i.e., participant) perspective on human behaviour (Seedhouse, 2004). Not only, then, did Garfinkel's EM foreground and give prominence to members' own commonsense knowledge over that of the analysts' supposed expertise, moreover, it made this commonsense knowledge a topic of study *in and of itself*. However, one issue that EM still faced was regarding 'how to gain analytic access to the level of commonsense knowledge which it [sought] to study' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 31).

This brings us to the crucial contribution made by Sacks in his development of a systematic method through which naturally occurring talk-in-interaction could be studied. In his decision to focus on recordings of mundane conversations, Sacks managed to avoid the pitfalls of other approaches (cf. for example, participant observation and interview), which still relied on the researcher's account, much like in the Parsonian tradition which Garfinkel (and Sacks himself) opposed. Instead, Sacks was concerned with 'actual utterances in actual contexts', that is, 'with real-world data, and with the situated, contexted nature of talk-in-interaction' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 21). Through his commitment to working with transcriptions of audio (and later video-) records, Sacks was able to address the issues plaguing other sociological paradigms by 'grounding analysis more directly in records of action that can be continually reviewed' (Hepburn and Potter, 2021: 12).

It is these aforementioned 'courses of action' (Heritage, 1984), 'rules' (Seedhouse, 2004), and 'commonsense knowledge' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998) which together constitute the *ethnomethods* - that is the shared reasoning and accounting practices (de Kok, 2007: 886) - of members, of which it is the job of the EM/CA researcher to uncover.

Now, having outlined CA's origins and its relationship to Garfinkel's EM, let us move on to consider the basic theoretical principles that underpin the EM/CA enterprise.

### 3.2.2. The Basic Principles of EM/CA

There are five fundamental principles that underlie ethnomethodology (Seedhouse, 2004). These are: (1) indexicality, (2) the documentary method of interpretation, (3) reciprocity of perspective, (4) normative accountability, and (5) reflexivity. In the proceeding sections, each of these underlying EM/CA principles will be explained, in turn.

### 3.2.2.1. Indexicality

Within the field of Linguistics, the term 'indexicality', otherwise known as 'deixis', is described as concerning:

'[T]he ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the context of utterance or speech event' and 'the ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance'

(Levinson, 1983: 54)

As a sociologist, however, Garfinkel conceptualised 'indexicality' beyond the merely linguistic domain as referring, more generally, to the 'context boundedness of *action*' (vom Lehn, 2016: 95 – my emphasis). His unique contribution to this concept, beyond his 'stress on action' (Atkinson, 1988: 450), was his argument that indexical knowledge is not something members find in their environment but rather something that is 'jointly constituted by those involved in an interaction' (Boyle, 2000: 32); that is, something accomplished through the interactional work in which members continuously engage (Cuff *et al*, 1987).

Garfinkel's focus on the indexical, interpreted nature of natural language was ground-breaking for its time and helped shift the sociological focus to a then hitherto underexplored topic; that is, to the practical reasoning that informs the nature of language use. As Heritage (1984) reminds us, Garfinkel's contribution to this area came at a time before the view that speaking was a form of social action was made commonplace by speech act theory (Searle, 1969; Grice, 1975). Considered with this mind, one can begin to appreciate the gravity of Garfinkel's account of 'the role of language in the constitution of social relations and social reality' (ibid.) and, by extension, his impact on the CA enterprise, which has committed to

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the view that 'speakers and hearers have to *work* at contextualizing talk' (Atkinson, 1988: 450 – original emphasis).

CA has inherited this EM conception of indexicality and, likewise, considers there to be a reflexive relationship between talk and context. Moreover, as interactants tend not to make explicit every single aspect of their intended meaning, relying instead on 'mutually understood features of the background context to supply additional information' (Seedhouse, 2004: 7), there is an insistence in CA that the analyst only invoke contextual features if these are oriented to by the participants themselves, as instantiated through their talk-in-interaction (ibid.). Indeed, this has become one of CA's key analytical resources and methodological commitments.

### 3.2.2.2. The Documentary Method of Interpretation

Another principle that is central to EM is the 'documentary method of interpretation' (henceforth, DMI). This ethnomethodological tenet 'treats any actual real-world action as a "document"' (Seedhouse, 2004: 7); that is, as 'standing on behalf of a presupposed underlying pattern' (Garfinkel, 1967 in Heritage, 1984: 84). So, for example, if one were to be addressed by someone saying "Hi", the hearer would associate this with a known pattern, identify it as a greeting, and respond accordingly with a return greeting. For Garfinkel, this method of interpretation is an 'invariant and unavoidable feature of all acts of mundane perception and cognition' (ibid: 85), and is one that has been adopted within CA.

The adoption of the DMI within the CA paradigm is manifest in two ways. That is to say, not only do analysts support the claim that this is 'the method of interpretation that interactants use' (Seedhouse, 2004: 8), it is also, importantly, the method that *analysts themselves* 'must use in analysing social interaction' (ibid.). This, after all, is what makes CA an *emic* methodology and, moreover, is part of what gives CA its significant 'explanatory power' (ibid.) when analysing interaction in its sequential context.

The DMI is associated with a key claim within CA; that is, that 'the significance of any speaker's communicative action is doubly contextual in being both *context-shaped* and

*context-renewing*' (Heritage, 1984: 242 – original emphasis). What this means is that when a speaker produces a 'document' this is not only interpreted based on its 'contribution to an on-going sequence of actions' but is also constitutive of the context itself, insofar as 'every current action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next' action in a sequence' (ibid.).

### 3.2.2.3. Reciprocity of Perspective

A third principle in EM/CA which, like indexicality and the DMI is used by interactants to construct a sense intersubjective understanding, involves a willingness to adopt a *reciprocity of perspectives* (Schütz, 1967). This principle (henceforth RoP) refers to interactants' implicit agreement that they are adhering to the same set of norms and, thereby, displaying 'affiliation with the other person's perspective to achieve intersubjectivity' (Seedhouse, 2004: 9). The term can be traced back to Schütz (1967 in vom Lehn, 2019: 309-310) who based this principle on two idealizations, namely: '(1.) [...] that in principle actors' geographical standpoints are interchangeable, and (2.) […] that in the situation at hand idiosyncratic personal differences in terms of the biography and interests do not impact the relevance the situation has for the actors'. To follow this principle in talk-in-interaction, then, means to agree that the same norms are being followed, particularly with regards to a bias toward cooperation (Seedhouse, 2004).

### 3.2.2.4. Normative Accountability

The next principle, that of normative accountability, is one of the core ethnomethodological underpinnings of CA. As the name suggests, this principle has to do with norms, which, in EM, are 'understood […] as constitutive of action rather than regulative' (Seedhouse, 2004: 10). This can be contrasted with Linguistics, which takes a descriptivist, rule-based approach. In CA, however, norms of behaviour (e.g., the expectation that a greeting be met with a return greeting, a question with an answer, and so on) are treated as 'a point of reference or action template for interpretation rather than as a rule' (ibid.). This means that, in EM/CA, analysts are concerned with 'constitutive organizational activity' rather than normative activity (i.e., rule following) (Peyrot, 1982).

EM/CA researchers, therefore, do not view social actors as slavishly following these norms (Seedhouse, 2004); in fact, they are often deliberately flouted by, for example, interrupting someone or failing to provide a response (in the interests, e.g., of declaring or continuing a quarrel (Heritage, 1984: 118)). In such instances, fellow interactants may evaluate these actions as noticeable (cf. the seen-but-unnoticed nature of preferred, normatively expected actions used to accomplish most everyday activities) and hold the speaker to account. As such, normative accountability can be seen as the 'moral force' that provides 'the basis for interpretation and social action' (Seedhouse, 2004: 11).

### 3.2.2.5. Reflexivity

The fifth principle of EM/CA is reflexivity, which states that the interpretation of actions and their production are governed by the same methods or procedures (ibid.), or as vom Lehn (2016: 104) puts it, that 'part and whole constitute each other; are not dependent from each other, but […] are reflexively interrelated'. In other words, from a CA viewpoint, if a speaker greets someone, they are not only *producing* an action but also creating a 'context for interpretation' (Seedhouse, 2004). Likewise, if the hearer responds with a return greeting, they are not only producing an action, but they are also, furthermore, displaying their *interpretation of* the first action (i.e., as having understood it as a greeting).

This principle is captured in the CA concept of the adjacency pair, which is used to denote two-part sequences that have 'achieved relatedness beyond that which may otherwise obtain between adjacent utterances' (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 295) (e.g., offer-acceptance, greeting-return greeting, question-answer). Reflexivity, too, is at the heart of the doubly contextual nature of communicative action (see Section 3.2.2.2.), which sees turns at talk as both context-shaped and context-renewing (Heritage, 1984).

Garfinkel's (1967 discussed in vom Lehn, 2016) analysis of jury deliberations exemplifies the essence of the EM principle of reflexivity in that it shows how these meetings only become recognizable as deliberations of a jury, rather than, say, a boardroom meeting or a political debate, 'by virtue of the ways in which their members refer to and use materials' (vom Lehn, 2016: 104). In other words, the jurors not only shape the context through their

communicative acts, but also renew, recalibrate, or reinforce the ongoing interpretive context for the other jurors. It is this understanding of the reflexive relationship between action and context – that is, the understanding that context is not 'a clearly delineated environment where action occurs' (vom Lehn, 2016: 104) but is, instead, *itself* continuously and reflexively constituted *by* action- that has been so influential on the development of CA.

This section has discussed the five epistemological and theoretical principles that underpin EM/CA, which, as we have seen, include indexicality, the documentary method of interpretation, reciprocity of perspective, normative accountability, and reflexivity. Having established these basic EM/CA principles, the thesis will now consider some of the fundamental structures of conversation used in the analysis of data within this thesis.

## 3.3. Interactional Structures

This section will explain three fundamental organizational structures uncovered by Sacks and his associates. These structures are as follows: turn-taking, sequence organization, and turn design.

### 3.3.1. Turn-taking

Ordinary conversation is characterised by the exchange of turns; however, how is it that this is 'accomplished so efficiently'? (Seedhouse, 2004: 27). As Clayman (2013: 150) points out, in the 'specialised speech exchange systems' of formal occasions (e.g., ceremonies, interviews), turn-taking is governed and constrained by a pre-arranged format that often 'precisely specifies the order of speakership and the length and content of turns.' Outside of these specialised exchange systems (e.g., in ordinary conversation), however, turn taking 'lacks a prearranged format'. Yet, despite this, ordinary conversation has been shown, in fact, to be 'remarkably orderly' (ibid.).

This orderliness was first captured in the seminal work of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), who described the norms that govern turn-taking as follows:

1. The current speaker may select the next speaker, or:

2. The next speaker may self-select, or

3. No one self-selects and the current speaker continues*

*if this occurs, the current speaker continues until the next TRP - where the above again applies - or until the conversation ends.

In CA, the 'building blocks out of which these turns are fashioned' (Schegloff, 2007: 3) are known as turn-constructional units (henceforth TCUs) and these areas of possible completion as the transition relevance place (TRP). TCUs and TRPs form the basis of a local management system (Seedhouse, 2004) through which participants themselves can jointly shape the ongoing interaction rather than relying on a pre-allocation of turns. As mentioned previously in this chapter, CA's object of study concerns how speakers' *actions* are interactionally organized and jointly accomplished (Heritage, 1984). In line with this, TCUs can be 'understood as a single *social action* performed in a turn or sequence' (Seedhouse, 2004: 30 – my emphasis) and a TRP, by extension, as the projectable end to this action. These social actions can be manifested in a range of ways (ibid) from the non-verbal (e.g., a nod, a headshake etc.) to a variety of linguistic formats, from a single word (or even sound: e.g., *uh*) to clauses or sentences. TCUs, however, cannot be mapped onto a single linguistic descriptor since they are, in line with CA's *emic* perspective, a social concept understood from the perspective of participants, and thus elude any *etic* labels. As such, TCUs have no objective meaning outside of their local context; that is, outside of the '*situated* [...] sets of circumstances of [the] participants' (Sacks et al, 1974: 699 – my emphasis). The units of the turn-taking system in CA are instead described in terms their '*action potential for participants'* (ten Have, 2007: 129 – original emphasis) rather than in terms of their structural, prosodic, or grammatical properties.

For Sacks et al (1974), interactants' TCUs perform 'three kinds of sequential work [...] thought of in terms of past, present, and future' (Seedhouse, 2004: 31). In other words, an EM/CA analysis of interaction shows how participants, through their TCUs, display an orientation to the current situation (present), and to 'how each action is related to each *prior* and each *next* action' (vom Lehn, 2019: 306 – my emphasis). The move from one speaker to the next (i.e., the exchange of turns-at-talk) 'recurs with minimal gap and

minimal overlap' (ten Have, 2007: 128) in a system that is interactionally and locally managed (i.e., 'party administered' (ibid.)) by participants after the production of each TCU at every TRP.

The turn-allocational techniques in the turn-taking system outlined by Sacks et al (1974) can be divided into two groups: (1) those in which the current speaker selects the next speaker and (2) those in which a next speaker self-selects (Sacks et al., 1974). If the former occurs, the selected party is 'obliged to take next turn [...] and transfer occurs at that place'; if a TCU does not involve a 'current speaker selects next technique' then self-selection may occur or, alternatively, the current speaker may continue, 'unless another self-selects' (ibid).

These fundamental mechanisms of turn-taking will be referred to frequently in the analysis of the transcripts herein and, as such, will provide a basis for understanding how test-takers manage interaction during group-based oral assessments. So, too, will the CA concept of *sequence organization*, relevant aspects of which will now be explored in some detail below.

### 3.3.2. Sequence Organization

So far, I have outlined the basic rules that govern turn-taking; that is, the norms of conversion that guide interactants in deciding who should speak and when. As mentioned above, there is a trivariate aspect to speakers' turns-at-talk in that their TCUs display an orientation to what action came before, what action is being performed now, and to what 'action is relevant next' (Hepburn and Potter, 2021: 44). In this section, we will explore this idea of the *situatedness* of turns-at-talk, captured in the commonsense observation that in conversation 'one party needs to talk after the other' (Schegloff, 2007: 1).

As mentioned above, TCUs create a new context for the subsequent action. This gives talk-in-interaction a normatively accountable *sequential* structure (Hepburn and Potter, 2021). This means that if an interactant proffers a TCU that makes a next action conditionally relevant and this expected next action is not provided, the first speaker can hold the second speaker to account (e.g., in the case of a greeting that is not returned or a question that is not answered). This principle, in part, is what informs that *sequential organization* of talk-in-interaction.

Whole books have been written on this topic (see, e.g., Schegloff, 2007) so it is, therefore, beyond the remit of this chapter to cover all its aspects. Instead, in what follows, I will explore three features of sequence organization that are of particular relevance to my forthcoming analyses. These are: (1) the adjacency pair, (2) progressivity, and (3) the organization of preference/dispreference.

### 3.3.2.1. The Adjacency Pair

Adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) are the 'basic building blocks of intersubjectivity' (Heritage, 1984) and 'the major instrument for the analysis of sequential organization' (ten Have, 2007: 310). As this concept is integral to an understanding of sequence organization and, moreover, is ubiquitous throughout my analyses, further explanation is warranted. To this end, the current section will first provide a definition for the term adjacency pair, before moving on to look at some of the ways in which adjacency pairs can be expanded and built upon to construct larger sequences of talk. This will be done by considering three adjacency pair expansion sequences; namely, (1) insert-sequences, (2) pre-sequences, and (3) post-sequences.

Adjacency pairs consist of two linked actions - a first pair part (FPP) and a second pair part (SPP) - the relationship between which is such that when a FPP (e.g., offer) is uttered, the SPP (accept/decline) 'become *conditionally relevant'* (Seedhouse, 2004: 17 – original emphasis). SPPs, then, are utterance types that are *'responsive* to the action of a prior turn' (Schegloff, 2007: 13) and occur most often, though by no means always, in an immediately adjacent position to the FPP (hence the name: '*adjacency* pair'). Consider the excerpts below, which each illustrate a different type of adjacency pair:

Greeting – return greeting adjacency pair:

```
1 A: Hello
2 B: Hello
```

Question – answer adjacency pair:

```
1 Prac:  Do you kno:w (0.31) why you've come here today?
2 Child: Erm because (0.39) I- keep (0.94) doin my- (0.41) I
3        think it's O- C- D-
```

<p align="center">(Stafford et al., 2016)</p>

While one can perhaps more easily picture adjacency pairs whose FPPs and SPPs are immediately adjacent (as in the examples, above) exceptions to this pattern may require further explanation. Consider, then, the following excerpt taken from Liddicoat (2007: 108):

```
1    Joy:   N'whaddya think'v Brett,
2    Harry: Brett?
3    Joy:   The new guy in accounts.
4    Harry: Oh. He seems oka:y.
```

In this sequence, we can see that Joy proffers a FPP (question) (line 1); however, rather than being met with an immediately adjacent SPP (answer), Harry instead responds with a question of his own (`Brett?` – line 2). In this instance, although an answer is still conditionally relevant, it is *deferred* until line 4. What is instead initiated by Harry in line 2 is what is known as an 'insert expansion' (Schegloff, 2007), which takes the form an of 'insert sequence' (ibid.); that is, a sequence inserted between the FPP and SPP of the adjacency pair.

Insert sequences are used to 'address matters which need to be dealt with in order to enable the doing of the base second part' (ibid: 99). Such matters are often related to problems with hearing or understanding the FPP. This can be seen in the excerpt below taken from Schegloff et al (1977):

```
1    D: Wul did' e ever get married' r anything?
2    C: Huh?
3    D: Did jee ever get married?
4    C: I have // no idea
```

The insert expansion, above, is known as a post-first insert sequence and can be said to 'look backward' (ibid.), in that it attempts to resolve an issue with the base FPP. This, however, can be contrasted with the previous exchange between Joy and Harry which, in contrast, demonstrates a *pre-second* insert sequence, that is, a sequence that instead looks *forward*, 'ostensibly to establish the resources necessary to implement' the base SPP (ibid.).This type of pre-second expansion sequence is exemplified again in the following excerpt taken from Psathas (1991):

```
1       A: Do you know the directions?
2       B: uh (.) You driving or walking?
3       A: Walking (0.2)
4       B: Get on the subway
```

In this excerpt, the second speaker's insert FPP in line 2 does not orient to any issues regarding understanding or hearing the base FPP; instead, B orients to the need for some 'preparatory work' (Liddicoat, 2007: 147) before a base SPP can be proffered.  In this sense, his insert FPP (line 2) is projecting forward in the conversation not referring back.

As we have seen so far, then, it is possible for adjacency pairs - the basic buildings blocks that constitute sequences of talk - to be expanded. This has been exemplified with reference to post-first and pre-second insert expansions. However, expansions can occur in two other positions relating to the base FPP and base SPP of an adjacency pair. These sequences are known as pre-expansions and post-expansions and will be described below.

Pre-expansions, as the name suggests, occur *before* the articulation of a base FPP. As such, they are 'hearable by participants as preludes to some other action' (Liddicoat, 2007: 125). These actions can range from invitations and offers to announcements and tellings; however,  as the 'most readily recognizable' pre-sequence 'in sheer common-sense terms' among these is the pre-invitation (Schegloff, 2007: 29), we will use this particular type of pre-expansion to elucidate the concept.

Consider the excerpt below, taken from Schegloff (2007: 30):

```
1    Cla:          Hello
2    Nel:          Hi.
3    Cla:          Hi.
4    Nel: Pre-FPP  Whatcha doin'.
5    Cla: Pre-SPP  Not much.
6    Nel: Base-FPP Y'wanna drink?
7    Cla: Base-SPP Yeah.
8    Nel:          Okay.
```

Here, we can see a common form that pre-invitations take. This is demonstrated, after a minimal opening sequence in lines 1-3, by Nelson's question (`Whatcha doin'`) and Clara's response (`Not much`) in lines 4 and 5, respectively. These turns serve as a pre-FPP and pre-SPP to the base FPP and base SPP in lines 6 and 7. In other words, lines 4 and 5 constitute a pre-sequence, a preliminary, to the base adjacency pair that follows (lines 6-7). Clara displays her understanding that Nelson (line 4) is 'not asking for a factual description' (ibid.) by proffering a response that instead serves as a "go ahead"; that is, as an indication that 'the projected invitation can now be done' (Liddicoat, 2007: 129). And, indeed, this is immediately follows (`Y'wanna drink?`).

We have seen so far, then, how sequences can be expanded between their FPP and SPP (insert expansion) and before their FPP (pre-expansion). In what follows, we will consider a Third type of expansion (post-expansions), in which a sequence is instead expanded *after* its base SPP.

Post-expansions occur after a base SPP  and come in a number of forms, from minimal post-expansions, which consist of a single word (`Okay`) or sound (`Oh`) or a short composite of components (e.g., receipt + assessment: `Oh(.) that's a good idea`), to non-minimal post-expansions which are made up of 'sequences of FPPs and SPPs of their own' (Liddicoat, 2007: 159).

Many sequences are 'recognisably complete [...] at the end of their second pair part turn' (Schegloff, 2007: 118). In such instances, this is embodied by speakers either moving on to a new sequence or allowing the talk to lapse (see, e.g., leave-takings). However, in some

cases, adjacency pairs are ended with a minimal post-expansion (ibid.) in a third position. These minimal post-expansions are 'minimal' in the sense that they project no further talk and, therefore, implicate closure. Because of this, they are also referred to as sequence-closing thirds (STCs).

Two of the most common forms of STCs are "oh" and "okay". The former is used to mark the 'receipt of information' (ibid.) - that is, to register a 'change of state' in the recipient from unknowing to knowing (Heritage, 1984b). This can be seen in the two examples below.

```
Emma:       An' d' yuh think you'll still be able tuh come
            up on the weekend,
Jan:        Uh. hh well no I don' think we'll be able tuh do it
            this weeken'
Dora:→      O↓uh.
```
<div align="center">(Liddicoat, 2007: 153)</div>

```
J:          =Hello there I rang y'earlier b'tchu w'r ou:t,
I:          ↑Oh: I musta been at Dez's mu:ms=
J: →        =↓AOh::. h=
```
<div align="center">(Heritage, 1984: 301)</div>

STCs in the form of an "Okay" are instead used to claim *acceptance* of a SPP (Schegloff, 2007), as shown in the example below taken from Liddicoat (2007: 154):

```
Andrew:     so do yih need any help,
Sam:        (.) uh I don' think so. It should be quite easy an' it won't
            Take long.
Andrew: →   o:kay.
```

Non-minimal post expansions, on the other hand, *do* 'project further talk beyond their turn' (Liddicoat, 2007: 159) and are, therefore, not sequence-closing like the minimal post-expansions above. Instead, non-minimal post-expansions in third position are themselves a FPP and thereby 'project at least one further turn' (Schegloff, 2007: 149). There are a

substantial range of post-expansion sequence types, an examination of which is beyond the remit of this chapter. Instead, I will present below an example of a common type of non-minimal post-expansion that was common within the current data set. This type of non-minimal post-expansion is known as *other-initiated repair*.

```
1 Dee:        Well who'r you workin for.
2 Con:        .hhh Well I'm working through:: the Amfat Corporation.
3             (0.8)
4 Dee: →      The who?
5 Con:        =Amfah Corpora[tion. (.) 'ts a holding company
6 Dee:                      [oh
7 Dee:        Yeah
```

(Schegloff, 2007: 149)

In the excerpt above, we can see this type of non-minimal post-expansion sequence at work. After the base FPP and SPP turns, which constitute a question-answer adjacency pair, Dee displays his trouble with Con's answer (line 2) and initiates repair (line 4). This turn then makes a SPP answer/clarification conditionally relevant, and this is provided by Con in line 5. The non-minimal post-expansion sequence *itself* is then expanded with two minimal post-expansions in lines 6 and 7 from Dee, which eventually close the sequence. This, then, demonstrates the non-minimality of these sequences and, in turn, concludes our examination of the different types of expansions (pre-, insert-, and post-) - and their various sub-categories (e.g., post-FPP/pre-SPP; minimal/non-minimal) - used to extend a base adjacency pair.

In the group-based oral assessments in this thesis, test-takers display an orientation towards keeping their talk going (i.e., towards progressivity) and to maintaining intersubjectivity between speakers. Expansions play a part in these two endeavours in that they, respectively, 'allow for the possibility of a single base SPP being expanded into quite lengthy sequences of talk' and provide 'places in which the interactional work of repair can be done' (Liddicoat, 2007: 170). While repair and intersubjectivity are not, *per se*, the central objects of analytic interest of this thesis they are pervasive to the interactions herein and, therefore, have a role to play in the maintenance of progressivity (Chapter 5), the

management of affiliation in disagreement sequences (Chapter 6), and the negotiation of deontic rights (Chapter 7).

### 3.3.2.2. The Organization of Preference/Dispreference

So far, we have considered sequence organization from the starting point of the adjacency pair and the various ways in which such pairs can be expanded into longer sequences of talk. We will now turn our attention to yet another aspect of sequence organization that features throughout my forthcoming analytic chapters; that is the *organization of preference/dispreference.*

The idea of preference in CA differs from its meaning in psychological terms – in other words, the CA notion of preference is not concerned with participants' cognitive motivations – with what they want to do or say (Lester and O'Reilly, 2019) -  but rather 'involves issues of affiliation and disaffiliation, of seeing, noticeability, accountability, and sanctionability in relation to social actions' (Seedhouse, 2004: 23). As such, it is viewed from a socio-relational and a structural-interactional (Duran and Sert, 2019) point of view, not a psychological one. This CA notions plays a prominent role in all of my forthcoming analytic chapters (though, see Chapter 6, which is concerned with how *affiliation* is managed during disagreement sequences, and Chapter 7, in particular) and, as such, warrants some attention, here.

Following Sacks (1992), let us take invitations as a starting point for our explanation. When a FPP invitation is proffered, this makes a SPP (an acceptance or declination) conditionally relevant. Notice, however, that these alternative SPPs 'are not [...] of equal status' (Whalen and Raymond, 2000: 434). As noted earlier in this chapter, turns and sequences are the vehicles by which social activities/actions are accomplished (Schegloff, 2007). As such, these unequal SPPs (acceptances and declinations, in this case) can be categorised in terms of those that favour 'the furthering or the accomplishment of the activity' – i.e., *preferred* actions – and those that do not – i.e., *dispreferred* actions. While both an acceptance and a declination align *sequentially* with an FPP invitation (i.e., they are both conditionally relevant), they differ in terms of the *affiliation* they display towards the FPP.

The dis/affiliative dimension of SPPs is represented in their turn design. For example, affiliative (i.e., preferred) responses are delivered immediately after the FPP with little mitigation. Consider, for example, this adjacency pair taken from a longer sequence presented above from from Schegloff (2007: 30):

```
6     Nel: Base-FPP Y'wanna drink?
7     Cla: Base-SPP Yeah.
8     Nel:        Okay.
```

Here we can see that Clara's preferred response (an acceptance) to Nelson's invitation/proposal is delivered immediately, and in a minimal format (a single word: `Yeah`). Contrast this, however, with the example below taken from Atkinson and Drew (1979: 58 in Seedhouse, 2004: 24):

```
1 B:  Uh if you'd care to come over and visit a little while this morning
2     I'll give you a cup of coffee.
3 A:  hehh well that's awfully sweet of you, I don't think I can make it
4     this morning. Hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and- and uh I
5     have to stay near the phone
```

In this sequence, A's dispreferred SPP declination displays a complex turn design replete with hesitations (`hehh well` – line 3; `Hh uhm` / `uh` – line 4), a mitigating preface (`that's awfully sweet of you`) and an account (`I have to stay near the phone` – line 4-5). In other words, it 'is packaged so as to minimize the degree of disaffiliation' (ibid.) and to reduce the declination's *face-threatening* potential (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This kind of elaborate turn structure is evident in the current dataset when test-takers respond with dispreferred SPPs. Consider the following example of a disagreeing turn taken from Excerpt 6.2.2. in Chapter 6:

```
35    *LARI:    OK uh- (0.3) i- i uh would choose
36              s- solar energy (0.4) for the reason that
37              the first uh- as for the price (0.6) uh
38              it's uh (0.5) cheaper (0.7) cheapest (.)
39              it's cheaper than others and uh (0.8) what's
40              more(0.4) it also has uh: (0.4) fifty (0.7)
```

```
41              five (0.4) percent (efficiency)
42              (0.7)
43   *BOBO:     yes=
44   *LARI:     =|rating| on the (        )=
                |((Larina turns to face Bobo))|
45   *AMY:      =°yes°
46              (1.7)
47→  *BOBO:     u:hm but (0.1) uh we all know that
48              the- this uh: (0.4) this uh: (0.9)
49              |e:quipment| is to help uh- uh (0.5) protect
50              our environment and keeping the public |happy|
                |((Bobo shifts gaze from the cribsheet to Larina))|
```

Lines 35-41 show a FPP assessment which is responded to by Bobo and Amy with agreement/acknowledgement tokens (`Yes`) in lines 43 and 45, respectively. These agreements are preferred actions and so display a minimal turn design. Contrast this, however, with Bobo's second SPP in which she appears to change her mind and now disagree with Lari's assessment (lines 47 - 60). This now *dis*preferred, disagreeing action, in contrast, exhibits a far more elaborate turn design. Note that it comes after a lengthier 1.7 pause in line 46 (cf. the 0.7 pause preceding her initial `yes` – line 43) and includes a constellation of features associated with dispreference, including markers of hesitation (turn-initial `u:hm`), a mitigating preface (`we all know that [...]`), epistemic downgrades (`I think` – line 51), and an account (lines 57-60). Compare this with a preferred, agreeing SPP (taken from Excerpt 6.3.1):

```
221  *JIMM:     i think it's a little useless=
222  *SARA:     =yeah
```

Again, note the minimal formatting of preferred responses, here composed of a single word that is proffered in a latched position to its FPP.

The EM influence on the CA paradigm can be seen in this notion of 'preference organization' (see Section 2.4.3.1), which denotes 'a structural bias toward […] reciprocity of perspective' (ibid: 9) and views preferred responses as those that are most affiliative and, therefore, 'supportive of social solidarity' (Heritage, 1984: 268). As such, preferred actions are 'seen but unnoticed' (Seedhouse, 2004: 9) and work toward RoP and affiliation, whereas dispreferred actions work against RoP and as shown above in the TickTackToe example are noticeable and may be held to account.

We can begin to see, then, how the structural organization of talk is constituted by turn-taking, the adjacency pair, and preference (Seedhouse, 2004). In terms of the latter, we have just seen that interaction is governed by a preference toward cooperation/affiliation, that is, towards actions that are conducive to social solidarity (Heritage, 1984) and to the furthering of the social action initiated in the base FPP. This, however, is not the only preference at play in talk-in-interaction. Indeed, in what follows, we will consider yet another form of preference structure; one that is explored in detail in Chapter 5.

### 3.3.2.3. Progressivity

Alongside the preferences in conversational activities for cooperation and affiliation to be maximised and conflict minimised (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984) and for the selected speaker to speak next, there exists also a preference for progressivity. I have chosen to focus on this aspect of sequence organization, here, as it is central to my analysis in Chapter 5, which considers how test-takers maintain progressivity with reference to the timeframe of test.

As Schegloff (2007: 15) puts it 'moving from some element to a hearably next-one with nothing intervening is the embodiment of, and the measure of, progressivity'. Indeed, if something does intervene between one element and what is due next, it will be 'heard as qualifying the progressivity of the talk' and be examined accordingly for how it reaffirms preceding talk and shapes what comes next (cf. the aforementioned doubly contextual significance of speakers' communicative actions (Heritage, 1984)). One situation in which this preference for progressivity is manifested in talk is in situations in which a conditionally relevant SPP is not forthcoming. In such cases, speakers 'may sanction the participant from whom this was due', usually through 'pursuit of an answer' (Stivers and Robinson, 2006: 370). This can be seen in the example below:

```
6 Gra: →     Now: will you do that for me::
7            (2.5)
8 Gra: →     °Honey°
9 Sis:       Wh-what,
```

```
10            (1.2)
11 Gra: →     Will you do that
12            (1.6)
13 Sis:       ᴬWell:
14            (2.0)
15 Sis:       Gra:mma it's gonna be so: expensive to go talk to
16            Some dumb doctor
```

(ibid.)

Here we can see that when a response to the grandmother's question in line 6 is not
forthcoming (note the 2.5-second pause – line 7), the grandmother sanctions this impeding
of the progress of the (question – answer) sequence, by first trying to elicit her
granddaughter's attention (°Honey° – line 8) and then, failing that, by repeating her question
(line 11). This orientation to 'nextness', or 'successiveness' (Hosoda & Aline, 2013), is
endemic to talk-in-interaction at the level of both turn construction and sequence
organization (Stivers and Robinson, 2006) and can also be seen in instances where it collides
with other preferences (e.g., the preference for a selected speaker to speak next). This can
be seen in the excerpt below:

```
1 Mom:        What're you doing Dad?, ((Dad is at phone))
2             (0.7) ((Boy gazes at Dad; Dad is leaning over phone))
3 Boy:        He's listening.
```

In this excerpt, the preference for progressivity overrides another preference; the
preference for the selected speaker (i.e. Dad) to speak next. Notice that after Mom has
directed her question at Dad there ensues a 0.7.-second pause, while Dad is seemingly
otherwise engaged. At this point, with an SPP still not forthcoming, the Boy elects to
circumvent the preference for selected speaker to speak next in favour of a preference for
progressivity, by supplying an answer and, as a result, furthering the progression of the
sequence initiated in the  base FPP (a question) in line 1.

This preference for progressivity can be seen not only in sequences in which no answer is
given, but also in sequences where a non-answer type response (e.g., I don't know) is
provided. This is exemplified in the sequence below, in which a mother overrides the

preference a selected speaker to speak next (`Girl`), in favour of progressing the sequence herself by providing an answer:

```
1.Girl:           [I::'m si:ck,=[h
2 Doctor:         [.hh          [uh huh?
3                 (.)
4 Doctor: →       You're sick, Well what's u:p,
5                 (1.1)
6 Girl:→          I don't know[:,
7 Mom: →                      [B[etween yesterdat and to[da:y she-
8 Doctor:                       [How- hh              [-hh
9                 (.)
10 Mom:           You know it's (just)/(this)- nasal crap an'
11                It's gotten it was gree:n_ it was [(uh really
12 Doctor:                                          [Okay.
13 Mom:           =uh beautiful color this morning
```
(Taken from Sidnell, 2010: 93)

What these various sequences show, then, is that oftentimes the preference for progressivity effectively 'outranks the preference for selected next speaker over non-selected next speakers', so that, in effect, the 'onward progress of action [...] is privileged even to the extent that it results in a violation' of other preferences (ibid.).

We will return to this idea of progressivity in the analysis in Chapter 5; however, for now, let us conclude this section with a consideration of one final aspect of sequence organization pertinent to this thesis: turn design.

### 3.3.3. Turn Design

Turn design, as ten Have (2007: 137) points out, is one type of organization that 'does not have an elaborate, structured approach in the CA tradition' - unlike the adjacency pair and sequence and preference organization. Nevertheless, 'all research in CA unavoidably bears [...] on what goes into the construction of a turn – on the actions [conducted] through turn design' (Drew, 2012: 149). Therefore, I will now consider the three basic principles that shape turn construction and design (action, recipient design, and sequence) . This will serve

to prime the reader for my third analytic chapter, in particular, which considers how the turn design (e.g., interrogative, declarative, imperative) of test-takers' directive actions (i.e., proposals, requests, suggestions, commands etc.) affects the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group. However, as alluded to in the above quote from Drew (2012: 149), the relevance of turn design will be pervasive throughout all three analytic chapters.

The term turn design refers to the ways in which speaker's construct their turns-at-talk. The basic buildings blocks of these turns, as already discussed, are TCUs, which can themselves be constituted by a variety of linguistic (e.g., lexical, prosodic, morpho-syntactic), and paralinguistic (e.g., gestural, bodily) resources (Drew, 2012). In other words, 'how a turn is designed is a meaningful *choice*' (ten Have, 2007: 137 – original emphasis) and affects how speakers' social actions are understood by their recipient(s). As such, recipients understand an utterance as ''designed' for its occasion, [...] chosen from a set of alternatives, [and] fitted to the evolving momentary situation' (ibid.).

We have already seen how turns can be packaged so as to show their relative preference status, with preferred turns tending to be minimally formatted with little to no hesitation, and dispreferred turns tending toward a more elaborate structure, consisting of accounts, mitigation, and markers of hesitation. Such packaging reflects how the *action* being performed affects choices in turn construction made by speakers. The range of actions that alternative turn designs can perform, however, goes beyond those than can be categorised in terms of preference status alone. Indeed, a speaker can choose to design his/her turn in relation to 'scale positions' (ten Have, 2007: 138), which exist on continuums concerning, for example, formality.

This brings us to the second principle that determines turn design, that is, *who* the turn is addressing. This is referred to in CA as 'recipient design' (Sacks, 1992). This concept is exemplified in the following three excerpts taken from Drew (2012: 146), which foreground how the focal turn (a question – in bold in each excerpt) differs when posed to addressees with whom the speaker has varying degrees of familiarity:

(1)

```
1 Joy:      °(Eight four eight seven: six oh five)°
2 Les:      Oh ↑hello Joyce are ↑you going↑ t' the meeting
3          T'ni:ght,
4 Joy:      .hhh No I'm not Leslie.
```

(2)

```
1 Les:      Leslie he:re,
2 Car:      Ye(h)es,
3          (0.2)
4 Les:      .hhh ↑U[hm
5 Car:           [Got the message,
6          (0.2)
7 Les:      Are you going t'night.
8          (0.3)
9 Car:      Yes I left a message with Ka:th.
```

(3)

```
1 Les:      Oh hello:, uhm Leslie ↑Field |he:re?
2          (0.6)
3 Myr:      Sorry?
4          (.)
5 Les:      Leslie [Fie:ld?
6 Myr:           [↑Oh hello hello[ :°Leslie yes sorry°
7 Les:                          [Hello,
8          (.)
9 Les:      ↑Are you thinkin:g of comin:g t'the meeting t'|night
```

The three excerpts above are taken from telephone conversations between members of an

organization (Myra and Carry) and an organizer (Leslie). While Joyce, a long-established

member, and Carry, a regular member, are well-known to Leslie, Myra, on the other hand,

has only recently transferred to Leslie's branch of the organization from another branch.

Leslie and Myra, therefore, are on less familiar terms. By examining Leslie's question in each

excerpt, we can begin to see how this familiarity (or lack thereof) with the addressee is

manifested in the turn design of each question.

In the first and second excerpts, Leslie designs her enquiry so as to ask directly whether

Joyce and Carry are *going* (are ↑you going↑ t' the meeting T'ni:ght, / Are you

`going t'night`). Compare this to how her enquiry is addressed to Myra. In this turn, Leslie includes the more circumspect: `are you `*`thinking`*` of coming`. In asking Joyce and Carry whether they are *going*, Leslie puts her recipients 'on some equal (social) footing' (ibid.). Indeed, in each of these first two telephone conversations, Leslie then goes on to request a lift. We can see, then, that her use of *going*, more so than *coming* (in the third excerpt with the less familiar Myra), establishes a pre-request 'in a way which *coming* would not' (ibid.). What all this illustrates, then, is that there are subtle differences in the 'granularity' of how the same action is designed to differently reflect the relationship (organizational and personal, here) between a speaker and her addressee(s) (ibid.). While we have used an example, here, based on the differing degrees of familiarity between members of the Women's Institute, one could just have easily taken as an example the different way a child might design the same action when addressed to a friend as compared to their teacher, or to the way in which a middle-manager might address a junior member of staff as compared to a CEO.

We have seen so far how turn design can be shaped not only by *what* action (e.g.,  preferred or dispreferred) is being done but also by *who* is being addressed. We will now consider the third main principle that shapes how turns are designed. This principle relates instead 'to *where* in a sequence [a turn is] being taken' (Drew, 2012: 140).

Turns-at-talk are produced in a *sequential* context, and, as such, are designed to respond in some way to what came before. This is what is known as the 'principal of contiguity' (Sacks, 1987). There is an orientation to sequential context in turns-at-talk - that is, to *where* a turn occurs - that can be seen in the different ways in which speakers display to their interlocutors the coherence - or 'connectedness' - between the current turn and its prior. There are four principal ways that this connectedness is achieved, i.e., through (1) indexicality, (2) ellipsis, (3) repetition, or (4) action (Drew, 2012). However, as the current chapter has already discussed what is meant by 'indexicality' (see Section 3.2.2.1.) and the way in which speakers make relevant the contiguity of their turn with a prior turn by responding with what is 'recognizable as some appropriate next action' (ibid.: 136) (see Section on 'Adjacency pairs' above) -   this section will focus on (2) and (3) only. This, it is

hoped, will supplement what has been discussed thus far and serve to highlight further the subtle yet significant effect that sequence has on turn design.

Ellipsis is a common way of showing coherence between turns. This can be seen in the following extract from Drew (2012):

```
1 Kri:      (You did it) on the pho:ne?
2 Tar:      what?
3 Kri:      You cried to him on the pho:ne?
4 Tar:→     Not on purpose
```

Note that in line 4, Tara responds to Kris' enquiry with an elliptical version of an answer. In other words, she does not answer `I did not cry to him on the phone on purpose` but rather with `Not on purpose`, thus emphasising the connectedness of her answer to its prior by relying on the content of Kris' question to derive her implied meaning. This is known in the Gricean tradition as a particularised conversational implicature (see Grice, 1989): i.e., a case in which the propositional content of an utterance is tied to its *particular* sequential context (cf. generalized conversational implicatures (ibid.) or *ex*plicatures (Carston, 2002)). Here, we can see how it orients to the aforementioned principle of contiguity.

Repetition, too, is a pervasive way that speakers display the coherence of their turn with a prior. This can be seen, for example, in the work of Pomerantz (1984) who studied the turn shapes of agreeing and disagreeing turns. In this study it was shown how repetition was a common feature in the turn design of second assessments that agree with their prior. For example:

```
1 M:  You must admit it was fun the night we
2     we[nt down
3 J:    [it was great fun . . .
```

and:

```
1 C:  She was a nice lady --I like her
```

```
2 G:   I liked her too
```

Notice how in each of the extracts above, the second speaker displays an orientation to contiguity with the prior turn by designing her SPP so as to repeat certain words from the FPP. In the first extract this is done with the word `fun`, which is repeated in the SPP (line 3) following an intensifier (`great`), a feature also highlighted by Drew (2012) when discussing the relationship between sequence and turn design. Repetition is again evident in the second extract; this time in the second speaker's use of the verb `liked` (line 2), which was used in its present simple tense in the FPP (`like` - line 1).

While the above features of turn design can occur in isolation within a second speakers turn, it is not uncommon for a responsive turn to display a number of contiguous components at once. This can be seen in the example below where both repetition and ellipsis appear in the same response (see lines 3-4):

```
1 Emm:      .hhhh is there any place around here that u-has
2           those lottie do yih know
3 Lot:      A::krun's I think is the only place
4           that [I know (Ellipsis: that has those)
5 Emm:      [Go:d that's right Akrun's
```

This sequence, in fact, provides us with an example of all four main principals of contiguous turn design (though they do not appear in the same turn). In Lottie's response, for example, we can see a contiguous *action* (an answer to a question), a repetition of a word from the prior turn (`place`) and an elliptical response (note the absence of `that has those` from the FPP enquiry). In addition, Emma's sequence-closing third in line 5 gives us an example of *deixis* in the use of the indexical `that` in `that's right.`

This section has considered three interactional structures: turn-taking, sequence organization (including the adjacency pair, the organization of preference, and progressivity), and turn design. In the next section, we will consider the reliability, validity, and generalizability of CA findings.

## 3.4. CA: Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

This section explores the issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability, and explains how each of these is addressed through the methods and analytic procedures of CA.

### 3.4.1. Reliability

Reliability - that is, the question of 'whether the results of a study are repeatable' (Bryman, 2012: 46) - in CA is related to 'guaranteeing the public access to the process of their production' (Peräkylä, 2004: 285). As such, the quality of transcripts, and the video recordings on which they are based, has a significant bearing on reliability within CA research.

As Seedhouse has pointed out, there are a number of research methodologies that do not, unlike CA, 'require presentation of the primary data[19] on which a study is based' (2004: 254). This is the case, for example, with ethnographic studies. CA's commitment, however, to working with transcripts, which are made available for readers to analyze themselves and 'test the analytical procedures which the author has followed' (ibid: 255), renders CA analyses '*repeatable* and *replicable* to readers' (ibid. - my emphasis) and eliminates the problems that ethnographic research has with regards to 'the unspecified accuracy of field notes and [...] limited public access to them' (Peräkylä, 2004: 285). Furthermore, it is standard practice among CA practitioners (this researcher included) to share their data at

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[19] Here Seedhouse (2004) refers to transcripts as the primary data of CA. Whether this is the case, however, is open to debate. Ayaß (2015), for example, has examined the shifting methodological status of transcription in research processes following the widespread adoption of audio-visual recordings in qualitative work, while Davidson (2009; 36 – drawing on work by Ochs, 1979) questions the way in transcripts have been presented as transparent rather than as 'the result of a series of choices in need of explication'. Many journals, in response to this, now encourage researchers to submit, along with their manuscripts, the original video-recordings on which their transcripts are based.

workshops (see Section 4.5.3.) and conferences prior to publication. This, again, adds to the transparency of the analytic procedures within CA and bolsters reliability.

### 3.4.2. Validity

Validity is 'concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research' (Bryman, 2012: 47) and can be categorised into four types: (1) internal, (2) ecological, (3) construct, and (4) external validity. This section will consider types 1-3 in terms of how they are addressed through the analytic procedures of CA. The fourth type of validity - *external* validity - will be discussed in Section 3.4.3. under 'Generalizability'.

Internal validity has to do with the credibility and integrity of findings; namely, with regards to the extent to which claims made by a researcher - in particular, conclusions that 'incorporate a causal relationship between two or more variables' (Bryman, 2012: 48) - are supported by the data. There is, at the heart of CA, a concern for ensuring such internal validity, which can be seen most clearly in CA's commitment to an *emic* approach; that is, in the commitment not to make claims 'beyond what is demonstrated by interactional detail' (Seedhouse, 2004: 255).

As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, speakers, in the unfolding of an interaction, display to their interlocutors (and, therefore, to the researcher) their understanding and interpretations of what is going on - i.e., what has transpired thus far - via their turn design. This, as Peräkylä (2004: 291) puts it, provides a 'fundamental validation procedure that is used in all conversation analytic research'. This is known as the next turn 'proof procedure' (Sacks et al, 1974) and is key to the internal validity of CA findings. In practice, any claim made by a researcher working within CA can be subjected to this proof procedure to ascertain whether or not interactants themselves treat an utterance in a way that matches 'the analyst's interpretation' (Peräkylä, 2004: 291). This can be contrasted with other, *etic*, approaches which often see researchers invoking concepts such as class, gender, race, and so on, 'without needing to demonstrate that the participants themselves are oriented to such concepts' (Seedhouse, 2004: 255).

Ecological validity, on the other hand, concerns whether findings are 'applicable to people's everyday, natural social settings' (Bryman, 2012: 48). So, for example, whereas a study conducted using a questionnaire might have a degree of internal validity and external validity - insofar that answers given can be generalized to other respondents - it cannot be said to have *ecological* validity due to the unnaturalness of the data collection setting. CA practitioners tend to record their data in natural settings (not, for example, in laboratories and interview rooms), which, therefore, gives their findings greater ecological validity. Indeed, this is the case in the current study insofar as all data was collected from *actual* group-based oral assessments that would have taken place (and, in this case, even been *recorded*) regardless of whether a researcher was involved. This is true for most CA research and is what makes this methodology, when compared to others,  'exceptionally strong [...] in terms of ecological validity' (Seedhouse, 2004: 257).

This brings us to construct validity, which can be defined as the extent to which hypotheses deduced from data correspond to relevant theories concerning a concept (Bryman, 2012: 172). This type of validity is more associated with a 'positivistic, quantitative, etic paradigm' (Seedhouse, 2004: 257) (e.g., Linguistics) to which CA is distinct. This point was discussed in Section 3.2.2.4. (*Normative Accountability*), where Linguistics, - which takes an etic, rule-based approach - was contrasted with EM/CA, which is concerned with 'constitutive [...] activity' rather than 'normative activity' (i.e., rule-following)  (Peyrot, 1982).

As Sacks et al put it (quoted earlier but repeated here for convenience): TCUs have no objective meaning outside of their local context; that is, outside of the '*situated* [...] sets of circumstances of [the] participants' (1974: 699 – my emphasis). So, whereas a Linguist would look for 'specifiable methods of description' (Seedhouse, 2004: 257) in order that she might match these descriptive categories (i.e., *constructs*) to 'surface linguistic features of an interaction' (ibid.), a CA researcher would instead - in line with an *emic* approach to interaction - see turns-at-talk not as corresponding to a single category but as analysable only in terms of how they are *recognised in interaction* by participants as being some or other social *action*. In CA, then, the basic unit of interaction - i.e., the "construct": TCU - is defined by the interactant rather than the analyst (ibid.). CA practitioners, therefore, can be seen as adopting an ontological position that 'challenges the suggestion that categories [...]

are pre-given' and rejects that they are 'external realities that [social actors] have no role in fashioning' (Bryman, 2012: 33).

### 3.4.3. Generalizability

The fourth type of validity, external validity, is concerned with the extent to which 'results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context' (Bryman, 2012: 47). The notion of 'generalizability', however, is treated differently in CA than it is quantitative studies,  which aim to produce laws (or law-like statements) or make empirical generalizations regarding the statistical relations among variables relating to, e.g., populations (ten Have, 2007). Indeed, even within a *qualitative* research context, the 'ways in which CA deals with 'generality' and 'generalization' are special in certain ways' (ibid.: 149).

In CA, the general and the particular exist in a kind of symbiosis. In other words, CA uses '*general* concepts to analyse *particular* instances' (ten Have, 2007: 149 - original emphasis), while at the same time using *particular* instances 'to build a *general* account of a phenomenon or interactional organization' (Seedhouse, 2004: 259 - my emphasis). This idea of CA being a methodology that effectively works on the micro (i.e., the particular) and the macro (i.e., the general) simultaneously is captured in the following quote by Sacks, who states that the aim of CA is to:

*take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims* [...] *that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine. The point is, then, to come back to the singular things we observe* [...] *with some rules that handle those singular features*
(1984: 411)

For CA, then, the purpose is to understand the *principles* that underly interactions not to generate laws or rules. These principles are extrapolated through procedures such as 'deviant case analysis', which considers sequences where a norm is flouted (e.g., when a conditionally relevant answer to a question is not forthcoming - see Section 3.3.2.3. on 'Progressivity' and Section 3.2.2.4  on 'Normative Accountability'). Such cases confirm the

'normative character of identified organizations' and provide the researcher with a framework - in other words, a 'normative frame of reference' (Seedhouse, 2004: 18) -  for understanding the underlying infrastructure of an interaction.

Having considered the development of CA, as well as its interactional structures, and how it addresses issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability, let us now turn to some of its purported limitations.

## 3.5. Criticisms and Limitations of CA

One criticism that has been levelled at CA since its emergence comes from sociologists who complain that CA cannot 'deal with the very important concerns they [are] interested in' (Button and Sharrock, 2016: 613). However, as briefly discussed above, CA is, in fact, capable of addressing issuing of class, power, gender, and so on; the only caveat being that the analyst should not make claims 'beyond what is demonstrated by interactional detail' (Seedhouse, 2004: 255). Far from being a limitation, however, this methodological commitment is one of CA's foremost assets. In other words, this is what gives CA research such incredibly strong internal validity, resulting from the analyst's need to constrain his/her interpretations to what is present in the empirical data by setting aside 'external issues and identities' in favour of examining 'participants' orientations to one another *in their own terms*' (Greatbatch and Clark, 2019: 3). Indeed, CA's commitment to working with transcripts that are made available to readers, to repeat a quote from Peräkylä, effectively eliminates an issue facing ethnomethodological research concerning 'the unspecified accuracy of field notes and [...] limited public access to them' (2004: 285).

Another criticism has been directed at CA's supposed 'scientism'. This criticism has its basis in CA's purported departure from the foundational principles of EM, the methodology from which CA emerged. The argument goes, according to Lynch, that as CA developed in its professional form its 'empiricist tendencies became predominant' (2000: 525), and, as a result, there arose a potential for CA's findings to be applied mechanically to code instances as belonging to 'one or other CA category, without explicating in detail one's understanding of those instances' (ten Have, 2007: 49). This criticism can be traced to what ten Have

(2004: 174) calls 'the problem of generalities' and be seen in the fact that CA is 'much more clearly oriented to formulating general properties than [...] recent ethnomethodological studies of specialized work' (ibid.).

However, while this may be the case, CA practitioners are nevertheless aware that a balance should be struck between the specifics and generic properties of any case at hand. It is, therefore, worthwhile to reiterate, in the light of Lynch's comments, that while CA *is* interested in generalities, it is interested, more specifically, in 'generalities-*in-use*' (ten Have, 2007: 50 - my emphasis). Therefore, any talk of generalities in CA must, by methodological necessity, come from the demonstrable interactional details of participants' talk-in-interaction and not just the analyst's construction of what she '[fancies] to be general in how people interact' (ibid.). This commitment is at the at heart of CA's radically emic approach.

One final criticism against CA is that its focus on action has often been 'characterized [...] by an exclusive interest in language' (Mondada, 2019: 48). However, this may largely be down to the technological limitations of early CA studies, which had to rely solely on audio recordings. Indeed, since the beginning, there has nevertheless been an interest in the body supported by the early use of film technologies (e.g., Goodwin, 1981; Heath, 1983). Nevertheless, it has not been until relatively recently that a multimodal approach has been pervasively adopted in CA research. Indeed, nowadays, video recordings are increasingly used in CA studies, which has allowed for embodied conduct such as gesture (Mortensen, 2016), use of objects (Hazel and Mortensen, 2014; Mondada, 2019), and gaze (Sert, 2019) to be studied alongside verbal conduct as a coordinated resource 'in the process of meaning making and action formation' (Jewitt, 2017: 28).

As we can see, then, much of the criticisms levelled at CA can be (or are *being,* in the case of the nascent adoption of a multimodal perspective ) satisfactorily addressed. This fact, alongside CA's  reliability, strong internal validity, and unique ability to illuminate,  in micro-analytic detail, the methods and procedures that underpin how interactants coordinate and accomplish actions through their talk, make CA the most suitable methodology for the current study.

Having said that, for parity, let me conclude this section by acknowledging one limitation of CA that is still debated. This limitation has to do with the extent to which CA can go beyond furthering our understanding of language *use* to illuminating issues regarding language *learning* and the processes of language acquisition. CA - unlike Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, which has traditionally focussed on the internal cognitive processes of learners - is a 'militantly behavioural discipline' (Markee, 2007: 1023) and one that was not designed to address issues of development and learning (Pekarek-Doehler, 2013). While some researchers have attempted to demonstrate the link between participation in interaction and acquisition within the emerging field of CA-for-SLA, others contend that mental states, not external behaviour, should be SLA researchers' primary object of inquiry (see, e.g., Long and Doughty, 2003).

However, recently this latter position has been labelled too extreme (Ellis, 2021). While there is, of course, more to SLA than what is observable in the behaviour of interactants, CA-for-SLA researchers (e.g., Pekarek Doehler, 2021; Hall, 2019) have provided, and continue to provide, unique insights into how learners' *methods* (i.e., their systematic procedures) can be said to display their relative development in the L2. The position of this researcher is to endorse a multi-perspectival approach to understanding learning/acquisition – i.e., one that draws both on studies that subscribe to a more social view (à la Firth and Wagner, 1997; 2007) *and* on those that adopt a purely cognitive view of SLA (see, e.g., Long and Doughty, 2003) – in the belief that this can help us arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how L2 acquisition takes place. This thesis, however, adopts but one of these approaches – the former.

## 3.6. Summary

Following the Introduction and Literature Review Chapters - which have, respectively, set the scene for the current study, outlined the need for micro-analytic research to be carried out in HE group-based assessment settings, and discussed the relevant literature - this chapter has provided an overview of the methodology adopted in this study.  Next, I will

provide an outline of the specific processes that were undertaken throughout this research project.

# Chapter 4. Research Design

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the setting in which the study takes place (Section 4.2.) and gives an overview of the participants (Section 4.3.), data recording and ethical considerations (Section 4.4.), and the methods of data transcription and analysis that were involved (Section 4.5.). These sections serve to frame the subsequent analytic chapters by outlining the processes that led to them.

## 4.2. Research Setting

The setting for this research was end-of-semester, group-based speaking tests on an International Foundation Year (IFY) for prospective Business and Humanities students at a university-affiliated HE institute in the UK. IFYs are one-year programmes designed to give students the requisite language skills and subject knowledge they need for progression onto year one of an undergraduate degree. On this course, students study EAP alongside several subject-specific modules (e.g., Business and Mathematics for Business students; Sociology and British Culture for Humanities students).

To progress to the university in question, students are required to take EAP examinations in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and achieve an average, IELTS-equivalent, score of 6.5., with no subskill lower than 6.0. This study focusses specifically on the final assessment for the speaking component of the EAP module.

These end-of-semester speaking exams were designed to elicit and test the kind of speaking skills one might need to interact effectively in a university seminar setting. As such, the students are tested in groups (of three or four) and are given a 'convergent' (Samuda & Bygate, 2006) task to complete; that is, a task that involves problem-solving and decision-making. Unlike in other speaking assessment formats, such as oral proficiency interviews and some paired oral assessments (e.g., Okada, 2010) the examiner, here, is not involved in the unfolding talk during the test. The examiner, however, is present throughout the entire assessment session and is responsible for recording the tests for assessment and external examiner purposes, for arranging where the test-takers sit, and for initiating and concluding

the two sections of the test; that is, the 8-minute preparation time and the 12-15-minute discussion task. This lack of involvement in the assessment interaction itself allows the examiner to watch, listen, and assess, rather than participate and assess.

These group-based assessments constitute 60% of the students' final speaking skills score on the EAP module. The other 40% is taken from a monologic presentation task (known as their 'Speaking Coursework'), which takes place in the middle of semester 2 and is based on a research project that the students complete as part of a separate module in Study Skills. The dialogic skills assessed in the group-based tasks considered herein relate to the overall EAP module aim to help learners develop their 'familiarity and facility with the English language skills they need for success on their university programme' and to the specific speaking sub-aim to enable learners to 'use spoken English confidently, clearly, and accurately, and to participate effectively, in an informal academic seminar context'[20].

It should be noted, however, that students take a formative version of their group-based speaking exam at the end of semester 1 and are, therefore, familiar with the procedure and expectations before they sit it for a second (and final) time in semester 2. However, in the semester 1 exam, the test-takers are only assessed using the first 3 categories in the assessment criteria (see Appendix D); that is, (1) listenership, (2) response to others, and (3) managing topics. It is not until their final, summative, group-based assessment that the test-takers are assessed using all 5 sections of the interactional speaking test criteria (see Appendix C). So, although the test-takers are assessed in this group-based format twice, it is only their second attempt that is summative and therefore counts towards the aforementioned 60% of their overall EAP speaking score[21]. This thesis is based on data taken from examples of this latter, high-stakes, summative version of the test.

Research has shown that small group, peer (i.e., learner-learner) interactions provide more opportunities for substantive conversation than in 'teacher-controlled class discussions' (Gan at al., 2008: 317 - see also Gan, 2010; Adams, 2004; Tsui, 2001; Bonk and Ockey, 2003).

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[20] These quotes are taken from page 8 of the IFY's EAP Student Handbook (see Appendix C)
[21] Remember, students must achieve an overall IELTS equivalent average of 6.5. (across reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to progress to the partner university, with no individual subskill lower than 6.0.

What's more, they enable test-takers to engage in 'genuine communication' and help develop 'discourse competence rather than only linguistic competence' (ibid). The assessment in question, then, adopts a sociocultural approach, in that it incorporates a task type that is 'interactive, dynamic, and collaborative' (Glipp, 1999).

In these tests, students are given a scenario. For example:

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Situation

*You and your classmates have been asked to introduce one of four products (detailed on page 2) to the British market. Each product designer has put together a short description for you and your partners to help you decide which product is likely to be the most successful.*

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*Figure 1 Example Test Scenario*

Students are informed of the possible exam topics (e.g., 'launching a product', 'opening a new franchise', 'staff recruitment' etc.) a week in advance and, therefore, have time to carry out some general research. However, they do not know the *specifics* of the task 'Situation' until the day of the test. Indeed, students are only made aware of these specifics once they are in the exam room.

After reading out the test 'situation' and providing students with a written copy on a handout that contains the tasks options (see below), the test-takers are given the opportunity to ask the examiner any clarifying questions. Following this, the examiner announces the beginning of the 8-minute preparation stage. During this preparation stage, test-takers read their assessment task sheet and make notes (pen and paper are provided) on a set of options (see Appendix B) related to the task scenario. During this time, test-takers can also check any unknown vocabulary using one of four paper dictionaries provided by the examiner. The task sheets themselves, which include the 'situation' and options, are laminated and cannot be written on by test-takers. Sheets of paper and pens are provided, however, should the test-takers want to take notes.

Once the 8 minutes' preparation time is over, test-takers then have 12 or 15 minutes (for groups of 3 and 4, respectively) to discuss and decide upon the best option to recommend from the set of four on their assessment crib sheets (Appendix B). Test-takers are made aware of how much time they have by the examiner who, using the classroom's smartboard, projects a digital timer (see Figure 2).
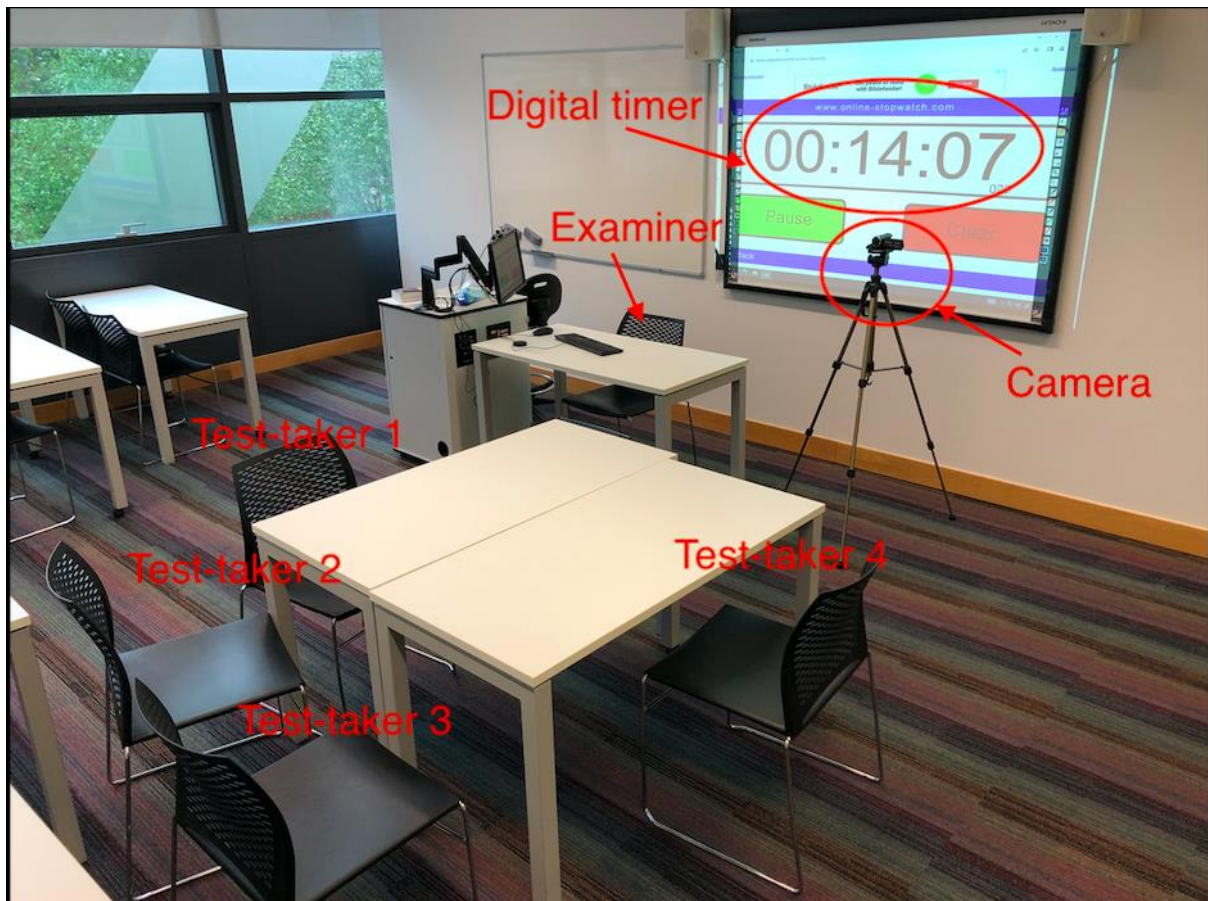


*Figure 2. Example assessment room setup.*

As students complete their assessment task, the assessors complete a marking criteria grid (see Appendix D for an example completed version). This assessment criteria is divided into five categories, each with a different interactional focus. These categories include: (1) Listenership, (2) Response to others, (3) Managing topics, (4) Language effectiveness, and (5) Interactive pronunciation. Each of these categories (i.e., Macro themes of interaction) contain five related micro themes. For example, the Macro theme of 'Response to others' is broken down into the following five subcategories:

1. You contribute ideas which relate to the developing topic under discussion
2. You can respond to the ideas of others with agreeing/disagreeing/comment marker phrases
3. You can respond to the ideas of others with agreeing/disagreeing/comment marker phrases *and* then a new idea of your own
4. You can integrate the idea of another group member with your own ideas to extend understanding of the topic
5. You can integrate and synthesise points from a number of group members with your own ideas to extend understanding of the topic.

If a test-taker demonstrates any of these micro-features they receive a tick. Once the test is complete, assessors then add the number of ticks to determine the overall score for that category (e.g., 1 tick = 4.5, 2 ticks = 5.5., 3 ticks = 6.5., 4 ticks = 7.5., 5 ticks = 8.5[22]). Once an overall score has been determined for each of the categories, these are then added together and divided by the number of categories (i.e., 5) to calculate each test-taker's overall speaking score. All test-takers have access to this criteria in the weeks before the test, so are aware of the interactional features they are expected to demonstrate in these assessments and how their final scores will be calculated.

## 4.3. Participants

The participants in this study were international students with English as a second or additional language on an IFY programme designed to assist in the transition to an undergraduate degree in the fields of Business or Humanities at a university in the UK. As such, while most of the EAP provision on the IFY addresses L2 language issues, there is also a broader focus on academic writing and the norms and expectations of British universities. A total of 85 test-takers (24 test groups) from countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Myanmar, Lebanon, and Azerbaijan, gave permission for their recorded speaking tests to be used in this study. Of these, 45 were male and 40 were female and the average IELTs score upon entry to the IFY was between 5.5 and 6.5[23].

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[22] Note that scores are presented in an IELTS format for university admissions purposes
[23] Note that the entry requirement for this IFY (in terms of language proficiency) is a minimum average of IELTS 5.5, with no individual subskill below 50, and the requirement for entry onto year one of an undergraduate

## 4.4. Data Recording and Ethical Considerations

The assessments in this thesis were all captured on a Panasonic HC-V130 video camera with in-built microphone (Figure 3) mounted on a tripod (Figure 4) and positioned in front of the table at which the test-takers were seated (Figure 2). At the beginning of each assessment, the examiner would use the camera to record the test, asking each test-taker to first introduce themselves to the camera (this was for second marking and school administrative reasons). At the end of the exam, the examiner would then switch off the camera before thanking the test-takers and informing them that the test is over. It is these recordings that I was given access to for the purposes of this study.



*Figure 3* - Panasonic HC-V130 video camera.



*Figure 4* - Tripod for Panasonic HC-V130 video camera

The data here have the benefit of ecological validity (see Section 3.4.2. in previous Chapter), having been taken from actual assessments. As all speaking assessments are recorded for second marking and school administrative purposes, this researcher did not, technically speaking, need to *collect* the data. In other words, the recordings were not made for the purposes of this thesis but were rather part of the institute's standard assessment

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programme at the university in question is typically an average of 6.5 with no subskill lower than 6.0. While the HE institute in question does not administer actual IELTS examinations, for university administrative purposes their scoring system mirrors that of IELTS. Note, also, that it is not uncommon for learners with an average IELTS score of 6.5 or above to enrol on the IFY. This is often because these learners are lacking the requisite *subject* scores (e.g., in Business, Media Studies, Law etc.) to progress directly onto their chosen undergraduate degree programme. These students still take the EAP course (and related examinations/coursework) but often have fewer hours of L2 provision than those students who arrive with a lower proficiency.

procedure - I was simply given access to the recordings. This, too, adds to the data's ecological validity.

Furthermore, I was not physically present in any of the assessment rooms. Instead, the recordings were obtained from the deputy programme manager at the end of the semester. This procedure was conducted once in 2016 and again in 2017, which lead, in total, to approximately 6.5 hours of recorded data being acquired for use in this study.

Students were given the option to provide permission for their speaking assessment recordings to be used in the present study. Furthermore, permission was only requested once students had received their grades for these assessments. This was done to reassure students that their participation in the study would in no way affect their final score. In addition, this study received approval from the University's Graduate School Ethics Committee during the project approval stage of this thesis.

After students had received their final scores, I met with the entire cohort at the end of one of their weekly lectures. In this session, I was able to explain the purpose of the study, answer any questions that the students had, and ascertain who was willing to participate. Once I had collected all the consent forms from those willing for their test recording to be used, copies were made. While I kept one copy, another was given to the Foundation: Business and Humanities manager. Institutional consent was also given by the institute's Director of Studies via email. Permission was granted for these recordings and images to be used in this thesis as well as in any academic presentations or publications.

## 4.5. Data Transcription and Analysis

Once my data was collected, I was encouraged by my supervisory team to transcribe one speaking test in its entirety. This was done to (1) familiarise me with Jeffersonian transcription conventions (see Appendix A), (2) become proficient with CLAN - a coding and transcription software designed to assist in producing CA transcripts for video-recorded data (https://dali.talkbank.org/clan/) -  and (3) as a means of developing a bank of initial

'noticings'; i.e., interesting sequences in the unfolding interaction that could be earmarked for closer analysis at a later date.

After this, I watched all my other recordings multiple times, taking note of any interesting occurrences, with an eye to 'finding patterns and extrapolating their logic' (ten Have, 2007: 120). This was done without taking on an *a priori* stance towards the data. In other words, any presuppositions that I had were deliberately set aside. In doing so, my initial observations were in line with one of the main principles CA - 'unmotivated looking' (ten Have, 2007:58). This meant that I was open to 'discovering phenomena' as opposed to simply searching for instances based on some 'preformulated theorizing' (Psathas, 1995: p.24 and 45, respectively). Approaching data without any 'preformulated theorizing' or specific interest, argued Sacks (1984), is beneficial in that it (1) helps deter researchers from finding what they *hope* to find, thereby making their analysis less subjective, and (2) ensures that other interesting discoveries will not be missed.

### 4.5.1. Using CLAN for Multimodal Transcriptions and Analysis

Studies that incorporate images of participants alongside written descriptions of their conduct (e.g., Gan and Davison, 2011; Leyland and Riley, 2021) offer a range of analytical benefits, and this study continues with this relatively recent tradition. One such benefit of adopting for a multimodal approach is that it allows the researcher to analyse how resources such as gaze, gesture, and bodily postures and movements – along with language - are 'holistically and situatedly used in building human social action' (Mondada, 2016: 336). However, as embodied conduct, *per se*, was not a central focus of research in this thesis, I chose not to adopt Mondada's full transcription conventions; instead - following the lead of other researchers (e.g., Greer & Nanbu, 2022) – Jeffersonian conventions were adopted alongside some simplified Mondada conventions.

To analyse the data with an eye to incorporating both verbal and embodied conduct in my transcriptions, CLAN coding and transcription software was used. This software (see Figure 3, below) enables transcripts to be temporally aligned with the original media file; in other

words, sequences in the written transcript can be mapped to their corresponding section in the audio-visual data.
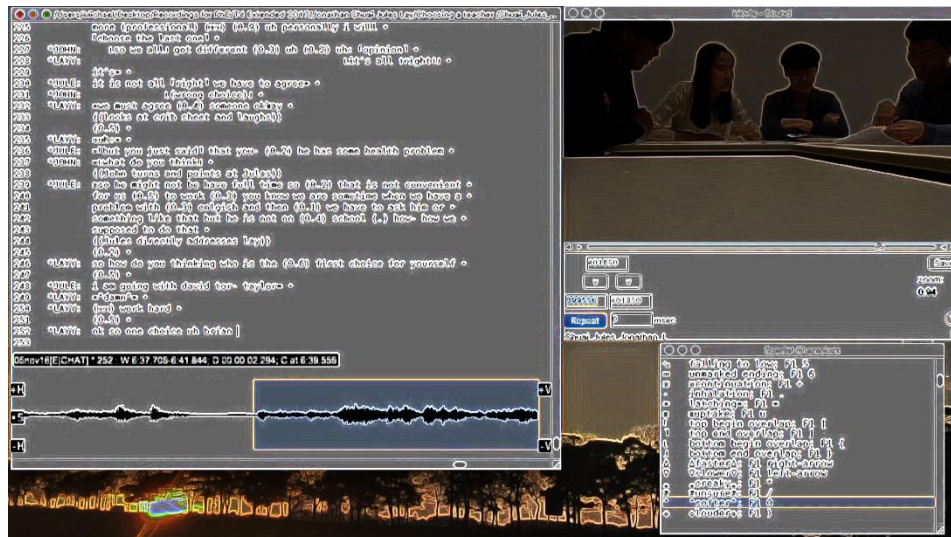


*Figure 5. – Screenshot of CLAN interface*

## 4.5.2. Data Presentation

The analytic process mentioned above was reflected in my transcripts. Once the data had been transcribed using CLAN, this was copied into a Microsoft Word document. After the written transcript had been configured in Word, I would return to CLAN to take screenshots of the relevant embodied conduct to be added to the new transcript. Figure 4 (below) illustrates how the written descriptions of embodied resources were positioned alongside visual snapshots of the multimodal actions produced by test-takers. The symbol '|' was used to demarcate when an embodied action occurred (see line 12 in Figure 6) in conjunction with an utterance. Beneath this demarcated line of speech in the transcript, the visual snapshots were placed along with written descriptions of the embodied actions, which were presented with double parentheses, e.g., '((SHAW raises right hand to SERE then taps pen on crib sheet))' (see Figure 6). In the visual snapshots, arrows were used to signal the direction of test-takers' gaze and circles were used to help direct the reader's attention to interesting gestural phenomena (cf. Leyland, 2018; Stephenson, 2020).

```
05    *SERE:  =uh:: maybe [it is]
06    *MARS:              [ease] the pressure
07            (0.3)
08    *SERE:  yes
09            (1.4)
10 →  *SERE:  so: (.) which one ▽do you think is the best?▽=
11            ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 →  *SHAW:  =|Δwait wait wait wait Δ=|
```



```
       |((SHAW raises right palm to SERE then taps pen on crib sheet))|

13    *SERE:  |=huh what?|
```



```
       |((SERE and MARS lean forward to look at SHAW's crib sheet))|
14            (0.5)
15    *SHAW:  you- do you notice (0.3) about that?
```

*Figure 6 – Example presentation of embodied conduct in a transcript (taken from Excerpt 5.3.1.)*

### 4.5.3. Sharing Data (the role of Newcastle University's MARG)

As I began to build up a larger collection of transcribed sequences and home in on what might become the focus of my thesis, I would regularly present my data at Newcastle University's MARG (Multimodal Analysis Research Group) meetings. In these sessions, transcribed sequences from my data would be played numerous times to an audience of fellow researchers. After several viewings, the floor would then be opened for those in attendance to share their thoughts on interesting phenomena within the data. Comments were also made on any possible improvements to my transcripts. These sessions were

invaluable through the early to middle stages of my doctoral candidature and helped shape my analytic focus as well as ensure the accuracy and quality of my transcripts.

### 4.5.4. The Analytic Process: Building Larger Collections

Once I had tentatively arrived at an analytic focus for a Chapter (i.e., once a couple of similar sequences of interaction had been identified from my dataset), I would begin the process of building a larger collection. To do so, I would use CLAN's keyword search function to facilitate the identification of further sequences worthy of examination. For example, when developing the focus for my third analytic Chapter, which looked at how test-takers negotiated deontic rights via the use of their directive formulations, I would search for particular modal (and semi-modal) verbs, such as `can, could, should, must, shall, must, need to, have to,` and so on, to identify further test-taker directives. Once I had made this larger collection of sequences, I would begin to categorise them into instances in which a directive was (1) adhered to, (2) ignored, or (3) explicitly rejected. From this I was able to begin the analytic process of identifying what commonalities were present in each subcategory. For example, in the case this analytic Chapter, it became clear after following this procedure that directives formulated with the semi-modals `need to` and `have to` were more often than not ignored or rejected by fellow test-takers, whereas as those formatted as requests, particularly with an interrogative syntax, were mostly adhered to (i.e., endorsed).

Similarly, when preparing my analytic Chapter on how affiliation is secured during disagreement sequences, I would use the same keyword search function to identify in my transcripts any sequences in which a potentially disagreeing turned was proffered. This usually began by my entering the search term `but,` a prefatory component present in most of the disagreeing turns deployed by test-takers, whether they be epistemic upgrades (`but the most important thing is`), rhetorical questions (`but have you ever considered`), or invocations of shared knowledge (`but we all know`). Again, once this keyword search approach had resulted in a larger collection of sequences, I would begin categorising the sequences into, e.g., disagreeing turns that were (1) met with affiliation and those that were (2) met with disaffiliation. From this, I could again begin to

examine what common features were present in disagreement sequences wherein fellow test-takers responded affiliatively, and which features were present in those sequences wherein fellow test-takers responded *dis*affiliatively.

It should be noted, however, that the analytic procedure described above only occurred after several initials rounds of 'unmotivated  looking'[24] (ten Have, 2007: 58). In other words, I did not start my analytic process by looking for certain words that might be indicative of particular actions; rather, the keyword search function was used to consolidate my early noticings and help in determining whether what I had identified was indeed salient and recurrent throughout the dataset.

## 4.6. Summary

This chapter has surveyed the setting for this study, including the participants. The data collection procedure, along with the ethical considerations relating to this, were also considered. So, too, was my analytic procedure, including how the data was transcribed, analysed, and finally presented. The next three chapters present my analytic findings concerning how test-takers co-manage their talk-in-interaction in pursuit of successful task accomplishment.

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[24] See pp. 89-90.

# Chapter 5. Analysis: Maintaining Progressivity with Reference to the Timeframe of the Test

## 5.1. Introduction

According to Wong and Waring (2010: 2), 'learning to engage in ordinary conversation is one of the most difficult tasks for second language learners'. Doing this, then, in a high-stakes, time-limited assessment situation is even harder. In this institutional setting, test-takers must ensure that they do not run out of time before a decision can be reached, while at the same time ensuring that a decision is not reached prematurely. In this sense, progressivity of talk between test-takers is essential. In other words: 'in test situations, advancing the in-progress activity, which is test-talk, becomes even more central to interaction, as testers won't be able to assesses test-takers if there is no interaction in progress' (Sert & Coban, 2020: 64). The current chapter, therefore, seeks to address the following question:

How do test-takers manage progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test?

To answer this, multi-modal conversation analysis was used to analyse the interactional resources deployed to manage progressivity in pursuit of timely task accomplishment. In doing so, three types of action and their responses were considered - these include: (1) speeding up discussion, (2) preventing premature/improper task completion, and (3) eliminating options.

In section (1), the impetus for the focal turns comes from a fellow test-taker taking too long to complete their turn, whereas in part (2), the focal turns are brought about by a fellow test-taker electing to either announce their final decisions, or elicit the final decisions of others, at a premature or improper juncture in the assessment task. In part (3), the impetus for the focal turns comes from the ongoing talk being put into a state of 'topic hold' (Jefferson, 1981) by either a long gap in talk or by a preceding abundance of affirmation markers (e.g. *yeah, OK, all right*) that contribute no additional life to the conversation.

Although several researchers have considered test-taker interaction in assessment settings (e.g., Gan, 2010; Gan, Davison, and Hamp-Lyons, 2008; Galaczi, 2016; Okada, 2010; Seedhouse and Nakatsuhara, 2018; Seedhouse, 2013; Lam, 2019), there has so far been little attention paid to 'how progressivity is maintained in such contexts' (Coban & Sert, 2020: 25). Although Coban and Sert (ibid.) is one example of a recent attempt to address this gap, their study does not focus on multi-party assessment formats or convergent task types, as is the case here. Their focus is instead on paired assessments in which students complete a divergent task type; that is, a debate/discussion. The current chapter, therefore, seeks to address this research gap and build on recent work on the management of progressivity in L2 speaking assessment settings.

As will be shown in this chapter, a preference for progressivity is demonstrated in this assessment setting not only in moments where there is a gap in talk, but also in moments where a test-taker *is speaking* but is doing so too slowly or for too long and is, therefore, taking more time to construct his/her turn than fellow test-takers are willing to allow. Similarly, the chapter considers moments in which a test-taker is progressing but is doing so too quickly. In these latter instances, progressivity involves slowing down the talk to correct a 'temporary misalignment in the unfolding interactional […] activity' (Sert, 2015:58). This is done by circumventing an interactional trajectory that could lead, ultimately, to the task being completed prematurely, and thus aligning talk more closely with the institutional constraints of the timeframe of the task.

Although other generic preferences exist in conversation (see, e.g., Heritage, 2007), such as the preference for a selected speaker to speak next, these preferences co-exist with the preference for progressivity, which is the overwhelming preference oriented to by participants in talk-in-interaction (Hosoda & Aline, 2013).

## 5.2. Expediting talk

This section will focus on the ways in which students expedite, or speed up, discussion to restore progressivity. In such sequences, a test-taker either directs the groups' attention to a shortage of time remaining and/or calls for the group to act more quickly. For example:

```
[Excerpt 5.2.1]

  149   *THE:      |may I interrupt because we're actually running out of
  150              time| I think we should |jump into| the last proposal


[Excerpt 5.2.2]


161   *YAN:      =we don't have enough time hhhh=
                 […]
163   *YAN:      =☺let's [gʰoʘ]


[Excerpt 5.2.3]


108→ *JON:       [°I] think we should be more quickly°
```

Excerpt 5.2.1. *We're actually running out of time, I think we should jump into*

Prior to the beginning of this first Excerpt students have been engaged in a discussion on the best way to reduce crime and deal with new offenders. The sequence below begins with Dani assessing the utility of the third option (of four) on their assessment cribs sheets.



```
144   *DAN:  based on what Theresa said just now that (.) they only target
145          (1.2) like just offenders like (.) in jail (.) cos: (1.5)
146          they are undergoing heavy (            ) so:: kind of
147          (1.4) uhm not really affecting (1.5) uh new offender
148          (0.9)
```

```
149    *THE:→ |may I interrupt because we're actually running out of time|
```
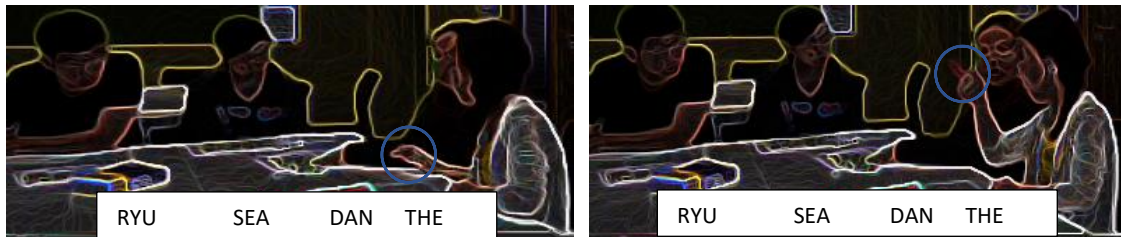




```
       |((Theresa taps Dani then points at the digital timer))|
150         →I think we should |jump into| the last proposal (0.9) uhm
```



```
                |((taps crib sheet))|
151         →yeah (0.8) Ryu what do you think (.) [about] the last one?
152    *RYU:                                      [uhm]
153          (1.7)
155    *RYU:  I think well firstly there's gonna be lower costs for police
```

Dani's assessment, which is based on *what Theresa said just now*, contains multiple long pauses (lines 145, 147, and 148) and hesitation markers (e.g. *uhm*, *uh*), which add to the time taken up by her turn. Theresa treats the speed of Dani's talk as being too slow in line 150 with a four-part TCU that includes (1) a mitigating preface (*may I interrupt*), (2) an account for the interruption and forthcoming directive (*because we're actually running out of time*), (3) a directive, which proposes that the group begin (i.e. *jump into* – line 150) their discussion of the final option, and (4) a question that selects Ryu as the next speaker. Each part of this complex TCU, which will be discussed in detail below, is delivered with concomitant embodied conduct, such as marked shifts in gaze and orientation to material objects (the crib sheet and the digital timer – line 149).

It has been shown elsewhere how mitigating devices, such as the one deployed by Theresa at the onset of her TCU, orient to 'potential dispreference' (Heinemann, 2006: 1086). By prefacing her directive in such a way, Theresa orients to the fact that the action to follow (i.e. the imposition, via the use of a directive, of an alternative interactional agenda to the one currently being undertaken by Dani) is disaffiliative and therefore potentially

'destructive of social solidarity' (Teleghani-Nikazm, 2006: 6). The idea that what comes next is potentially face threatening is also oriented to in Theresa's use of modals (e.g. *may* I), which as a group are listed under 'playdowns' and have been shown to play an important role in mitigation (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999).

Her preface is followed by an account – a feature, again, typical of dispreferred actions (Lam, 2018) - which orients to the timed nature of the assessment task and the need to progress (*because we're actually running out of time*). Delivered with concomitant pointing to the digital timer (line 149), this account forms the next phase in a complex TCU, which, when coupled with the prior mitigating device, seems designed to minimise the entitlement claimed by the forthcoming directive. Orientations to the timer in this test setting make public participants' multiple involvements (Raymond and Lerner, 2014) as they display that they are 'simultaneously paying attention to the ongoing discussion and the upcoming timer' (Greer, 2019: 160). As such, they are considered a form of 'multi-activity' (Haddington *et al.*, 2014) in that they signal 'imminent disengagement from the current conversation' (Greer, 2019: 162).

Directives, which include actions such as requesting, suggesting, commanding, proposing, and inviting, among others (Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015), share a common core, in that they all 'attempt to induce the recipient to perform (or not to perform) some action' (ibid: 2). Stevanovic and Svennevig (ibid) also note that, though they share this common core, directives can vary across deontic dimensions such as necessity, desirability and speaker entitlement. For example, directives formatted as commands (e.g. *give me that, wait!*) claim high entitlement, whereas those formatted as suggestions (*we should . . .*) requests (*can we . . .?*) or proposals (*we can . . .*) make a weaker claim of entitlement, as they orient to possible noncompliance by the recipient. The fact that Theresa's directive is issued in a canonical suggestion format (*we should . . .*) with the first-person personal pronoun 'we' – used in many task-oriented educational settings to organise decision-making and signal group membership (Walsh & Knight, 2016) - displays her orientation to the joint nature of the task, an interpretation that is compounded by the preceding preface and account, which also serve to reduce the level of entitlement claimed.

Of further interest regarding Theresa's directive is the inclusion of the epistemic stance marker, *I think*. Such markers of epistemic stance are frequently used when suggesting, and this construction, in particular, has been noted elsewhere for the prominent dialogic function it plays in terms of leaving 'the dialogic space open for alternative points of view to emerge' and in 'placing the speaker in relation to other participants and their potentially diverging views' (Mortensen, 2012: 235 and 237). This is in line with the preceding features of Theresa's TCU, which are also concerned with reducing entitlement and ensuring that participation in the unfolding discourse remains symmetric and open to fellow test-takers.

This orientation to the task as a joint endeavour is displayed more explicitly in the fourth section of Theresa's TCU, where, rather than self-selecting to enact the personal agenda initiated by her directive, Theresa instead selects Ryu as the next speaker (line 156 – *Ryu, what do you think about the last one?*). After a short (1.7) pause, Ryu responds to Theresa's question and a discussion of the final option on the assessment crib sheet (see screenshot, right) begins, thereby successfully supplanting the prior interactional trajectory pursued by Dani and expediting the discussion, as per Theresa's suggestion.

Proposal 4

**Eviction from council houses/flats**

Many of these young people and their families live in Social Housing, that is, properties that are owned by the local council. Eviction would mean losing their rights to live in this property and also removing all government benefits.

Additional information:
- Teaches offenders what it is like to lose one's home.
- Reduces the burden on the taxpayer
- Cheap to administer
- Those evicted have to be housed elsewhere or they cause disorder 'on the streets'

By couching her directive in this way - that is, with a preface, an account, and with subsequent selection of another speaker - Theresa successfully initiates her interactional agenda while yet orienting to the assessment task as one in which all members are equally entitled to contribute. This interpretation is evidenced by Ryu's response, which he begins to formulate even before Theresa has completed her turn (line 157). This lack of delay in proffering a type-confirming response (an answer to a question), not only signals cooperation and alignment at a structural level, but also displays Ryu's affiliation (Duran & Sert, 2019) with Theresa's claim of entitlement (Asmuß & Oshima, 2012) in initiating this interactional trajectory.

As we can see from this first example, then, expediting talk in order to maintain progressivity is a delicate task and requires some mitigation and face work, so as to

minimise dispreference and preserve symmetry in terms of the distribution of entitlement among co-participants. In the analysis of the following two sequences, we will see how speakers of a lower proficiency than Theresa negotiate the local exigencies of this peer assessment format when initiating similar directives on the group, and in doing so uncover some of the various mechanisms through which speakers manage the need to mitigate the dispreferredness of this social action.

In Excerpt 5.2.2. we find the participants engaged in an assessment task that requires them to decide on the best way for a company to deal with 'absenteeism'.

Excerpt 5.2.2 – *we don't have enough time, let's go*



```
153    *CHR:   yeah i see yeah your opinion but (0.9) you know sometimes uh:m
154            uh if you have some problem not only on weekend maybe (0.5) uh
155            (0.5) between Monday and uh Friday if you have problem (0.5)
156            uh:m (0.4)  every year has three hundred and sixty-five days
157            and it's uh- (0.5) it's a long time you only have three days if
158            you have uh too many trouble maybe [you] will lost=
159    *YAN:                                     ‖okay‖]
```



```
                        |((Yan glances at the digital timer))|
160    *KEV:   =yeah yeah=
161  →*YAN:   =we don't have |enough time| hhhh=
```
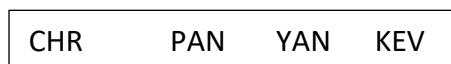
|((Yan points at the digital timer))|

```
162   *KEV:  =so okay=
163 →  *YAN:  =☺let's[gˈHo☺]
```



CHR         PAN      YAN      KEV

|((Yan shifts gaze to, and points at, crib sheet))|

```
164   *KEV:         ⌊but⌋ I- I- actually I choose the last one I think last
165          one is very good options=
166   *YAN:  =yeah=
167   *KEV:  =because if you (0.4) absent (0.6) you got the punishment
```

Much like Excerpt 5.2.1., the sequence here begins with a long turn replete with pauses and hesitations markers (see lines 153-8). This is followed in quick succession by acknowledgement/agreement tokens from Yani (*okay* – line 159) and Kevin (*yeah, yeah* – line 160); multiple instances of which contribute 'no additional life […] to the topic' (Heritage, 2012: 46) and, therefore, temporarily delay the progression of the overall, ongoing activity. Such tokens have been shown to precede topical shifts (Stokoe, 2000), and, indeed, the acknowledgement tokens in evidence here appear to be equally premonitory of topic shift, as they are followed in a latched position, much like in the previous sequence, with an account and a directive that drives at expediting the discussion and restoring progressivity.

However, the focal TCU in this sequence differs in several ways to that in Excerpt 5.2.1. To begin with, Yani does not offer any linguistic mitigating device (cf. *Sorry to interrupt* in Excerpt 5.2.1) to reduce the entitlement claimed by her directive, opting instead to launch immediately into her account in line 161 (*we don't have enough time hhhh*). Although there is an absence of any verbal mitigating device, Yani does however end her account with laughter, which has been found in educational settings such as this to 'minimise the dis-preferred dimension of [a] response' in 'delicate moments in institutional interaction' (Petitjean & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2015: 91). What this shows here is that despite Yani's TCU being less linguistically complex than Theresa's in Excerpt 5.2.1., there is nonetheless a similar orientation to mitigating dispreference, albeit non-verbally.

The comparative linguistic simplicity of this TCU is again evident in Yani's subsequent directive (=*let's go*), which occurs after an attempted topic initiation by Kevin in line 162 (=*so okay*=). After this Yani proffers her directive in line 163, which again is delivered through laughter and with a smile. In this sequence, however, the directive is formatted not as a suggestion but instead as a command in the form of the bald imperative (Craven & Potter, 2010) '*let's go'*. Directives formulated in such a way have been found to embody 'particularly strong deontic claims' (Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015: 3), that is, they claim high entitlement and display little to no orientation to possible noncompliance. Note also that - in contrast to the previous sequence, which made use of the epistemic marker, *I think* - Yani displays her orientation to mitigating the dispreference of her directive by recourse instead to laughter tokens and smiling.

In a further departure from the previous sequence, there is no selection of the next speaker, as we saw in the coda to Theresa's complex TCU in Except 5.2.1. However, despite not being explicitly nominated to do so, Kevin still enacts Yani's call to expedite the conversation by announcing his final decision in line 164 (*but I- I- actually I choose the last one*).

Although this TCU is different in many aspects to that in Excerpt 5.2.1., one striking resemblance - besides an orientation to mitigating the dispreferred dimension of restoring progressivity - is the way in which the stages within each directive TCU are delivered with concomitant embodied conduct. In this regard, the two sequences are almost identical.

They each begin with (1) a shift in gaze to the prior speaker, followed by (2) a gesture which directs the group's attention to the digital timer, and finally (3) a gesture that redirects attention back to the assessment crib sheet. Similar, too, are the ways in which co-participants treat these directive TCUs. In each of the sequences examined in this sub-section, co-participants choose to enact the initiated agenda and do so in a way that displays their affiliation with the content of said directive. This is evident in the immediacy of these second-pair parts, which are proffered either before the directive turn is complete (see Excerpts 5.2.2.) or after a short pause (Excerpt 5.2.1.). This suggests that, though expediting talk can be a potentially face-threatening act (indeed, this is oriented to via the expediting test-takers' turn design), the need to manage progressivity with reference to the constraints of the timeframe of the task is in the best interests of all test-takers; hence, the affiliative nature of their responses.

So far, we have considered two sequences in which a directive is proffered to initiate an alternative agenda on subsequent talk; namely, to speed up discussion and restore progressivity. Each of these sequences is prompted by an extended turn by a co-participant (typically one with multiple hesitation markers and pauses) that is then followed by an account and a directive. In each we also see evidence of an attempt to mitigate the dispreferredness of the directive, albeit via different interactional means. In the former, a verbal mitigating device and subsequent nomination of the next speaker were deployed: in the latter, laughter tokens and smiling. In the next sequence, we will consider yet another example of the ways in which participants negotiate the balance between issuing a directive and displaying an orientation to minimising dispreference, in line with the collaborative nature of the task at hand and the ever-present need to maintain progressivity.

### Excerpt 5.2.3. *I think we should be more quickly*

In this Excerpt, the participants have been tasked with choosing a product in which to invest. The sequence begins with Johnson criticising one of the products on the crib sheet, which he considers 'expensive'; an assessment that is met with some resistance by Eva and

Poppy who claim, respectively, that the product is, in fact, worth *the value* (line 97) and *not expensive* (line 99).
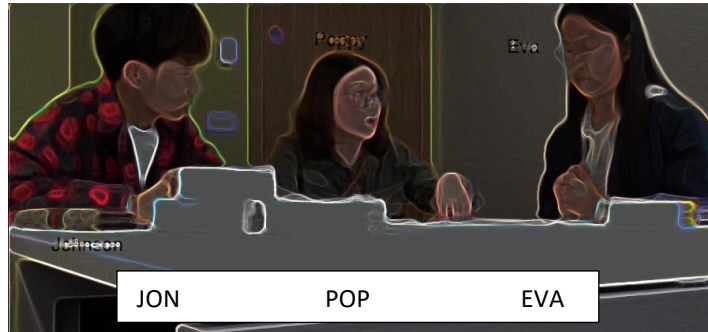


```
93    *JON:   I'm still think it's expensive
94            (0.5)
95    *POP:   mmm but I think [the]
96    *EVA:                   [it's] worth it's value I think
97            (.)
98    *POP:   yeah uh it uh: for (.) this product is not uh expensive but
99            have many (.) similar things- materials (.) maybe: pla- pluh-
100           pla:tics=
101   *EVA:   =platics=
102   *POP:   =(plastics) so: uhm I think it uh: more (0.5) expensive=
103   *JON:   =uh and uh finally uh this advantage disadvantage |have you
```



```
104           uh any ideas?|
              |((Johnson looks at Eva))|
105           (1.0)
106   *POP:   [mmm]
107 → *JON:   [°I] think we should be |more quickly|°
```
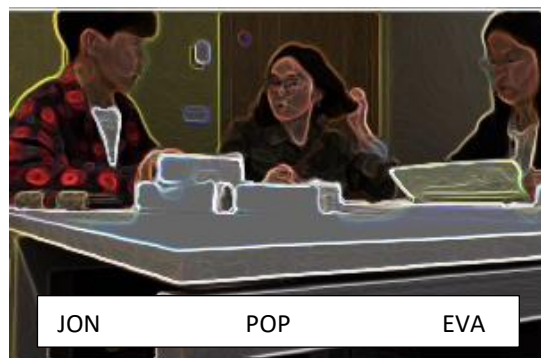


```
              |((Johnson looks at Poppy))|
108           (1.0)
109 → *POP:   uh so let's summarise about [the] four things=
110   *EVA:                               [okay]
```

```
111   *JON:   =uhm (.) my- uh I just- uh: (unless) it's all
112           (.) of these four products.=
113   *EVA:   =yeah=
114   *JON:   =first one is uh:: (0.8) uh target market is for,
115           students (.) uh mostly and uh it's useful (.) uh
```

Poppy elaborates on her assessment by discussing the materials used in the manufacturing of said product (e.g. *plastics*), but encounters some trouble in articulating this term in lines 101-102. Eva then offers a candidate pronunciation in line 102, which seemingly supports Poppy in concluding what she has to say on the matter in line 103. However, by this stage Poppy's turn has taken up much of the floor from lines 97-104 and, like the opening turns in the previous two sequences, is one formulated with some difficulty. This is indexed, as in Excerpts 5.2.1 and 5.2.2., by multiple hesitation markers and pauses that increase the time taken up by the delivery of her turn.

Having reached a turn relevant position (TRP) in line 104, Johnson interjects with a question (lines 104-5) directed at Eva (*this advantages, disadvantages have you uh any ideas*?), which serves to curtail any further discussion on whether or not the option in question is too expensive. At this stage in the assessment, there is little more than one minute left on the digital timer and the group are yet to decide on a product in which to invest. Johnson displays an orientation to this shortage of time and the need to restore progressivity in the preface to his question (e.g. *uh and uh finally*), which is indicative of topic progression and forthcoming closure to talk. However, his question is somewhat ambiguous in that the referent of the demonstrative pronoun *this* is unclear. Indeed, what follows - a lengthy pause in line 110, and a token of uncertainty, *mmm,* from Poppy in line 107 - treats the prior turn as problematic.

Johnson responds to this with a directive in line 107 (°*I think we should be more quickly*°), delivered in a canonical suggestion format, much like the directive in Excerpt 5.2.1. Similar, too, is the inclusion of the first-person plural pronoun *we*, and a marker of epistemic stance (e.g. *I think*). However, in this sequence the question that selects the next speaker (cf. Ryu in Excerpt 5.2.1; Poppy, here) *precedes* the directive and no explicit mitigating phrase is used. Absent, too, in this sequence is the use of 'smile voice' and laughter tokens to mitigate the dispreferred dimension of the directive (cf. Excerpt 5.2.2.). However, Johnson does make use of other vocal resources.

Interestingly, his directive is delivered in a whispered tone in a volume much lower than his prior speech and the speech of his fellow test-takers, a mitigating strategy that presents his directive as *off-the-record*. By delivering his directive in a way that is potentially inaudible to the examiners and the camera, Johnson appears to be 'saving face' for Poppy, who in lines 99-103 and lines 106-7, has repeatedly displayed difficulty in formulating her contributions. This kind of 'facework' (Goffman, 1967) is not uncommon in this assessment setting, as we see students balance the demands of the task (e.g., time restrictions, the need to make a marked move toward consensus) with the socio-relational demands of peer interaction.

Poppy responds to this, after a 1.0-second pause, with a second directive (*uh so let's summarise about the four things*) in line 110, which corroborates Johnson's call for imminent closure to the discussion and is met with commitment by Eva in line 111 (*okay*). After this Johnson appears to reassert that the group will indeed summarise their thoughts on all four options on the crib sheet (*it's all of these four products* – lines 112-3). Once Eva acknowledges this reassertion in line 114 (*yeah*), Johnson begins his recap of the first product and the group continue summarising until the digital timer signals the end of the test, shortly afterwards. In this instance, the group do not manage to reach a consensus within the designated fifteen-minutes.

Though there is a different constellation of features in each of the directive sequences presented here, what this analysis hopes to have shown is that, in each case, there is an orientation to 'facework' and the minimisation of dispreference. There is a face-threatening potential to delivering these directives to manage progressivity that, if left unmitigated, may be destructive of social solidarity. Participants display their awareness of this through both the linguistic formatting of their turns and the vocal perturbations of their delivery; for example, through laughter, 'smile voice', and whispers. Findings such as these give us an insight into how students negotiate in a peer group setting and contribute to a better understanding of the 'discourse structure of second language learners' peer interactions' (Gan et al., 2008: 316).

In this section, we have considered sequences in which participants maintain progressivity by means of expediting discussion to ensure that the task is completed in a timely manner. However, this orientation to the management of progressivity occurs not only when the group are progressing too slowly or have ceased to progress altogether (e.g. in moments of topic attrition). Indeed, present also throughout these assessment tasks are instances in which the group are progressing too *quickly* (e.g. when a decision is announced/elicited before all options on the crib sheet have been considered).

In such cases, progressivity is restored not to prevent the group running out of time before a consensus can be reached, but to avoid a consensus being reached *prematurely*. In the next section, then, we will consider several sequences in which progressivity is managed in situations where a test-taker either (1) prematurely elicits the final decision of another test-taker, or (2) announces their own decision too early in the test. The analysis that follows highlights how the management of progressivity is not only concerned with moving things forward but with recalibrating the focus of ongoing talk or, more generally, with *slowing it down.*

## 5.3. Circumventing premature/inappropriate task completion

In this section, we will consider sequences in which a test-taker orients to a need to prevent premature task completion (recall that these tests should last approximately 12-15mins, depending on group size), by restoring progressivity and aligning it with the institutional constraints of the task. Such sequences occur when a test-taker attempts to either:

(1) Elicit the final choices of other test-takers prematurely or inappropriately (e.g. before all pertinent details have been considered):

```
  [Excerpt 5.3.1]


10    *SERE:      so: (.) which one ∇do you think is the best?∇=
11                ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 → *SHAW:       =∆wait wait wait wait ∆

  [Excerpt 5.3.3]
```

```
45    *LEEI:      ye:ah (1.0) so you choose (0.5) chair library (1.8) or
46                shower umbrella?
47                (2.5)
48 → *JOHN:       let's talk- |talk about| (1.0) let's talk about
49                (0.3)
50    *JULE:      chair library
```

Or (2) announce their decision too early in the test:

```
 [Excerpt 5.3.2]

39    *LEI:  a:nd they busy high street near the ↘station↗ (.) i think the rou-
40           the location is good a:nd they- the customer (1.2) eh- is in
41           enough and (0.3) i think the (route) is not higher so i think the
42           (1.0) choice is the best
43           (1.8)
44    *YAN:  uhm (0.9) but compared to: the others maybe the price here a little
45 →         bit high (0.6) can we see the other choice so we can discuss
46           [this one?]
```

Excerpt 5.3.1. *wait, wait, wait, wait, do you notice about that?*

In this first sequence, participants are discussing which location would be the best for opening a new Domino's Pizza franchise.



SHAW    MARS    SERE    IVAN

```
03    *MARS: not only com- competition but also have the (0.5) reduce
04           the pressu- the pressure=
05    *SERE: =uh:: maybe [it is]
06    *MARS:             [ease] the pressure
07           (0.3)
08    *SERE: yes
09           (1.4)
10 → *SERE: so: (.) which one ∇do you think is the best?∇=
11           ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 → *SHAW: =|∆wait wait wait wait ∆=|
```

```
                |((SHAW raises right palm to SERE then taps pen on crib sheet))|

13      *SERE:  |=huh what?|
```



```
                |((SERE and MARS lean forward to look at SHAW's crib sheet))|
14              (0.5)
15      *SHAW:  you- do you notice (0.3) about that?
16              (0.3)
17              there has [uh: twenty five]
18      *MARS:           [twenty-four hours petrol station]=
19      *SHAW:  =[hours petrol stations?]
20      *IVAN:   [twenty-four hours]
21              (0.3)
22      *SERE:  [?oh::,]
23      *IVAN:  [yeah] and it's uh=
24      *SHAW:  =that's means (0.3) any time (0.5) uh::
25              (0.5) always have people to be there (0.5)
26               and to the:- in there (0.5)uh:: (0.4) yes
27              (0.9) the- is- is very good for restaurant
38              (0.5) they [can open twenty-four hours]
29      *IVAN:             [yes uh- uh] mm whenever they want
30              to eat pizza=
31      *SHAW:  =yeah you always can find that=
32      *IVAN:  =so it's a good fact
33              (0.3)
34      *SHAW:  yeah it's- it's (0.6) pretty good

                          16 lines omitted

51      *SHAW:  ye:ah (1.7) yeah okay which one do you prefer?
```

In lines 3-8, we see Marshall extolling the merits of one of the locations, which he claims is competitive and can 'ease the pressure' (lines 3 and 6, respectively). Serene responds to Marshall's assessment in line 8 with an acknowledgement token (*yes*), however this is followed by a 1.3 pause, which effectively puts discussion of this option into a state of 'topic hold' (Jefferson, 1981).

To address this, Serene asks Marshall which option he thinks is the best (line 10) with a question designed with the prefatory component 'so', which has been noted for its use by speakers in marking that 'they are about to change the topic of the conversation' (Gan et al., 2008: 325). What's more, as Serene's question explicitly calls for an announcement on which option Marshall thinks is the best, this topic shift could mark the episodic closure of the discussion.

However, Shawn prevents Marshall from responding to Serene's question with his directive in line 12 (*wait, wait, wait, wait*). Composed of a bald imperative, repeated several times for emphasis, his directive takes the form of a command, an assertive format that claims high entitlement (Craven & Potter, 2010) and shows no orientation to recipient contingency. This is delivered with concomitant embodied conduct in the form of an open palm gesture directed at Serene that assists in the prevention of a move by the group into a decision-announcement phase of discussion. His turn is concluded by then gesturing to an overlooked detail on the crib sheet pertaining to the option that Marshall was previously discussing, which results in his coparticipants orienting their gaze to the aforementioned detail on his crib sheet (line 13).

Serene responds to Shawn's directive with an 'open class' repair initiator (OCRI) in line 12 (*huh, what?*), as she leans in to examine the detail on the crib sheet to which Shawn is gesturing. Repair initiators of this type have been described as a weak form of repair (Brandt, 2011), as the component(s) of the trouble source turn that should be repaired are not specified. However, Shawn is able to counter this, after a 0.5-second pause, with a question in line 17 (*do you notice about that*?), while still pointing to the same area of the crib sheet. The 'that' in his question refers to the fact that the location in question is next to a twenty-four-hour petrol station, a fact to which Shawn, Marshall, and Ivan all refer in lines 19-22.

Shawn's response to Serene's OCRI functions like the accounts in Excerpts 5.2.1., and 5.2.2,, in that it partly explains the reasoning behind the need to initiate an alternative agenda and restores progressivity by forestalling the announcement of decisions until all options have

been sufficiently discussed. Therefore, in this sequence, the impetus for the directive derives not from the fact that the group are not progressing quickly enough, but that the group are proceeding too quickly; in other words, the group should not conclude their discussion (1) so early in the test (c.8mins into a 15min test, here) or (2) without a proper consideration of all factors on the crib sheet. This need to manage progressivity in the light of the time constraints of the task is a challenge for test-takers and is one that is oriented to throughout the data set, as we shall in the following sequences.

After Shawn, with some assistance from Marshall and Ivan, has established that pertinent details on the crib sheet have passed without comment, Serene responds with a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) in the form of an *oh*-receipt in line 24, which suggests that Serene has now (at least, partly) revised her view of the situation. However, her *oh*-receipt is delivered with elongated, rising-falling prosody, which suggests a degree of uncertainty. This interpretation is evidenced by Shawn's response, which offers clarification by explaining how being next to such a facility means that there will *always have people* (customers, presumably) *to be there* (line 28).

Ivan displays his affiliation with Shawn's appraisal in lines 31-2 and 34, and this is followed by further discussion on the merits of this particular location, thus restoring progressivity to talk, by aligning it with the constraints of the timeframe of the task. Much of this discussion takes place between Marshall, Ivan, and Shawn in lines 35-51 (omitted in the transcript), before Shawn (in line 51) elects to initiate a move into a decision-announcement phase with the question: *so, which one do you prefer?*

This is essentially what Serene was asking two minutes earlier in line 10; however, it is only now taken up by the group once they have considered all relative details on the crib sheet and spoken for ten minutes. After this, the group announce their chosen locations and an agreement is eventually reached after fourteen minutes of discussion.

Throughout the dataset, we can see cases where a test-taker proffers a turn that foreshadows closure at a premature stage in the task. This often involves an attempt to elicit other test-takers' opinions on which option is the best, as in the sequence above;

though, in some sequences, closure is engendered by a test-taker instead electing to announce their own final choice without the group having sufficiently covered all pertinent aspects on the crib sheet. In the sequence below, we will consider one such instance.

Excerpt 5.3.2. *can we see the other choices so we can discuss this one?*



```
29    *LEI:    but- so how about ch- uh: choice (.) uh choice two (0.3) i think
30  →          in my opinion it's the best because (0.7) they have a uh customer
31             because they have a loca:l (0.7) uh gram-
32             (1.1)
33    *HOL:    |government|=
```



```
              |((Holly turns to Lei))|
34    *LEI:    =government so (0.7) it's have enough the customer (0.6) a:nd they
35             have no (sent) business in here
36             (0.5)
37    *HOL:    yeah i think so
38             (0.3)
39    *LEI:    a:nd they busy high street near the station (.) i think the rou-
40             the location is good a:nd they- the customer (1.2) eh- is in
41  →          enough and (0.3) i think the (route) is not higher so i think the
42  →          (1.0) choice is the best
43             (1.8)
44    *YAN:    uhm (0.9) but compared to: the others maybe the price here a little
45  →          bit high (0.6) can we see the other choices so we can
46             discuss [this one?]
47    *LEI:            [choice three] is no other business () so [i- it's]≈
48    *YAN:                                                      [yeah but]
49    *LEI:    ≈you mean [it's] [no::]
50    *YAN:              [yeah]
51    *HOL:                    [maybe] there's no customers=
52    *LEI:    =yeah
```

The sequence begins with Lei introducing option two and announcing that it is *the best* (line 29-30). Lei then attempts to explain why she believes this to be the case but encounters some trouble in articulating her point in line 31 (*they have a loca:l* (0.7) *uh gram-*).

Following this there is a lengthy 1.1-second pause, proceeded by Holly, who proffers her candidate understanding (Heritage, 1984) in line 33 (*government*), which she delivers while shifting her gaze towards Lei. This candidate understanding is repeated and confirmed by Lei in an immediate, latched position, before she begins again her account of why option two is *the best* in lines 34-5. This is proceeded by another pause before Holly responds by agreeing with what Lei has said (*yeah I think so*). However, Holly does not elect to elaborate on her agreement with a second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984), and instead, there is yet another pause before Lei retakes the floor with a turn that both continues her assessment of option two (*the location is good* – line 40) and reiterates her contention that this *choice is the best* (line 42).

At this stage, the participants have only been discussing the task for two minutes and thirty seconds and many of the details on the crib sheet have not been covered; however, despite the test still being in its early stages, Lei has by this point already announced her decision twice (see lines 30 and 42). Indeed, Yang's subsequent delayed response (preceded by a pause of 1.8 seconds) to Lei and the hesitation at the onset of his turn in line 44 (*um* (0.9) *but*) indicate that there is 'trouble with respect to sequential progress' (Stivers & Mondada, 2011).

The *trouble*, here, is to do with the premature nature of Lei's decision announcement – an interpretation that is strengthened later in Yang's turn with the directive: *can we see the other choices so we can discuss this one* (lines 45-6). This directive - delivered as a suggestion in a canonical *can we-*, interrogative format in a turn that is dispreferred and therefore potentially 'face-threatening' (Hüttner, 2014) – attempts to curtail any further decisions being announced and effectively deletes, or temporarily dismisses, Lei's assessment, in a manner akin to Shawn's TCU in the previous sequence. In doing so, Yang

attempts to restore progressivity to the ongoing talk by requesting that the group *see the other choices* first so that they can *discuss this one* (lines 45-6).

Despite the face-threatening nature of the prior turn, Lei responds in overlap, enacting Yang's suggestion by introducing the next option for discussion (*choice three is no other business* – line 47). This turn, which displays Lei's willingness to 'cooperate with the preference of the prior action' (Stivers & Mondada, 2011), treats the directive as unproblematic by 'complying with it immediately' (Heinemann, 2006: 1082). Following this - after several false starts and overlaps (see lines 48-50) – task-relevant progressivity is restored as the group begin discussing options three and four in earnest, having now avoided threat of a premature announcement of decisions.

This dispreference for premature decision announcements and test-takers' attempts to restore progressivity, and thus align talk with the constraints of the timeframe of the task, are visible throughout the dataset and can be seen in the following sequence, where, again, a student attempts to elicit the final choice of a fellow test-taker at even earlier stage in the assessment task.

Excerpt 5.3.3. *Let's talk about chair library*



```
36      *JUL:       |so] (0.8) if I would have to (0.4) invest I would (0.5)
37                  probably choose chair or shower (0.2) |uh (0.2) what do
```

```
38              you thinks?|
```
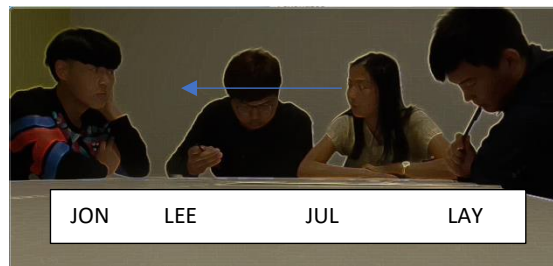


```
                |((Jules turns to Jon))|
38              (0.2)
39    *JON:     uh: (0.6) I- I agree with you (0.5) this- this (0.8) is
40              quite important (xxx) (0.8) it's- it's quite (0.3) it's
41              qui:te (1.0) cheap (0.8) i:n (0.6) first one is (0.4)
42              the price is low- lower (0.3) yeah (1.6) if we choose
43              (0.2) I think (0.3) erm I will choose (0.1) between (1.0)
44              the other two
44              (0.9)
45 →  *LEE:     ye:ah (1.0) |so you choose (0.5) chair library| (1.8) or
```



```
                    |((Lee turns to John))|
46              shower umbrella?
47              (2.5)
48 →  *JON:     let's talk- |talk about| (1.0) let's talk about
```



```
                |((John touches 'Chair Library' on crib sheet))|
49              (0.3)
50    *JUL:     chair library=
51    *JON:     =chair library=
52    *LEE:     =chair library okay
```

In this assessment, test-takers have been asked to decide on the best product (1. Pet glove wipes, 2. Chair library or 3. Baby shower umbrella) in which to invest. At the beginning of the sequence, we see Jules declaring her preference for options 2 (*chair*) and 3 (*shower*) in line 37. However, as can be seen from the various mitigating devices in her turn design (note its conditional syntax and the use of hedges such as *probably*), the strength of her

assessment is softened. Her TCU is then concluded by eliciting the opinion of her teammate John (*what do you thinks?* – line 37-8), whom she selects as the next speaker by a concomitant shift in gaze.

After a brief pause, John takes the floor with an affiliative response (*I agree with you* – line 39) that elaborates on why option one is not suitable; namely, because it's retail price is *quite cheap* (line 41) and *lower* (line 42) than the other two. John then reiterates his agreement with Jules by stating that he would also *choose between the other two* options.

At this stage, neither Jules nor John have indicated a preference for option 2 or 3; their respective turns appear only to rule out option 1. Nevertheless, their turns are followed, after a pause (0.9 seconds), by Lee, who attempts to clarify which of the remaining two options John will choose: *so you choose chair library or shower umbrella?* (see lines 45-6). This question, which attempts to elicit a decision announcement at only 1 minute and 38 seconds into the test, is particularly premature (cf. Excerpts 5.3.1. and 5.3.2., in which the decision elicitations/announcements came at c.8 minutes and c.2.5 minutes, respectively). As this is a group of 4, discussion should last approximately 15 minutes, with test-takers typically reaching their final decision towards the end of the test, once all options have been considered. As a result, Lee's question is met with several markers of dispreference: namely, delay (a lengthy, 2.5 second pause) before, and hesitation within, John's subsequent turn (line 48); both of which are features typical in the turn design of dispreferred, disaffiliative responses (Duran & Sert, 2019).

What's more, John's response does not align structurally with Lee's question, as no answer is given. Instead, he suggests that the group talk about option 2 (chair library) by pointing to it on his crib sheet and proffering the partial directive *let's talk about*, which is completed by Jules in line 50, after a micro-pause of 0.3 seconds.

The immediacy of Jule's turn completion indexes her alignment with John in terms of both his proposed agenda to talk about the second option and his resistance to Lee's premature elicitation of a decision announcement. Following Jule's turn, John quickly confirms her candidate understanding by repeating *chair library*, which is then followed, again in a

latched position, by Lee who aligns with the new interactional agenda (*chair library okay* – line 52). By this stage task-relevant progressivity is restored as the group move on to discuss this option, having successfully circumvented a premature decision announcement.

## 5.4. Interim Summary: Metatalk (Procedural vs. Topical Progression)

In the sequences considered thus far, the focal TCUs - in expediting talk (Excerpts 5.2.1. – 5.2.3.) or preventing premature or improper task completion (Excerpts 5.3.1. – 5.3.3.) -  can be seen as serving a metacommunicative function (Pochon-Berger, 2009). This metacommunicative talk has been referred to in the literature as 'metatalk'; that is, 'talk about the discourse that constitutes the task' (Brooks & Donato, 1994: 266). In the instances of metatalk above, we can see test-takers 'step out of the interaction' (ibid: 237) - that is, away from the core interactional aims of assessing the different options and attempting to establish consensus - to regulate their ongoing talk. This is also known as managing procedural progression (Pochon-Berger, 2009).

However, successful task accomplishment cannot be achieved by the management of procedural progression alone; test-takers must also manage progressivity from a *topical* perspective (ibid.). In other words, as well as ensuring that the task is completed in a timely manner, test-takers must concern themselves with the core aim of the task; that is, evaluating each of the options on their crib sheets against a set of task instructions to, ultimately, establish a group consensus. As will be shown in the next section, topical progression in this assessment task is largely oriented to via the elimination of certain options on the test-takers' crib sheets.

## 5.5. Narrowing down/Eliminating options

In this section, I will consider yet another way in which test-takers manage progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test; namely, through the act of eliminating options when talk has stalled. As the students have only 15 minutes in which to discuss each of the four options on their crib sheets and reach a consensus, they are limited in terms of the amount of time they can dedicate to each one. This means that at times during these assessment tasks, the test-takers must formulate some 'measure of assurance that [certain]

topics will not be recycled' (Heritage & Watson, 1980: 153), particularly in cases of 'topic attrition' where the discussion of a topic (an option on the crib sheet, in this case) 'withers' (Heritage, 2012); that is, when the conversation regarding an option on the crib sheet is 'not abandoned, but no additional life is contributed [to it]' (ibid). Such cases are not uncommon in the dataset, and, if they are not resolved, can hinder test performance. After all, if a state of topic attrition, or topic hold, is not resolved, test-takers risk running out of time before a consensus can be reached. What's more, 'testers won't be able to assess test-takers if there is no interaction in progress' (Coban & Sert, 2020: 67).

Examples of attempts to eliminate an option and thus manage progressivity include:

```
 [Excerpt 5.5.1]


 57    *DARR:   so we can cancel it?


 [Excerpt 5.5.2]


 203   *MOH:   and uh: (1.3) yeah so (0.5) can we all agree that we
 204           all would like to cancel proposal one from any options?=

 [Excerpt 5.5.3]


 97    *THE:   well i guess we have to definitely exclude it-
 98            this from consideration


 [Excerpt 5.5.4]


 18    *DAN:   so so far we need to at least eliminate
 19            (0.6) two (0.4) and then just figure out between
 20            other to make it easier
```

In the first excerpt below, the students have been asked to choose a product in which to invest. At the onset of the sequence, Darren can be seen proffering an assessment of one of the options on his assessment crib sheet; an item known as 'Pet Mop Shoes', which he claims is maybe *not necessary for people* (line 50).

Excerpt 5.5.1. *So we can cancel it*



```
50     *DARR:      maybe it's not necessary for people
51                 (0.3)
52     *PHYLL:     [yeah it's not very (1.4) useful
53     *KARO:      [yes it's [very- not] very useful
54     *WILL:                [not not]
55                 (1.4)
56     *KARO:      so that's uh: [we-
57  →  *DARR:                    [|so we can cancel it?|=
```
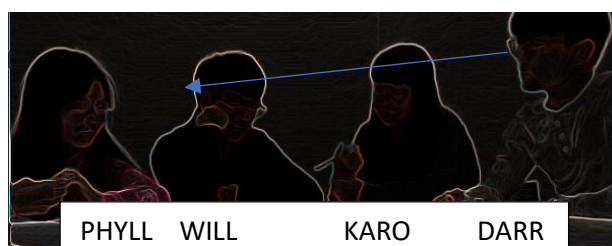


```
                   |((Darren turns to Phyllis))|
58     *KARO:      =|yes cancel it| (0.9) let's |(1.7)| look
```
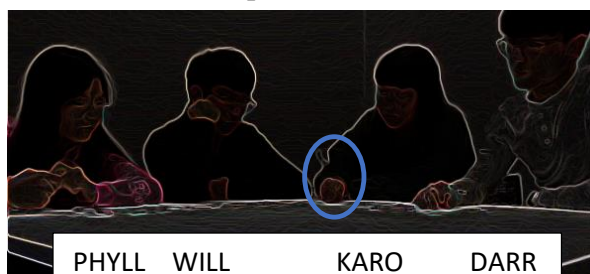


```
      |((Karol crosses out option one, followed by Phyllis and Darren))|
59                 at the picture two (0.5) chair library=
60     *DARR:      =good idea I think
```

After a short pause of 0.3 seconds, Phyllis and Karol offer agreement with Darren's assessment in overlap with one another, both claiming that it is *not very useful*. It seems also that William attempts to offer similar agreement with his *not- not* in line 54, which is potentially syntactically parallel to Phyllis and Karol's respective *not very*s, in lines 52 and 53.

The immediacy of these second pair-part assessment responses to Darren's initial claim, as well as their syntactic parallelism, index affiliation with Darren's claim. However, such an abundance of affiliative responses and pronounced epistemic symmetry has been shown to engender topic attrition (see Heritage in Sidnell, 2012). Indeed, this seems to be the case, here, as after Phyllis, Karol, and William's second pair-part responses, there occurs a lengthy 1.4 second pause, which puts the discussion into a state of topic hold.

To restore progressivity, Karol attempts a topic shift. This interpretation is strengthened by the inclusion in her TCU of the prefatory component *so* (line 56), which has been noted for its use in signalling that the topic of conversation is about to change (see, for example, Gan et al., 2008). However, Karol does not complete her turn, as after some hesitation (*uh*::), Darren begins speaking in overlap with a similarly formatted *so*-initial turn (*so we can cancel it?*).

This turn, though declaratively formatted in a canonical *we can* suggestion format (Stevanovic & Perakyla, 2012), is marked by turn-final, rising intonation, suggesting that Darren's TCU is designed to elicit a response from the group; in particular, Phyllis, to whom Darren appears to address the question with a concomitant shift in gaze. However, it is instead Karol who provides a response, orienting to Darren's turn as an interrogative in pursuit of affiliation by both aligning with it at a structural level (i.e. by providing an answer to his question) and by affiliating with it at a propositional one.

The affiliative nature of Karol's response is indexed by: (1) a prefatory *yes-*, (2) syntactic parallelism with the first pair-part (*we cancel it*), and (3) the immediacy of her response, which as we can see, is offered in a latched position. What's more, Karol's agreement with the suggestion to *cancel* product one is further underscored by her embodied conduct, as her turn is delivered with a concomitant crossing out of product one on her crib sheet (line 58).

In the next part of her TCU (lines 58-9), Karol initiates the topic shift she first attempted in line 56, announcing the next product for discussion (*let's* (1.7) *look at picture two*). After pausing for 1.7 seconds to allow time for Darran and Phyllis to follow suit and also cross out

option one on their crib sheets (line 58), Karol finishes her turn and progressivity is restored when Darren begins assessing option two (*it's a good idea I think* – line 60).

Such suggestion formats, designed with the modal verb 'can', are common throughout the data set and occur frequently during the early and middle stages of these assessments in moments of topic attrition where there is a need to manage progressivity. A similar case can be seen in Excerpt 5.5.2.

In this excerpt, students have been asked to consider four proposals for making a local university more sustainable and environmentally friendly. At the onset of the sequence, the students are discussing proposal four, an awareness raising campaign to promote recycling and other eco-friendly habits.

Excerpt 5.5.2. *So can we all agree that we all would like to cancel proposal one?*



```
189   *MOH:      it's not that hard to print out papers and uh:
190              labels around the university campus
191              (0.3)
193   *ALI:      but like with all due respect I disagree (.) don't you
194              think it will add to the cost of the university and
195              it will be time-consuming option four and option two
196              together?
197              (1.1)
198   *MOH:      uh it does say that uh (0.8) [the cost of proposal
199              four]
200   *ABD:                                    [this- (.) four] is like=
201   *MOH:      =four is very low it's almost non-existent you're just
```

```
202                    going to pay for |printing and uh what not|
```
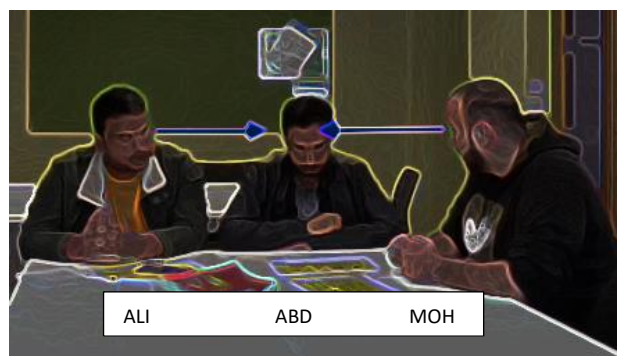


```
                          ((MOH shifts gaze to ALI)
203                    (2.0)
204 →   *MOH:    and uh: (1.3) yeah so (0.5) can we all agree that we
205 →            all would |like to cancel| proposal one from any
```



```
        |((Mohammad brings left hand down over option one))|
206 →            |options?|=
```
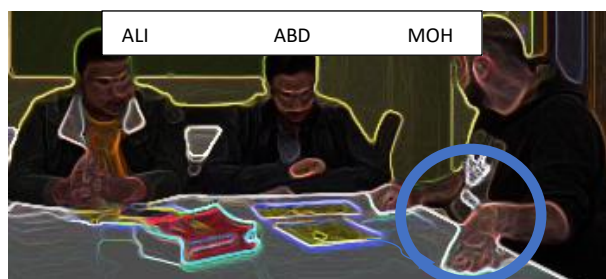


```
   |((Mohammad sweeps left hand across the surface of the table))|
207   *ABD:        =[yeah]
208   *ALI:        =[yeah] proposal four is not suitable
```

The sequence begins with Mohammad assessing the relative ease with which proposal four could be implemented (lines 189-90). Ali, however, responds to this with disagreement in the subsequent turn, claiming that this proposal has the potential to *add to the cost of the university* (line 194) and *be time-consuming* (line 195).

After a pause (1.1 seconds) Mohammad responds to this by referring to the information regarding proposal four on their crib sheets (*uh it does say that uh the cost of proposal four* – line 198-9). However, he does not complete his turn as Abdul speakers over him with a turn that also looks set to be a counter-informing to Ali's claim (*this four is like*=).

Mohammad then retakes the floor in line 201, finishing the turn he started at line 189 by explaining that the cost of proposal four is *very low, it's almost non-existent* as you just have to pay for *printing and whatnot.*

In the lengthy 2.0-second pause that follows, Mohammad shifts his gaze to Ali, in a gesture indicative of next-speaker selection (line 202). However, Ali does not respond, and the conversation is put into a state of topic hold. To restore progressivity, Mohammad appears first to continue his counter-informing by developing it further (*and uh:* - line 204). However, after another lengthy pause (1.3 seconds) he appears to change tack by then asking the group: *can we all agree that we all would like to cancel proposal four from any options.* He does this with concomitant embodied conduct, by bringing his left hand down over option four at *like to cancel* (205) before concluding his turn with a left-hand sweeping gesture across the table (206), signalling that proposal four is being removed. After this, both Ali and Abdul signal their agreement (lines 207 and 208), thus ensuring that discussion of this option will not be recycled. Topical progressivity is then achieved as the group shift their focus to the next option on the crib sheet.

This sequence and its focal TCU bear several similarities to the previous sequence. First, each sequence begins with a student assessing one of the options on their crib sheets. Similarly, in each case what follows – preceded either through displays of affiliation and epistemic symmetry or, as was the case here, unresolved epistemic asymmetry – is a state of topic hold, indexed by multiple lengthy pauses. In both sequences, this is resolved by a marked topic shift (note the use of the prefatory component *so-* in each) followed by a canonical *we can/can we* suggestion format, either designed syntactically as an interrogative or issued declaratively with a marked turn-final rising intonation, indexing that this is a turn in pursuit of an affiliative response. We also see in both sequences an orientation to the assessment materials (the crib sheets) through the embodied conduct of the participants. In the former, students Karol, Darren, and Phyllis physically enact the 'cancelling' of an option by crossing it out with their pens; in the latter, Mohammad touches the option on his crib sheet and then moves his hand across the table in a sweeping gesture. This conduct is in line with Mortensen (2013), who observed how embodied orientations to documents can be used as a resource in the management of activity transitions.

Due to the constraints of the timeframe of the assessment task, the participants cannot afford to allow a state of topic attrition to continue; if the conversation reaches an impasse through an unresolved disagreement (as in the latter sequence) or through an abundance of affiliative responses that contribute no additional life to the conversation (as in the former), progressivity must be restored. Otherwise, the students will be unable to accomplish the task in a timely manner. Throughout the dataset, the most frequent way of restoring progressivity and, therefore, resolving these situations is to *cancel* (Excerpts 5.5.1 and 5.5.2), *exclude* (5.5.3), or *eliminate* (Excerpt 5.5.4) an option from further discussion. This resolves the state of topic hold by offering a measure of assurance to the group that this topic will not be recycled, which as a result maintains progressivity and, therefore, facilitates timely task accomplishment.

The two sequences above are illustrative of the methods adopted by students in achieving this aim at the early and middle stages of assessment; that is, at regular intervals before the 10-minute stage of the assessment task. In what follows, we will consider two sequences in which participants attempt to narrow down their options, and thus manage progressivity, in the final third of the test; that is, after 8 minutes for a group of 3 and after 10 minutes for a group 4. As such, the following sequences all take place at a point in the assessment where the need to progress and make a marked move toward closure is far more pronounced, and the risk of unsuccessful task completion more acute.

In the sequence below, the test-takers are trying to decide which option, of four, would be the best solution for tackling youth offenders. At the onset of the sequence, they have been talking about the third option on the crib sheets (option 3 – decriminalise drugs) for approximately three minutes, with each student contributing to the topic. At this stage in the discussion however, the group still have one option on the crib sheet to discuss and there remains only a minute and a half left of exam time in which to reach a consensus.

Excerpt 5.5.3. *I guess we have to definitely exclude it*

```
88    *RYU:    maybe- e- even if e- e- we can- we can
89             even say like (.) if (0.5) it happens for
90             a long time maybe (.) can become a norm or=
91             (0.3)
92    *THE:    mhmm
93             (0.3)
94    *RYU:    =cus[tom so]
95    *SEA:        [OK] yeah
96             (0.3)
97 →  *THE:    well I guess we have to definitely |exclude it-|
```



|((Theresa taps third option on crib sheet))|

```
98             this from consideration
99             (0.2)
100   *DAN:    and yeah |looking at like-| (0.9)| I think
```



|((Dani points to the next option on the crib sheet))|

```
102            in my perspective like (0.5) with
104            the one two and four (0.6) they the only
106            ones that kind of (0.6) focus on (1.3)
108            those who are- are really confident (right)
109            (1.9) (really) (0.8) compared to like (.) proposal
110            two who were just like (0.8) looking
111            at another perspective to this (1.4) (         )
```

To begin with, Ryu is explaining how decriminalisation could lead to drug use becoming *a norm* (line 90) or *custom* (line 94). This point, however, is one that has already been made by Theresa in a previous turn within the last three minutes and, as such, contributes 'no

additional life to the topic through the seesaw of K-/K+ epistemics' (Heritage, 2012: 46). Ryu's turn, instead, along with subsequent acknowledgement tokens from Theresa (*mhmm* – line 92) and Sean (*OK yeah* – line 95), which do little to further discussion of this option, index knowledge symmetry, suggest that the current topic has withered, and engender closure; though the topic has yet to be abandoned.

After a brief pause (0.3) in line 96, however, Theresa displays her orientation to restoring progressivity with a directive to abandon further discussion on this option, or, as she puts it, *to* [...] *exclude it from consideration* (lines 97-8), while concomitantly pointing to said option on the assessment crib sheet. This orientation toward progressivity is further indexed in her use of the turn-initial particle *well*, which Heritage (2017:3) has noted for its ability to communicate that 'the action that follows [...] will depart from the [...] trajectory of the sequence so far'.

Of additional interest, here, is that Theresa's directive is declaratively formatted as a 'need report' (Kendrick & Drew, 2016), using the semi-modal *have to*. This format - stronger than the *can we/we can* suggestion formats found elsewhere throughout the dataset (see previous two sequences) when participants narrow down by proposing that an option is eliminated - leaves the difficulty itself implicit, in that it 'does not report the problem *per se*' (ibid: 6). In other words, the fact that the group are not progressing sufficiently – and are, therefore, running out of time - is left unsaid. To mitigate this stronger directive format, Theresa uses the pre-positioned epistemic hedge *I guess* (Hansen, 2018) and the pronoun *we*, the latter of which suggests that the necessity of excluding the option from consideration and restoring progressivity is one contingent upon the rest of the group.

After a short pause (0.2), Dani endorses Theresa's directive by moving on to discuss the final option, which she points to on her crib sheet, thus mirroring Theresa's embodied conduct in the previous turn (cf. lines 97 and 100, respectively). The immediacy of Dani's turn and this mirrored gesture display her affiliation with Theresa's orientation toward progressivity. This interpretation is evidenced by Dani's TCU which moves on to discuss all other options *except* option three (*in my perspective with the one, two, and four* [...] *they focus on* . . . –

lines 102-6), thus enacting Theresa's proposed agenda. Shortly thereafter the group reach a consensus.

Such 'need report' sequences in the dataset occur towards the end of assessments, unlike the aforementioned *can we/we can* suggestions, which primarily occur at the early or middle stages, that is, when there is still a considerable amount of time remaining in the test. What Theresa's TCU, and the TCU in the next sequence, hope to show is that there is a tendency to adopt stronger turn formats when there is little time remaining and the need to restore progressivity is, therefore, more acute.

In the sequence below, the students are trying to decide on the best location in which to open a new Domino's pizza franchise. So far, they have discussed the first three options on their crib sheets, and at the beginning of the sequence are in the process of assessing the fourth and final option. Unlike in most assessments in the dataset, this group have not been ruling out options at regular intervals throughout the task, as was the case, for example, with those in Excerpts 5.5.1 – 5.5.3. Therefore, at this stage in the test, with just a few minutes remaining, they risk of running out of time before a decision can be reached is acute.

Excerpt 5.5.4. *We need to at least eliminate two*



```
10    *HAN:     because- it could be because all the morning
11              (0.6) not have people for them for pizza
12              (0.2)
13    *DAN:     yeah it's true=
```

```
14    *AMY:       =people say (inaudible – very quiet)
15                (2.7)
16 →  *DAN:       so (.) so far we need to at least |eliminate|
```



```
            |((Danya lifts corner of crib sheet with right hand))|
17                (0.6) two (0.4) and then just figure out between
18                other to make it easier
19                (0.9)
20    *AMY:       mm yeah=
21    *DAN:       =so |which ones do you think are the least?|
```



```
            |((Danya directs her gaze to Amy))|
22                (1.4)

23    *AMY:       ??the least??=
24    *HAN:       =[least choice three hhh]
25    *DAN:       =[ least profitable  ]
26                |(0.5)|
```



```
        |((Hannah points at choice three and turns to Danya))|
27:   *DAN:        choice three I agree=
28:   *HAN:       =yeah
29:                (.)
30:   *AMY:       yeah
31:                (0.4)
31:   *DAN:       also (.) I think would be: choice four
```

We begin the sequence with Hannah explaining why she does not like option four, which cannot open later in the evening and relies mostly on customers ordering pizza in the morning (*it could be because all the morning* (0.6) *not have people for them for pizza*). After a short pause, Danya offers agreement (*yeah it's true*), thus displaying her affiliation with Hannah's claim. Amy's response, however, which begins in a subsequent, latched position with *people say*, is lost as the end of her turn and is inaudible to both examiners and, it seems, her fellow test-takers. This latter interpretation is evidenced by the ensuing 2.7 second silence, which effectively puts the conversation into a state of topic hold.

To address this state of topic hold and restore progressivity, Danya responds - like Theresa, Mohammad, and Darren in the previous sequences - with a turn consisting of the prefatory component *so* and a directive calling for an option (or option*s*, here) to be ruled out (i.e. *cancelled, eliminated*). Here, Danya's directive is formulated - like Theresa's, which also occurs at a late stage in the task - as a 'need report' with the first person, plural pronoun *we* (*we need to at least eliminate two* – lines 16-7). Although no pre-positioned mitigating phrase is used in this instance (cf. Theresa's *well, I guess*), Danya does mitigate this stronger turn format with a subsequent component to her TCU, which provides a warrant for her directive, i.e., that having only two options to choose from, rather than four, would *make it easier* (line 18).

As in the previous three sequences, we can see again, here, how the assessment materials are oriented to in and around the focal TCU to manage participation and secure the joint attention of co-participants. In Excerpt 5.5.1, this was done via participants visibly crossing out the excluded option from their crib sheets and in Excerpt 5.5.2., via a sweeping gesture by Mohammad after touching the proposed option to be cancelled. In the two preceding sequences, the issuer of the directive can be seen respectively lifting the corner of their crib sheet or tapping it with their pen at the same moment that options are called for to be *excluded* or *eliminated.* Such examples of embodied conduct reorient the group to the task at hand through the redirection of gaze towards the assessment materials, and typically foreshadow an activity transition (Mortensen, 2013), occurring, as they do, after moments of topic attrition where progressivity has been impeded and must be restored.

After a short pause (line 15) of 0.9 seconds following Danya's TCU, Amy responds to the focal directive with an acknowledgement token (*mm yeah* – line 20). Although this response displays Amy's affiliation with Danya's turn, at the structural level it does not fully align with the prior directive. In other words, though it signals agreement with the need to restore progressivity, it does little to drive the sequence forward by actually *eliminating* options and so progressing, as per Danya's directive.

Danya responds to this in a latched position with the interrogative =*so which ones do you think are the least,* while concomitantly shifting her gaze from the crib sheet to Amy. This embodied next-speaker selection indicates that Danya is pursuing elaboration from Amy, whose prior turn did not restore progressivity by eliminating an option. Amy, however, displays her misunderstanding of Danya's question with her subsequent turn (??*the least*??), which is delivered with a marked vocal perturbation, indexing uncertainty; after which Danya provides clarification (least = *least profitable* - line 25). However, it is instead Hannah who answers Danya's question (*least choice three hhh* – line 24), which is delivered in overlap with Danya's clarification.

After this, Danya and Amy agree (lines 27 and 30, respectively) with Hannah and the group successfully eliminate their first option, thereby restoring progressivity by partially enacting Danya's directive to *at least eliminate two*. The group then continue in this vein (*also I think would be choice four* - line 31) before ultimately reaching consensus and completing the task in a timely manner.

## 5.6. Summary

This chapter has examined sequences of interaction from collaborative group assessments in which participants display their orientations toward managing progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test through such practices as: (1) expediting talk, (2) circumventing premature/improper calls for decision announcements and premature decision announcements themselves, and (3) eliminating options from discussion. In doing

so, the analysis above has attempted to illuminate some of the complex interactional work involved in managing progressivity.

As has been shown, this complex interactional work involved, among other things, mitigating dispreference via the use of prefaces, warrants, and vocal perturbations; actions that were often accompanied by embodied conduct in the form of gestures towards material objects such as the crib sheet and the digital timer. This complexity was also evidenced by the way in which test-takers demonstrated an orientation towards upgrading the formatting of their turn design to match the relative urgency associated with the need to manage progressivity and align talk with the constraints of the timeframe of the task. This could be seen, for example, in the way that test-takers switched from low entitlement, canonical request and proposal formats in the earlier stages of the test to stronger 'need reports' in the latter stages, when the risk of running out of time, and, therefore, the need to manage progressivity, was more acute.

Though such interactional practices may not be an official feature of the assessment criteria, knowledge of these practices offers test-takers and assessors valuable insights into the interactional demands of such assessment tasks and, by extension, has the potential to boost learners' confidence in dealing with the challenges inherent in such time-limited, collaborative group work.

# Chapter 6. Analysis: Managing Affiliation in Disagreement Sequences

## 6.1. Introduction

'[A]s linguists we are not only interested in the presence or absence of disagreement but in observing how disagreement is enacted and achieved and *what the effects of the different renditions might be*'

(Angiouri & Locher, 2012: 1550 – my emphasis)

As this assessment consists of a convergent (Samuda & Bygate, 2008), problem-solving task-type - with the principal aim of reaching a group consensus – it can be considered one form of institutional talk in which disagreements are an expected, and perhaps even 'inherent [,] feature of the speech activity' (Hüttner, 2014: 4). Indeed, as Halvorsen (2010: 287) points out, any 'decision process aiming for reaching agreement will […] involve the management of disagreement'. However, though disagreement may be an inherent feature of such decision-making assessment tasks, the test-takers must still orient to the collaborative dimensions of the task. The current chapter, therefore, sets out to answer the following research question:

How do test-takers manage affiliation in disagreement sequences?

In doing so, I build on the work of Hüttner (2014) and Gablasova and Brezina (2018) in seeking to analyse and better understand how disagreement is constructed in assessed oral L2 interactions. However, while Hüttner (ibid.) focussed exclusively on advanced learners involved in teacher-led interviews, role plays with teachers, and dyadic peer interactions, this chapter extends the scope of research into disagreements in L2 test-talk by focussing instead on *poly*adic (i.e., group) oral assessment interactions with *intermediate* learners in a format where there is no teacher involvement in the task. As such, the 'asymmetric role distribution' (ibid: 26) in teacher-present settings is absent here.

The chapter is divided into three analytic subsections, which correspond to three salient disagreement actions and their responses within the dataset. The first of these sections

considers sequences in which test-takers formulate their disagreeing turns by, among other things, invoking shared knowledge (e.g. *but* […] *as we all know*). The second section then considers a form of disagreement in which one test-taker upgrades their epistemic rights by presenting an alternative idea as being more salient than a previous idea (e.g., *but* […] *the most important thing is . . .*). Finally, the third section considers sequences in which disagreement is expressed by a participant highlighting some yet-to-be-discussed consideration via the use of a rhetorical question (e.g. *but do you know . . .?*; *but, look at the information . . . so what's that mean?*; *but, have you ever considered . . .?*) that elicits agreement and a recognition of new knowledge from a fellow test-taker. In each of these sections, there is a focus on the extent to which affiliation is elicited from fellow test-takers.

## 6.2. Disagreeing by invoking shared knowledge

In this first excerpt, test-takers have been tasked with selecting the best new product to bring to market. At the onset of the sequence below, they are discussing the second product on their crib sheets – an umbrella that changes colour in the rain.

Excerpt 6.2.1. *no I think* […] *because* […] *we all know*
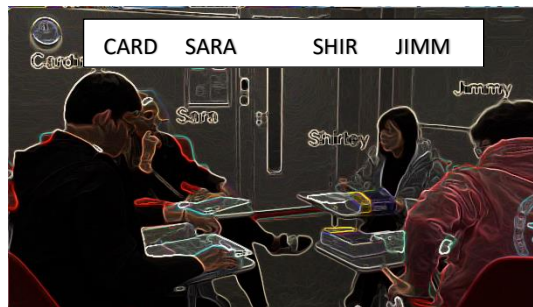


```
164   *JIMM:     so the second i:s (0.6) the umbrella can changes its
165→             colour (0.9) i think it's useless
166             (0.2)
167   *SARA:    I think it's [fo:r]
168   *CARD:              [it's ] ef|fi|cient (.) i think=
```
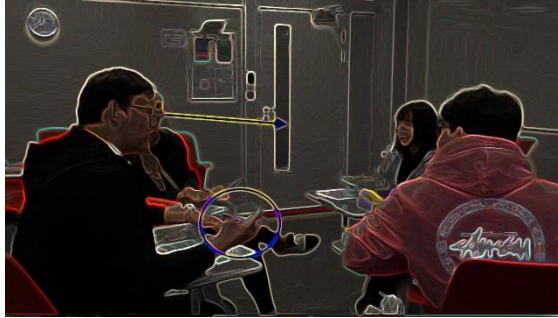
|((Cardinal shifts gaze to Jimmy and raises right hand))|

169→ *SHIR:    =|no:| uh i think mm this is uhm



|((Shirley turns to face Jimmy))|

170           it's a (0.6) mmm a unique uhm umbrella because

171→          in- uh in UK (0.4) uh (.) we all know the climate is

172           very unique and of- (0.8) and often rain-

173           and have rains and so i think (0.3) uh this product

174           th- |this product| is really important in UK |market?|



|((Shirley point to crib sheet then shifts gaze to Sara))|

175               (0.8)

176→  *SARA:    if we talk about marketing the business yeah

177               it's sold out in a- [in days]

178   *SHIR:                          [yes]=

179   *JIMM:    =in days=

180   *SHIR:    =yes=

181   *SARA:    =[which means that it's successful

182   *JIMM:    =[very popular

```
183                 (0.4)
184→  *SARA:      but if we talk about the idea it's silly
```

After introducing the product in line 164, Jimmy goes on to proffer a negative assessment in line 165: *I think it's useless*. This makes a second assessment a 'conditionally relevant next action' (Pomerantz, 1984 in Clifton, 2017) and, indeed, this is what follows. After a short pause, Sara first begins a turn that suggests she will discuss the product's utility or target market (see *I think it's fo:r* – line 167), however this is interrupted in overlap by Cardinal, and it is in this overlapping turn that a second assessment is proffered.

With a concomitant shift in gaze, addressing Jimmy, Cardinal offers his assessment (*it's efficient* […] *I think* – line 168), thus making his epistemic stance public in the form of a disagreement (Cheng, 2013). His second assessment, however - lacking as it does an explicit disagreement preface (e.g. *but, no, I disagree*) – does not seem to register with all test-takers. This interpretation is evidenced in the next turn by Shirley, who responds in a latched position to Cardinal's second assessment with a disagreement-prefaced (*no* – line 169) TCU, which seems, prima facie, to signal disaffiliation with the content of Cardinal's turn. However, as Shirley's TCU unfolds, it becomes clear that her disaffiliative turn is instead directed towards Jimmy's first assessment (*it's useless*) not Cardinal's second (*it's efficient*). This is made visible in line 170, where, like Cardinal, she proffers an assessment in *support* of the product in question: *this umbrella is unique*.

Let us consider the turn design of this TCU in greater detail. After having started her turn with a strong disagreement-preface, Shirley seems to mitigate her disagreement, post hoc, with the epistemic stance marker *I think,* which has been noted for its prominent dialogic function in leaving 'space open for alternative views to emerge in the ensuing discourse' and in positioning the speaker in relation to others and their 'potentially diverging positions' (Mortensen, 2012: 237). This is done when introducing her assessment regarding the uniqueness of the product, and, after having done so, Shirley provides an 'account' for her disagreement, which begins in the same line with *because*.

Such accounts are a common feature of dispreferred actions (Pomerantz, 1984), and the inclusion of one here reinforces the interpretation that Shirley is 'doing' oppositional talk. Of particular interest in her account is the way in which she continues to manage and mitigate the dispreferredness of her turn. For example, notice how within lines 170-2, she switches from using the first-person singular pronoun *I* to the more inclusive first-person plural *we* (*I think* […] *because* […] *in UK* […] *we all know the climate is very unique* […] *and often rain*). Choi and Schnurr (2014) have considered the strategic uses of pronoun switching in their study on how consensus is negotiated in leaderless, interdisciplinary research groups, where they uncovered how - when pronouns are switched in an inverse order to the one seen here (e.g. instead from the inclusive, plural *we* to the singular *I*) - speakers can take on 'powerful stances' and 'reinforce official role[s]'. However, what Shirley appears to enact here is the opposite of this dynamic; that is, by instead softening her stance and orienting to inclusivity in pursuit of affiliation.

She does this by grounding her 'contradiction' (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998) in shared knowledge, i.e. that in the UK it *often rains*. Based on this invoked (*we all know*) shared knowledge, Shirley concludes her TCU by claiming that the product is, therefore, *really important in UK market* (line 174); an epistemic stance in opposition to Jimmy's negative assessment in line 165. In doing so, she first points to the crib sheet before shifting her gaze to Sara at the end of her turn - which is marked with a rising terminal intonation indicative of uncertainty -   and holding this gaze for the duration of the pause that follows, indicating next-speaker selection (see line 174).

By the end of her TCU, then, Shirley makes visible her orientation to mitigating the face-threatening potential of her disagreement and securing affiliation by (1) invoking the shared knowledge of the group, (2) switching to inclusive pronoun use, (3) the prosodic marking of uncertainty, and (4) her next speaker selection. Each of these features, I suggest, display the test-taker's understanding of the collaborative and contingent nature of the task at hand.

After the short pause in line 175 that proceeds Shirley's TCU, Sara takes the floor by responding with a turn that acknowledges both Jimmy's and Shirley's assessments. This is done via a conditionally-formatted TCU that takes place across multiple turns: *if we talk*

*about marketing the business it's sold out in days* – lines 176-7; *but if we talk about the idea it's silly* – line 184. Muntigl and Turnbull (1998: 226) have described how arguing involves the 'management of competing claims [*and*] the management of social structure', and, indeed, this is what Sarah appears to do. By acknowledging the validity of both claims (i.e. that the product (1) does have a market and will sell but is, nonetheless, (2) silly/useless) Sara manages to negotiate two 'diverse stances in order to arrive at a position shared by all interlocutors' - a move essential for the collaborative task at hand (Hüttner, 2014), and one which saves face for both Jimmy and Shirley.

This shared position is evidenced by Shirley's and Jimmy's respective agreement tokens (lines 178 and 180) and congruent assessments (lines 179 and 182) throughout Sara's multi-unit turn, which are delivered in both overlapping and latched positions; the immediacy of which makes visible their affiliation towards Sara's disagreement resolution. After this, the disagreement is managed implicitly, as is often the case in such sequences, by 'participants moving on to a new […] topic' (ibid.).

So far, we have considered one sequence in which a focal disagreeing TCU is formulated with an invocation of shared knowledge. This makes visible the collaborative orientation of the speaker and functions as a 'palliative appropriate to the previous turn' (Antaki, 1994: 79), in that it mitigates the force of the speaker's dispreferred, disagreeing turn, thereby reducing its face-threatening potential toward the prior speaker. Such disagreeing TCUs are common throughout the dataset, though their design varies. In the sequence above, for example, the invocation of shared knowledge was deployed *post hoc* to soften an initial disagreement. As such, the focal disagreeing TCU was constituted by (1) a second assessment (*no I think this is a unique umbrella*), (2) a mitigating invocation of shared knowledge (*in the UK we all know the climate is very unique)*, (3) an elucidation/account of this background knowledge (*often rains*), and (4) a summary/statement of the oppositional upshot of the turn (*so I think this product is important in UK market*).

However, although the test-taker who proffered the focal disagreeing TCU did so with the inclusion of mitigation and an account, further facework negotiation was required. This was evidenced by Sara's response, which functioned as an explicit consensual resolution to the

disagreement between Shirley and Cardinal, negotiating their 'diverse stances to arrive at a position shared by all interlocutors' (Hüttner, 2014). Sara achieved this via the conditional syntactic formatting of her turn, which effectively validated both Jimmy's and Shirley's assessments of the product.

In the sequence that follows, we will consider a variation on this constellation of features in which the invocation of shared knowledge is delivered in a turn-initial position, allowing the speaker to shift the focal disagreeing content further back within the TCU. In this formulation, the invocation of shared knowledge instead *foreshadows* the oppositional content of the disagreeing turn, mitigating its face-threatening potential in advance. As we shall see, this turn design elicits an altogether different response from fellow test-takers.

### Excerpt 6.2.2. *but we all know*

In the following excerpt, test-takers Luki, Bobo, Amy and Larina are participating in a speaking test that requires them to agree on the most suitable form of renewable energy to be adopted in a UK city. At the onset of the sequence, we find Larina assessing one of the options (solar energy), which she claims she *would choose* (line 35) for *the reason that* (line 36) it is the *cheapest* (line 39) and has a *fifty* (0.7) *five* (0.4) *percent* (lines 40-1) efficiency rating.



```
35    *LARI:     OK uh- (0.3) i- i uh would choose
36               s- solar energy (0.4) for the reason that
37               the first uh- as for the price (0.6) uh
38               it's uh (0.5) cheaper (0.7) cheapest (.)
39→              it's cheaper than others and uh (0.8) what's
40               more(0.4) it also has uh: (0.4) fifty (0.7)
41               five (0.4) percent (efficiency)
42               (0.7)
43    *BOBO:     yes=
```

```
44      *LARI:       =|rating| on the (          )=
```
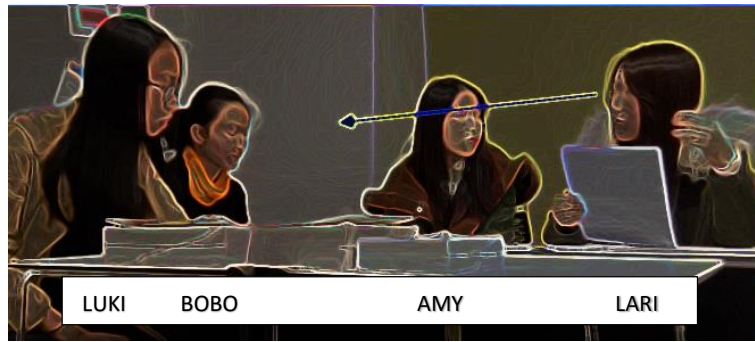


```
             |((Larina turns to face Bobo))|
45      *AMY:        =°yes°
46                   (1.7)
47→     *BOBO:       u:hm but| (0.1) uh we all know that
48                   the- this uh: (0.4) this uh: (0.9)
49                   |e:quipment| is to help uh- uh (0.5) protect
```



```
             |((Bobo picks up cribsheet))|
50                   our environment and keeping the public |happy|
```



```
             |((Bobo shifts gaze from the cribsheet to Larina))|
51→                  (0.6) so I think (0.5) if (0.2) solar energy put
52                   (0.5) uh like (0.4) this (0.6) solar energy
53                   you put in some places (0.3) but it will (0.7) uh
54→                  give people some- some places not very convenient
55                   (0.4) but this hydro electrics (0.7) dams it (0.2)
56                   it was uh: built in far from (0.2) UK city
57                   (0.4) so it have (0.6) uh: (0.8) no: (0.7) uh:(0.3)
58                   not- not good way to people and also can (0.4) it
59                   have a leisure↑ (0.8) it was leisure activities for
60→                  people (0.5) so i think hydro electricity's better
61                   (0.8)
62      *AMY:        OK
63                   (0.3)
64      *LARI:       °OK I know°
```

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After a subsequent (0.7) pause in line 42, Bobo (line 43) and Amy (line 45) respond to Larina's assessment with the same acknowledgement token: *yes*. Such *yes* responses, according to Heritage (2012: 46), have been shown to 'neither advance [a] sequence, nor wholly abandon it', and indeed this seems to be the case here. This is evidenced by a subsequent lengthy (1.7) pause in line 46, which puts the ongoing talk into a state of topic hold. What's more, this "delayedness" foreshadows a dispreferred action, and, 'from a sequential perspective […] is disagreement-implicative' (Waring, 2001: 38). This implication of disagreement is then realised when Bobo, in lines 47-63, delivers an oppositional turn.

Like Shirley in excerpt 6.2.1., Bobo begins her turn with a disagreement preface (*but* – line 47). However, unlike Shirley's disagreeing turn in the previous sequence, where her oppositional second assessment was immediately subsequent to her turn-initial disagreement token, here the second assessment is delayed. In Bobo's turn design, the invocation of shared knowledge is instead brought to the front of the turn and her oppositional second assessment is postponed. Indeed, if we look at her turn design, we can see that lines 48-50 are entirely dedicated to an elucidation of what it is that the group *all know*; i.e. that the purpose of this renewable energy equipment is to *protect our environment* (lines 49-50) and *[keep] the public happy* (line 50). Only once this has been established does Bobo elect to deliver her second assessment; that is, that in the light of this shared knowledge, solar energy is, in fact, *not very convenient* (line 54) due to where these solar panels are located.

This point is further elaborated on in lines 55-6, where Bobo contrasts solar energy with *hydro-electric dams*, which are *built far from* (0.2) *UK city* (NB: on the assessment crib the sheet, the image of solar energy depicts panels placed on the roofs of houses). Finally, in line 60, Bobo reveals the oppositional upshot of her turn by stating *so I think hydro-electricity's better*. This is then followed by a pause (0.8), before Amy (line 62) and Larina (line 64) both respond to Bobo's counter-assessment with the acknowledge token, *OK*.

Shortly after the sequence presented here, the topic shifts to wind energy, which Amy introduces with the claim that it is better than both solar and hydro-electric energy. Notice

how, unlike in Excerpt 6.2.1., no further negotiation of consensual agreement was required. However, the delayed (0.8. seconds) and minimal formatting of her fellow test-takers' responses - which seem only to acknowledge Bobo's disagreement, not agree with it - do not display affiliation. This is an interpretation also evidenced by the vocal perturbation of Lari's (the original assessor, with whom Bobo was disagreeing) turn, which is delivered as a whisper (°OK I know°). Therefore, though the responses to this disagreeing turn, compared to the response in Excerpt 6.2.1., do not orient to the need for further face work (cf. Sara in previous sequence), they are still far from what one may deem affiliative. Rather, their delayedness, vocal delivery, and minimal formatting seem only to acknowledge the prior disagreement.

Invocations of shared knowledge, then, have so far demonstrated their ineffectiveness at securing affiliation in disagreement sequences. The final Excerpt supports this interpretation.

Excerpt 6.2.3. *but, y'know, Bristol  is not a big city*
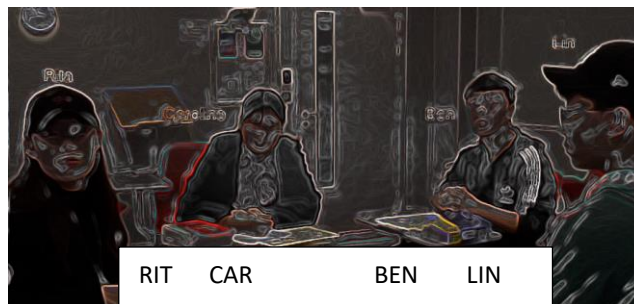


```
255    *LIN:      It may be a (0.4) new fashions of (0.4) uh: (1.0)
256               international student
257               (0.8)
258    *CAR:      yes [I agree with that]
259→   *BEN:          [yeah it's- it's] maybe it's mmm it's good
260               for (0.5) uhm it's good for international student
261→              and it's very popular between them (0.5) but
```

```
262→            (0.6) |you know| (0.4) in Bristol is uh: (0.9)
```
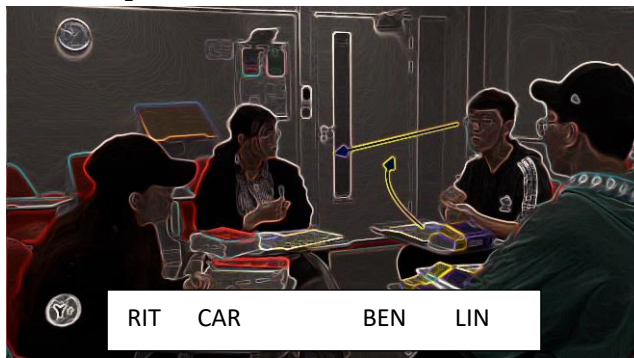


```
                RIT   CAR          BEN    LIN

             |((Ben looks up from cribsheet))|
263          it's not a big city
264          (0.4)
265  *RIT:   yeah
266          (0.3)
267  *BEN:   yes and uh (0.5) just have (0.3) little (0.3)
268          international student °on Bristol°
269          (0.3)
270  *RIT:   hhh=
271  *BEN:   =I- so I=
272→ *CAR:   =|☺seriˈHously?ˈH☺|
```
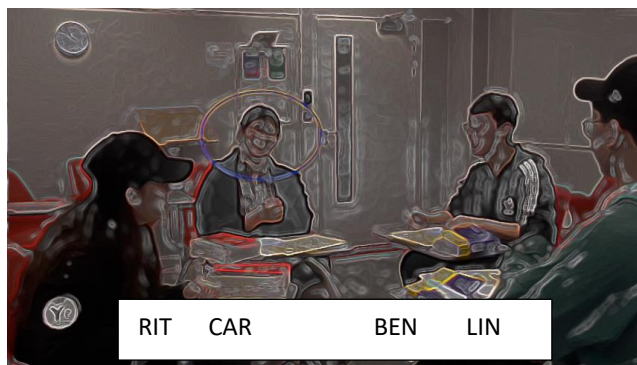


```
                RIT   CAR          BEN    LIN

             |((Caroline smiles incredulously))|
274          (0.2)
275  *BEN:   yeah (.) yeah (.) but i- if it's on London (0.5)
276          maybe it is very popular and suitable because it has
277          uh (0.5) lots of international student and (      )
278→         and uh (.) but (.) uh if in Bristol |☺I think☺| just
```
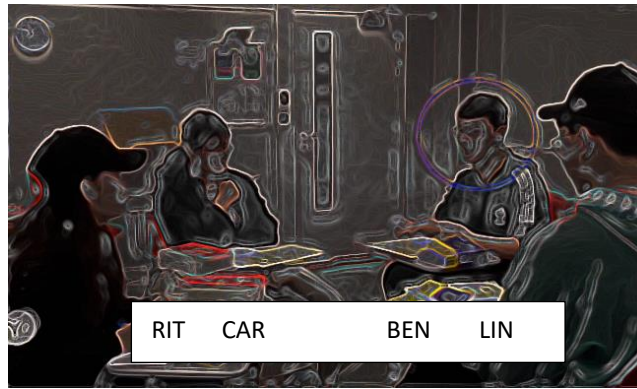
```
                              |((Ben smiles))|
279        have little international student (.) so I think maybe
280        it's not- maybe it's not uh (.) good idea (.) I think-
281→       uh just |I| think.
```
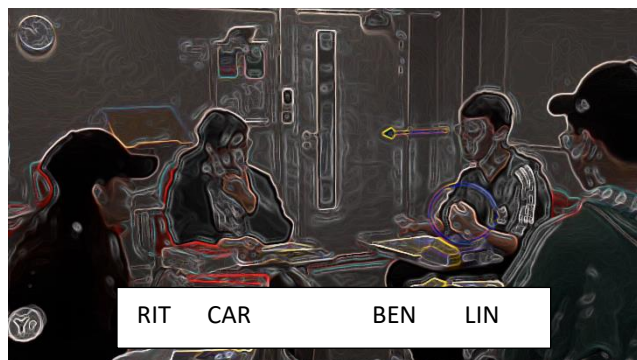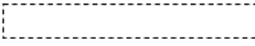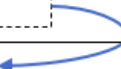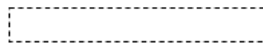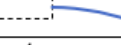


```
|((Ben points to himself))|
```

In this sequence, four test-takers (Rita, Caroline, Ben, and Lin) are discussing which product, of four, they should invest in. At the beginning, we see Lin (line 255) assessing one of these products (a new brand of training shoes) which he claims could be a *new fashions of* […] *international students* (line 255). This is met, after a short pause, with explicit agreement from Rita in line 258. Ben then follows this in overlap with a turn that appears, prima facie, to also offer agreement with Lin's first assessment: *yeah* […] *maybe* […] *it's* […] *for international student and it's very popular between them* (lines 259-261).

Note, however, that Ben's second assessment contains a 'scaled-down […] weakened evaluation term' (e.g. *maybe*), which has been shown to 'frequently engender disagreement sequences' (Pomerantz, 1984: 68). Indeed, as Ben's turn unfolds, it becomes clear that his turn opening is, in fact, an agreement preface (ibid) to a disagreeing turn. This becomes evident in lines 261-263, where Ben signals his switch to disjunction via the disagreement

token *but*, which is coupled with an invocation of shared knowledge, *but* […] *y'know* […] *Bristol is* […] *not a big city*, and delivered with a concomitant shift in gaze from the crib sheet to the group.

The inclusion of an agreement preface before this invocation of shared knowledge pushes the second assessment further still into the TCU, where it now takes a third position (see table below).

| Design of focal disagreeing turns | | |
|---|---|---|
| Excerpt 6.2.1. | Excerpt 6.2.2. | Excerpt 6.2.3. |
| Disagreement token w/ Second assessment | Disagreement token w/ Invocation of shared knowledge | Agreement preface |
| Invocation of shared knowledge | Second assessment | |
| Oppositional upshot | Oppositional upshot | Disagreement token w/ Invocation of shared knowledge |
| - | - | Second assessment |
| - | - | Oppositional upshot |

This demonstrates the ubiquity and flexibility of invocations of shared knowledge in test-takers' attempts to mitigate the dispreferredness of disagreement and elicit affiliation in this group assessment setting. Notice how, in the sequences in this section, these invocations have been delivered (1) after a second assessment to mitigate its face-threatening potential *post hoc*, (2) in a preceding position, thus creating a warrant for disagreement, and (3) after an agreement preface in a more complex turn design which embeds the focal disagreement deeper into the TCU.

After Ben's invocation of shared knowledge (*y'know* […] *it's not a big city* – line 263), Rita responds with the acknowledgement token *yeah*, after a short pause in line 265. Following this, Ben delivers his focal disagreeing assessment in lines 268-9 with *and* […] *just have* […] *little* […] *international student*. After a short pause, Rita then responds to Ben with laughter in line 271; however, Ben does not acknowledge this and instead appears to begin formulating the oppositional upshot of his TCU with *I- so I=* (line 271). However, before Ben can complete his TCU with a turn-final statement of the overall oppositional upshot -

common in disagreeing turns of this type (cf. excerpts 6.2.1. and 6.2.2.) - Caroline interrupts with a question (*seriously*?), delivered with smile face and laughter in a way that appears to question the veracity of what Ben claims is shared knowledge.

In response to this tacit rejection of his second assessment and attempt at invoking shared knowledge, Ben appears to defend his position by claiming that, compared to London, which has *lots of international students* (line 277), Bristol has relatively *little international student* (line 279). What's particularly interesting about this turn, though, is the way in which Ben goes on to distance himself from his earlier attempt at invoking shared knowledge. Notice how, in line 279, Ben switches from the second-person pronoun *you* in his *you know*, at the beginning of his original invocation, to the first-person *I* in *I think,* delivered with the vocal perturbation of laughter/smile voice, which serves to 'minimise the dispreferred dimension of [his] response' (Petitjean & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2015: 91). In doing so, Ben appears to recast what he originally claimed was shared knowledge by now indicating that it is only his opinion.

After this, Ben then delivers the oppositional upshot of his TCU that was first attempted in line 271 before he was interrupted by Caroline. In delivering this, Ben again uses the same *I think* epistemic stance marker in lines 279, 280 and 281. In the third and final of these lines, Ben adds an emphatic *just* before *I think,* and his delivery includes a concomitant gesture of pointing to himself. This displays Ben's strong orientation to now communicating that he is no longer invoking the shared knowledge of the group.

Having failed to elicit affiliation with recourse to a mitigating invocation of shared knowledge and acknowledgement of partial agreement in his agreement preface, Ben elects to switch to this less inclusive epistemic stance marker. This allows Ben to rescind his invocation of shared knowledge and, therefore, the basis on which disagreement was framed, while still maintaining the oppositional stance communicated by his original second assessment (i.e., that there aren't enough international students).

Clayman and Raymond (2021; 2) claim that when 'you know' is used in conversation 'a state of "being on the same page" is being advanced and *often validated'* (my emphasis).

However, while findings from this excerpt support Clayman and Raymond's (ibid) contention that 'you know':

- Operates as an 'alignment token'
- 'Invokes a convergent orientation between recipient and speaker'
- And is 'deployed in environments where […] affiliation has emerged as salient'

It does not support their claim that its use is *often validated*. On the contrary, in this case – as in the previous two sequences, where 'we all know' was used instead - disagreeing by invoking shared knowledge has been shown to be ineffective in terms of securing validation and affiliation.

In this section, we have considered some of the ways in which invocations of shared knowledge are deployed to secure affiliation in disagreement sequences, and the different responses they can elicit. These included: 1. A negotiation of the two diverse stances by a third party, also known as 'Dominant third-party intervention' (Sharma, 2012), 2. Minimal acknowledgement followed by topic shift, or 3. Incredulous responses marked by laughter and smile voice. Although the turn design of a focal, disagreeing TCU can go some way to eliciting a more affiliative response from fellow test-takers (cf. Excerpts 6.2.1 and 6.2.2), it has been shown, in cases where an invocation of shared knowledge is too preposterous for fellow test-takers to validate (see Excerpt 6.2.3), that turn design can do little to secure affiliation and circumvent a rejection of the disagreeing assessment. However, as was evidenced in the previous excerpt, the invoker of shared knowledge can renege on their invocation while yet preserving the propositional content of their disagreement.

Overall, however, disagreements that incorporate an invocation of shared knowledge were found to be ineffective in terms of securing affiliation from fellow test-takers. In what follows, we will consider another form of disagreement that proved more effective in this regard; namely, the upgrading of epistemic rights.  As will be shown, these upgrades, which are comprised of a noun-copula clause construction (e.g., *the most important thing is*), can be used by speakers to distance themselves from the content of a prior assessment without directly contradicting it. This, as will be discussed, offers test-takers a face-saving strategy

that preserves social solidarity and makes visible their orientation to the collaborative, convergent nature of the task at hand; an interpretation that is evidenced by the more affiliative responses this turn design receives.

## 6.3. Disagreeing by upgrading epistemic rights

Excerpt 6.3.1. *but I think the most important thing* […] *is to sell more*

In the following sequence, Cardinal, Sara, Shirley, and Jimmy are trying to decide on a product in which to invest. It begins with Sara assessing one of the products on her crib sheet: *the idea is not that good* (line 219).



```
219   *SARA:    the idea is not that good
220             (1.9)
221   *JIMM:    i think it's a little useless=
222   *SARA:    =yeah=
223→  *SHIR:    =but i think uhm the- (0.9) the most important thing
224             for product is (0.6) uh [to]
225   *SARA:                             |[to] sell more|=
```



```
226             |((Sara raises left hand open palm to Shirley))|
```

```
227    *SHIR:       =|yes yes| so i- i think this [is- maybe is]
```



```
               |((Shirley smiles and nods))|
228    *JIMM:                                [maybe] younger
229            generation will: (0.3) count on it
230            (0.3)
231    *SARA:  maybe
```

After a lengthy (1.9. second) pause, Jimmy responds to this with a conditionally relevant, second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984) (*It's a little useless* - line 222), thus displaying his agreement; to which Sara responds in a latched position with the acknowledgement token, *yeah*. However, before a full group consensus can be reached, Shirley responds to Sara's acknowledgment token with a disagreeing turn in line 223.

Let us consider the design of Shirley's turn.  It begins with the disagreement token *but* and the epistemic stance marker *I think,* which, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, plays a prominent dialogic function in leaving space for different views to emerge and in placing the speaker in relation to her co-participants' potentially divergent positions (Mortensen, 2012). This is then followed by a noun-copula clause construction (*the most important thing for product is*), which have been noted (1) for their ability to 'foreshadow upcoming content while connecting the content to the previous discourse', (2) their use as an 'epistemic stance marker that signals a shift in perspective and helps form a counter-informing act', and (3) their capacity for allowing a speaker to upgrade her 'epistemic rights in the process of pursuing agreement' (Hsieh, 2018: 107).

Notice how this construction, though constituting a counterclaim (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998), or counter-informing, does not directly contradict either of the prior assessments - quite the opposite, in fact. Shirley appears to acknowledge the validity of her fellow test-taker's assessments (*not that good* – line 219; *a little useless* – line 221) in implying that,

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while fellow test-taker's points may not be *the most important thing* to consider, they are nonetheless valid. This tacit acceptance of the prior assessments and subtle shift in perspective allows Shirley to mitigate the dispreference of her counterclaim and secure affiliation.

This interpretation is evidenced in the immediately subsequent turn by Sara, who manages to complete Shirley's turn in overlap in line 225 with *to sell more*, which she does while extending her left palm to Shirley and nodding – the combination of which suggests emphatic agreement and affiliation with the prior speaker. After this, Shirley confirms the content of Sara's completion (again emphatically) in line 227 (*yes yes*) in a turn that is delivered with concomitant smiling and nodding. Following the two agreement tokens at the onset of her turn, Shirley then begins to formulate the oppositional upshot (*so I* […] *think this* […] *maybe is*) before her turn is again completed by one of her fellow test-takers (Jimmy, this time) who takes the floor and signals his alignment and affiliation with Shirley and Sara with *maybe younger generation will:* (0.3) *count on it* in lines 228-9.

Throughout the data set, disagreeing turns that incorporate a noun-copula clause construction, such as the one in the sequence above, are generally met with (often emphatic) affiliative responses. This is perhaps because such constructions offer speakers a resource with which to disagree with or oppose content in the previous discourse while still preserving its validity and, in doing so, thus facilitating a greater likelihood of acceptance and affiliation from fellow test-takers. Disagreements delivered in such a manner do not claim (nor imply) that what a prior speaker said is incorrect, only that it is not the most salient thing to consider, and this serves to maintain social solidarity and facilitate collaboration. We can see this again in the following sequence.

### Excerpt 6.3.2. *but the most important problem is* […] *mobile phone*

In the sequence below, the test-takers have been asked to choose the most suitable channel through which to receive homework, notifications, and instructions at university. The options they have been given include Facebook, Blackboard, and Twitter.

```
110   *YUNA:      yes i think so and i want to say uhm (.) uh we:- (0.6)
111               we are in the university and we should study the
112               academics things so (0.5) the Blackboard is more (.)
113               relatively than- (0.6) relatively academic than
114               other apps
115               (1.0)
116→  *CHRI:      but the most (0.5) important problem is we can't be
117               viewed on a |mobile phone| (.) so you [can't check]≈
```



```
              |(( Christine shifts gaze from crib sheet to Junn))|
118   *JUNN:                                          [mm yeah]
119   *CHRI:      ≈|your homework (.) your class| (.) in- when you are
```
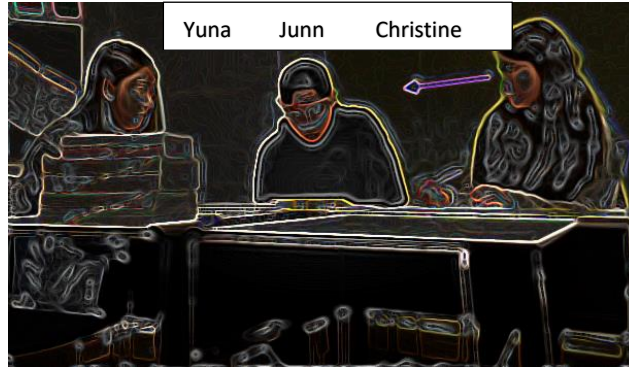


```
              |((Christine swipes hand, imitating phone screen))|
120               in the street=
121   *JUNN:      =yeah=
122   *CHRI:      =when you are not at home (.) yeah
123               (0.6)
124   *JUNN:      it is (0.7) quite (.) com- uncomfortable right?=
125   *CHRI:      =yeah
126               (0.6)
127   *CHRI:      how about Twitter?
```

At the onset of this sequence, Yuna can be seen arguing in favour of Blackboard which, she claims, is *more […] academic than other apps* (lines 113-4).

After a lengthy (1.0) pause in line 115, Christine responds to Yuna's assessment with disagreement in line 116. This is signalled with the disagreement-implicative, prefatory component *but*, which is then followed by the noun-copula clause construction *the most important problem is*. With this, Christine accepts Yuna's claim that Blackboard is more academic but upgrades her epistemic rights in suggesting that a more pressing concern is that Blackboard *can't be viewed on a mobile phone* and so students would be unable to *check homework* or [their] *class […] on the street* (lines 117-9).

As is the tendency with such perspective-shift, noun-copula clause disagreements in the data set, affiliation from a fellow test-takers is swift. This is evidenced, here, by Junn who responds in overlap (line 117) with the agreement token *mm yeah* before the completion of Christine's turn. In formatting his response with such immediacy, Junn signals his affiliation (Stivers & Mondada, 2011) with Christine's epistemic stance and progresses the activity by aligning with Christine at a structural level (i.e. by agreeing with her claim).

Junn then provides another acknowledgement token (=*yeah* – line 121) after the completion of Christine's turn. This is again delivered with immediacy (in a latched position this time, rather than in overlap) thus signalling further his affiliation with Christine's claim. After this, Christine clarifies her comment *in the street* (line 120) with *when you are not at home*, in a latched position proceeding Junn's second agreement token. This is then followed by a (0.6) pause, after which Junn clarifies the oppositional upshot of Christine's counter-informing (*it's* […] quite […] *uncomfortable right?* – line 124), which she confirms in line 125.

Having now established between themselves (Junn and Christine) that they are in alignment, Christine, after a 0.6.-second pause, moves the group on to the next option on their crib sheet with the interrogatively formatted topic shift *how about Twitter?* In line 127. A similarly affiliative response to a disagreement turn formatted with a noun-copula clause construction can be seen in Excerpt 6.3.3.

In this sequence, the test-takers are discussing which method of learning is better - online, face-to-face, or blended learning – in order to arrive at a group consensus on which one to recommend.



```
160    *PATR:      online learning i think (1.1) is (0.7)
161                it's expensive to learn because ev- every
162                student (0.5) must have a laptop or a computer
163                (0.7) to learn (0.9) and uh(1.2) student might
164                lost their way (0.7) during their study
165                (0.7) because no one can (0.4) guide them to
166                (0.8) learn very well (0.5) [doing]
167    *MARC:                                 [yeah]=
168→   *JULY:      =|in fact (.) i think| this uh: |is not a big problem|
```



```
       |((July gestures to the crib sheet with her right hand))|
```



```
       |((July shifts gaze from the crib sheet to Patrick))|
169                because in school everywhere have computer
170                uhm people uh- uh people can use this computer
171                to learning (0.4) but the (0.4) mmm the best uh
172→               the most uh (one) (1.1) uhm problem is people can't
173                (0.7) uh: (0.8) only use- use computer to study maybe
```

```
174              they will use it to uhm(0.6) use some website or check
175              email and chatting or play computer games=
176   *HEBA:     =so this maybe uh: wasting for their time?=
177   *JULY:     =>yeah yeah<
178              (0.3)
179   *MARC:     [yeah]
180   *JULY:     [yeah](0.5) a learning time
```

At the beginning of the sequence, Patrick can be seen making his case *against* choosing online learning, on the grounds that (1) it is *expensive* (line 161), (2) it requires that everyone has a laptop (line 162) and (3) that nobody can *guide* students to *learn very well* (line 165-166). Marco then responds to Patrick in overlap, and before the completion of his turn, at line 167 with the agreement token *yeah*, thus signalling his affiliation with the prior assessment. However, it becomes clear that agreement is not unanimous in July's latched turn at line 168.

This turn, which proffers a conditionally relevant second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984), begins with the epistemic markers *in fact* and *I think,* the latter of which, as already outlined above, has been shown to foreshadow and connect upcoming content with previous discourse (in this case, Patrick's first assessment). This is then followed by an explicit claim that what Patrick highlighted in his previous turn *is not a big problem* (line 168). This is interesting, as in the two sequences considered thus far, turns which contain a noun-copula clause construction (as is the case, here – see line 172: *the most* […] *problem is*), the speaker merely implies that the content of previous discourse is less salient than the content of the current turn. However, here July elects to make this implication explicit in following up her two turn-initial epistemic markers with the statement: *this* […] *is not a big problem*. This is delivered with a concomitant shifting of gaze from the crib sheet to Patrick (see line 168).

July then mitigates the face-threatening potential of this counter-informing with an account for her disagreement in lines 169-171: *because in school everywhere have computer* […] *people can use this computer to learning*. Accounts of this sort have been shown to be a frequent feature in dispreferred responses (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015) and the inclusion of one here supports the interpretation that July is indeed constructing some form of disagreement. Note, however, that July is not disagreeing with the overall gist of Patrick's prior assessment (i.e., that online learning is not suitable), only that Patrick's claims

(especially his taking issue with all students requiring a laptop – line 162) are not sufficient grounds on which to eliminate this option from consideration. This is followed by the noun-copula clause construction *the most* [...] *problem is* in line 172, which upgrades July's epistemic rights and prefaces the oppositional upshot of her TCU; namely, that a far more salient concern with online learning is that students *will* have a computer or laptop but may be tempted to use it for things other than studying. As July puts it, they may *use some website or check email and chatting or play games* (line 173-5).

Following July's TCU, Heba responds in a latched position with the declarative *so this maybe uh: wasting for their time*, prosodically marked as an interrogative with a turn-final rising intonation that 'pulls back sufficiently to ensure that her turn is an enquiry' (Drew, 2018: 170). Heba thereby displays her epistemic status as only partially knowing; an interpretation evidenced by July who responds immediately, again in latched position, with a confirming answer in the form of *yeah*, *yeah* in line 177. After a short pause, Marco then signals his affiliation with the agreement token *yeah* in line 178, to which July overlaps with further confirmation: *yeah* (0.5) *a* learning *time* (my emphasis). After this, having now agreed on what their greatest reservation is with regards to online learning, Marco initiates a topic shift to the next option on the crib sheet ('Blended Learning') and the group move on with their discussion.

As we have seen in this section, TCUs designed with noun-copula clause constructions provide test-takers a subtle resource with which to signal their disagreement with a prior idea while yet preserving its validity. In doing so, participants can agree with the gist of an argument (e.g., broadly in favour of or against on option on the test crib sheet) but disagree with the grounds on which that position is built. In other words, by claiming, for example, that *the most important thing is* (Excerpt 6.3.1) or *the most problem is* (Excerpt 6.3.3) in a conditionally relevant second assessment, test-takers can imply that what came before is indeed important or a problem, but that it is not as salient an issue as the current idea being proposed. This serves as a face-saving strategy that heightens inclusivity and elicits affiliation from fellow test-takers. This way of disagreeing, then, compared to the invocations of shared knowledge seen in the previous section, can be seen as more commensurate with the collaborative, joint nature of the task.

The interpretation that these epistemic upgrades preserve social solidarity and lessen the dispreferred dimension of the disagreeing turn is evidenced by the affiliative responses that such turns elicit. In Excerpt 6.3.1., affiliation with the disagreeing turn was offered by way of an overlapping, turn completion, while in Excerpts 6.3.2 and 6.3.3., respectively, agreement was offered in overlap with, or shortly after, the disagreeing turn. The immediacy of which is indicative of affiliation.

## 6.4. Disagreeing by asking rhetorical questions

In this third and final section of the chapter, yet another salient disagreeing strategy will be considered; namely, the use of rhetorical questions (hereafter RQs). Such questions are framed in contrast to general information-seeking questions (or ISQs - see, for example, Braun et al., 2020), in that they do not genuinely seek an answer. Rather, they are designed to provoke a recognition and acceptance of the new knowledge (Ilie, 1994) alluded to in the RQ and, thereby, to elicit affiliation from a fellow test-taker.

In the sequences below, we will see how such questions can be used as a means of shifting the focus of the conversation to an as yet unconsidered perspective that runs counter to an idea presented in prior discourse. For example:

```
[Excerpt 6.4.1]
21   *ALY:      but how do you think of it? - maybe it a bit expensive do
22              you know we should have a classmate to have a group-
23              become a group to have a uh dinner?


[Excerpt 6.4.2]

223  *CAR:      bu- (.) but i think look at the additional information
224              (0.2) they uh this company is very uh: (0.6) grows
225              in- uh quickly so what's that mean? (0.2)
226              so quality(0.3) is uh- ah- increasing=

[Excerpt 6.4.3]
73   *CHRI:     =do you thought- but have you ever considered
75              about the: effect the- the environment? i mean there-
76              there's- this- this restaurant is uh very=
```

In each of these examples, the turn is designed so as not to allow sufficient time for a fellow test-taker to respond, and in each, it is the current speaker that provides an answer to the question. This, as will be discussed below, imbues the question with the 'perlocutionary effect of a statement' (Ilie, 2015: 4) and evidences their metacommunicative, rhetorical nature. What's more, as will be shown, these disagreeing turns tend to elicit affiliative responses from fellow test-takers.

My findings support Ilie's (1994: p28) definition of RQs, which she claims are:

*Question[s] used as a challenging statement to convey the addresser's commitment to its implicit answer in order to induce the addressee's mental recognition of its obviousness and the acceptance, verbalised or nonverbalised, of its validity*

According to Ilie (2015), RQs serve a range of communicative functions, such as challenges, protests, disagreements, ironical remarks, and accusations. In what follows, I will focus specifically on their use in securing affiliation in disagreement sequences, analysing both the turn design of the focal disagreeing turn and the responses they receive.

### Excerpt 6.4.1. *but* […] *do you know?*



```
12    *MEG:      yeah and also i think it's the traditional English food
13               that because we are foreigners we come to a new country
14               that we need to try the traditionals=
15    *ATA:      =yeah you can try their [local]≈
16    *MEG:                              [yeah yeah yeah]
17               (0.3)
18    *ATA:      ≈[local food]
19    *MEG:      [local- local] food (.) local restaurant
20               (0.4)
```

```
21→  *ALY:        but how do you |think of it|(.) maybe it a bit expensive
```



```
     |((Alyssa puts her hands together and points to the crib sheet))|
22 →             (.) do you know we should have a classmate to have a
23               group- become a group to have a uh dinner? (.) i think
24               maybe expensive is not very suitable for |the classmates|
```
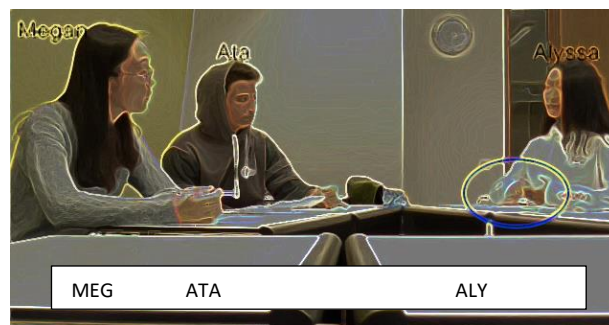


```
     |((Alyssa hovers her right hand over the crib sheet))|
25               (0.5)
26   *ATA:       ah: (.) yeah i think so (0.5) it's not suitable for
27               students because it's quite [expensive]
28   *MEG:                                   [|quite high|]=
```



```
                     |((Megan nods))|
29:  *ALY:       =yeah
```
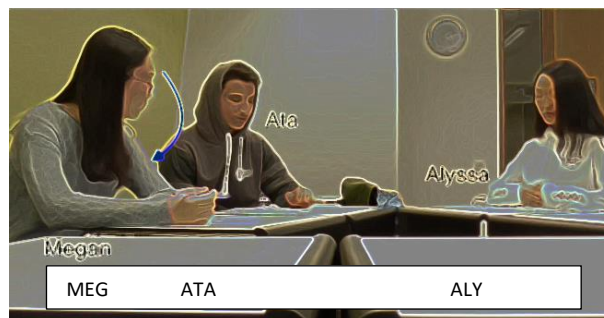
In this first sequence, test-takers Alyssa, Megan, and Ata are engaged in an assessment that requires them to choose the most suitable restaurant for an end-of-term party. Just before the onset of the sequence, the group have been discussing one of the options on their crib sheets, which they all agree is convenient due to its proximity to the University.

At the beginning of the sequence, we see Megan signalling her agreement with this prior assessment of the restaurant's convenience in a TCU formatted with a turn-initial *yeah* and a subsequent conditionally relevant second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984): *and also I think it's the traditional English food* (line 12). Megan then provides an account for why her assessment is pertinent to the task in lines 13 and 14 (*because we are foreigners, we come to a new country that we need to try the traditional*s).

Following Megan's TCU, Ata then signals his agreement in a latched, multi-unit turn in lines 15 and 18: *yeah we can try their local* [...] *local food*. Megan confirms this in overlap in line 19 (*local food* (.) *local restaurant*), the immediacy of which (along with her emphatic *yeah yeah yeah* in line 16) signals affiliation and alignment between herself and Ata.

At this stage in the discussion, Alyssa has remained silent and opted not to affiliate with Ata and Megan, who in the prior discourse have highlighted their agreement with regards to the salience of local food as a factor in deciding which restaurant to choose. However, after a short pause (0.4) in line 20, Alyssa makes her position clear when she takes the floor with a disagreement (*but-*) prefaced TCU containing two questions. Note, however, that despite the TCU's interrogative format, Alyssa does not wait for another test-taker to provide an answer, instead she provides a response herself, suggesting that these questions indeed serve a rhetorical function. Let us consider each in more detail.

The first of these questions (*how do you think of it?* – line 21) is answered with *maybe it a bit expensive*. This foreshadows her subsequent question and establishes a premise for disagreement (i.e., the price of the restaurant). Having done so, Alyssa then goes on to ask *do you know we should have a classmate to have a group- become a group to have a uh dinner?* (lines 21-3), which is given the answer: *I think maybe expensive is not very:* (0.4) *suitable for the classmates*. This second question serves the rhetorical functions of (1) directing her fellow test-takers' attention to the task instructions, which state that the group should select an appropriate restaurant for a group of university students, and, as a consequence, (2) of lending legitimacy to her previous assessment that the restaurant in question is *a bit expensive*. The implication being that university students may not have a lot of money.

By constructing her disagreement using interrogative syntax and incorporating markers of epistemic uncertainty into each respective answer (cf. maybe *it a bit expensive* – line 21; I think maybe *expensive is not suitable* – lines 23-4), Alyssa is able to mitigate her disagreement and make an affiliative response more likely by leaving the dialogic space open for the emergence of alternative views (Mortensen, 2012). This mitigation is compounded by the fact that Alyssa bases her disagreement on a consideration pertaining to the official task instructions on the assessment crib sheet, which she gestures to multiple times throughout her TCU at lines 21 and 24.

After Alyssa completes her disagreeing TCU, there is a short pause (0.5 seconds) before Ata signals his agreement in line 25. His turn, which is formatted with a prefatory change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) (*ah*:), signals his shift from a K- to a K+ epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012) and suggests that he had not, until now, considered the cost of the restaurant. This interpretation (i.e., that in having now considered the price of this restaurant his position has changed) is evidenced in the remainder of Ata's turn when he states *yeah I think so* […] *it's not suitable for students because it's quite expensive*, and thereby distances himself from his and Megan's positive appraisal of the restaurant in question in the prior discourse (cf. lines 12-19). Megan then appears to signal her agreement with Alyssa's claim with *quite high* (presumably referring also to the price of the restaurant) at line 28, which she delivers in overlap with Ata's *quite expensive* while nodding. After this affiliative display from Megan, Alyssa acknowledges her fellow test-takers' agreement in line 19 (*yeah*) before the group then move on to consider the next option on their crib sheets.

A similar orientation to the task instructions when constructing disagreement can be seen within the following sequence, where again a test-taker manages to elicit affiliation from a fellow test-taker by incorporating a RQ into their disagreeing TCU in order to highlight some as-yet unconsidered aspect of the task pertinent to the decision-making process.

In this sequence, the test-takers have been asked to choose a suitable product in which to invest. At the onset, Ben can be seen stating that one of the products is *not a good idea* (line 212). His turn, however, which is designed with emphatic markers that downgrade his epistemic certainty (*I think-* just *I think* (lines 212-3) leaves the floor open to emergent views (Mortensen, 2017), and indeed this is what follows, after a short pause in line 214.
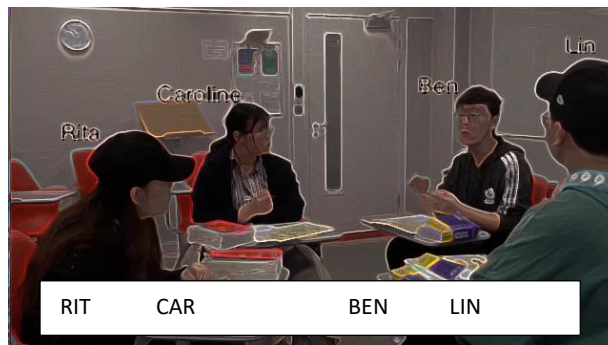


```
212   *BEN:      maybe it's not a (1.4) good idea i think- just i
213              think
214              (0.4)
215 →*CAR:       but may i ask a question (.) so (0.3) you are talking
216              about the (0.4) fourth one right (.) that means the
217              last one
228              (0.3)
219   *BEN:      yeah last one
220              (0.8)
221 →*CAR:       |bu- (.) but| i think- look at the additional information
```



```
|((Caroline raises her left hand))|
```

```
222                     (0.2) they uh |this company| is very uh: (0.6) grows
```
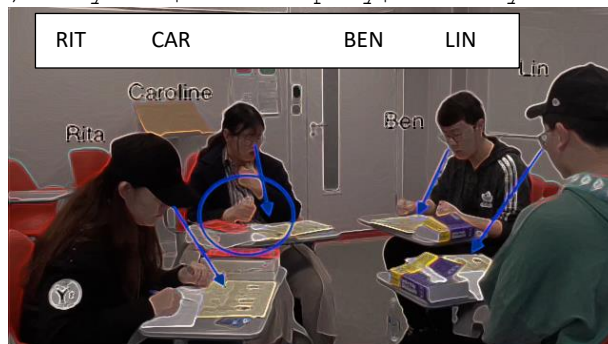


```
       |((Caroline points her pen at the crib sheet and her fellow test-takers
                   also shift their gaze to their own crib sheets))|
223 →              in- uh quickly (.) |so what's that mean?| (0.2) so quality
```
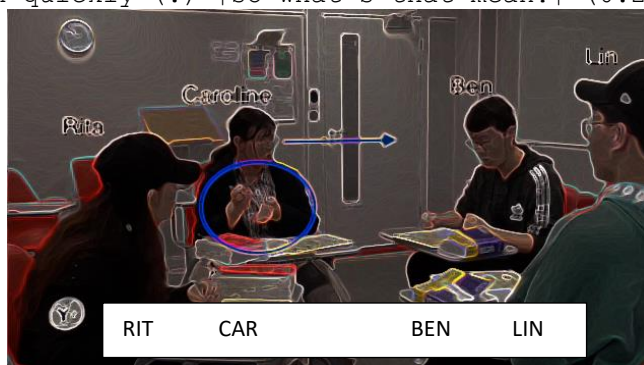


```
           |((Caroline lifts both hands up and shifts gaze to Ben))|
224                   (0.3)is uh- ah- increasing=
225    *BEN:          =yeah
226                   (.)
227    *CAR:          so (.) it's (.) not like
228                   (0.6)
229    *BEN:          yeah the future (.) yeah
```

At line 215, Caroline takes the floor with a *but*-prefaced turn indicating opposition to Ben's prior assessment, and a subsequent clarifying question (*may I ask a question* […] *so you are talking about the fourth one right* […] *that means the last one* (lines 215-216). This is then confirmed by Ben (*yeah the last one* – line 219) after a short pause.

Having established then that she and Ben are indeed referring to the same product on their assessment crib sheets, Caroline begins what seems to be the locus of her disagreement. In this next stage of her multi-unit TCU, Caroline re-establishes the oppositional nature of her turn with a second prefatory *but-*, which she delivers this time with a concomitant gesture of raising her left hand towards Ben, making it clear that it is he, specifically, that she is

addressing. This is then followed by the epistemic marker *I think-* before switching to the bald imperative (Antaki & Kent, 2012): *look at the information.*

This directive to the group is clarified in line 222, when Caroline specifies *this company* while pointing with her pen to the specific product to which she is referring, which then orients her fellow test-takers' gaze to their respective crib sheets (line 222). Once the groups' attention has been oriented to the detail on their crib sheets, Caroline then asks *so what's that mean?* (line 223), while raising both palms out in front of her and shifting her gaze from her crib sheet to Ben, who continues to be her primary addressee. However, this question appears to be rhetorical in nature.

This interpretation is evidenced by the subsequent pause (just 0.2 seconds), which, crucially, – as with the previous sequence - does not allow sufficient time for a fellow test-taker to respond. Instead, after this brief pause, Caroline proffers her own answer (*so quality* […] *is* […] *increasing* - lines 223-4), which alludes to her prior claim that the company in question is growing very quickly, in lines 222-3. In response to this, Ben then offers his agreement in a latched position (=*yeah* – line 225), thus signalling his affiliation with Caroline and, as a result, the option in question for the time being is not ruled out.

Like Ata in Excerpt 6.4.1., here Ben produces his agreement by orienting to the new knowledge foregrounded by the prior RQ. In this case, the new knowledge relates to the *future* potential of the product, a point which Ben topicalises with *yeah the future* (.) *yeah* in line 229. Compare this with Ata's *ah: it's not suitable* […] *because it's expensive*, which parallels Alyssa's original *expensive is not very suitable* (line 24, Excerpt 6.4.1) and, as here, topicalises the new knowledge alluded to in the prior RQ.

In the previous two sequences, then, we can begin to see how test-takers in this assessment setting incorporate RQs that highlight some as-yet unconsidered aspect of the assessment task (be that an element within the task instructions, as in the former sequence, or a specific detail pertaining to one of the individual options on their crib sheets, as in the latter) into their disagreeing turns to secure affiliation from fellow test-takers . As shown, this serves to elicit affiliation by way of an acknowledgement of new knowledge, signalling a

fellow test-taker's agreement with the prior disagreeing turn and their switch from a K- to a K+ epistemic status. This is often achieved via a concomitant embodied orientation to the assessment materials by the issuer of the disagreeing TCU.

By using the assessment materials as a basis for their disagreement, test-takers are able not only to mitigate the oppositional force of their TCUs, but also to lend credence to their content. In other words, by constructing their disagreement in relation to the exigencies of the assessment task (rather than, for example, in relation to personal preference towards one option or another), test-takers can elicit a more affiliative response, as was the case in the sequences considered thus far, in which both focal disagreeing TCUs were proceeded by immediate (and, therefore) affiliative tokens of agreement or changes of perspective. What the deliverer of the oppositional TCU is doing, it appears, is making it difficult for a fellow test-taker to disagree, as to do so would run counter to the official assessment details.

In the next section we will consider a similar sequence in which a RQ is incorporated into a disagreeing TCU. However, this time, we shall see how slight modifications to the turn designs seen in the previous two Excerpts can result in a less affiliative response, in which neither agreement nor a recognition of the new knowledge alluded to in the RQ is elicited.

### Excerpt 6.4.3. *but have you ever considered the effects of . . . ?*

In this sequence, test-takers Hannie, Kevin, Chris, and Jane are trying to decide on the best restaurant at which to hold an end-of-term party for a group of students at a British university. It begins with Hannie making the case for choosing a traditional British restaurant instead of a local pizza restaurant, as she claims *pizza* […] *we can eat everywhere* […] *but traditional food* […] *we cant' do it by ourselves* (lines 65-7). This is followed in overlap by Kevin in line 70 (*Okay*), who acknowledges Hannie's suggestion (lines 68-9).

```
65    *HAN: bu:t (0.2) the pizza uh- pizza (0.2) wHe
66          can eat everywhere (0.3) but traditional
67          food uh we (0.4) we can't do it by ourselves
68          so (0.4) uh we can (0.7) go to the: restaurant
69          and eat the (0.7) traditional English [food]
70    *KEV:                                      [okay]=
71 →  *CHR: =do you thought- but |have you ever consider|
```



```
                           |((Chris looks at Hannie))|
72 →          about the: effect the- the environment? (.) i mean there-
73            there's- this- this restaurant is uh very=
74    *JAN: =which restaurant?=
75    *KEV: =uh:=
76    *CHR: =the first one=
77    *KEV: =(xxx)=
78    *CHR: =[is] she talk about is the small and quiet
79    *JAN:  [okay]
80           (.)
81    *KEV: yes=
82    *CHR: =we have eight people in our class so
83           (0.5) uh maybe it's too crowded for us
84           maybe it's- there's no table for us
85           and uh- uh: it's very quiet and eight
86           people together: (0.5) you- you know the
87           (0.2) people will be very large and you
88           may need to speak very loudly so
89           (0.3) it maybe can be a problem
90           (0.3) uhm (0.7) how do you think about
91           it Kevin?
92           (0.5)
93    *KEV: uh: ☺i don't think so☺
```

After Hannie's suggestion that the group should choose a traditional British restaurant, and Kevin's subsequent acknowledgement, Chris takes the floor in line 71 with a disagreeing TCU. This TCU is comprised, firstly, of a turn-initial disagreement marker (*but)* and the false start (*do you thought* - ), before then switching to the interrogative: *have you ever consider about the environment?*.

As in the previous sequences, the rhetorical nature of this question is evidenced by a subsequent short pause that does not allow sufficient time for a fellow test-taker to respond. After this pause, Chris instead continues his turn by stating *I mean* […] *this*

*restaurant is very* (lines 72-3); however, before Chris can finish his assessment, Jane interrupts with the clarifying question *which restaurant* in line 73. This communicative breakdown is then repaired by Chris, who first specifies *the first one* before further elaborating with *is she talk about*, in lines 76 and 78 respectively. The *she* in Chris' turn appears to refer to Hannie, to whom Chris directed his RQ with a concomitant shift in gaze in line 71.

Having now clarified the restaurant to which he is referring, Chris completes his second assessment (Pomerantz, 1984) with *small and quiet* (line 78). After a short pause and subsequent acknowledgement (*yes* – line 81) from Kevin, Chris continues his multi-part TCU with an explanation of why a restaurant being *small* and *quiet* might be a problem. This section of Chris' TCU, which can be seen as a warrant (Heritage, 2012) for his disagreement, occurs between lines 82-9, where it is claimed (albeit with frequent markers of epistemic uncertainty: *maybe* and *may* – lines 83, 84, 88, and 89) that this restaurant may be *too crowded,* that there may be *no table,* and that eight people together may be *very large* and as a result the students may need to *speak very loudly*, which *can be a problem*. His disagreeing TCU is then concluded in lines 90-1 by selecting the next speaker, via the interrogatively formatted: *how do you think about it Kevin?*

In summary, then, Chris' disagreeing TCU is comprised of; (1) a prefatory marker of disagreement, (2) a RQ, (3) a warrant/explication for his disagreement, and (4) next-speaker selection. Let us now consider the response to this disagreeing TCU, in comparison to the responses given in the previous two sequences.

In Excerpts 6.4.1 and 2.4.2, each disagreeing TCU was met with affiliation via an agreeing turn that topicalised, or rephrased, the new knowledge alluded to by the prior RQ. In the latter, agreement was both immediate and brief, which, being a common feature of preferred responses (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006), signalled the speaker's affiliation with the prior assessment. In the former, although delivered with less immediacy, the subsequent agreement was more explicitly formulated. This included a change-of-state token, signalling the speaker's shift from K- to K+ status and a repetition of the prior speaker's assessment which, together, displayed the speaker's strong affiliation with the prior claim. However,

with the current sequence, the response was less affiliative. After Chris' TCU, there proceeded a pause of 0.5 seconds before Kevin responded with the disaffiliative *I don't think so,* in a turn formulated with both hesitation (uh::) and a vocal perturbation (smile/laughter voice), the latter of which has been noted for its use by students as a resource with which to 'minimise the dispreferred dimension of their response' (Petitjean & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2015: 91).

It is worth noting that, in the current sequence, the speaker in his disagreeing TCU did not explicitly refer to the assessment crib sheet or the task demands, as was the case in Excerpt 6.4.2 (*look at the information*) and 6.4.1, where the speaker gestured to her crib sheet before reminding the group of the task instructions (*we should have a classmate* […] *to become a group* […] *to have dinner*). An additional difference concerning the focal TCU in the current sequence is that it was designed with a greater abundance of markers of epistemic uncertainty, which emphasise the speculative nature of the speaker's disagreement (see, e.g., *maybe it's too crowded* – line 83; *maybe* […] *there's no table for us* – line 84; *maybe it can be a problem* – line 89). This constellation of features appears to compromise the persuasive, rhetorical force of the first two disagreeing TCUs, in which disagreement was constructed with an overt reference to the official task instructions, thus making any disaffiliation from a fellow test-taker less feasible. Here, on the other hand, in the absence of a more explicit reference to the official test documentation, and with the inclusion of a warrant for disagreement replete with speculative, conjectural markers of epistemic uncertainty, the subsequent speaker had a firmer basis on which to disaffiliate with the prior speaker's claim. And this is indeed what occurred.

As we have seen in this section, then, disagreeing turns constructed with RQs that frame some as-yet undiscussed topic (usually derived from the assessment documentation) serve as both a means of mitigating the dispreferred, potentially face-threatening nature of the disagreeing act and eliciting affiliation, while at the same time strengthening the speaker's claim. Successful disagreeing turns of this sort (i.e., those that are met with affiliation rather than disaffiliation - see excerpts 6.4.1 and 6.4.2) use markers of epistemic uncertainty sparingly (if at all – see 2.4.2) and make use of concomitant physical gestures to the crib sheet to consolidate the relationship between their claims and the official test

documentation. This gives their disagreements a deontic dimension (Stevanovic & Perakyla, 2012); that is, by incorporating facets of the official test documentation into their oppositional turns, test-takers can bolster their rights to determine what is 'obligatory, permissible or forbidden' (ibid: 299) which, in turn, makes the prospect of disaffiliation from a fellow test-taker less practicable. After all, to counter such turns would involve opposing not only the prior speaker's claim but, in effect, the assessment documentation itself.

Turns of this type, as we have seen, are most often met with immediate agreement in turns that also rephrase or topicalise the new knowledge alluded to in the RQ of the focal disagreeing turn. That is, so long as the focal TCU is formatted with a sufficient degree of epistemic certainty, or at least not replete with markers of epistemic *un*certainty. This, as we have seen, lessens the rhetorical, facilitative nature of the focal disagreeing turn and makes a disaffiliative response more likely.

## 6.5. Summary

This chapter set out to analyse and better understand how affiliation is managed in disagreement sequences within a group-based, task-oriented oral assessment setting. In doing so, three salient disagreeing acts were considered. These included disagreeing by: (1) invoking of shared knowledge, (2) upgrading of epistemic rights, and (3) asking rhetorical questions. Each of these disagreeing acts was shown to orient, in its own way, to the collaborative nature of the assessment task. As such, they may be classified as a form of 'inclusive disagreement', in that they each 'acknowledge another's view [(or, at least, do not directly dismiss it)] while constructing a potentially disagreeing position' (Waring, 2001: 33).

In section 6.2, this was done by a test-taker invoking the group's shared knowledge - often in conjunction with a statement of their own knowledge - to mitigate the dispreferred nature of their disagreement. By formulating their disagreeing turns in this way, it was found that test-takers could foreground the collaborative demands of the task, while yet venturing a turn with a face-threatening potential that is potentially destructive of social solidarity. However, as was shown, this disagreeing strategy could often be met with a need for further facework from a test-taker outside of the disagreeing dyad (see Excerpt 6.2.1.) or

with an implicit rejection, or questioning, of the veracity of the invocation of shared knowledge (see Excerpt 6.2.3.). In this sense, disagreeing via recourse to invoking shared knowledge was found to a less successful interactional strategy in terms of managing affiliation, when compared to disagreeing via the upgrading of epistemic rights (Section 6.3.) or via rhetorical questions (Section 6.4.).

In Section 6.3., we saw how noun-copula clause constructions were integrated into disagreeing turns as a way of upgrading epistemic rights that both preserved the validity of the prior claim *and* countered its proposed salience. It was found that this subtle interactional resource allowed test-takers to elicit affiliation from fellow test-takers by agreeing with the *gist* of a prior claim (e.g., option one is unsuitable) while yet disagreeing with the grounds on which that claim was based (e.g., option one is unsuitable more because of X than because of Y or X is a problem but Y is a bigger problem). This disagreeing turn design was shown to facilitate more immediate, and therefore affiliative, displays of agreement from fellow test-takers, with the recipients of these upgrades of epistemic rights responding in overlap (Excerpts 6.3.1. and 6.3.2.) or in quick succession (Excerpt 6.3.3.) with tokens of agreement.

Finally, in Section 6.4., it was shown how test-takers were able to incorporate into their turn design RQs that highlight some as-yet undiscussed facet of the test documentation to cast a different light on something previously positively or negatively evaluated by the group. The facilitative nature of this disagreeing act allowed a speaker to guide their fellow test-takers to their counter-position rather than state it directly, which was shown in the first two sequences to elicit affiliation. This was achieved by the interrogative formatting of the turn as well as the way in which these counterclaims were wedded to the official test documentation, to which the speakers gestured concomitantly. In such sequences, this disagreeing strategy displayed a propensity for eliciting affiliative responses that displayed agreement by way of a fellow test-taker topicalizing the new knowledge alluded to by the RQ in the prior disagreeing turn.

In analysing these salient acts within the dataset, I hope to have highlighted further the complex and cognitively demanding skill of managing disagreement and affiliation in a

hitherto relatively underexplored setting. What's more, the analysis above adds to prior research by scholars interested in disagreements-in-interaction (see, e.g., Hüttner, 2014; Angiouri & Locher, 2012; Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998; Pekarek-Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011; Sharma, 2012) by exploring three types of disagreeing acts that, to this researcher's knowledge, have received little attention in the literature (notwithstanding Hsieh's (2018) work on the use of noun-copula clause constructions in pursuing agreement). All of this, in turn, contributes to ongoing efforts by CA researchers interested in L2 education to uncover the 'invisible rules' (Wong and Waring, 2010) of interaction that guide how test-takers engage in and manage talk. As such, these findings offer valuable insights for materials writers in the fields of ELT and EAP who may wish to offer prospective test-takers something more than useful stock phrases such as *I disagree, I don't think so*, by creating learning materials based on 'raw data', rather than low-resolution abstractions, and thereby facilitating a greater appreciation of the complex interactional practices needed to successfully navigate such group-based assessment tasks.

# Chapter 7. Analysis: Negotiating Deontic Rights

## 7.1. Introduction

Though several studies have now addressed deontics in talk-in-interaction (see, e.g., Stevanovic, 2013; 2015; Stevanovic & Perakyla, 2012), few have done so in educational settings (one known exception is Ishino and Okada 2018). Moreover, within such studies, few – outside of those concerned with child interactions (see Goodwin and Cekaite 2012) – have focussed on settings where there is a prima facie flat relationship between participants (e.g. as in the peer interaction found in this assessment setting), leaving instead a preponderance of studies where the focal setting contains a hierarchical relationship (e.g. between doctor-patient (Landmark et al. 2015), parent-child (Zinken and Ogiermann 2011), or director-faculty member (Clifton et al. 2018)). This chapter, therefore, aims to contribute to the burgeoning field of research on deontics with a focus on a hitherto underexplored setting; that is, peer interaction in L2, oral, group assessments. To this end, the following research question was posed:

How do test-takers negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group?

Through an initial exploration of this question, it was found that directives, such as proposals (Clifton et al. 2018; Ekberg and LeCouteur 2015; Stivers and Sidnell 2016) and requests (Stevanovic 2011; Kendrick and Drew 2016), can be used as a resource with which to impose or close local sequences of interaction and therefore make a claim of deontic rights (Stevanovic 2013, 2015; Stevanovic and Perakyla 2012) relative to one's fellow test-takers. Therefore, these directive-initiated adjacency pairs were selected for analysis. This is in line with Stevanovic's (2018) suggestion that such adjacency pairs are the central locus of negotiation over deontic rights.

The directives considered in this chapter range from requests (Curl & Drew, 2008), such as:

```
[Excerpt 7.2.2.]

39    *SARA:    =but can we have the description of the first
40              product first?
```

to suggestions (Stevanovic & Perakyla: 2012):

```
[Excerpt 7.4.3.]

57    *ALI:     =so should we move on to the next option
58              proposal four?
```

proposals (Stivers & Sidnell, 2016):

```
[Excerpt 7.2.1.]

22    *JON:     ⌊(may i mention to you)⌋ uh we can
23              talk- talk with this uh in the order
```

and stronger 'need reports' (Kendrick and Drew, 2016), using semi-modals, such as:

```
[Excerpt 7.3.1.]

46    *HOL:     =but there's other facts that we need to
47              (0.7)think ⌈about it⌉
```

A fine-grained analysis of such directive actions and the deontic practices they entail may have significant pedagogical benefits in terms of learner training – raising learners' awareness of the implications that turn design can have on the uptake of a proposed interactional agenda – and in terms of assessor training, in that these findings could help foster and facilitate a deeper appreciation of the complex, subtle interactional practices in which deontic rights are negotiated in the course of such assessment activities.

With this in mind, the current chapter seeks to explore how test-takers make use of directives to set the group agenda and subsequently negotiate their deontic right to do so relative to their fellow test-takers. In doing so, this chapter reveals some of the local exigencies of interaction within an assessment format that has received comparatively little attention in the assessment literature compared to the language proficiency interview (LPI) (Ross 2017), or oral proficiency interview (OPI) (Seedhouse 2013; Lazaraton 1996; Kasper and Ross 2007) format.

### 7.1.2. Deontics and Directives in CA

Directives have been said to include requests, proposals, and suggestions (Stevanovic 2013). These action types have often been studied alongside commissives such as offers and

invitations, although some researchers (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 2014) treat the two categories as belonging 'to one single extended family of action' (624); that is, initiating actions that involve a speaker attempting to bring about some future action. Such future actions can relate to the here and now (proximal) and are brought to bear on the talk immediately subsequent to the directive (as is the case in the current chapter), or refer to actions to be carried out in the more distant future (distal) . In the literature, the borderline between directives and requests is not clear-cut, and these have often been characterised as more or less the same thing; actions that are involved with 'getting somebody to do something' (Keisanen and Rauniomaa 2012, 325) or, in the words of Ervin-Tripp (1976), who referred to such as actions as 'control moves', actions that involve 'efforts to encourage actions or prohibit, slow or stop actions already underway by another person' (196). Such actions have tended to be discussed in relation to the notion of entitlement (see Heinemann 2006; Craven and Potter 2010).

Although directive actions such as proposals, requests, suggestions, orders, and the like, have a common core (i.e., they all attempt to 'induce the recipient to perform some action' (Stevanovic and Svennevig 2015, 2)), they vary along deontic dimensions such as desirability, necessity, and speaker entitlement (ibid.). For example, directives in a proposal format (we can/we could) have been argued to claim low entitlement, in that they treat the outcome of action as dependent on recipient approval (Stivers and Sidnell 2016). Suggestions, too, have been argued to index the joint nature of the future action/ activity, claiming low entitlement (Stevanovic and Perakyla 2012) relative to other stronger directive actions such as orders, often formulated as bald imperatives (e.g. *do it, give me that*) that claim high entitlement and show little to no orientation to possible noncompliance.

Deontic claims, like epistemic claims, are ubiquitous to social interaction and play a part in a variety of specific actions such as proposals, requests (Curl and Drew 2008; Brown and Levinson 1987), topic closure (McKinlay and McVittie 2006), and the announcement of decisions (Stevanovic 2013). However, being still in its infancy (Heritage 2013), research on the deontic domain in interaction has, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, hitherto largely neglected educational settings, with only a few exceptions; most notably Ishino and Okada (2018), who investigated how teachers used constructed deontic status by means of

'alternative recognitionals' as a resource for managing student participation in ongoing classroom activities (though see Stokoe (2000) and Gan, Davison, and Hamp-Lyons (2008) on the related concepts of topic negotiation/construction, and Jenks (2007) on floor management).

### 7.1.3. Chapter Outline

The chapter is organised as follows: first, it considers how deontic rights are negotiated by accepting a prior directive, before moving on, in the second section, to an analysis of sequences in which a directive is subsequently rejected. The final section then considers sequences in which a directive is responded to by a fellow test-taker proffering a second, additional directive. In each of these sections, I will consider how these different practices affect the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group.

## 7.2. Negotiating deontic rights by accepting a directive

Excerpt 7.2.1. *we can talk about this in the order*

This sequence, in which students must choose a suitable product in which to invest, begins with Poppy assessing one of the products (lines 11–13).
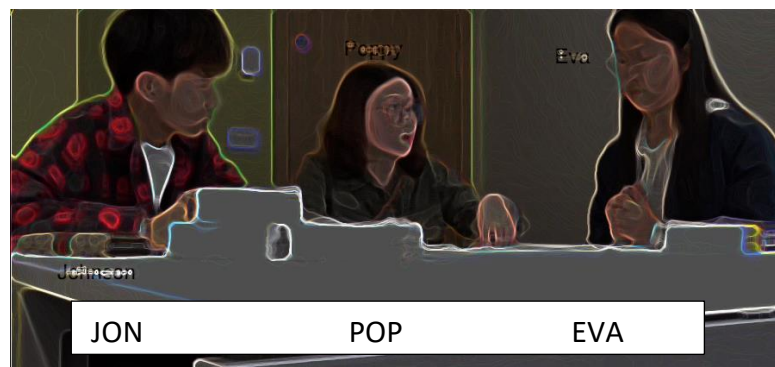


```
11    *POP:     i just (know-) want to say i- uhm if you: uh:
12              (0.3) other can- can mmm carry uh backpack the
13              mm: storage space (0.4) will be smaller=
```

```
14      *EVA:       =yeah (1.1) uh [what you think]
```
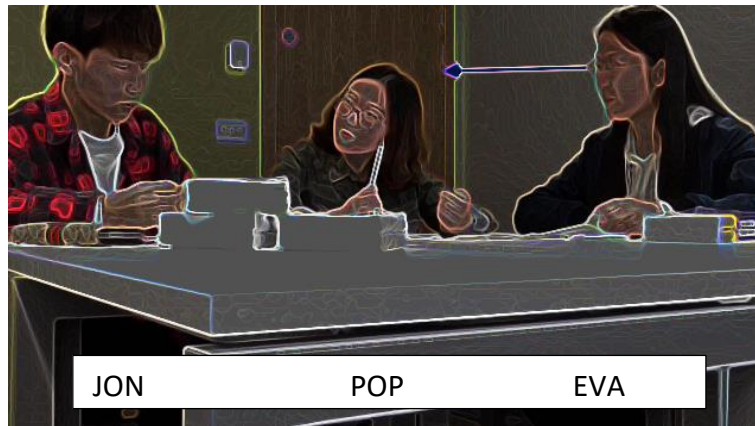


```
                    |((EVA turns to JON))|
15→     *JON:        ⌊(may i mention to you)⌋ uh we can talk- talk
16                  with this uh in the order like (.) target market
17                  (.) a:nd (0.6) products cost and (.) pros and cons
18                  (.) because we need to these details to discuss
19                  wh- whether it is the best(0.7) business (0.3) uh:=
20      *EVA:       =yeah=
21      *JON:       =successful yeah (.) so as- as she said uh:
22                  this (target) market is for children (0.5) uh
23                  (.) specially two to- to- fo- uh: to five years
24                  (.)
25      *POP:       uh-=
26      *JON:       =u:hm (.) uh: (0.5) product is uh: (.) chair and
27                  can (0.4) store in the bag
28                  (.)
29      *EVA        yes
30                  (.)
31      *POP        yeah
```

This is followed by Eva's agreement token *yeah* (Schegloff, 2007), and subsequent selection of Jonson as the next speaker with the interrogative *uh what you think* and concomitant shift of gaze (line 14). Jonson, however, begins his turn in overlap with Eva's question (i.e. before it's completion), interjecting with a directive designed to impose a particular sequential order on subsequent talk; that is, to first consider the product's *target market*, then the *product's cost*, and finally the *pros and cons* (see lines 16-7). This directive, using a common grammatical format in proposals (e.g. we can – see Couper-Kuhlen 2014, 638), suggests a course of joint future action and makes conditionally relevant a commitment (or a withholding of commitment) to said action and, by extension, claims proximal deontic rights.

As Stevanovic (2015, 86) puts it, 'recipients may treat their co-participants' proximal deontic claims in different ways: endorse, challenge, or circumvent', and, in this instance, Jonson's directive is accepted and his deontic claim appears to be endorsed mid-turn by Eva's latched ' = yeah = ' (line 33), which indicates that Jonson's proposal has been approved. Moreover, as Eva's compliance token is offered without delay, mitigation, or an account (Duran and Sert 2019), her response can also be said to be face affirming and affiliative, suggesting that this is a preferred second pair-part.

Deontic rights can be 'claimed with varying strength or degree of necessity, positing them on a deontic gradient' (Landmark, et al. 2015, 56) and speakers, through their turn design, can choose to increase or decrease the probability of a deontic interpretation (Stevanovic 2011). With this in mind, let us consider some of the features in the turn design of Jonson's directive. Declaratively formatted, it contains both the mitigating phrase 'may I mention to you' and multiple instances of the first- person plural pronoun 'we' (lines 16 and 19), used in many task-oriented, educational settings, to organise decision-making (Walsh and Knight 2016) and signal group membership. These features – which mark low entitlement and high contingency (Thompson, Fox, and Couper-Kuhlen 2015) – when coupled with the TCU's canonical proposal format and the inclusion of an account (see lines 18-9), make a weak claim to deontic rights and serve to index a need to confer, suggesting evenly distributed rights among the group by implying that there is a decision to be made, and that the enactment of which is contingent upon the recipient (Stevanovic 2013). This recipient contingency implies an even distribution of rights, or deontic symmetry (Stevanovic and Perakyla 2012), and is strengthened further by the account in lines 19-20, where Johnson again orients to the agenda as being something that the test-takers are equally entitled to determine. This is subsequently reinforced and maintained by Eva and Jessica's approving responses in lines 20, 29, and 31, which are offered in a latched (line 21) or immediately subsequent sequential position (e.g. after a micro pause – lines 30 and 32), displaying affiliation and commitment towards Johnson's directive.

It is worth noting that Johnson's directive, which proposes the task-at-hand be framed in terms of target market, product cost, and pros and cons, is only partly grounded in the task instructions, which explicitly state that test-takers should consider 'the strengths and

weaknesses' of each option but make no mention of 'target market' or 'product cost'. However, by drawing upon the task instructions as a source of deontic authority, Johnson is able to scaffold his own personal interactional agenda. In so doing, his directive displays his orientation to effective task completion and highlights some divergence between task-as-workplan and task-as- process.

After Jonson's directive – and Eva's approval – he does not wait for one of his fellow test-takers to elaborate on this proposed interactional agenda, but rather begins to do so himself with his so-formulation (lines 21), which is used as a topic structuring device that gets to work on discussing the product in terms of its target market, as suggested in line 17; thus projecting 'the upshot of the talk-so-far and [making] explicit the links between the prior talk and the current turn' (Clifton 2009, 67; see also Deppermann 2011). Such formulations can serve as useful resources in interaction as they can achieve and demonstrate a collective understanding of prior talk while also giving some measure of assurance that certain topics will not be revisited (Heritage and Watson 1980). This latter point has particular significance for the kind of joint decision-making found in this assessment setting, as the test-takers have only 15 minutes to discuss the options and reach a consensus, thus limiting the extent to which topics can be recycled.

In this sequence, Jonson's directive – designed with both a mitigating phrase and an account, which are common in dispreferred actions (Duran and Sert 2019) – and subsequent initiation of the proposed interactional agenda successfully influence the trajectory of the conversation, 'deleting' Poppy's assessment, closing down talk concerning the utility of the product in question, and bringing the focus of the interaction into alignment with his directive. Sequences of this type – that is, assessment – directive - commitment – elaboration – are present throughout the dataset, as can be seen in Excerpt 7.2.2., below.

Excerpt 7.2.2. but can we have the description […] first

In this next sequence, in which Shirley, Jimmy, Sara, and Cardinal are discussing the same set of products, we will again see how a directive can be deployed in order to claim deontic rights and impose a more effective sequential order to the unfolding talk, and how this is subsequently endorsed by the other test-takers and enacted by the issuer of the directive.



```
29    *SARA:    uhh=
30    *JIMM:    =(this one) and it's very useful (0.4) if you-
31              if you (home is have) a dog (0.7) it is- (0.2)
32              maybe it's hard for you to clean up (0.4)
35              dog (0.9) and especially when you walking dog
36              (0.4) in the street (0.4) it's hard for you to
37              clean up the dog mess=
38    *SARA:    =but can we have the description of the first
39              |product| first so we can⌈(0.2)⌉decide?
```



```
40              |((Sara points at her crib sheet))|
41    *SHIR:                              ⌊ok⌋
42              (0.9)
43    *SARA:    i think the first product is useful
44              because it's a (.) portable bin=
45    *JIMM:    =mmm
46              ((Jimm and Shir both nod in unison))
```

As with Excerpt 7.2.1, this sequence is initiated by the proffering of an assessment. In this instance, Jimmy is assessing the positive utility of the product in question (it's very useful –

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line 30, especially when walking dog – line 35). However, as with Excerpt 7.2.1., this assessment is responded to with disaffiliation; instead of being followed by a preferred second assessment (Pomerantz 1984), the next speaker issues a directive, here in a canonical request format, concerning the desired ordering of the interaction (= *but can we have the description of the product first* - line 38). This turn, with Sara's concomitant pointing to the crib sheet (line 39), attempts to reorient the group to the institutional order of the task, suggesting that Jimmy's assessment is premature, i.e. that a description of the product should precede any assessments. In this way, it echoes the impetus for the directive in Excerpt 7.2.1, in that it follows an assessment with a call for a more effective sequential ordering on subsequent talk.

The turn design of Sarah's directive also mirrors that in Excerpt 7.2.1. in that it makes use of the first-person plural pronoun 'we'. However, unlike Jonson's, this is designed as an interrogative rather than a declarative statement (as a request rather than a proposal) and no turn-initial mitigating phrase is used, thus displaying higher entitlement. Curl and Drew (2008) found that directives formulated as interrogatives, with the modal 'can', present a request as unproblematic and non-contingent; though, in this case, as in Excerpt 7.2.1., commitment to the directive is still offered in overlap (see line 41), that is, without mitigation or delay. A further similarity can be seen in that, after issuing a directive, the speaker self-selects to initiate their requested interactional order as a post-expansion to the prior directive-commitment sequence. This is shown in lines 43-44, where Sarah begins her description of the product.

### Excerpt 7.2.3. *maybe we can focus on the first and the second*

A very similar sequence of assessment–directive–commitment-elaboration can again be seen in the excerpt below. Here, Darren, Phyllis, William, and Karol have been asked to decide on the best form of social media (Facebook, Twitter, or Blackboard) through which to communicate with their classmates and receive notifications and homework from their teachers. At the beginning of this sequence, as with excerpts 7.2.1 and 7.2.3, the students can be found assessing one of the options on their crib sheets (Twitter).
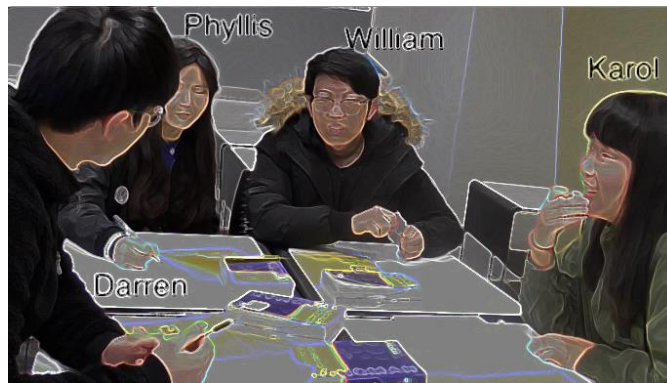
```
266    *KARO:    =yes (.) because it's limited uh character=
267    *WILL:    =limited [your idea
268    *PHYL:           [it's a big problem=
269    *KARO:    =yes (0.5) the most uh: serious problem=
270    *WILL:    =you ca:n't explain your ideas totally it's mean
271              (1.1) [you] need to=
272    *PHYL:          [yeah]
273    *KARO:    =yeah=
274    *PHYL:    =so we turn back social net[working?
275→   *DARR:                               [maybe we can focus on
276              the first and the second [and] talk about the thing=
277    *PHYL:                               [yeah]
278    *KARO:    =then compare (is we talk about) uh: what is the
279              best way
280              (0.5)
281    *DARR:    all right (.) I disagree the first one
```

In lines 266-71, Karol and William agree that Twitter would be unsuitable for communication purposes due to the limited number of characters that can be used. This is then followed with agreement from Phyllis in line 272 (yeah). Having agreed that Twitter is unsuitable, Phyllis then takes the floor again in line 274 with *so we turn back social networking*, which is marked with turn-final rising intonation, suggesting an interrogative intention. However, before Phyllis can complete this turn, Darren interjects with a directive in line 275 that suggests that the group *focus on* the *first* and *second* options again and *talk about the thing*. As with excerpt 7.2.1., the directive here is formatted declaratively in a canonical proposal format using both the modal 'can' and the first-person plural pronoun 'we'. Similar, too, is the immediacy with which commitment is offered by a fellow test-taker. Here, however, this immediacy is more pronounced in that commitment is offered in overlap with the prior turn (see line 277) rather than in a latched position (cf. excerpts 7.2.1 and 7.2.2). What *is* offered in a latched position, here, rather than straightforward

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commitment, appears to be a clarification or turn-completion by Karol, following the seemingly vague ending to Darren's proposal (*and talk about thing=* - line 276). In her turn, Karol expands on Darren's directive with *then compare* […] *what is the best way,* which both offers commitment (albeit implicitly) *and* co-constructs the emergent proposal. After this short deviation from the typical assessment-directive-commitment-elaboration sequence found in previous excerpts, there is a short pause before Darren (like Johnson in Excerpt 7.2.1 and Sarah in Excerpt 7.2.2) self-selects to enact his directive by beginning discussion on the first option in line 281 (*all right* (.) *I disagree the first one*), as per his directive.

Excerpts 7.2.1 – 7.2.3 highlight one way in which deontic rights are negotiated within this assessment setting: namely, through a brief and immediate acceptance of a directive, which cedes the full share of deontic rights to the prior speaker. However, not all directives – be they in the form of suggestions, requests, or proposals – are met with a such preferred, affiliative response. In what follows, we will examine three sequences in which a speaker responds to a directive with *dis*affiliation and commitment is withheld. As will be discussed, this - in contradistinction to the sequences above - cedes none of the relative share of deontic rights to the issuer of the directive.

## 7.3. Negotiating deontic rights by rejecting a directive

### Excerpt 7.3.1. *there's other facts that we need to think about*

In the excerpt below, students are involved in an assessment task that requires them to choose the best location (of four) to open a new pizza franchise. As with Excerpts 7.2.1 – 7.2.3, the sequence here begins with an assessment (lines 131–132), in which Lei extols the merits of one of the locations on her crib sheet.

```
131    *LEI:    location is (.) good for another (0.8) better
132             than another choice
133             (0.6)
134    *HOL:    what do you mean of the (0.5) location?
135             (0.7)
136    *LEI:    because they near the (0.6) Primark
137             (1.1)
138    *HOL:    oh,
139             (0.6)
140    *LEI:    uh next to ☺the Prima'Hrk☺
141             (2.0)
142    *LEI:    so (.) OK=
143    *HOL:    =so for the customers this is the best choice=
144    *LEI:    =ye:ah=
145→   *HOL:    =but there's other facts that we need to
146             (0.7) think [about it]
147    *YAN:                [but- but] uhm (0.6) establish a new
148             (0.5) Franchise needs lots of money y'know
```

After this assessment, Holly initiates a pre-expansion to an upcoming directive sequence that deals with a breakdown in mutual understanding (what do you mean of the (0.5) location? – line 134). This trouble source then becomes the impetus for the directive sequence that follows.

After Lei's response, and Holly's subsequent change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) in line 138 – which, with its short, flat pitch, treats the prior turn as problematic – there is a short pause (0.6) followed by self-repair from Lei, who corrects 'near the Primark' to 'next to the Primark'. There is then a 2.0 second pause preceding an attempted topic closure by Lei in line 142, which Holly interrupts with her directive: =*so for the customer this is the best choice* [...] *but there's other facts that we need to* (0.7) *think about it*. As with the directives in Excerpts 7.2.1 – 7.2.3, Holly's (here, designed as a 'need report' (Kendrick and Drew

2016)) seems to be motivated by the need to impose a more effective interactional agenda on subsequent talk; *but there are other facts that we need to think about* implies that these 'other facts' should be considered first.

However, this excerpt differs from the previous three, in that the preferred second pair-part to Holly's directive (i.e. commitment) is withheld. Before Holly can complete her request, Yang begins his turn in overlap (lines 147–8), seemingly dismissing Holly's turn in favour of responding directly to Lei's assessment instead. Lei's choice of location has the highest rent and Yang takes issue with this in lines 147-8, rejecting Holly's directive by picking up from a point in the interaction prior to its issuing. It is through these patterns of mismatch, these implicit power plays (Stevanovic, 2018), that negotiations of deontic rights specifically take place. By rejecting Holly's directive, Yang's response implicitly circumvents Holly's claim of proximal deontic rights, i.e., of her right to 'initiate, maintain, or close up local sequences of conversational action' (Stevanovic, 2015, 86) and her right to speakership, agency, and time.

It is worth noting that Holly's directive lacks a number of features found in the excerpts in section 7.2. First of all, it contains no mitigating phrase to heighten contingency and reduce entitlement and therefore the likelihood of a deontic hearing, as was the case with Jonson's proposal in excerpt 7.2.1 (*may I mention to you*). Furthermore, her TCU contains the deontic semi-modal need to (Kastrone 2008) in line 145; i.e. not *can*, as was the case in Excerpts 7.2.1 (*we can*) and 7.2.2 (*can we*), the choice of which appears to further increase the entitlement claimed, reflecting a less symmetrical relative distribution of deontic rights among the group. A similar sequence can be seen in the excerpt below.

### Excerpt 7.3.2. *We need to consider how much it can bring me*

Excerpt 7.3.2 begins in a manner akin to that in the excerpts above, that is to say, with test-takers assessing one of the options on their crib sheets. In this case, the test-takers have been asked to choose a product in which to invest, and at the beginning are discussing one of these products; a 'chair library'.

```
276    *KARO:    yes I think it can used in some
277              activity room in ⌈some⌉ big≈
278    *PHYL:                    ⌊yeah⌋
279    *KARO:    ≈companies and uh in also
280               in our ⌈all- also⌉
281    *PHYLL:           ⌊like just⌋ like uh: teaching building
282              and in every corner we can put it in here
283              ⌈you can choose some (      )⌉
284    *KARO:    ⌊and you can use to take a libe-⌋ book to see=
285    *PHYL:    =to read ⌈and⌉ watching the book every time=
286    *KARO:             ⌊and⌋
287    *WILL:    =and ⌈they⌉=
288    *KARO:         ⌊yeah⌋
289    *DARR:    =but now (1.0) I am invuh-
290              invite- investing some (0.4) err project
291→             we need consider uh how much it can
292              bring me (2.0) not just the idea
293              (1.1)
294    *WILL:    the other ones they do not have any real
295              usings value
296              (3.0)
297    *KARO:    ⌈°i think°⌉
298    *DARR:    ⌊and uh⌋ (0.5) the patent applicay- (0.5)
299              application mmm has uh (0.5) been rejected (0.7)
300              maybe in the future other peoples can copy it
301              (2.9)
302    *KARO:    but=
303    *PHYL:    =but the shower umbrella also awaiting response
```

Much of the discussion regarding the product takes place between Karol and Phyllis in lines 276–286, although Will's turn at line 287 suggests that he is also poised to contribute to a congruent evaluation of the product's utility (note his use of an *and*-prefaced formulation, the use of which generally suggests continuity and coherence with prior talk (Bolden 2010, 8). However, Darren interrupts Will with a directive formulated as a 'need report' (Kendrick

and Drew 2016) in lines 289–292, which, like Holly's directive in Excerpt 7.3.1, imposes an alternate sequential ordering on subsequent talk, and thus makes a claim of proximal deontic rights (*we need consider how much it can bring me* (2.0) *not just the idea*).

Again, the impetus for this directive bears similarity to the directives in previous excerpts, in that it stems from a desire to impose a more effective sequential order on subsequent talk. In this case, Darren's directive proposes that they focus more on financial considerations (*how much it can bring me*, lines 291–2) than on the product itself (*the idea*, line 292). Although, sequentially, Darren's directive is similar to that of the other excerpts, his turn design bears most similarity to that of Holly's (Excerpt 7.3.1).

Just as the turn design of both directives in Excerpts 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 are similar (declaratively formatted with the semi-modal *need to* and/or *must*) so too are the recipient responses. In each case, commitment to the prior directive is met with disaffiliation as the next speaker withholds commitment, and so each deontic claim is effectively circumvented. It has been shown elsewhere (e.g. Kendrick and Drew 2016) how need reports, like those in Excerpts 7.3.1 and 7.3.2, 'do not establish a normative obligation for the other to assist' (p.7), and this may account for why directives formatted in this way are more readily rejected than proposal or request formats, as is the case in the sequences, here.

After Darren issues his directive in the form of a need report, addressing the lack of utility (or *usings value*) of the other products, there is a 1.1-second pause followed by an attempted topic initiation by Will (lines 294–5). Will's turn can be seen as a continuation of Karol and Phyllis' assessments in lines 276–85, and serves, much like Yan's TCU (beginning in line 148) in Excerpt 7.3.1., to effectively dismiss the prior directive (in this case Darren's need report, which implies a request for a focus on what the product can bring me) by orienting to a point in the interaction before the directive was given. Darren responds to this by abandoning his intended interactional agenda with a topic shift towards the status of the product's patent application instead, which is taken up by Phyllis in line 303. Ultimately, however, Darren's attempt to impose his interactional agenda, and so to claim proximal deontic rights, like Holly's in Excerpt 7.3.1, has by this stage been effectively circumvented.

In Excerpt 7.3.3., we can see the same four test-takers as in the previous excerpt, completing the same assessment task. This time, however, we join the conversation just after three out of four of the test-takers have summarised why they disapprove of one of the products on their crib sheets (the 'Baby Shower Umbrella', which they consider ridiculous and too expensive). At the beginning of the sequence, we find Karol alluding to additional reasons why this product may not a good choice; namely because the company plans to develop a version for adults (line 232) and to *have an advertisement in a national* […] *newspaper* (lines 232-3).



Phyllis    William        Karol      Darren

```
231   *KARO:    =[because he want to- he want to mmm
232             used in adults and have an advertisement
233             in a national new- newni- new- newspaper=
234→  *DARR:    =uh but let's [look]- look- look=
235   *WILL:              [impossible]
236→  *DARR:    =at [uh:] profit uh margin and uh:
237   *KARO:       |[impossible]|
```



Phyllis    William        Karol      Darren
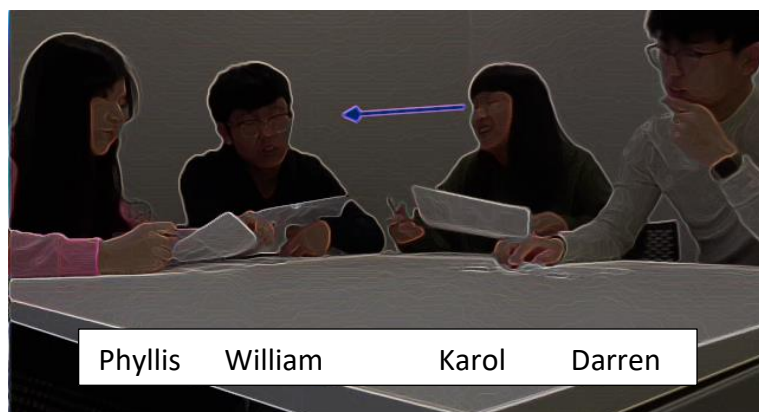
```
|((Karol shifts gaze from crib sheet to William))|
```

```
238              (0.7)
239→  *DARR:    ei:ghteen percent (0.5) people should uh
240              focus on it I think
241              (0.2)
242   *PHYLL:   but maybe not many people need (1.0) the
243              object like this
244              (0.5)
245   *WILL:    yeah
246              (0.5)
247   *DARR:    [but compare with-
248   *PHYLL:   [it cannot attract many people
```

After Karol's TCU in lines 231-3, Darren responds in a latched position with a hesitation- and *but*-prefaced directive TCU that attempts a topic shift (*uh but let's look* […] *at* - lines 235-6) to the product's *profit margin* (line 236). However, before Darren can complete his directive TCU (and resulting claim of proximal deontic rights), an emergent circumvention is already visible.

In the first instance, this can be seen in line 235 where William - rather than cede the floor to Darren, who has already begun his directive – responds (like he did in Excerpt 7.3.2 and like Yan did in Excerpt 7.3.1) to the previous turn (i.e., Karol's) with the congruent evaluation *impossible* (line 235), which presumably refers to the prospect of such a small company being able to afford an advertisement in a national newspaper. In the second instance, this incipient circumvention of Darren's claim of proximal deontic rights can be seen in line 237, where, rather than cede the floor to Darren, who continues with his directive TCU in line 236, a fellow test-taker (this time Karol) *again* pursues the prior topic – this time, with a 'same evaluation' (Pomerantz, 1984) agreement; that is, by asserting the same evaluation (i.e. *impossible* – line 237) as William in line 235. This is delivered with a concomitant shift in gaze from her crib sheet to William, signalling further that it is William, and, by extension, the prior topic of conversation, that she is addressing with her turn – not Darren. In doing so, Darren's fellow test-takers make visible their commitment to the prior line of discussion and signal their indifference to his emergent directive. This indifference is emphasised not only by their turns' irrelevance with regards to Darren's directive (i.e., they are non-type confirming responses (Stokoe et al., 2020)), but also by their sequential placement - each is delivered in overlap; in other words, while Darren is still speaking.

After Karol's 'same evaluation' in line 238, there is a 0.7-second pause before Darren concludes his directive TCU, in lines 239-40, by suggesting that *people should focus on* the product's *eighteen percent* profit margin. However, Darren's claim of proximal deontic rights continues to be circumvented; this time by Phyllis, who takes the floor with a more explicit (i.e. *but*-prefaced) rejection of Darren's directive, in line 242. In this turn, Phyllis claims that it may be the case that *not many people need this product;* the implication being that it is not worth discussing details such as profit margins if the product itself is unlikely to sell in the first place.

After a 0.5-second pause, William signals his agreement with Phyllis' claim in line 245. This is followed by another 0.5-second pause, after which Darren seems poised to mount a counter-response to Phyllis and William (notice his use of a prefatory *but*); however, he does not complete his turn (see line 247). Instead, Phyllis, who began her turn at the same time as Darren (see line 248), upgrades her prior claim (*maybe not many people need* […] *this*) to the more epistemically certain, less mitigated: *this* cannot *attract many people*. Shortly after this turn, the group discuss the next option on their crib sheets, having successfully rejected Darren's directive and circumvented his claim of proximal deontic rights.

Let us now consider in a little more detail some of the features of the focal directive's sequential placement and turn design in connection to the sequences considered thus far. It is worth reiterating, here, that before Darren interjected with his directive, all other test-takers agreed that the product under discussion was not worthy of investment. It is perhaps the case that Darren's claim that the group should focus on something pertaining to an option they had already recently dismissed made too great a claim of proximal deontic rights; a claim that the group, quite clearly, were not willing to validate. The high entitlement implied by the sequential placement of Darren's TCU (after each of his fellow test-takers had made it clear that they dislike this option) is compounded by his turn design. Notice how, as in Excerpts 7.3.1. and 7.3.2., Darren's directive is declaratively, rather than interrogatively, formatted. In addition, it is worth highlighting that what little mitigation there is here appears in a turn-final position (signalled by the epistemic marker of uncertainty *I think* in line 240). This stands in contradistinction to the more prominent

displays of turn-*initial* mitigation found in Excerpts 7.2.1. and 7.2.3, which served from the outset to both heighten contingency and lower the level of entitlement claimed by the forthcoming directive. In the absence of such a constellation of features – that is, interrogative syntax and/or turn-initial mitigation – Darren's claim of proximal deontic rights, like Yan's in Excerpt 7.3.1, was again (cf. Excerpt 7.3.2) circumvented by his fellow test-takers.

In Excerpts 7.3.1 – 7.3.3, we considered three claims of proximal deontic rights that resulted in circumvention by test-takers. Both directives were in the form of declarative statements in the indicative mood, or, in other words, as 'desiderative statement[s] in which the speaker asserts a need, wish or desire' (Couper-Kuhlen 2014, 639). This is in contradistinction to the turn design of the accepted directives in excerpts 7.2.1 and 7.2.3 (proposals) and 7.2.2 (a request in the interrogative mood).

What this general pattern of proposal- acceptance and request/need report-rejection sequences points toward is that test-takers in this institutional setting may have a particular sensitivity to unmitigated or dispreferred sequence-initiating directive formats (that is, turn designs with 'need to' and 'must' and requests made in a mood other than the interrogative, i.e., potentially hearable as assertions or announcements). The sequences examined thus far support Goodwin's (1980, 1990) contention that proposals convey a more egalitarian relationship between speakers, as it is this type of directive that is most often accepted. Furthermore, the findings also appear to support Kendrick and Drew's (2016: 6) claim that 'reports [of needs, difficulties, or troubles] do not establish a normative obligation for the other to assist'.

This recipient sensitivity to unmitigated or dispreferred turn formats in directives and claims of proximal deontic rights could perhaps be a feature of such collaborative peer interaction. Sequences like those in Excerpts 7.3.1 – 7.3.3, in which a negotiation of deontic rights occurs – specifically in which a second speaker ignores a prior directive – have been referred to by Stevanovic (2018, 11) as instances of deontic incongruence. Such deontic incongruence, it is suggested, occurs in cases where 'a first speaker [makes] a claim of more deontic rights in relation to the recipient than the recipient is willing to validate' (ibid.). Such instances are not infrequent within this dataset, and this, I suggest, points to an orientation

to deontic symmetry and the collaborative nature of the task within this assessment setting, the negotiation of which is a local accomplishment.

## 7.4. Interim Summary

In the sequences examined thus far, directives have either been accepted, resulting in deontic congruence, whereby the deontic claim implied by the directive is endorsed by test-takers through their use of compliance/acceptance tokens such as *yeah* (Excerpt 7.2.1), *OK*, or *mmm* (excerpt 7.2.2), or in deontic incongruence, whereby the directive is rejected by the next speaker, who, in the examples above, formulates his or her utterance so as to address a turn prior to the issuing of the directive, thus circumventing the first speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights. Such sequences highlight how recipients can manipulate in subtle ways the relationship between first and second turns to claim for themselves a larger share of the deontic rights than that afforded to them by the first speaker (Stevanovic 2018).

In the next section, it will be shown how deontic rights can be negotiated via other interactional means than those discussed thus far. In particular, I will consider how recipients can display deontic (in-)congruity via the issuing of a second directive, and thereby, a second claim of proximal deontic rights.

## 7.5. Negotiating deontic rights by responding with a second directive

### Excerpt 7.5.1. *and now we should discuss*

The sequence below takes place at the beginning of a speaking assessment, in which the test-takers have been asked to decide on the most suitable product in which to invest. Just before the beginning of the sequence, the examiners told the test-takers that they could start and turned on the camera, after which a few seconds of silence ensued.

```
10    *CARD:      start?=
11    *JIMM:      =°start°
12                (4.8)
13→   *JIMM:      all right today we will- we should talk about
14                (0.8)which- which (person) will win the award
16                (0.8) that values- that values fifty hun- fifty
18                thousand pounds (0.8) yeah (0.5) right
19                (1.6)
20→    *SHIR:     and now we should discuss |the four choices|
```



| CARD | SARA | SHIR | JIMM |

```
              |((Shirley taps crib sheet and shifts gaze to Sara))|
21                  and uh i think uh we should discuss |the first one|
```



| CARD | SARA | SHIR | JIMM |

```
                   |((Shirley points to the first option on crib sheet))|
22                 (0.8) dump (0.7) drop
24                 (0.5)
25    *JIMM:       drop?
26                 (0.3)
27    *SHIR:       drop
28                 (1.3)
29    *SARA:       uhh-=
30    *JIMM:       =(this one) and it's very useful (0.4) if you-
31                 if you home is have a dog
```

As we join the conversation, we can see Cardinal take the floor first in line 10, in a turn that appears to seek confirmation that the group can indeed begin. This is evidenced by his turn's rising intonation (*start*?) and Jimmy's subsequent confirmation (*start* – line 11).

After this exchange between Cardinal and Jimmy, the conversation is put into a state of topic hold by a lengthy 4.8-second pause. Following this, Jimmy takes the floor in line 13 with a turn that serves as both a statement of the core aims of the task and as a sequence-initiating directive (*today* […] *we should talk about* . . .), thus making a claim of proximal deontic rights. As we have seen thus far, fellow test-takers, when faced with such directives, have opted either to endorse the prior speaker's claim of deontic rights with, for example, a confirmation token, or elect not to validate the prior speakers deontic claim by ignoring said directive. However, in this instance, after a 1.6-second pause, Shirley takes the floor, not with an acceptance token or rejection of the prior directive, but with a second directive of her own: *and now we should discuss the four choices*.

Formulated as it is with an *and*-preface, Shirley's directive can be seen as retrospectively operating 'on prior talk' (i.e., Jimmy's prior directive) and establishing continuity (Bolden, 2010). The retrospective nature of Shirley's directive is also present in her turn design, which mirrors that of the prior directive; note that both are formulated as suggestions (Stevanovic & Perakyla, 2012) using the modal verb *should*. This is delivered with a concomitant shift of gaze from the crib sheet to Sara. Shirley then completes her TCU in line 21, by suggesting the group *discuss the first one,* while tapping the corresponding option on her crib sheet; an expansion on the first part of her directive which is mitigated by the epistemic marker, *I think*.

Then, after a brief repair sequence in lines 24-8, Sara looks poised to take the floor in line 29; however, she is interrupted by Jimmy (the issuer of the first directive), who begins assessing the first option, as per Shirley's directive. By this stage, both directives have effectively been accepted, in as much as the group go on (in general) to *talk about* which person should receive the investment (as per, Jimmy's directive); however, it is more Shirley's claim of proximal deontic rights that has been endorsed, as it is her directive more specifically that is being enacted. A similar example of this sequence type can be seen in the following excerpt.

## Excerpt 7.5.2. Also we have to look at the benefits

As with the previous sequence, the sequence below takes place at the beginning of a speaking test. In this assessment, the test-takers have been asked to choose the best proposal for making a local primary school eco-friendlier and more sustainable.
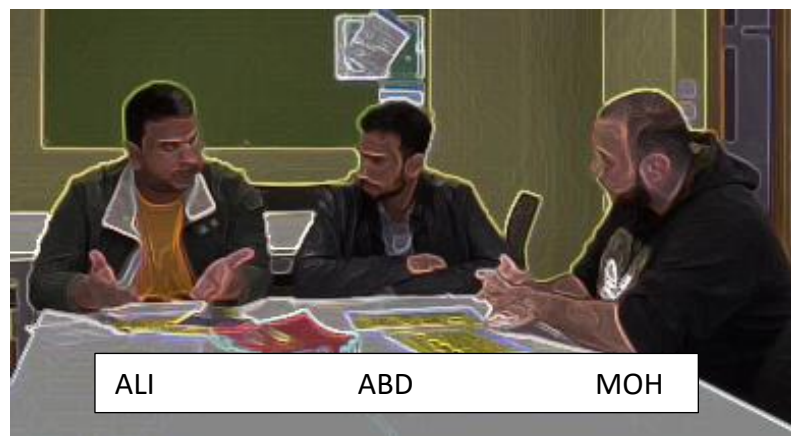


```
9      *ABD:      as you (0.2) already- already know like
10                Bristol are making efforts in (0.6) reduce it's
11                overall carbon footprint (.) and we have been given
12                the opportunity to decide on the most effective
13                (0.8) most efficient (0.4) uh proposal
14                (0.5)
15  →   *MOH:      so today we're gonna have to decide (0.3) out
16                of these four proposals and options (0.5) as
17               to which one is the most (0.6) efficient and
18                effective=
19  →   *ALI:      =also we have to look at the benefits and drawbacks
20                of each option and then (0.3) see how successful
21                it would be and how practical it is
22                (1.0)
```

```
23    *MOH:      all right let's start with the first (0.2) proposal
24               which is new campus building
```

Abdul begins by stating the task scenario in lines 9–13. This is followed, after a short pause of 0.5 seconds, by Mohammad who draws upon the task instructions with a directive that establishes the core aim of the task (cf. Jimmy's directive in Excerpt 7.5.1.), in lines 15-18 (*we're gonna have to decide*). This TCU, which makes use of the semi-modal *have to*, can be interpreted as making a claim of proximal deontic authority, in that it claims the right to initiate the conversation (the prior turn can be interpreted as more of an informing than a directive). However, unlike the sequences in sections 7.2. and 7.3., this directive is neither accepted with a compliance token nor rejected by addressing a turn in the interaction prior to the issuing of the directive. Instead, the next speaker, Ali, like Shirley in Excerpt 7.5.1., endorses this claim with a subsequent directive of his own (*also we have to* ...), thereby corroborating and co-constructing the directive in the prior turn, as in the prior sequence. By doing so, Ali neither cedes the full share of deontic rights to the prior speaker nor cedes none at all. Instead, in this instance, the share of deontic rights is distributed evenly between to the two test-takers who manage to jointly determine how the group should proceed.

In the two sequences considered thus far, test-takers, rather than simply acquiesce to another's proposed interactional agenda with a minimal compliance token (e.g., OK, mhmm, all right), elect to take joint ownership of the incipient agenda with a congruent directive of their own. This co-construction of a directive and proximal deontic claim indexes the collaborative nature of the assessment task and, more so than the compliance tokens used to receipt and endorse the deontic claims in section 7.2, reflects a more egalitarian distribution of deontic rights among test-takers.

Just as a second directive can serve as a resource with which to endorse and share a speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights, and so maintain a level of deontic symmetry among speakers, so too can a second directive be used as a resource with which to circumvent a first speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights and delay their proposed interactional agenda, in a manner altogether more egalitarian than the circumventions in section 7.3. An example of this can be seen in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 7.5.3. Yes we should […] however […] we need to

In this sequence, we see the same group of test-takers as above. This time, we join the conversation at a later stage in the test, as the group assess one of their four proposals.



```
43     *ABD:    mostly it's like from nine and seven
44              (0.2)
45     *MOH:    that's a waste=
46     *ABD:    =that's a waste=
47     *ALI:    =also there's a (0.3) time gap
48              between from June to September
49              when there will be no classes held
50              because of holidays(0.6)and so=
51     *ABD:    =it (          )=
52     *ALI:    =yes more students will come
53              (0.4)
54     *MOH:    OK=
55 →   *ALI:    =so should we move on to the next option
56              proposal four?
57              (0.6)
58 →   *MOH:    uh: (.) yes we should (0.8) however
59              uh (1.0) what do you guys think (0.3)
60              is a benefit (0.5) a major benefit
61              for proposal three? (0.4) because we
62              need to weigh uh- weigh in the (0.2)
63              advantages and disadvantage
64              (0.8)
65     *ABD:    extremely cheap
66              (0.2)
67     *MOH:    yeah (0.2) uh to- [yeah]
68     *ABD:                      [the gains] are like
69              from the financial point of view
```

After this series of assessments (see lines 43-52), it seems that Mohammad attempts topic closure in line 54 (*OK=*), though Ali curtails this turn by issuing a directive (=*so should we*

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*move on to the next option proposal four*?) and so claims proximal deontic rights. In response to this, Mohammad seems to offer approval and commitment, albeit with some markers of hesitancy (*uh* (.) *yes we should*), which signal disaffiliation. However, as this multi-unit turn unfolds, it becomes clear that Ali's directive is being only partially accepted, and that the relationship between the two turns is one of only superficial deontic congruence.

Following a brief pause of 0.4 seconds, Mohammad proceeds to delay the enactment of Ali's proposed interactional agenda by turning to Ali and Abdul and asking a question about the current option (*however uh* (1.0) *what do you guys think* (0.3) *is a benefit* (0.5) *a major benefit for proposal three*?). This question is subsequently accounted for in lines 61-3, where Mohammad proffers a second directive (*because we need to weigh uh- weigh in the* (0.2) *advantages and disadvantages*), thereby circumventing Ali's proximal deontic claim in lines 55-6. Indeed, it is Mohammad's second directive that is then expanded by Abdul in line 65, who, after a 0.8 pause, provides an advantage (extremely cheap), as per Mohammad's request.

At this point, the discussion continues for some time on the topic of the advantages and disadvantages of proposal three – Ali's directive to move on to proposal four is not expanded upon until later in the discussion. As a result, unlike the examples of deontic incongruence in section 7.3., the first speaker's proximal deontic rights are not entirely circumvented; instead, they are acknowledged, and the proposed interactional agenda is accepted but delayed. This, it is argued, minimises the potential for an uneven relative distribution of rights and is distinct from the sequences in Excerpts 7.3.1. – 7.3.3. where the design of the incongruent turns reflected a more visible deontically asymmetric group dynamic.

## 7.6. Summary

This chapter set out to examine how test-takers, in this task-based assessment setting, negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group. Following Stevanovic's

(2018) suggestion that the central locus of negotiation over deontic rights is the adjacency pair sequence, these interactional units – in this case, first pair-part directives and their second pair-part responses – were taken as the focal point of the analysis. As such, it was found that test-takers, through their formulations of directive sequences, used here to impose/propose locally constructed interactional agenda on subsequent talk and index to a greater or lesser extent their orientations to entitlement and contingency, were able to negotiate for themselves a greater or lesser share of deontic rights.

The adjacency pairs examined in this study can be broadly categorised in two ways: (1) sequences in which a first pair-part directive is accepted (endorsing the first speaker's proximal deontic rights), and (2) sequences in which a first pair-part directive is rejected (thus circumventing the first speaker's proximal deontic rights). From considering these two sequence types, it was found that the relative deontic strength of a directive can be mitigated via a speaker's turn design. It was also found that, in this assessment setting, directives formulated so as to index low entitlement (e.g., proposals: *we can*, requests: *can we*, and suggestions: *should we*) tend to be accepted by fellow test-takers, whereas directives which display high entitlement (e.g., need reports: *we need to, we must*) tend to be rejected.

Just as the relative strength of directives and the proximal deontic claims they entail can be manipulated via turn design, so too it seems can the level of deontic subordination by the recipient. What this chapter hopes also to have shown is that recipient acceptance and rejection of directives, and by extension endorsements and circumventions of implicit deontic claims, exist on a deontic gradient and that the turn design of these second pair-parts is a locus for negotiation over deontic rights.

Endorsement can be given in a way that shares, to a greater or lesser extent, deontic rights relative to the issuer of the directive. For example, a single compliance/acceptance token, such as *OK*, *yeah*, and *all right*, offers unfettered commitment to, and affiliation with, the directive but reflects a less even relative distribution of deontic rights than, say, a second directive, which can equally be deployed as a response to a directive, showing endorsement and acceptance. This, in contrast to a compliance/acceptance token, reflects a more even relative distribution of deontic rights – or deontic symmetry – thus demonstrating one way

in which the formulation of a directive, and its subsequent second pair-part response, can serve as a resource through which to negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group.

The same has been shown for rejections of directives, in which commitment is withheld. For example, in the sequences examined in section 7.3., the first pair-part directives were rejected by the next speaker who designed their turn to dismiss the directive by orienting to a point in the interaction prior to its issuing. Formulating the second pair-part in this way served to dismiss the first speaker's proximal deontic rights entirely, whereas the sequence in Excerpt 7.5.3., demonstrated how a directive can be effectively rejected (or, postponed, at least) at a structural level, while yet endorsing, implicitly, the first speaker's proximal deontic rights. This was achieved via a three-part TCU that (1) accepted the proposed interactional agenda, (2) initiated an alternative topic by asking an open question to the group, and (3) accounted for the circumvention with a second directive. This reflects a level of deontic symmetry between the two speakers absent in the prior directive-rejection sequences, and again highlights the relationship between directive formulations, test-takers' response to them, and the distribution of proximal deontic rights.

What all this demonstrates is that, not only are these negotiations over deontic rights a ubiquitous feature of this assessment setting, but that the ways in which these implicit power plays unfold are subtle, nuanced, and complex, and therefore difficult to counteract and reflect on by the test-takers themselves (Stevanovic 2018). Research of this micro-analytic variety, therefore, can serve to illuminate some of these complexities and offer a thorough understanding of the mechanisms involved. It also improves our understanding of task-as-process, allowing as it does for a researcher to analyse test-takers' talk as they locally manage and jointly construct their intersubjective understanding of the assessment task.

# Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion

## 8.1. Introduction

This study has explored the practices used by test-takers to co-manage interaction within a group-based, L2 speaking assessment task. In the preceding chapters, three such salient practices were analysed. These included (1) maintaining progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test, (2) managing affiliation in disagreement sequences, and (3) negotiating deontic rights. Each of these practices pertains to a respective constraint within the assessment setting, namely: (1) the timeframe of the test, (2) the need to disagree in a way germane to the collaborative exigencies of the task, and (3) the need to establish how the task is approached in the absence of any teacher involvement or preassigned roles, such as leader or chairperson.

## 8.2. Discussion of the Findings

This discussion is divided into three parts, each of which corresponds in turn to one of the analysis chapters above. In each of these parts, the analysis will be briefly summarised along with a discussion of the key findings in relation to the relevant research literature. Where necessary, certain excerpts from the preceding analysis chapters will be repeated for clarity and convenience.

### 8.2.1. Maintaining Progressivity with Reference to the Timeframe of the Test

The analysis in Chapter 5 explicated how test-takers maintain progressivity with reference to the timeframe of the test. As was shown, test-takers oriented to the need to maintain progressivity by (1) expediting talk, (2) slowing talk down, and (3) by eliminating options.

In Section 5.2., instances in which a test-taker was treated as taking too long to complete their turn were considered. In such cases, it was shown how test-takers orient to the need to maintain progressivity in the light of the timeframe of the test by responding to these perceived lengthy or slow turns with a call for the talk to be expedited (e.g., *we're actually running out of time, I think we should jump into the last proposal* – Excerpt 5.2.1.; *we don't have enough time* […] *let's go* – Excerpt 5.2.2.; *I think we should be more quickly* - Excerpt

5.2.3.). In each of these sequences, test-takers were found to display a strong orientation to mitigating the dispreferred and potentially face-threatening dimension of their expediting act through their verbal conduct. This was exemplified through a combination of the following features in the design of the focal expediting turn: mitigating prefaces, use of modals, warrants, and vocal perturbations (e.g., whispers, laughter).

Such verbal features were also often delivered with concomitant embodied conduct in the form of gestures to material objects such as the assessment documentation and the digital timer, which were used as resources with which to secure the joint attention and participation of fellow test-takers. This was also found to be the case in sections 5.3. and 5.5. As such, the findings from this chapter are in line with current research which has demonstrated 'the crucial role of embodied resources in […] the maintenance of progressivity' (Coban & Sert, 2020; 85 – see also Hosoda & Aline, 2013).

Section 5.3., in direct contrast to Section 5.2., considered sequences in which a test-taker's turn was treated as an attempt to progress through the task *too quickly*. This could be seen in cases when a test-taker announced their final decision or attempted to elicit the final decision of another test-taker too early in the assessment.  In this assessment setting, test-takers are expected to speak for as close to the time limit (15 minutes for a group of 4, 12 minutes for a group of 3) as possible; therefore, completing the task prematurely could result in a poor test score, as the assessors may not hear enough spoken output with which to calculate a suitable grade. Test-takers, evidently, were aware of this and displayed a need to maintain progressivity in line with the constraints of the timeframe of the test by expediting talk and, in this case, *slowing it down* to achieve timely task accomplishment.

Section 5.5. considered sequences in which the trouble source consisted of either an abundance of affirmation markers that contributed no additional life to the ongoing topic, a lengthy silence that placed the conversation into a state of topic hold, or a combination of the two. In such cases, it was found that the most common way to restore and maintain progressivity was to call for an option on the assessment crib sheet to be *cancelled* (see Excerpts 5.5.1. and 5.5.2.), *excluded* (Excerpt 5.5.3.) or *eliminated* (Excerpt 5.5.4). This served to shift the topic of discussion, provide a measure of assurance that the previous

topic would not be revisited, and make a marked move toward closure (i.e., toward reaching a consensus).

Of particular interest, in this chapter, was the finding that test-takers displayed a sensitivity and awareness towards the timed nature of the task via their turn design throughout the test. This was exemplified in the tendency for test-takers to upgrade the linguistic formatting of their turns relative to the stage in the assessment at which the need to restore progressivity arose. This could be seen, for example, in the way in which low entitlement, high contingency directive formats, such as proposals and requests, were used at earlier stages in the test (see Excerpts 5.5.1., *we can . . .* and 5.5.1., *can we . . .?*), whereas stronger 'need reports' that claim higher entitlement were deployed in the later stages (see Excerpts 5.5.3., *we have to . . .* and 5.5.4., *we need to . . .*) when there was an increased likelihood of running out of time before consensus could be reached. In such cases – usually after 8 minutes for a group of 3 and 10 minutes for a group of 4 – the need to maintain progressivity was more acute, and test-takers reflected this exigency in their turn design, thereby demonstrating one way in which progressivity was restored and maintained with reference to the constraints of the timeframe of the test.

This shift to higher-entitlement turn formats when maintaining progressivity in the later stages of these assessment tasks was accompanied by a concomitant shift in the manner in which these focal TCUs were responded to by fellow test-takers. For example, with the canonical proposal and request formats used at the early- to mid-stages in the assessment, responses were most often affiliative. This was indexed in the immediacy of fellow test-takers' responses, which were offered in latched positions (see, for example, *=yes cancel it* – line 58, Excerpt 5.5.1.; *=yeah proposal four is not suitable* - line 208, Excerpt 5.5.2.). However, in the latter stages of the test, where progressivity was maintained with high-entitlement, low contingency 'need reports', recipient responses were less immediate and, therefore, affiliative. As was shown, such instances were often followed by pauses (Excerpt 5.5.3. and 5.5.4) or non-type-confirming responses (Excerpt 5.5.4., see line 20).

Such high-entitlement, low-contingency turn formats, though perhaps necessary at the later stages in the test when the risk of running out of time before reaching a consensus is most

tangible, were nevertheless treated with less affiliation than their low-entitlement, high contingency counterparts deployed at the early- to middle stage of the assessment task. This demonstrates a sensitivity to unmitigated, high-entitlement turn formats and suggests an orientation by test-takers to the collaborative, contingent dimension of the task.

In addition, whereas most recent studies that have considered progressivity in educational settings have focussed on instances of trouble or disruptions that 'potentially *delay* task accomplishment' (Balaman & Sert, 2017: 608 – my emphasis; see also, Amar, Nanbu, and Greer, 2021; Coban & Sert, 2020), this chapter has shown that test-takers also display an orientation to restoring and maintaining progressivity in instances of interaction that may inappropriately *expedite* task accomplishment. This orientation to circumventing turns that could lead to the end point of the task being reached too soon was seen in the ways in which test-takers directed the groups' attention to an overlooked aspect on the assessment crib sheet after a fellow test-taker attempted to elicit a final decision, or announce their own, prematurely:

Excerpt 5.3.1.(Premature decision elicitation)

```
10    *SERE: so: (.) which one ∇do you think is the best?∇=
11           ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 → *SHAW: =|∆wait wait wait wait ∆=|
              […]
15 → *SHAW: you- do you notice (0.3) about that?
```

Excerpt 5.3.2. (Premature decision announcement)

```
39    *LEI:  a:nd they busy high street near the station (.) i think the rou-
40           the location is good a:nd they- the customer (1.2) eh- is in
41           enough and (0.3) i think the (route) is not higher so i think the
42           (1.0) choice is the best
43           (1.8)
44 → *YAN:  uhm (0.9) but compared to: the others maybe the price here a little
45           bit high (0.6) can we see the other choices so we can
46           discuss [this one?]
```

and by the way in which premature calls for a final decision announcement were ignored altogether by a fellow test-taker instead initiating a topic shift:

```
Excerpt 5.3.3. (Premature decision elicitation)

45    *LEE:    ye:ah (1.0) so you choose (0.5) chair library (1.8) or
46             shower umbrella?
47             (2.5)
48 → *JON:    let's talk- |talk about| (1.0) let's talk about
                         |((John touches 'Chair Library' on crib sheet))|
```

It may be the case, then, that test-takers prioritise a preference for this kind of *task-relevant* progressivity over a preference for progressivity per se, in such time-limited, task-oriented assessment settings.

Finally, in the research on progressivity in talk-in-interaction, scholars have suggested that progressivity comes to the fore in instances where interactional 'difficulties' (Stivers & Robinson, 2006), or 'troubles' (Coban & Sert, 2020), emerge.  In these studies, such 'troubles' and 'difficulties' are often characterised as 'a gap (e.g., a very long silence) in talk' (Coban & Sert; 2020: 65) or, more generally, as any issue pertaining to speaking, hearing, and understanding (Schegloff et al., 1977). However, in this chapter, it has been shown that an orientation toward progressivity can emerge in the absence of any linguistic disfluencies or prolonged silences. Take, for example, the sequences in Excerpts 5.2.2. and 5.5.3., below, in which the orientation toward progressivity emerges in response to a turn (or turns) in which no observable linguistic difficulties, or troubles, are present:

Excerpt 5.2.2.

```
153   *CHR:    yeah i see yeah your opinion but (0.9) you know sometimes uh:m
154            uh if you have some problem not only on weekend maybe (0.5) uh
155            (0.5) between Monday and uh Friday if you have problem (0.5)
156            uh:m (0.4)  every year has three hundred and sixty-five days
157            and it's uh- (0.5) it's a long time you only have three days if
158            you have uh too many trouble maybe [you] will lost=
159   *YAN:                                       [|okay|]
                          |((Yan glances at the digital timer))|
160   *KEV:    =yeah yeah=
161 →*YAN:    =we don't have |enough time| hhhh=
```

Excerpt 5.5.3.

```
88    *RYU:    maybe- e- even if e- e- we can- we can
89             even say like (.) if (0.5) it happens for
90             a long time maybe (.) can become a norm or=
91             (0.3)
92    *THE:    mhmm
93             (0.3)
```

```
94    *RYU:   =cus[tom so]
95    *SEA:       [OK] yeah
96            (0.3)
97 →  *THE:   well I guess we have to definitely |exclude it-|
```

In such instances, it was the time limit – or, more specifically, the matching of the task to the time limit – that was the difficulty, not any issue with speaking, hearing, or understanding. Findings from this chapter, therefore, expand our understanding of progressivity in talk-in-interaction by uncovering situations in which such orientations arise in the absence of any language-related difficulties.

### 8.2.2. Managing Affiliation in Disagreement Sequences

Though disagreements are often considered as potentially face-threating, dispreferred acts, this conception ignores 'the importance of disagreeing for many types of interaction, such as problem-solving and decision-making' (Hüttner, 2014). As the test-takers in this assessment setting have been tasked with negotiating a consensual decision, we may even consider disagreements here as 'an inherent feature of the speech activity' (ibid: 4). This interpretation is supported by Angiouri and Locher (2012), who have highlighted 'the role of disagreements as a "sine qua non" within [such discussion] activities.'

However, while there is an expectation that disagreements will occur within these convergent, decision-making assessment tasks, there is also the associated expectation that test-takers be able to express and defend their opinions in a way that is germane to the collaborative task demands. In this regard, it is important for test-takers to express their disagreement in a way that does not negatively impact the group dynamic as this may hinder overall test performance.

With this in mind, the analysis in Chapter 6 set out to explicate how test-takers manage affiliation in disagreement sequences. In other words, this chapter considered the ways in which those test-takers who proffered disagreements did so in a way that more or less successfully secured an affiliative response from fellow test-takers. In doing so, three disagreeing acts were identified for analysis: (1) disagreeing by invoking shared knowledge, (2) disagreeing by upgrading epistemic rights, and (3) disagreeing by asking rhetorical

questions. For each of these disagreeing acts there was a focus on sequential placement, turn design, and the extent to which the responses elicited displayed affiliation. As will be mentioned again below, although each of the disagreeing acts in this chapter were designed so as to minimise dispreference, heighten inclusivity, and, therefore, increase the likelihood of an affiliative response, analyses indicated that these disagreeing acts exist on a gradient in terms of their effectiveness in securing affiliation.

Of central interest in this chapter was the finding that, of the three disagreeing strategies considered, disagreeing with recourse to an upgrading of epistemic rights was found by far to be the most consistently effective in terms of securing an affiliative response from fellow test-takers. This was exemplified in Section 6.3.

Each disagreeing turn in this section consisted of a noun-copula clause construction (*the most important thing is* – Excerpt 6.3.1, *the most important problem is* – Excerpt 6.3.2., and *the most problem is* – Excerpt 6.3.3.), which have been noted elsewhere for their use in 'upgrading epistemic rights in the process of pursuing agreement' (Hsieh, 2018: 107). In analysing such noun-copula clause constructions, it was found that test-takers most often responded to these disagreeing turns with emphatic displays of affiliation. This was evidenced by the design of fellow test-takers' responses, which were delivered as turn completions (Excerpt 6.3.1.), overlaps (Excerpt 6.3.2), latches (Excerpt 6.3.3.), and with emphatic embodied conduct (see, for example, Excerpt 6.3.1., line 225).

Such noun-copula clause constructions do not claim (nor do they imply) that what a prior speaker said is incorrect, only that it is not the most salient thing to consider. As such, these constructions provided test-takers a subtle resource with which to agree with the gist of a prior assessment, while yet disagreeing with the grounds on which that position was built. In other words, by claiming the *most important thing is* in a conditionally relevant second assessment, test-takers could imply that what came before was indeed important, but that it was not as salient an issue as that currently being proposed. This form of disagreement was shown to serve as a face-saving strategy whereby test-takers could upgrade their epistemic rights, heighten inclusivity, and thereby manage to consistently secure affiliation, an interpretation that was evidenced in the responses these turns received.

While several studies have considered disagreements in educational settings, none have yet analysed the use of noun-copula clause constructions in formulating disagreements and securing affiliation. Therefore, the findings from this section offer a unique insight into how affiliation can be effectively managed while disagreeing. What's more, although noun-copula clause constructions have been noted for their use in terms of upgrading epistemic rights in pursuit of agreement in ordinary conversation (see, e.g., Hseih, (2018) who investigated these phrases in Mandarin), no studies have yet considered their use in L2 spoken assessment settings. This study, then, can be seen as a first step to uncovering their use in relatively under-explored institutional settings.

Findings from this section support Delahunty's (2012: 41) contention that noun copula clause constructions, or *Thing* sentences as they are often known (e.g., *the thing/problem is . . .*), communicate 'that their complements are problematic [and] that the range of other interpretations is greater than hitherto proposed'. That these complements are problematic is often emphasised in the disagreeing test-taker's turn design; for example, by (1) using the abstract noun *problem* rather than *thing,* (2) including a disagreement preface, and (3) using negative modals in the complements. For example:

```
Excerpt 6.3.2.

116→ *CHRI:      but the most (0.5) important problem is we can't be
117               viewed on a |mobile phone| (.) so you [can't check]≈
118   *JUNN:                                            |mm yeah|
119   *CHRI:     ≈|your homework (.) your class| (.) in- when you are


Excerpt 6.3.3.

172→              the most uh (one) (1.1) uhm problem is people can't
173               (0.7) uh: (0.8) only use- use computer to study maybe
174               they will use it to uhm(0.6) use some website or check
175               email and chatting or play computer games=
```

Their effectiveness in terms of managing affiliation can perhaps be attributed to the fact that they do not directly contradict what a prior speaker has said. Instead, they imply that what is currently being proposed is simply more salient than what came before or, to again

quote Delahunty (ibid), that 'the range of interpretations is greater than hitherto proposed'. In other words, disagreeing in this way implicitly downgrades the prior content in terms of salience but does not negate or invalidate it.

Another reason why disagreements formulated with a noun-copula clause construction are so effective in terms of securing an affiliative response is that these constructions have been shown to 'project further discourse' by ceding 'interactional space for […] additional talk' (Delahunty, 2012: 69). Indeed, the data from this chapter evidences this interpretation. This can be seen in the way in which these focal disagreeing turns were proceeded by dense moments of interaction, often involving two to three test-takers, in which one of these test-takers helped jointly construct the content of the disagreeing turn via a confirmation question. For example:

Excerpt 6.3.2.

```
116  *CHRI:      but the most (0.5) important problem is we can't be
117              viewed on a |mobile phone| (.) so you ⌈can't check⌉≈
                 |(( Christine shifts gaze from crib sheet to Junn))|
118  *JUNN:                                            ⌊mm yeah⌋
119  *CHRI:      ≈|your homework (.) your class| (.) in- when you are
                 |((Christine swipes hand, imitating phone screen))|
120              in the street=
121  *JUNN:      =yeah=
122  *CHRI:      =when you are not at home (.) yeah
123              (0.6)
124  *JUNN:      it is (0.7) quite (.) com- uncomfortable right?=
125  *CHRI:      =yeah
```

Excerpt 6.3.3.

```
172              the most uh (one) (1.1) uhm problem is people can't
173              (0.7) uh: (0.8) only use- use computer to study maybe
174              they will use it to uhm(0.6) use some website or check
175              email and chatting or play computer games=
176  *HEBA:      =so this maybe uh: wasting for their time?=
177  *JULY:      =>yeah yeah<
178              (0.3)
179  *MARC:      ⌈yeah⌋
180  *JULY:      ⌊yeah⌋(0.5) a learning time
```

Though not as consistently effective as upgrading epistemic rights, disagreeing turns formulated with the inclusion of a rhetorical question (see the examples repeated, below)

were found to be a close second in terms of their effectiveness at securing an affiliative response.

```
[Excerpt 6.4.1]
21    *ALY:        but how do you think of it? - maybe it a bit expensive do
22                 you know we should have a classmate to have a group-
23                 become a group to have a uh dinner?

[Excerpt 6.4.2]

223   *CAR:        bu- (.) but i think look at the additional information
224                (0.2) they uh this company is very uh: (0.6) grows
225                in- uh quickly so what's that mean? (0.2)
226                so quality(0.3) is uh- ah- increasing=

[Excerpt 6.4.3]
73    *CHRI:       =do you thought- but have you ever considered
75                 about the: effect the- the environment? i mean there-
76                 there's- this- this restaurant is uh very=
```

As was shown in Section 6.4., test-takers were able to incorporate such RQs into their disagreeing turns (the oppositional nature of which was made clear via a disagreeing preface) to highlight some unconsidered aspect of the task (e.g., the price of a particular restaurant, Excerpt 6.4.1.; the growth of a company, Excerpt 6.4.2; the effect of the environment with regards to the atmosphere at a student gathering, Excerpt 6.4.3) pertinent to the ongoing discussion.

By framing disagreeing turns as an, albeit rhetorical, interrogative the speakers were able to guide their fellow test-takers to their disagreeing position, rather than state it directly. This gave the focal disagreeing turns in Section 6.4. a facilitative dimension, which most often resulted in a shift from K- to K+ epistemic status by a fellow test-taker, as indexed in the design of their responding turns. For example:

```
Excerpt 6.4.1.


26    *ATA         ah: (.) yeah I think so (0.5) it's not suitable for
27                 students because it's quite expensive

Excerpt 6.4.2.
```

```
225    *BEN:        =yeah
226                 (.)
227    *CAR:        so (.) it's (.) not like
228                 (0.6)
229    *BEN:        yeah the future (.) yeah
```

In each of the responses above, affiliation was indexed by agreement tokens and the topicalization of the overlooked content alluded to in the prior disagreeing turn (e.g., `quite expensive` – Excerpt 6.4.1.; `the future` – Excerpt 6.4.2.).

As such, disagreeing turns formulated in this way were found to be effective in terms of securing an affiliative response. However, unlike disagreeing by upgrading epistemic rights, which was found to elicit affiliation in *each* instance, there appeared to be a caveat for successfully securing affiliation when it came to cases where a RQ was used. This was exemplified in Excerpt 6.4.3., in which the disagreeing turn included an abundance of markers of uncertainty:

`Excerpt 6.4.3.`

```
82    *CHR: =we have eight people in our class so
83          (0.5) uh maybe it's too crowded for us
84          maybe it's- there's no table for us
85          and uh- uh: it's very quiet and eight
86          people together: (0.5) you- you know the
87          (0.2) people will be very large and you
88          may need to speak very loudly so
89          (0.3) it maybe can be a problem
90          (0.3) uhm (0.7) how do you think about
91          it Kevin?
92          (0.5)
93    *KEV: uh: ☺i don't think so☺
```

In this instance, the disagreeing test-taker's turn design appeared to diminish the effectiveness of his RQ-based disagreement in terms of securing affiliation. This stood in stark contrast to the other sequences in this section, in which affiliation was emphatically displayed. Here, on the other hand, affiliation was not elicited; instead, a fellow test-taker responded curtly with the disaffiliative: *I don't think so,* which was preceded by delay, hesitation, and smile voice, all of which have been shown to signal that the turn in question is dispreferred (Stivers & Mondada, 2011; Stivers, 2008; Kappa, 2016). It was surmised,

then, that disagreeing with recourse to a RQ was successful in terms of securing affiliation only insofar as the focal disagreeing turn avoided abundant markers of uncertainty or hypotheticality, as was the case in Excerpts 6.4.1 and 6.4.2.

While several studies have considered arguing and/or (dis-)agreements in educational settings (see, e.g., Hüttner, 2014; Sharma, 2012; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011; Gablasova & Brezina, 2018; O'Donnell Christoffersen, 2015) none, to this researcher's knowledge, have yet analysed the use of RQs in formulating disagreements and securing affiliation. The current chapter, therefore, has addressed this research gap by uncovering the ways in which RQs can be incorporated into disagreeing turns to, most often successfully, secure affiliation. What's more, though several studies have looked at the use of rhetorical questions for argumentation in courtroom (Ilie, 1995), talk show (Ilie, 1998; 1999), and parliamentary (Ilie, 2003) settings, none have yet considered their use for disagreeing in educational or assessment settings such as the one in this thesis.

One perhaps surprising finding from this chapter was the fact that disagreeing turns that incorporated an invocation of shared knowledge (e.g., *we all know* - Excerpts 6.2.1., and 6.2.2.; *you know* – Excerpt 6.2.3.) were the least effective in terms of securing an affiliative response. This was exemplified by the way in which fellow test-takers responded to these disagreeing turns: that is, by (1) negotiating the two diverse stances of the prior speakers (i.e., the speaker who proffered the original assessment and the speaker who disagreed with it), (2) offering a minimal acknowledgement token (e.g., `OK`, line 62, Excerpt 6.2.2.), or (3) with incredulity (e.g., ☺`seriously?` ☺ – line 272, Excerpt 6.2.3), none of which indexed affiliation with the prior disagreement. This stood in stark contrast to the other disagreement strategies considered in this chapter, each of which proved more effective in terms of securing affiliation.

Clayman and Raymond (2021), in their study of the alignment token *you know* in ordinary conversation, found that it 'generally invokes a convergent orientation between recipient and speaker', an invoked alignment that often comes off as affiliative, in that the 'recipient supports the action or stance being taken' (p.2). Though the alignment token *you know* was used less often than the phrase *we all know* in the sequences in this chapter, thus

preventing any direct comparisons between the two datasets, one might expect *we all know* to establish common ground and elicit affiliation in the same way *you know* was found to in Raymond and Chase's (ibid) data.  However, in each instance where an invocation of shared knowledge was incorporated into a disagreeing turn (whether indexed through *you know* or *we all know*), fellow test-takers' responses were not affiliative. This also contrasted the findings from Pomerantz' (1984) canonical study on disagreement sequences in ordinary conversation, which found incorporating common knowledge into disagreements to be a 'powerful rhetorical strategy through which one can legitimise claims about the appropriateness of the argument' (ibid in Sharma, 2012: 12).

It may be the case, then, that in L2 test-talk more so than in ordinary conversation, there is a heightened orientation by participants (in this case, test-takers) to determine their own 'territories of knowledge' (Heritage, 2012). This may account for why disagreeing via asking rhetorical questions and, in particular, via upgrading epistemic rights, were found to be so much more effective in terms of securing an affiliative response. In this assessment setting, test-takers seem reluctant to validate such invocations of shared knowledge, especially when they are formatted in a way (i.e., declaratively) that downgrades recipient contingency. Indeed, this may be a feature in assessment settings, in general, not just those within the domain of education.

### 8.2.3. Negotiating Deontic Rights

Chapter 7 explored how test-takers negotiate the relative distribution of deontic rights among the group. As this assessment format involves no teacher intervention and as test-takers are not assigned roles such as chairperson or leader, there is here a prima facie flat, symmetric relationship between test-takers, not a hierarchical one. As such, it is incumbent on each individual test-taker (not the teacher or some pre-assigned leader) to determine how the test is approached, for example by imposing or closing local sequences of interaction. It is in this regard, that the deontic domain comes to the fore.

After a preliminary exploration into the ways in which deontic rights were negotiated, it became clear, in line with the recent research on the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction,

that a central locus for such deontic negotiations was directive-initiated adjacency pairs. As such, first pair-part directives (e.g., requests, proposals, suggestions, commands, etc.) and their second pair-part responses were chosen for analysis. These included sequences in which deontic rights were negotiated by (1) accepting a directive, (2) rejecting a directive, and (3) responding with another directive.

The findings support Stevanovic's (2011) claim that second speakers, through the way in which they commit themselves to joint future tasks, can enact a 'rather straightforward speaker-tilted deontic asymmetry', as seen in test-takers' responses to the proposals (Stivers & Sidnell, 2016) and requests (Curl & Drew, 2008) analysed in Section 7.2.:

```
Excerpt 7.2.1 (Proposal + response)


15→    *JON:            ⌊(may i mention to you)⌋ uh we can talk- talk
16             with this uh in the order like (.) target market
17             (.) a:nd (0.6) products cost and (.) pros and cons
18             (.) because we need to these details to discuss
19             wh- whether it is the best(0.7) business (0.3) uh:=
20    *EVA:    =yeah=


Excerpt 7.2.3 (Proposal + response)


275   *DARR:                              ⌊maybe we can focus on
276            the first and the second ⌈and⌉ talk about the thing=
277   *PHYL:                             ⌊yeah⌋


Excerpt 7.2.2. (Request + response)


38    *SARA:   =but can we have the description of the first
39             |product| first so we can⌈(0.2)⌉decide?
40             |((Sara points at her crib sheet))|
41    *SHIR:                             ⌊ok⌋
```

or 'a more symmetrical relative distribution of deontic rights between participants' as seen in Section 7.5., in which a first pair-part directive was responded to with a second pair-part that included another directive:

```
Excerpt 7.5.1.


13  *JIMM:      all right today we will- we should talk about
14              (0.8)which- which (person) will win the award
16              (0.8) that values- that values fifty hun- fifty
18              thousand pounds (0.8) yeah (0.5) right
19              (1.6)
20  *SHIR:      and now we should discuss |the four choices|


Excerpt 7.5.2.


15  *MOH:       so today we're gonna have to decide (0.3) out
16              of these four proposals and options (0.5) as
17              to which one is the most (0.6) efficient and
18              effective=
19  *ALI:       =also we have to look at the benefits and drawbacks
20              of each option and then (0.3) see how successful
21              it would be and how practical it is
```

Such second pair-parts were shown to offer test-takers a resource with which to accept the

prior directive (thereby endorsing the prior speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights).

However, they could also be used to postpone the enactment of a prior directive, while yet

preserving the prior speaker's deontic rights:

```
Excerpt 7.5.3.


55  *ALI:       =so should we move on to the next option
56              proposal four?
57              (0.6)
58  *MOH:       uh: (.) yes we should (0.8) however
59              uh (1.0) what do you guys think (0.3)
60              is a benefit (0.5) a major benefit
61              for proposal three? (0.4) because we
62              need to weigh uh- weigh in the (0.2)
63              advantages and disadvantage
```

 As such, this chapter provides us with a further insight into the subtle practices through

which second speakers can challenge how deontic rights are distributed among participants.

What's more, the analysis here also corroborates Stevanovic's (2015:5) contention that

'participants are always making judgements about their deontic rights relative to their co-

participants'. This was evidenced by the ubiquity of such deontic negotiations within the dataset.

In considering these deontic negotiations in this assessment setting, test-takers were found to display a pronounced sensitivity toward unmitigated, high-entitlement/low-contingency directive formats. This was exemplified by the way in which claims of proximal deontic rights, entailed by directives formatted as need reports and declaratively formatted suggestions, were most often circumvented by fellow test-takers, who showed an unwillingness to validate such strong deontic claims by ceding deontic authority to the first speaker.  In this regard, the findings support Kendrick and Drew's (2016: 6) observation that need reports, in contrast to requests, 'do not establish a normative obligation for [an] other to assist'. In other words, in such cases where need reports were used to make a claim of proximal deontic rights, assistance (i.e., endorsement) was not forthcoming. This could be seen in Section 7.3., in which first speakers' directives, composed as a need report (Kendrick and Drew, 2016) or as a declaratively formatted suggestion with no prefatory mitigation features, were circumvented by a second speaker:

```
Excerpt 7.3.1.


145→   *HOL:      =but there's other facts that we need to
146               (0.7) think [about it] ]
147    *YAN:             [but- but] uhm (0.6) establish a new
148               (0.5) Franchise needs lots of money y'know



Excerpt 7.3.2.


289    *DARR:     =but now (1.0) I am invuh-
290               invite- investing some (0.4) err project
291→              we need consider uh how much it can
292               bring me (2.0) not just the idea
293               (1.1)
294    *WILL:     the other ones they do not have any real
295               usings value



Excerpt 7.3.3.
```

```
239→  *DARR:    ei:ghteen percent (0.5) people should uh
240            focus on it I think
241            (0.2)
242   *PHYLL:  but maybe not many people need (1.0) the
243            object like this
```

Sections 7.2. and 7.3. demonstrated second pair-part responses at opposite ends of a deontic gradient (Landmark et el., 2015); that is, ones that signal complete acceptance and endorsement, ceding the full share of deontic rights to the issuer of the directive, and ones that signal complete rejection and circumvention, ceding none of the relative share of deontic rights to the issuer of the directive. Section 7.5., however, illustrated an alternative way in which a fellow test-taker could accept or reject a directive, and, therefore, endorse or circumvent the prior speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights, in an altogether more egalitarian manner, resulting in an even distribution of deontic rights between speakers.

As such, the findings from section 7.5. should be of particular interest to teachers, materials designers, and prospective test-takers, in that they uncover a strategy for responding to directives that is particularly germane to the collaborative exigencies of such 'convergent' (Samuda and Bygate, 2006), group-based tasks. In other words, whereas the sequences in Sections 7.2. and 7.3. demonstrated how test-takers' second pair-parts could fully endorse the prior speaker's claim of proximal deontic rights (in the former) or dismiss them entirely (in the latter), the sequences in 7.5. illustrated how test-takers could either (1) accept a directive in a way that claimed for themselves a greater share of deontic rights (see Excerpts 7.5.1 – 7.5.2.) or (2) reject a directive in a way that preserved to a greater extent the deontic rights of the prior speaker.

In the former, this was achieved by a tacit acceptance of the prior directive (note the use of turn-initial *and-* and *also-* to mark congruity with the prior turn) followed by a second directive that served to jointly construct the interactional agenda being proposed by the first pair-part. In the latter, a test-taker's directive was effectively postponed in a way that preserved the deontic rights of the speaker by (1) explicitly accepting their directive (*yes we should*), (2) initiating an alternative topic (*however* […] *what do you guys think is a benefit?*), and (3) substantiating the circumvention/postponement with an account in the form of a

second directive (*because we need to*). In this way, unlike the rejections in Section 7.3., the second speaker was able to maintain a relatively even distribution of deontic rights between themselves and the issuer of the directive, endorsing their claim of proximal deontic rights while yet momentarily delaying the enactment of the directive in favour of their own agenda.

Research on deontics in interaction is still very much in its infancy (Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015), and of those studies that do consider this domain, few consider such negotiations in educational settings. Those that do (e.g., Ishino & Okada, 2018) focus on classroom-based, student-teacher interaction where there is a prima facie hierarchical relationship between participants. Therefore, other than Stephenson (2020), this researcher knows of no other CA-based study that has considered the deontic domain in such L2, group-based spoken assessment settings, where there is a symmetric role distribution. As such, the findings from this chapter can be seen as an initial step toward uncovering how such subtle, complex power plays unfold in this little researched setting. What's more, while several studies have investigated the deontic domain in other settings, none have yet uncovered the ways in which a second pair-part directive can be used to establish a more even distribution of deontic rights between speakers.

As Stevanovic (2011: 29) has pointed out, an understanding of deontics in talk-in-interaction can have an 'emancipatory potential'. In other words, by understanding the ways in which people may deploy a deontic stance (via, for example, high-entitlement/low-contingency directive formats) that is 'more [...] authoritative than their deontic status would suggest' (ibid: 30), participants may be better placed to challenge and rectify such emergent deontic asymmetries. In an assessment setting such as the one considered in this thesis, where there is pressure on test-takers to express themselves equitably and take joint-ownership of the collaborative outcome of the task (here, a consensual decision), such an understanding could prove beneficial in terms of ensuring that individual test-takers' voices are not drowned out by more dominant group members. What's more, from the perspective of the directive issuer, an understanding of deontics may help them to ensure that their directives are formatted in a way that fosters and facilitates an equitable relationship between current

and next speaker, thus establishing a more collaborative relationship between test-takers, in line with the convergent, joint nature of the task.

## 8.3. Contributions to the notion of Interactional Competence

Language is a tool to make coordinated social actions (Roever and Dai, 2021), and this ability to successfully accomplish social actions via the deployment of language (as well as embodied conduct such as gestures and gaze) has been defined as a person's Interactional Competence (IC) (Lam, 2018; May *et al.* 2020). Hall and Pekarek Doehler (2011: 2) define this construct as:

> 'The ability to accomplish meaningful actions, to respond to co-participants' previous actions and to make recognisable for others what our actions are and how these relate to their own actions'
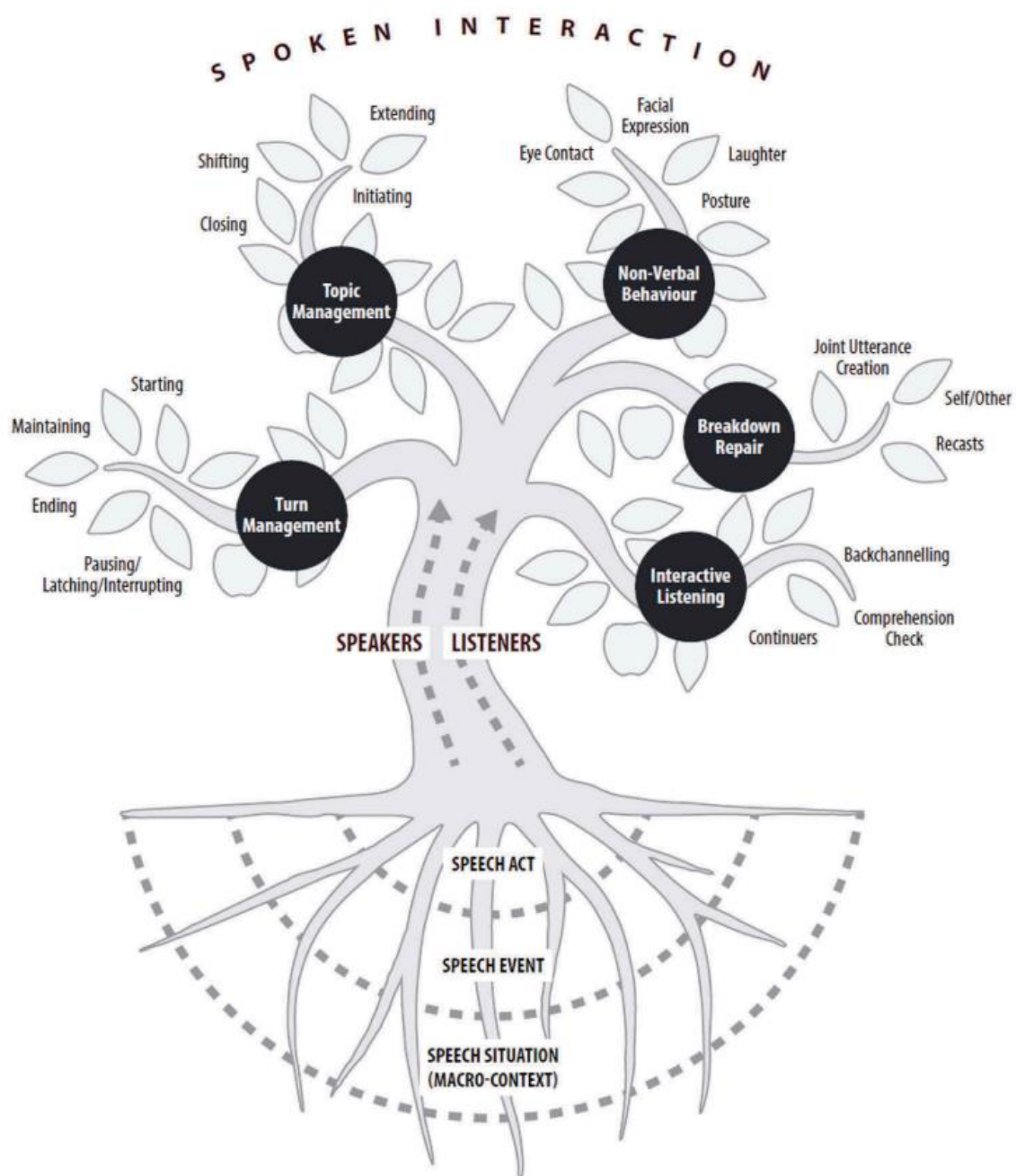
Unfortunately, many language tests do not include interaction in a second language, and those that do often use the resulting talk merely as a language sample to be assessed against a non-interactive criterion (Roever and Dai, 2021). Speaking tests whose rating scales do not include a measure of interactional ability include the IELTS and ACTFL OPI. Other assessments, such as the Cambridge main suites exam, do, on the other hand, contain rubric for interactive communication, however this rubric reflects an over-simplified, test format-specific construct of interaction. Whereas, at the other end of the spectrum, the TOEFL speaking exam comprises an entirely monologic task, in which test-takers are required only to respond to prompts provided by their examiner.

However, in recent years researchers have begun recognising the need for language tests to reflect a more interaction-focussed conception of language use, arguing that assessments that do so allow examiners to obtain a more representative picture of what a test-taker is capable of doing in real-world interactions (Roever and Dai, 2021), thereby broadening the range of defensible inferences that can be drawn from the speaking test (Roever and Kasper, 2018). In order to realise this, it is essential that language assessment researchers establish a sound understanding of the various micro-features of IC for the target setting so

that this may support the development of assessment tasks and criteria, as well as assessor and learner training materials. However, despite considerable research on IC in speaking assessment research (e.g., Wagner, 2014; Galaczi and Taylor, 2018; Huth, 2020), until recently, the idea of how IC might be practically conceptualized and operationalized in second language teaching, learning and assessment contexts has remained under-explored (though see May *et al*. 2020).

The findings from this study have the potential to advance this emergent endeavour. To demonstrate this, in what follows, I will highlight how the findings from each analytic chapter reveal hitherto under-explored microfeatures of interactional competence that are important and present in the L2 spoken interaction in these assessments. In each instance, I will argue that these microfeatures be incorporated into the IC construct so that they may be fruitfully operationalised in future classroom and assessment practice (e.g., in the form of training materials for learners and assessors, and in rating scales and criteria that better represent test-takers' interactional abilities). In doing so, this study responds to a call from fellow L2 assessment researchers (see, e.g., Galaczi and Taylor, 2018: 219) to develop a more comprehensive representation of the IC construct so that future testing is 'relevant and fit for purpose'.

Galaczi and Taylor (2018) use a tree as a visual representation of the IC construct (see below). The unlabelled branches indicate that microfeatures are still emerging as more empirical research on L2 spoken interaction reveals their importance. As such, they offer space for new microfeatures to be added as new investigations confirm their relevance. I will refer to their diagram in what follows, so that the relevance of my findings can be mapped onto their representation.

SPOKEN INTERACTION

Topic Management
- Extending
- Shifting
- Initiating
- Closing

Non-Verbal Behaviour
- Facial Expression
- Eye Contact
- Laughter
- Posture

Turn Management
- Starting
- Maintaining
- Ending
- Pausing/Latching/Interrupting

Breakdown Repair
- Joint Utterance Creation
- Self/Other
- Recasts

Interactive Listening
- Backchannelling
- Comprehension Check
- Continuers

SPEAKERS   LISTENERS

SPEECH ACT

SPEECH EVENT

SPEECH SITUATION (MACRO-CONTEXT)

### 8.3.1. Regulating interaction as a feature of Interactional Competence

A number of assessments, such as the Cambridge English test and Trinity College London's Integrated Skills in English test, include some fundamental features of IC. However, they 'stop short of a full description of the concept' (Galaczi and Taylor, 2018: 228). For example, the Cambridge English test speaking criterion references concepts such as 'maintains and

develops the interaction' and 'keeps the interaction going' but offers no insight into what micro-level features are involved in doing so. It is in this regard that the findings from Chapter 5 can make a useful contribution.

May *et al*'s (2020) study has already attempted to address this by creating a checklist of features (what they call 'Micro Themes') that operationalise the concept (or 'Macro Theme') of maintaining and developing interaction, as included in the Cambridge English B2 First Speaking examination criteria. Although 'maintaining' and 'developing' interaction were grouped together in the Cambridge English criteria, May *et al*. (2020) found that examiners tended to differentiate between the two. Based on the findings from chapter 5, one might even take this a step further and argue that a third dimension be added; that is, ***regulating interaction***. After all, when test-takers are engaged in a specific assessment task (e.g., 'reaching a decision through negotiation' ( [https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first/exam-format/](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first/exam-format/) )), it is not enough to simply maintain interaction for interaction's sake. Similarly, it would not be advisable to develop an interactional trajectory that could jeopardise successful task accomplishment. Indeed, in the assessment tasks in this study - which, like part 3 of the Cambridge English First Speaking examination, also require the negotiation of a decision (albeit in a group-based format rather than paired) - test-takers displayed an orientation to this kind of *regulatory* behaviour. This could be seen in instances where the task was not progressing in line with the task/time demands; for example, when a fellow test-taker prematurely announced their decisions or attempted to elicit a final decision from another test-taker prematurely:

```
  [Excerpt 5.3.1]


10    *SERE:      so: (.) which one ∇do you think is the best?∇=
11                ((SERE turns to MARSH))
12 → *SHAW:       =∆wait wait wait wait ∆


[Excerpt 5.3.3]

45    *LEEI:      ye:ah (1.0) so you choose (0.5) chair library (1.8) or
46                shower umbrella?
47                (2.5)
48 → *JOHN:       let's talk- |talk about| (1.0) let's talk about
49                (0.3)
```

50   *JULE:        chair library

If, then, we were to add 'Regulates Interaction' as a Macro Theme in May *et al.*'s (2020) IC checklist,  the accompanying Micro Theme might read:

- Monitors the ongoing interaction to ensure key elements of the task (including the matching of talk to a timeframe) are being adhered to and responds appropriately (e.g., by expediting talk or slowing it down and realigning it) when these demands are flouted.

These Macro Theme might form a new offshoot on the 'Topic Management' branch in Galaczi and Taylor's (2018) IC tree, above.

## 8.3.2. Being collaborative as a feature of Interactional Competence

Disagreement is a feature of everyday discourse and plays a crucial role in defending standpoints and expressing opinions. As such, it is an important social aspect of communication that L2 learners need to master, especially for those  learners who wish to use their L2 for academic purposes.  Disagreement, however, is also a dispreferred speech act that is tied up with issues of appropriateness and politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Angiouri and Locher, 2012), and, as a result, has the potential to be socially disruptive and face threatening (Gablasova and Brezina, 2018). As such, it is important that L2 learners are provided with adequate provision to develop their ability in performing this speech act, and that L2 oral assessment tasks and criteria accurately capture a learner's proficiency in this regard. The findings from chapter 6 have the potential to contribute to this goal by providing an insight into how disagreements are **collaboratively managed** in L2 test-oriented discourse and to, therefore, refine existing conceptions of IC that inform the design of future interaction-oriented criteria.

May et al.'s IC checklist makes no mention of agreeing/disagreeing. However, within the Macro Theme 'Keep the discussion going over several turns' they include the following 'Interaction Strategy':

**'Be collaborative**: keep a natural and collaborative flow to the interaction'

The kind of 'inclusive disagreement' (Waring, 2001) seen in Chapter 6 (through upgrading epistemic rights, asking rhetorical questions, and invoking shared knowledge) can be considered as manifestations of this 'be collaborative' strategy. In particular, disagreeing turns that incorporated an epistemic upgrade were germane to this feature of IC, in that this disagreeing format: (1) most often elicited an affiliative response from fellow test-takers (i.e., maintained a 'collaborative flow') and (2) produced the densest sequences of multi-party interaction immediately subsequent to their production (i.e., thereby 'keep[ing] the discussion going **over several turns**').  As such, the excerpts in this thesis that demonstrate how such epistemic upgrades can be gainfully deployed to manage disagreement sequences could be used to illustrate, to learners and assessors alike, **key features of IC pertaining to being collaborative.**

Indeed, a precedent for this has already been set in a paper by Lam (2019), in which a resource bank of 'worked examples' was developed for the paired collaborative task in the Cambridge English B2 speaking exam, with the aim of illustrating and exemplifying key features of IC so that these may be communicated in more tangible ways. To support this, he developed worksheets for classroom use that included: (1) video links and transcripts for the examples, (2) guided questions to facilitate learners in noticing relevant features of IC, and (3) a 'lessons learned' narrative that highlights the 'key messages to take home from the examples' (p.3). The data and findings from this thesis could be used to produce similar learner-oriented materials by building on Lam's approach, providing a resource bank of 'worked examples' for such group-based, assessment formats, where the ability to reach decisions, solve problems, and debate issues is paramount. Not only can this type of awareness-raising classroom intervention provide benefits for learners about to sit such group-based assessments, but it can also, importantly, prepare learners for their university studies. After all, a common practice in university classrooms is for learners to be assigned

into groups (Sharma, 2012) in which they are required to express their perspectives, attitudes, and assessments with their peers (see, e.g., Stokoe, 2000; Frazier, 2007).

### 8.3.3. Taking joint ownership as a feature of IC

At every moment of joint interactional undertakings, such as the group-based assessment tasks in this thesis, participants' sense of self-esteem and legitimacy as contributors are at stake (Stevanovic, 2015). One way of negotiating and establishing this legitimacy is through the issuing of directives and the negotiation of proximal deontic claims, which as we have seen in **Chapter 7**, allow test-takers to shape the incipient interactional agenda. This ability to effectively impose an agenda on upcoming talk or, alternatively, to signal resistance or acquiescence to the interactional imposition of a fellow participant, is important in innumerable interactional settings, not least within such 'convergent' (cf. Long, 1990; Samuda and Bygate, 2008) group-based assessment tasks. This is especially so when the ability to participate effectively in such tasks is assessed, as is now the case in a number of similar high stakes English language examinations, such as part three of the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English (CAE) and in various in-house university pathway examinations around the world, where test-takers are often assessed in groups and are tasked with solving a problem or negotiating a consensual decision using their L2 (see, for example, Gan, Davison, and Hamp-Lyons, 2008).

L2 learners of English who find themselves in such assessment situations can often run the risk of being dominated by more proficient, or simply more confident, test-takers - unable to reject the directives of others and likewise unable to proffer their own. This inability can have serious consequences; after all, if someone speaks for too long, imposing and enacting their own interactional order on talk, they may be depriving their fellow test-takers of the opportunity to display their linguistic abilities to the examiners.

It has been noted in my discussion chapter that a consideration of the deontic domain in interaction could have an 'emancipatory potential' (Stevanovic, 2011). In this case, it is for test-takers, who may benefit from training grounded in findings from authentic data that highlight the interactional mechanisms through which consequences can be successfully

brought about in collaborative discourse, and how the propositions of others can be granted or resisted without comprising the deontic rights of an individual. This ability, I argue, is a salient feature of the IC construct within this assessment setting and is organized, as evidenced in my analysis, at a fine level of granularity by test-takers. As such, this should be reflected in future criteria design and in the development of more focussed learner-oriented training materials.

The ability to respond to the directives of fellow test-takers in a way that evenly distributes deontic rights between speakers – that is, in a way that **takes joint ownership of the emerging interactional agenda** - can be mapped onto the Macro Theme 'Responds to partner' in May *et al*'s (2020) IC checklist. It also evidences the Macro Theme of 'Interactive Listening' in the sense that such responses are contingent on the previous turn (Lam, 2018; Hirçin-Çoban and Çimenli, 2022). In terms of the former ('Responds to Partner'), the concomitant criterion feature 'Links contributions to those of partner' (ibid.) could be supplemented with 'takes joint-ownership of the interactional agenda'; a feature of IC exemplified in the excerpt below (line 19) taken from Chapter 7:

```
15   *MOH:       so today we're gonna have to decide (0.3) out
16               of these four proposals and options (0.5) as
17               to which one is the most (0.6) efficient and
18               effective=
19   *ALI:       =also we have to look at the benefits and drawbacks
20               of each option and then (0.3) see how successful
21               it would be and how practical it is
```

Similarly, this type of social action can be said to 'explicitly negotiate toward an outcome', in that such turns jointly foreshadow how a decision will be made. As such, this micro-feature of IC could also be placed within Macro Theme 3 ('Negotiates towards an outcome') in May *et al*'s (2020) IC checklist. In terms of Galaczi and Taylor's (2018) model, this micro-feature of IC could be both positioned on the 'Topic Management' branch as a form of 'extending', or as an example of a 'continuer', under 'Interactive listening'.

### 8.3.4. Summary

The awareness raising potential of these findings for those preparing to sit assessments of this type taps into two strong learner needs: that is, the need for further learning based on micro-level feedback and the need to develop the demanding and complex skill of participating in interaction (Carless, 2007 in May *et al*. 2020). Practitioners who design speaking materials based only on banks of useful phrases - e.g., for agreeing, disagreeing, and asking for opinions - fail to address this latter skill. In other words, by focussing on useful phrases divorced of their local sequential context, the 'invisible rules' (Wong and Waring, 2010) of conversation - that is, the to-and-fro of interaction *in situ* – are ignored and (wrongly) presumed to be relatively unproblematic. Conversation analytic investigations of the kind contained herein, however, address this oversight by illuminating in micro-analytic detail the resources participants themselves deploy to navigate the complexities involved in the collaborative management of talk.  These micro-analytic findings provide fertile ground on which to develop classroom activities (Jones and Saville, 2016; Lam, 2019), raise assessor awareness, and enhance assessment tasks and criteria, as they contribute to ongoing efforts (see, e.g., Galaczi and Taylor, 2018; May *et al*., 2020) to refine the construct of interactional competence (IC) for 'more productive operationalization' in classroom and assessment settings (Lam, 2018: 25).

An example of how the findings from this study might be applied to expand the scope of existing interaction-oriented criteria can be found in Appendix E. It is hoped that incorporating findings on these three salient social actions (i.e., maintaining progressivity, managing affiliation, and negotiating deontic rights) into future test design will help raise prospective test-takers' and examiners' awareness of their complexity and their importance for timely and equitable task accomplishment in this group-based assessment setting.

### 8.4. Contributions to Interaction Research

As discussed above, the findings from this thesis enhance our understanding of the IC construct by supplementing existing models (e.g., May *et al*'s (2020) IC Checklist; Galaczi

and Taylor's (2018) IC tree) with three hitherto under-explored, salient micro-features (i.e., interactional repertoires (Hall, 2018)) within L2 EAP, group-based, assessment interaction. In what follows, I will now broaden the scope of discussion to consider some of the theoretical contributions this study has made to interaction research, more generally; namely, in terms of our understanding of progressivity, disagreement, and the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction.

### 8.4.1. A Preference for *Timely* Progressivity vs. a Preference for Progressivity *per se*

The findings from **Chapter 5** further our understanding of how progressivity is maintained in educational settings. Whereas recent studies in this area (e.g., Coban & Sert, 2020; Balaman & Sert, 2017) have focused on instances of trouble that *delay* task accomplishment, the current study has uncovered a hitherto underexplored orientation for restoring and maintaining progressivity in instances where, instead, the trouble source has the potential to improperly *expedite* task accomplishment. Moreover, in much of the literature to date, it has been suggested that progressivity is oriented to by interactants in moments of interactional difficulties (Stivers and Robinson, 2006; Coban & Sert, 2020), often characterised as long gaps in talk or as pertaining to issues of understanding (Schegloff *et al*. 1977). This chapter, however, has shown that the need to maintain progressivity can emerge in instances where no prolonged silences or linguistic disfluencies have occurred. The 'difficulties' present in some of the excerpts in this chapter instead pertain to the matching of the task to the time limit and arise in the absence of any language-related trouble. Such instances point to a preference for *timely* progressivity over a preference for progressivity *per se*, occurring as they do following attempts by fellow test-takers to either prematurely announce their final decision or to prematurely elicit the final decisions of others.

### 8.4.2. Disagreement as a *Sine Qua Non* in Consensus-building, Problem-Solving Talk

Findings from **Chapter 6**, which looked at how affiliation was managed in disagreement sequences, demonstrated how epistemic upgrades, formulated using noun-copula clause constructions (e.g., `but the most important thing is`), were able to express

disagreement while yet preserving the validity of a prior speaker's claim. Moreover, far from being socially disruptive (Gablasova and Brezina, 2018) or face threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leyland, 2018), these disagreement types were shown to be conducive to furthering the ongoing interaction, consistently securing an affiliative response from fellow test-takers, and eliciting dense episodes of talk, in which multiple test-takers contributed. This has implications for how disagreement is theorised, supporting Angiouri and Locher's (2012) contention that disagreement is a *sine qua non* in consensus building and problem-solving talk and should not be seen as an *a priori* negative act.

Furthermore, the findings from Chapter 6 contribute to our understanding of the role that knowledge plays in managing (dis-)agreement, by presenting evidence that runs counter to that of previous studies. For example, Pomerantz (1984), in her canonical study of the structure of agreements and disagreements, found claims of common knowledge to be an effective rhetorical strategy through which to legitimise an argument and pursue agreement. Similarly, Clayman and Raymond's (2021 – see, also, Herder et al., 2022) study found 'you know' to have a 'remedial' effect in terms of dealing with interpersonal trouble. However, the findings from this chapter contrast these claims by demonstrating how, in this assessment setting, disagreements formatted with claims of shared knowledge (e.g., `but + you know, we know, we all know` etc.) were the least effective rhetorical strategy in terms of securing an affiliative response. These findings mirror Asmuß's (2011: 218), who found that while claims of shared knowledge indeed *invite* affiliation, what is most often elicited is instead 'only minimal alignment'. What this Chapter and Asmuß' study demonstrate, then, is that while claims of shared knowledge can be seen as an affiliating move, they nonetheless have the potential to create an 'emerging disaffiliating environment' (ibid.). This was evident in the sequences analysed in Section 6.3. of Chapter 6, in which test-takers consistently responded to disagreements formulated via claims of shared knowledge with overt displays of disaffiliation.

### 8.4.3. Collaboratively Constructing an Interactional State of Affairs

Chapter 7 considered how test-takers oriented to and negotiated their own and other's deontic rights – i.e., 'their rights to determine actions' (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2014: 191)

– by examining their attempts, via the use of various directive formats, to set the group's interactional agenda in pursuit of successful task accomplishment.

Most studies on the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction have focussed on settings in which there is a *prima facie* hierarchical relationship between participants. This trend can be seen in studies by Landmark *et al*. (2015) (doctor-patient), Zinken and Ogiermann (2011) (parent-child), Clifton *et al*. (2018) (director-faculty member), and Stevanovic (2011) (cantor-pastor). However, as the assessment tasks in this thesis were not, strictly speaking, role-plays[25], in which roles such as chairperson, leader etc. are pre-assigned - and, as the test-takers were peers - it can be said that there existed instead, here, a *prima facie* flat (i.e., symmetric) relationship between participants, as opposed to a hierarchical one. As such, the findings from this Chapter enhance our understanding of how the deontic rights are negotiated within a lesser explored relationship structure.

Moreover, while previous research has uncovered how such local exigencies as differential *epistemic* access can render pre-established asymmetric relationships symmetrical (see, e.g., Asmuß and Oshima, 2012), less is known about the role that the deontic domain plays in this regard. My findings, however, address this research gap by demonstrating how *prima facie* symmetric relationship structures are local accomplishments that can be rendered asymmetrical (i.e., hierarchical) by successfully claiming *deontic* rights. These findings, therefore, enhance our understanding of the deontic order (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012) in interaction – an area of study still very much in its infancy -  and, by extension, the micro-organization of social interaction more generally, by uncovering the means by which participants can claim for themselves a greater share of deontic rights relative to their fellow interactants.

In addition, it has elsewhere been stated that the key locus of negotiation over deontic rights is the adjacency pair sequence (Stevanovic, 2018: 1). The current study corroborates

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[25] It is worth noting that I am using a narrower meaning of 'role play', here – that is, to mean any task where participants are assigned a label/part that they must act out (e.g., shopkeeper – customer, doctor – patient and so on). In the broader sense of the term, however, these assessment tasks do constitute a role play, in the sense that they are simulations (i.e., the test-takers will not actually carry out the decisions they make); i.e., they involve people being assessed interacting within hypothetical scenarios (Stokoe, 2014).

this claim by uncovering how the turn-by-turn unfolding of FPP directives and their SPP responses – be they endorsements, rejections, or follow-up directives– indeed, constitute the space through which these implicit power plays take place.

Finally, the findings from Chapter 7 offer insights into the related concepts of task-as-workplan (i.e., what a task was designed to do) and task-as-process (i.e., what actually transpires when a task is performed by particular learners in a particular setting). That is to say, the directives evident in this Chapter, and the deontic claims they entail, illuminate how test-takers jointly construct and locally manage their intersubjective understanding of the assessment task. That these understandings are not always shared by all test-takers in the group highlights the dynamic and variable nature of test-takers' interpretations of task demands (Jenks, 2007) and corroborates claims pertaining to the unpredictability of task performance (see, e.g., Lee and Burch, 2017; Breen, 1987). As such, these findings demonstrate the utility of understanding how negotiations of deontic rights unfold for refining task design and instructions, as they make visible learners' understanding of what is expected of them. The findings also bear parallels to research on talk-in-interaction outside of the educational domain. For example, Deppermann *et al*.'s (2010) study on agenda management in workplace meetings similarly highlights the ways in which participants can collaboratively construct an interactional state of affairs that 'differ[s] [...] from [that] projected by [a] written agenda' (p.1700) or from the interpretations of other interactants. As such, the current study has broader implications in terms of furthering our understanding of how emergent courses of action develop in institutional discourse.

## 8.5. Pedagogical Implications

This section will consider some of the pedagogical implications of the current study. First, the implications for (1) examiners and assessment designers will be considered, before then moving on to consider the implications for (2) teachers, (3) learners/test-takers, and (4) for EAP/PSE skills preparation, in general.

### 8.5.1. For Examiners / Assessment Designers

One implication that the current study has for examiners and test designers relates to the potential development of more interactionally-oriented assessment criteria and rating scales. As noted by a number of the scholars cited above, recent findings from studies concerned with uncovering the facets of IC pertinent to this kind of collaborative, test-based discourse have not been exhaustive. There remains, therefore, scope for researchers to identify further relevant features of interaction and thereby contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance existing assessment criteria (cf. May et al, 2020) with more pertinent, nuanced macro- and micro- themes of IC for testing purposes. Indeed, each of the three domains of interaction discussed in the analytic chapters contained herein provide insights into salient and recurrent features of group-based, test-oriented discourse that can be incorporated into existing IC-based criteria and rating scales (see Appendix E) to thereby enhance their efficacy.

Findings from Chapter 7, which considered the ways in which deontic rights are negotiated among groups of test-takers via their use of directives, may also have important implications for test designers. This stems from the way in which a test-taker's directive formulations afford us an insight into their intersubjective understanding of task demands, which, as shown, can often be at variance with both that of their fellow test-takers and, perhaps, with what was intended by the task designer. This notion of actual task performance being at odds with what the task was intended to elicit/achieve is, of course, not new; indeed, this relates to two well-established and related concepts within the task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) literature, namely, 'task-as-workplan' and 'task-as-process'[26] (Seedhouse, 2005a). However, to this researcher's knowledge, the specific bearing that the deontic domain in talk-in-interaction can have on (1) demonstrating these TBLT concepts and (2) informing the iterative process of task design, has until now not been explicitly foregrounded. My argument is that by analysing these deontic negotiations, test designers can gain insight into test-takers' intersubjective understandings of the task and thereby glean some measure of assurance that the task is being understood and carried out

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[26] See discussion in Section 8.4.3. See, also, the analysis of Excerpt 7.2.1. in Section 7.2., where it is made clear - via Darren's directive - that his understanding of the task demands are at odds with those of his fellow test-takers.

as intended. If this is not the case, and test-takers' directive formulations suggest that the task demands have been misinterpreted, test designers can act on this knowledge by, e.g., modifying task instructions, reconsidering time limits, or editing supporting details on test-takers'/examiners' crib-sheets in order to better mitigate the possibility of future discrepancies between task-as-workplan and task-as-process.

## 8.5.2. For Teachers

The data and findings from this thesis, furthermore, have the potential to be incorporated into data-driven, interactionally-oriented teaching materials. One such example of how this might be done can be seen in Appendix F, which demonstrates how data taken from my analytic Chapter on managing affiliation during disagreement sequences can be presented to learners in an engaging and *inductive* (Thornbury, 1999) format[27]. This approach to speaking skills provision requires learners to actively process and engage with real-life examples of interaction in order to infer rules and patterns of behaviour[28]. As such, these materials, I argue, provide teachers with a resource that goes beyond simply providing students with basic stock phrases (e.g., I disagree, I agree etc.) to instead help illuminate what Wong and Waring (2010) call the 'invisible rules' of interaction - that is, the rules and patterns that guide how participants engage in and manage interaction (Stephenson and Hall, 2021) – by providing learners with realistic and accessible samples of language use in an authentic target context. These materials, therefore, respond to calls from various L2 teaching and learning researchers - especially those proponents of the Usage-Based (UB) model of acquisition (see, e.g., Römer, 2019; Pérez-Paredes et al., 2020; O'Keefe, 2021) – for practitioners to engage in the curation of more data-driven learning materials (O'Keefe, 2023).

By exposing learners to these authentic interactional excerpts and helping them, through guided, inductive techniques and materials, to a realisation of the rules and patterns of interactional behaviour, teachers can help foster their students' ability to develop strategies

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[27] Materials are based on those in Lam (2019), though some modifications have been made to the staging of the tasks and the task instructions.
[28] The practice of grappling with patterns and their meanings is seen as a fundamental cognitive process in usage-based models of language acquisition (O'Keefe, 2023).

to build their own academic IC, an ability that - according to Wright *et al* (2022) - is becoming increasingly necessary for success in seminars in a globalised HE setting. As such, these findings have significant implications for EAP practitioners, in particular, whose aim it is to prepare learners for the demands of modern-day tertiary education.

### 8.5.3. For Learners / Test-Takers

If such interactionally-oriented and data-driven materials were utilised in the classroom, this could have a number of useful implications for learners. For example, findings from my analytic chapter on negotiating deontic rights might be exploited in learning materials that help test-takers develop strategies for **dealing with dominant speakers**. That is, by raising awareness of the effects that different responses to co-participants' directives can have on subsequent talk – namely, on how certain second pair-part responses allow test-takers to negotiate *joint ownership* of an emergent interactional agenda – learners can be better placed to develop their own strategies for ensuring that their voices are heard and that their active contributions to task accomplishment are made visible to the examiners. An understanding of the deontic domain in interaction, as promoted by these authentic materials, has an 'emancipatory potential' (Stevanovic, 2011 – see, also, Stephenson, 2020) for learners, highlighting as they do the interactional mechanisms through which consequences can be successfully brought about in collaborative discourse.


Furthermore, in previous investigations into the challenges of group work in HE, **conflict management** has been reported as a key concern by learners (see, e.g., the studies reviewed in Popov *et al.*, 2012). This is particularly the case in groups of a heterogenous composition; that is, in groups containing a mix of different cultures and nationalities. Here again, the data and findings from this thesis may prove relevant. For example, findings from my second analytic Chapter, which focussed on the ways in which affiliation is managed in disagreement sequences, could be used as basis on which to develop materials (see, e.g., Appendix F) that provide learners with training on how to deal with the potentially face-threatening act of disagreeing. These materials, if brought into the classroom, could provide learners with an insight into the interactional resources that might be drawn on to ensure

that their disagreeing turns are commensurate with the collaborative demands of these convergent assessment tasks.

Similarly, findings from my analytic Chapter on how progressivity is maintained in the light of these assessments' relatively limited time restrictions might be used to assist learners in developing IC strategies for dealing with yet another purported challenge related to group work; that is, **adhering to timelines** (see, e.g., Behfar *et al*., 2006). Like disagreeing, expediting the talk of fellow test-takers and/or slowing it down (i.e., maintaining task progression within a limited timeframe) can be a potentially face-threatening act, and one that should, therefore, be approached with a degree of sensitivity in order to ensure that the ongoing interaction remains germane to the task's collaborative demands. As pointed out in Stephenson and Hall (2021), however, although efforts have been made previously to ensure that, increasingly, materials draw on actual spoken language data rather than on author intuition (see, e.g., the 'Touchstone' coursebook series for students), such materials still opt for simply providing learners with banks of useful phrases for achieving certain discourse functions (e.g., clarifying, agreeing, asking questions etc.) and, therefore, do not address the rules and patterns of interaction that govern how participants maintain the overall *progression* of conversation. Indeed, the ebb and flow of timely and equitable participation in, and the overall ongoing accomplishment *of*, task progression is taken, implicitly, to be relatively unproblematic. However, as the detailed analysis contained herein hopes to have shown, this is a somewhat optimistic and simplistic conception of what occurs in many group discussions. Thus, what is missing from (and needed in) most instructional and test-preparation materials are insights into what learners might actually need to do or say in order to effectively maintain the timely progression of talk and to achieve the shared goals of these assessment tasks.

Materials based on findings such as those in this thesis, and presented in the inductive, guided discovery approach demonstrated in Appendix F, I argue, have the potential to address this need. They do so by providing learners with the insights from authentic interaction necessary for them to cultivate their ability to develop their own IC strategies for success not only in these group-based assessment tasks but also, it is hoped, in the group work that awaits them after admittance to university.

### 8.5.4. For EAP/PSE Skills Preparation

Indeed, it is has been noted elsewhere (e.g., Wright *et al.,* 2022), that international students' success in seminars within a globalised HE setting, rests in large part on their ability to develop strategies to build academic IC. There is an argument, therefore, for Pre-Sessional English (PSE) programmes - which purport to develop learners' EAP skills in preparation for entry into HE – to incorporate into their curriculums, alongside traditional writing, reading, listening, and (monologic) speaking skills provision, a focus on the kind of *dialogic,* interactional skills that learners need in order to participate in today's communicative HE classrooms.

Findings from this thesis provide evidence of the kind of complex interactional work involved in the successful accomplishment of the group-based assessment tasks contained herein. Furthermore, the interactional repertoires uncovered by the current study – that is, the interactive strategies involved in maintaining progressivity, managing affiliation during disagreement sequences, and negotiating deontic rights – all map on to areas of interaction that international students in previous research have reported as challenging facets of group work in HE. As mentioned in the previous section, in a study by Popov *et al* (2012)[29], international students reported difficulties pertaining to 'adhering to timelines' (cf. *maintaining progressivity*), 'conflict management' (cf., *managing affiliation in disagreement sequences*), and 'agree[ing] on acceptable behaviour' / 'task coordination' (cf., *negotiating deontic rights*)[30]. As such, the data excerpts and findings from this study provide fertile ground upon which to develop the kind of syllabus and teaching/learning materials that would provide learners with the requisite training to raise their awareness of (and develop strategies for) the interactional exigencies present in dialogic, academic group work.

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[29] Drawing on previous work by Behfar *et al* (2006) in the field of management and organizational research.
[30] Other challenges related to (1) heterogenous group composition, (2) different academic attitudes, (3) differences in content knowledge, and (4) culturally different styles of problem-solving and decision-making – all of which are aspects involved in the group-based assessment tasks in this thesis (although, some assessment groups, by necessity, had a culturally homogenous composition – e.g., in some groups the test-takers were all Chinese).

Findings also evidence the construct validity of this group-based, convergent IOA format – demonstrated insofar as features of interaction salient in the target situation (i.e., group work in university seminars) are also present in the elicited test-based discourse – and, therefore, support an argument for this particular group-based, IOA format (over, e.g., other OPI and paired formats) to be adopted on any EAP course purporting to provide learners with the academic speaking skills required for success after matriculation to their target institutes. Having such an assessment as an end-of-term assessment on PSE/EAP courses, I suggest, would - from a learner's perspective - help emphasise the importance of developing academic IC and - from a practitioner's perspective - encourage the design and implementation of more collaborative forms of learning (Flowerdew, 1997).

## 8.6. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

There were a number of limitations to this study. Firstly, I did not have access to all of the test-takers' final scores or the examiners' comments. This, as a result, precluded an examination of the extent to which the salient interactional features considered herein influenced the decisions of the examiners. Having said that, this nevertheless did not affect the veracity of my findings and analysis of the unfolding test talk, as I was concerned only with the collaborative accomplishment of social actions such as disagreeing, maintaining progressivity, and negotiating deontic rights. I would recommend, however, that future studies do attempt to collate examiners' marks (and feedback, if any), as this would allow the researcher to identity examiners' attitudes (favourable or otherwise) towards certain interactional practices. This, of course, could influence future assessor and learner training materials as well as inform the development of assessment criteria.

Another minor limitation of the current study has to do with the quality of the video recordings. In some, the examiners' positioning of the test-takers in relation to the recording equipment meant that in a minority of cases some test-takers' faces were not fully visible. While the audio was not affected by these conditions, it nonetheless restricted my ability to capture aspects of their embodied conduct (facial gestures etc.). Furthermore, as the examiners mark these tests live (i.e., not afterwards using the recording) and often position themselves next the camera (not always behind it), it is possible that the view I had,

as the researcher, was not the same as that of the examiners. I would, however, have had the same view as any third marker, who would have used the recording for moderation purposes at a later date. With this in mind, it might be useful for future studies to use a 360° camera placed in the centre of the assessment table. This would allow the researcher to examine the interaction from inside the group, facilitating a view of all participants from an emic (i.e., participant-relevant) perspective. This type of recording equipment would also provide the researcher with access to what test-takers write down during the course of the unfolding interaction, providing an interesting depth to any future multimodal analyses by uncovering the ways in which textual artefacts are used in group speaking tests.

Furthermore, due to a need to narrow down my focus so that my analyses would fit within the remit of a PhD thesis, it was inevitable that certain areas of interest had to be prioritised over others, with some aspects explored only cursorily (e.g., multimodality) and others dropped entirely. For example, during the early stages of the thesis, I had considered exploring more thoroughly the different ways in which test-takers utilised humour in their collaborative management of talk. While aspects of humour (e.g., smile face, laughter, facial expressions etc.) were explored in terms of their role in mitigating face threatening acts such as disagreements (see Chapter 6), these early noticings did not develop into a dedicated analytic chapter. Instead, the current study focussed largely on speech alone. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies adopt a more focussed multimodal approach in order to investigate more closely the role that embodied conduct plays in the collaborative management of assessment talk.

While the current study – in uncovering the salient and recurrent ways in which test-takers collaboratively manage talk during assessment tasks - has gone some way to uncovering lesser explored features underlying the construct of IC, these features are not exhaustive. Indeed, it is my contention that there are still more microfeatures to be discovered and subsequently accommodated and acknowledged within the construct definition. I, therefore, recommend further empirical research on L2 spoken assessment interaction in order that these important features may be revealed and understood. In relation to this, it is also recommended that future studies, following Lam's (2019) example, continue to incorporate these IC findings into practical classroom materials so that the complexities of

this construct can be more tangibly communicated to learners. It is also recommended that researchers continue to ensure the veracity of interaction-oriented assessment criteria by uncovering further macro- and micro-themes of IC (à la May *et al.*, 2020).

Finally, towards the end of my PhD candidature, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that these group-based spoken assessments temporarily switched to an online, video-based format, using platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. This was the case at the university affiliated HE institute from which the data for this study was taken, and in innumerable other educational institutes around the world. This has created an interesting opportunity to study the differences (if any) that these two mediums (face-to-face vs. remote, video-based) have on how test-takers collaboratively manage interaction.

## 8.7. Final Remarks

L2 speaking has often been overlooked in second language education (Nation and Newton, 2009), and in EAP research, in particular. Indeed, a survey of the 50 most recent articles published in the Journal of English for Academic Purposes found that, of these, 17 focussed on writing skills, 5 focussed on grammar, 4 on reading skills, 4 on vocabulary, 8 had a practitioner focus, 5 focussed on listening, 5 had a Discourse Analytic focus based on corpus data of academic articles, and only 2 had a specific focus on speaking (that is, on *interaction*, as opposed to pronunciation or monologic presentation skills). This, of course, is understandable as university assessment predominantly involves writing (via e.g., coursework – essays, reports, and the like - or long-form examination questions), wherein reading skills must be sufficiently developed in order conduct the requisite research and/or revision. The importance of listening, on the other hand, is apparent based on the number of lectures learners are expected to attend, whereas, vocabulary and grammar, meanwhile, are seen as incidental to the aforementioned.

As far as speaking skills are concerned, however, as mentioned these will largely only be assessed via monologic presentations. It is understandable, then, that provision in interactive speaking skills is not often foregrounded in EAP research. However, as this thesis and the research cited herein have shown, spoken interaction is a complex phenomenon, and one that goes beyond mere concerns of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. As

such, the ability to effectively interact in groups, I argue, must be given credence as a discrete skill in need of its own principled provision. Indeed, as the importance of being able to interact competently in groups has been acknowledged as being an effective and powerful way to learn - emphasising thinking skills and preparing learners for an 'increasingly collaborative work force' (Slavin, 2010: 162) - it would be remiss of EAP practitioners not to recognise the importance of developing learners' ability to interact, regardless of whether or not this skill is a codified part of assessment at the target university. This need to develop learners' abilities in spoken interaction is especially critical at a time when, despite the growing cultural and linguistic diversity at universities, there is 'strong evidence of minimal interaction between 'domestic' and 'international' students in classrooms and in wider university contexts' (Cruickshank *et al.*, 2012 – though see, also, Arkoudis *et al,* 2011; Elliott and Reynolds, 2012) and at a time when evidence has emerged pertaining to the reported challenges[31] inherent in multi-cultural student group work in HE (Popov *et al.,* 2012).

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[31] Such challenges relate to, among other things, differences in student attitudes towards culturally mixed group work (Summers and Volet, 2008), culturally different standards of interaction (Cotton *et al.,* 2013; Cox *et al.,* 1991), dominating group members (Hofstede, 2001), and willingness to communicate in an L2 (MacIntyre *et al*. 1998).

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Gail Jefferson's CA Transcription Conventions

| | |
|---|---|
| `Name: talk` | Focal turn(s) during the excerpt(s) |
| `[yeah]`<br>`[okay]` | Overlapping talk |
| `=` | End of one turn and beginning of next with no gap/pause in between |
| `(.)` | Very short untimed pause (1 tenth of a second or less) |
| `(1.5)` | Timed pause (1.5 seconds, here) |
| `Wo:rd`<br>`Wo:::rd` | Lengthening of preceding sound |
| `?` | Rising intonation |
| `<word>` | Talk produced more slowly than the surrounding speech |
| `>word<` | Talk produced more quickly than the surrounding speech |
| ☺`word`☺ | Smile voice |
| `((shakes head))` | Analyst's note on embodied conduct |
| `–` | False start or interruption |
| `WORD` | Increased volume |
| `(word)` | Uncertain utterance or incorrect/unclear pronunciation |
| <u>`Word`</u> | Emphasized word |
| `|yeah|`<br>`|((nods))|` | Maps embodied conduct to verbal conduct |
| `hhh` | Exhalation/laughter within a word |
| °`Word`° | Whisper/soft voice |
| `.` | Fall in tone |
| ↑↓ | Rising or falling intonation |

Adapted from Hepburn and Bolden (2017) and Hepburn and Potter (2021).

## Appendix B: Example Crib Sheets

### Choosing a Product

| Choice 1 | Choice 2 | Choice 3 | Choice 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Align** | **Boostpak** | **The Porkfolio** | **The One Stop Chop** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Cost** | **Cost** | **Cost** | **Cost** |
| £9.99 | £37.99 | £17.99 | £20 |
| **Product Description** | **Product Descript** | **Product Descript** | **Product Descript** |
| A stapler with detachable base which enables a user to staple materials of any size, from posters to sheets of cardboard. | A children's rucksack that doubles as a car booster seat for small children aged 2 – 5 years. | a smart piggy bank that wirelessly connects to an app on your mobile device and lights up when you insert coins. | A durable cutting board with 3 hidden food preparation storage containers that slide under its chopping surface. |
| **Additional Information** | **Additional Information** | **Additional Information** | **Additional Information** |
| • Magnets keep the two halves attached like any other stapler.<br>• Detach its base to staple wherever you want.<br>• It is portable so you can stick it to any magnetic chalkboard, white board or filing cabinet.<br>• Available in blue, pink and black | • Ideal for use on holidays, the school run and car-sharing<br>• Back padding encourages better posture and protects growing spines.<br>• The seatbelt adjusts to fit the child as they grow to ensure maximum safety.<br>• Limited storage space when used as a backpack | • Can check your balance and set goals<br>• The nose lights up when U.S. / Euro coin is inserted.<br>• A fun way to teach children about money and responsibility<br>• Wi-Fi with iOS 8, iPhone 6s, Android phones and tablets with OS 6. | • Save on counter space when preparing food<br>• Surface made from finished, oil-treated bamboo that stops scuff marks and absorbs moisture<br>• You can slide or dice and then sweep your ingredients into a dish below.<br>• Available in two sizes |

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# Choosing a Location for a New Business

| | Choice 1 | Choice 2 | Choice 3 | Choice 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Artist's impression of your Domino's franchise | Artist's impression of your Domino's franchise | Artist's impression of your Domino's franchise | Artist's impression of your Domino's franchise |
| **Costs** | Lease for 15 years: Price £65, 000 | Lease for 12 years: Price £130, 000 | Lease for 12 years: Price £190, 000 | Lease for 10 years: Price £85, 000 |
| | Annual Rent £12,500 | Annual Rent £68,000 | Annual Rent £85,000 | Annual Rent £21,500 |
| | **Other businesses and retail outlets on the road close to the proposed site** | **Other businesses and retail outlets on the road close to the proposed site** | **Other businesses and retail outlets on the road close to the proposed site** | **Other businesses and retail outlets on the road close to the proposed site** |
| | • McDonalds, Pizza Hut and a kebab shop.<br>• A sports shop, swimming pool and gym<br>• 2 pubs | • Local government offices with 300 members of staff<br>• 3 banks, a newsagent and convenience store<br>• A betting shop | • No other businesses or retail outlets | • A fish and chip shop, a pub and a French Bistro<br>5 charity shops and a florist<br>A 24 hour petrol station |
| **Road details** | • Busy main road from town to major road (A1)<br>• Near big housing estate | • Busy high street near station<br>• Next to Primark | • On the outskirts of the town<br>• Part of a popular shopping centre | • Pedestrianized zone- there are benches to sit on outside |
| **Parking** | 10 bays at the back of premises - free | Multi-level car park, 200 metres away. Cost : 70p/ 30 minutes | Over 500 parking bays - free for 2 hours | Car park 300 metres away - Cost: 50p/ 60 minutes |

To help international students prepare for undergraduate study at a British university.

**Objectives of the Module**

By the end of the module, you should have

- achieved a familiarity and facility with the English Language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) which will enable you to benefit fully from your university programme

- gained confidence and skills in critical analysis, carrying out research for assignments, writing essays and presenting information

- gained practical experience of British university teaching methods - the lecture, the tutorial, individual research and group study

- appreciated the need for a successful student to be self-motivated, independent, critical and engaged, as well as hard-working

## 3.1 MODULE AIMS

We aim to develop your academic English in all four skills areas.

### 3.1.1 Reading and Writing

- To develop the language skills that will enable you to produce written work of a sufficiently high standard to meet the requirements of a university degree programme.

- To enable you to read academic texts effectively and efficiently in English, to take adequate notes and to summarise what you have read; to exploit academic texts for study or writing purposes.

### 3.1.2 Listening and Speaking

- To enable you to understand lectures and discussions on academic topics, to take adequate notes and to summarise appropriately.

- To enable you to use spoken English confidently, clearly and accurately in a formal and informal academic context and, more specifically, to participate successfully in academic seminars and discussions.

## Appendix D: Assessment Criteria (w/ completed scores)

| Listenership | | 1 Student name | 2 Student name | 3 Student name | 4 Student name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. You show you are listening/following through the use of **backchannels** (yes, uh hu, mm ) and/or appropriate **gestures/body language** | x | | X | X |
| | 2. You **check understanding** through the use of **clarification questioning** | X | x | | |
| | 3. You **check understanding** through the use of **confirmation questioning** | | | | |
| | 4. **You show very close listening by **overlapping appropriately with another speaker** | | | | |
| | 5. **You show very close listening by **completing the turns of other speakers in an appropriate way** | | | | |
| | **Score** | 55 | 45 | 45 | 45 |
| **Response to others** | | | | | |
| | 1. You **contribute ideas** which relate to the developing topic under discussion | x | x | x | x |
| | 2. You can **respond** to the ideas of others with **agreeing/disagreeing/comment marker phrases** | x | x | x | X |
| | 3. You can **respond** to the ideas of others with agreeing/disagreeing/ comment marker phrases and then **a new idea of your own.** | * | x | | X |
| | 4. **You can **integrate the idea** of another group member with your own ideas to extend understanding of the topic | X | x | | |
| | 5. **You can **integrate and synthesise** points from a number of group members **with your own ideas** to extend understanding of the topic | | X | | |
| | **Score** | 75 | 85 | 55 | 65 |
| **Managing topics** | | | | | |
| | 1. You manage the direction of the discussion **by asking others for their ideas on a topic** | X | X | | |

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.    You can manage the direction of the   discussion by **introducing new topics** | x | x | x | x |
| | 3.    You can use a mixture **of longer AND shorter** turns as appropriate | x | x | x | x |
| | 4.    You can manage longer turns by other people **by using interruption techniques appropriately** | | x | | |
| | 5.    You can manage the direction of the discussion **by summarising, recapping, concluding topics** | x | | | |
| | **Score** | 75 | 75 | 55 | 55 |

*Figure 3 1*

| Language effectiveness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.    You can talk with your group members about the **topic in general**, and although you may make language mistakes these don't cause any interaction breakdown. | x | x | x | X |
| 2.    You can **give your opinion** on one task option, and **support** this with reasons, implications and examples. | x | x | x | X |
| 3.    You can **evaluate** the options through **comparing or contrasting** two or more  **and/or** by analysing each option against criteria or features; you **support this with reasons**, implications and examples | x | * | x | x |
| 4.    **You are **persuasive ** through the use of emphatic language e.g**.** **adverbs, auxiliaries, fronting, inversion** | x | x | | |
| 5.    **You are **precise and efficient** through your use of **longer noun phrases**, and **multiple adjective forms** | | | | |
| **Score** | 75 | 75 | 65 | 65 |
| **Interactive pronunciation** | | | | |
| 1.    The **volume AND/ OR pace** of your delivery does not cause interaction breakdown nor an inappropriate flow to the interaction. | X | x | x | X |
| 2.    You can use **general non-specialist language** without any misunderstandings or interaction breakdown, even if there are some pronunciation mistakes (sounds, stress) | X | x | x | X |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.   You can use **specialist or topic vocabulary** without any misunderstandings or interaction breakdown, even if there are some pronunciation mistakes (sounds, stress) | * | X | x | x |
| 4.   **You can **support your evaluations** and/or emphasize your message by using a range of **sentence stress patterns e.g. contrastive stress** | x | x | | |
| 5.   **You are able to use a range of **intonation and rhythm patterns** to support your ideas and interaction e.g. with old/new information, checking/confirming questions | x | x | | |
| **Score** | 85 | 85 | 65 | 65 |
| | | | | |
| **Overall score (average of 5 micro-strategy scores)** | 75 | 75 | 60 | 60 |

## Appendix E: Example descriptors added to existing IC assessment criteria

| The student can . . . | Interaction strategies |
|---|---|
| 1. Initiate new ideas | a. **New Ideas**: Take initiative to contribute relevant new ideas<br>b. **Right time for new ideas**: Contribute new ideas after the current idea has been adequately discussed<br>c. **Language**: Use a range of appropriate language to initiate new ideas and/or shift from one idea to another (e.g., when initiating a new trajectory of talk, do so with low entitlement formats such as requests, suggestions, and proposals, rather than high entitlement formats such as commands and need reports) |
| 2. Keep the conversation going over several turns | d. **Develop (own idea):** Extend your own ideas sufficiently<br>e. **Develop (partner's idea):** Extend partners' ideas by linking their own contribution to the partner's and giving more than just a token response<br>f. **Invite:** Actively invite your partner(s) if needed (e.g., asking questions, helping complete a sentence where necessary, prompting partner(s) to say more.<br>g. **Listen:** Show listener engagement through back-channelling and short responses (e.g., exactly, right, OK).<br>h. (~~**Be collaborative**~~ – moved from being a sub-feature of 2. to being a macro-skill in its own right).<br>i. **Language:** Use a range of appropriate language (e.g., agreeing, disagreeing, explaining, elaborating, justifying, providing examples). |
| 3. Negotiate towards an outcome | j. **Joint decision/ownership:** Proactively work towards making a joint decision (e.g., inviting partner(s) to make a choice, showing willingness to compromise, as well as taking joint ownership of the group agenda - e.g., by responding to a partner's directive with a congruent directive of their own)<br>k. **Language**: Use a range of appropriate language (e.g. summarising, evaluating, comparing, prioritising points raised in discussion) |
| 4. Use body language appropriately | l. **Body language**: Use appropriate body language (e.g., nodding, smiling) to show interest in your partner(s)' contributions and/or signal change of speakers.<br>m. **Eye contact:** keep eye contact with partner(s). |
| 5. Work collaboratively | n. **Initiates:** initiates new directions of conversation in a way that orients to the contingent, joint nature of the task (by, e.g., formulating directives in low entitlement formats such as requests, proposals, and suggestions, rather than high entitlement formats, such as commands and need reports) |

| | | o. ***Affiliation and (dis-)agreement***: Uses inclusive forms of disagreement such as rhetorical questions (but have you considered . . . ?) and 'epistemic upgrades' (yes, but the most important thing is . . . ) rather than direct contradictions and challenges to ensure an affiliative response from partner(s). <br> p. ***Mitigation***: Uses mitigating devices to save face and maintain affiliation (e.g., acknowledge/agreement prefaces, laughter, epistemic downgrades, warrants etc.) |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Ensure timely task completion | | q. ***Speeding up:*** Expedites interaction when talk has stalled or partner(s) is dominating talk/taking too long <br> r. **Eliminating***: Calls for options to be eliminated when discussion has reached a state of topic attrition (evidenced, e.g., by lengthy pauses, recycling of ideas) <br> s. ***Slowing down/realigning:*** Slows talk down and/or recalibrates the ongoing direction of talk when the test interaction has strayed off topic or presents the risk of premature/unsatisfactory task accomplishment (e.g., reaching an agreement without sufficient discussion having taken place). |

*Figure 3 2 – May* et al's (2020) draft checklist criteria adapted to include IC features from the current study.

The table above is taken from May et al's (2020 based on Nakatsuhara et al, 2018) draft IC assessment checklist and modified to include descriptors based on findings from the current study (all changes/additions are in red). The micro-skill 'be collaborative', originally a sub-feature under the macro-skill 'Keep the discussion going over several turns', has been listed instead as a distinct macro-skill with three associated micro-skills (n., o., and p.). The macro-skill 'Ensure timely task completion' has also been added and has three associated micro-skills (q., r., and s.). Micro-skills c., and j., have been supplemented with further text to help elucidate and better operationalize the concept for prospective assessors and test-takers based on how these features were manifested within the current study's dataset.

| Features of Interaction |
|---|
| – More and less effective ways of challenging/disagreeing |

## *Example 1 – Rita, Caroline, Ben, and Lin*

### 1st Listen

The test-takers in the excerpt below are discussing the same task as in Example 1 (that is, choosing a product in which to invest). At the beginning of the sequence, Lin claims that the product in question might become a 'new fashion' for students.

**https://ncl.instructure.com/courses/45507/pages/worked-examples-disagreeing**

1. Who disagrees with Lin?

    a. …

2. Why do they disagree?

    a. …

```
255  LIN: It may be a (0.4) new fashions of (0.4) uh: (1.0)
256       international student
257       (0.8)
258  CAR: yes ⌈I agree with that⌉
259  BEN:    ⌊yeah it's- it's⌋ maybe it's mmm it's good
260       for (0.5) uhm it's good for international student
261       and it's very popular between them (0.5) but
262       (0.6) you know (0.4) in Newcastle is uh: (0.9)
263       it's not a big city
264       (0.4)
265  RIT:     yeah
266       (0.3)
267  BEN: yes and uh (0.5) just have (0.3) little (0.3)
268       international student °on Newcastle°
269       (0.3)
270  RIT: hhh=
271  BEN: =I- so I=
272  CAR: =seriously?
274       (0.2)
275  BEN: yeah (.) yeah (.) but i- if it's on London (0.5)
276       maybe it is very popular and suitable because it has
277       uh (0.5) lots of international student and-
```

```
278        and uh (.) but (.) uh if in Newcastle |☺I think☺|
just
279        have little international student (.) so I think
    maybe
280        it's not- maybe it's not uh (.) good idea (.) I
    think
281         uh just i think.
```

**2ⁿᵈ Listen**

Guiding Questions:

1. Ben responds to Lin and Caroline in lines 259-263 and 267-8. In which specific lines does Ben begin to show his disagreement?
   a. …
2. How does Ben formulate his disagreement?
   a. …
3. After the first part of Ben's disagreeing turn (lines 259-263), what follows in lines:
   a. 264?
      i. …
   b. 265?
      i. …
   c. 266?
      i. …
4. Do lines 264-266 show that the discussion is progressing?
      i. …
5. Following the next part of Ben's turn (lines 267-8), what follows at line:
   a. 269?
      i. …
   b. 270?
      i. …
   c. 272?
      i. …
      ii. …

## *Example 2 – Luki, Bobo, Amy, and Larina*

In the discussion below, the test-takers are trying to decide on the best form of renewable energy to introduce into a city in the UK. Their options are solar energy, wind energy, and hydroelectricity. At the beginning of the sequence, one of the test-takers can be seen evaluating the solar energy option.

1. Which two test-takers disagree?
2. Why do they disagree?

```
35 *LARI:  OK uh- (0.3) i- i uh would choose
36         s- solar energy (0.4) for the reason that
37         the first uh- as for the price (0.6) uh
38         it's uh (0.5) cheaper (0.7) cheapest (.)
39         it's cheaper than others and uh (0.8) what's
40         more (0.4) it also has uh: (0.4) fifty (0.7)
41         five (0.4) percent (efficiency)
42         (0.7)
43 *BOBO:     yes=
44 *LARI:  =rating on the ( )=
45 *AMY:   =°yes°
46         (1.7)
47 *BOBO:     u:hm but| (0.1) uh we all know that
48         the- this uh: (0.4) this uh: (0.9)
49         e:quipment is to help uh- uh (0.5) protect
50         our environment and keeping the public |happy|
51          (0.6) so I think (0.5) if (0.2) solar energy put
52         (0.5) uh like (0.4) this (0.6) solar energy
53          you put in some places (0.3) but it will (0.7) uh
54          give people some- some places not very convenient
55         (0.4) but this hydro electrics (0.7) dams it (0.2)
56         it was uh: built in far from (0.2) UK city
57         (0.4) so it have (0.6) uh: (0.8) no: (0.7) uh:(0.3)
58         not- not good way to people and also can (0.4) it
59          have a leisure↑ (0.8) it was leisure activities for
60          people (0.5) so i think hydroelectricity's better
61         (0.8)
62 *AMY:   OK
63         (0.3)
64 *LARI:  °OK I know°=
65 *LUKI: =and-
66 *       (0.5)
```

**2<sup>nd</sup> Listen**

Guiding Questions

1. In lines 47-60, Bobo expresses her disagreement with Larina. How does she show that she is disagreeing?
   a. …
2. What follows Bobo's disagreeing turn in lines:
   a. 61?
      i. …

b.  62?
                    i.  ...
           c.  63?
                    i.  ...
           d.  64?
                    i.  ...
           e.  65?
                    i.  ...
    3.  Do these responses encourage/further the discussion?
           a.  ...
           b.  ...

### *Example 3 – Heba, Patrick, July, and Marco*

In the sequence below, the test-takers are trying to decide on the best method of learning for international students. The options they have been given are Blended Learning, Online Learning, and Face to Face (classroom-based) learning. At the beginning of the sequence below, the test-takers are discussing Online Learning.

https://ncl.instructure.com/courses/45507/pages/worked-examples-disagreeing

### 1st Listen

1. Which test-takers agree with each other?
2. Who disagrees?
3. Why do they disagree?

```
160 *PATR: online learning i think (1.1) is (0.7)
161       it's expensive to learn because ev- every
162       student (0.5) must have a laptop or a computer
163       (0.7) to learn (0.9) and uh (1.2) student might
164       lost their way (0.7) during their study
165       (0.7) because no one can (0.4) guide them to
166       (0.8) learn very well (0.5) [doing]
167 *MARC:                          [yeah]=
168 *JULY: =|in fact (.) i think| this uh: |is not a big
problem|
169       because in school everywhere have computer
170       uhm people uh- uh people can use this computer
171       to learning (0.4) but the (0.4) mmm the best uh
172        the most uh (one) (1.1) uhm problem is people can't
173       (0.7) uh: (0.8) only use- use computer to study
maybe
174       they will use it to uhm(0.6) use some website or
check
175       email and chatting or play computer games=
176 *HEBA: =so this maybe uh: wasting for their time?=
177 *JULY: =>yeah yeah<
178       (0.3)
179 *MARC: [yeah]
180 *JULY: [yeah] (0.5) a learning time
```

### 2nd Listen

Guiding Questions:
1. In lines 168-175, July challenges what Patrick said in lines 160-6. What language does she use to indicate that she is not in full agreement?
2. Does this form of disagreement claim that the prior speaker's idea is wrong?

3. How do July's fellow test-takers react at lines:
    a. 176?
    b. 179?
4. Would you say that the responses following Christine's disagreement are positive or negative?
5. Is the 'flow' of the conversation interrupted by Christine's disagreement?
6. How do the responses following the disagreement in this sequence compare to that in Examples 1 and 2?

## Example 4 – Yuna, Junn, and Christine

In the sequence below, the test-takers are trying to decide on the best way to receive homework and messages from their teacher. The options they have been given are Facebook, Twitter, and Blackboard (a university Virtual Learning Environment). At the beginning of the sequence below, the test-takers are discussing Blackboard.

[https://ncl.instructure.com/courses/45507/pages/worked-examples-disagreeing](https://ncl.instructure.com/courses/45507/pages/worked-examples-disagreeing)

**1st Listen**

1. Which test-takers disagree?

    a. …

2. Why do they disagree?

    a. …

```
110 *YUNA:      yes i think so and i want to say uhm (.) uh
we:- (0.6)
111        we are in the university and we should study the
112        academics things so (0.5) the Blackboard is more
(.)
113        relatively than- (0.6) relatively academic than
114        other apps
115     (1.0)
116 *CHRI:  but the most (0.5) important problem is we can't
be
117        viewed on a mobile phone (.) so you ⌈can't check⌉≈
118 *JUNN:                                 ⌊mm yeah⌋
119 *CHRI: ≈your homework (.) your class (.) in- when you are
120     in the street=
121 *JUNN: =yeah=
122 *CHRI: =if you are not at home (.) yeah
123     (0.6)
124 *JUNN: it is (0.7) quite (.) com- uncomfortable right?=
125 *CHRI: =yeah
126     (0.6)
127 *CHRI: how about Twitter?
```

**2nd Listen**

Guiding Questions
1. In lines 116-122, Christine disagrees with Yuna. How does she formulate show that she is disagreeing?
    a. …

2. Does this form of disagreement claim that the prior speaker's idea is wrong?
    a. ...
3. How do Christine's fellow test-takers react at lines:
    a. 118
        i. ...
    b. 121
        i. ...
    c. 124
        i. ...
4. Would you say that the responses following Christine's disagreement are positive or negative?
    a. ...
5. Is the 'flow' of the conversation interrupted by Christine's disagreement?
    a. ...
6. How do the responses following the disagreement in this sequence compare to that in Examples 1 and 2?
    a. ...

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