Visual Initiations of Repair - Some Preliminary Observations[1]

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Abstract

This paper provides some initial observations on embodied 'non-verbal' conduct as a way of initiating repair in the second/foreign language classroom. It demonstrates how a social practice, which is recognizable from ordinary conversation, can be, and often is, used in the classroom to enhance specific pedagogical aims.

In the last decade or so the amount of ethnomethodological (EM) and conversation analytic (CA) studies that incorporate information about participants' embodied conduct has increased dramatically (for a recent collection of studies, see Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011). Following EM/CA's claimed emic perspective, they describe embodied conduct as relevant and oriented-to components of social action-in-interaction. This line of work continues a smaller group of EM/CA researchers who since the 1980s have described social action as a *Gestalt* of various semiotic fields (e.g., C. Goodwin, 1981; Heath, 1986; Streeck, 1993, 1994). Yet the precise ways in which embodied conduct is oriented to as performing *systematic and recognizable* social action is less clear (Mortensen, forthcoming 2012). Research that relies on collections of embodied conduct has so far primarily been related to the organization of turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). For instance, a few studies show how incipient speakers project an upcoming turn-at-talk (Mondada, 2007; Mortensen, 2009; Streeck & Hartge, 1992). Additionally, a few studies have described embodied social action in relation to another of CA's cornerstones, which is the topic of the present study - the organization of repair.

At any point in social interaction, intersubjectivity may break down and need to be restored by the participants. The organization of repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) describes the practices that participants use to do this. Studies in CA have described how participants may divide *initiating* and *accomplishing* the repair, respectively, between either the speaker of the trouble source ('*self*') or another co-participant ('*other*'). 'Trouble source' does not refer to external criteria or psychological 'truths', but to what participants in situ treat a problematic, and this may refer to troubles of speaking, hearing or understanding. Some types of repair initiation locate the kind of trouble the speaker is having with some prior turn. This may be the case with for instance partial or full repeats, and interrogatives such as *who?* and *where?*. Others, such as *huh?* and *pardon?* do not locate the trouble source, but are so-called 'open class' (Drew, 1997). A few studies have described participants' embodied conduct during repair sequences (e.g., Egbert, 1996) including word searches (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Hayashi, 2003) and the assumed relevance of repair to language learning (Olsher, 2008). To my knowledge, only a single (and recent) study by Seo and Koshik (2010) deals with how embodied conduct in the *absence* of talk can be a practice for initiating repair. Analyzing English as a second language (ESL) conversational tutoring sessions, they describe how two gestures, 'head poke' and 'head turn', initiate repair and how they are understood as indicating problems of understanding.

In this paper I focus primarily on two different body movements, which without accompanying talk initiate repair on the turn-at-talk it follows. In the first one ('leaning forward') the 'participant' leans forward and torques the head (see fig. 1). In the second ('hand to ear') the 'participant' brings the finger(s) or hand(s) to the ear(s) (see fig. 2). Additionally, the collection includes a smaller number of head pokes, which are often accompanied with raised eyebrows similar to the ones described by Seo and Koshik.

Figure 1 'Leaning forward'   **Figure 2 'Hand to ear'**

As the resources are embodied-only, they do not seem to specify the kind of trouble source. In terms of social action they seem to be similar to open class repair initiations (Drew, 1997), and they seem to be treated identically by the co-participants. The visual repair initiations are not tied to institutional roles, but are used by both teacher and students, and by students in both teacher-student and student-student based activities. In this (short) paper I want to show (i) how embodied conduct can be a systematic practice for initiating repair, (ii) which in this particular sequential context is understood as a problem of hearing. And (iii) how the teacher relies on this social practice for pedagogical reasons, e.g. in order to evaluate the linguistic accurateness of the student's prior turn.

A speaker can initiate repair at any point in the course of interaction. In my collection I find visual initiations of repair (VIRs) in two sequential positions: Either following a first pair part where the VIR initiates an insertion sequence. Or following a second pair part in which the VIR initiates a post expansion as in example 1[2].

Example 1
```
01 F Te:   okay (.) eh Sabine what is the <ve::rb> for ↑picture number one
02   Ps:   (1.5)
03   Sa:   °Hmmm ↑hmm°
04   Ps:   (4.2)
05   An:   .Hh °ah°
06   Ps:   (4.5)
07   Te:   any idea
08   Ps:   (3.0)
09   Te:   Camilla
10 S Ca:   go
11-> Ps:   #1(0.7)#2
```



```
12   Ca:   go in flat
13   Te:   not to go (.) no it's more permanent than go,
14   Ps:   (3.1)
15   Te:   André
16   Ps:   (0.2)
17   An:   eh live
18   Te:   LIVE
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[2] In the transcripts 'F' indicates a first pair part and 'S' a second pair part. The arrow marks the VIR.

In example 1, Sabine is not answering the teacher's question in line 1, and in line 9 the teacher selects Camilla to answer the question as she presents herself as available to answer the question by turning the gaze towards the teacher in line 8 (see Mortensen, 2008). Following her second pair part, the teacher leans the torso forward and torques the head maintaining the gaze towards Camilla. Camilla orients to the teacher's body movement as a repair initiation as she repeats and expands her prior turn in line 12.

Although the collection includes examples of 'VIR + reformulation' that orients to the VIR as a problem of understanding, they are overwhelmingly followed by a repeat of the prior turn. In example 1 above, the student expands the prior turn which might reveal her understanding of the (assumed) form focused pedagogical aim (cf. Seedhouse, 2004: 141ff.). The teacher, however, does not orient to the expansion, but that this is not the right verb to describe the picture on the hand out. By repeating the prior turn, the speaker orients to the repair initiation as a (displayed) hearing problem (Schegloff, 1997: 507; 2000). A similar case, where the VIR, 'head poke' with raised eyebrows, is done by a student is presented in example 2 in which the class is asking questions in order to guess André's (hypothetical) job:

Example 2
```
01   Te:   André do y(h)ou ear a lot of money
02   Ps:   (4.2)
03   An:   no I don't=
04   Te:   =no?
05   Ps:   (1.3)
06   Te:   °o:ka:y°
07   Ps:   (0.7)
08   Te:   Sabine?
09   Ps:   (2.0)
10   Sa:   do you (drive)
11-> Ps:   #1(1.1)#2
```



```
12   Sa:   do you drive
13   Ps:   (2.5)
14   An:   eh:: (0.3) no I don't
```

These findings contrast with that of Seo and Koshik (2010). They describe how embodied repair initiations that in physical shape are quite similar to the ones described here are oriented to as a problem of *understanding* rather than hearing. Several studies have suggested a preference for addressing declared troubles as a *hearing* problem over problems of *understanding* (Pomerantz, 1984; Svennevig, 2008). Here, the VIRs are treated as a hearing problem which might be socially less sensitive as it places the responsibility on the recipient rather than on the speaker. Consider example 3, in which the class jocularly talks about the teacher's wife who (presumably) lets him do all the house work.

Example 3
```
01   Ca:   where *does* (1.1) where does she do:?
02   Te:   what does she ↑do (.) my [wife=
03   Ca:                            [yes
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04   Te:   =she re↑lax[es
05   Ca:             [↑ohhh
06   Ps:   (1.2)
07   Ca:   (   ) la chance
08   Ps:   (.)
09   An:   it's very °good°
10   Te:   it's very good for [he:r (but) for me: [it's hhhh
11   Ca:                       [very good
12   Sa:                                               [no work
13-> Ps:   (0.4)#1(1.1)#2 ((1.5))
```



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14   Sa:   ↑no ↑work?
15   Ps:   (1.1)
16   Te:   sor[ry?
17   Sa:      [she don't work
18   Ps:   (0.3)
19   Te:   she:
20   Ps:   (0.3)
21   Ca:   doesn't
22   Sa:   doe[sn't work]
23   Te:      [yes yes y]es yes she works
```

The VIR in line 13 follows overlapping talk, and Sabine orients to the VIR as a hearing problem as she repeats her prior turn in line 14. After a pause, in which the teacher produces a 'negative' facial mimic, he initiates another repair initiation - this time verbally with an 'open class' repair initiation - '*sorry?*'. In overlap, the student repairs her prior turn by turning it into a finite sentence. However, she uses the wrong inflection, and in line 19 the teacher produces a prompt, i.e. another repair initiation that orients to formal linguistic aspects. In this way, what starts off as a VIR due to (assumed) hearing problems in overlapping talk is turned into another repair initiation that re-constructs the pedagogical focus of the language classroom. This happens very frequently in the collection.

Whether a VIR is oriented to as a problem of hearing or understanding seems to be intimately related to the sequential complexity. There seems to be a tendency towards treating a VIR as a hearing problem is situations in which it follows a second pair part that is responsive to the teacher's display question. The structure thus resembles an IRF format in which the VIR takes up the follow-up turn. The VIR is not treated as assessing the student's turn according to the pedagogical focus. But by initiating a repair, and even more so a repair initiation that does not specify the trouble source, it gives the student a chance to produce the second pair part - once more. Repeating, which here is prompted by the VIR is a central feature of classroom interaction and may be used for various interactional (or pedagogical) purposes including topicalizing a turn, repeating a turn for the sake of the other students, or highlighting a turn for a (following) pedagogical evaluation (cf. Mortensen, 2011). In sum, VIR is a general social practice that, depending on the sequential context, may be treated as either a problem or hearing or understanding. The practice may then be used 'pedagogically' for instance to evaluate the pronunciation of the prior turn. When a VIR is a 'genuine' matter of intersubjectivity (either hearing or understanding) and when it is a pedagogically motivated way of having the student re-do the prior turn does not seem to be an easy analytic distinction. Indeed, this can most often only determined retrospectively.

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