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Dealing with Disaligned and Misaligned Reciprocity: Storytelling in Homestay Contexts

Tim Greer

Abstract Storytellings are often adapted extemporaneously according to their audience's reactions. This chapter examines recipient uptake in a corpus of dinnertime narratives collected in homestay contexts where the guest is a novice speaker of English. Aligning responses represent the preferred form of uptake and enable the teller to continue without delay, but disaligned and misaligned responses may cause the teller to postpone or repair a telling-in-progress to re-establish optimal listenership. Disaligned responses are designedly unfitted to the speaker's just-prior turn, whereas misaligned responses do not display any recognition that the response is ill-fitted to the action formation. Disaligned uptake can, for example, constitute a teasing or joking stance and may be followed with laughter or a knowing nod that treats it that way, while a misaligned response can lead the teller to reformulate the talk-in-progress. Within the context of this investigation, misaligned turns from the homestay visitor (an L2 speaker of English) are treated by the family as evidence of limited interactional competence and, by addressing the guest's misaligned stance, they offer opportunities for second language learning "in the wild" (Hellermann, Eskildsen, Pekarek Doehler, & Piirainen-Marsh, 2019). The study therefore provides insight into how speakers adapt their turns in situ to both the stances and the proficiencies of those around them and how they pre-emptively deal with possible reference or understanding problems through the practices of recipient design.

1 Introduction

Next-turn interpretations are fundamental to Conversation Analysis (CA), where the notion of procedural consequentiality (Schegloff, 1992) is a central tenet. Any given action makes particular kinds of reciprocal action relevant in the ongoing talk and is sensitive to what comes before it. Where a turn is not suited to its sequential environment, its relevance may be challenged through the machinery of repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977), and speakers are therefore continually monitoring their recipients' reactions to ensure the message is being properly understood. A recipient's contribution can be said to be *disaligned* (or *misaligned*) when it does not respond in a way that demonstrates appropriate understanding of how the prior turn was designed. It can also be considered *disaffiliative* if it does not endorse the prior speaker's stance. When it comes to storytelling, this often means that elements of the story are delivered in installments, with recipients given opportunities to display their understanding through receipt tokens, assessments and similar reactions, or to clarify misunderstandings with

repair initiations. These interactional practices are employed by and for expert (L1) speakers and novice (L2) speakers alike,¹ although the frequency and details may differ to some extent.

This chapter examines such recipient uptake in a corpus of dinnertime narratives collected in homestay contexts where the guest is a novice speaker of English. Misaligned turns from the homestay visitor can be treated by the family as evidence of limited interactional competence and, by addressing the guest's misaligned stance, they can offer opportunities for second language learning "in the wild" (Hellermann et al., 2019). However, on occasions, such explanations are deployed pre-emptively, despite the L2 user's claims of understanding. The study therefore provides insight into how speakers adapt their turns *in situ* to both the stances and the proficiencies of those around them. Following a brief overview of the CA literature on alignment, the analysis first examines some instances of misaligned and disaligned reciprocity in storytelling contexts, then considers the issue of preemptive recipient design within such stories, particularly in relation to novice language users' displays of alignment.

2 Literature review

2.1 Reciprocity within storytelling

Since stories are co-constructed, analysts must pay attention to both the storyteller and the recipient(s). Schegloff (1997) famously criticized the Labovian approach to narrative analysis for not sufficiently taking into account the role of the recipient. Tellers demonstrate considerable investment in designing and monitoring their story in order to ensure it is being correctly understood, as demonstrated via the audience's reactions (Mandelbaum, 2012; Sacks, 1992). For their part, recipients are also continually inspecting the story for relevant elements that need to be properly acknowledged, such as giving a go-ahead to a story preface (Schegloff, 2007) or by laughing at the punchline of a joke (Sacks, 1978). In other words, the recipient's displays of intersubjectivity facilitate the progress of the story (Heritage, 2007), and what constitutes alignment is "the ways in which interlocutors demonstrate their intersubjectivity, by showing...that they are understanding each other and are being understood" (Ding, 2004, p. 744). Such displays provide turn-by-turn information to the teller about how the recipient is aligning to the story as its audience and therefore support the activity at the structural level. Meanwhile at the affective level, displays of social affiliation are used to show empathy or agree with the teller's stance (Steensig, 2019; Stivers, 2008). A recipient might align by recognizing the teller is telling a story, but not affiliate with it, such as by withholding laughter or assessment at points when they are sequentially due. Alignment is revealed in any responsive turn, but affiliation is only visible via responses that "match the prior speaker's evaluative stance, display empathy and/or cooperate with the preference of the prior action" (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011, p. 21).

The CA literature to date has by and large used the term *disalign* to refer to turns that fail to accept the interactional presuppositions or support the action formation that is being proposed by a given FPP. However, this paper will make a distinction between *disaligned* and *misaligned* responses. Misaligned responses do not provide the interlocutor(s) with any interactional evidence that the speaker has recognized the FPP action formation. They are therefore

¹ In line with Firth and Wagner's (1997) criticism of a priori relevance of categories like "non-native" or "learner", I choose to instead refer to expert and novice users throughout this paper, unless the participants themselves orient to each other in some other way.

inadvertently misplaced and are likely to result in interactional repair. While this is certainly not the first time the term misaligned has been used in a CA study (see Bolden, 2018; Drew and Hepburn, 2016; Oloff, 2018), the distinction is not one that has been made clear.

Issues of alignment and affiliation can be seen in a variety of storytelling contexts. Hall, Malabarba and Kimura (2019) show that teachers use alignment practices to cooperatively manage their class. While reading aloud to a group, for example, a teacher may respond to a student's mid-telling bid for clarification only by smiling and continuing reading, and thus accomplishing both disalignment and embodied affiliation. Ta and Filipi (2020) examine storytelling in doctoral research supervision meetings, demonstrating that recipients in that context align with the story as instructive, rather than displaying affiliation in terms of emotion or stance. In L2 interaction, alignment and affiliation from expert speakers during troubles-telling sequences (Jefferson, 1988) support the novice user's participation and can therefore play a role in integrating migrants into the new community (Kunitz & Jansson, 2021). In multi-party talk, recipients may orient differently to the same story, revealing multiple interpretations and involvements with the narrative (Goodwin, 1986; Kim & Tse Crepaldi, 2021), and storytellers can likewise treat the audience differently, based on their perceived understanding of the recipients' knowledge and experience (Goodwin, 1981). As Goodwin (1986) notes, "the meaning that the story will be found to have thus emerges not from the actions of the speaker alone, but rather as the product of a collaborative process of interaction in which the audience plays a very active role" (p. 283). For this reason, conversation analytic research into storytelling focuses on the actions of both the teller and the audience.

The ability to align as a recipient has been shown to develop via recurrent engagement with the target language, both within children learning a second language (Burdleski & Evaldsson, 2019; Kim, 2016) and throughout study abroad sojourns (Burch, 2019; Dings, 2014; Ishida, 2011). In particular, mealtime conversations within homestays provide students with recurrent opportunities to use the target language and experience the host family's cultural practices (Kinginger, Lee, Wu, & Tan, 2014), including lexical items and storytelling (Berger, 2017; Berger & Pekarek Doehler, 2018; Greer, 2019a, 2019b). When an expert speaker formulates a story for a known novice of the language, they may pre-empt reference and understanding problems (Svennevig, 2010; Svennevig, Gerwing, Jensen, & Allison, 2017) by unpacking words and phrases even before the learner has displayed any trouble in comprehending them. The analysis in this chapter will build on this work by explicating some of the interactional practices used by L1 English speakers to tell a story and by L2 English recipients in aligning and affiliating with the story in a homestay setting.

3 Background to the data

The talk to be examined originates from a dataset of 56 recordings gathered from 14 homestay families in Australia and the United States between 2012 and 2019. In each case, the homestay guest was a first- or second-year student from a Japanese university who was taking part in a short-term (3- or 4-week) study abroad program while living with a local host family. The students were asked to video-record instances of natural interaction between themselves and the host family and consent was obtained from all parties. The researcher was not present at any of the recordings. The study received ethical approval from the funding body. Host families were recruited by the homestay coordinator at each site and the visiting students were invited to take part in the study once the family had indicated their willingness to be involved. Participants were

given the option to delete any of the video-recordings prior to submitting them and the students were made aware that participation in the project would have no effect on their grade. All parties gave written consent for the recordings to be studied.

The analysis will focus on six extended excerpts from two of these families. Shin's host family (Excerpts 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6) consisted of Mom, Dad, Gran and Jen, a college-aged daughter who had returned home for one of the meals (Figure 1). The family lived in Seattle, USA and were all L1 speakers of English. Ryo's host family (Excerpt 3) were Mexican immigrants to Australia and spoke both English and Spanish in the home (Figure 2). The family consisted of Mum and Dad and their two sons, Axel (11) and Luis (6), and at the time of the first recording, they were joined by Gran and Uncle Juan. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the analysis.

Figure 1.
Shin's host family

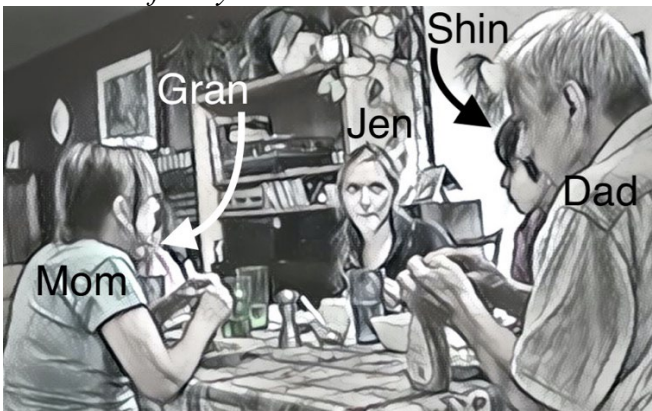


Figure 2.
Ryo's host family



The interaction in these homestay settings will be analyzed from a conversation analytic approach (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007). In line with its radically emic perspective, any analytic observations are based on the publicly available orientations of the participants themselves, as displayed via the sequential unfurling of the talk. Along with detailed attention to paralinguistic and embodied features of the interaction, this evidence allows us to document how recipients align and affiliate with stories on a moment-by-moment basis, with the aim of exploring the repercussions such alignment displays can have for both the audience and the storyteller.

The data have been transcribed according to the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004), and embodied aspects of the talk have been indicated below the talk in a tier rendered in

grey. Following a simplified version of Mondada’s approach (Mondada, 2018), each tier is identified with the participant’s initial and a code indicating the locus of embodiment (e.g., -gz for *gaze*, -px for *proximity*, -bh for *both hands*, and so on). The onset of the embodied action is located relative to the talk tier via a horizontal bar (|). See the appendix for further details.

4 Analysis

This section will explore issues of recipient design and alignment in storytelling sequences from the two homestay settings. After providing examples of recipient disalignment (4.1) and misalignment (4.2), we will consider how differences in alignment can exist within multi-party reciprocity (4.3). The analysis will then take into account how storytellers pre-empt reference problems via asides to the novice language user (4.4), and document how they design the upshot of a story for recipients who are affiliating differently (4.5). Throughout the analysis, therefore, the dual focus will be on how tellers shape recipient response and how recipients respond to the telling.

4.1 Disaligning as a tease

We begin with an example of a disaligned recipient response during a pre-telling sequence. Just as Jen, as a prospective teller, is attempting to launch a storytelling, Dad jokingly disaligns with that action sequence in what Piirainen-Marsh (2011) calls a “(designedly) inappropriate or cheeky answer” (p. 360).

Excerpt 1. Do you wanna hear what happened?

```
01 JEN      |i had t' °|drive round for a few minutes°=>
           j-gz      |down
           j-hd      |shakes head

02          |oh yeah 'n you wanna hear what happened?
           j-gz      |~~~>dad----->

03 DAD      no.
04          |(0.7)
           j-gz      |~~>plate-->

05 GRAN     h'[h' h' h' h' h' h' hh' h' h' =
06 JEN      [|well $too bad$ i'm gonna |[tell] you |anyways
           j-gz      |plate----->
           j-xp      |smiling
           s-gz      |to jen-----~~~~~|to dad----->
           s-xp      |not smiling----->
```





07 DAD [yes]

08 GRAN |h' h' [h' h' h' hh'] h' h' h' h'=
 s-gz |to gran----->
 s-xp |smiles

09 DAD? [°sh' h' h'°]

10 GRAN =h'|h' h' hh' h' [h' hn.
 d-gz |~~>gran----->
 d-xp |smiling

11 DAD [°hn [hn°

12 JEN [so,

13 (1.9)

14 JEN [u::m,]

15 DAD [°i di]dn't mean (it)°

Jen is telling the family about her day and recounts a story about how she accidentally locked her keys in the car. Excerpt 1 begins as she is just starting the narrative. Line 2 is delivered in a “punched up” manner (Jefferson, 2004); i.e., latched to the prior TCU and produced at a slightly quicker pace as she turns toward Dad. This gives the impression that she has remembered something newsworthy as she formulates a bid for a go-ahead (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007), “oh, yeah 'n you wanna hear what happened?” This first-pair part (FPP) serves as a pre-sequence and normally its recipient would align by saying yes and thus allow the speaker access to a longer slot in which a story can be told, i.e., the base sequence the pre is projecting. However, in this case just the opposite happens: Dad responds with a flat-out “no” (line 3), without any delay or hedging that might serve to mark it as dispreferred (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013) and therefore tacit permission to tell the story is not given. This sort of response from a recipient would ordinarily be taken to mean that the audience (Dad) is implying that he understands Jen wants to tell a story but he does not want to hear it. Were it to be taken seriously, Jen might be within her rights to search for some sort of explanation (Is Dad busy with something else? Or is he angry with her?). Without any evidence to support those suppositions, it transpires that Dad is in fact joking in this case (as evidenced by his laughter in line 9), and Gran aligns with this stance with laughter in lines 5 and 8.

As the butt of the joke, Jen initially treats Dad’s refusal to grant a go-ahead with silence and gaze aversion (line 4), then retaliates by upgrading the disalignment in line 6, “well too bad, I’m gonna tell you anyways”. In addition to making clear the intention of her bid in line 2, this turn also tacitly treats Dad’s disaligned “no” as a joke, since she smiles as she delivers it and later goes on to start the story after line 12. Dad likewise treats it as a joke by immediately retracting the story-blocking “no” with an overlapped “yes” in line 7 and then smiling as he turns to Gran. He also retracts the joke a second time in line 15 (“I didn’t mean it”) as Jen launches her

story. On the other hand, it appears the homestay visitor, Shin, has not fully understood the joke. During line 6 he looks to Jen after Dad has just done the faux-refusal, then back to Dad when he changes his yes to a no, all without smiling. It therefore seems he is aware something is happening and is perhaps aligning to Dad's blocking of the story as serious. However, moments later (line 8) he smiles as he turns toward Gran, who is laughing. While it is unclear whether or not Shin fully understands the joke, he is eventually at least able to align to it properly by observing the way that others orient toward it.

As this example shows, the initiation of a story requires a suitable display of alignment from its recipients and if one or more primary recipients actively disaligns with the proposal, the deployment of the story can be delayed. Implicit in this is the notion that stories are co-accomplishments between teller and recipient, even though the teller usually does the majority of the interactional work.

4.2 Misaligned reciprocity

On the other hand, a story uptake turn may be misaligned when it somehow delays the smooth delivery of the story due to the recipient's misunderstanding. Such cases differ from disaligned reciprocity in that the recipient displays their failure to recognize the projected action. Since the homestay visitors in this dataset were still developing their interactional competence, it was often the case that their contributions were misaligned rather than disaligned, but such instances were also found among younger L1 English-speakers, such as Axel, the 11-year-old son of Ryo's host family. In Excerpt 2, we see both Ryo's misunderstanding of a story request and Axel's misaligned receipt of Ryo's news-of-the-day telling.

Excerpt 2. Is this cordial?

```

01 MUM      ((laughing)) a hn hn hn hn
02          |(2.0)+|(0.5)
          a-hn  |lifts cup, drinks
          a-hn  |places cup in front of dad-->
                |((plates clattering))

03 AXEL     |°jugo por favor° (0.5) °(please)°
            juice please
          a-hn |----->

04          (2.3)
05 AXEL     |how was your day.
          a-gz |at ryo
          d-hn |grabs juice

```



```

06          |(0.8)
          m-gz |to ryo
          r-gz |to axel

```


m-gz
d-gz

|to ryo
|to ryo



07 AXEL |at school.
d-hn |grabs juice

08 (0.6)
09 RYO |(on)/(want) this?
r-lh |points at his plate
d-bh |picks up juice



10 AXEL [|no, how wz] school.
a-rh |shakes hand
d-hn |pours juice----->line 16

11 MUM [(how was yo-)]
12 | (0.8)
r-gz |turns from mum to axel

13 MUM h[ow w]as your day?
14 RYO [um:]
15 | (0.7)
r-hn |pushes glasses up

16 RYO |>how was yo- ah |my day?<
r-gz |to axel, then at mum, nods
d-hn |---->pours juice |replaces cap

17 MUM |mh:m
m-hd |nods

18 (0.7)
19 RYO yes(ta) °un° |it was good.
r-gz |to axel

20 | (0.9)
a-hd |nods

21 RYO e::|ah::n (0.4) I: (0.2)
r-rh |rolls hand

22 the|↑class start- |started? |from- |from today.

r-gz |looks to axel
 r-rh |rolls hand
 r-hd |nodding
 a-px |leans toward ryo


23 AXEL | °mm° =
 a-hd |nods, drinks

24 MUM =from today?
 25 RYO |yes
 r-hd |nods

26 | (0.5)
 r-gz |to table

27 RYO the teacher is ve:ry::, very interesting
 28 >very nice, very funny.<
 29 MUM mhm mm
 30 RYO [yes ()]
 31 DAD [mmm::]

32 AXEL |is this cordial?
 a-rh |points to bottle



33 DAD i:n |uh(m)
 a-gz |looks to dad

34 AXEL papi |is this cordial?
 a-rh |points to bottle again

35 (0.3)
 36 DAD yes
 37 AXEL °oh.°
 38 (0.7)
 39 DAD it's |umm:
 d-gz |to ryo
 a-hd |drinks

40 (0.8)
 41 |what (0.5) level are you in or what grade?
 r-gz |turns to dad

42 |(1.3) + |(1.0) + |(1.0)
 r-gz |to plate, eats
 r-gz |back to Dad
 r-rh |points to chest

43 RYO me?
 44 DAD |mhm.
 d-hd |nods

45 AXEL what lev- (0.2) ↑wha:t (0.3)
 46 JUAN what language.
 47 (0.7)
 48 AXEL no what GRA:de >°like°<
 49 RYO gra:de? [°grade°?]
 50 DAD [o : h][level.]
 51 AXEL [in sch-]
 52 |in schoo:l↑ (0.3)
 a-rh |reaches out RH

53 you had grade |one, grade |two gr[ade |three:]
 a-rh |palm pump |palm pump |pump

54 RYO [a::h, yes.]
 55 AXEL in university, which grade are yo:u.
 56 |(0.4)
 m-gz |turns to Ryo

57 RYO u::h, so::, first u::h I'm |freshman?
 r-gz |turns to Mum

58 (0.7)
 59 RYO my- first year?

The excerpt begins with laughter after a tease that is directed at Axel (see Greer, 2019), so his news-of-the-day request to Ryo in line 5 may be an attempt to deflect the family's attention away from himself: at the very least it constitutes a somewhat disjunctive topic shift, so it is not surprising that the L2-user, Ryo, is unable to come up with an immediate response. After the brief silence in line 6, Axel formulates an increment (line 7) that is designed to be grammatically linked to his story request (line 5), and therefore reinitiates that action. However, instead of producing an aligned second-pair part (SPP) response, Ryo produces a FPP of his own—an other-initiated repair that makes public his understanding of Axel's question as somehow related to the food, since Ryo points to his plate as he says it (line 9). In other words, Ryo's response is misaligned to Axel's request, leading Axel (and later Mum in line 13) to enact repair by repeating the request. After a further delay through gaps of silence (lines 12 and 15) and repetition (line 16), Ryo eventually claims understanding and goes on to report on his day in the form of a story (lines 19-22). The principal point here is that Ryo's initial uptake in line 9 was misaligned because it did not display appropriate recognition of the projected action sequence, and the family treated it as such through the organization of repair. This differs from Dad's disaligned response in Excerpt 1, which made public his understanding that a narrative was being projected, even though it worked to block it.

When it arrives, Ryo's story is fairly brief, consisting of an assessment (line 19, "it was good") and a report that his classes started (line 22). Axels receipts it only minimally in next turn with a nod and an almost inaudible "mm" as he takes a sip from his cup (line 23). In one sense this might be seen as an aligned response, perhaps treating the story as only just getting started and therefore deploying a short acknowledgement to encourage the teller to go on. However, taken in conjunction with lines 32 and 34, Axel's receipts could also be viewed as somewhat misaligned with respect to their intensity. As the elicitor of the story, Axel has some deontic obligation (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012) to display his investment in the narrative. Even though Ryo is able to respond with a description of his teachers (lines 27-28), Axel does not treat this as

newsworthy, instead initiating an unrelated question to his father (lines 32-34), and thereby not providing any receipt to that segment of Ryo's story. Interestingly, Axel's misaligned turns are not treated as sanctionable (in the way Ryo's was), possibly because the family has now aligned to Ryo's story as a party of recipients, with Mum and Dad providing minimal receipts instead. In addition, it could be that the obligation to produce a relevant SPP after being selected is greater than to deliver third-position uptake, particularly when a story is possibly hearable as incomplete. At any rate, misalignment within storytelling sequences is not solely the domain of novice language users, though it may be more frequently observed among them due to their limited interactional competence.

4.3 Aligning as a story recipient versus withholding alignment

Competently telling a story often involves managing various kinds of recipients and the knowledge they can be assumed to possess (Goodwin, 1981). In Excerpt 1, it seems that Jen is treating Dad as the primary recipient (Greer & Ogawa, 2021) by gaze-selecting him in line 2, but there are three other people at the table, so she has to constantly monitor their reactions to her story and take into consideration issues of recipient design in order to tailor the story to what she knows about them. The next segment of talk (Excerpt 3) continues on from Excerpt 1. In this case we see the homestay guest, Shin, aligning with the story in a way that Jen deems apposite, but Mum and Dad withhold their alignment, which may project their disapproval of the story to some extent. The point of contention seems to be that the story involves Jen locking her keys in her car, something that might be funny to Shin but may be treated as careless or irresponsible by her parents.

Excerpt 3. Instant panic

```

01 JEN      |so (1.3) |(0.6) |[u::m,]
    m-gz    |--- bread|~~jen
    m-rh                    |puts bread in mouth
    d-bh    |twists dressing lid----->
    s-gz    |~~plate----->
    s-rh                    |spoon to mouth

02 DAD                                [°I di]dn't mean (it)°

03      |(2.8)
    j-fc    |chewing
    d-bh    |replaces dressing lid
    s-gz    |to lid

04 JEN      |i was |getting ready to |leave?
    j-gz    |lifts head           |looks to dad
    m-gz    |turns to jen
    s-gz    |turns to jen

05      |(0.8)
    j-fc    |swallows

06 DAD?    [ mhm ]
07      [|((snap))]
    d-bh    |puts cap on bottle

```

08 JEN and ↓|i drove there |so,
 j-gz |turns to shin, nodding
 j-fc |smiles, eyebrows raised



09 SHIN oh |[°mm°]
 s-hd |nods

10 JEN [i-] |>i was< I was getting °t-°
 j-gz |turns back to table

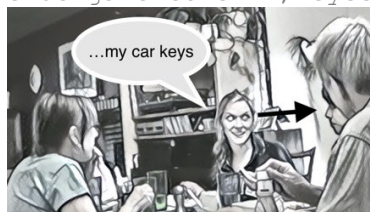
11 |ready to leave,
 j-gz |to dad
 d-gz |to dressing lid

12 (0.5)

13 JEN and i |looked in my purse,
 j-rh |to table
 d-bh |removes label from dressing-->

14 |(0.5)
 j-gz |eyes up left, tongue out

15 JEN |and i didn't see my car keys
 j-gz |side gaze to shin, eyes wide-->



16 |(0.4)
 j-gz |to table

17 SHIN hm?

18 |(0.3)
 j-gz |to mom, wide eyes
 m-gz |to plate--->>



19 SHIN |yah!
 j-gz |to dad, raises eyebrows
 d-gz |to jen

20 JEN |pa|nic!
 j-fc |raises eyebrows
 d-fc |eyebrow flash



21 SHIN |nya H' HAH
 d-hd |slight nod?

22 JEN |instant |panic
 j-fc |smiling
 j-px |leans forward
 j-gz |glances to mum



23 |(.)
 j-rh |puts bread in mouth

24 SHIN mmgm!

Towards the beginning of the story, Jen treats Dad as the primary recipient, as evidenced by her gaze direction in line 4 as she sets up a possible troubles-telling, to which Dad provides uptake in line 6. However, at this point it seems that Jen takes into consideration the varied nature of her audience, turning to Shin in line 8 to produce an aside (“I drove there, so”). This is hearable as information that is already understood by Mom and Dad, but possibly not by Shin. Since it eventually becomes clear that the car is a central element of Jen’s story, it is important for her to ensure that the whole audience is aware of it. Shin indicates his understanding with a receipt token in line 9. Having accomplished maximal audience reciprocity, Jen redirects her gaze to Dad in line 11 as she repeats the story set-up she delivered in line 4, effectively bracketing off the side talk with Shin. Shin’s alignment helps her to do this by indicating he is following and therefore allowing her to move on.

Jen delivers the next part of the story in installments, interspersing a trajectory that depicts “business as usual” (lines 10, 11, 13) with intra-turn pauses (lines 12 and 14) that help accomplish dramatic effect and project a juxtapositional trouble element to the story (Jefferson, 1980). During these pauses, it is worth noting that the recipients give neither audible nor embodied displays of alignment: they simply listen. During the second pause (line 14, just prior to the troubles telling), Jen looks up and away while poking out her tongue, which seems to flag what comes next as particularly noteworthy. During that turn (line 15, “I didn’t see my car

keys”), she shifts her gaze to Shin and opens her eyes widely, raising her eyebrows. Shin’s response in line 17 (“hm?”) is ambiguous, but it is at least some sort of response, indicating that he views the just-prior segment of Jen’s story as significant. If his “hm?” were taken as his own-real time reaction it would constitute a possible repair initiator (and therefore suggest he didn’t understand what she said), but it is more likely that Shin is instead deploying “hm?” as represented talk (Kasper & Prior, 2015), exemplifying the sort of reaction that Jen herself had when she opened her purse and found her keys were not there. In that Jen does not attempt to explain her prior talk further to Shin, there is evidence to suggest that she herself heard it as represented talk (and Shin’s “yah” in line 19 is an apparent second attempt at this). Rather than enacting repair, Jen turns to Mom (line 18) and then to Dad (line 19) showing them her widely opened eyes and raising her eyebrows in what seems to be an embodied display of surprise. Significantly, Mom does not align in any perceptible way, instead averting her gaze by looking down at her food for the remainder of the excerpt. Dad does give some minimal embodied uptake, including a brief eyebrow flash (line 20) and a barely perceptible nod (line 21), but he does not comment at all at this point. By withholding overt displays of reciprocity and affiliation, the parents are not treating the story in the same way as Shin does, suggesting that they do not see it as amusing.

In line 20, Jen formulates a story element that is hearable as her in-story reaction to finding her keys missing (“panic!”) and couples this with some slightly comical eyebrow raises that help depict the situation in the here-and-now as non-serious. In line 21, Shin properly affiliates to this segment of Jen’s story as humorous by laughing, although none of the other participants do. This leads Jen to turn toward Mom and deploy an upgraded repetition of her turn in line 22 (“instant panic”) as a pursuit of appreciation (Theobald & Reynolds, 2015), but again Mom’s gaze remains averted and she does nothing to overtly align to the story as a recipient or affiliate to it as humorous. Later in the talk (not shown) it transpires that this is not the first time Jen has locked her keys in the car, so it is possible that the story has different implications for the parents than it does for the short-term guest, who has not been inconvenienced at all by Jen’s actions. Therefore, it is possible for a novice speaker to display entirely appropriately aligned reciprocity to a story-in-progress, and at the same time have expert speakers withhold that alignment despite the fact that they presumably understand the story. This suggests that recipient alignment to speaker actions can also have implications for their affiliation toward the projected stance. It also means that the parents’ withheld displays of affiliation are at odds with Shin’s affiliative displays, leaving him to laugh out loud by himself in line 21. On casual examination this could be taken to mean that Shin’s laughter was somehow misaligned, but on reflection the situation is rather more delicate than that.

Finally, it is worth considering Gran’s role in all this. Throughout all the recordings, the family rarely address Gran. She follows the conversation and laughs along (see Excerpt 1), but rarely contributes much in terms of talk. Jen does not gaze at Gran at any time during her story, instead delivering it just to Dad, Mom and Shin. The reason why she does this is not clear, but in terms of interaction it means that Gran does not seem to align as a recipient, but more as a ratified overhearer (Goffman, 1981). She is present at the table and the family is not particularly concealing their talk from her, but neither are they expecting her to take part actively. This being the case, Gran’s lack of uptake in the slots we have discussed can be seen as different to those of Mom and Dad. Theirs is noticeably absent, whereas hers is not. Such are the delicate intricacies of designing a story for multiple recipients.

4.4 Pre-empting reference problems in storytelling

As mentioned earlier, one outcome of having multiple disparate audience members is that the storyteller may need to deal with issues of recipient design. In this section we will examine two segments in which Jen expands elements of her story for Shin's benefit within subsidiary or side sequences (Jefferson, 1972), possibly to pre-empt reference or understanding issues (Svennevig, 2010; Svennevig et al., 2017). Interestingly, Jen does this even in cases where Shin has made a claim to understanding. Excerpt 4 begins earlier than the talk shown above, as Shin elicits a news-of-the-day telling from Jen.

Excerpt 4. Babysit

01 SHIN |what- |what did you |do. today.
 s-gz |turns to jen-->
 s-rh |points to jen
 |points to table



02 (0.9)
 03 JEN um ↑i:::: um- >a girl that |i< babysit?<
 j-gz |to shin



04 | (0.4)
 j-bh |puts down butter

05 SHIN [uhuh]
 06 JEN [|that i-] i u:s::ed to ↑watch her,=
 j-gz |looks down

07 =um i watched her a lot >last summer.<

08 SHIN m[hmm]
 09 JEN [her] birthday was to|day.
 j-gz |to shin



10 SHIN [yah]
 11 JEN [so sh-] i went to:: (.)
 12 her birthday [party.]
 13 SHIN [okay] o::[: : h.]
 14 JEN [yeah a]nd i

In response to Shin's news-of-the-day topic elicitation (line 1), Jen says that she went to a child's birthday party. However, the response is not nearly that concise, since Jen pre-emptively unpacks various details in order to design her story for an unknowing recipient, in particular with regard to her relationship to the child and by extension her implied reason for attending. The telling begins in line 3 with a post-gap hesitation marker ("um") and high-pitched proterm ("I") delivered with a considerably elongated diphthong. These delays mark Jen's response as potentially problematic, and she goes on to abandon her turn-in-progress and instead insert her description of the birthday girl. She produces this incrementally, try-marking the first installment (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) in line 3, and then appending that statement with two successive self-initiated repairs (lines 6 and 7) that clarify the nature of their relationship. As the recipient, Shin produces timely receipt tokens to these explanations (lines 5 and 8), and with the unfamiliar referent secured, Jen goes on to use it as part of the story background (line 9, "her birthday was today"), indexed with the proterm "her". Once more Shin aligns via a receipt token in line 10, which allows Jen to return to her abandoned story beginning in line 11, picking up from the "I" she abandoned in line 3.

This side talk helps keep Shin "in the loop". As an outsider to the family, he is not treated as knowing the child in question or the reason why Jen would attend her birthday party. Jen does not use the child's name, as she might have if she had been reporting her day to her parents. In fact, it seems that this much of the story may even have been known to Mom and Dad, since Jen does not address them during this segment, either via talk or embodiment, and neither do the parents treat the story as newsworthy (in the way Shin does in line 13).

Jen's side talk to Shin may also treat him as a novice English speaker. By reformulating "a girl that I babysit" (line 3) to "that I- I used to watch her" (line 5), Jen is changing both the verb tense (present to past), but also replacing "babysit" with "watch", an ostensibly easier lexical item. In fact, the initial format of her abandoned turn in line 5 ("that I-") suggests that she may have been originally going for a framed replacement of "babysit" (since it recycles the frame from talk in line 3) and then also added the tense change. The repair of the tense seems to target the truth value of the statement as problematic, but the switch from "babysit" to "watch" seems more likely to be a matter of word choice, designing her turn not only for a non-knowing outsider but also possibly one who may not recognize the former word. In this way Jen pre-emptively self-repairs her turn design in consideration of her primary recipient. Although Shin does provide an aligned uptake token in line 5, it is slightly delayed and that gap of silence may have led Jen to reformulate her prior turn for him. After her two appended reformulations, Shin gives another uptake token (line 8) and Jen continues with the story she had suspended.

A similar practice can be seen in Excerpt 5, in which Jen is telling the story of how she locked her keys in her car at the child's birthday party. Here again she turns to Shin to explain story elements such as the distance of the party venue from her house, but in doing so she is also unpacking the pragmatic intent of the phrase "and of course it had to happen when", and thus treating Shin as an L2 speaker of English.

Excerpt 5. Far away from home

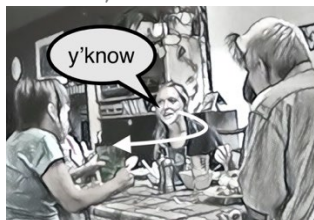
01 JEN °↑↑|what's wrong what's wrong° >|↓|and I was like<
 j-gz |looks up-left, shakes head |turns to dad

02 |.hhh |↑↑i can't find my |ca(h):r keys
 j-gz |to dad, shaking head
 j-fc |frowns |smiles



03 | (0.7)
 d-hd |nods
 j-gz |to mom-->

04 JEN |y'know |and [of course] |**this has to happen,**
 |----->|gaze to dad----> |gaze to shin----->
 m-gz |to JEN, sips
 d-gz |to JEN, smile?



05 SHIN [°hn hn°] ((a laugh))

06 JEN |(.) **of course this happens** |when i'm (.)
 j-gz |gaze to shin----->|to dad |gaze right
 j-lh |rolls LH
 j-rh |to chest



07 JEN |**wa::y** |**far away from home.**
 j-gz |returns to SHIN----->
 j-rh |sweeping gesture to right-->
 j-hd |shakes



08 (0.5) |
 j-gz ---->
 j-rh ---->|

09 JEN |this |park that i was at |was l- (.)
 j-gz ----->| to dad
 j-rh |points down in front of chest
 |moves pointed finger to right



10 |**half an** |**hour away**
 j-hd |shakes
 j-rh |palm moves to far right
 j-gz |back to SHIN



11 DAD |yeah. °mm°
 d-hd |nods

12 JEN |**thirty minutes.**
 j-gz |to dad

13 SHIN ° |mhmm°
 s-hd |nods

14 JEN ↓|so:, (.) >y'know< |**of course it would happen**
 j-gz |from DAD to MUM |down and left----->



15 |**when i was thirty minutes away,**
 j-gz |to SHIN----->



16 SHIN ° |mm°
 s-hd |nods

17 JEN |**instead of** |(0.5) like (0.5)
 j-gz |----->
 j-fc |raises eyebrows

18 |[five minutes away] °hheh ha°
 j-gz |----->
 j-fc |raises eyebrows

19 DAD [°down the street°]
 20 SHIN [°|**a : : h yeah**°]
 s-hd |nods

21 JEN heh [hah hah
 22 SHIN [heh hehah
 23 MOM ha
 24 GRAN? °h'h'hah°
 25 JEN |so i::
 j-gz |looks away from SHIN

At this point in the story, Jen is explaining her reaction when she could not find her car keys, firstly by utilizing represented talk in lines 1 and 2 to portray a reenactment of a conversation she had at the time. She then follows this with a sort of aside that might be considered as represented thought, her unspoken reaction at the time: “of course, this had to happen when I was so far from home”. This upgrades the inconvenience of locking one’s keys in the car, and by adding this element to the story, Jen is adding to its tellability (Berger, 2017: Sacks, 1992). In order to tell the story in a more newsworthy manner (Maynard, 2003), it is important then that the recipients understand this phrase in order to properly align to it as a

troubles telling. Again, there is evidence to suggest that Jen reformulates this potentially problematic phrase for Shin until she receives a claim of understanding from him. On its first appearance in line 4, Jen formulates it as “y’know, and of course this has to happen” while shifting her gaze from Mom to Dad and finally to Shin. With her gaze remaining on Shin, she then self-repairs the turn segment to “of course this happens” (line 5), a grammatically simpler formulation. She then continues her turn-in-progress with a time-and-distance component; this is likewise unpacked for Shin. Her initial version comes in lines 5 and 6 with “when I’m way far away from home” and she accompanies this with a grand sweeping gesture and prosodic elements that help make its meaning clear. As she does, her eyes remain on Shin, indicating that he is the primary recipient (Greer et al., 2021) for this segment of the story; presumably Mom and Dad know where the party was held, as evidenced by Dad’s agreement token and nod in line 11, and in fact this is made even clearer in later talk (not shown).

Following Jen’s first formulation of the distance, however, Shin does not give any noticeable display of alignment and there is a slight gap (line 8) in which Jen keeps looking at him with her arm outstretched. This would seem to be a slot in which Shin could (or should) have nodded or said “uhuh”, but in the absence of any such alignment, Jen goes on to reformulate her turn component to “half an hour away”, a version that quantifies the distance and therefore makes it amenable to assessment by the recipient. As noted earlier, it is at this point that Dad provides an uptake token that aligns with Jen’s telling by doing agreement (line 11); however, Shin is still yet to provide any receipt of his own, which leads Jen to do yet another reformulation, changing “half an hour” to an equivalent yet different formulation, “thirty minutes” (line 12). These three versions of the time-distance component finally get uptake from Shin in line 13, and Jen is able to continue her story.

At this point (line 14), Jen returns to her original TCU, reintroducing the phrase “of course it would happen” and marking it with “so” to connect it back to the prior talk. It seems that Jen has yet to receive the kind of alignment she is looking for from Shin on this point and she therefore launches one more attempt at doing her telling. The interactional import of “of course this would happen” seems to be to highlight the misfortune of the situation, particularly to show the doubly unlucky nature of locking one’s keys in the car and inconveniencing one’s parents by having them drive a long way to help. In this third and final deployment, Jen combines a version of that base phrase with the newly understood time-distant component (line 15), delivering it while looking at Shin. She then appends an alternative non-case component (lines 17 and 18, “instead of like, five minutes away”), which again points to the unfortunate and troublesome nature of the formulation. All this serves to clarify the interactional significance of the phrase “this would have to happen” and ensures that it gets a fitting uptake token from Shin, which is finally what happens in line 20 (“aah, yeah”) as well as the laughter in line 22.

Through her actions, Jen is orienting to differences within her audience. The side explanations (self-initiated repairs) are directed primarily toward Shin through embodied elements of the interaction like gaze direction and body torque (Schegloff, 1998). They are, in part, attentive to Shin’s outsider status as someone who is unfamiliar with this local area, but they also treat him as a novice English speaker in that they involve multiple iterations of the same talk components. By withholding alignment claims at certain key junctions, Shin is also publicly providing for the possibility that he is not completely following the story, so Jen’s efforts at explanation work primarily to retain him as an optimal audience member, but also provide for potential orientations to language learning (Gardner, 2015).

4.5 Designing the upshot of a narrative for two different recipients

As has been shown in the previous excerpts, multi-party talk means that there may sometimes be differing forms of alignment and affiliation to a story from its various recipients, and close attention to the details of the interaction can make these diverging recipient orientations visible (Kim & Tse Crepaldi, 2021). In the final case (Excerpt 6), we will explore a segment of Jen's story where, again, Shin and her parents orient to the story differently, and in this case Jen uses Shin's non-member status to help rework the moral upshot of the story to cast her actions in a better light. As it turns out she was able to get the keys out of her car because she had left the trunk unlocked, an oversight that could be seen as both fortuitous and irresponsible.

Excerpt 6. Bad, but good

01 JEN oh! so i go over to the ca:r,
 02 >i'm like< lookin' in the windo:ws, (0.5)
 03 °and i don't see them.°
 04 °°|i'm like |oh my go:sh°°=
 |looks down left
 |looks up left

05 =°|they must be in the trunk of the car.°
 |gz to dad----->



06 | (1.1)
 j-gz |to dad
 j-px |leans back,
 j-fc |raises eyebrows
 d-hd |slight nod

07 JEN |I'm lookin' in the car,
 jen |mimes looking----->

08 >lookin' lookin' lookin'.<
 ----->

09 |looking in the igni:tion,
 |mimes looking----->
 j-hd |tilts

10 |don't see `em,
 j-hd |shakes head





22 |ca:[:r,\$
j-gz |----->

23 DAD [mhm
24 GRAN? [°h'h'hah°
25 (0.8)
26 JEN |craw::led over to the front seat, (0.6)
j-bh |crawling gesture

27 u:n:locked the trunk, (0.2)
28 |there were the ke:ys, |sit[ting in the tr]unk.
j-gz |to mom |to dad
j-rh |raised
j-fc |smiling
29 SHIN [nya : : : g h!]



30 (0.5)
31 JEN [just like I] though[t].
32 SHIN [ah great] [n]ya:h
33 MOM the [keys were] in the trunk.
34 SHIN [(you w-)]
35 JEN ↑↑♪a:::::h♪



36 MOM h' ha
37 SHIN very lucky

In the first half of Excerpt 6 Jen has established an obstacle within her narrative, built some rising tension and at line 12 she finally arrives at a possible solution. Throughout the story up until this point, Mom has been looking towards Jen without eating, but on hearing “back door’s unlocked” (line 12) she turns to Dad and there is a brief gap of silence (line 13) during which Jen stares at Dad. In line 14, Dad gives a minimal uptake token, but it is noticeably delayed, and along with some non-committal embodiment (a long nod and raised eyebrows) this can be seen

as slightly disaffiliative. The potential exists that this silence indicates that the parents are treating the unlocked trunk as irresponsible rather than lucky, and Jen immediately orients to it in that way in line 15 by acknowledging both interpretations with “bad, but good”. She then goes on to expound on each of these, using Shin’s peripheral reciprocity as a resource.

Even before Shin has spoken, Jen shifts her gaze towards him (line 16), perhaps to disengage from Dad as the primary recipient. She then repeats “bad” in line 17, following it immediately with a morally loaded explanation that is probably in line with her parents’ take on her leaving the door unlocked. As she does this she waves her index finger in an admonishing pose, and it is possible that Shin’s presence affords her the opportunity to deliver an ostensibly language-related explanation to him that is dually designed to serve as part of the pre-emptive justification she is delivering to her parents. In lines 21-22, the second part of this turn takes on a similar format (assessment + account), and Jen shifts her gaze to Dad, smiling as she says, “but good, because I could get in the car”. Dividing her recipients into parties in this way is an adroit method of circumventing potential criticism; addressing the negative segment to an outsider who is less likely to reprimand her and delivering the positive element to those who might. In addition, Shin’s uptake tokens are more aligned with Jen’s story at this point, whereas her parents are affiliating to it with a potentially negative stance. Jen quickly moves on to the story resolution and denouement (lines 26-35) and Shin provides an assessment (lines 34 and 37) that serves as a coda and thus properly aligns to the story as finished.

5 Concluding discussion

5.1 Recipient alignment in homestay contexts

As in other settings, storytellings around the homestay dinner table are co-constructed as social accomplishments. This study has offered insight into how speakers adapt their turns *in situ* to both the stances and the proficiencies of those around them. Storytellers deliver their narratives while taking into account their recipients’ moment-by-moment claims of understanding, as made public through the practices of recipient alignment. Aligning responses represent the preferred form of uptake and enable the teller to continue without delay, while disaligned and misaligned responses may cause the teller to postpone or repair a telling-in-progress in order to re-establish optimal listenership. Disaligned uptake can, for example, constitute a teasing or joking stance and may be followed with laughter or a knowing nod that treats it that way, whereas a misaligned recipient does not demonstrate that they understand their response to be ill-fitted; this can lead the teller to repair or reformulate the talk-in-progress. Misaligned turns from the homestay visitor are sometimes treated by the family as evidence of limited interactional competence, and addressing them offers opportunities for second language learning “in the wild” (Hellerman et al., 2019).

On other occasions, the storyteller oriented toward the visitor differently than she did from the other recipients, pre-empting reference and understanding problems by explaining various matters to him as asides, despite his displays of recipient alignment. Embodied features of the teller’s interaction (such as gaze, gesture and body torque) provide evidence to suggest she was treating the visitor as the primary recipient at these junctures. The fact that the other audience members did nothing to dispute that orientation suggests that they too saw it as appropriate. Storytelling and reciprocity can therefore become vehicles for making relevant and affirming aspects of the interactants’ respective social identities (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

5.2 Recommendations for practice

The study offers practical implications for L2 learning in homestay settings, both for the hosts and the visitors, including how to formulate a story for a novice speaker or how to show an expert speaker that you are following.

Like those in the excerpts we have seen, most homestay hosts have little or no professional language teaching credentials. Instead, they are largely trained “on the job”, while interacting with their guests, with some succeeding better than others. An awareness of alignment practices within interaction could conceivably become part of their pre-homestay training, such as through the CA role-play method (Stokoe, 2014). Such an approach would involve playing videos of actual homestay interaction while pausing them to discuss the next possible interactional outcome. In doing so, host family members could reflect on how they orient to their guests in the talk. Shin is often treated differently by Jen as she tells her story, but that is not always because he is a novice speaker: instead she orients to issues of knowledge and experience, as a newcomer who needs to have extra details made clear because he can be commonsensically understood not to have access to them. By the same token, she treats Mom and Dad in a certain way, as knowing participants: she orients to them, for example, as knowing that she went to the party by car or that the venue was a certain distance away. This is local knowledge that insiders can be assumed to possess in common, and the presence of an outsider necessitates that such details are made clear in order to tell the story properly. Similarly, there are moments when the homestay visitor’s linguistic competence or knowledge is in fact treated as the most relevant aspect of their identity.

The flipside of that argument is from the homestay guest’s perspective. Displaying alignment is a seemingly simple matter, but in its absence, a storyteller is likely to reformulate their narrative in the belief that the recipient is not properly following. Novice English users like the homestay guests in this study should be made aware of the importance of providing alignment and affiliative reciprocity displays in order to facilitate smoother interaction during their study abroad trip. Although this no doubt comes intuitively to some, others may benefit from making the practices of reciprocity explicit through pre-departure training sessions.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

The transcripts follow standard Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 2004), with embodied elements shown via a modified version of the conventions developed by Mondada (2018). The embodied elements are positioned in a series of tiers relative to the talk and rendered in gray.

	Descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between vertical bars
--->	The described action continues across subsequent lines
---->	The action reaches its conclusion
>>	The action commences prior to the excerpt
--->>	The action continues after the excerpt
.	Preparation of the action
----	The apex of the action is reached and maintained
//////	Retraction of the action
~~~~~	The action moves or transforms in some way.

SHIN	The current speaker is identified with capital letters
<b>car</b>	Areas of particular analytic focus are highlighted in bold

Participants doing an embodied action are identified relative to the talk by their initial in lower case in another tier, along with one of the following codes for the action:

-gz	gaze
-lh	left hand
-rh	right hand
-bh	both hands
-px	proximity
-hd	head
-fc	face
-gs	gesture

Framegrabs are positioned within the transcript relative to the moment at which they were taken.

