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Learner initiative in action:

**A micro-longitudinal CA study of post-expansion sequences in a novice ESL
survey interview task**

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Abstract

This study uses micro-longitudinal Conversation Analysis to track a novice learner of English as he conducts a series of semi-structured survey interviews with expert English speakers. The sequential analysis focuses particularly on unscripted elements of the interaction, including how the student deviates from his prepared list of questions and how he reformulates subsequent versions of a follow-up question. The study explores how the learner makes use of post-expansion sequences to build on the interlocutor's responses, reformulating and adjusting them across episodes, but not always because the co-participant orients to them as repairable. Grounding its findings in the observable details of talk, the analysis offers insight into how learner initiative provided opportunities for developing interactional competence through experimenting with reformulations. Implications for educators and task design are discussed.

Keywords

micro-longitudinal conversation analysis; post-expansion sequences; learner initiative; reformulation; survey interview tasks

Introduction

Good language learners are active language learners. They do more than just what the task asks them to do by looking for chances to extend the conversation with follow-up questions, which can also lead them to reflect on the way they formulate their own turns at talk. This study uses micro-longitudinal Conversation Analysis (CA) to track one such second language (L2) learner as he conducts a survey interview task with a series of expert English speakers. Through carefully observing the way the learner reformulates his unscripted follow-up questions across successive episodes of this task, the study proffers interactional evidence for learner autonomy and learner initiative in action.

Learner autonomy in L2 education involves learners assuming responsibility for their own learning and for the communication that underpins it (Dang, 2012; Littlewood, 1997). Benson (2013) sees autonomy as "grounded in a natural tendency for learners to take control over their learning" (p. 2). Yet even after decades of theoretical and practical research, there still remains a need to investigate how learners publically orient to learner autonomy in actual instances of second language interaction. One way that applied linguists have attempted to operationalize autonomy in classroom interaction is through the concept of *learner initiative* (Stevik, 1980; van Lier, 2013). Garston (2002) defines learner initiative as "an attempt to direct the interaction in a way that corresponds more closely to the interests and needs of the learners, as evidenced by the interaction itself" (p. 48), citing a range of learner-initiated actions as examples and noting that such initiative can facilitate both input and output. Adopting a CA approach, Waring (2011) outlines an empirically-based typology of learner initiative,

demonstrating that learner initiative can be accomplished in classroom talk by (1) self-selecting to initiate a sequence, (2) self-selecting to volunteer a response, or (3) exploiting an assigned turn to begin a sequence (p. 204). Such an approach offers a detailed participant-centered perspective on how learners manage their agency, and thereby their language learning, on a turn-by-turn basis in sequences of talk, and the present study extends Waring's work to paired interaction beyond the classroom context.

Language classrooms provide plenty of opportunities for developing learner initiative in tasks that take place between novice peers, such as pairwork activities, group discussions, and prepared interviews. But how do these learners fare when they step outside the relative safety of the classroom environment? One common task-based activity that aims to bridge the gap between classroom interaction and talk in non-classroom situations is having learners conduct interview surveys with expert English speakers outside of class. Students typically prepare for such tasks by writing a list of survey questions and practicing them prior to the interview (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2005). However, they are unable to plan completely for appropriately placed follow-up questions, since that relies on the countless possible responses given by the interviewee. In that respect, follow-up turns, or what Schegloff (2007) has termed *post-expansion sequences*, can be challenging for beginning language learners. Ultimately though, unscripted follow-up questions are beneficial for the development of students' interactional competence because the necessity for timely uptake, however brief, pushes them to respond quickly. In addition, when autonomous learners go beyond their planned interview questions they are taking responsibility for their own learning.

In order to investigate how learner initiative becomes visible in L2 interaction, the current study uses CA to track a university-level learner of English as he conducts a

series of semi-structured survey interviews with expert English-speakers. As a form of task-based learning, the primary aim of these survey interviews is to encourage the learners to talk to English speakers outside the classroom. The study focuses on unscripted elements of the interaction, particularly when the focal student deviates from his prepared list of questions through the use of post-expansion sequences.

The current study views post-expansion sequences as a rich locus in which learners can choose to push their language development, since follow-up questions are occasioned by prior talk and therefore cannot always be pre-planned. Through a careful consideration of the talk both within and across successive episodes of survey interviews, this study's micro-longitudinal approach to CA offers insight into how one novice second language user actively engages with his own interactional development by reflecting on his language use and recycling responses from previous interviewees into successive iterations of the task. The analysis first explores how the student redesigns his formulation of a particular post-expansion initiator (a clarification request) across episodes, then considers ways he incorporates the interviewee's response from one conversation into follow-up questions in successive survey interviews.

A Conversation Analytic Approach to Survey Interviews in L2 Learning Contexts

Until recently the field of applied linguistics has largely been driven by cognitive notions of learning, in which language learning is viewed as the internal processing of information and interaction is seen merely as a means of transferring language into the learner's head where cognition can take place (Long, 2007; Ortega, 2009; VanPatten & Williams, 2014). However, since Firth and Wagner's (1997) controversial challenge to second language acquisition (SLA) research for "more critical discussion of its own

presuppositions, methods, and fundamental (and implicitly accepted) concepts" (p. 286), there has been a social turn in SLA research (Block, 2003), and interaction itself is now viewed as a valid focus. One strand of such socially oriented second language investigation involves CA, and a number of CA researchers have explored classroom interaction in relation to planning and implementation of communicative tasks by second language learners (Markee, 2005; Markee & Kunitz, 2013; Mori, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). Rather than relying on quantitative evidence about how learners plan and carry out language tasks, socially-focused investigations of L2 interaction can demonstrate in the here-and-now how learners 'push' their language use to maximise their learning (Batstone, 2005, p. 279).

Beyond second language learning settings, there has also been a significant amount of CA work on how L1 speakers deviate from the script in survey interviews, such as to enact repair (Moore & Maynard, 2002), compliment interviewee responses (Gathman, Maynard, & Schaeffer, 2008), accomplish categorization (Widdicombe, 1998) or deal with aspects of recipient design (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1995, 2000).¹ In standardized sociological survey interviews, deviations from the list of scripted questions have the potential to negatively influence respondents' answers and thereby can constrain the sorts of ad-lib post-expansions that are possible. Even so, Houtkoop-Steenstra's work (1995, 2000) has shown not only that interviewers do provide unscripted follow-up questions, but that these types of questions also play an important role in eliciting the respondent's ongoing cooperation. However, CA researchers have yet to look specifically at post-expansions in survey interviews in which the focus is on L2 learning. In the sorts of survey interview tasks examined in the current study, follow-up turns benefit the learner in terms of language practice, in addition to extending the content of

the interview, which can lead to additional opportunities for learning, reflection and reformulation.

The present study's focus on a survey interview task also builds on CA studies of task design in language classrooms. Such research has shown, for example, that over-planning can lead to talk that is less natural in terms of sequence and reciprocity. A close examination of the details of the talk can reveal that the task-as-planned and the task-as-delivered are not necessarily the same (Seedhouse, 2005). Mori (2002), for instance, tracks a language task in which a group of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) learners was given the opportunity to plan a discussion one week in advance of a native speaker visit. While the list of questions the learners compiled helped facilitate communication, what was intended as a discussion eventually proved to be more like an interview in that the learners mainly initiated the sequences (by asking questions) and provided little receipt or follow-up to the native speaker's responses. In fact, it was only when the visitor initiated a counter-question of her own that the learners produced more spontaneous utterances and began to pay attention to the sequential details of the conversation. The current study aims to extend this line of investigation by documenting the way one learner adapts his follow-up questions in a series of survey interviews, and thus point to specific interactional practices he adopts that promote learner initiative.

Context of the Study

The study's data set consists of roughly 11 minutes of learner talk that was video-recorded on the same day in 2010 on a university campus in Australia. The focal participant, Yuta, was a 19 year-old Japanese male who was taking part in a three-week, short-term study abroad program in which the goals were to practice conversational

English and experience life in another country. Despite six years of English education in Japan, Yuta had limited experience using English in authentic situations outside the classroom. At the time of the first conversations Yuta had been in Australia for only three days, and the recordings took place after only two days of class instruction.

The researcher was a professor at Yuta's university in Japan and had taught him in the previous semester. The researcher's main role within the study abroad program was one of pastoral care—traveling with the group to and from the host country and dealing with any non-academic issues. As such, the researcher was not involved in designing or delivering the curriculum and did not attend the class in which Yuta prepared his list of questions.

Yuta was chosen as the focal learner for this study because, based on informal observations of his interaction with the other members of his class, he was an outgoing, confident person who was able to talk with a range of different people. Initially it was simply felt that such a learner would be willing to be filmed during the activity, but as it turned out, Yuta's gregarious nature also provided many examples of follow-up questions and episodes of reflective talk—the analytic focus of this study.

Typical of the sorts of communicative academic tasks that are often used in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, the teacher had asked students to work in groups to compile a list of interview questions on an assigned topic ('Tourism in Australia'). The students were then required to ask their survey questions to several people outside of class and report on their findings via a brief in-class presentation. Yuta's interaction during the survey interview task forms the basis of the present analysis. As outlined in Table 1, Yuta interviewed four students on campus over a period of around 11 minutes for this task.

Table 1

A Summary of the Survey Interviews Yuta Conducted on 25 August, 2010

<<Insert Table 1 here>>

The questions that Yuta prepared for the survey interview are listed in Table 2. Yuta handwrote these on a piece of paper to which he referred during the interviews. He also took notes on the interviewees' responses on a separate piece of paper that was stapled behind the list of questions (Figure 1) and as such was frequently flicking back and forth between the two sheets of paper.

Table 2

Yuta's Prepared List of Survey Interview Questions

<<Insert Table 2 here>>

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
1. Sunshine coast.	Ireland	short } long Motel } Resort.	hire bike in skidoo cat. tennis: swimming	Europa
2. Brisbane	America.	Resort.	Basketball	USA.
3. Goald coast		Hotel	go out dinner	Canada
4. Nwosa	Italy	Backpacker	Surfing eating	JAPAN.
5. Goald coast	Bangradish	Backpacker	Walking around South bank	South America
6. out back	Scotland	Backpacker	sightseeing	JAPAN.

Figure 1. The handwritten notes Yuta made during the first round of interviews.²

Yuta wrote the interviewees' names in the margin of the response sheet, even though this was not something that was required by his teacher. The white rectangles to the left of Yuta's responses in Figure 1 indicate the approximate position where he jotted the interviewees' names. This act of writing the participants' names, itself a learner-initiated activity, will become crucial for the current analysis, because it routinely engaged Yuta in checking the spelling of those names. However, this does present the researcher with an analytic dilemma in that the data transcripts had to be anonymized for publication. In selecting pseudonyms, therefore, I aimed to maintain the same number of syllables and letters as the original name, since this could hold potential consequences for the interaction.

The survey interviews were held in an outdoor common space on campus (e.g., near a coffee vendor, at a picnic table). Yuta was not acquainted with any of the respondents prior to the recording; he initiated the survey interviews by approaching the prospective interviewees and asking for permission to talk to them. It seemed that Yuta's main criteria for selecting an interviewee was that the person looked as though they had a few minutes to talk. This meant that he tended to choose people who were sitting alone drinking coffee or smoking a cigarette.

The researcher followed Yuta with a handheld video-recorder but refrained from taking part in the conversation wherever possible. Verbal permission to record the interview was briefly obtained at the start of the conversation, and after the interview the participants were given a more detailed consent form explaining the aims of the research and seeking their permission on how the researcher could use the recordings. A complete list of the consent questions is provided in Appendix A. Any interviewees who did not want to have their recording included in the study were given the option of

having it deleted. In the following section, we will examine how Yuta displayed learner-initiative in these interviews by initiating clarification requests and recycling elements of the interviewees' responses into later interviews.

Analysis

“How Spell?”: Reformulating Clarification Requests across Episodes

Generally speaking, Conversation Analysis adopts a radically emic methodological stance (Markee & Kasper, 2004), basing interpretations on the participants' perspective as publically demonstrated in the socio-pragmatic actions they perform in the immediately following turn. Schegloff (1992) calls this feature of CA methodology *procedural consequentiality* and it has become the primary means by which analysts in the field account for their findings; if the recipient does not initiate repair after next turn, the other interactants have a basis for claiming that they understood the talk in a non-problematic way, and so the analyst in turn can make robust claims about the sequence of turns from the participants' points-of-view.

However, Drew (2013) has proposed that there is also value in comparing successive versions of the way a speaker formulates a turn for different recipients. He cites the case of a woman phoning several acquaintances to confirm participation in an upcoming event, noting that alternative versions provide insight into the various formulations that are available to the speaker for initiating this action. Therefore, what constitutes a longitudinal approach in CA may take place across minutes rather than years, so long as the focal participant is involved in comparable episodes of interaction, such as when one person answers the door to different people as they arrive at a party,

greeting one as a friend and the next as a stranger (Pillet-Shore, 2012), or when a caller makes a second or third call to a helpline and adapts her formulation of the opening sequence to present herself accordingly as a known speaker (Shaw & Kitzinger, 2007).

Wootton first used a longitudinal CA approach to examine L1 development as far back as the early 1990's (e.g. Wootton, 1994), and Lee and Hellermann (2014) point out that longitudinal CA studies can also uncover the contextually occasioned changes in L2 language use and the sequences in which participants deploy them. Brouwer and Wagner (2004) track a series of work-related phone calls from a novice speaker of German to a colleague, documenting how he adapts his initial opening sequences across successive calls in order to accommodate the call-taker's practices. Brouwer and Wagner then pursue their argument by demonstrating how a Dutch immigrant to Denmark is socialized into the appropriate use of address terms and is able to put them into practice in subsequent calls. They maintain that the systematic study of changes in participants' conduct over time can provide evidence of their interactional development.

Researchers have recently also begun investigating successive displays of interactional competence both in language learning contexts (Hellermann, 2011; Ishida, 2011; Kasper & Wagner, 2011; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011) and in professional development more generally (Nguyen, 2011, 2012). Markee (2008) proposes a longitudinal version of CA in his "learner behavior tracking methodology" (p. 404) to document both when learners use new vocabulary and grammar and how they incorporate those into their interactional repertoires. It is anticipated that the current analysis will add to this body of work.

In this section I will adopt this sort of longitudinal approach in order to explore how Yuta revises and refines a key repair-initiating question (the clarification request, "How

do you spell that?") across four successive interactional episodes during the series of survey interviews. Markee (2011) uses the term *micro-longitudinal* to refer to the way "sequences in a single speech event unfold on a moment-by-moment basis" (p. 605). However, in this paper I use *micro-longitudinal* to describe the study's methodological concern for detailed attention to changes in formulations across similar episodes of the same speech event, although not across long periods of time (hence the addition of "micro").

Since Yuta was taking notes on the paper shown in Figure 1, he had a number of opportunities to request clarification with regard to the spelling of unfamiliar words. As outlined in Table 3, the target words typically involved names of people and places, and these are typically the sorts of words that get spelled out because they can be unfamiliar or distinctive.

Table 3

Spelling Clarification Turns across the Four Interviews

<<Insert Table 3 here>>

In the first instance, it is actually not Yuta but the interviewee who initiates the spelling clarification, but this is nonetheless a significant event because it cues Yuta to the potential for getting the participant to spell key words in future sequences. As shown in Excerpt 2, Kit offers to spell her name without Yuta specifically asking her to do so. The segment begins just after Yuta's first scripted survey question has been asked and answered, and he is writing Kit's response on his record sheet. Transcription is based on the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004). See Appendix B for an outline.

Excerpt 2. Interview 1, Kit

01 Yuta o::h.
02 Kit heh heh heh heh HA

03 (1.1)/|((Yuta writing))
|((Y looking at page))



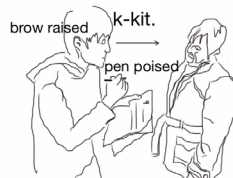
04 Yuta ah, what's your |name?
|((Y looks to K, pen up))



05 Kit |kit.
|((K head back))



06 Yuta→ |**k-kit.** |**kit?**
|((brow raised, pen poised)) |((Y head forward))



07 Kit kit. ((spelling)) kay eye tee.
08 (.)
09 Yuta ah, (k/'kay) thank you.
10 (1.3)/((Yuta writing))
11 Yuta kit.

In line 4, Yuta initiates a non-scripted sequence by asking Kit her name in order to list it on his sheet along with her answer. At this point, embodied features of his actions provide evidence that this question is "off script": he does not look at his paper before he asks the question, instead maintaining gaze with Kit. Although he has been using his pen to write Kit's response to the first question, on his production of this follow-up

question, he lifts the pen from the paper, indicating that he is done with that question and this is a new one. In this way, Yuta makes use of a variety of carefully co-ordinated multi-modal resources to accomplish his shift from prepared questions to non-scripted learner-initiated post-expansions.

Yuta initiates a confirmation check in line 6 with a hesitant repetition of Kit's name followed by an upwardly intoned self-repetition, raising his brow on the first repetition and moving his head slightly closer to Kit on the second. As he does so, he moves his pen slightly toward the paper indicating his readiness to use it again, and therefore makes public his expectation that Kit will provide a response in this slot. This leads Kit to repeat the name and offer a spelled-out version as part of her clarification in line 7. Yuta did not specifically initiate a spellcheck and so Kit could have treated it purely as other-initiated repair in which the trouble source was hearing or understanding. However, in this instance she responded with a spelling clarification and this possibly acted as a trigger for Yuta, who went on to initiate spelling clarifications as post-expansions in subsequent survey interviews. Of course, a spelling clarification could solve two sorts of trouble here, both Yuta's hearing/comprehension of the name and his ability to write it on the paper. Since both participants are orienting to Yuta's production of handwritten notes as an integral part of this talk, it is likely that Kit's offer to spell her name indexes the somewhat institutional nature of this conversation.

In the next survey interview, around 4 minutes later, Yuta initiates two spelling clarifications at the same point in the conversation, i.e., during the post-expansion sequence after his initial scripted question.

Excerpt 3. Interview 2, Noosa

01 Freddy: noosa.
02 (0.8)

03 Yuta: noosa.
 04 Freddy: ((nodding)) °yeah.°
 05 Yuta: where is noosa
 06 (0.9)/((Yuta puts pen to response sheet))
 07 Yuta: → **a:h, what spell.<how spell.**
 08 Freddy: en, double oh?
 09 (0.3)
 10 es ay?
 11 (.)
 12 [°noosa.°
 13 Yuta: [°en double oh es ay.°
 14 (0.8)
 15 Yuta: ah- noosa. ()
 16 (0.4)
 17 where is it
 18 (.)
 19 Yuta: [ah, near ()]
 20 Freddy: [()] ((points over shoulder))
 21 yeah=o::h, (.) sorta, yeah.
 22 (1.5)
 23 Yuta: what's your name
 24 (.)
 25 sorry
 26 Freddy: Freddy.
 27 Yuta: Freddy. ef [ar ee [dee
 28 Freddy: [ar ee [double dee wai.
 29 Yuta: thank you. a::h,

Freddy's turn in line 1 constitutes a response to Yuta's inquiry about his favourite place for a vacation (Noosa, a nearby beach). After receipting it through repetition (line 3), Yuta initially formulates a follow-up question that seeks to clarify the content of Freddy's response (line 5), but before Freddy replies Yuta instead initiates the spellcheck clarification, and his embodied actions help inform Freddy that Yuta is asking about the word Noosa in order to write it down on his response sheet.

Yuta's turn in line 7 is an ah-prefaced initiating action in which the Japanese turn-initial change-of-state token (ah) indexes a departure from the expected prior course of action (Heritage, 2013), indicating that he is putting the unanswered question in line 5 on hold. He then re-initiates this follow-up question in line 17, substituting the pro-term

'it' for the proper noun. Although Freddy's response in lines 20-21 is ambiguous, Yuta neither receipts it nor initiates repair on it, instead electing to pose another task-related question by asking Freddy for his name (line 23). Yuta receipts the name and when he goes on to spell it, Freddy joins him in overlap to co-complete the spelling (Lerner, 2002). Although Yuta's turn in line 27 is not formulated as a typical question, Freddy treats it as response-worthy, indicating that he sees it as a sequence-initiating action i.e., a declarative question formulated as a B-event statement (Heritage, 2012).

Up until this point, Yuta has used a variety of tactics to get the respondent to provide a spelling for a proper noun, including upward-intoned repetition, a self-attempt at the spelling and his own version of the question "How do you spell that?" In excerpt 3 line 7, Yuta formulates this as "What spell- how spell?", which is hearable as self-initiated self-repair, with the word *how* replacing *what*. Previous longitudinal CA research has suggested the importance of self-repair and repetition in acquiring second language formations (Hauser, 2013; Lee & Hellermann, 2013).

By looking at this episode alone, it might be tempting to suggest that Yuta is aware that *how* is the more appropriate pronoun, but in a similar slot in the next interview (Excerpt 4, line 9) he again initiates the spellcheck post-expansion with *what* before quickly replacing it with *how*.

Excerpt 4. Interview 3, Fico

01 Fico: (what is this?)
 02 Yuta: a:nd, what's your name?
 03 (0.3)
 04 Fico: ah, (it's) fico.
 05 (0.3)
 06 Yuta: ichiko?
 07 Ziko. yeah,
 08 [fico.]
 09 Yuta: → [**what-**] **how spell.**
 10 [((clunk))]

11 ((Yuta places pen case on bench))
 12 Yuta: → please tell me, (0.5) how to [spell.]=
 13 Fico: [° () °]
 14 Yuta: → =spell.
 15 Fico: ah. (.) ef ai see oh.
 16 (0.5)
 17 Yuta: e:h ef,
 18 (0.8)
 19 Fico. ef ai, ((takes a puff on cigarette))
 20 Yuta: ai, see, oh.
 21 (0.4)
 22 thank you.
 23 (0.9) ((turning over page, looks to Fico))
 24 thank you fico. heh-hn.

One notable difference between the two turns (Excerpt 3 line 7 and Excerpt 4 line 9) is that Yuta's self-initiated repair appears to happen slightly sooner in Excerpt 4, since he abandons the turn-in-progress before he produces the word "spell", suggesting, he is leaning toward the correct pronoun, *how*. Further evidence to support this is available in his expanded reformulation of the request in line 12, in which he uses the phrase "how to spell". Both line 12 and its partial repetition in line 14 are formulated with turn-final intonation patterns, indicating that Yuta did not intend to include an object (such as "it" or "that") in this form of the question.

The recipient, however, does not treat this as problematic, going on to comply with the request in the pursuant talk by spelling out the word. This leads us to a point worth noting. Although none of the expert speakers has initiated repair on this turn, Yuta himself treats it as a trouble source, initiating self-repair at the nearest possible point (the turn-in-progress) as well as in the ongoing talk, by formulating it in different ways in subsequent interviews. This is where the micro-longitudinal approach to CA can offer significant insight into how novice second language users engage with their own interactional competence. It seems that Yuta is progressively refining his use of this

question, and since he is doing so largely by himself it seems that he is using memory, including that of the just-prior version, as a resource for improving his formulation of this item (Kitzinger, 2006; Shaw & Kitzinger, 2007).

In Excerpts 5 and 6 we see that Yuta uses only the word *how* in his initiation of the spellcheck request, instead of the word *what*, demonstrating unequivocally that he sees this as the more appropriate formulation.

Excerpt 5. Interview 3, Bangladesh

01 Fico: overse::as, (.) a:h (1.4) maybe:
02 >in my country?<
03 (.)
04 Yuta: ah, where?
05 Fico: bangladesh? and-
06 Yuta: bang↑ladesh.
07 Fico: yeah=the (longest) in the ().
08 Yuta: ohn.
09 [(2.4)]
10 [((Yuta writing))]
11 Yuta: → °**how spell.** | (mm) [**bangladesh.**°
12 | ((shrugs shoulders))
13 Fico: [it's-
14 (.)
15 Fico: ah, bee ay en gee,
16 Yuta: ((writing)) bee ay en gee,
17 Fico: el ay,
18 Yuta: el ay.

In Excerpt 5 line 11 Yuta combines *how spell* with the target word, *Bangladesh*, combining it with a shrug which acts as an embodied display of epistemic subordination that helps denote it as a request for information. The word Bangladesh is hearable as the object of the sentence, although given the turn-final intonation after "how spell" it may simply be a post-positioned increment. Thus there is no strong case to be made about whether or not Yuta is using the complete grammatical construction at this point, particularly as there is no object in the version he produces in the final interview (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6. Interview 4, Camryn

01 Yuta: sorry=ah what's your name.
 02 Camryn: camryn.
 03 Yuta: camryn.
 04 Camryn: camryn.
 05 (0.9) ((Yuta turns page))
 06 Yuta → **how d'you spell.**
 07 (.)
 08 Camryn: a[:h, see ay,
 09 [((Yuta drops paper, crouches down
 10 to pick it up))
 11 (.)

While line 6 is still not grammatically complete, it does include one intriguing element that was not in the earlier versions, “do you”. This suggests that Yuta does in fact treat the word *spell* as a verb, at least at this point, since he has formulated it with the modal verb “do” to make a question. Again, even with its non-standard grammar, the expert speaker does not treat it as a trouble source, instead simply responding to the question without any verbal noticing of the missing object. In other words, like the earlier interviewees, Camryn does not publically initiate repair on Yuta's non-standard English formulation.

That said, there is micro-longitudinal evidence to suggest that at least one of the participants, Yuta himself, is treating the formulation as repairable. Looking across these segments from four successive survey interviews, we have seen that Yuta initiates the same post-expansion sequence with slightly different formulations, indicating that he himself is initiating repair, not only on the turn-in-progress (in Excerpts 2 and 3) but also on the version of this formulation he used in previous interviews. Through its inbuilt opportunities for repetition, the survey interview activity constitutes an affordance through which the learner reflects on prior iterations of talk and reworks them into increasingly target-like formulations. There is no particular input from the

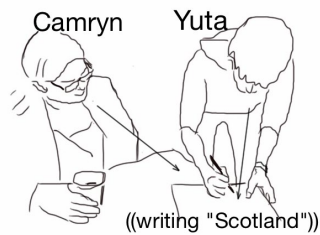
expert speakers and the interviews followed one after the other, so this seems to be a case not of learning but of remembering. However, as Kitzinger (2006) notes in data taken from a series of phone calls, it is not that the focal participant is “doing remembering”, but that details of his recollection can be seen in the way he formulates each successive rendition of this turn. Moreover, in reformulating the way he constructs each iteration of this turn construction, Yuta demonstrates that he is remembering or recalling the appropriate formulation, or calling on his existing knowledge of grammar and adapting it according to his current understanding. In other words, his learner initiative in asking follow-up questions that were not strictly part of the assigned task provided him with an opportunity to experiment with language and develop his interactional competence.

Typically CA makes the case for participant understandings based on repair (or the lack thereof) as displayed in the next turn (Schegloff, 1992), but in this data the expert English speakers do not orient to Yuta's formulations as repairable. It is only through adopting a micro-longitudinal stance in comparing Yuta's alternative versions across episodes that we begin to see how he takes responsibility for his improvement, by self-initiating repair across episodes and thus treating the activity not simply as an exchange of information but as an opportunity for learning.

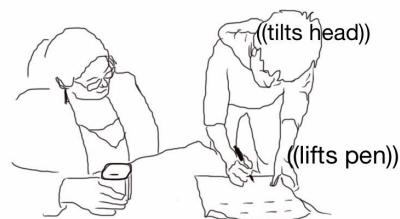
Finally, as noted in Table 3 there is one more episode in the fourth interview in which the participants ostensibly orient to the issue of spelling. About 30 seconds after Camryn has finished spelling her name (Excerpt 6), Yuta initiates another spelling clarification in perhaps its most minimal form: through embodied action, as outlined in Fragment 1, taken from Excerpt 9.

Fragment 1. (from Excerpt 9)

08 (3.0)/((Yuta writes on page))



09 ((Yuta tilts head to side: "not sure" pose))



10 Yuta |okay?=
11 |((looks to Camryn, showing page))



12 Camryn |=mmhm yeah.
13 |((nods approval))



At a point where Yuta is visibly engaged in the business of writing Camryn's response on his survey sheet, he stops writing, cocks his head to the side in an embodied display of unsuredness, then shifts his gaze to Camryn and asks "okay?" (lines 8-10). In response Camryn gives a minimal display of affirmative uptake, indicating that Yuta has indeed spelled the word correctly.³ There are two main differences that may help

explain why Yuta chose to use such a minimal formulation in this instance, despite the fact that he had just demonstrated that he could produce a more complex formulation (Excerpt 6). Firstly the clarification request is different in that he has already attempted to write the word and is therefore checking his attempt rather than asking for a complete spelling before he writes. Secondly his notes on the page (see Figure 1) therefore serve to facilitate the spoken interaction and the clarification sequence is carried out quickly and smoothly as both participants orient to the progressivity of the talk. So Yuta's brief "okay" is not an anomaly or evidence of backsliding; it is instead finely tuned to the temporal and turn-constructive details of the talk.

Misaligned Post Expansions: Incorporating a Prior Interviewee's Response into Successive Interviews

While Yuta capably used post-expansion sequences to extend the talk beyond his prepared list of interview topics, these follow-up questions were not always successful. Although they were sometimes well formulated in terms of their syntax, they did not always orient to the prior talk sequentially, or else they provided evidence of Yuta's incomplete lexical knowledge. This section will provide evidence to suggest that Yuta recycles language that one of the expert speakers used during a prior interview. Although his subsequent versions of the focal turn are sequentially misaligned (Stivers, 2008), they do demonstrate that he is actively engaged with the activity as an opportunity for furthering his interactional competence.

Returning to the first interview, in Excerpt 7 we begin by noticing an occasioning of the formulation "I have only ever been to" in a second pair part response from the interviewee.

Excerpt 7. And overseas?

01 Yuta where is your favourite place for a holiday.
 02 Kit (for) a holiday.
 03 Yuta yeah.
 04 Kit the gold coast.

((9 lines omitted))

14 (1.1)/((Yuta writing))
 15 Yuta (yes) thank you.
 16 (1.0)
 17 Yuta a:::hn (and) overseas?
 18 Kit **overseas? I have only ever been to chi:na=**
 19 Yuta [china]
 20 Kit =[and th]at was for business so I don't
 21 know about overseas.
 22 Yuta o::h.
 23 Kit heh heh heh heh Ha
 24 Yuta ah, what's your name?

The way that Yuta's prepared question (in its abbreviated form in line 17) is formulated assumes that the respondent has been overseas. In Kit's case, she has never been overseas for a vacation, so she abstains from answering on epistemic grounds, although she does qualify this by saying she has been overseas on business (lines 18-21). In line 18 Kit uses the syntactic construction "I have only ever been to...", a formulation that Yuta is likely to be familiar with from his secondary school English classes (MEXT, 2009). As shown in Figure 1, Yuta does not write any response for Kit in this answer and after a sequence-closing change-of-state token (line 22), he goes on to initiate a new topic (line 24).

However, when examined in conjunction with Excerpts 8 and 9, taken from the second and fourth survey interviews, we notice that Yuta initiates an *ad lib* post-expansion that builds on the second question on his list by using the formulaic construction "Have you ever been to ~".

Excerpt 8. Italy

Excerpt 9. Scotland

Although grammatically appropriate, Yuta's question is sequentially inapposite in that the answer is already implicit in the prior talk (see Kasper & Kim, 2007; Raymond, 2004 for more on inapposite responses). This may demonstrate a gap in Yuta's lexical knowledge about the word "favourite". In English a favourite place implies a place that

the speaker has direct experience with, in this case a place where the interviewee has already visited. To ask someone's "favourite place for a holiday" is to assume that they have already been there, and so Yuta's post-expansion seems misaligned (Stivers, 2008). This is evidenced minimally by the participants themselves in next turn—in line 12 Freddy delivers a laughed-through confirmation and a similar response from Camryn is produced with a smile rather than a fully audible laugh (Excerpt 9, line 7). However, neither expert speaker overtly corrects Yuta's mistake. The dispreferred nature of other-initiated repair (Schegloff, Sacks, & Jefferson, 1977) may work against learners in these situations, making it difficult for expert speakers to correct them, particularly in first-contact encounters. CA researchers have noticed that other-correction is secondary to self-correction in terms of frequency and sequential availability (Schegloff et al., 1997), and that certain asymmetrical relationships (such as teacher-student, parent-child) make it easier for the more knowledgeable participant to initiate repair (Hosoda, 2000; Kurhila, 2001, 2006; Norrick, 1991). However, in situations like those in the present data, the interviewees do not correct Yuta, reflecting and reifying their relationship to him as non-pedagogical.

So while it is not perfectly timed, the interaction analysed in this section nonetheless suggests that Yuta is challenging himself by extending the talk with language he has heard in an earlier conversation. Once Kit uses "I have only ever been to China" in the first interview, this construction becomes available as an interactional resource that Yuta is able to recycle in his impromptu talk in the subsequent interviews by adapting its form into a sequence-initiating action. Although "Have you been to Scotland?" may have been a failure in terms of its sequential placement, it does provide evidence that Yuta is able to take advantage of the repetitive nature of the task to rehearse and

repurpose language. In other words, the task and the talk that it generates become an affordance for the learner (Jacknick & Thornbury, 2013; Okada, 2010; van Lier, 2000), allowing Yuta to improvise and experiment with phrases that he has heard and giving him the potential to transition such expressions from his passive knowledge to his active interactional repertoire. Although he has used them in a mispositioned way in this case, by reusing language that the task has supplied him Yuta has actively engaged with the interaction to make it a vehicle for language practice to develop his interactional competence.

Concluding Discussion

The current study has aimed to observe learner initiative in action through examining successive sequences of interaction recorded outside the classroom during an ESL survey interview task. The analysis has highlighted some of the ways the focal participant took charge of his language learning by extending the talk beyond the requirements of the task in *ad lib* post-expansion sequences, including spelling clarifications and topic initiations. Yuta was a keen communicator and a savvy language learner. He seemed genuinely interested in the talk as an activity and was eager to extend the interview, transforming it into an occasion for learning. Although these post-expansions did not appear in the notes he made on his page (see Figure 1), they did serve a purpose in allowing him time to write the answer to the main survey question. Moreover, they demonstrate his orientation to learning (Gardner, 2008) and provided him with opportunities to practice and improve his interactional competence in English. In short, he seems to have seen the activity as more than simply collecting interview data.

The micro-longitudinal approach to CA offers a window not only into Yuta's interactional competence but also into his reflection on his own language use and that of the expert speakers. In the first analytic section on Yuta's clarification requests across episodes, we saw that Yuta adapted the way he formulated a particular clarification request across successive episodes of the task, despite the fact that the expert speakers in no way oriented to it as repairable. Similarly, in the second analytic section on Yuta's incorporation of one interviewee's response into follow-up questions in successive survey interviews, the micro-longitudinal approach provided evidence of how Yuta repurposed language for use in later interviews. Therefore, methodologically there is value in comparing students' language use across episodes of similar talk, and in doing so we can gain insight into the way active learners can take the initiative in extending language beyond the bounds of an assigned task.

The two analytic segments above are both concerned with the details of learner-initiated follow-up questions across successive episodes of talk; (a) Yuta's gradual refinement of a spelling clarification request, and (b) examination of his use of a topic-expansion question that seems to have been occasioned by an interviewee response during the initial episode. The two sections make for an interesting comparison because in the former it is the learner who is orienting to the (re)formulation of the post-expansion (and this ultimately leads to a more target-like version), while in the second, even though the recipients do minimally acknowledge the misaligned nature of the post-expansions, this is not sufficient to prompt the learner to notice it. This supports SLA research on attention, awareness and noticing (Schmidt, 1990, 1994, 2001; Williams,

2013) and their relation to the socio-cultural-linguistic environment (Jacknick & Thornbury, 2013).

Language teachers will never be able to provide their students with a complete list of possible responses that they may need in order to produce a relevant post-expansion sequence in survey interview activities like these. However, teachers should discuss the role of follow-up questions and give students an opportunity to prepare some potential post-expansion sequence initiators. If, for instance, Yuta had practiced the question "How do you spell that?" before the interview task, his follow up questioning might have gone more smoothly. Beyond that, learners must be willing to take on the responsibility for their own learning. Being an autonomous learner becomes apparent through such interactional practices as producing timely post-expansion sequences. An experienced language teacher watching these videos of Yuta interacting would no doubt come up with an accurate holistic assessment of his skills, but the deeply descriptive perspective that CA allows for an empirical and sequential understanding of what he accomplished.

Finally, a further strength of the task design is that the learner is able to recycle the conversation with multiple interlocutors. When given the opportunity to plan spoken tasks and repeat them with various interlocutors, EFL learners can improve the accuracy, complexity and fluency of their English (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011). Teachers should consider providing their students with structured communicative tasks such as this, not only because they provide plenty of occasions for genuine exchange with expert speakers beyond the classroom, but also because they naturally incorporate unplanned opportunities for language use in follow-up talk. Making students aware of these

opportunities and encouraging them to extend the conversation beyond the prepared list of questions may be one of the teacher's most important roles in this process.

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Appendix A. Specific Permission Items Listed on the Consent Form

- ☐ The videos can be studied by the researcher for use in the research project.
Anonymous transcripts of the recordings can be published in academic journals.
- ☐ The videos can be shown to other researchers at academic conferences.
- ☐ The videos can appear on secure professional websites, such as those of academic journals.
- ☐ The transcripts and/or recordings can be used by other researchers.
- ☐ The records can be shown in public presentations to non-specialist groups.
- ☐ The records can be used on television or radio.

Appendix B. Transcription conventions

=	continuing turn/no beat between turn constructional units (TCUs)
<	"left push" indicating a hurried start to the next TCU
—	emphatic stress
(())	encloses transcriber comments
[indicates overlapping talk
	indicates the onset of embodied action in relation to talk
°°	encloses talk delivered in a lower volume
:	elongation of preceding sound
(1.2)	silence, measured in seconds
(.)	gap of silence under 0.1 seconds
()	inaudible talk
< >	slower talk
-	cut-off talk
(h)	laughed-through talk
↑↓	rising/falling intonation (preceding syllable)
.	turn final falling intonation
?	turn final rising intonation
,	continuing intonation
\$ \$	smiley voice

Endnotes

1. An extensive review of the CA literature on research interviews can be found in Roulston (2006).
2. The first two interviewees listed on Yuta's notes were conducted with his homestay family earlier in the day and therefore were not included in the data recording.
3. I believe that Yuta is checking the spelling here and not the content or meaning of what Camryn has just said. As can be seen in the just-prior talk in Excerpt 9, Yuta is writing down the word Scotland here, which was Camryn's answer to the question. Yuta says Scotland twice before he writes it down and Camryn repeats it to confirm it. In other words, they both know the content of what he is about to write, so when he stops and does a thinking pose just after he writes it, then says "(Is this) okay?" he is asking her to check the spelling, not the content. However, in Figure 1 we can see that in fact the word that he shows her is indeed misspelled (as "Scottland"), so she did not correct him. Whether or not this is a case of "letting it pass" or she was treating this as a request for confirmation of the content of what she just said, remains unclear.

Table 1.

A Summary of the Survey Interviews Yuta Conducted on 25 August, 2010

Partner	Gender	Nationality	Length of interview
Kit	Female	Australian	3:08.9 min
Freddy	Male	Australian	2:31.2 min
Fico	Male	Bangladeshi	2:34.9 min
Camryn	Female	Australian	2:33.9 min
Total			10: 48.0 min

Table 2.

Yuta's Prepared List of Survey Interview Questions

What is your favorite place for a holiday in Australia?
What is your favorite place for a holiday overseas?
What kind of accommodation do you prefer to stay in?
What activities do you like to do on holiday?
If you had a choice of the following places, which would you choose?

Table 3.

Spelling Clarification Turns across the Four Interviews

Interview sequence	Target word	Form	Data segment
Interview 1 (Kit)	Kit's name	Hesitant repetition of target word	K-Kit?
Interview 2 (Freddy)	Noosa (place)	Self-initiated self-repair	What spell<how spell?
	Freddy's name	Initiating an attempt to spell the word	Freddy. F-R-E-D...
Interview 3 (Fico)	Fico's name	Self-repair initiated earlier in the turn-in-progress	What- how spell?
	Bangladesh	Bare form + shrug	How (to) spell?
Interview 4 (Camryn)	Camryn's name	Bare form, but clearer	How d'you <u>spell</u> ?
	Scotland	Embodied initiation of confirmation	(Looks to interviewee for approval)