



## Doing, and justifying doing, avoidance

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, I treat avoidance as a locally contingent practice that is collaboratively co-constructed by participants in real time as a topic of interaction during the course of naturally occurring institutional talk. In order to develop this post-cognitive account of how participants do, and justify doing, avoidance-as-behavior, I draw on ethnomethodological conversation analysis and discursive psychology to frame and explicate a number of emerging issues in the conversation analysis-for-second language acquisition literature. These issues include: (1) How can we respecify individual notions of cognition as socially situated activity? (2) How can we use longitudinal talk to show how participants demonstrably orient in speech event 2 (SE2) to a course of action that first occurred in speech event 1 (SE1)? And (3) how can we legitimately use exogenous (that is, talk-external) cultural artifacts (here, a Power Point presentation and a self-evaluation form) as resources for analyzing language learning behavior?

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### 1. Introduction

To date, the topic of *avoidance* has been studied in the second language studies (SLS) literature as a type of communication strategy (CS: see, inter alia, Schachter, 1974; Kleinmann, 1977, and especially Tarone, 1978, 1981), which is often understood as a type of individual, mental activity (Bialystok, 1978). This is certainly how Elaine Tarone initially defined CS: more specifically, Tarone (1978:195) suggests that CS are “used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual thought.” She also goes on to claim in this paper that CS may be divided into three categories, namely, paraphrase, transfer and avoidance, the last of which may be further sub-divided into topic avoidance and message abandonment.

However, in Tarone (1981) she changes her definition of CS by adopting a more interactional perspective. More specifically, she argues that:

... the term CS relates to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Meaning structures here would include both linguistic structures and sociolinguistic rule structures.) Communication strategies, viewed from this perspective, may be seen as attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations. Approximation, mime, and circumlocution may be used to bridge this gap. Message abandonment and avoidance may be used where the gap is perceived as unbridgeable (Tarone, 1981:288).

Tarone goes on to propose that the following three criteria characterize a CS: (1) a learner wishes to communicate meaning X to an interlocutor; (2) the learner realizes that she does not possess linguistic or sociolinguistic structure X that she needs to communicate her message, or that this structure is not shared with the interlocutor; (3) consequently, the

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learner decides to: (a) avoid communicating meaning X, or (b) she abandons trying alternative means of communicating meaning X when it becomes clear that there is shared meaning.

Finally, at the end of the same paper, Tarone cites a number of then current studies to exemplify what future research informed by an interactional definition of CS might look like. For present purposes, I concentrate on the first of these, an unpublished study by Aono and Hillis (1979). In this study, an advanced learner of English as a second language recorded his own conversations with native speakers. Using a now classic ethnographic retrospective recall methodology, this talk was first transcribed, and the learner then annotated the transcription and recorded what he had been thinking about and trying to say at various moments in the recordings. Substantive findings from this study included: (1) confirmation of the existence of CS such as approximation, circumlocution and message abandonment in the talk; and (2) the identification of a new production strategy called rehearsal. Speaking to point 1, Tarone (1981:291) concludes: “Given that intended meaning and intention to communicate are notions fundamental to the definition of CS and are not easily accessible in observational data, the use of introspective data may be able to aid in the study of this phenomenon.”

The research tradition summarized here has yielded important insights into the complexity of CS in general. In addition, the call that Tarone (1981) issued for an interactional perspective on CS was an important step forward, as was the insight that innovative methodological instruments were needed to do CS research. Both of these ideas have received considerable uptake; indeed, they constitute default positions in much of the psycholinguistic work being done in CS and second language acquisition (SLA) studies today (see, for example, Mackey, 2008; Mackey and Gass, 2005, respectively).

However, to my knowledge, there has been no follow up at all on Tarone’s ideas with respect to how we might do interactional research on *avoidance* specifically. In this paper, I minimally propose to fill this gap in the literature. However, in the wake of Firth and Wagner’s influential critique of psycholinguistic SLA in 1997,<sup>1</sup> I argue that, just as in 1981, it is again time to: (1) rethink how we specify the topic of avoidance in particular; and (2) explore the analytical potential of more up to date innovative methodologies that might cast new empirical light on this phenomenon.

For these reasons, I treat avoidance in this paper as a locally contingent practice that is collaboratively co-constructed by participants in real time as a topic of interaction during the course of naturally occurring institutional talk.<sup>2</sup> In order to develop this post-cognitive account of how participants do, and justify doing, avoidance-as-behavior, I draw on ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP) to frame and explicate a number of emerging issues in the conversation analysis-for-second language acquisition (CA-for-SLA) literature (see Markee and Kasper, 2004 for the origin of this term). These issues include: (1) how can we respecify individual notions of cognition as socially situated activity? (2) How can we use a longitudinal approach to show how participants demonstrably orient in speech event 2 (SE2) to a course of action that first occurred in speech event 1 (SE1)? And (3) how can we legitimately use exogenous (that is, talk-external) cultural artifacts (here, a Power Point presentation and a self-evaluation form) as resources for analyzing the co-constructed organization of language learning behavior?

To these ends, the remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, I provide a brief review of the CA-for-SLA literature, concentrating in particular on how the emerging themes discussed in the previous paragraph constitute an interconnected domain of inquiry. Second, I use CA-for-SLA to analyze five fragments of classroom and office hour talk and associated cultural artifacts to identify when and how a learner avoids, and then justifies avoiding, the oral use of the word *prerequisites*. Finally, in the conclusion, I first summarize the findings of this paper, and then outline some future avenues of research that are suggested by the findings in this paper.

## 2. Literature review

Let me begin by clarifying in what sense CA and DP are ethnomethodological disciplines, how these fields relate to each other, and how CA-for-SLA in turn draws on these source disciplines. Ethnomethodology (EM)<sup>3</sup> is a radical form of sociology founded by Garfinkel (1967, 1974). As Roger and Bull (1988) explain:

The term ‘ethnomethodology’ was coined by Garfinkel (1974). In combining the words ‘ethno’ and ‘methodology’, Garfinkel was influenced by the use of such terms as ‘ethnobotany’ and ‘ethnomedicine’ to refer to folk systems of botanical and medical analysis. What is proposed is that any competent member of society (including the professional social scientist) is equipped with a methodology for analyzing social phenomena; the term ‘ethnomethodology’ thus refers to the study of the ways in which everyday common-sense activities are analyzed by participants, and of the ways in which these analyses are incorporated into courses of action. The most prominent development within ethnomethodology is undoubtedly that which has become known as conversation analysis, which examines the procedures used in the production of ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Firth and Wagner (1997:286) called for a reconceptualization of psycholinguistic SLA in three areas: “(a) a significantly enhanced awareness of the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, (b) an increased emic (i.e., participant-relevant) sensitivity toward fundamental concepts, and (c) the broadening of the traditional SLA data base.”

<sup>2</sup> In response to anonymous reviewer #2’s query whether this analysis aims to explicate how avoidance is done as a recurrent practice, I would like to clarify that, since, to my knowledge, this paper constitutes the only attempt in CA-for-SLA to analyze how avoidance is achieved on a moment-by-moment basis, such a goal would be premature. However, as I will show in the empirical section of this paper, I *am* making the claim that the participants observably orient to recurrent practices such as turn taking, repair, conversational sequencing, and the preference organization of laughter to do, and justify doing, avoidance in the data that I present here.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed discussions of the ethnomethodological research program, see Garfinkel (1967). In addition, see Button (1991), Button et al. (1995), Francis and Hester (2004), Heritage (1984) and ten Have (2004).

conversation. The influence of conversation analysis is being increasingly felt in disciplines outside sociology, notably psychology, linguistics and anthropology (Roger and Bull, 1988:3).

CA is thus concerned with explaining how the structure of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction is organized in terms of turn taking, repair, and conversational sequencing, and also in terms of the preference organization of adjacency pairs and repair sequences (ten Have, 2007; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008; Liddicoat, 2007; Schegloff, 2007; Schegloff et al., 2002). The term “talk-in-interaction” (coined by Schegloff, 1987) is an overarching term that brings both ordinary conversation and institutional varieties of talk within the purview of CA. Ordinary conversation is the default speech exchange system in talk, while doctor–patient communication, courtroom talk, classroom talk, etc., are speech exchange systems whose structural organization is modified in various ways to enact institutionally relevant courses of action (see Drew and Heritage, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974).<sup>4</sup>

DP, which emerged as a sociological challenge to cognitive psychology, may be characterized as follows:

DP approaches the topics of cognition, mental states and psychological characteristics as matters under active management in talk and text. The start point is everyday discourse considered as a domain of social practice. Mostly, it is talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 1987), but written text is analyzed too. The key to DP is that it is primarily a way of analyzing talk and text. It does not start with psychological questions, and does not offer a rival theory of mind. Not does it deny the reality and importance of subjective experience. Rather, DP rejects the assumption that discourse is the *product* or *expression* of thoughts or intentional states lying beneath it. Instead, mental states, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, and the nature of the external world, figure as talk’s topics, assumptions and concerns (Edwards, 2006:41, emphasis in the original).

Thus, EM ontologically and epistemologically underpins both CA and DP. Most importantly, both CA and DP are “ethnomethodologically indifferent” (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970:63) toward the etic (i.e., researcher-centric) explanations of a priori theories in social science and seek instead to explicate how participants co-construct the mundane, taken-for-granted details of everyday life in and through talk. This is why, for example, DP employs CA methods to analyze how participants orient to doing cognition (among other things) as a topic of talk.

At the same time, EM, CA, and DP have distinct research programs and, in some instances, have important disagreements on key issues. For example, the ethnomethodologist Jeff Coulter has consistently attacked the entire cognitive science enterprise as fundamentally misguided (see, in particular, Coulter, 1979, 1983, 1990, 1991), and this critique has not spared prominent researchers in either CA (see, for example, Coulter, 2005 on Schegloff, 1992) or DP (see Coulter, 1999 on Edwards and Potter, 1992, and the reply to this critique by Potter and Edwards, 2003). Furthermore, there are similar tensions between CA and DP (see, for example, Potter’s [2006] critique of Drew, 2005).

To summarize, EM advocates the most radical – or “atheistic” – position on the question of whether underlying cognitive processes shape surface conversational events, while CA and DP both adopt more “agnostic” stances toward such matters. However, DP’s agnosticism on this issue is much more pronounced than that of CA. This is because the respecification of cognition is a central part of DP’s research agenda (Edwards, 1997), whereas CA researchers, as we have already seen, are primarily interested in explicating how talk-in-interaction is organized (though this certainly does not mean that cognitive matters are of no interest to CA writers: see, for example, Drew, 2005; Heritage, 2005; Kitzinger, 2006; Schegloff, 1979, 1991a, 1996, 2006a, b).

Before I discuss in more detail the three themes of the agenda which I previously identified in the introduction, let me now briefly situate CA-for-SLA (or at least, the kind of CA-for-SLA that I do in this paper) in relation to EM, CA, and DP. CA-for-SLA is a form of institutional CA that is “applied” (ten Have, 2007) to the development of an emic (that is, participant relevant) understanding of how participants do language learning behavior<sup>5</sup> (Markee, 2008). CA-for-SLA is thus ethnomethodologically indifferent to a priori psycholinguistic theories of SLA. It is in this sense that the emerging research agenda of CA-for-SLA is distinctively post-cognitive (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Kasper, 2008, 2009; Markee, 2008; Markee and Seo, 2009; Mori and Hasegawa, 2009; Seedhouse, 2004). But, to build on the previous distinction I made between atheistic and agnostic formulations of cognition in EM, CA, and DP, CA-for-SLA writers have yet to develop a real consensus on this issue. For example, while Kasper (2008, 2009), Markee (2008) and Markee and Seo (2009) have adopted the stronger form of agnosticism that is characteristic of DP, Mori and Hasegawa (2009) have tended to adopt the weaker form of agnosticism associated with CA.

### 2.1. Respecifying individual notions of cognition as socially situated activity

The idea that cognition is as much a socially situated activity as it is an individual phenomenon is one of the liveliest topics in contemporary cognitive science (Robbins and Aydede, 2009). According to these writers, the notion of situated cognition subsumes work on the *embodied* mind, the *embedded* mind, and the *extended* mind. So, for example, a series of articles by Goodwin (2000a,b, 2003a,b, 2007) exemplifies a concern with embodiment: that is, “how the body shapes the mind” (Gallagher, 2005) through various practices such as eye gaze, pointing, and other gestures. Hutchins’ (1995) work on

<sup>4</sup> So, when interviewers respond to interviewees’ requests to clarify a question by repeating the question verbatim – a technique that is often used to standardize the way questions are asked – they do not make use of various repair practices that would be the norm in ordinary conversation. It is this suppression of repair that enacts this kind of talk as survey interview talk (see Maynard, 2003, Chapter 3, note 18).

<sup>5</sup> Language learning behavior is any sort of social interaction in which the participants observably display an orientation to working on language or communication issues that they find problematic for some reason. It is therefore an emic, not an etic, label. Note further that I am not making the claim that all language learning is directly observable in and through talk. Thus, self-study, private speech and other forms of language learning activity such as silent memorization of vocabulary lists are all forms of learning that are not accessible to CA-for-SLA.

“cognition in the wild” illustrates the related idea that cognition is embedded in a larger social context. That is, cognition goes “beyond the skin” of individuals and includes the ways in which participants use tools in the environment to solve everyday problems. And current debates among EM, CA, and DP researchers on how written discourse and conversation shape cognition – see for example, [te Molder and Potter \(Eds.\) \(2005\)](#), and the special issue of *Discourse Studies* edited by [Van Dijk \(2006\)](#) – address the most controversial aspect of work on situated mind, namely, the idea that mind is extended from the individual sphere into the intersubjective space between individuals. The present paper is therefore intended to contribute to our understanding of how a situated cognition perspective might play out in SLA.

## 2.2. Using longitudinal data in CA-for-SLA

As we have seen, the question of how participants do conversational sequencing is a key issue in all CA work. Since such sequences necessarily take place over time, a concern with temporality necessarily lies at the heart of the CA enterprise. For the most part, CA has worked within what we may call a micro-longitudinal time frame, in which the focus of analysis is on how sequences that occur within a single speech event unfold on a moment-by-moment basis. However, we may discern a more macro-longitudinal perspective in the work of [Wooton \(1997\)](#), whose work – which lies at the cusp of developmental psychology, psycholinguistics, and CA – demonstrates how a young child’s attributions of particular understandings in first language request sequences change between the ages of approximately 26 and 38 months. Similarly, in the CA-for-SLA literature, [Brouwer and Wagner \(2004\)](#), and [Young and Miller \(2004\)](#) have carried out preliminary analyses that show how real time language learning behaviors that occur in different speech events evolve over more extended periods of time.

However, a common feature of all this work is that it does not explore how participants demonstrably orient to the details of talk that occurs in a speech event that is currently being enacted (SE2) to a course of action that first occurred in a prior speech event (SE1) that happened days, weeks, or even months earlier. Thus, in this paper, I use the learning behavior tracking (LBT) methodology first developed by [Markee \(2008\)](#) to show how a learner and her instructor actively orient to such issues as they manage the learner’s oral avoidance of the word *prerequisites* during an episode of classroom talk (SE1), and then in office hour talk (SE2) that occurred 11 days later. An LBT methodology subsumes two forms of analysis: learning process tracking (LPT) and learning object tracking (LOT). LOT involves documenting every time a learning object or practice identifiably occurs in different speech events, while LPT uses CA and DP to analyze how participants observably co-construct these objects or practices<sup>6</sup> in each speech event. Note that, while in [Markee \(2008\)](#), I originally developed LBT to show how we might address substantively conventional, but macro-longitudinally framed, methodological issues of vocabulary *appropriation* in CA-for-SLA, I use LBT here to show when, and how, [Huang Ling](#) avoids using the word *prerequisites* over time.

## 2.3. Using exogenous context as a resource for analyzing language learning behavior in CA-for-SLA

[Heritage \(1988\)](#) argues that conversation analyses are both context *shaped* and context *renewing*. More specifically, current talk is not only *shaped* by immediately preceding talk, but also sets up the interactional context for the *renewal* (i.e., the maintenance, adjustment, or alteration) of speakers’ intersubjective understandings of how the talk is going to unfold in next turn. Controversially, this localized understanding of talk-as-its-own-context makes no appeal to broader, ethnographic understandings of context, which has given rise to the so-called “cultural critique” of CA (see [Maynard, 2003:68–70](#)). The scholar most closely associated with this critique of CA is [Moerman \(1988\)](#), who argues that the sequential analyses of talk found in CA are unduly technical and need to be grounded in broader, cultural analyses of what participants are doing if the true complexity and richness of talk-in-interaction are to be fully unpacked and appreciated.

In an interesting discussion of these issues, [Maynard \(2003\)](#) suggests that the purist (i.e., talk-as-its-own-context) tradition within CA is most tenable when analysts focus on ordinary conversation. This is because all members of a culture are held to be competent in the interactional norms of that culture (see the previous citation from [Roger and Bull, 1988](#)). However, people who are not already members of professional community X are rarely competent in the interactional norms that enact this community’s institutional agendas. In such cases, Maynard argues that the epistemological status of certain forms of ethnographic context becomes more ambiguous, and that ethnographic information may be used to set the scene for subsequent CA work (for a good example of ethnographically contextualized CA of this kind, see [Heritage & Sefi, 1992](#)). However, as Maynard also points out, the fundamental issue facing all student of talk-in-interaction (especially those interested in institutional talk) involves knowing when appeals to such forms of contextualization become a methodological liability. In other words, analysts must adhere to precise methodological principles that enable them to: (1) maintain *analytic control* over their data; and (2) avoid *data loss* through their methodological choices.

More specifically, citing [Schegloff \(1987, 1991b\)](#), [Maynard \(2003\)](#) suggests that the principal criteria for *maintaining control* over an analysis in CA is: (1) to ground any appeals to ethnographic context as a resource for understanding the unfolding structure of talk in the observable *relevance* that this information has for participants; and (2) to demonstrate the *procedural consequences* that such an orientation has for the way in which the details of talk-in-interaction are organized. Furthermore, given the central tenet of CA that social order is to be found in the minutest details of talk-in-interaction ([Heritage, 1988](#)), we must fully exhaust the analytic potential of showing how participants co-construct the local organization of talk-in-interaction

<sup>6</sup> The selection of the learning object is not made on the basis of a priori theory by the researcher. It is the participants themselves who demonstrate to each other (and therefore to the researcher) that they want to focus on a specific learning object (in this case, the word *prerequisites*).

**Table 1**  
LOT matrix for the word prerequisites.

	1/26/04	1/28/04	1/30/04	2/02/04	2/10/04	2/11/04	2/13/04
Dan (T)	X						
He Hua		X					
Huang Ling			X	X			X

before we appeal to ethnographic context to explain any given course of action. In other words, if we invoke ethnographic context too early in an analysis, we run the risk of putting on a priori theoretical blinders that will likely lead to substantial *data loss*.

Finally, while rejecting the idea that there is a “mutual affinity” between CA and ethnography (i.e., that CA and ethnography unproblematically complement each other, as suggested by cultural critics of CA), Maynard (2003) makes the case for a more “limited affinity” between the two disciplines. More specifically, Maynard suggests that CA may benefit from careful ethnographic contextualization in three areas: (1) describing settings and identities (as in Heritage and Sefi’s [1992] opening description of the role of home health visitors in the British National Health Service); (2) explaining unfamiliar terms, phrases, or courses of action (as in Cicourel’s [1987] analysis of how technical terms are used in medical discourse); and (3) explaining “curious” sequential patterns (as in Heritage and Sefi’s [1992] analyses of how clients reject professional advice or counseling). In this paper, I concentrate on the last of these areas.

There is no doubt that within SLS, the realist perspective that objective facts may be constructed relatively easily through the use of carefully designed and administered instruments such as questionnaires and interviews continues to be widely accepted (see, for example, Mackey and Gass, 2005). However, a powerful critique of this position has emerged in EM, CA, and DP. This relativist critique is agnostic as to the truth value of the information that is collected through such instruments, and treats the production of official records as institutionally occasioned, and as objects that are designed to achieve specific kinds of institutional work that go far beyond merely collecting facts (see, for example, Maynard, 2003, Potter, 1996, and Talmy, 2010 for valuable discussions of this matter).<sup>7</sup>

These are issues that have received relatively little attention in CA-for-SLA to date. For example, most CA-for-SLA work on classroom or office hour talk has concentrated on showing how participants co-construct the verbal aspects of talk-in-interaction. Conversely, it has paid relatively little attention to how participants demonstrably orient to, and use, exogenous pedagogical materials to do language learning behavior (though see Markee, 2008; Markee and Stansell, 2007; Mori and Hasegawa, 2009, for exceptions to this generalization). In this paper, therefore, I show not only how participants use a naturally occurring Power Point presentation and a self-evaluation form to do different kinds of institutional work but also how, during the course of talk-in-interaction, such exogenous documents are themselves susceptible to being changed by the participants.

### 3. Participants

Dan is an American English for specific purposes teacher/curriculum designer, who at the time of data collection (Spring Semester, 2004), had over 12 years of experience in such work. Huang Ling<sup>8</sup> is a female faculty member at a science university in the People’s Republic of China. Huang Ling was enrolled in Dan’s class in an intensive English program at an American university to improve her English, and concurrently to develop her science teaching skills. The ultimate goal of this program was to enable participants to lecture on science through the medium of English in China.

### 4. Analysis

As we can see from the simplified LOT matrix shown in Table 1, Dan first puts the word *prerequisites* into the public classroom domain during a lecture on course descriptions on 1/26/04. This learning object is first recycled as a vocabulary problem during the course of whole class talk involving another student, He Hua, on 1/28/04 (see Markee, 2008, for a detailed analysis of this talk). On 1/30/04, this word appears in written form in the mock-up of a Power Point presentation that was prepared during some in-class, small group work involving Huang Ling and other students, but the word itself is never actually spoken by any of the participants. On 2/2/04, which constitutes SE1 in these data, Huang Ling does an individual Power Point presentation in class, during which she talks through a course description for a course on Visual Basic programming that she teaches in China. An extract from this talk on 2/2/04 is shown in Fragment 1:

Fragment 1: Power Point Presentation, 2/2/04

```

1 HL:      last uh:: at the end of the::
2          semester we will introduce some
3          principle of the: (h)u-
4  ?:      ((sneeze))
5 HL:      user
6  ?:      ((sneeze))
7 HL:      (interfacity) design (.) this uh-
8          [(0.6)

```

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to anonymous reviewer #1 for suggesting this topic as an interesting issue to discuss in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Both names are pseudonyms.

**Other Information**

- **Prerequisites**
  - A background of Windows User Interface
  - A basic knowledge of calculus and algebra
- **Textbooks**
  - Visual Basic Programming (required)
    - By Huang Runfa, Qiang Shasha
    - China Textile University Press
  - Visual Basic Programming 5.0 (recommended)
    - By Song Peizeng, Lu Weimin
    - High Education Press
- **Grading**
  - Grades will be determined on the basis of homework (10%), lab activities (20%), a midterm (30%) and a final (40%).

9  
 10 a::ll information about the  
 11 courses uh (1.0) and uh::: (. )  
 12 the restuh is uh::: (. )some  
 13 knowledge uh you've (. ) you'll  
 14 will (. ) (prepare) attention to:  
 15 (. ) about uh: (. ) before this  
 16 class/e/ you you'll have some uhm  
 17 (. ) background/e:/and uh::  
 18 textbooks and uh grading and- (. )  
 19 ? : that's a:ll. (0.3) thank you.  
 20 huh huh  
 ((Clapping from the audience.))

As shown in Fragment 1, the word *prerequisites* again appears in written form on one of the Power Point slides in Huang Ling's presentation, but she does not produce this word orally. More specifically, during the (0.6) second pause in line 8, Huang Ling brings up the Power Point slide entitled Other Information onto the projected screen of the class computer. Although she demonstrably knows what *prerequisites* means (see the two categories of prerequisites that she has included on the Power Point slide), it is noticeable that she does *not* orally produce this word.

This is an example of what Maynard (2003) calls a "curious" sequential pattern. That is, as Huang Ling goes through the list of three bullets on the slide, she first formulates in lines 7–16 a matter that could be referred to as "prerequisites" as the following extensive description<sup>9</sup>: "this uh- (0.6) the restuh is uh::: (. ) some knowledge uh you've (. ) you'll will (. ) (prepare) attention to: (. ) about uh: (. ) before this class/e/you you'll have some uhm (. ) background/e:/' '. In contrast, note that, in line 17 of Fragment 1, Huang Ling *does* orally mention the sub-titles Textbooks and Grading that appear as the second and third bullets on this slide, respectively, and, furthermore, does so in a relatively straightforward, trouble-free manner.

Although there are perturbations (pauses, cut offs, sound stretches and vocalizations such as "uh' ' and "uhm' ' ) throughout Fragment 1, Huang Ling's talk in lines 7–16 is marked by a massive number of these perturbations. While we have to be careful how we analyze such behavior,<sup>10</sup> these first turn repairs may project that Huang Ling is orienting to some kind of unfolding conversational trouble. More specifically, I argue here that these perturbations are consistent with Huang Ling doing oral avoidance<sup>11</sup> of the word *prerequisites* and simultaneously initiating a word search<sup>12</sup> to compensate for the locally contingent oral unavailability of this word.<sup>13</sup> Note further that the word that Huang Ling eventually settles on in line 16 as the solution to her word search is "background/e:/' ', and that the observable source of this (quasi) synonym is the Power Point slide, which specifies that a "background of Windows User Interface" (emphasis added) is a prerequisite for this course. This last observation illustrates how CA-for-SLA researchers may, within strictly specified methodological constraints, justifiably use exogenous documents such as Huang Ling's Power Point slide as a resource for analyzing language learning behavior.

Let us now move on to SE2, which consists of subsequent office hour talk between Huang Ling and Dan on 2/13/04. During this speech event, Huang Ling and Dan produce Fragment 2 (which, for analytic convenience, I have sub-divided into Fragments 2a–2d). As they produce the talk in these fragments, Huang Ling and Dan orient to another exogenous cultural artifact, the self-evaluation form reproduced as Handout 1 below. This form is a document

<sup>9</sup> I thank anonymous reviewer #1 for suggesting this wording to me.

<sup>10</sup> For example, it may be that these perturbations are simply a manifestation of Huang Ling's general lack of fluency in English.

<sup>11</sup> As anonymous reviewer #2 suggests, "A different reading, however, is possible, according to which the student uses the less technical term 'background' instead of 'prerequisites'. This alternative reading is corroborated by the fact that the student produces a three-item list (background, textbooks and grading) and that she later declares to have replaced "prerequisites" by 'background' (see excerpt 2d l. 44). While this is indeed a possible interpretation, this idea would have to be supported by the same kind of detailed empirical analysis that I offer in support of my position.

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to Andrea Golato for suggesting this line of analysis to me.

<sup>13</sup> Note that perturbations of this kind are one of a number of oral and embodied behaviors that typically accompany word searches (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1986).

Table(s)  
 and the third objective is ~~to~~ problem solving and programming techniques because we learn this programming language, we will apply it in the real life. We should use this programming language to solve some problems.

### Presentation 1 – Introducing a Course/Explaining the Rationale Self-evaluation Form

#### Part 1 – Content and Rationale

Directions: Watch the video of your presentation; then answer the following questions based on what you saw in the video.

1. Was the course content effectively communicated? What did you do/say to make it clear?

Yes. But too much info.

the first week  
 the following weeks

at the end of this semester

2. Was the rationale clearly stated? Write down one sentence that you said to explain your rationale. (Write down your exact spoken words, not what you wrote on your PowerPoint slide.)

More or less. At first, you can learn from me the major principles, features and design concepts in programming language because this class focuses on the Visual Basic Programming.

3. How did you answer the question, "Why is learning the material covered in this course important?"

4. How do you know the students understood your main points?

I should interact with them. observe their face expression, ask question, sometimes pause, waiting for response but did not.

#### Part 2 – General Presentation Skills

Directions: Comment on your presentation skills. State specifically what you did well and what you need to improve, based on what you saw in the video.

1. Nonverbal communication (good eye-contact, used gestures well, didn't move too much)

① Eyes fixed on the screen for too long time. ② Shake the body frequently

③ Gestures are okay. But I think I should point out the important course info & objectives by gesture

2. Responsiveness (checked for comprehension, listened to and answered any questions well)  
 no responsiveness.

3. Clarity (good pronunciation, appropriate volume and speed, easy to understand)

Always put stress on the last letter of one sentence. Maybe speed was too fast.

The listener cannot grasp the important points. All words slide away from mind.

4. Organization of material (well organized, used time well, easy to follow)

maybe information should be more brief

5. Confidence (was not nervous, spoke fluently, looked relaxed and natural)

nervous, so speak faster than my normal speed

6. Find three vocabulary or pronunciation items from your lesson that you are not sure about.

List them.

A. algorithms

B. semantics

C. prerequisite

skip it when speak

when speaking, always ignore tense, plural number, ing/ed etc

Handout 1. Self-evaluation form.

that Dan distributed to all students after they had given their in-class presentations, and which they used in their own time outside class to evaluate their own performances as they watched streaming video recordings of their presentations.

What is the epistemological status of Huang Ling's answers to the questions in this questionnaire? From the realist perspective that is so common in current SLS work, the temptation to use Huang Ling's response to Question 6 (in which she

identified the word *prerequisites* as a difficult vocabulary item, and wrote the evaluative note “skip it when speak” in the margin) as conclusive ethnographic evidence that confirms the interactional analysis of Fragment 1 is perhaps overwhelming. However, as I have already argued, from the relativist perspective adopted in this paper, it is best to maintain an agnostic stance on the truth value of this information (not least because, as we will see shortly, Huang Ling’s accounts in Fragments 2a–2d of what she did in Fragment 1 change over time). So, as I did with Huang Ling’s Power Point slide, I will instead again concentrate on showing how the participants talk *Handout 1* into *relevance* and what the *procedural consequences* of this course of action are in terms of the on-going organization of the participants’ talk. Let us now see how these issues actually play out in Fragments 2a–2d.

Fragment 2a: Office hour, 2/13/04, lines 1–6

1 HL: and  
 2 [thi- this word uh-  
 [   
 [   
 [   
 [   
 [   
 [   
 [   
 3 I 'hh couldn't (0.3) I can't uh  
 4 speak it u::h pronounce it uh  
 5 correctly so I skippeduh this  
 6 word [ahhah]

First, note that Huang Ling uses eye gaze and pointing gestures in lines 1–6 of Fragment 2a to talk the self-evaluation form into relevance at this particular moment, in this particular office hour conversation. At the same time, Dan also gazes intently at this form as she points at the word *prerequisites*.<sup>14</sup> From an LBT perspective, these *embodied* behaviors show in a preliminary fashion how Huang Ling and Dan use the self-evaluation form as an *embedded* cognitive resource that demonstrably links talk that occurs in SE2 to talk that first occurs in SE1. Second, in another example of a “curious” sequential pattern, we can see that Huang Ling is not just talking *about* why she avoided the word *prerequisites* on 2/2/04, she is simultaneously *doing* avoidance (i.e., she says “this word” instead of “prerequisites”). Indeed, as we will soon see, Huang Ling never orally produces the word *prerequisites* in any of these fragments. This is no accident. Just as the initial lack of oral production of this word was constructed as an accountably absent artifact from Huang Ling’s talk on 2/2/04, so is the lack of oral production of this word in the office hour talk on 2/13/04.

Moving on now to the *procedural consequences* of Huang Ling and Dan orienting to *Handout 1* in SE2, we can see that the way in which these participants orient to this interview form in SE2 is rather different from the way in which Huang Ling orients to her Power Point slides in SE1. In SE1, Huang Ling uses her slides as an on-line aide memoire and as a resource for finding a real time solution to the problem of how to replace the word *prerequisites* with the word *background*. But in SE2, *Handout 1* provides for the *extended* enactment *in* and *through* the participants’ talk of different institutionally relevant roles, responsibilities, and agendas. As a student, Huang Ling has the duty and obligation to use this form to provide an account to her instructor of what went well and what went badly in her presentation. But as a teacher, Dan is responsible for providing Huang Ling with pedagogical feedback on her work. As we will now see, these different roles and responsibilities give rise to different, and highly delicate, agendas. Furthermore, these agendas are in competition with each other.

Huang Ling provides two accounts of her behavior on 2/2/04 that are physically separated from each other by some evaluative pedagogical talk by Dan. We have already seen how Huang Ling produces a first account in Fragment 2a, in which she explains that she skipped the word *prerequisites* because she could not pronounce this word. Let us now see how this talk subsequently runs off in the other fragments.

In line 6 of Fragment 2b below, Huang Ling ends her first account with the laughter token “ahhah”, which provides us with a preliminary indication that she is already orienting to the topic of avoidance as a delicate matter. After all, by admitting to having avoided using the word *prerequisites* in SE1, Huang Ling is potentially laying herself open to the charge of being a bad student. Note also that her laughter token in line 6 also serves to make a sympathetic assessment of Huang Ling’s first account by Dan a relevant next action, which Dan duly produces in lines 7–14 of Fragment 2b:

<sup>14</sup> Although we cannot read the word that Huang Ling is pointing to, the position of what she is pointing at exactly matches the position of the word *prerequisites* on the self-evaluation form (see *Handout 1*).

Fragment 2b: lines 5–14

5 HL: ... so I skippeduh this word  
 6 [ahhah]  
 7 Dan: [yeah ] right well that's  
 8 probably strategic  
 9 HL: u[hu:h, ]  
 10 Dan: [I think] almost everybody  
 11 who [used ] that word  
 12 HL: [°uhuh°]  
 13 Dan: had [a hard] t(h)i(h)i:me  
 14 HL: [°uh° ]

In line 7, Dan overlaps Huang Ling's laughter token with the word “yeah” and makes an approving assessment that is distributed over lines 7–8, 10–11, and 13. This assessment is done in two phases. In phase 1, Dan lauds Huang Ling's “strategic” solution to the problem (see line 8); and in phase 2, he downgrades the potential seriousness of Huang Ling's avoidance of the word *prerequisites* by saying “I think almost everybody who used that word had a hard t(h)i(h)i:me”. While the laughter tokens and concurrent lengthening of the vowel in the word “t(h)i(h)i:me” in line 13 show that Dan is also orienting to the delicate nature of the current talk, it is noticeable that neither assessment is particularly strong. For example, the word “well” in line 7 is often a marker of incipient repair, and the adverb “probably” in line 8 and the verb “I think” in line 10 all serve to mitigate the strength of these assessments. Furthermore, notice that the second assessment hardly constitutes an upgrade on the first.

Huang Ling's overlapping vocalizations in lines 9 and 12 minimally show that she is paying close attention to Dan's unfolding evaluation of her avoidance “strategy,” while the “°uh°” token in line 14 (also in overlap) suggests that Huang Ling has picked up on the tentative nature of Dan's assessment and may already be projecting when Dan's turn is coming to a close, and thus when to make a preliminary bid for next turn (see Sacks et al., 1974). In other words, it is at about this point in the unfolding talk that we can locate the deployment of competitive agendas by Huang Ling and Dan.

More specifically, note that, in lines 15–30 of Fragment 2c, Dan pre-empts this potential bid for the floor by Huang Ling with a competing agenda item of his own (teaching pronunciation). This agenda is consistent with his institutional role and obligations as a teacher. I will unpack the organization of this teaching agenda shortly. For now, however, notice that, as Dan talks, Huang Ling produces the vocalization “°uh°” or “°uhm°” in lines 18, 24, and 27, and the word “°yeh:h°” in lines 22 and 29, all in competitive overlap. These utterances again suggest that Huang Ling is not only attending to Dan's explanation but, certainly by line 29 (if not earlier), is also projecting when Dan's pedagogical work will draw to a close so that she can continue with her own contingently incomplete agenda of justifying her avoidance of the word *prerequisites*.

Fragment 2c: lines 15–30

15 Dan: 'hhh I think the easiest thing  
 16 to do is  
 17 [[break] it apart  
 18 HL: [°uh° ]  
 [  ]  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 19 Dan: in fact in our pronunciation, we  
 20 break it apart. 'hh  
 21 [h be]cause uh-  
 22 HL: [°yeh:h° ]  
 23 Dan: we figure-  
 24 HL: °uhm°  
 25 Dan: it's like pre::: is one wo:rd  
 26 [and]  
 27 HL: [°uh°]  
 28 Dan: then re[qui ]site  
 29 HL: [yeh:h.]  
 30 Dan: is the next.

Focusing now on the organization of this pronunciation work (see lines 17–30), we can see from the frame grab that both Dan and Huang Ling are looking intently at the self-evaluation form. As they do so, Dan verbally and visually breaks the word *prerequisite* down into its constituent parts. More specifically, as Dan says “break it apart” in line 17, we can see from the video that he “inscribes” the word *prerequisites* in this document with a forward slash, as follows: pre/requisite (see also Handout 1). This action – which is similar to the way in which an experienced archeologist marks off archeological evidence with a trowel to teach a graduate student to “see” (in a professional sense) traces of an artifact in the soil that she is excavating (see Goodwin, 2003a,b) – graphically divides the word *prerequisites* into its two constituent lexical parts. Thus, as I have already suggested, this visual course of action, which is complemented by further verbal information about how this word is stressed (see how Dan emphasizes the first syllable of “requisite” in line 28) not only shows how Handout 1 affects the unfolding interactional organization of Dan’s explanation of how to pronounce the word *prerequisites*. It also demonstrates how participants may temporarily appropriate and alter such artifacts more or less extensively in the service of enacting institutional agendas, in this case, doing pronunciation teaching.

In line 31 of Fragment 2d, we can see how Huang Ling overlaps the last three words of Dan’s turn in line 30 and successfully gets next turn by starting a second, more elaborated version of her first account, thus supplanting Dan’s pedagogical talk.

Fragment 2d: lines 28–45

28 Dan: then re[qui ]site  
 29 HL: [yea:h.]  
 30 Dan: [is the next.]  
 31 HL: [I pra/x/c ]liced pra/x/ci-  
 32 [it ]  
 33 Dan: [si-]  
 34 HL: in my do:rm ‘hh fo:r (.) several  
 35 times the butuh when I stand  
 36 i:n the:: ‘hh bui- in  
 37 front of the power point I forgot  
 38 it [hhh ]  
 39 Dan: [huhh]  
 40 HL: [so I skipuh this word huh ]  
 41 Dan: [↑heh ↑huh ↓hah ↓huh huh huh]  
 42 huh huh  
 43 HL: I just- I justuh use another  
 44 worduh backgroundu:h hhh [huh]  
 45 Dan: [huh]  
 46 huh °ih° that makes that works?  
 47 that works? that’s a  
 48 perfect>ly:::< (.) goo:d  
 49 stra:tegy.

In this second spate of accounting talk, which lasts from lines 31–44, Huang Ling artfully constructs the competing, and highly delicate, face-saving agenda of presenting herself to her instructor as a conscientious, indeed resourceful, student, who is able to justify her previous avoidance of the word *prerequisites*. She achieves this course of action by revising and adding new temporal and substantive information about what she did in Fragment 1. First, she tells Dan that she *practiced* pronouncing this word several times in her dorm, thus establishing herself as a conscientious student (see lines 31–35). Second, in lines 35–38, she says that when the moment came to do her presentation in class, she momentarily *forgot* how to pronounce this word (note that, following Lynch and Bogen, 2005, Huang Ling’s use of the verb “forget” here is not an instance of mental activity, it is a course of action that serves to exculpate herself vis-à-vis Dan). Finally, and as a consequence of this brief “lapse of memory,” she says that she *skipped* this word (see line 40), and asserts that she *just used* another word (see line 43). Whatever the truth value of these assertions, the way Huang Ling skillfully downplays her previous avoidance behavior as an essentially temporary and unimportant glitch in her presentation further serves to present herself as a resourceful student who is able to talk herself out of the tight spot she found herself in on 2/2/04 in real time.

Finally, note the evidence Fragment 2d which shows how Dan participates much more readily this time in validating Huang Ling’s account as it unfolds turn by turn. For example, Huang Ling’s laughter tokens (lines 38, 40, and 44) invite Dan to laugh too and to deliver an unambiguously favorable assessment of Huang Ling’s performance. In lines 39, 41–42, 45 and 46, Dan duly produces a series of affiliative (and, therefore, preferred) laughter tokens that are done in chorus with Huang Ling. Finally, in lines 46–49, Dan provides the much more favorable verbal assessment “that works?” twice (see lines 46–47), and again praises Huang Ling for using a “perfect>ly:::< (.) goo:d stra:tegy.” in lines 48–49. In the talk that follows, the participants then move on to address another topic, and the word *prerequisites* is not taken up again in the conversation.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have attempted to engage with a number of important theoretical and methodological issues in SLS that are simultaneously long standing and highly current. At the simplest level of analysis, I have shown how, contrary to early assumptions that we have to use an ethnographic retrospective recall methodology to carry out interactional research on avoidance, we can in fact use an exclusively observational, micro-analytic methodology to do such research, and furthermore, obtain interesting results.

More ambitiously – and certainly more controversially – I have tried to reframe cognitive discussions of avoidance within a post-cognitive respecification of SLA studies. This respecification treats avoidance as a locally contingent practice that is collaboratively co-constructed by participants in real time as a topic of interaction during the course of naturally occurring institutional talk. This post-cognitive analysis, which provides a detailed, empirical exemplification of the specific ways in which we may justifiably formulate cognition as a socially situated activity, has shown that Huang Ling has achieved different levels of interactional competence in written and spoken English (a finding which is not, in and of itself, particularly novel). Much more importantly, however, it has also shown *when* and *how* Huang Ling does avoidance in strictly behavioral terms.

First, by using a LOT methodology within the macro-longitudinal framework of LBT, we can pinpoint *when* Huang Ling publicly avoids using this word (most importantly, on 2/2/04, and 2/13/04). Second, by using CA and DP during the LPT phase of the analysis, we can show *how* Huang Ling's formulation of her talk in Fragments 2a–2d as accounts reveals a behavioral orientation to the delicate nature of this talk. This collaboratively achieved orientation not only shapes the recipient design of Huang Ling's talk but also has the observable consequence that her multiple attempts to get favorable assessments from Dan puts him in the sequential position of providing such assessments as preferred actions in next turn. To the extent that Dan actively collaborates with Huang Ling on achieving this course of action, any opportunity that he might have to ask her to say the word *prerequisites* is contingently delayed turn by turn, until it finally slips away altogether. Finally, I have attempted to show in this paper how talk and text index each other in the institutional context of classroom/office hour talk. More specifically, I have tried to develop an empirically based analysis of how Huang Ling and Dan orient in different ways to two exogenous cultural artifacts (the Power Point slides Huang Ling uses on 2/2/04, and the self-evaluation form both participants use on 2/13/04). In this analysis, I have tried to go beyond the typically uncritical acceptance of the truth value of information gathered from interview instruments that still typifies most SLS work. Instead, I have focused on showing how participants talk such documents into relevance, and how these documents become procedurally relevant to participants' on-line co-construction of specific institutional agendas in talk-in-interaction. To summarize, I therefore claim that we now have a considerable amount of empirical evidence to support the claim that the systematic, social organization of language learning behavior is observably independent of individuals' personalities and, indeed, of a priori psycholinguistic accounts of cognition as an underlying source for the surface organization of talk-in-interaction.

Finally, in terms of what discussion and further research this paper might open up, I would like to point out that, first, while I have framed my own arguments within a post-cognitive perspective on talk-in-interaction, the idea that mind can be understood as a form of *embodied*, *embedded*, and *extended* activity is *not* (pace Long and Doughty's [2003] limited, not to say outdated, conception of the bounds of cognitive science) in and of itself inconsistent with current developments in cognitive science (see Robbins and Aydede, 2009). Potentially, therefore, there is plenty of room for a productive theoretical dialog between CA-for-SLA and cognitive SLA. Second, I believe that we need much more empirical work in general on how cognition works as socially situated activity. And third, in the specific context of institutional language learning behavior, we also need to explore how participants orient to, and use, a whole range of exogenous pedagogical materials, not just the two kinds analyzed here.

## Appendix A. Transcription conventions

CA transcription conventions (based on Jefferson's conventions in Drew and Heritage, 1992).

### IDENTITY OF SPEAKERS

Dan: an identified participant  
?: unidentified participant  
Dan?: probably Dan

### SIMULTANEOUS UTTERANCES

Dan: [yes  
Stan: [yeh simultaneous, overlapping talk by two speakers  
Dan: [huh? [oh ] I see]

Stan: [what]  
 Ann: [I dont get it ] simultaneous, overlapping talk by three (or more) speakers

#### CONTIGUOUS UTTERANCES

= indicates that there is no gap at all between the two turns

#### INTERVALS WITHIN AND BETWEEN UTTERANCES

(0.3) a pause of 0.3 s

(1.0) a pause of 1 s

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF SPEECH DELIVERY

? rising intonation, not necessarily a question  
 ! strong emphasis, with falling intonation  
 yes. a period indicates falling (final) intonation  
 so, a comma indicates low-rising intonation suggesting continuation  
 descr|ption↓ an upward arrow denotes marked rising shift in intonation, while a downward arrow denotes a marked falling shift in intonation  
 go:::d one or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound; each additional colon represents a lengthening of one beat  
 no- a hyphen indicates an abrupt cut-off, with level pitch  
because underlined letters indicates marked stress  
 SYLVIA large capitals indicate loud volume  
 SYLVIA small capitals indicate intermediate volume  
 sylvia lower case indicates normal conversational volume  
 °sylvia° degree sign indicates decreased volume, often a whisper  
 ·hhh in-drawn breaths  
 hhh laughter tokens  
 >the next thing< >...< indicates speeded up delivery relative to the surrounding talk  
 <the next thing> <...> indicates slowed down delivery relative to the surrounding talk

#### COMMENTARY IN THE TRANSCRIPT

((coughs)) verbal description of actions noted in the transcript, including non-verbal actions  
 ((unintelligible)) indicates a stretch of talk that is unintelligible to the analyst  
 ... (radio) single parentheses indicate unclear or probable item

#### OTHER TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

Co/l/al slashes indicate phonetic transcription  
 → an arrow in transcript draws attention to a particular phenomenon the analyst wishes to discuss

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