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Reformulation and Co-completion: L1 responses to L2 assessment accounts

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Abstract

Using conversation analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework, this study examines how Japanese learners of English and their interlocutors, who are speakers of English as a first language, co-construct assessment activities, in the context of a student exchange in the U.S. Special attention is paid to the L1 speakers' reformulation and co-completion in response to the L2 speakers' accounts, to justify their assessments. The moment-by-moment analysis of the conversations between L1 and L2 speakers reveals that the identities of the L1 speakers as "language experts" and the L2 speakers as "non-experts" are occasionally salient, as the L1 speakers orient to the L2 speakers' minimal accounts or indications of difficulty by reformulating and co-completing the L2 speakers' utterances. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that the L1 speakers commonly orient to understanding rather than non-understanding of the L2 speakers' accounts. Consequently, asymmetric contributions by the L2 and L1 speakers function as a resource for successful communication, leading them to achieve intersubjectivity. Finally, drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the paper discusses how such assistance by the L1 speakers, as needed by the L2 speakers, could lead to the independent functioning of the L2 speakers in assessment activities in the future, and to the further development of their interactional competence.

1. Introduction

After second language acquisition (SLA) was reconceptualized to focus on social and contextual dimensions (Firth and Wagner, 1997), conversation analysis (henceforth CA) has increasingly contributed to enriching the database (Eskildsen & Majlesi, 2018; Firth & Wagner, 2007; Kasper & Wagner, 2011, 2014; Mori, 2007; Pollotti & Wagner, 2011). The findings from CA data of L2 speakers suggest that although L2 speakers may not be highly proficient, they are able to engage in social activities using a variety of interactional resources even from the beginning of their language careers (Wagner & Gardner, 2004). One of the merits of using CA as a methodological and theoretical framework is that it enables us to observe how the participants in conversations employ

the *methods* and *procedures* that ordinary speakers use to achieve intersubjectivity—locally and interactionally—by closely attending to what each participant displays to each other in an interaction (Dings, 2014; Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 1991). Specifically, they achieve mutual understanding through their choices of recurrent, orderly structures such as turn-taking, repair, and preference organizations (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 2002).

Although much attention in the SLA field has been paid to how L2 speakers employ such orderly structures in conversation, studies that focus on how L2 speakers' interlocutors—such as L1 speakers and advanced peers in a particular language—respond to L2 speakers in co-accomplishing social actions are still rarely found. The present study fills this gap by focusing on how L1 speakers orient themselves to L2 speakers' speech in one ubiquitous social action, namely assessment. It explores how accounts and explanations in assessment activities are jointly accomplished (Antaki, 2004) by closely observing L1 speakers' moment-to-moment display of their understanding of L2 speaker's actions in conversations.

2. Background

2.1 Assessment

Ordinary talk is full of assessments and judgments (Pomerantz, 1984). Assessments are social actions in the sense that people display their evaluation of the topic, make judgments about, and agree or disagree with one another's evaluations (Pomerantz, 1978, 1984). Pomerantz (1984) defines that "assessments are produced as products of participation: with an assessment, a speaker claims knowledge of that which he or she is assessing" (p. 57), which reflects the social nature of assessments as people routinely evaluate social activities that they participate in.

The most general definition of assessment is provided by Goodwin & Goodwin (1992) as "evaluating in some fashion persons and events being described within their talk" (p. 154). More specifically, Antaki's proposal for four subsections under the general heading "assessments" enables us to classify utterances as assessments: *evaluations*, *factual claims*, *choices*, and *formulations* (1994). These are defined as things that require accounts when a disagreement occurs.

Although assessment is a widely studied social action in CA, both in mundane talk (Antaki, 1994; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992; Goodwin, 1984, 1986; Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Jefferson, 1978; Liddicoat, 2007; Pomerantz, 1978, 1984; Sacks, 1992) and institutional talk (Antaki et al., 2000; Fasulo & Monzoni, 2009;

Lindström & Heinemann, 2009; Mondada, 2009), research on how L2 speakers become involved in assessment activities is still limited. One exception is the studies by Ishida (2006, 2011) and Ohta (2001), both of which investigate assessments by L2 speakers of Japanese.

2.2 Accounts in Assessment Activities

Accounts have traditionally been understood as explanations designed to exonerate the speaker from an untoward act (Antaki, 1988; Heritage, 1988; Waring, 2007), and such accounts involve justifications and excuses (Cody & McLaughlin, 1990; Scott & Lyman, 1968). However, in daily interactions, we encounter accounts that do not necessarily involve troubles (Buttny & Morris, 2001; Buttny, 1993). In his explanations of various meanings of accounts, Buttny (1993) presents ethnomethodological and CA meanings of accounts that go beyond problem-solving interactions. Specifically, accounts can be understood as "sense-making work through which participants engage in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about" (Baker, 2001: 781).

When people make assessments, they generally support their evaluations by providing accounts, because assessment or subjective evaluation of any type requires a reason for judgment. By providing accounts, speakers display how legitimate their claims are to other participants (Antaki, 1994; Waring, 2007) so that other participants can agree or disagree with the assessments made by the speakers.

2.3 Reformulation and co-completion

This study investigates how the L1 speakers display their orientation to fuller accounts by speaking for the L2 speakers when the L2 speakers display difficulties in continuing their accounts or when their accounts are minimal. Two types of discursive devices are observed: reformulation (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and co-completion of a suspended unit (Lerner, 2004).

The term *reformulation* (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) is also called *formulation* by some CA researchers (Drew, 2003; Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970; Heritage & Watson, 1979). Drew (2003) explains that "formulations are a means through which participants may make explicit their sense of "what we are talking about" or "what has just been said". They are "a means for constructing an explicit sense of the gist of the talk thus far" (p. 296). In the present study, *reformulation* is specifically defined as a formulation in which

"a speaker offers his or her interpretation of what the other meant" (Drew, 2003: 296). This type of formulation generally takes the form of "(So) what you mean/are saying is …" or implicitly conveys something similar.

Co-completion, another phenomenon that I will discuss in this paper, is an affiliative utterance that is built to be adjacent to the preliminary component of the TCU[1]-in-progress (Lerner, 2004). It is the production of a candidate word or phrase, anticipating and providing "what the other was going to say" pre-emptively.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data

The data for the present study, taken from a larger dissertation project[2], are recordings of conversations between L2 speakers in a "study abroad" context and their L1 interlocutors. The L2 participants are six Japanese high school students who lived in a homestay in the U.S. for 11 months from the beginning of August 2001 to the beginning of July 2002, and attended local high schools, as part of the study abroad program arranged by the American Field Service (AFS)[3]. They were asked to choose English-speaking interlocutors and audiotape conversations during their stay in the U.S. The recordings for the present study were made approximately three months after they arrived in the U.S.

Table 1. Timeframes of the Recordings

L2 speakers	**Ayu**	**Saki**	**Kazu**	**Hide**	**Fumi**	**Eri**
Minutes	46	30	36	96	30	112

Table 2. Participants in the recordings

L2 speakers	**L1 Participants**
Ayu	John (host father), Olivia (host mother)
Saki	Ann (host mother)
Kazu	Linda (host mother)
Hide	Sarah (AFS liaison)[4]
Fumi	Kelly (host mother)
Eri	Laura (friend)

Each participant took the ACTFL-SST (Standard Speaking Test) both before their departure to the U.S. (either June 23 or 24, 2001) and after their return from the U.S. (either August 3 or 4, 2002). The ACTFL-SST is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability (oral proficiency) at the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines levels of Novice

through Intermediate High.[5] The results of the pre- and post-ACTFL-SST for each participant are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants' Levels in the ACTFL-SST

	Ayu	Saki	Kazu	Hide	Fumi	Eri
Jun. 2001	3	4	4	4	4	5
Aug. 2002	6	6	6	6	7	7

3.2 Method of Analysis

I have transcribed all the recordings of conversations using a modified version of the system devised by Jefferson (2004); the conventions are provided in the Appendix A. I identified and collected the assessments in my data and analyzed what action each assessment is achieving and the sequential position in which it occurs. A turn-by-turn analysis was conducted on sequences of assessment activity by following the general analytic strategies proposed by ten Have: *turn-taking organization, sequence organization, repair organization, and the organization of turn-design* (2007). The research question for this study is, "How do L1 speakers reformulate and co-complete L2 speakers' accounts in assessments?"

4. Analysis

4.1 Reformulation in response to the L2 speakers' display of epistemic uncertainty

Let us examine some examples of how L1 speakers speak for an L2 speaker by reformulating the L2 speaker's accounts for assessments. The examples in this section show how L1 speakers orient themselves to the accounts of L2 speakers, who use the *negative verb construction*[6] "I don't know" (henceforth IDK) in their explanations.

In the following excerpt, the L1 speakers, Olivia and John, and the L2 speaker, Ayu, were discussing rules about clothing in American schools. Olivia asked Ayu why she thought that American students were upset, although they could wear whatever clothes they chose. In discussing the issue that some students were upset because the school prohibited them from wearing low-rise pants, Olivia reformulated what Ayu was trying to explain:

Excerpt 1. [Ayu: Low Rise Pants]

```
Olivia:   why did you think it is like this
          you said um in American school,
          (1)
John:     ((clears his throat))
Olivia:   kids can do (.) kids can wear
          (0.5) whatever clothes and then
          they get upset, (0.8)
          why is that.
          (2)
Ayu:      umm (1.3) because uhh (1)
          >I don't know< wh:y (1) uhh (.)
          the kids cannot (.) put down
          their pa:nts, (.)because (1)
          they can dye their hair:,=
Olivia:   =°ah:°=
Ayu:      =and the:y can (.)
          put the jewelry:,
Olivia:   yeah.
Ayu:      and (.) they can wear whatever
          just (.)and ca- they cannot
          wear the camiso:le, but (1)
          I- (1) £because£ $hh if hhh $
          (1.5) >I dunno< what-
          what is problem [(th-)]
Olivia: → [if] you're
        → going to have ru:les
        → then you have ru:les and
        → if they're no'gonna have ru:les
        → then they have no ru:les.
John:     so you think that the kids
          should be able to pull down
          their pants in school?=
Olivia:   =yeah. that's what she thinks.
John:     is it really? you think
          it's okay to pull your pants
          down in school?=
Ayu:      =↑yeah:, because they-=
John:     = WOULD YOU PULL your PANTS DOWN
          in SCHOOL?((in a challenging tone))
Ayu:      hh. (1.8) becuz $ they just
          show (0.5) their (.)underwear
          $ ehhhh and-$
John:     OH: ↓°yeah.°
Ayu:      a:nd,
          (1.5)
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46      John:      it's the style.
47      Olivia:  → what she's saying is that
48               → if they can dye their hair::
49               → and if they can wear their
50               → jewe:lry:, and they can wear
51               → their other (0.8) when there
52               → are no rules,       then why should
53               → there be rules (.)about pa:nts.
54               → (1.5) they're not ↑nak↓ed,
55      Ayu:       uh huh,
56                 (0.5)
57      Olivia:    they're [ju-   ]
58      John:              [they're] showing underwear.
59      Olivia:    it's just showing underwear,
```

In the excerpt above, in response to Olivia's question about why she thinks American kids get upset although they can wear any clothes to school (1–2, 5–8), after some signals of trouble such as a 2-second pause, perturbation, and a 1.3-second pause, Ayu begins her answer with an account marker "because" (10). It is followed by IDK, claiming not to know why the kids cannot put down their pants (11). Further, she lists what the kids in school can and cannot do. The expression of IDK here is uttered in response to Olivia's question but does not stand alone and leads to subsequent explanation. It functions as a prefatory move to a display of epistemic uncertainty (Lindström, Maschler & Pekarek Doehler, 2016), downgrading the content of the subsequent contribution. Ayu concludes her account with the expression IDK (23), claiming again that she does not know why the kids in school are upset (23–24). This is an indication of her puzzled stance on the issue and her uncertainty about her own account. Olivia orients her response to the accounts that lack clarity and reformulates them in a summative way, with a clear logical connection, using two conditional sentences (25–29). What Olivia says is that if students have rules, they should have rules about clothing, but if they have no rules, there should not be any rule at all. What Olivia is doing is revoicing and reformulating Ayu's accounts in lines 10–14, 16–17, and 19–24, clarifying "the sense of the gist of the talk" (Drew, 2003, p. 296). Olivia's reformulation helps to articulate more clearly what Ayu was not fluently able to do.

The second reformulation is from lines 47 to 54, which occurs after John repeatedly challenges Ayu about whether she really thinks it is acceptable to "pull down their pants" in school (30–32, 34–36, 38–39). He uses the exaggerated expression of "pulling down pants" instead of "wearing low-rise pants" in a challenging tone of voice. Ayu demonstrates her irritation by saying "yes" in an emphatic way, with high rising

intonation in line 37. She explicitly displays her positive assessment about wearing low-rise pants, the accounts of which are first abandoned after the account marker "because" (37). Her accounts are interrupted by John's third challenge in a stressed voice (38–39). Orienting herself to John's question, Ayu finally provides a short account, in an assertive tone, saying that "they just show their underwear" (40–41). John displays his understanding of it with a change of state marker, "oh" (43) (Heritage, 1984b)[7] and by providing an additional account, "it's the style" (46). Olivia orients to Ayu's accounts by speaking for Ayu in an elaborative way. In line 47, Olivia reformulates the gist of what Ayu was saying. First, Olivia explicitly states that she is speaking for Ayu by starting her reformulation with "what she is saying is," which is a typical initiation remark for reformulation (Drew, 2003). She uses a conditional sentence again, reformulating what Ayu said and her own former reformulation (25–29). This time, Olivia supports this conditional sentence with specific examples—that there are no rules about hair and jewelry—and claims, speaking for Ayu, that there should therefore be no rules for pants (52–53). Olivia adds, "they're not naked" (54), which is a reformulation of Ayu's additional account that "they just show their underwear" (40–41), produced in response to John's challenge.

The next excerpt shows another example of an L1 speaker's reformulation of an L2 speaker's talk in an assessment activity. In a similar pattern, the L2 speaker, Hide, displays epistemic uncertainty by using the negative mental verb construction IDK twice. Prior to the excerpt, Hide and Sarah were talking about a film, *Death Man*.

Excerpt 2. [Hide: Interesting Movie]

1	Hide:		>I don't know °why but°<
2			it not so (.) £ah::mhhh (.)
3			not fun? £ but a- hmmm,
4			(.) a- interesting to me,
5			°I don't know why b-°
6	Sarah:		[sometimes] but- you- I think =
7	Hide:		[( )]
8	Sarah:		=you'd really li:ke x-files.
9	Hide:		°ah.°
10	Sarah:	→	sometimes movies that are (.)
11		→	so:: (.) ah dee:p, [you know?]
12	Hide:		[uh-hu?]
13	Sarah:	→	[are (.)]
14	Hide:		[yeah.]
15	Sarah:	→	are not really FUN to wa:tch,

16 Hide: uh huh,
17 Sarah: → but they're so: interesting.
18 Hide: °yeah.°
19 Sarah: → >probably like the beach.<

Sarah's reformulation occurs from lines 10 to 19 after Hide makes the assessment that the movie *Death Man* is not "fun" but "interesting" (1–5). Hide orients himself to the necessity to account for his assessment, by repeating "I don't know why", at the beginning (1) and at the end of his assessment (5). This expression of epistemic uncertainty echoes Ayu's strategy in Excerpt 1. He also displays some difficulties in accounting for the assessment, with perturbations, first with a smiling voice in line 2 before providing the expression "fun" and second, in line 3, before providing the description "interesting." Sarah orients herself to Hide's explicit display of difficulties and reformulates his speech, by saying that sometimes movies that are "so deep" are not really "fun" to watch but they are "so" interesting (10–17). In this reformulation, she recycles two expressions that Hide used—"fun" and "interesting"—and characterizes the kind of movies that she is talking about as "deep" (11). She also strengthens her assessments with the intensifier—"so"—twice and adds *The Beach* as a specific example of such "deep movies" (19).

4.2 Provision of lexical assistance in reformulation

The next excerpt shows an example of the L1 speaker's reformulation of the L2 speaker's utterances in a simple, summative way using an alternative expression. The reformulation by the L1 speaker functions both as a display of understanding of the L2 speaker's utterances and as a linguistic support. Before the excerpt, Kelly explained that the AFS would soon send information about an orientation conference.

Excerpt 3. [Fumi: AFS Orientation]

1 Fumi: °o:key° but- I'm kind of afraid,
2 beca:use I might have
3 tournament [at that time]
4 Kelly: [oh for basketball.]
5 Fumi: yeah:.
6 Kelly: hu::m.
7 Fumi: so: but I ha:ve to be there,
8 because it's orientation.
9 Kelly: yeah.=
10 Fumi: =it's not like para:de.=

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11    Kelly:    =right. yeah. it's-
12           →  it's a required thing.
13              but sometimes, (.) they'll
14              let you: come later.
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In line 1, Fumi makes an assessment that she is "afraid" and initiates her accounts with an account marker "because" (2). She explains that she might have a basketball tournament at the same time as the orientation (2–3). She continues her explanation that she "has to" be there because it is an orientation (7–8). Then, she adds an example of "parade" as different from orientation (10). What she is doing here is categorizing "orientation" as something that she "has to" attend, whereas "parade" is not in such a category. Kelly acknowledges Fumi's accounts with "right" and reformulates Fumi's explanatory categorization with a new expression, "it's required". Kelly's reformulation displays her understanding of Fumi's explanation and at the same time presents a new expression "required"—with emphasis—to summarize Fumi's accounts. By stressing the expression "required," Kelly can be heard as doing being a language expert (Hosoda, 2006) although Fumi did not initiate a repair or word search.

The next excerpt is a more salient example of the L1 speaker providing an expression by functioning as a language expert for the L2 speaker in an assessment activity. Before the excerpt, Laura had asked Eri whether the attitudes of generations in Japan had changed with the introduction of foreign influence after World War II. Eri answered that some people had changed, and some had not, concluding that "it depends". To elicit more detailed accounts, Laura asked Eri for some examples. In response to this, Eri said that her grandparents had "adjusted" after WWII. Excerpt 4 followed that conversation:

Excerpt 4. [Eri: Attitude of Grandmother]

```
1     Eri:      hu but umm still uh ( my ) (1)
2               grandmother? is very good for like-
3               (.)introducing Japanese culture
4               to foreign people, (.) but still (.)
5               right now,(.) sh- she goes umm(.)
6               when I said I'm going to America,
7               she said like (.) don't make any
8               (.) black boyfriends,
9     Laura:    HUM.=
10    Eri:      =that's the yeah=
11    Laura:    =[yeah.]
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12     Eri:        [some ]thing like- like tha:t,
13                 and I was very surprised because (.)
14                 she's very interested in-
15                 in introducing culture,
16                 (.) so it means she (.)
17                 m:m (.)what was (that) word.
18     Laura:  →   open minded?
19     Eri:        yeah?
20     Laura:  →   yes. open minded,
21     Eri:        open minded,
22                 bu:t (.) still (that) she think that
23                 white is (.) better than bla:ck,
24     Laura:      yeah,=
25     Eri:        =like,(.) >you know,<
26     Laura:      [yeah.]
27     Eri:        [it's ] not right, but she think so,
```

In line 1, Eri provides a divergent view of her grandmother, initiating it with the contrasting marker "but". She explains that although her grandmother is good at introducing Japanese culture to foreigners, she showed racial prejudice (1–8). She supports this with the episode when her grandmother said: "don't make any black boyfriends" (7–8). Laura's "HUM" in a loud voice is a display of negative feelings about Eri's grandmother's utterance, to which Eri indicates agreement (10). Eri assesses this experience of her grandmother's attitude as something surprising (13) and tries to account for the assessment, starting with an account marker "because". When she tries to make a logical connection between her grandmother being interested in different cultures and her personality, she enters a word search (Brouwer, 2003; Eskildsen, 2018; Goodwin, M. H., 1983; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Koshik, 2002), which is projected in her utterance in line 17 "what was (that) word", which is an explicit word search marker. In line 18, Laura responds to Eri's self-repair initiation and offers a candidate expression "open-minded?" with a rising intonation. Eri adopts it by repeating the expression (21), after confirmation exchanges (18–20). After the insertion of the repair sequence of the co-constructed word search, Eri explains that although her grandmother is open-minded, she has some prejudice against black people (22–23), and Eri assesses that her grandmother's prejudice is not "right" but it is the way her grandmother thinks (27). With this statement of judgment, Eri is doing being "a conscientious, morally upright and socially aware person" (Couper-Huhlen, 2006: 84).

In this sequence of assessment activity, initiated by Laura's question, Eri demonstrates her competence to produce extensive accounts and to organize them with

a preface, "I was very surprised" (14), and a concluding assessment, "it's not right". At the same time, Eri displays difficulties when producing accounts. This is evident in her initiation of a word search for repair. Gardner and Wagner argue that such a repair sequence is used "as a resource for securing intersubjectivity" (2004:12). In a larger assessment sequence when a repair side sequence is completed and the problem is resolved, the speaker will return to the point before the repair sequence began (Brouwer, 2004; Gardner & Wagner, 2004). It seems that Eri, with the supportive orientations of her co-conversant, is able to continue. Laura supports Eri both linguistically, by providing a repair expression, and structurally, by asking Eri to provide examples. It can be said that in the excerpt we have just observed, local identities of the language expert and non-expert are particularly salient in their talk. This is especially true when they are involved in discussing difficult issues such as social changes.

4.3 Co-completion by the L1 speakers

In the following excerpt, the L1 speaker uses co-completion to reformulate the L2 speaker's accounts. Prior to the following excerpt, Linda asked Kazu why he chose the school he went to in Japan. Kazu answered that he chose it because of its interesting curriculum. Then, Kazu initiated further interaction, illustrating an example of an interesting class in the school from line 1.

Excerpt 5. [Kazu: School near Sea]

```
1       Kazu:     yeah like uh I- we could swi:m in sea? (.)
2                 we could swim sea?
3                 °in the sea? (.) in the sea?°
4       Linda:    you could swim, [yeah,]
5       Kazu:                     [yeah ]
6       Linda:    ok,
7       Kazu:     o:r we- (1) in winter there was,
8                 uhh there was running?
9       Linda:    uh huh,
10      Kazu:     but it was not on the road,
11                but umm on the beach?
12      Linda:    oh huhu,
13      Kazu:     so it is special? (1)
14                from other schools?
15      Linda:    the other schools didn't have
16                those physical active[ties?]
17      Kazu:                           [yeah]
18                I think it (1) yeah: (in) they past days
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19                 but I don't know.
20      Linda:     uh huh,
21      Kazu:      but my school was very special,
22                 I think so. (1)
23      Linda:  →  so you think your school is special
24              →  because of the- (.) uhh
25      Kazu:      they have sea,
26      Linda:  →  they have the ocean [or the]=
27      Kazu:                         [ yeah.]
28      Linda:  →  = sea right next to it.=
29      Kazu:      =yeah.
30      Linda:  →  so the location was nice,
31      Kazu:      yeah very ↑good.
```

Kazu is explaining that in his school, they had activities such as swimming in the sea and running on the beach (1–11). In lines 13–14, he assesses that his school is special and different from other schools. Linda elicits more accounts about this assessment by asking a question about whether other schools did not have such physical activities (15–16), to which Kazu offers an answer that lacks clarity (17-19) with IDK, the expression of epistemic uncertainty (19). He reiterates—with the upgrade "very"—that his school was special (21–22) without substantiating it. Linda orients herself to it with a designedly incomplete utterance (Koshik, 2002: 277) "so you think your school is special because of the- " (23–24), explicitly repeating the assessment that Kazu has made and adding an account marker "because", which suspends the unit that comes after the marker. After Kazu offers a possibility for the suspended unit, "they have sea" (25), Linda reformulates the reasoning that Kazu provides in a full sentence: "they have the ocean or the sea right next to it" (26, 28). Additionally, she adds a summative assessment for these accounts, "so the location was nice" (30). This is prefaced with a conclusive "so", and Linda offers a confirmation. In this assessment and account sequence, Linda uses not only the device of reformulation, discussed in excerpts 1 to 4, but two additional types of eliciting device: asking a question and using a designedly incomplete utterance.

The next excerpt shows how Ann co-completes a suspended unit that the L2 speaker, Saki, produced in an assessment activity about the previous winter being hard.

Excerpt 6. [Saki: Hard Winter]

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1       Saki:     ↑last ↓year (1) it's (.)
2                 it was (1) ha:rd winter.
3       Ann:      when we a say a hard winter,
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4                  it was not the who:le winter
5                  we had thre- we had nineteen days,
6                  (.) that were real ha:rd.
7       Saki:      ah: (.) I heard news (.)
8                  about (.) Chicago.
9       Ann:       um-hum,
10      Saki:      and I watched (.) on TV,
11                 (.) that (.) many people sleep-
12      Ann:    →  in- in the airport?
13      Saki:      $ yeah::hahaha.$
14      Ann:       um-hum, ah:, (well) remember
15                 that's the windy city,
16                 politics and wind.
17      Saki:      [°um hum,°]
18      Ann:       [   uhr    ] but the're on the lake,
19                 (.) they get (.) more severe weather
20                 than we do. even though we're
21                 two hours (.)from there.
22                 we are two ho-
23      Saki:      oh::::.
```

Ann's pre-emptive completion "in the airport" (Lerner & Takagi, 1999; Lerner, 2004) occurs in line 12, after Saki offers an account for her assessment that it was a hard winter the previous year (1–2). Saki explains that she had heard some news on TV about people in Chicago (5–8). She stops short after saying "many people sleep-" (11). Ann orients to this and provides a candidate suspended unit—"in the airport?"—with a rising intonation (12), which is a "try marker" (Lerner, 2004: 229), inviting confirmation from Saki. In the next receipt slot, the original speaker, Saki, acknowledges Ann's completion with "yeah" and laughter (13).

5. Discussion

In the present data, the identities of the L1 speakers as "language experts" and the L2 speakers as "non-experts" were occasionally salient, as the L1 speakers oriented to the L2 speakers' minimal accounts or displays of difficulties by reformulating and co-completing what the L2 speakers were trying to say.

Even in the case of asymmetric participation, reformulations by the L1 speakers and initiations of repairs by the L2 speakers eventually lead them to intersubjectivity. As Park (2007) states in the following quotation, asymmetric contributions by the L2 and L1 speakers seem to function as a resource for successful communication.

> From a social relational point of view, there certainly is a power structure residing in an invoked NS/NNS interaction which affects how the participants come to perceive themselves and each other. Nevertheless, I entertain the possibility that an asymmetry is a resource for the successful communication between an NS and an NNS (see Kurhila 2001). Ten Have (1991) interprets the asymmetry between a doctor and a patient as an interactional resource for them to perform their roles in a medical setting. The same seems to be true of NS/NNS interaction. Asymmetry is not merely an external constraint of participants' actions, but it also provides resources for them to use in order to move the interaction ahead. (Park 2007: 355)

In the present data, the asymmetric participation becomes occasionally salient when the L2 speakers display uncertainty in carrying out accounts, by downgrading an epistemic stance with the use of IDK and initiating lexical searches. It is found that the L1 speakers orient themselves to such displays of difficulties and uncertainty by the L2 speakers by drawing on supportive means so that the L2 speakers can achieve their accounts fully. The following supportive means were observed in the present data:

(1) Reformulations
(2) Co-completions
(3) Asking questions to elicit further accounts
(4) Assisting the L2 speakers in linguistic choices

When the L2 speakers only offer minimal accounts, the L1 speakers fill the gaps in co-constructive ways by reformulations and co-completions. Asking questions to elicit further accounts from the L2 speakers enables the L2 speakers to offer fuller accounts that they could not have given by themselves. Although the L1 speakers generally orient themselves to the progress of the interaction, they assist the L2 speakers when the L2 speakers seek their assistance by using a repair mechanism in conversations. As was found in Kurhila (2006), the analysis in the present study reveals that the L1 speakers commonly orient to understanding rather than non-understanding of the L2 speakers' account, and "they orient to the progress of interaction" (Kurhila, 2006: 220) even when the L2 speakers' accounts are minimal and lacking in clarity. In this sense, the L2 interactions are no different from the L1 talk. Even with asymmetric participation, the interactants demonstrated movement toward intersubjectivity.

Although my data analysis is based on CA and ethnomethodological theory and does not involve external theories, it might be useful to consider connecting the outcomes of the analysis with broader sociological theories (Kasper & Wagner, 2014). These supportive means employed by the L1 speakers can be theorized as enabling the L2 speakers to work in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)[8] (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In other words, the ways that the L1 speakers orient to the L2 speakers' utterances enable the L2 speakers to accomplish what they cannot do alone but can manage with the support of "more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978: 886). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) explain that there are two elements of the ZPD concept that have influenced researchers in a wide variety of disciplines: One is the notion of assisted performance, and the other is foreseeing learners' independent functioning in the future. Lantolf and Thorne explain the latter as follows:

> Another compelling attribute of the ZPD is that, in contrast to traditional tests and measures that only indicate the level of development already attained, it is forward looking through its assertion that assisted performance, and importantly the varying qualities of assistance needed for a particular individual to perform particular competencies, is often indicative of independent functioning in the future. (Lantolf & Thorne 2006: 263)

When we observe the present data from the perspective of this future possibility of independent functioning, the phenomena in the present data are indicative of the L2 speakers' future competence to function fully on their own in making assessments and providing sense-making accounts.

The use of supportive means by the L1 speakers can be explained by the sociocultural concept of "help" within the learners' ZPD. Lantolf and Thorne explain that the "mechanisms of effective help" should be both *graduated* and *contingent* on the actual needs of the L2 speakers.

> Aljaafreh and Lantolf identify a number of 'mechanisms of effective help' relating to intervention within the ZPD. Assistance should be *graduated* — with no more help provided than is necessary, for the assumption is that over-assistance decreases the student's agentive capacity. At the same time, a minimum level of guidance must be given so that the novice can successfully carry out the action at hand. Related to this is that help should be *contingent*

> on actual need and similarly removed when the person demonstrates the elements of developmentally productive joint activity. This process is *dialogic* and entails continuous assessment of the learner's ZPD and subsequent *tailoring* of help to best facilitate progression from other-regulation to self-regulation. (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006:277) (italics in original)

The analysis of the present data uncovers the nature of the "help" that the L2 speakers are receiving. The persistent orientation to co-conversants' actions in talk-in-interaction enables the L1 speakers to provide graduated assistance to the L2 speakers depending on their demonstrated needs. Such assistance is likely to be "*opportunities for learning*" (Eskildsen, 2018: 48), and subsequently, it can lead to L2 speakers' future actions. The data from the same participants recorded seven months after the first recording is not included in the present paper. However, Kondo (2011) observed indications of improved features in the L2 speakers' accounts for assessments over time. The developmental phenomena are an empirical matter and further research is needed to investigate the nature of longitudinal development of interactional competence (Hall et al., 2011; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2015).

6. Conclusion

SLA literature has shown that even novice second language speakers possess interactional competence to accomplish sense-making and achieve mutual understanding by closely monitoring the talk and actions of the co-participants (Carroll, 2004; Kondo, 2014; Mazeland & Zamah-Zadeh, 2004). The findings in the present study are consistent with previous research, as it is evident that L2 speakers, whose proficiency levels in the ACTFL-SST before their departure from Japan[9] ranged from Novice to Intermediate Low, utilized whatever linguistic and paralinguistic resources they possessed—including conversational mechanisms such as repair organization—to accomplish mutual understanding in social activities. The present data provided some evidence that intersubjectivity is possible even with limited resources because conversational practices and activities are co-constructed and jointly achieved with their co-participants.

The study also revealed the nature of interactions between L1 and L2 speakers. The findings were consistent with those of Kurhila (2006) and Wagner and Gardner (2004) in terms of the following: (1) when mutual intelligibility is in danger, the L1 speakers display understanding rather than non-understanding; (2) the identities of language expert/non-expert become relevant only occasionally and locally when the L2 speakers

display uncertainty or difficulties; and (3) the L2 speakers possess competencies to utilize interactional resources to achieve intersubjectivity. Further, analysis of the present data might indicate that language learning is embedded in the assessment activities accomplished by the interaction between the L2 and L1 speakers. Importantly, it was also found that the L1 speakers offered supportive actions in accordance with the L2 speakers' demonstrated needs.

Although the data I have analyzed is not institutional, the results can have pedagogical applications. For example, the importance of being engaged in talk-in-interaction in social life could be informative for L2 learners, especially to those who intend to study abroad. They can benefit by knowing beforehand that talk-in-interaction is a rich site, potentially providing them with opportunities to acquire sociocultural and linguistic knowledge through *graduated* and *contingent* support from their interlocutors. The achievement of intersubjectivity by the participants through moment-by-moment actions can be "a built-in learning mechanism" (Kasper & Wagner, 2014: 194) that is visible to participants as well as to researchers. Finally, it seems reasonable to conclude that talk-in-interaction can provide potential opportunities for language learning and that language can be learned through interaction.

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Notes

[1] According to Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) TCUs (turn constructional units) are unit-types with which a speaker can construct a turn. In English, TCUs can be sentences, clauses, phrases, or words. TCUs make it possible for the next speaker to project the completion point of the present speaker's turn, and the possible point at which a speaker change may occur is called the transition relevance place (TRP).

[2] The larger dissertation project includes the same type of recordings that took place seven months after the first recordings, which form the data for the present study.

[3] AFS is one of the world's largest not-for-profit volunteer-based organizations. It offers international exchange programs in more than 90 countries through local AFS organizations. AFS provides intercultural learning and volunteer opportunities for students, young adults, teachers, and families through international exchanges.

[4] Hide's interlocutor, Sarah, is an AFS Student Family Liaison, whose primary role is to maintain regular contact with her assigned AFS student and host family and provide support when needed.

[5] The test was developed by the ACTFL and ALC with adjustments for Japanese candidates both in the content and in the levels of proficiency. The Intermediate Mid and Intermediate Low levels are each further divided into two levels in the ACTFL-SST (See Appendix B for the levels). ALC, based in Tokyo, Japan, is a company that specializes in publishing books and magazines related to teaching and learning foreign languages, especially English.

[6] Lindström, Maschler & Pekarek Doehler (2016) argue that negative mental verb constructions such as "I don't know" function not only as the disclaiming of epistemic access but also as various markers of epistemic stance. For example, it can be used as a "prefatory move which signifies the speaker's stance to what is said in a fuller continued response turn" (p.75) as "epistemic downgrading of the content of the speaker's subsequent contribution" and as "a prepositioned epistemic hedge" (p.76).

[7] Heritage (1984b) discusses the use of the particle "oh" to suggest that "its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness" (p. 299).

[8] The most frequently referenced definition of the ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978: 86).

[9] See "Table 3: Participants' Levels in the ACTFL-SST" and "Appendix B: Correlation Between ACTFL OPI and SST".

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Appendix A: Transcription Conventions

Based on the Jefferson Transcription System
http://www-staff.lboro.ac.uk/~ssjap/transcription/transcription.htm

Symbol	**Meaning**
[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech. They are aligned to mark the precise position of overlap.
↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement, over and above normal rhythms of speech. They are used for notable changes in pitch beyond those represented by stops, commas and question marks.
→	Side arrows are used to draw attention to features of talk that are relevant to the current analysis.
Underlining	indicates emphasis; the extent of underlining within individual words locates emphasis and also indicates how heavy it is.
CAPITALS	mark speech that is hearably louder than surrounding speech. This is beyond the increase in volume that comes as a by-product of emphasis.
°I know it,°	"Degree" signs enclose hearably quieter speech.
that's r*ight.	Asterisks precede a "squeaky" vocal delivery.

(0.4)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in seconds (in this case, four-tenths of a second). If they are not part of a particular speaker's talk they are on a new line.
(.)	A micropause, hearable but too short to measure.
((staccato))	Additional comments from the transcriber, e.g. about features of context or delivery.
she wa::nted	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; the more colons, the more elongation.
Hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
.hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
Yeh,	"Continuation" marker, the speaker has not finished; marked by fall-rise or weak rising intonation, as when delivering a list.
y'know?	Question marks signal stronger, "questioning" intonation, irrespective of grammar.
Yeh.	Full stops mark falling, stopping intonation ("final contour"), irrespective of grammar, and not necessarily followed by a pause.
bu-u-	Hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
>he said< **< he said>**	"Greater than" and "lesser than" signs enclose speeded-up talk. Occasionally they are used the other way around for slower talk.
solid.= =We had	"Equals" signs mark the immediate "latching" of successive talk, whether of one or more speakers, with no interval.
heh heh	Voiced laughter. Can have other symbols added, such as underlining, pitch movement, extra aspiration, etc.

( ) Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to understand what was said. The length of the parenthesized space reflects the length of the missed speech.

(word) Parenthesized words and speaker designations are especially dubious.

Additional notations

$ $ Surrounds the "laughing" voice.

£ £ Surrounds the "smile" voice.

Appendix B: Correlation Between ACTFL OPI and SST

ACTFL OPI Levels	SST Levels
Superior	Level 9
Advanced High	
Advanced Mid	
Advanced Low	
Intermediate High	Level 8
Intermediate Mid	Level 7
	Level 6
Intermediate Low	Level 5
	Level 4
Novice High	Level 3
Novice Mid	Level 2
Novice Low	Level 1

The information in Appendix B was available on the official webpage of ALC Press in 2010. Their webpage accessed on December 23, 2020, shows the descriptions of 9 levels (https://tsst.alc.co.jp/sst/english.html). Their webpage in Japanese announces that SST will end its service at the end of March 2021.