Turn Design and the Organization of Participation in Instructional Activities

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Talk in interaction is the prevailing form of instructional activity. To understand and improve second language literacy instruction, an appreciation of the interactional practices in which reading and writing are embedded is necessary. In this article I examine one aspect of these practices: speaker turn design. I focus on the uses of incomplete turn-constructional units in structuring subsequent participation. First, I describe several ways teachers design their turns at talk and show how these furnish differing opportunities for subsequent participation by students. Next, I show how the task of producing written answers as complete stand-alone sentences can be carried out as an utterance-completion task in which turn design plays a key organizing part. Finally, I show how this form of sequential organization can be used as an analytic resource in diagnosing a problem one group of students encounters in writing the answer to a story question.

Many researchers have asked the question: What do teachers and students need to know in order to participate effectively in the classroom (Mehan, 1985)? This question generally concerns the stock of knowledge—academic and social—needed by students for successful participation (Green & Meyer, 1991). For those researchers concerned with second language literacy development this translates into an interest in the ways bilingual children cognitively frame ongoing communicative activity as they acquire "schooled literacy" in their second language (Durán, 1987).

I would like to ask a somewhat different question: What are the opportunities for participation in instructional activities? This respecifics the question, not as a question of knowledge or even shared knowledge, but as a question of social-sequential organization (cf. Schegloff, 1991a, 1992). The research result of this reformulation is not a stock of shared knowledge or list of competencies, but a description of interactional practices that produce the opportunities and possibilities for participation in instructional activities. These practices consist of the talk and visible behaviors of the participants. However, it is the organization of the recognizable actions that are realized through particular utterances and body behavior produced in particular ways at particular places in a particular course of action that is of interest here. So, I am not searching for the contents of a mind or the shared contents of several minds or even the raw materials of sociality. I am
searching for and describing the shared practices that enable sociality in the classroom.

The corpus of materials used in this investigation consists of a collection of video recordings of English-speaking and Spanish-dominant, bilingual third-grade students. These students are participating in a "cooperative learning" language arts program in which the bilingual students have begun working in their second language (English). The students are engaged in story reading and story-related writing activities that are carried out in small work groups. The relevance of this characterization of the participants, their circumstances, and their activities—and its relationship to the findings reported here—will be discussed.

ENABLING INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

Talk-in-interaction is the enabling organization for much instructional activity. A classroom-in-session furnishes a site for copresent action (Goffman, 1963), interaction, and talk-in-interaction. It is through action-(including talk)-in-interaction that participants engage in various instructional activities. Many instructional tasks are accomplished at least in part as talk-in-interaction. My aim is to show how the local organization of instruction-related interaction—and in particular the organization of talk in that interaction—can provide emergent opportunities to participate in instructional activities. I examine how instructional activities establish opportunities for participation by describing the sequential organization of the moment-to-moment conduct that actually makes up instructional activities.

The concern of this article with "opportunities for participation" has its origins in the work of Goffman and in work carried out in the conversation analytic tradition—of which this report is a part. Goffman (1967), in "Alienation from Interaction," portrays the demands on attention that interaction requires of participants and shows how participants can become alienated from the focus of an encounter. In a detailed specification of this demand on attention, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) describe turn-taking practices for ordinary conversation. They show that turn transitions are locally and interactionally arranged by participants by reference to possible completion places one possible completion place at a time. As a result, "the turn-taking system for conversation builds in an intrinsic motivation for listening to all utterances in a conversation, independent of other possible motivations, such as interest and politeness" (p. 727). In conversation, opportunities to participate are distributed by reference to places that are made available in the course of an emerging utterance. How each speaker designs his or her utterances as turn-constructional units and the type of action realized through each turn establish the opportunities for subsequent participation. To understand student participation in classroom activity, it is necessary to examine the moment-to-moment (i.e., turn-by-turn) opportunities made available for that participation in the course of those activities themselves. Moreover,
different turn-taking systems produce differing opportunities to participate. For instance, the opportunities to repair trouble can differ from one turn-taking system to another. As Schegloff (1992) states, “Because the organization of repair is mapped onto a turn-based organization of talk, variation in the setting or context, or anything that can involve some transformation of the turn-taking system by which the talk is organized . . . may well carry with it differences in the organization of repair” (p. 1337).

In this article, I examine turn design as an element of instruction and instructed action. I describe several devices or ways of speaking that teachers use in producing their speaking turns and the opportunities for participation that these make available for students. In particular, I focus on the opportunities for participation produced by incomplete turn-constructional units that are designed for subsequent completion by other participants. In the first half of the article, I consider several turn types that teachers use when speaking with students, and I show how these produce different opportunities for student participation. In the second half, I focus on practices that comprise literate action by describing conversational activities that come between reading a story and producing story-related writing. I show how story-related writing tasks are accomplished using specific conversational resources connected to the design of speaking turns, thus demonstrating how literate action can emerge from talk-in-interaction. The article concludes with an application of this analysis to a single episode in order to diagnose the problem one group of students experienced in answering a story question.

“RELEVANCE” AND THE ANALYSIS OF INTERACTION

In one sense this article might be considered an exercise in applied conversation analysis. I have applied the methods and findings of conversation analysis to a particular site of interactional activities in order to see what the outcome of such an application would look like. Here I am interested in the organization of talk-in-interaction insofar as it is relevant to classroom instruction and in particular to the classroom instruction of language-minority students. By describing in detail what some aspects of instructional activity consist of as actual courses of action (actual sequences of talk-in-interaction), I hope to make these courses of action visible for instructional consideration.

1Philips (1972), also following Goffman, introduced the concept of “participant structure,” but this refers to cultural styles of participation. In addition, Erickson (1982) applies the notion of “social participation structure” to classroom interaction, but also in a quite different way. More closely aligned to the present usage is Goodwin’s (1984, 1986) notion of “participation structure.”

2It should go without saying that the language arts activities I am reporting on here and classroom activities in general represent only one (institutionally organized) occasion for literate action and acquisition.
The decision to examine talk-in-interaction only insofar as it is relevant to the classroom instruction of bilingual students as they shift from Spanish instruction to English instruction may seem like somewhat of a reversal of the conversation analytic injunction concerning relevance which provides that aspects of social structure as ordinarily conceived in the social sciences (e.g., various social identities such as "teacher" or "police officer" and various formulations of context such as "classroom" or "courtroom") must be shown to be locally relevant for participants in order to be introduced into the analysis. As Schegloff (1987, 1991b) has suggested (following Sacks', 1972, discussion of relevance for membership categorization devices), a particular correct characterization of the participants and setting of talk-in-interaction may or may not be relevant to the participants at some point in the interaction. A particular characterization, given the ready availability of other equally correct characterizations, may or may not contribute to the practical intelligibility of the conduct for the participants or be procedurally consequential for some particular aspect of the participants' conduct.

Though I have selected a site of talk-in-interaction for analysis, I do not make an automatic inference that one or another characterization of the identities of the participants or the site of this interaction as a classroom-in-session has an ongoing relevance or consequentiality for the organization of the features of talk-in-interaction I describe, or even that the achieved orderliness I describe is characteristic or uniquely characteristic of a bilingual classroom-in-session as compared with some other vernacularly characterizable site of interaction. However, by selecting a classroom-in-session I believe I can be confident that I will be examining interactional materials that count as instructional activities. Nonetheless, limiting the corpus in this way does not imply that the practices I might find cannot be instantiations of a more general domain of social-sequential organization. The characterization of types of activities described in this report, though descriptive of classroom interaction and potentially relevant to instructional planning for language minority students, is not meant to be limited to the classroom or to participants so identified. I remain silent on its scope and on the dimensions of scope on which such a determination might be empirically made.

**TURN DESIGN AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION**

The particular manner in which a speaker constructs a turn at talk can be consequential for the sort of work or action that utterance accomplishes. For example, it is possible for a teacher to address a particular student by adding the student's name to a turn. However, the placement of the name in relation to the rest of the turn changes the sort of work being done by the turn. If the name is placed at the beginning of a teacher's turn, it will select the named student as the addressed recipient, but if it is placed at the end of the turn, it may operate in a somewhat different fashion. This can be seen in Excerpt 1. Here the teacher is discussing
words used in a story with the whole class. The teacher is explaining what “innocent” means.

(1) [CIRC:Dugg]
Teacher: ... not guilty of some crime. = Your focus needs to be up here.
CATHERINE,

As the teacher comes to the end of a definition for the word "innocent," she takes up the problem of a student who is not paying attention. However, in addressing that student by name only at the end of her reprimand, she is able to postpone identifying which student she is addressing and indeed whether she is addressing a single student or some collection of “not focusing” students or the class as a whole. This allows the turn to be possibly for anyone for whom the reprimand-in-progress might be heard to apply. In addition, it allows the yet-to-be addressed student the opportunity to turn her attention to the teacher before being singled out by name, thereby eliminating the need to address her by name. How a turn at talk is designed, even in terms of the placement of a single word, can shape the sort of work accomplished in that turn and therefore the opportunities for participation that issue from it.

In the following discussion, I examine turns designed as elicitation questions and turns designed as lists. I show how each turn type can include an unfinished turn-constructional component that invites completion by recipients. This discussion sets the stage for the subsequent description of the word-search format as a device and resource in the collaborative production of story-related writing.

Different turn types can provide very different opportunities for subsequent participation. Furthermore, as a turn emerges, the kind of opportunity can change with each additional turn-constructional component. This can be seen with one widely reported instructional turn type, the elicitation question (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). First, I provide a brief description of the sequence this type of turn initiates, then I describe one way an incremental addition to a turn containing an elicitation question can change the opportunity for subsequent participation.

The elicitation question can initiate a small sequence: elicitation–reply–evaluation. Asking an elicitation-type question makes an answer specially relevant and provides the sequential possibility of an evaluation. This can be seen in Excerpt 2.

(2) [CIRC:Dugg] (‘side’ refers to a page in an open book))
1 Teacher: Do we know what this side is called?
2 (1.7) ((several students raise their hand))
3 Nolle.
4 Nolle: Ah its ah who you write it to,
5 Teacher: The dedication. ((with big nod))
In Excerpt 2 the teacher confirms the student’s answer by naming what the student has described in a manner that shows acceptance of the answer. A less than acceptable reply may result in a sequence expansion (Mehan, 1982). In Excerpt 3 the teacher shows the student’s answer to be partially correct but incomplete. Further specification of the answer is then solicited.

(3) [CIRC:Dugg]

1 Teacher: Okay. Now, (.) who can tell me what a prediction is, what does it mean to make (.) a prediction.
2 (2.0) ((several students raise their hand))
3 Cindy.
4 Cindy: Ah it means that >make a guess,<
5 Teacher: kinda make a guess. ((nods once))
6 A guess about what

And if the sequence-completing evaluation is not produced after a reply is issued, then additional replies can remain relevant, as in Excerpt 4.

(4) [CIRC:Simson]

1 Simson: If you were big, if you were big, bigger than anybody in this whole classroom (.) how could you solve (.) that problem.
2 Eric: um
3 Juan: cutting your legs ((laughs)) no huh huh
4 Erica: bend down::n::?
5 Juan: get on your knees
6 Daniel: (to exercise)
7 Juan: get on yr knees
8 Juan: no:::
9 (2.0)
10 Juan: do you know it Miss Simson?

By withholding a sequence-completing confirmation, the opportunity for student participation continues under the aegis of the teacher’s question.

A turn begun as an elicitation question can have additional turn-constructional components added to it. In the next excerpt the teacher first asks an elicitation question (at line 1), but then provides the beginning of a reply at line 3. By extending her turn in this way the teacher provides additional turn-constructional resources for a reply. (During the 2 seconds between lines 1 and 3, there is continuing talk by many children. Through the commotion several students do say “New York’ and one says “Company.” But the teacher, looking down at her book, continues without registering any of these as distinct from the ongoing din of talk.) The beginning of the reply includes a name (“Macmillan publishing company”) that is located at the same place the students must look in their books to find the answer and associates this reference with an element of the question (“publishing”), thus indicating where the students should look and, at the same
time, eliminating a possible wrong answer by incorporating the publisher’s name into the reply turn unit itself.

(5) [CIRC:Dugg]
1 Teacher: Where was this book published?
2 :
3 Teacher: Macmillan publishing company in?
4 (.)
5 →Class: New York ((mostly in unison))
6 Teacher: Okay.

After line 3 a reply is still relevant, but its form has been narrowed and something other than an individual student answer is implicated. The teacher has designed the further increment of her turn in a manner that makes a choral response specially relevant.

In choral responses students coordinate the tempo and loudness of their talk to produce a response in unison. Each response is not only produced at the same moment as other responses, but in the same way as other responses. In Excerpt 5 the teacher addresses the class as an association of students, and this is done in a manner that establishes the relevance of a response by the members of the class as a team or ensemble (Lerner, 1993). By halting her utterance prior to a recognizable completion, stressing the final word, and producing it with upward intonation, the teacher can invite and coordinate completion by the class as a whole. (This seems like an apt procedure to employ with a talkative class, since it musters, coordinates, and limits the participation of all those students who are prepared to reply.)

Another type of incomplete turn-constructional unit that can invite a response from recipients—and as such can serve as an instructional resource—is one that initiates a word search (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Sacks, 1992). However, I must first introduce list construction, since the word search I examine is contained within this type of turn unit. Moreover, list construction itself can furnish the resources for recipient coproduction of a turn-constructional unit and thus provides an opportunity for recipient participation.

The organization of list construction in conversation has been described in detail by Jefferson (1990). In addition, Lerner (1994) has described the use of responsive list construction in accomplishing multifaceted action, while Atkinson (1984) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) have documented the use of list construction as a "claptrap" in political oratory. In this section, I describe how list construction can operate as an instructional resource—that is, how it can furnish opportunities for student participation.

Jefferson (1990) has proposed that list construction ordinarily takes a three-part form and can be recognized as a "list-in-progress" prior to its completion. The following excerpt, in which a teacher discusses the word "to," contains several three-part lists. (Here I show only the teacher’s utterance.)
List items are produced in a way that can provide an opportunity space for anticipatory completion (Lerner, 1987, 1991) of a not-yet-completed list. Leti’s utterance at line 4 in Excerpt 7 demonstrates this.

The list structure provides both a different type of place and a different form for student participation than, for example, an elicitation question. Beginning a list opens the possibility of student involvement. Through the inductive procedure of illustration, a list-in-progress furnishes recipients with the characteristics and form of a proper list item and a site for it to be issued. A list-in-progress furnishes a form for additions (a next list item of the type already produced), and as such it provides an opportunity for syntactically tying subsequent utterances by various participants to a prior turn as an extension of it. This can relax the proscription against entering another’s turn at talk, insofar as a next list item is designed as a completion for or an extension of the prior turn. The affiliated list item is designed as and can be treated as a conditional entry into the turn of another participant.

In addition to what some educators might call the “scaffold” (Cazden, 1988) provided by the structure of a list-in-progress, a teacher can design a list in a manner that not only provides an opportunity for anticipatory completion, but may even invite such participation. This can be seen in Excerpt 8 at line 7 in which the teacher engages in a word search.
Here the sound stretch on "to" at line 7 and the concurrent body movement show coparticipants that the teacher is engaged in a word search. This provides a place for students to offer candidates to complete the search. The structure of the list-in-progress, along with the pause in the progressivity of the turn's talk, provide coparticipants with the form of the searched-for item plus some entitlement to conditional entry into the turn in order to help conclude the search by completing the list.

In Excerpt 8, the "three-partedness" of list structure foreshows a third item of the same sort as the first two items at lines 3 and 5, while the stretch and gestural accompaniment demonstrate that, although there has been a halt in the progressivity of the turn's talk, the turn has not been abandoned. The features that constitute a search in progress show the turn to be unfinished. A word search is not the only action that can be produced when the progressivity of the talk is halted prior to a possible completion place but is the result of initiating a particular procedure—that of searching for a word. Other practices produce other outcomes (e.g., trailing-off before a possible completion of a turn-constructional unit may not be treated as a pause in the progressivity of a turn, but as a turn's adequate completion).

In addition to providing distinct opportunities to reply, incomplete turn-constructional units that initiate a search can furnish students with resources to produce written answers to assignments, especially when written answers are to take the form (as they often do) of complete sentences.

TURN DESIGN AND THE PRODUCTION OF WRITABLE SENTENCES

The manner in which an answer to a story question is produced by members of a work group shapes the opportunities to contribute to constructing that answer. Answering a story question can be organized as completing a turn at talk, thus transforming the task from answering a question into one of utterance completion. Or it can be accomplished conjointly as one participant writing down a sentence, while others contribute elements to its production. Here the writer can make audible his or her writing, while coparticipants coordinate their contributions by reference to the progress of the audible writing word by word. Or the task can be organized in other ways. Though each of these may produce an answer at the end of the day, the particular course of action students pursue (and this can change mid-course) will shape the organization of participation in describable ways.

The ways in which utterances are designed by their producers and the ways

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3An instance of answering a story question by completing an utterance occurs in Excerpt 10 and will be examined in detail there. Because of space considerations it is not possible to include instances and analyses for other forms of story-related writing within this article.
those designed utterances are treated by their hearers as they occur on actual occasions of use form social-syntactic structures. Several basic features of language in use are grounded in the organization of turn-taking for conversational interaction. Two key features of language used as talk-in-interaction are (a) the recognizability of possible completion and (b) the projectability of such recognizable possible completions (Sacks et al., 1974). These features of language use provide for the possibility of coordinated transfer of speakership by providing places by reference to which transitions can occur. Speaking turns are ordinarily constructed out of such projectable, recognizable units of talk.

Sacks et al. (1974) found that once a party acquires a turn to speak he or she is ordinarily entitled to produce at least one such turn-constructional unit. Of course, in practice this is not always the case. But it is this entitlement (and the already mentioned features that provide the resources for such an entitlement) on which other practices hinge (e.g., see Lerner, 1989). Importantly, for the present discussion, these turn-taking features of talk in conversational interaction provide the resources for a form of social organization for participation through which instruction is pursued by the teacher, and concomitantly they furnish the resources for a form of organization for students to enable their independent group work.

In this section, I examine how turn design provides a resource in the collaborative construction of written answers. First, I describe how an incomplete turn-constructional unit provides a resource for instructing students in how to properly construct definitions. Here the teacher uses a word-search format as a vehicle for a distinctively instructional intervention. Then I examine how students use such turn-constructional formats as a way to organize defining words and answering reading questions.

**Teacher Instruction**

In the following excerpt the teacher approaches a student work group table. There she discovers that the students, who should be working together to “write definitions,” have been instead “writing sentences.” She then instructs them in “definition writing.” She does not attempt to tell them what a definition is, rather she shows them how a definition is to be constructed.

(9) [CIRC:Simson]

1 Teacher: You have on here (2.2) “the doorknob was locked.”
2 That’s using ‘doorknob’ in a sentence, but I want the
3 definition, = what is ah doorknob? (0.2) Ah doorknob IS
4 (0.6) ((teacher pantomimes the use of a doorknob))
5 J: a whe = a little [wheel
6 Dan: [to open- (.) the door.
7 9 Teacher: Okay, we’ll don’t fall into the trap of giving me sentences.
8 10 I want definitions. (0.5) Checks are, a tongue is, a plan is
Here the teacher first states what she wants the students to produce ("I want the definition"). She then specifies that instruction as a question ("what is a door-knob?"). This shows what will count as an acceptable written response to the instruction. The question furnishes a procedure for producing a definition, and as such it provides a criterion of accountability for the students themselves, as well as for the teacher. The candidate definitions they produce can be inspected for the way in which they are or are not responsive to the question. By producing the first part of an adjacency pair (a question), a type-fitted or paired second action is foreshown. Is the written definition an answer to this question? Is it the sort of answer this question projects? In addition to producing a turn type (question) that projects what an adequate written response should look like, the question also can implicate a relevant next action in the talk itself, since it is through talking with each other that a writable definition, or more precisely, candidate definitions can be produced and the acceptance of a single writable definition can be arranged.

As a method of instructing her students, the teacher then produces a next turn-constructional unit that begins the implicated answer to her own question. (She does this when a student answer is not immediately forthcoming.) Here she is changing the opportunity to participate by changing what is implicated as a relevant next action. After the question at line 3 is produced, an answer to that question becomes specially relevant. After the teacher’s next increment of talk, the relevant next action is now the completion of an answer—that is, the completion of an answer turn-constructional unit. Answering a question has become completing an utterance. Though this is an incomplete turn-constructional unit (i.e., the speaker is not at a possible turn-unit completion), the turn-so-far has

"Of course, in practice the distinction the teacher is making between "sentence" on the one hand and "definition" on the other can lead to problems. This in fact happens when a student later realizes that definitions can be sentences, yet they have been specifically instructed not to write sentences for the words. The following discussion provides one brief "diagnosis" of this problem. After the teacher has left the table and students are working on the word "quarter," they come up with a sentence "you could spend a quarter." This is then plugged into the definition frame—"a quarter is (.) that you could spend it."—but this still seems to be a sentence which they now find problematic. One way of thinking about the trouble here is that the teacher was distinguishing between "assignment (or activity) types" that would produce different (complete) sentence types, whereas the students, or at least some of them, are distinguishing different forms their written responses should take. And this leads to the (false) dilemma of producing a definition which keeps ending up as a sentence, where these are held to be exclusive of one another. By the way, the "dilemma" I pose is one that is formulated and discussed explicitly by the students.

Here is one special problem with student work groups: Instructions (directly from the teacher and from curricular materials) are generally not available for third turn initiation of "third-position" repair (Schegloff, 1992). The teacher’s intervention, on arriving at the group’s table in Excerpt 9 is an instance of "delayed" third-position repair. By this time they have wrongly written several sentences that ought to have been definitions. (Something akin to this, though not organized as conversational repair, can also be found in teacher comments concerning misunderstood instructions, visible in students’ written work.)
been designed so that transition is nevertheless relevant. This might be thought of as the word-search counterpart of an elicitation (i.e., known-answer) question. It makes relevant candidate answers from the students and thereby provides the opportunity for an evaluation of candidates by the teacher. Here turn design is used as a resource by the teacher to instruct the students in definition writing.\(^5\)

This case is actually the counterpart of an expanded elicitation sequence. In the spate of talk not shown after line 7, the teacher does not evaluate the first candidates at lines 6 and 7. Further completions are produced which are also inadequate— that is, they are not evaluated. The teacher then asks a follow-up question, while continuing her doorknob pantomime. Finally, a student produces "handle" after which the teacher marks the success of that candidate.

Sequences of this sort are both like and yet different from other word-search sequences; just as sequences initiated by elicitation questions are similar to, but different from other question-answer sequences. They are similar insofar as the production of an incomplete turn-constructional unit initiates a small sequence of talk aimed at providing a satisfactory completion to the halted turn unit—that is, it is formed as a word search. What differentiates this activity is the participants' orientation to a different distribution of knowledge displayed in the way the teacher's turn has been produced and the instructional activity this implicates. When an elicitation question is asked, it is not oriented-to as a request for information, but as a request for a demonstration of knowledge. It is this orientation to the searched-for completion to the turn-constructional unit which the teacher has begun that differentiates it from a word search in which other participants may enter the current speaker's turn to provide a candidate word as the original speaker continues to search in order to complete his or her turn. The students in Excerpt 9 are not aiding the teacher in her search for a word; rather, she has made it clear in the manner in which she has designed her utterance and gestures that she could complete the turn unit, but that it is the students' (instructed) task to do so. Here the search format provides a vehicle for instruction.

**Student Instructed Action**

Practices such as the ones described in the previous section are not limited to teacher-led instruction of students. Designing a turn to initiate a search for the completion of an utterance—as a way to produce a writable answer—is also a procedure students use among themselves. Here the elements of a word-search sequence (Sacks, 1992) are preserved, but the opportunities for participation are transformed by the ongoing relevance of the task as a collaboratively completable project. Once the search is initiated, all group members can provide candi-

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\(^5\)When I say the teacher uses "turn design" as a resource, I am here speaking of it as a pedagogical resource in which the teacher designs her turn not only for her recipients but for their subsequent use as a format for producing definitions.
dates, and all can accept or reject candidate completions. It is here that the
assigned group task at hand is procedurally consequential for a small sequence
that comprises a segment of that task. Interestingly, it is not consequential for the
elements of the sequence (i.e., the ordered actions of search initiation, candidate
completion, and acceptance or rejection of the candidate that make up a search),
but only for the distribution of participation among the participants.

In the following excerpt a search is used by a group of students engaged in
jointly answering a reading question.

(10) [CIRC:Dugg]
1 A: Doctor Moore wouldn't tell mister (Auldin) beca: use.
2   (;)
3 B: uhm,
4   (0.2)
5 A: because ,hh doctor Moore wanted to keep it secret,
6 B: because doctor Moore wanted to keep him working for him
7 A: ((A begins writing the group’s answer))

Here the form of the question implicates the form the answer should take. For
“why” questions, the answer part of the answer turn will ordinarily take the form
of a reason (e.g., “because . . .”). That is, question and answer are type
matched. Other “wh”-type questions implicate matched answer types as well,
and the form the beginning of the answer takes (i.e., the question part of the
answer turn) can be designed to project a particular answer-part type. In Excerpt
10, speaker A produces the first part of her answer turn at line 1 and then stops
speaking. The question part ends with “because”—the answer element that is
paired with “why.” In linguistic terms “because” connects two clauses, but in
terms of the task at hand in the emerging interaction, “because” projects the
answer-part type for a not-yet-completed answer.

In this excerpt, an opportunity for completion by other participants is pro-
duced. The sound stretch in “because” shows a search to be getting underway.
However, the place of this search (in the course of producing a single writable
answer for the group) and the downward intonation contour in the production of
“because” show that she is not merely searching for a word. Rather, she has
established a place for the production of the projected answer part of her turn-
constructional unit by any of her coparticipants—as well as by speaker A herself.
This can be seen in the way B responds to the initiation of the search. He first
produces what Sacks has called a “pre-pausal” token. This shows that speaker B
is also engaged in figuring out the answer to the assigned question. Then, even
though speaker A finishes her own turn-constructional unit, speaker B neverthe-
less treats her self-completion as merely a candidate answer part by subsequently
producing his own answer in the form of a turn-unit completion.

Answering questions as stand-alone complete written sentences is something
teachers variously encourage or require and for which they sometimes provide instruction. In addition to any considerations of cognitive development, there are interactional grounds for the need for such instruction and the difficulty students have in following it. These have to do with the necessarily situated circumstances of producing actual answers. Because answers are responsive actions, their syntactic structure is shaped by their position as a second action. The production of stand-alone complete-sentence answers represents a "marked" form in contrast with elliptical (i.e., sequentially tied) responses ordinarily used in talk-in-interaction. Spoken answers need not be produced as complete sentences (as Excerpt 11 shows) nor do answers ordinarily repeat their originating question (or only reference it indexically) because answerers can rely on their turn's proximity to the question's original production and the projected relevance of answering as a next action for their turn.

(11) [CIRC:Simson]

1 Simson: If you were big, if you were big, bigger than anybody in this whole classroom (.), how could you solve (.), that problem.
2 Erica: um
3 Juan: cutting your legs ((laughs)) no huh huh
4 Erica: bend down:::
5 Juan: get on your knees
6 Daniel: (to exercise)
7 Juan: get on yr knees

In contrast, producing stand-alone answers requires the construction of an utterance that is markedly disengaged from its local sequential environment. Yet, the construction of that utterance is always situated within a particular course of action using practices designed in the first place for situated conduct and copresent recipients. Complete-sentence answers that repeat elements of the question introduce a marked redundancy into the reply that is nonetheless an unmarked

6 The following are the sorts of instructions teachers give to show students how to produce stand-alone complete-sentence answers by starting the answer with parts of the question.

Now some of you were able to figure out that in English in order to make an answer out of a question what we need to do is take "Grizzle" and then take "is" and move it here and then we're gonna take this off ((eraser "what" and "?")) and put our answer in. So, "what is Grizzle grumbling about" is going to change into "Grizzles is grumbling about" and then you put in the answer.

Why do you think Peter is getting angry. How's that answer gonna start? . . . Wait a minute, when I say, "why do you think" what is your answer going to be? . . . Start the answer, just start the answer.

Teachers speak of this as "echoing the question in the answer." Note that this can be applied to definition writing as well, as in Excerpt 9.
Turn Design in Instructional Activities 125

(and nonredundant) element of an eventually written sentence that is to be designed to stand on its own, independently of the question.

Students must counteract ordinary conversational practices to produce stand-alone, complete and unabridged sentence responses. Yet, this teacher-mandated response-form can itself provide resources for answering questions when that task is achieved as a word-search utterance completion task.

What part does the instruction to produce a stand-alone written sentence play in the course of action that comes to produce the requisite type of answer? The use of "echoing the question in the answer" to begin answering a question furnishes an interactional resource for producing a written answer. (There are other places it can be used, for example, after students have settled on an answer.) By starting to answer the question with a sentence beginning as a turn-constructional unit beginning, the task becomes one of producing first the question part of the answer and then using the foreshown answer-part format (e.g., "because. . ." or "to. . ." or "by. . .") to complete the unit-in-progress as a word search. Word-search organization provides a structure for searches through which such sentences can be collaboratively constructed in the talk one part at a time. This provides one way of using written questions to produce written answers.

In summary, word-search organization provides an especially suitable form of sequential organization through which students can come to learn how to construct complete-sentence written answers to assigned questions. The students have at least two challenges here: (a) producing an answer; and (b) producing a complete, stand-alone sentence. The use of a word search allows them to separate the two tasks, while nonetheless keeping them interconnected and interdependent. The sentence construction is established by producing the question part. This projects a form for the answer part which then allows and informs pursuit of an answer using a sequentially tied (nonsentential) response form. That is, participants can use a response form that does not require each candidate to be a complete sentence, yet each is tied sequentially to a sentential form. This sequentially tied response form can be seen in Excerpt 10. I can now turn to an examination of a complete search sequence.

In Excerpt 12, the search not only projects the form of the utterance completion, but provides a place for participants to produce candidates controlled by the format of the unfinished turn-constructional unit, and a receipt slot after each candidate for that candidate to be accepted or rejected.

(12) [CIRC:Simson]

1 G: We hafta- have to think of one-. . .
2 have to think of what else [(duh duh)]
3 K: I have a TONGUE
In this instance the sentence beginning is itself a joint production of several speakers. K’s utterance, which could possibly be taken as complete, is turned into the beginning of a now clearly not-yet-complete turn-constructional unit. In addition, “to” now limits the type of completion possible, thus restricting the scope of the search the students engage in at lines 9 through 12. (This is in contrast to a series of full-sentence guesses that occurred just prior to the transcribed excerpt but were rejected, including such contributions as “Everybody has a tongue” and “I got a tongue twister” as well as “I have a tongue to lick.”) After the search space is opened up at lines 6 and 7, a round of candidates (and a rejection) is then produced. The rejection by G at line 11 provides an occasion to renew the search (“to uhmm:”)—to begin a next round. However, in this case a next round does not actually occur. At line 14, G produces an acceptance-relevant action addressed forcefully to K. (G raises his voice, and as he speaks, he points first with his right hand and then his left toward K and jumps up from a slouched-on-the-table position to an upright sitting position.) By claiming authorship of the candidate completion he shows (insofar as authorship is worth claiming) that it is possibly an acceptable candidate. K seems to treat it in this way by reissuing the complete sentence. The complete sentence is accepted by G, and then it is again reissued loudly to other members of the group in a manner that shows it to be not a candidate answer, but a confirmed answer.

**A Source of Trouble in Answer-Turn Design**

How students design the preliminary component of an answer turn-constructional unit implicates the type of answer-part completion projected. Producing a question part that projects the proper sort of completion component can be a separate task from producing an answer-part completion itself. In Excerpt 13 students are answering the prediction question, “How will Grizzlesolve his problem?” The
teacher has been called over to the table by the students to indicate they have finished the assigned task (or so they think). After arriving at the table and finding that the students seem to have taken the question to mean "Will Grizzle solve his problem?" the teacher at line 10 directs them to continue working. At lines 16 and 17, the students begin again to answer the story-prediction question. And then again at lines 25 through 30 they repeat the question part (as a way to renew the search), but they do not get beyond it. That is, no candidate answer parts are forthcoming.

(13) [CIRC:Simson]

1 Simson: Tell me your prediction ((pointing to Juan))
2 Juan: nhurn ((turns head over page)) I think Grizzle (. ) solved his
3 problem. ((looks up at teacher and then looks at Daniel’s paper))
4 Simson: You think? (2) How.
5 Juan: I think (. ) uh, Guh, I don’t know ((looks up at teacher, teacher
6 looks at group))
7 Javi: [We have to guess that. huh. ] ((smiles and looks at teacher))
8 Erica: [Grizzle will solve this problem?]
9 Javi: That’s a hard one.
10 →Simson: oh well let’s get that done.
11 ((Teacher walks backwards away from table, but remains nearby))
12 Javi: That’s a hard one.
13 Simson: ((nods her head and waits))
14 Juan: It’s (thirteenth)
15 (3.0)
16 →Daniel: [I thin:::
17 →Erica: [I think that Grizzle will solve his problem because,
18 (5.0)
19 Daniel: Gr:::i::z::::e:ll
20 Juan: kn we use the book Miss Simson?
21 Simson: No::::::, ((walking towards the group)) You’r- This is a prediction.
22 [There’s no right or wrong, it’s jus how you- .h =
23 Erica: [uh oh
24 Simson: =it’s jus designed [to make you think]
25 Daniel: [I t h i : : n k ] Grizzle
26 (0.5)
27 →Erica: I think Grizzle will ss- will solve his problem because,
28 (3.0)
29 →Erica: a:n:d
30 →Juan: because.
31 (5.0)
32 Erica: ((begins to write)) Gri:::zzle solve his, (0.8) solve his problem
33 Simson: I think Grizzle will solve his (. ) big problem, all of you agree(d)
34 that he will, now try n tell me ho:w.
This problem can be diagnosed in interactional terms—that is, in terms of projected turn-constructional unit design. As in earlier excerpts, these students attempt to produce an answer by turning it into the activity of completing an utterance as a word search. Yet they do not seem to be making any headway. One way of diagnosing the trouble they are having in producing an answer is in terms of the mis-pairing of a “how” question with the beginning of an answer to a “why” question—that is, they are beginning a “because” answer. By producing a question part that ends in “because,” Erica at lines 17 and 27 projects a search for a reason—that is, a search for an answer part to a “why” question. After a fairly long pause, Erica attempts to deal with this problem by circumventing the projected completion format by producing a conjunction at line 29. This is aimed directly at getting past the restriction placed on the search by “because.” However, this tactic is rejected by Juan, who reasserts (with downward, terminal intonation) the earlier item, showing that the “and” gambit is not acceptable. So, they are back to the “why”-type question-part format. However, the paired question-part item for a “how” question is “by” (e.g., “I think Grizzle solves his problem by . . .”). Erica starts to write the beginning of the answer, but the teacher intervenes here. Rather than suggesting a different question-part format she proceeds in a different fashion, as can be seen in Excerpt 11.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The organization of activities into sequences of actions shapes participation. Each course of action shapes the opportunities to participate within it. And as participants make relevant various opportunities to participate through their actions, they thereby organize themselves.

One can distinguish various recognizable domains of social organization and talk-in-interaction in vernacular terms (e.g., “classroom interaction”). Though vernacular descriptions may be useful starting points for investigation (Jefferson, 1989), it may not be appropriate to automatically include these as a part of the technical description of the practices themselves. Vernacularly described activities cannot be assumed to be organizationally—that is, procedurally—distinct. Just how and to what extent an activity identified in vernacular terms is consequential for the organization of talk and other conduct ought to be the outcome of investigation and not taken as a settled matter at the outset.

There turn out to be quite general orders of organization discernible in instructional activities, but these orders of organization of talk-in-activity are not limited to or characterizable in terms of instructional activity. It is possible to distinguish at least two broad families of activities that entail distinct types of organization. Project-organized activity furnishes very different relevancies for participation than topically organized activity. The relevance of completion for project-organized activities furnishes one type of coherence that is absent from
topically organized activities (Schegloff, 1990). The recognizability of completion (i.e., what it will take to materially complete a project) and the projectability of that completion from the outset of the activity provide an ongoing relevancy in the case of project-organized interaction that is consequential for the organization of actions throughout the activity.

It is within the context of completable projects that students prepare written responses for assigned tasks such as defining story words, writing sentences using story words, and answering story-related questions. Answer-part searches demonstrate the ongoing relevance of the task at hand as a completable project for the participants. These searches take the form of a word search, but the distribution of participation within the search is shaped by the nature of the task at hand. In other words, the sequential elements remain the same as a word search, but the distribution of which participants can properly contribute each element is different. It is here that one can see the specific consequentiality for the organization of talk in interaction of a cooperative learning curriculum. The analysis of instructional activity at the level of detail at which the participants themselves organize it can result in the explication of how students construct their own literacy—or in the case of the specific practices examined in this report, one might say it results in a description of how they search for literacy.

This report examined aspects of “schooled literacy” acquisition that take place in the talk that is interwoven in the reading and writing that comprises literate action. I described one way question answering is turned into a group utterance completion task and how the design of answer beginnings provides a resource for utterance completion and thereby constitutes a procedure for producing complete-sentence written answers.

This site of talk-in-interaction provides a place to examine both speaking practices and the use of written texts. In the present study, I focused mainly on the talk that comes between reading and writing, yet reading and writing themselves can be social and collaborative activities, and talk can be organized by reference to these activities as well. These activities open avenues for further investigation of both literacy and talk-in-activity more generally.

Finally, insofar as this investigation, as an exercise in applied conversation analysis, describes how actual activities are produced by bilingual, Spanish-dominant students in a classroom language arts program, I hope that it can contribute directly to an understanding of language-minority persons engaged in a cooperative learning literacy program for those readers for whom these characterizations are relevant practical considerations.

REFERENCES


