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## Footing and identity in interaction at a conversation club

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### Abstract

Taking Goffman's concepts of *footing* and *production format* as a foundation, this study analyzes instances of interaction among native and non-native speakers of English in a conversation club at a language school. Following examples of how the production format of a turn may be established, the analysis focuses on the interactional work that is accomplished with different production formats in specific instances. The main generalization that can be drawn about the interactional work accomplished through this generic speaking practice is that it is varied and does not seem to be constrained by the exigencies of interaction in the conversation club. The analysis then shifts to how the establishment of production format provides a resource for the invocation and local constitution of three specific identities of the non-native speakers, as language learners, as language school students, and as members of a culture separate from the native speaker.

### Introduction

According to Goffman (1981), the global and lay roles of speaker and hearer are inadequate for an in-depth understanding of the relationships among participants in interaction. Participant roles can be analytically decomposed, allowing for different combinations of these roles, or different types of interactional *footing*. With regard to the global role of speaker,<sup>1</sup> this can be decomposed into the three roles of *animator*, "an individual active in the role of utterance production" (144), *author*, "someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" (144), and *principal*, "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone committed to what the words say" (144). These three roles, "taken together, can be said to tell us about the 'production format' of an utterance" (145).

Taking Goffman's (1981) insights into production format as a foundation, this paper presents analyses of interaction among native and non-native speakers of English participating in a conversation club (see below) at an English language school. Starting with specific examples of how the production format of an utterance may be established, this paper then moves on to investigate the interactional work that is accomplished through the use of different production formats in specific instances. This is then followed by an investigation of how specific participant identities – participants as language learners, participants as language school students, and participants as

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<sup>1</sup>Goffman (1981) also discusses in detail how the global role of hearer can be analytically decomposed.

members of different cultures – are invoked and locally constituted during and through segments of interaction which involve the establishment of different production formats.

## Data and Method

The data analyzed here come from recordings of interaction among native and non-native speakers at a conversation club at an English language school in Honolulu. The conversation club met weekly on a day on which there were no regularly scheduled classes. Non-native speakers attending the school as students, hereafter referred to as *students* or *student participants*, attended the conversation club on a voluntary basis. Native speakers, hereafter referred to as *conversation partners*, as they were labeled by the school, were paid for their participation. At the conversation club, typically between two and four student participants and one or two conversation partners formed conversation groups and talked together in English. (In all of the segments analyzed in this paper, there was always only one conversation partner.) With the oral consent of all participants and of the language school, the data were collected by audio-recording different conversation club groups over the course of two ten-week school terms.

The data thus collected were then transcribed and analyzed based on the transcription and micro-analytic techniques of conversation analysis, in particular as described in Pomerantz and Fehr (1997), Psathas (1995), and ten Have (1999). It should be noted that while the author considers this paper to lie within the realm of conversation analysis, the use of concepts from Goffman, in particular the concepts of animator, author, and principal, but also the concept of *face-work* (Goffman 1967) (see below), is rather unusual in conversation analytic work.<sup>2</sup> It should also be emphasized that, while transcripts are provided in the text of each segment of interaction analyzed in this paper, the primary data for the analysis are the audio-recordings of the conversation club interaction. All analyses are based on repeated listenings to these recordings.

## Examples of Footing in the Conversation Club

One way that the footing, or more specifically the production format, of a particular turn may be indicated is through explicit marking that it has been authored by another. This is illustrated in segment (1).

Segment (1)

P: my mom said you: not ready yet.

The first part of P's turn, "my mom said," marks what follows, "you not ready yet," as having been authored by another. The production format of the second part of the turn has P as the animator and her "mom" as the author. It is irrelevant whether P's "mom" actually spoke these exact words. What is relevant is that the second part of the turn is produced in such a way as to attribute these words to this person.

As segment (2) shows, the author can also be the same person as the current animator, but in a different time and place.

Segment (2)

1 P: my mom said you: not ready yet.

2 (0.4)

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<sup>2</sup> It is not, though, unknown. See Clayman (1992).

3 P: I said ha:lg (0.9) okay

The first part of P's turn in line 3 marks a shift of footing for what follows. Whereas in line 1, P's "mom" was marked as the author, in line 3, P herself is marked as the author of what follows. However, the production format of this turn is not as simple as the animator and the author being identical. Rather, the animator is P speaking now in the conversation club, with the author being P in a different time and place responding to something said by another person who is not currently present.

The words of another can also be animated without the use of verbs such as "said" to explicitly mark the production format, as is shown in segment (3). This segment also illustrates that the author whose words are being animated may be present.

Segment (3)

- 1 C: oh hh I'm: (0.3) compter ((two
- 2 syllables)) game.
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 Y: oh [::
- 5 M: [huh?
- 6 (0.9)
- 7 M: what?
- 8 C: [compute game
- 9 Y: [computer game.

In line 1, C is apparently attempting to utter the compound "computer game." However, M treats what C has said as problematic and initiates repair in line 5 and again in line 7. C completes the repair in line 8, but in overlap with this, Y also completes the repair in line 9, animating words which can be attributed to C as the author.

Segment (4) shows an example of the person animating the words speaking on the behalf of a group.

Segment (4)

- 1 E: but (0.3) chris uh kon uh:
- 2 Valentine's Day, (0.5) Korea and
- 3 Japan, (0.3) uh only women (0.6)
- 4 give (1.5) preth to prest (0.4) for
- 5 (.) to: (0.4) man.

E can be understood as the animator and author of what she says, but by mentioning "Korea and Japan" in lines 2-3, she can also be understood as marking what she is saying as spoken on behalf of the people of these two countries. E is deploying a category, which could be glossed as "the people of Korea and Japan," and producing talk for which the members of this category are the principal.

Finally, segment (5) may be understood as a case in which the animator, author, and principal are united in the same person in the same time and place.

Segment (5)

- 1 E: uh- I have a question=this is a
- 2 (0.3) chris (0.2) Christian
- 3 cus:to:m?

By prefacing her question, which is itself produced syntactically as a statement, with "I have a question," (line 1) E marks herself as the author and principal of the words she is uttering. Again, though, while the production format of the question may be understood as involving the combination of animator, author, and principal in the same person in the same time and place, there is also an ambiguity. What E says comes during a rather long stretch of talk which involves the

students asking their conversation partner questions about Valentine's Day as part of a class homework assignment. Though this is not explicitly marked, a possibility is that E thought of this question at a different time and place, in preparation for completing the assignment, and is using the question preface, "I have a question," to introduce something for which the author is E at an earlier time in a different context.

### Footing and Interactional Work

As Clayman (1992) has argued and clearly illustrated, the establishment of footing is a generic speaking practice that is deployed to accomplish specific interactional work in specific instances. In the news interviews analyzed by Clayman, this interactional work involves taking a neutralistic stance appropriate to news interviewers. As such, footing in these cases can be seen as working to meet the constraints and exigencies of the news interview context. In the conversation club interaction, the particular interactional work that is accomplished through turns which involve the establishment of footing, or more specifically the production format, is more varied, which is not surprising as there do not seem to be institutional constraints requiring participants to adopt particular stances.

Segment (6) provides a nice illustration of the type of interactional work that can be accomplished through turns involving the explicit marking of production format.

- Segment (6)
- 1 (2.7)
  - 2 P: I never try (0.4) never.
  - 3 T: you never trie[d TOEFL?]
  - 4 P: [no: ] uh-uh
  - 5 (0.5)
  - 6 T: you know I had tuh [take the TOEFL=
  - 7 P: [my: mo:m said
  - 8 T: =for h(h)ere
  - 9 ?: ha ha .h ha ha [.hh ha ((female))
  - 10 P: [my mom said you:
  - 11 not ready yet.
  - 12 (0.4)
  - 13 P: I said ha:lg [(0.9) [okay
  - 14 ?: [ha ha ha[ha ha
  - 15 ((female))

Prior to this segment, the participants, primarily P and T, have been discussing an upcoming opportunity to take the institutional TOEFL, a cheaper version of the English proficiency test which international applicants are required to take by many institutions of higher learning in the U.S. Following the rather long pause in line 1, P shifts the topic by mentioning that she has never tried, or will never try, something, which in the local context is likely to be the TOEFL, though it is ambiguous whether she is referring to the institutional TOEFL, or the more expensive regular version of the test, or both. Note that it is also ambiguous whether she is stating that she has never tried the TOEFL, leaving open the possibility that she may try it in the future, or that she will never try it. P's turn is hearably complete following the word "try," but this gets no immediate response and P then repeats the word "never" following a 0.4 second pause. At this point, T responds in a manner that removes some of the ambiguity of what P has said. In stating "you never tried TOEFL," T takes what P has said as referring only to the past, leaving open the possibility that she may try it in the future, and also takes what P has said as, on the one hand, tied to the discussion prior to the

pause in line 1, and on the other, as not referring specifically to the institutional TOEFL. In line 4, P confirms how T has taken what she has said with two negative tokens, “no” and “uh-uh.” The first is produced in overlap with the end of T's turn, before he has completed the articulation of “TOEFL,” while the second comes in the clear. With these tokens, P indicates that how T has taken what she has said in line 2 is unproblematic.

T's turn in line 3, though, does more than display how he has taken what P has said. The partial repetition and the rising intonation also index surprise, indicating that it is unexpected that P, as a student at the English language school who presumably has ambitions to enter an institution of higher learning in the U.S., has never tried the test. In addition, as P in line 2 treats the fact that she has never tried the TOEFL as something worth mentioning, she can also be heard to orient to this information as unexpected, or at least not obvious. Given that this information is taken as unexpected, and even surprising, P can be expected, following T's turn in line 3, to provide a reason for not having taken the test. This reason, though, is not forthcoming, resulting in a 0.5 second pause in line 5. Following this pause, T does not pursue a reason from P, but rather introduces his own surprising piece of information in lines 6 and 8, which is that he was required to take the TOEFL. Given that T is a conversation partner, presumably a native speaker of English,<sup>3</sup> such information would seem to be unexpected and surprising, and T can be heard to orient to this nature of what he says through his laughter token in line 8 as well as through the fact that he takes this information as something worth mentioning. In line 9, one of the other participants responds to what T has said by laughing, showing her orientation to what T has said as humorous, perhaps due to its being unexpected and surprising.

In line 7, though, P is pursuing her own line of talk. In overlap with the middle of T's turn, she produces: “my mom said,” but then abandons this, perhaps because it is in overlap. Her abandonment of what she is saying is only temporary, though, as she then recycles “my mom said” in line 10, in overlap with the laughter response to what T has said, and completes her turn by animating the words of her “mom,” placed in the role of author, in lines 10-11. As discussed in the previous section, this involves the explicit marking of the production format of the second part of her turn. After this gets no response, resulting in a pause in line 12, she then produces another turn which explicitly marks the production format, with herself, in another time and place in interaction with a currently non-present participant, as the author of the second part of her turn.

The interactional work accomplished by P's turns in lines 10-11 and line 13 is to provide the reason that she has never taken the TOEFL, which would seem to have been expected earlier, following T's turn in line 3, but was not forthcoming. In addition, it also has the effect of sequentially erasing T's turn in lines 6 and 8, as well as the response laughter in line 9. In abandoning her turn in line 7, P can be heard to orient to T as having laid claim to the floor, as being in the midst of a turn. However, after T has completed his turn, rather than responding to what T has said in lines 6 and 8, P produces a turn designed as a response to what T has said in line 3. While the reason that P gives, in turns involving the explicit marking of production format, serially follows T's second turn in this segment, it sequentially follows his first turn.

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<sup>3</sup>As is discussed in the next section, T immigrated to the U.S. with his family when he was six years old. (I learned this from something he told the student participants.) However, there is nothing in the way he talks that would indicate, to this author, that he is not a native speaker of English and he does not seem to categorize himself as a non-native speaker.

As discussed previously, production format can be established without explicit marking, as in segments (7) and (8), which involve the same participants, with segment (8) coming a short time after segment (7). (The name used in the transcript is a pseudonym.)

Segment (7)

- 1 (1.4)
- 2 H: Setsuko we ca:n research for (1.2)
- 3 for: for:
- 4 M: oh [for your class?
- 5 S: [(the class)?
- 6 S: ah-
- 7 H: mm
- 8 S: yeah
- 9 M: it's for your (.) for your class?
- 10 S: (but)=
- 11 H: =yes [oh-
- 12 M: [yeah no problem,

Segment (8)

- 1 H: yeah ou:r: (0.4) uh:- (0.3) we:
- 2 uh: same (.) uh we have (0.4) take
- 3 a: (0.4) [(.) ] same classes.=
- 4 ?: [°same°] ((female))
- 5 M: =mm-hm=
- 6 H: =°yes° .h [we:- (0.5) ] we=
- 7 ?: [(xx) (sometimes)] ((female))
- 8 H: = do::- (0.5) ha (0.5) our homework?
- 9 M: uh-huh
- 10 H: °we will° .h uh: (0.4) American?
- 11 or: conversation partner?
- 12 M: okay=
- 13 H: =some question? [(.) ] is about=
- 14 M: [sure]
- 15 H: =Valentine Day:s,=
- 16 M: =okay okay

The talk prior to segment (7) has involved the conversation partner, M, getting the names of the students in the group. Following the 1.4 second pause in line 1, H shifts the topic through a turn, in lines 2-3, explicitly addressed to another student participant. However, she shows difficulty completing her turn, pausing 1.2 seconds after saying “for” and then repeating “for” twice. In line 4, M completes H's turn for her, with the change-of-state token (Heritage 1984) at the beginning and the rising intonation at the end together indexing tentative understanding of what H is trying to say. The production format of M's “for your class” is rather complex, with M as the author of the words and H as the principal, but also with the rising intonation indexing the tentativeness of M's own understanding. S, who has been explicitly addressed by H, responds in lines 5 and 6, first, apparently, also providing a completion of H's turn, and then showing recognition of what H is talking about by saying “ah.” Following a further exchange between H and S in lines 7-8, M initiates repair in line 9 by asking if his tentative understanding is correct, which H confirms in line 11. M then responds in line 12 with “yeah no problem,” apparently acquiescing to a request that he takes H to have made. It is interesting to note that while H marks her turn in lines 2-3 as addressed to another student, M takes it as a request addressed to him.

Following segment (7), the talk returns to the task of M getting the names of the students in the group, prior to the start of segment (8). In this segment, H produces a fair amount of talk in lines 1-3, 6 and 8, 10-11, and 13 and 15. Due to the non-target-like nature of what H says, it is difficult to determine unambiguously how many possibly complete turns she produces in this segment, but she appears to produce four possibly complete turns, one in lines 1-3, a second in lines 6 and 8, a third in lines 10-11, and a fourth in lines 13 and 15. In lines 5 and 9, M produces continuers, orienting to H as being in the midst of a multi-unit stretch of talk. Although H produces nothing which can be heard as a direct request or a conventionally indirect request, as in segment (7) M orients to what H says as a request, producing tokens of acquiescence in lines 14 and 16, with his “okay” in line 12 being ambiguous as to whether it is a third continuer or a first token of acquiescence.

These two segments illustrate how the establishment of production format can be an interactive accomplishment. That H has made a request of M, which appears to be for M to participate in a homework assignment, emerges from the manner in which M takes H's talk. If H is understood as making a request, as M takes her to be doing, then in segment (8) her use of “our” (line 1), “we” (line 1), “same” (line 2), “we” (line 2), “same” (line 3), “we” (line 6, twice), “our” (line 8), and “we” (line 10), as well as “we” in line 2 of segment (7), can be understood as indicating that she is making the request on behalf of a group of which she is a member, specifically the group of student participants in this interaction who are in the same class and need to complete the same homework assignment. In other words, H is the author of her talk, but the group as a whole is the principal on whose behalf she is making her request. The interactional work can be understood as involving face-work, to adopt another term from Goffman (1967). In particular, following Brown and Levinson's (1978) expansion of the concept of face, H can be heard as working to protect her own positive face, as a request made on behalf of the group of students is less selfish than would be a request made on behalf of herself only. In addition, H can be heard as working to protect M's negative face, as M, in his institutional role as conversation partner, is responsible for talking with all student members of this conversation club group, something which he would be less able to do if the request to participate in the homework assignment had been made on behalf of H alone, but which he is quite able to do with the request being made on behalf of all student members of this group. Acquiescing to the request thus puts minimal additional constraints of M's freedom of action in his institutional role as conversation partner.

As the interaction which follows segments (7) and (8) involves the student participants asking M questions about Valentine's Day, questions which may be predetermined, there appears to be nothing problematic with M taking H's talk as being a request made on behalf of the group. Segments (9) and (10) illustrate some of this questioning.

Segment (9)

1 (0.6)

2 E: uh- I have a question=this is a

3 (0.3) chris (0.2) Christian

4 cus:to:m?=  
 5 M: =no not Christian

Segment (10)

1 M: so m::en give to: (.) women.

2 E: [yes

3 ?: [yes ((female))

4 M: oh::

5 S: mm (0.3) okay ah- ja may I ask a

6 qu(h)est(h)ion? (t)heh=

- 7 M: =sure sure sure=  
 8 S: =mm .hh uh- (0.3) do you send  
 9 Valentine Day's card to:- (0.4)  
 10 anyone?  
 11 (0.7)  
 12 M: uh: (0.3) no ha ha .hh

The talk prior to segment (9) has involved M answering a question from a student other than E. Following the 0.6 second pause in line 1, E claims the floor by saying “uh” and then stating “I have a question.” She then immediately begins to produce her question, though the second half is not produced without difficulty. As discussed in the previous section, the production format of E's question, which she explicitly marks by the question preface, involves E as the animator, author, and principal, though the author may also be understood as E in a different time and place, if the question has been determined prior to the conversation club meeting. The talk prior to segment (10) has involved a discussion, prompted by student questions, of different Valentine's Day gift-giving customs in different countries, with the talk in lines 1-4, and possibly S's “mm” at the start of line 5, involving the closing down of talk about White Day, a day (March fourteenth) in Japan which is related to Japanese Valentine's Day gift-giving customs. Following a 0.3 second pause, S claims the floor by saying “okay ah ja” and then asking permission to ask a question and laughing. M grants permission in line 7 and then S asks her question, following some hesitation, in lines 8-10. As with E in segment (9), the production format of S's question, explicitly marked by her preface in lines 5-6, involves S as animator, author, and principal, though again the author can be understood as S in a different time and place.

Though the request for M to participate in this homework assignment, made in segments (7) and (8) above, was made on behalf of the group, each student participant in the group has different questions and must claim the opportunity to ask their questions. The question prefaces in segments (9) and (10) not only mark the production format of the questions that follow, they also partially accomplish the interactional work of claiming such an opportunity for individual students, of marking a transition to a new question. In segment (9), the preface accomplishes this in conjunction with “uh.” In segment (10), the preface accomplishes this in conjunction with “okay ah ja.” It is interesting to note that S not only uses the English “okay,” but also the Japanese “ja” to index her orientation to the prior discussion having been brought to a close,<sup>4</sup> opening up an opportunity to claim the floor for a new question.

Segment (11) illustrates the accomplishment of very different interactional work.

- Segment (11)  
 1 M: how bout you (0.3) what's your  
 2 hobby.  
 3 (0.6)  
 4 C: oh hh I'm: (0.3) compter ((two  
 5 syllables)) game.  
 6 (0.5)  
 7 Y: oh[::  
 8 M: [huh?  
 9 (0.9)

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<sup>4</sup> My own intuition as a proficient non-native speaker of Japanese tells me that one of the uses of the discourse marker “ja,” and the related “dewa,” is to index transition to a new topic, as it appears to be doing here. This intuition has been confirmed by native speakers familiar with the study of interaction, but I have not been able to find any discourse analytic or conversation analytic work on the use of this particular Japanese discourse marker.

10 M: what?  
 11 C: [compute game  
 12 Y: [computer game.  
 13 M: oh computer game.=  
 14 C: =ye[:s  
 15 M: [oh: (there you go) what kind of  
 16 game.  
 17 (0.8)

In lines 1-2, M asks C a question. C does not respond immediately, though, resulting in a 0.6 second pause before he answers the question. This answer gets no immediate response, but in line 7, Y displays understanding of what C has said by producing an elongated change-of-state token. In overlap with this, M indexes lack of understanding by initiating repair in line 8. This, though, gets no response, resulting in a 0.9 second pause in line 9, and M reinitiates repair in line 10. The repair is then completed simultaneously by both C and Y in lines 11 and 12, to which M responds by producing his own change-of-state token and repeating “computer game” in line 13, indexing that he has now come to understand what he previously could not. Following C’s confirmation in line 14, M goes on to comment on C’s answer and to ask a follow-up question.

As discussed in the previous section, the production format of Y’s turn in line 12 involves herself as animator and C as author and principal. The interactional work accomplished by this turn is the completion of repair. The trouble source targeted by M’s repair initiations in lines 8 and 10 is C’s answer in lines 4-5, so it is rather unusual that Y chooses to complete the repair. However, the repair completion itself has become problematic, as M’s first initiation (line 8) has received no response, prompting him to reinitiate (line 10). In addition, with her change-of-state token in line 7, Y indicates that she understands C’s answer to M’s question, so that what is targeted as a trouble source by M is not treated as a trouble source by Y. With the completion of the repair having become problematic, but with the trouble source not being problematic for Y, Y is in a position to aid C by completing his repair for him, animating his words on his behalf. The repair is successfully completed in lines 11 and 12, but the possibility remains that, had Y not stepped in to complete the repair, C would not have been able to successfully complete it on his own. In any case, none of the participants can be heard to treat Y’s repair completion as problematic and the interaction continues as M comments on C’s answer to his question and asks his follow-up question.

Segment (12) presents a final case of interactional work that may be accomplished with a particular production format.

Segment (12)  
 1 M: [(xx)  
 2 E: [but (0.3) chris uh kon uh:  
 3 Valentine’s Day, (0.5) Korea and  
 4 Japan, (0.3) uh only women (0.6)  
 5 give (1.5) preth to prest (0.4) for  
 6 (.) to: (0.4) man.  
 7 M: oh yeah? (.) [so the men don’t=  
 8 S: [(women)  
 9 M: =give to (0.5) women?  
 10 (1.3)

As discussed in the previous section, by saying “Korea and Japan” in lines 3-4, E marks her turn as being produced on behalf of a group, which could be glossed as “the people of Korea and Japan.” E is the author of what she is animating, but this group can be understood as the principal. In this

segment, E is drawing a contrast between Valentine's Day gift-giving customs in, on the one hand, Korea and Japan and, on the other, a different country or culture, presumably the U.S., as M is from, and a cultural member of, the U.S. M responds to what E has said by treating it as new information, saying "oh yeah" with rising intonation, and then asking for clarification of what has been implied, that "the men don't give to women." By responding in this way, M can be heard to treat the information that E has provided about "Korea and Japan" as contrasting with Valentine's Day gift-giving customs that he is familiar with. The interactional work that is accomplished through the use of a production format in which the group "the people of Korea and Japan" is the principal is to make it clear that E is drawing a cultural contrast.

Producing turns with different production formats is a generic speaking practice that accomplishes specific interactional work as it is used in specific instances. Based on the examples in this section, it appears that the main generalization that can be drawn about the interactional work accomplished through this generic speaking practice is that it is varied and does not seem to be constrained by the exigencies of interaction in the conversation club. However, as will be illustrated in the next section, an understanding of the interactional work that is accomplished can provide a foundation for understanding how this generic speaking practice is deployed in the invocation and local constitution of particular participant identities.

### Footing and the Constitution of Identity

The concern of this section turns to how footing is involved in invoking and, more importantly, constituting particular identities. In particular, this section focuses on the identity of the student participants as 1) language learners, 2) language school students, and 3) as members of a culture separate from that of the conversation partner. Analysis of how this last type of identity is invoked and constituted also illustrates what Mori (2003) has termed the construction of *interculturality*.

***Being a language learner.*** Some of the ways that an analyst may feel justified in classifying the student participants in the conversation club are as non-native speakers, second language speakers, or second language learners. However, while such labels may be perfectly accurate, they do not necessarily reflect how the participants view themselves. More importantly, even if the student participants view themselves as belonging to categories such as second language learner, which does seem to be the case, it does not follow that this identity is always relevant.<sup>5</sup> This subsection looks at cases in which the identity of being a second language learner is made relevant, either through being explicitly invoked or through more subtle means, and how being a language learner is locally constituted.<sup>6</sup>

Segments (13) and (14), which were not analyzed above in terms of production format, provide examples of how the identity of second language learner can be invoked, by either the conversation partner or a student participant.

Segment (13)

- 1 F: if I- (0.4) just spea- (.) speak
- 2 Japane:se here. (1.0) not (1.6)
- 3 no::- (1.2)

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<sup>5</sup>I have argued elsewhere (Hauser 2003) that the role of language learner is *omnirelevant* (Sacks 1992) in the interaction in the conversation club. This does not entail, though, that it is always relevant.

<sup>6</sup>By the term *locally constituted*, I am referring to how an identity is constituted in a specific instance of interaction. What could be labeled as the same identity, e.g., second language learner, could be constituted differently in different specific instances.

- 4 T: point=  
 5 F: =same as- no point.  
 6 T: yeah  
 7 (0.5)  
 8 F: just same as (.) Japan.  
 9 T: yeah yeah  
 10 F: °(so)° (0.5) why: why did I come  
 11 here.  
 Segment (14)  
 1 T: I got this job just cuz (0.7) I  
 2 don't know I sorta: know: how you  
 3 guys feel (.) [just because (.) you=  
 4 ?: [mm  
 5 T: =know like I have f:our older  
 6 brothers and they're all (0.7)  
 7 really old yeah, (.) [so (0.4)  
 8 ?: [mm  
 9 T: when they came here they they were  
 10 like you guys

In segment (13), F orients to being a first language speaker of Japanese who came “here” (lines 2 and 11) as a language learner. She states that coming “here” would have “no point” (line 5) if she were to speak Japanese, implying that her purpose for coming “here” is to speak English. The conversation partner, T, displays his ability to empathize with what F is saying, producing “yeah” (line 6) and “yeah yeah” (line 9) and by helping F complete a word search in line 4. The production format of line 4 is worth examining more closely. In lines 2-3, F displays difficulty finding the word she wants, saying “not,” pausing 1.6 seconds, saying “no” in an elongated manner and cutting off, and then pausing again. After the pause has continued for 1.2 seconds, T offers the word “point.” The production format of this turn involves T as the author, as he is not animating something that F has said, and F as the principal, as “point” is being offered as the word that F is searching for to complete her description of her own feelings. In line 5, F cuts off what she has started to say and accepts the word that T has offered, saying “no point.” Through her explanation of why she came “here,” F can be heard as orienting to an identity as a language learner, an orientation which T finds unproblematic.

In segment (14), T is explaining why he got the job that he has at the language school.<sup>7</sup> In lines 2-3, he classifies the other participants in the group as belonging together as “you guys” and claims the ability to empathize with them, saying “I sort of know how you guys feel.” He then provides a reason for his ability to empathize in lines 3, 5-7, and 9-10. In providing this reason, he states that he has “four older brothers” (lines 5-6) who are “really old” (line 7) and that at one time, “when they came here” (line 9), they were similar to the student participants, “they were like you guys” (lines 9-10). In order to understand what T is talking about here, it is helpful to know that he is actually a first language speaker of Japanese who moved to the U.S. with his family when he was six years old. As he provides his reason for being able to empathize with the student participants, he somewhat implicitly categorizes his brothers as, at one time, being second language learners of English. In stating that “they were like you guys,” he can also be heard as placing the student participants in the same category, so that “you guys” can be heard as “you guys who are trying to

<sup>7</sup> Unlike other conversation partners, T's job at the language school includes responsibilities besides participation in the conversation club.

learn English in the U.S.,” and thus as orienting to the identity of the student participants as second language learners. Note also, though, that T does not place himself in the same category, but rather simply claims the ability to empathize with members of the category. According to supposedly objective analyst’s criteria, it may be possible to categorize T as a non-native speaker, but this does not seem, at least in this instance, to be a way that T categorizes himself.

Segments (13) and (14) not only involve the invocation of identity as second language learners, but also involve the local constitution of what a second language learner is. In segment (13), being a language learner is constituted as someone who needs opportunities to speak the language being learned, as well as someone who may need assistance, such as that provided by T in line 4 and accepted by F in line 5, with using the language. In segment (14), being a language learner is constituted as belonging to a group the members of which T’s own life experience allows him to empathize with. In addition, it is constituted as involving age, perhaps as being too old to simply pick up the language naturally as a child. Segment (15), which was analyzed in previous sections, also illustrates how being a language learner may be constituted.

- Segment (15)
- 1 (2.7)
  - 2 P: I never try (0.4) never.
  - 3 T: you never trie[d TOEFL?]
  - 4 P: [no: ] uh-uh
  - 5 (0.5)
  - 6 T: you know I had tuh [take the TOEFL=
  - 7 P: [my: mo:m said
  - 8 T: =for h(h)ere
  - 9 ?: ha ha .h ha ha [.hh ha ((female))
  - 10 P: [my mom said you:
  - 11 not ready yet.
  - 12 (0.4)
  - 13 P: I said ha:lg [(0.9) [okay
  - 14 ?: [ha ha ha [ha ha
  - 15 ((female))

As discussed previously, the production format of the second half of P’s turn in lines 10-11 involves herself as animator and her “mom” as author and principal, while the production format of the second half of her turn in line 13 involves herself in the conversation club interaction as animator and herself in a different time and place as the author. P’s reporting of this exchange between herself and her mother, which provides the reason that she has not taken the TOEFL, implicitly invokes her identity as a second language learner, constituting this identity as involving progress towards a particular goal, in this case being “ready” (line 11) to take an important language proficiency test. Note also that it is implied through the words of “mom” that, while this goal has not “yet” (line 11) been reached, it eventually will be. Finally, as a second language learner, P is constituted as someone who is in a position to have her language proficiency judged by another, presumably a more competent speaker, and who must accept this judgment.

Segment (16) shows how even a relatively brief turn can involve the local constitution of different participants as different types of second language learners.

- Segment (16)
- 1 M: how bout you (0.3) what’s your
  - 2 hobby.
  - 3 (0.6)

4 C: oh hh I'm: (0.3) compter ((two  
 5 syllables)) game.  
 6 (0.5)  
 7 Y: oh [::  
 8 M: [huh?  
 9 (0.9)  
 10 M: what?  
 11 C: [compute game  
 12 Y: [computer game.  
 13 M: oh computer game.=  
 14 C: =ye[:s  
 15 M: [oh: (there you go) what kind of  
 16 game.  
 17 (0.8)

As discussed previously, the production format of Y's turn in line 12 involves herself as animator and C as author and principal. C can be heard as having difficulty keeping up his side of the interaction between himself and M, as he does not respond to M's first initiation of repair in line 8, this prompting M to reinitiate repair, following a 0.9 second pause, in line 10. By stepping in to complete the repair for C, albeit in overlap with C's own completion, Y can be heard to be orienting to this difficulty, providing C with the help he needs to act as a competent participant in the interaction. If this difficulty with participating in the interaction is understood as a result C's being a second language learner, then Y's turn in line 12 can be understood as constituting C as someone who needs assistance using his second language, even assistance from another second language learner. Even though Y herself is a student participant, she can here be heard to behave as someone with enough competence in her second language to provide help to someone less competent.

***Being a language school student.*** In the interaction in the conversation club, the participants can at times be heard to orient to the identity of language school student, which is not logically equivalent to being a second language learner, as one may learn a language without attending school.<sup>8</sup> In segment (15) above, the fact that P has never tried the TOEFL is treated as surprising by T, prompting P to, eventually, provide a reason for this state of affairs. Both T and P can be heard to orient to P as a student at this particular language school, a school where students are encouraged to take the TOEFL and which many students eventually leave to enter an institution of higher learning in the U.S. In segments (17) and (18), there is a much more explicit orientation to the student participants being students.

Segment (17)  
 1 (1.4)  
 2 H: Setsuko we ca:n research for (1.2)  
 3 for: for:  
 4 M: oh [for your class?  
 5 S: [(the class)?  
 6 S: ah-  
 7 H: mm  
 8 S: yeah  
 9 M: it's for your (.) for your class?  
 10 S: (but)=  
 11 H: =yes [oh-

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<sup>8</sup> It would also seem to be possible to attend a language school but not actually to learn any of the language.

12 M: [yeah no problem,  
Segment (18)  
1 H: yeah ou:r: (0.4) uh:- (0.3) we:  
2 uh: same (.) uh we have (0.4) take  
3 a: (0.4) [(.) ] same classes.=  
4 ?: [°same°] ((female))  
5 M: =mm-hm=  
6 H: =°yes° .h [we:- (0.5) ] we=  
7 ?: [(xx) (sometimes)] ((female))  
8 H: = do::- (0.5) ha (0.5) our homework?  
9 M: uh-huh  
10 H: °we will° .h uh: (0.4) American?  
11 or: conversation partner?  
12 M: okay=  
13 H: =some question? [(.) ] is about=  
14 M: [sure]  
15 H: =Valentine Day:s,=  
16 M: =okay okay

As discussed previously, H can be heard in both these segments as speaking on behalf of the group, that is, with the group as principal. The participants not only treat H as making a request on behalf of the group, but also indicate that the request is on behalf of the group as a group of language school students taking the same class. This can be heard in M's "for your class" in lines 4 and 9 of segment (17) and in H's "same classes" in line 3 of segment (18). As students, the members of the group have a "homework" (segment (18), line 8) assignment for which they need the assistance of another, an "American" (segment (18), line 10) or a "conversation partner" (segment (18), line 11).

As the interaction continues following segment (18), the student participants take turns, in the role of language school students completing a homework assignment, asking questions of M about Valentine's Day, as illustrated in segments (19) and (20).

Segment (19)  
1 (0.6)  
2 E: uh- I have a question=this is a  
3 (0.3) chris (0.2) Christian  
4 cus:to:m?=  
5 M: =no not Christian  
Segment (20)  
1 M: so m::en give to: (.) women.  
2 E: [yes  
3 ?: [yes ((female))  
4 M: oh::  
5 S: mm (0.3) okay ah- ja may I ask a  
6 qu(h)est(h)ion? (t)heh=  
7 M: =sure sure sure=  
8 S: =mm .hh uh- (0.3) do you send  
9 Valentine Day's card to:- (0.4)  
10 anyone?  
11 (0.7)  
12 M: uh: (0.3) no ha ha .hh

In each of these segments, one of the student participants claims a turn to ask M one of their own questions. In segment (19), E does this by producing “uh I have a question” and then immediately asking her question. In segment (20), S does this by producing “okay ah ja may I ask a question,” waiting for a response from M, and then asking her question. As discussed in previous section, the student participants can be heard to be treating the prior discussion, involving M’s answer to another student’s question, as complete and as there being an opportunity for a new question related to the homework assignment. In each of these four segments ((17), (18), (19), and (20)), the student participants’ identity as language school students is invoked, either explicitly, as in segments (17) and (18), or implicitly through the taking of turns to ask their questions, and locally constituted as involving the need to complete a homework assignment with the assistance of M. In addition, the conversation club is treated as a legitimate place to complete the homework assignment, just as M is treated as a legitimate person to request assistance from. For his part, in acquiescing to the request to participate, in answering the questions, and in not attempting to move the interaction on to something else, M can also be heard to share this orientation.

***The construction of interculturality.*** As Mori (2003) has argued and empirically demonstrated, rather than being taken as given when participants in interaction come from different cultural backgrounds, interculturality can be understood as constructed by the participants locally as they orient to these different backgrounds. In segments (17) through (20) above, the participants can be heard to have such an orientation as they complete a homework assignment which involves asking a member of a different culture questions about Valentine’s Day.<sup>9</sup> In particular, in segment (19), as E asks a question about whether there is a relationship between Valentine’s Day and Christianity, and as M answers that there is no such relationship, these two participants are oriented to the possession of different cultural knowledge, with E lacking knowledge of whether there is a connection between Valentine’s Day and Christianity and M possessing such knowledge. Neither of these two participants, or the other participants in the group, appear to treat this difference in the possession of cultural knowledge as problematic. The cultural identity of E and M is locally constituted as involving the possession of different cultural knowledge.

Segment (21) illustrates an interesting case of the construction of not only interculturality, but what could also be termed as *intraculturality*.

- Segment (21)
- 1 M: [(xx)
  - 2 E: [but (0.3) chris uh kon uh:
  - 3 Valentine’s Day, (0.5) Korea and
  - 4 Japan, (0.3) uh only women (0.6)
  - 5 give (1.5) preth to prest (0.4) for
  - 6 (. ) to: (0.4) man.
  - 7 M: oh yeah? (. ) [so the men don’t=
  - 8 S: [(women)
  - 9 M: =give to (0.5) women?
  - 10 (1.3)

Prior to this segment, the interaction has involved a discussion of Valentine’s Day gift-giving customs in the U.S. As discussed previously, the production format of E’s turn in lines 2-6 involves E speaking on behalf of “Korea and Japan” (lines 3-4), or with the people of these two countries being the principal. E introduces what she is about to say with “but” (line 2), indicating that she is

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<sup>9</sup> Less locally, the teacher who gave the students this assignment must also have been oriented to the students being members of foreign cultures.

building a contrast. This is followed by a pause and then some talk that is difficult to interpret, “chris uh kon uh,” before she indicates that she is still talking about “Valentine’s Day” in line 3. Following another pause, she then explicitly marks that she is talking about “Korea and Japan,” in contrast, given the prior context, to the U.S. Finally, in lines 4-6, she states, with a fair amount of disfluency, what the gift-giving custom for Valentine’s Day is in “Korea and Japan,” which is, somewhat simplified, that “only women” (line 4) “give” (line 5) “to man” (line 6). In lines 7 and 9, M responds to this in a way that treats it as something which he has not heard before. At the beginning of line 7, he produces “oh yeah” with rising intonation, indexing that this is new knowledge for him. He then seeks confirmation of what has been implied by E by saying, with rising intonation, “so the men don’t give to women.”

Both E and M are constructing interculturality, as E introduces this information about gift-giving customs in “Korea and Japan” as contrasting with gift-giving customs in the U.S., and as M responds to this information as being something which he has not heard before. It is also interesting to note, though, that in the way that E introduces the contrasting gift-giving customs, in particular in the way that she marks the production format as speaking on behalf of “Korea and Japan,” E also constructs intraculturality. She presents these two different countries as sharing the same Valentine’s Day gift-giving customs, implying a cultural relationship. In addition, E, who is Japanese, presents herself as having knowledge of Valentine’s Day gift-giving customs in Korea. Looking at this segment alone, it seems rather mysterious that E should choose to speak on behalf of “Korea and Japan,” rather than just on behalf of “Japan.” As it turns out, though, two of the student participants in this group, E and S, are Japanese, while the third, H, is Korean, with all three participants asking M questions in order to complete their homework assignment. By designing the production format of her utterance as she does, E constructs the three student participants as sharing the same cultural background, at least as far as these gift-giving customs are concerned. That is, she constructs intraculturality among the three student participants. The cultural identity of these three student participants is locally constituted as being shared and in contrast with the cultural identity of the conversation partner.

Needless to say, the invocation and local constitution of identity are not directly tied to the establishment of the production format. However, this generic speaking practice provides one resource for invoking and constituting identity in interaction. An understanding of the interactional work that is accomplished through this generic speaking practice can provide the foundation for understanding what might be called the identity work that this practice is used to accomplish in particular instances. This provides that analyst with a valuable viewpoint on the construction of identity in face-to-face interaction.

## **Conclusion**

The interaction analyzed in this paper may seem to be a rather uncommon type of interaction, with the student participants, on the one hand, and the conversation partners, on the other, often never having met before, but nevertheless getting together and talking for an hour or more, ostensibly having no other business than providing opportunities for the student participants to practice and, hopefully, learn English. However, this type of interaction may not be as uncommon as it first appears. To give a few examples, many English-language schools, at least in the U.S., have programs similar to the conversation club; in so-called communicative language classrooms, much of the interaction among students or between students and the teacher may involve this sort of free conversation; and language learners themselves may organize meetings for the purpose of practicing their second language.

The purpose of the conversation club, according to the administration of the language school that sponsored it, was to provide students with opportunities to practice and learn English conversation. However, understanding what actually happens in the interaction at the conversation club, or in similar contexts such as those listed in the previous paragraph, and understanding how this interaction may (or may not) differ from “normal” conversation, requires research and careful analysis. This paper has demonstrated how a generic speaking practice, the establishment, explicitly or not, of the production format of what is spoken, is deployed in such interaction. The specific interactional work that is accomplished through the use of different production formats in specific instances is varied and does not seem to be designed to meet particular constraints or exigencies of the conversation club. However, an understanding of the interactional work that is accomplished in specific instances with this generic speaking practice provides a foundation for understanding how particular identities, identities which do seem to be closely related to the context of the conversation club, can be invoked and locally constituted during and through interaction.

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