Epistemics, action formation, and other-initiation of repair: the case of partial questioning repeats

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It has been forty years now since Gail Jefferson (1972) published her groundbreaking chapter titled "Side Sequences," wherein she identified the *questioning repeat* as a class of practices for implementing other-initiation of repair. The current chapter examines one sub-class of questioning repeats that involve repeating part of a trouble-source unit (vs. a full repeat; cf. Robinson and Kevoe-Feldman, 2010), virtually identically (vs. being modified; cf. Jefferson, 1972; Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 1996, 1997; Stivers, 2005), with non-astonished prosody (vs. astonished; cf. Selting, 1996), and with unit-final-rising intonation (vs. falling or "level"; cf. Bolden, 2009; Jefferson, 1972). For economy, this sub-class practice will be referred to as a *partial questioning repeat*. For two examples, see examples 1–2. In example 1, Moe’s partial questioning repeat of the noun phrase “My heater?” (line 12) initiates repair and identifies Bob’s “your heater” (line 11) as the trouble source.

(01) BUS
01 Moe: How’s your bus running otherwise.
02 (0.5)
03 Bob: Pretty good I need a tune up real bad, but .
04 [dah .]
05 Moe: [Mm hm,]
06 (0.4)
07 Bob: It’s runnin’ real good.
08 (.)
09 Moe: (>Mm=hm,/<Mm,<)
10 (1.2)

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11 Bob: How’s your heater been working these last few weeks.
12 Moe: → My heater?
13 Bob: Yeah= in your car.
14 Moe: Thuh brake?
15 Bob: Yeah=s or do you use it that (m[uch])
16 Moe: [Qh]: yeah I been
17 >got a lot a (< ) cubic feet a girl in there,.
18 Bob: Yeah.

In example 2, Mom’s partial questioning repeat of the noun/proper name “Playboy?” (line 11) initiates repair and identifies Ula’s “Playboy” (line 7) as the trouble source (Playboy is an American men’s magazine featuring photographs of nude women, as well as journalism and fiction).

(02) PLAYBOY

01 Mom: hh Well this is something very important.
02 Ula: h [Yeah ]
03 Mom: [We go] thuh Washing=[onian,< (a magazine))
04 Ula: Uh huh=hh
05 (0.4)
06 Mom: #Ahh
07 Ula: But did you get [Playboy, ] (a magazine)
08 Mom: [They 5 s]aied-
09 (0.4)
10 Ula: H=hhh
11 Mom: → Playboy?
12 Ula: H hh Yeah. a girl in my class was in it.
13 (1.3)
14 Mom: Wh(h)h(h)h(h)=huh huh [huh huh]
15 Ula: [I ↑tq.] did you↓ about
16 th#at.#

This chapter attempts to answer the question of how recipients of partial questioning repeats – such as Bob in example 1 at line 13, who is the recipient of Moe’s “My heater?” (line 12), and Ula in example 2 at line 12, who is the recipient of Mom’s “Playboy?” (line 11) – understand the particular, contextualized social action that such repeats are designed to accomplish. As such, this chapter contributes to a core concern of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysis (Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 2007) with explaining members’ socially organized methods for designing recognizable social action, which Schegloff (ibid.) articulated as the analytic problem of action formation. This chapter argues that a necessary part of the answer to the aforementioned question involves epistemics, or what interactants know about each other’s knowledge (Heritage and Raymond, 2005; Raymond and Heritage, 2006; Heritage, 2012a, 2012b; Stivers, Mandada, and Steensig, 2011). Prior to analysis, this chapter begins by reviewing partial questioning repeats and how they bring into relief the problem of action formation, and then presents the chapter’s central arguments regarding epistemics.

Practices of other-initiation of repair have the formal-organizational goal – that is, relative to the organization of talk-in-interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977) – of resolving some type of “problem” or “trouble” with prior talk. Conversation analysis identifies “trouble” post hoc based on participants’ orientations (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977), and the range of repair-related troubles is vast; some empirically robust categories of “trouble” include that with speaking (e.g., mispronunciation, or saying something untrue, irrelevant, inappropriate, or hurtful; Svennevig, 2008), hearing, and understanding. Although the initiation of repair by others can itself be characterized as an action, this type/level of action is a general (i.e., non-particularized, non-contextualized) formal-organizational one (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977). A concurrent yet different type/level of action involves what a practice of other-initiation of repair is being used to do in situ, that is, embedded within all relevant particularities of “context,” liberally defined (re. context, see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1987).

The final-rising intonation on partial questioning repeats contributes to their being understood as types of interrogatives (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik, 1985). Grammatically, a partial questioning repeat is a request for (dis)confirmation that initiates a sequence of action that makes (dis)confirmation conditionally relevant (re. conditional relevance, see Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). However, the interactional constraints of grammar can be different from those of action, and participants privilege the latter over the former (Schegloff, 2007). The particular action implemented by a partial questioning repeat is the resolution of a particular trouble (e.g., speaking, hearing, understanding) toward some particular interactional and relational/interpersonal end (re. relational/interpersonal dimensions, see Jefferson, 1987; Pomerantz and Mandelbaum, 2005; Robinson, 2006). Recipients must understand the particularities of repair-initiation actions in order to relevantly respond to them.

For a variety of formal-organizational reasons, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the composition and position of practices of other-initiation of repair and trouble type (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). This raises the question of how participants work within formal-organizational constraints – such as the organization of other-initiation of repair, which is an “organization of action” (Schegloff, 1997: 504) – to design recognizable particular actions. As noted earlier, this is what Schegloff referred to as the analytic problem of action formation: “[H]ow are the resources of the language, the body, the environment of the interaction, and position in the
interaction fashioned into conformations designed to be, and to be recognizable by recipients as, particular actions" (ibid., p. xiv, emphasis added).

The problem of action formation is brought into stark relief by partial questioning repeats in the following way. A survey of prior research (ranging across English, Finnish, Korean, and Mandarin conversation) reveals that, even when partial questioning repeats—which already have a similar unit design/composition (i.e., a virtually identical repeat of the trouble-source unit) and a similar unit prosody (i.e., a non-chance format with unifinal-rising intonation)—are positioned after similar trouble-source-unit actions (e.g., after requests for information, as in examples 1–2, above), share similar sequential positions (e.g., a post-first insertion sequence, as in examples 1–2; Schegloff, 2007), target similar grammatical objects (e.g., nouns/noun phrases, as in examples 1–2), and are produced in similar environments of non-embodiment (e.g., over the telephone, as are examples 1–2), partial questioning repeats can be produced and understood as implementing radically different particular social actions (Jefferson, 1972; Sorjonen, 1996; Kim, 2002, 2003; Koshik, 2005; Wu, 2006; Svennevik, 2008). For instance, in example 1 (above), Bob's clarifying response (which is prefaced by a confirmation, Yeah, which addresses the grammatical constraints of the partial questioning repeat), "Yeah—in your car." (line 13), displays his orientation to Moe's partial questioning repeat as indexing his trouble understanding Bob's reference to "your heater" (line 11) whereas in example 2 (above), Ula's justificatory response (which is again prefaced by a confirmation), "Yeah, a girl in my class was in it." (line 12), displays her orientation to Mom's partial questioning repeat as indexing her trouble accounting for the relevance of the soft-core-pornographic magazine Playboy.

While acknowledging that (at least) unit composition, unit position, embodiment, and environment are essential resources for action formation, the case of partial questioning repeats suggests that they are not (always) sufficient resources for the production of recognizable social action. This insufficiency is evident regarding other actions as well, such as asserting/requesting information (Heritage, 2012a), soliciting accounts for human conduct (Bolden and Robinson, 2011), and counter-informing (Robinson, 2009). These, of course, other resources for action formation, many of which can be subsumed within "perhaps the most general principle which particularizes conversational interactions, that of recipient design," which refers to "a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974: 727, emphasis original). That and how practices of action systematically involve the principle of recipient design is a nascent area of investigation within conversation analysis and a trove for future research. However, one resource for action formation, which is a robust facet of recipient design, is the epistemics of social relationships (or epistemics for short).

This chapter argues that, at least in the case of partial questioning repeats, epistemics is a necessary resource for action formation. Specifically, this chapter argues that, in order for a recipient to understand the particular social action being accomplished by a partial questioning repeat, the recipient must determine how much the producer knows about the repeated item in context, that is, how thoroughly, accurately, and/or authoritatively the producer understands the meaning of the repeated item in the context of the unit of talk that contains the putative trouble (e.g., in example 2, above, Ula, as the recipient of Mom's partial questioning repeat, must determine how much Mom knows about or understands the meaning of the repeated item, Playboy, as it was used by Ula in her trouble-source question: But did you get Playboy?). Along these lines, this chapter attempts to support two arguments. The first argument is as follows: If the recipient figures that the producer has knowledge of the repeated item in context—in which case we will say that the recipient figures that the producer is in a [K+] position relative to the repeated item—then the recipient will be more likely to recognize the partial questioning repeat as implementing a particular class of repair-related actions, which will be referred to as [K+] actions. [K+] actions index their producers' "disagreement" (for lack of a better term) with the repeated item (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977; Pomerantz, 1984), where "disagreement" can range from pro forma disagreement, which can result in actions that constitute claims of ritualized disbelief or surprise concerning the repeated item (Heritage, 1984a), to "serious" disagreement, which can result in actions that constitute challenges to the relevance, appropriateness, accuracy, and so on of the repeated item (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). [K+] actions involve repair-related troubles that are predicated on producers hearing and understanding repeated items (i.e., trouble sources) in context. The second argument is as follows: If the recipient figures that the producer of the partial questioning repeat does not have knowledge of the repeated item in context—in which case we will say that the recipient figures that the producer is in a [K−−] position relative to the repeated item—then the recipient will be more likely to recognize it as implementing a different class of repair-related actions, which will be referred to as [K−−] actions. [K−−] actions index either their producers' lack of understanding of the repeated item, or a lack of adequate hearing of the repeated item (adequate hearing is a prerequisite for understanding).

9.1 Data and method

This chapter is part of a larger project dealing with actions that get implemented through turns involving repetitions of others' talk. The larger data set is drawn from approximately 130 hours of naturally occurring, "ordinary" conversation.
between friends and family members (including 275 telephone calls and 8 videocassettes). This paper draws on a sub-collection of 154 cases of partial questioning repeats (as defined above). By design, all of the cases analyzed in this chapter (with the single exception of example 14, in the discussion) occur over the telephone, which allows for analytic “control” over non-vocal behavior (Schegloff, 1968), which is consequential for the operation of other-initiation of repair (Seo and Koshik, 2010). All cases were transcribed by the author using Jefferson’s notation system. The method used is conversation analysis (Heritage, 1984b).

9.2 Analysis

The analysis section is organized into three sub-sections. The first two sub-sections examine cases in which partial questioning repeats are understood as implementing [K+] and [K−] repair-initiation actions, respectively. The third sub-section examines a deviant case. Throughout, it is argued that, at least regarding partial questioning repeats, epistemics is a necessary feature of action formation.

9.2.1 When partial questioning repeats are understood as [K+] repair-initiation actions

In this sub-section, seven cases are examined in which partial questioning repeats are understood as implementing [K+] repair-initiation actions, or ones that index their producers’ “disagreement” with the repeated item. As discussed earlier (and in note 2), “disagreement” can range from pro forma disagreement, which can result in actions that constitute claims of ritualized disbelief or surprise regarding the repeated item in context (Heritage, 1984a), or “serious” disagreement, which can result in actions that constitute challenges to the relevance, appropriateness, accuracy, and so on of the repeated item (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977).

The first two cases involve partial questioning repeats that are positioned after requests for information. These cases can be compared to examples 1 and 9 in the next sub-section, where partial questioning repeats are similarly sequentially positioned (see again note 1). For the first case, return to example 2 (above), which is drawn from a long-distance call between a college-aged woman and her mom. At line 1, Mom uses a story preface, “Well this is something very important.” (Jefferson, 1978), to launch an extended telling involving news (that she and her husband, Ula’s father) discovered in the Washingtonian (line 3), which is a magazine that covers aspects of living in Washington, DC. Although Ula initially aligns as a cooperative story recipient with “Yeah” (line 2) and “Uh huh?” (line 4; ibid.; Schegloff, 1982), she subsequently interrupts Mom (after “#A#h”; line 6) with a question: “But did you get Playboy.” (line 7).

Based on the thorough American cultural penetration of the Playboy brand, it is likely, via commonsense knowledge (Schutz, 1962), that Mom not only knows about the repeated item itself (i.e., that Playboy is a softcore pornographic men’s magazine), but that Mom understands Ula’s use of Playboy in her query at line 7 (i.e., that Ula is asking Mom if she bought a copy of Playboy). However, rather than relying on stipulated commonsense knowledge, there is data-internal evidence that Mom knows about Playboy and that Ula expects such knowledge. For example, without having Playboy explained (i.e., at line 12, where Playboy is subsequently referred to with the pronoun it), in response to Ula’s bawdy revelation (at line 12) that nude photos of her friend were featured in the magazine, Mom relevantly enact surprise with an “astonished” and laugh-infused: “Wh(h)a(h)(h),” (line 14; Selting, 1996). Furthermore, Ula claims to have discussed Playboy with her mom during a previous call: “I told you about this#a#t#” (lines 15–16). In response to Mom’s partial questioning repeat, “Playboy?” (line 11), Ula answers by justifying (i.e., accounting for) the relevance of her question, “a girl in my class was in it,” (line 12), and thus treats Mom’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action, that is, as challenging the relevance of Ula’s question as it involves Playboy.

For the second example, see example 3, which is drawn from a call between two adult friends, Kim and Matt, who are “catching up” after not having spoken in a while.

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(03) PICTURES

01 Mat: Well how thuh hell you doin’.
02 Kim: I’m great.
03 (1.3)
04 Mat: You were at Michigan, I take it.
05 Kim: Yeaah. (.) Do you ev- (like-) read my letters?
06 h-h-h=
07 Mat: =Yeaah. (u-) I mean (.) I’ve only got thuh one from you,
08 (0.2)
09 Kim: Oh you di’nt’ get thuh second one with thuh pictures?
11 (1.1)
12 Mat: -> Pictures?
13 (0.5)
14 Kim: You didn’t get it?
15 Mat: No. I haven’t got it.
16 (0.2)
17 Kim: I sent(it) a lo:ing time ago.
18 Mat: Hm.:
Kim lightly (i.e., with unit-final laughter) accuses Matt of not reading her letters: "Do you ev- (like)- read my letters? h=sh=h" (lines 5-6; Schegloff, 1988). Matt resists Kim's accusation by claiming that he does read her letters, "Ye:ah." (line 7), and then (perhaps defensively) accounts for his minimal knowledge about Kim's stay at Michigan by asserting the limited nature of her letters: "I mean (.) I've only got thuh one from you." (lines 7-8). After a brief silence (line 9), Kim backs off from her accusation by producing "Ohh" (line 10), which claims a change in state from uninformed to informed (Heritage, 1984a), and then requests (dis)confirmation of a situation that would account for Matt's minimal knowledge: "you didj'n get thuh second one with thuh pictures?" (line 10). This unit of talk embodies cross-cutting preferences of grammar and action (Schegloff, 2007). In terms of grammar, Kim formats her unit (i.e., you didn't get) so as to prefer a No-type answer (Sacks, 1987). In terms of action, insofar as Kim is asking about something that "should have happened," her unit arguably prefers a Yes-type answer (Schegloff, 2007).

This extract was collected in 1997, and commonsense knowledge suggests that Matt not only knows about the repeated item itself (i.e., that pictures refers to hard-copy, developed photographs), but that Matt understands the meaning of Kim's use of pictures in her query at line 10 (i.e., that Kim is asking Matt if he received pictures in a mailed envelope). This stipulation is again supported by date-internal evidence. For instance, without having pictures explained (i.e., at lines 13-14), Matt is able to relevantly respond to Kim's inquiry at line 14. Rather than answering Matt's partial questioning repeat, "Pictures?" (line 12), Kim reissues a modified version of her question at line 10: "You didn't get it?" (line 14). Here, Kim anticipates Matt's production of, and thus his partial questioning repeat as being preliminary to a, No-type answer that disaligns with the action of her question at line 10 (Schegloff, 2007). Kim's anticipation is realized by Matt, who ultimately disaligns with her action: "No: I haven't got it." (line 15). In this example, Kim treats Matt's partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action, that is, as contesting the presence of pictures in a letter that he might have received from her.

The third and fourth examples in this sub-section involve partial questioning repeats that are positioned after tellings/informs. (These cases can be compared to examples 10-11 in the next sub-section, where partial questioning repeats are similarly sequentially positioned.) Example 4 is drawn from a call between two adult friends, Dee and May. As context, Dee recently returned home to the United States from an extended trip overseas. While overseas, Dee had a US-based boyfriend, who called her frequently and flew to visit her three times. Dee broke up with her boyfriend either at the very end of her trip or very soon upon returning to the US. The boyfriend recently sent her a letter wherein he requested that she pay part of the long-distance phone bill accrued during the relationship (see lines 9-11). Dee's reported request by her ex-boyfriend is initially, strongly rejected by May: "Forget that::1;" (line 15). However, it turns out that Dee is inclined to "help 'im pay it." (lines 19-20).

(04) LETTER

01 Dee: .h:hhhhhh Sg: an' he's just- an' I'm like ljest
02 you know you never know we might get back
03 together w:gi: in thuh future: but I just can't
04 think about that now (an' )=i wanna be free an'
05 all this stuff so .h:hhhh that an' I just got a
06 little from hin' ann hhh (Claugh!
07 May: [Oh]: great.
08 Dee: .m:ch an' he's like .hh you know I really miss
09 you still an' blah >bl=blah< an' he's like ↑ by
10 thuh way (this) big phone bill can you h(h)elp
11 m(h)er p(h)ay it↑ hhu hhu=
12 May: =N[q: Wg]= :y=
13 Dee: [ .h:hhhh]
14 Dee: =↑ SY:A=A↓=
15 May: =h(h↑ Forget that):↓ hhu=[hhu]
16 Dee: ↓[h An' uhh] [Wha]:↓[i:7]
17 Mat: ↓[h] $Forgt:
18 Dee: thaat; $
19 Dee: Well (.) ng=no.(th')=thing is though is like I
20 w:ould help 'im pay it becauise (.) he(:) (.)
21 May: [Yeh-]
22 Dee: pag id for e:verything. >like < (.) > (.)<
23 seriouly this guy spent like twelve thousand
24 dollar h(b)or r(h)al(h)al(h)al(h)sh(h)ip.
25 or some thing (.)
26 May: → [Twelve thousand]?
27 Dee: ↓.h Like he w(h)ent tuh- he flew to see=mec (.)
28 three ti:mes=,
29 May: =R:j[ght. ye]ah that's true[e. ]
30 Dee: ↓[Was it? ] [>(An'=e')]'s < paid
31 for all thuh phone bills, ...

At lines 20-22, Dee begins to explain why she is willing to help her ex-boyfriend pay the long-distance phone bill: "because (.) he(:) pago id for e:verything." Dee continues to unpack and support this explanation by asserting that her ex-boyfriend "spent like twelve thousand dollars" on the relationship (lines 23-24). Commonsense knowledge suggests that May knows about understands twelve thousand dollars at it applies to a dating relationship. This stipulation is partially supported by the fact that, in response to May's partial questioning repeat, "Twelve thousand?" (line 26), Dee justifies her previous
assertion, “Like he w(h)ent huh- he flew to see=me: (.) three times,” (lines 27–28), and the sense of this justification relies on May’s understanding of twelve thousand dollars. With her justification, Dee treats May’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action, that is, as a challenge to the accuracy of twelve thousand dollars as an amount spent by the ex-boyfriend on the relationship. This claim is further supported by the fact that May responds to Dee’s justification with “Ri:ght.” (line 29), which orients to May’s epistemic authority on the matter (Gardner, 2007), and then agrees with, and concedes to the veracity of, Dee’s assertion: “yeah that’s true.” (line 29).

For the fourth example, see example 5, which is drawn from a call between two adult sisters, Ivy and Pia. As context, both women have recently returned from separate vacations. While on vacation, Ivy mailed Pia a postcard that arrived in Pia’s mailbox prior to Pia’s return from vacation. At line 1, Ivy is telling Pia about her (i.e., Ivy’s) vacation, which included visiting Ivy’s and Pia’s grandparents. However, Ivy cuts herself off (symbolized in the transcript by the hyphen), “We stopped by grandma-” (line 1), to ask if Pia received her (i.e., Ivy’s) postcard, “>did yuh get< my postcard?” (lines 1–2), presumably to avoid violating the interactional norm of telling someone something that they already know (Terasaki, 2004):

(05) POSTCARD

01 Ivy: ...h we stopped by grandma- (.) >did yuh get< my postcard?
02 Pia: .h yea=ah i jus[t got it to])ay in thun mail.
04 Ivy: [Oh good.]
05 (0.2)
06 Ivy: -> Today?
07 Pia: .hh Uhm yeah=eh-- well=
08 =([we (picked) it up today. so ])
09 Ivy: [Well sometime while you w’=go line.
10 Pia: .hhh Yeah. coul$db be a=en hh Saturday, or hh=
11 Ivy: =Okay.

In response to Ivy’s question, “>did yuh get< my postcard?” (lines 1–2), Pia initially answers affirmatively, “Yea=ah” (line 2). However, Pia continues to qualify her answer, “I just got it today in thun mail.” (line 3), which turns out to be the trouble-source action. Although Pia’s “intended” meaning of got it in “I just got it today” (line 3) appears to have been picked it up (i.e., “we (picked) it up today”; (line 8)), Pia can alternatively be understood as asserting that Ivy’s letter physically arrived “today,” where got it is understood in terms of the letter “being delivered today.” Based on Sacks’s (1989) observations about members’ reference terms for days of the week (e.g., yesterday, today, tomorrow), it is arguable that Ivy knows about/understands the meaning of today (this speculation is further supported by data below).

Prior to beginning her turn in which she responds to Ivy’s partial questioning repeat, “Today?” (line 6), Pia produces an inbreath, “hh” (line 7), and “Uh=uh” (line 7), both of which project a dispreferred, disconfirming response (Schegloff, 2007). Pia goes on to produce a confirmation token that is cut off, “yeah=eh-” (line 7), which projects self-repair (Schegloff, 1979), and then corrects her trouble-source action by replacing “I just got it” with “we (picked) it up” (line 8). Pia’s correction, as well as Ivy’s interruptive and simultaneous orientation to the correction, “Well sometime while you w’=gone” (line 9), are evidence that both women knew about/understood the repeated item today. Pia’s correction treats Ivy’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action, that is, as a challenge to the accuracy of Pia’s claim that the letter physically arrived today.

In sum, in examples 2–5, there are grounds for asserting that recipients of partial questioning repeats expect producers to know about (i.e., understand the contextualized meaning of) the repeated item (i.e., Playboy, pictures, twelve thousand, and today). In each case, partial questioning repeats are (accurately) treated as implementing [K+] repair-initiation actions, or ones that index their producers’ “disagreement” (see earlier definition) with the repeated item.

It is worth showing two cases where recipients of partial questioning repeats treat them as implementing [K+] repair-initiation actions even when the repeated items, as trouble sources, might seem highly prone toward making relevant understanding trouble, and thus as implementing [K–] actions. Example 6 involves a person reference (i.e., Jen Stein), and is drawn from a call between two friends who attended college together but now live in different parts of the country. At lines 1–2, Ida is telling Vic about her life, specifically about a trip she took with: “Dave Abrams,<.hh Melanie Lasslin. (0.2) a:::nd Jen Stein.”

(06) THAT GIRL

01 Ida: >Anyways, Dave Abrams,< hh Melanie Lasslin<. (0.2)
04 a:::nd Jen Stein. we all went to Mill Farr.
03 Vic: -> Jen Stein?
05 ()
05 Ida: (h)Y(h)eah.
06 ()
07 Vic: W’=what-> What thuh hell< (did) that girl do with her
08 life. d’ she graduate?
09 (0.2)
10 Ida: Y:es. she uhmm (0.3) she’s w(h)oping <to get> (.) her
11 c(h)ertification.

When practices of other-initiation of repair identify locally initial, recognitional-reference names (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) as trouble
sources—as does Vic’s partial questioning repeat, “Jen Ste:in?” (line 3)—one might suppose that recognition (i.e., a type of understanding) would become strongly relevant as a possible trouble type (see Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; Enfield and Stivers, 2007). However, in cases where producers of partial questioning repeats actually know about the person in question (and context), and where respondents expect producers to have such knowledge, partial questioning repeats are commonly understood as implementing [K+] repair-initiation actions. For example, in example 6 (above), Jen Stein was a mutual friend of both Ida’s and Vic’s in college. Evidence that Vic recognizes Jen Stein is found in the fact that, without having her identity clarified (i.e., at lines 4–6), he is able to ask a relevant (albeit disjuncting) question about that girl: “>What thuh hell < (did) that girl do with her life. d’ she graduate?” (lines 7–8). Ida’s confirmation is infused with laughter, “(h)Ah:Yb.” (line 5), which displays her stance toward Jen Stein’s presence as being in some way accountable, and thus orients to Vic’s partial questioning repeat as making such accountability relevant. In sum, Vic’s partial questioning repeat implements a [K+] repair-initiation action, that is, an index of surprise at the presence of Jen Stein.

Example 7 involves a relatively technical term (i.e., *open bar*), and is drawn from a call between Bob and Dan, two friends who attend separate colleges, and who enjoy partying (data not shown). At lines 1–3, Bob is remorsefully telling Dan about how he declined to attend a party during final-exams week in order to study.

(07) **OPEN BAR**

01 Bob: ‘H uh:m, (.).hh but anyway shb uh:— (.). she invited me to a party w’ was a thge kegger an’ there was 02 open bar:.hhhh[ ]

03 Dan: → [meh] Open bar.

05 Bob: <Open,> #bar.#=hhhh (tone of admiration)

06 Dan: Why: (di)— uh you (hadda=duh) test. you got thuh 07 test to study fo[r. ]

08 Bob: [ Yi]:ah.

When practices of other-initiation of repair identify technical terms as trouble sources—as does Dan’s partial questioning repeat, “Open bar:” (line 4)—one might suppose that recognition (i.e., a type of understanding) would become strongly relevant as a possible trouble type, and thus that Dan’s partial questioning repeat would implement a [K–] action (re. specialist terms, see Kitzinger and Mandelbaum, 2007). However, in cases where producers of partial questioning repeats know about/understand the specialist term (in context), and where respondents expect producers to have such knowledge, partial questioning repeats are commonly understood as implementing [K+] actions. An *open bar* refers to the provision of free alcohol (including hard liquor), and is the proverbial Holy Grail for many party-minded college students. Evidence that Dan understands open bar is found in the fact that, without having its nature clarified (i.e., at line 5), he proceeds to challenge Bob’s decision to not attend the party, indirectly deriding Bob for not taking advantage of the open bar; that is, at line 6, Dan begins to solicit an account for Bob’s decision, “‘Why: (di)’—, which is a cut-off version of Why didn’t ..., and on its way to something like Why didn’t you go? (re. soliciting accounts for human behavior and their challenging nature, see Boidlen and Robinson, 2011). Bob confirms the partial questioning repeat with a different type of repeat, “<Open,> #bar.#=hhhh” (line 5), which is used to confirm an allusion (Schegloff, 1996). Bob’s confirmation is produced with a marked tone of admiration, and confirms an allusion embedded in Dan’s partial questioning repeat that an *open bar* is an unusual object of wonder and esteem. In sum, Dan’s partial questioning repeat implements a [K+] repair-initiation action, that is, an index of surprise at the presence of an *open bar*.

Within the admittedly gross category of [K+] repair-initiation actions, there is still the analytic problem of action formation (Schegloff, 2007). That is: What resources do participants use to design recognizable [K+] actions *in their particularity* (e.g., a claim of ritualized disbelief vs. a serious challenge of accuracy)? Space limitations preclude a sufficient answer to this question, but data suggest that epistemics are again a factor, now in terms of epistemic imbalances between interactants’ epistemic status (Heritage, 2012b) regarding repeated items in context. For example, data suggest that, when recipients of partial questioning repeats figure that producers have strong knowledge (e.g., personal or first-hand knowledge; Pomerantz, 1980) of the repeated item that potentially equals or exceeds that of recipients’ knowledge, partial questioning repeats are understood as indexing more serious “disagreement.” For example, in example 5 (above), because Ivy sent the postcard, she has strong knowledge about when it should have normally arrived that at least equals that of Pia, and note that Pia treats the partial questioning repeat as challenging the accuracy of today. For another example, in example 3 (above), Matt, as the receiver of the letters, has strong knowledge about whether or not they contained pictures that arguably exceeds that of Kim, and Kim treats Matt’s partial questioning repeat as embodying a disaligning “No”-response.

Alternatively, data suggest that, when recipients of questioning repeats figure that producers have weak knowledge (e.g., hearsay; Pomerantz, 1980) of the repeated item that does not equal that of recipients’ knowledge, partial questioning repeats are understood as indexing more pro-forma “disagreement.” For example, see example 8, which is drawn from a call from a pregnant mom to a home-birth help line (this call is drawn from Wilkinson
and Kitzinger, 2006). At line 1, the caller takes (Clt) announces that she has had five home births: “I’ve had five at home.” Because the caller (Ros) has yet to have a home birth, she has weak knowledge of home births that does not equal that of the caller.

[08] FIVE

01 Clt: I’ve had five at home ((i.e., five home births))
02 Ros: —>
03 Clt: mm
04 Ros: Goodness!

As a response to the caller’s partial questioning repeat, “Fi::ve,” (line 2), the caller-taker’s “mm” (line 3) treats it as a mere request for confirmation. Furthermore, insofar as the caller subsequently claims to be surprised, “Goodness!” (line 4), participants orient to Ros’s partial questioning repeat as having indexed ritualized surprise/disbelief (Heritage, 1984a; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006), and thus as having indexed pro-forma “disagreement” with the amount-formulation five.

9.2.2 When partial questioning repeats are understood as \([K-] \) repair-initiation actions

In this sub-section, six cases are examined in which it is argued that recipients of partial questioning repeats have grounds for inferring that producers do not have sufficient, adequate, and/or accurate knowledge of repeated items. In each case, recipients treat partial questioning repeats as implementing \([K-] \) repair-initiation actions that raise the relevance of trouble involving either understanding the meaning of the repeated item or adequately hearing them.

The first four cases deal with understanding trouble. The first two cases are designed to be comparable to examples 2–3 in that the partial questioning repeat is positioned after a request for information (see again note 1). For the first case, return to example 1 (above), which is drawn from a call between two adult friends, Moe and Bob. An analytically important piece of context is that the call takes place during winter, and Moe has previously made reference to gathering wood for a “heater” (i.e., a wood-burning stove) in his home (data not shown). Here, the topic has now shifted to Volkswagen buses, which both Moe and Bob own. At line 1, Moe asks Bob about how his bus is “running.”

After Moe and Bob bring the assessment sequence regarding Bob’s Volkswagen bus (at lines 1–9) to a place of possible completion/closure (Schegloff, 2007), Bob asks Moe to assess his heater: “How’s your heater been working these last few weeks?” (line 11). In this case, there are grounds for asserting that the repeated item, your heater, is possibly referentially ambiguous for

Moe, and that this possibility is knowable by Bob. Specifically, earlier in this phone call, Moe had referred to gathering wood for a “heater,” but was referring to a wood-burning stove in his home (data not shown). At line 11, the ambiguity surrounding Bob’s initial reference to a different type of “heater” (i.e., a car heater) is exacerbated by the fact that Bob’s inquiry is interactionally disjoined, by a 1.2-second lapse (line 10; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974), from the prior, possibly completed sequence involving Volkswagen buses. With the second unit of Bob’s response, “in your car,” (line 13), Bob treats Moe’s partial questioning repeat, “My heater?” (line 12), as implementing a \([K-] \) action, specifically a request for clarification of the potentially ambigous term heater.

The second case is example 9, which is drawn from a call between two adult British friends, Leslie and Robbie, who are both primary-school teachers, here discussing two students. At lines 4–6, Robbie produces a request for confirmation regarding a pedagogical exercise wherein individual students are given the opportunity to share/describe something with/to the rest of the class.

(09) NEWS

01 Les: Yes, he’s a ↑ little boy. and
02 ’s beautiful with ’s brother.
03
04 Rob: Don’t ↑ you↑ find that when you give them chance
05 t‘=do news : they↑ – they’re terribly selfish, an’
06 they↑ – () go on too long.
07 (0.4)
08 Les: —> e=xNew:s.s=held
09 Rob: =News. when you talk– [when you’re [( ) ]
10 Les: [h.s] [ Oh] yes yes
11 yes that’s right. especially thges: umh .sche=.hbb
12 (u)–twi:ns.

Although the exercise referred to by Robbie (at lines 4–5) is commonly known, at least by primary-school teachers, as show and tell or sharing time (Michaels, 1981), Robbie refers to it at line 5 in a non-vernacular, slang fashion as “doing news” (i.e., “when you give them chance t‘=do news:”). Thus, there are grounds for asserting that Leslie may not recognize the reference to “doing news,” and that this is knowable by Robbie, who is also a teacher. In response to Leslie’s partial questioning repeat, “New:s,” (line 8), Robbie initially produces a repeat-based confirmation, “News,” (line 9; Schegloff, 1996), and then immediately continues to explain what she meant by news, “when you talk–,” (line 9). Robbie’s explanation treats Leslie’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a \([K-] \) action, that is, as an index of her non-understanding of the slang term “doing news.”
The next two cases (Extracts 10–11) are designed to be comparable to examples 4–5 (above) in that partial questioning repeats are positioned after tellings/informings. The third case in this sub-section is example 10, which is drawn from a call between a college-aged woman, Ara (who is calling long distance), and her mom. Prior to line 1, Ara described what she had for dinner, and at lines 1–4, her mom does the same.

(10) **COOKER**

01 **Mom:** I had soup beans, barbequed ribs, fried potatoes, cornbread.

02  

03 **Ara:**  

04 **Mom:** [An] corn bread.

05  

06 **Ara:**  

07 **Mom:** (el)  

08 **Ara:** hh[h ]

09 **Mom:** [(T)ey:-) (ott) - my - my: ( ) crock pot that -( )

10 **( ) = I showed you what duh (.). hh Wanda got me for Christmas didn't I.

11  

12  

13 **Ara:** Nq.: 

14 **Mom:** Know that crock pot that she got me for Christmas

15  

16 **Ara:** I remember she got you one a couple years ago[0 .]

17 **Mom:** [ W]ell

18 **Ara:** she got me a: hh a cooker.

19 **Mom:**  

20 **Ara:** hh A crockpot that sits

21 down on a hq plate.

22  

23 **Mom:** hh A qb:ing cooker that sits

24 **Ara:** [ Mm hm,]  

25 **Mom:** An' (. ) pot my :=rb: is there an' barbequed them...

At line 9, Mom begins a telling about how she cooked her ribs in a Crock Pot: "(Tey:-) (ott) - my - my: ( ) crock pot that". However, Mom cuts herself off to establish that Ara is familiar with her new Crock Pot: "I showed you what duh (.). hh Wanda got me for Christmas didn’t I." (lines 10–11). After Ara twice claims a lack of familiarity (at lines 13 and 16), Mom summarily asserts that her friend bought her a cooker: "Well she got me a: hh a cooker." (lines 17–18).

There are grounds for asserting that the trouble source, cooker, is possibly ambiguous to Ara, and that this is knowable by Mom. At line 9, Mom initially refers to a Crock Pot. The term Crock Pot is a trademark name that is commonly used generically to refer to a wide range of types of countertop, electrical, slow-cooking devices. However, when Mom re-references to the same Crock Pot, she uses a new and different reference term: "a cooker" (line 18). The term cooker is a nonstandard and shortened (and thus slang) form of the term slow cooker, and thus arguably not a commonly understood synonym for Crock Pot. Furthermore, perhaps the most widely known version of a Crock Pot is a single unit that both holds and heats food. However, Mom is actually referring to a less-widely known version of a Crock Pot, which is also referred to as a slow cooker, which involves two units, including a pot (that holds food) that sits on a separate/detachable heating plate (that heats food). In response to Ara’s partial questioning repeat, “A cooker?” (line 19), Mom answers by clarifying the term cooker; “A qb:ing cooker that sits down on a hot plate.” (lines 20–21), and thus treats Ara’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K–] action, that is, as indexing her trouble understanding the meaning of the term cooker.

The fourth case is example 11, which is drawn from a call between two adult friends, Kay and Rod. At line 1, Kay is telling Rod, for the first time in the conversation, about the acquisition of a new kitten by a mutually known relational couple, Susan and Will.

(11) **KITTEN**

01 **Kat:** .hh S:usan an'll Will: took one:= th:th kittens.  

02 **Rod:** Uh huh,  

03 **Kay:** So they have a (.) cat now.  

04 **Rod:** Uh huh,  

05  

06 **Kay:** Called (0.4) A: Cee:. (the initials ‘A’ and ‘C’)

07  

08 **Rod:** A: Cee?  

09 **Kay:** Fer (. ) a cat. =uhhh (. ) hh hh hh hh hh. hh

10 **Rod:** [<A cat.]: oh my. ]

When Kay tells Rod about the kittens/cat (i.e., at lines 1 and 3), she tacitly claims to have relatively more knowledge about the subject matter in question (Terasaki, 2004), and Rod tacitly endorses her epistemic authority by aligning as a story recipient with continuers (i.e., "Uh huh," at lines 2 and 4; Schegloff, 1982). At line 6, Kay informs Rod of the name of the kitten using only an abbreviation, "A: Cee:;" (i.e., the letters "A" and "C"), which, given Rod’s apparent lack of knowledge about the subject matter, is arguably a non-recognition reference term (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979). Thus, there are grounds for asserting that Rod does not know what "A: Cee:" stands for, and that Rod’s lack of knowledge is known about by Kay. In response to Rod’s partial questioning repeat, “A: Cee?” (line 8), Kay answers by clarifying her abbreviation, “Fer (. ) a cat.” (line 9), and thus treats Rod’s partial questioning...
repeat as implementing a [K−] action, that is, as indexing his lack of recognition/understanding of the abbreviation.

In sum, in examples 1 and 9–11 above, it was argued that recipients of partial questioning repeats have grounds for inferring that producers do not sufficiently, adequately, and/or accurately know/understand repeated items in context (i.e., your heater, news, a cooker, and A. C.). In each case, recipients treat partial questioning repeats as implementing [K−] repair-initiation actions that specifically involve trouble understanding the meaning of the repeated item. The role of epistemics is highlighted when you compare these extracts to examples 2–5. Examples 1 and 9 are comparable to examples 2–3 in that partial questioning repeats are positioned after requests for information, and examples 10–11 are comparable to examples 4–5 in that partial questioning repeats are positioned after tellings/ informantings (see again note 1). Thus, within these comparison groups, the actions being implemented by trouble-source units, the sequential positioning of partial questioning repeats, and the formal composition of partial questioning repeats (i.e., as non-astonished, verbatim repeats that end with rising intonation) are similar. What differs is producers’ degrees of knowledge of repeated items in context, and how, by virtue of accurately inferring such knowledge, recipients understand partial questioning repeats as implementing either [K+] or [K−] repair-initiation actions.

Although examples 1 and 9–11 involved understanding trouble, this is not the only type of [K−] trouble. Insofar as understanding is predicated on adequate hearing, another type of [K−] action is a claim to have possibly not adequately heard the repeated item. Because partial questioning repeats are, by definition, virtually identical repeats of trouble sources, they do not index a claim of “lack” of hearing, per se. It is for this reason that, relative to other practices of other-initiation of repair – such as open-class practices (e.g., Huh?, What?, or Sorry?) (Drew, 1997; Robinson, 2006), or [partial repeats + What?] (Scheglof, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977) – partial questioning repeats very rarely address hearing trouble; when they do, they display that their speakers heard a correct version of the trouble source and index a claim of possible misunderstanding. In these cases, the constraints of grammar and action placed by partial questioning repeats on next-turn responses can be simultaneously satisfied by a single (dis) confirmation response.

One environment in which partial questioning repeats are consistently treated as addressing possible inadequate hearing is when trouble sources are “seriously” obscured by overlapping talk. The most illuminating cases for the present argument are ones in which producers of partial questioning repeats would otherwise have knowledge/understanding of repeated items, and thus cases where partial questioning repeats would otherwise be prone to being understood as implementing [K+] repair-initiation actions. For instance, see example 12, which is drawn from a call between two adults, Buc and Eve. As context, extended snowy weather has made local roads treacherous, which has prevented Buc and Eve from going grocery shopping. At lines 1–2, Buc reports his family’s willingness to settle for available food, “we’ve decided we can live on hhh macaroni an’ t’na.”, which embodies a stance that Eve affiliates when she claims a similar position (lines 3–5).

(12) FISH

01 Buc: I think we’ve decided we can live on hhh
02 macaroni an’ t’na.
03 Eve: Well I said (.) I will have macaroni
04 an’ ch(be)gess f(h)or s(h)upper before
05 (I’ll ( )
06 Buc: [We had fish la]st night =h
07 Eve: → Ffish?
08 Buc: Y:es:s
09 Eve: [H]:ow was it.
10 (0.4)
11 Buc: It was fish.
12 (0.3)
13 Eve: Yeah, hw’d you flx it.
14 (0.2)
15 Buc: .h Grilled it.

At line 6, Buc interrupts Eve to announce, “We had fish last night.”, the majority of which is produced in overlap with Eve’s prior turn. Eve’s partial questioning repeat, “Fish?” (line 7), targets a component of Buc’s turn (i.e., “fish”; line 6) that was entirely overlapped. In this case, the effect of overlap on hearing is so extreme that the transcriptionist was not able to even approximate the majority of Eve’s talk at line 5. As such, there are interactional grounds for arguing that Eve may not have adequately heard the trouble source (i.e., fish), and that Buc knows this (re. interruption and hearing, see Scheglof, 2002). Note that example 12 can be compared to example 2, where the trouble source Playboy is also entirely overlapped, but with no effect on either transcription or comprehension. Thus, the issue for participants does not appear to be whether or not trouble sources are objectively overlapped, but the subjective degree to which such overlap affects comprehension.

By responding with a simple confirmation “Y:es:” (line 8), Buc treats Eve’s partial questioning repeat as a [K−] repair-initiation action, specifically
a request for confirmation of a possibly inadequate hearing. Buc’s confirmation is “simple” in that it is not designed, lexically or prosodically, to display additional stances, as do, for example, laugh-infused Yeahs or Yeas (as in example 6, above) and repeat-based confirmations (as in example 7, above). Buc designs his confirmation so as to project turn completion by stretching it (symbolized in the transcript by colons) and producing it with final-falling intonation (Local, 2007). Likewise, Eve treats Buc’s confirmation as both complete and sufficient in two ways. First, she comes in to speak slightly early at line 9 (i.e., overlapping the “s” of Buc’s Yeas with the “h” of her How). Second, she comes in early to progress (re. progressivity, see Schegloff, 2007) Buc’s fish-announcement by inquiring into its culinary outcome: “How was it?” (line 9). Although the following is a negative observation (Ibid.), nowhere in the data do Buc or Eve orient to any other type of trouble other than hearing.3

9.2.3 A deviant case and a caveat to prior argument

This chapter has argued that, if the recipient of a partial questioning repeat figures the producer has knowledge of (e.g., thoroughly, accurately, and/or authoritatively understands the contextualized meaning of) the repeated item, then the recipient will be more likely to recognize the partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action. However, knowing about/understanding the repeated item may not be sufficient for the recipient to conclude that a partial questioning repeat is designed to implement a [K+] action. It may additionally be necessary for the recipient to infer that the producer has grounds for identifying a type of trouble that extends beyond that of hearing or understanding. This observation is highlighted in deviant cases (Silverman, 2001), where it can be demonstrated that a recipient’s epistemic status leads them to “inaccurately” assess the producer as not having grounds for identifying such a trouble. In these cases (of which only two exist in the data), recipients treat partial questioning repeats as implementing [K−] actions, even though they were arguably designed to implement [K+] actions.

For one example, see example 13. Kay is calling her friend, who is not home, and thus reaches her friend’s mom. At line 2, the act of Mom informing Kay about her friend’s college schedule (i.e., “she went thuh thuh college, an’ then she goes to work today.”) displays Mom’s orientation to Kay not knowing about her friend’s schedule (Terasaki, 2004). However, Mom is mistaken. Kay not only subsequently claims to have such knowledge, “I know, I go with her [to college]” (lines 14–15), but precisely demonstrates it by providing the exact time that her friend’s last class ends: “Twelve thirty.” (line 20).

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(13) COLLEGE

01 Kay: This’s Kay. is she at work?  
02 Mom: Uh yas Kay. she went thuh college, an’ then she goes to work today.  
03       
04       
05       
06 Mom: You wan’ her office phone number she’ll be there after three.  
07       
08       
09 Kay: ->.match After three.  
10 Mom: Yeah.  
11 Kay: Oh she(–) What she doin’ in thuh meantime.  
12 Mom: h She hadda go duh college. she goes thuh school in thuh morning. [[S:(.)]]  
13       
14 Kay: [I T know.↓ I go with her. hh[h]]  
15       
16 Mom: [[Ye:[ah.]]]  
17 Kay: [hhh][hh ]  
18 Mom: [An’ I think then she was done:]  
19 Kay: (what) abou’ eleven o’clock?  
20 Mom: [Twe]lvie thirty.  
21 Mom: Yah, an’ she’s supposed tuh stop in (Fall Park)  
22 for an’ hour or two, an’ then she hadda get tuh thee office ( ↓ )  
23       
24 Kay: [Oh she stopped] in Fall Park.  
25 Mom: Yes. ←.ght.

At lines 6–7, Mom informs Kay that her friend will be at work “after three.” However, Kay assumes that her friend went directly to work after class, which ended at twelve thirty, and thus that her friend is currently at work (see Kay’s question at line 1: “is she at work?”). As such, Mom’s time reference “after three.” (line 7) produces, for Kay, an anomalous two- and-a-half hour gap of time between twelve thirty and three o’clock, when Kay had expected her friend to already be at work (See Kay’s question at line 11: “Oh she(–) What she doin’ in thuh meantime.”). This anomaly raises the possibility that Mom’s estimation of when the friend will be at work is inaccurate, and presumably motivates Kay’s initiation of repair: “After three.” (line 9). With vocal stress (symbolized in the transcript by underlining), Kay identifies the trouble source as being the proposition “After”, which she then frames with “three.” (re. “framing” other-initiations of repair, see Jefferson, 1972).

On the one hand, there is not only evidence that Kay does know about the repeated item in context – that is, that Kay understands the meaning of the proposition “after” as it is used to modify “three.”— but also that Kay does have grounds for identifying trouble that extends beyond that of hearing or
understanding Mom. Thus, there is evidence that Kay designs her partial questioning repeat so as to implement a [K+] action that involves questioning the accuracy of Mom’s time formulation. This claim is supported by the fact that Kay goes on, after Mom’s simple confirmation, “Yeah.” (line 10), to solicit an account for the anomalous gap of time: “What she doin’ in that meantime.” (line 11).

On the other hand, although it is likely that Mom assumes that Kay knows about the repeated item in context (i.e., that Kay understands the meaning of the preposition “after” as it is used to modify “three”), from Mom’s perspective, Kay does not have grounds for identifying trouble that extends beyond that of hearing or understanding. That is, if Kay does not know about her friend’s schedule, then it is unlikely that Kay has (reasonable) grounds for challenging Mom’s assertion (at lines 6–7). Arguably, Mom’s “incorrect” knowledge about Kay’s knowledge prevents Mom from being able to (reasonably) “rule in” the implementation of a [K+] action. If Mom orients to Kay (as a competent, native English speaker) as understanding the meaning of the preposition “after” as it is used to modify “three”, then this will also prevent Mom from being able to “rule in” the implementation of a [K+] action involving understanding trouble. In this scenario, from Mom’s perspective, a remaining and viable type of trouble is Kay’s possible inadequacy of hearing “after.” Along these lines, Mom responds with a simple confirmation, “Yeah.” (line 10), which treats Kay’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action involving hearing trouble.

9.3 Discussion

This chapter examined one practice of other-initiation of repair, the partial questioning repeat (Jefferson, 1972), and attempted to answer the question of how its recipient understands the particular repair-related action it was designed to implement. This chapter argued that, at least in the case of partial questioning repeats, epistemics (Heritage and Raymond, 2005; Raymond and Heritage, 2006; Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig, 2011; Heritage, forthcoming-a, forthcoming-b) is a necessary resource for action formation (Schegloff, 2007), and thus action recognition. This general idea was addressed over thirty years ago by Goffman:

At the very center of interaction life is the cognitive relation we have with those present before us, without which relationship our activity, behavioral and verbal, could not be meaningfully organized. And although this cognitive relationship can be modified during a social contact, and typically is, the relationship itself is extra situational, consisting of the information a pair of persons have about the information each other has of the world, and the information they have (or haven’t) concerning the possession of this information”. (Goffman, 1983: 4–5, emphasis added)
and thus recipients treat questioning repeats as implementing [K+] actions (i.e., as various types of challenges).

One additional resource (beyond epistemics) that participants likely use to understand partial questioning repeats as implementing [K+] or [K−] actions, but a resource that this chapter did not specifically attend to, involves the prosodic nuances of a partial questioning repeat—such as its pacing/stretching, pitch, and amplitude, and whether its unit-final-rising intonation is large/strong or small/weak—as well as the relationship between the prosody of a partial questioning repeat and that of the original production of the repeated item (i.e., the trouble source). Although prosody certainly matters for what Selting (1996) termed "astonished" productions of other-initiation of repair, which tend to implement [K+] actions, the data for the present chapter did not include such cases, precisely in an attempt to "control" for prosodic variation.

This chapter provides yet another set of parameters, grounded in epistemics, that shape how participants understand action, and thus produce recognizable action. A central form (but not the only form) of evidence for participants' understandings of prior turns is how they treat them in next turn, and this type of evidence was heavily (although not exclusively) utilized in the present chapter. However, it is critical to note that people can understand practices of other-initiation of repair in one way yet "intentionally" treat them in another way (although this tends to be accountable in interaction, as seen in note 8). All sorts of actions/stances—such as "acting coy," "being modest," "being cautious," "being defensive," "being overly-sensitive," "playing dumb," and so on—can be accomplished by treating recognizable [K+] actions as [K−] actions, or vice versa (Robinson, 2009).

Instances of intentional mis-treatment do not invalidate this chapter's claims about understanding. Finally, insofar as intersubjectivity is managed interactionally (for review, see Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992), there are also bound to be cases of unintentional mis-treatment due to participants' miscalculations of each others' knowledge.

The differences between how interactants understand and treat action highlight a topic for further research, which involves the possible existence of co-operating social orders that independently affect how participants treat practices of other-initiation of repair. Based on an early observation by Pomerantz (1984), one candidate is a preference, at least in certain circumstances (see below), for treating partial questioning repeats as implementing [K−] (vs. [K+] actions (re. preference, see Schegloff, 2007). There are at least three grounds for this preference. First, Pomerantz observed that interactants tend to avoid interpersonal conflict (for review and confirmation of this line of argument, see Clayman, 2002), and speculated that what is referred to in the present chapter as [K+] actions are potentially more relationally/interpersonally conflictual than [K−] actions. Second, Pomerantz speculated that interpersonally conflictual practices of other-initiation of repair have the potential to further delay the normative progression of interaction (above and beyond the initiation of repair and the resolution of a trouble; re. progressivity, see Schegloff, 2007) by making relevant what Jefferson (1987) called "attendant activities," such as blaming, apologizing, accounting, etc. Third, insofar as people produce and understand talk in interaction primarily in terms of the social action it accomplishes (Schegloff, 1995), and insofar as interactants' recognition of talk's action is predicated on their hearing and understanding talk, the resolution of repair-related trouble involving hearers and understanding talk (i.e., the type of trouble indexed by [K−] repair-initiation actions) is arguably more critical to the fundamental operation of interaction as a social system (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) than is the resolution of repair-related trouble that is predicated on hearing and understanding what was said, such as someone saying something outlandish, untrue, inappropriate, or hurtful (i.e., the type of trouble indexed by [K+] repair-initiation actions).

At least in cases where partial questioning repeats are possibly (or accountably) ambiguous in terms of implementing [K+] or [K−] repair-initiation actions (re. possibilities, see Schegloff, 2006), data offer some support for a preference for treating partial questioning repeats as implementing [K−] (vs. [K+] actions). For example, when recipients respond with turns that contain multiple units, and when one unit treats the partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action and the other a [K−] action, [K−] treatments tend to precede [K+] treatments. For instance, see example 14, which is drawn from a living-room conversation between five friends. At lines 1–2, Ron continues a telling about being sick.

[14] Zinc

01 Ron: So: (0.8) >I was like < (0.2) s o sick. (.) all week.
02 an' I'm like >I gotta get< better before Friday.
03 ( . )
04 ???: hh=heh heh heh heh heh ((1.0))
05 Ron: So: uh:mm (0.7) I w's:=like popping zj;no, an' (0.8)
06 ( [ ] )
07 Tom: [Zinc?] 
08 Ron: Zinc pills;
09 ( . )
10 Ron: ("Cause) they ( ) help you recover faster.
11 Tom: Do th'hey (really,)
12 Ron: [I believe] that,
13 ( . )
14 Ron: I ( [ ] ),
15 Zev: [Supposedly,]
At line 5, Ron announces an attempt to remedy his sickness: “So: uh: m (0.7) I w:s:=like popping zinc.”. Ron’s reference to zinc is to a mineral supplement, in tablet form, that some (but only some) people consider to be an effective alternative therapy for colds. On the one hand, zinc is a relatively technical term, and it was a relatively uncommon therapy in the United States in 1995, when this extract was collected. In this case, Tom’s trouble might involve a lack of understanding of zinc, in which case his partial questioning repeat would implement a [K−] action. On the other hand, as a naturopathic (vs. more medically conventional) therapy, it is possible that Tom orientizes to zinc as having questionable benefits. In this case, Tom’s trouble might involve his “disagreement” with the efficacy of zinc, in which case his partial questioning repeat would implement a [K+] action. In response, Ron initially produces “Zinc pills:” (line 8), which clarifies his previous use of “zinc” (line 5) by adding the modifier “pills:” (line 8), and thus treats Tom’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K−] action. Note that Ron designs “Zinc pills:” to be possibly complete, that is, with slightly rising final intonation and a final-sound stretch (Local, 2007). After a micropause (line 9), which is arguably Tom’s silence, Ron produces “(‘Cause) they (.) help you recover faster.” (line 10), which is a justification of zinc as a cold remedy that now treats Tom’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action. At least the data used for this chapter reject an unqualified preference for treating partial questioning repeats as implementing [K−] vs. [K+] actions (cf. Pomerantz, 1984; Svennevig, 2008). For example, in cases where partial questioning repeats are “unambiguously” produced and understood as implementing [K+] actions, recipients frequently and unaccountably treat them as such in their responsive turns, as in examples 2–5 (above).

Precisely because interlocutors’ “cognitive relationship” tends to be, as Goffman (1983) noted, “extratituional,” the task of demonstrating the relevance and procedural consequentiality (Schegloff, 1992) of participants’ knowledge in the details of their conduct — versus merely stipulating it — is difficult, to say the least. Much more work is needed to validate this chapter’s hypotheses and, if warranted, explore their implications for other-initiation of repair specifically, and for action formation more generally.

REFERENCES


6 For additional evidence that Mom is beginning a telling, note that she continues it at line 25.
7 This is not always the case when the trouble involves understanding or speaking because (dis)confirmation responses alone frequently do not adequately resolve the trouble (See examples 1–5 and 9–11, and example [Self Timer] in note 5).
8 Data suggest that, when partial questioning repeats make relevant speaking or understanding trouble, responding with simple confirmations is accountable (Garfinkel, 1967), evidenced at least by the fact that, in these situations, producers of partial questioning repeats tend to pursue trouble resolution, frequently immediately. For example, in the following example (PARTIES), Guy’s partial questioning repeat, “Stil?” (line 3) is designed to make relevant speaking trouble, and in the wake of Matt’s simple confirmation, “Yeah.” (line 4), Guy pursues trouble resolution: “It shoulda gotten out yesterday.” (line 5).

[PARTIES]
01 Mat: Our highschool’s (.) still in (0.2) school i.
02 (1.3)
03 Guy: -> Stil?
04 MAT: .hh Yeah.
05 Guy: --> It shudla gotten out yesterday.
06 (1.2)
07 Mat: ‘Ell I think today.
For another example, in this next extract (PROFESSOR), Rob’s partial questioning repeat, “David Sykes?” (line 3) is designed to make relevant understanding trouble, and in the wake of Tom’s simple confirmation, “Yeah.” (line 5), Rob pursues trouble resolution: “Who is David Sykes.” (line 6)

[PROFESSOR]
01 Tom: We’ll nnext time yuh come down you need duh (m/b) get
02 uh:: (. ) David Sykes. .hhhh
03 Rob: -> D [d Sy] kes?=
04 Tom: [ (So: uh)-> ]
05 Tom: Yeah.
06 Rob: --> .hhhh Whq is David Sykes
07 Tom: Oh: he speaks about uh:: (. ) suven languages...
(continues)

9 An alternative interpretation is that Mom does, in fact, understand Kay’s partial questioning repeat as implementing a [K+] action, but that Mom “intentionally” avoids treating it as such, for example by providing an account similar to the one she ultimately provides at lines 21–22: “she’s s’posed tuh stop in (Faul Park) for an’ hour or two.” However, this interpretation makes the assumption that Mom’s response (at line 10) to Kay’s partial questioning repeat is non-cooperative (Levinson, 2000). Alone these lines, see again note 8.
10 I was reminded of this quote when reading Heritage (forthcoming a), who used the quote.

11 It is possible that one systematically accountable source of such ambiguity is overlapping talk, which raises the relevance of possible inadequate hearing (Schegloff, 2002), and does so concurrently with whatever (other) type of trouble possibly generated by the overlapped trouble source. This observation may extend beyond overlapping talk to any social/public phenomena — such as a jet engine, or being far away from one’s interlocutor — that physically obstructs hearing.