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What “What?” Tells Us About How Conversationalists Manage Intersubjectivity

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When studying how conversationalists assess mutual understanding, research has focused on one type of evidence: next-turn talk. This article identifies another, antecedent type of evidence involving how talk is produced by reference to repair-opportunity spaces that are systematically provided for by conversation’s generic organization of repair. As current speakers talk, recipients claim understanding ex silentio on an action-by-action basis as they forgo each next repair-opportunity space—that is, as they ’withhold’ talk at each next transition-relevance place. This conversation-analytic article supports its argument through an analysis of multi-action/TCU turns generally, and specifically when recipients initiate repair on such turns with: “What?” In these cases, people respond by repairing only the most proximate action in their prior turn, which indexes their understanding that people who initiated repair understood relatively distal actions. Data are drawn from naturally occurring, ordinary, telephone conversations between friends and family members. Data are in American and British English.

[A] warrant for the study of the phenomenon of ‘understanding’ is that it’s specifically a thing that is achieved, and it can proceed employing conversation, and have places where it gets exhibited. (Sacks, 1992c, p. 141)

Central to the study of language and social interaction are the related concepts of intersubjectivity (Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992) and common ground (Clark, 1996). Definitions of these concepts overlap in reference to a state of affairs in which participants’ understandings of current talk are the ‘same-for-all-practical-purposes’ (Garfinkel, 1967). As a turn-constructional unit (hereafter, TCU; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) and the action it implements is in the process of being formed up, intersubjectivity is systematically provided for (if not guaranteed) by at least three things: (a) the principle of recipient design (Sacks et al., 1974), which holds current speakers accountable for designing their talk so as to be understandable by recipients; (b) the

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rules for turn taking, which hold recipients accountable for listening (Sacks et al., 1974); and (c) myriad inferential principles—along the lines of Garfinkel’s (1963, 1967) notion of ‘trust’ and Levinson’s (2000) theory of generalized conversational implicature—which hold recipients accountable for understanding contextualized conformations of talk in particular ways (re accountability, see also Goffman, 1971). Once a TCU and its action have been formed up—that is, at a transition-relevance place (Sacks et al., 1974)—intersubjectivity is systematically managed by reference to next-turn talk (Schegloff, 1992). That is, in next turn, recipients can initiate repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) or produce some other type of talk (e.g., an answer, a response cry, a new initiating action, etc.) that somehow indexes their understanding of prior talk (such indexing can be claimed, demonstrated, etc., and can be done tacitly, explicitly, en passant, etc.; Heritage, 2007; Sacks, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c). In this way, next-turn talk facilitates participants’ assessments of the need for repairing trouble with speaking, hearing, or understanding. The present article suggests that, at each next transition-relevance place, participants rely on another, antecedent systematicity in order to manage intersubjectivity, that being the omnirelevant and generic organization of repair for conversation (Schegloff, 1992), and specifically the socially organized opportunities it provides for recipients (i.e., others) to initiate repair. The following introduction presents the research problem and discusses how it will be addressed.

PRESENTING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In contrast to a socialization-based explanation (Parsons, 1937) of how participants manage intersubjectivity, conversation analysis (hereafter CA) adopts an operation-based explanation (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992). A hallmark contribution of CA is its recognition that the ‘operational’ character of intersubjectivity is not merely interpretive, but also involves, and is systematically enabled and constrained by, “particular aspects of particular bits of conduct that . . . [incrementally] provide occasions and resources for understanding, which can also issue in problematic understandings” (Schegloff, 1992, p. 1299). Along these lines, regarding types of interactional evidence that current speakers rely on to determine if recipients understand current talk, a longstanding position held not only by CA (Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992), but by a range of other approaches to the study of discourse (Clark, 1996), is that recipients’ understandings are somehow indexed in the course of their next-turn talk.

The research problem lies in the fact that CA has long produced evidence that participants do not rely exclusively on next-turn talk in order to manage intersubjectivity, at least in terms of current speakers assessing whether or not recipients understand current talk. For example, at each next transition-relevance place, current speakers do not necessarily wait for recipients’ next-turn talk prior to progressing their turns by producing a next discrete action (Sacks et al., 1974). In the context of the rules for turn taking, which organize conversation on a TCU-by-TCU basis (Sacks et al., 1974), this is one type of evidence that current speakers hold recipients accountable for understanding immediately current talk in the absence of recipients’ next-turn talk, and thus that current speakers do not always or necessarily rely on recipients’ next-turn talk as a proof-procedure for assessing recipients’ understandings of immediately current talk. For related examples, when current speakers come to places of transition relevance, prior to next-turn talk, current speakers sometimes extend their turns in ways that presuppose that recipients understood immediately prior talk. For instance, current speakers sometimes (a) provide a syntactic
increment to their immediately prior TCU (Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 2002; Schegloff, 2001), or
(b) provide a tag question to prompt recipient action (Sacks et al., 1974; Heritage, 1984b, p. 248),
or (c) reissue and reformat their immediately prior action in ways that now anticipate a dispre-
ferred (vs. preferred) answer (for review, see Heritage, 1984b, pp. 273–280), or (d) construct a
new action that now utilizes a locally subsequent (vs. a locally initial) reference form (Schegloff,
1996a). In each of these examples, current speakers index their assessments that recipients under-
stood immediately prior talk, and current speakers somehow make these assessments without the
benefit of recipients’ next-turn talk.

For a particularly striking, although by no means rare, example that exposes the current
research problem, see Extract 1. As context, Emma is calling her close friend Lottie from her
vacation beach house. At lines 1–4, Emma informs Lottie that Emma’s daughter, Barbara, will
be using the beach house a “week after next.” (line 4). The focus is on Emma’s multi-action (and
thus multi-unit) turn at lines 9–18 and Lottie’s next-turn response: “Oh::” (line 20).

Extract 1  [NB:I:6a]

01 EMM: We’re a’ll goin’ home >tuhday an’ I guess< Barbara’s comin’
02 back with thu kids:=fer: a few days, later on,n,
03
04 EMM: Maybe (. ) week after next.
05 (0.3)
06 EMM: [So]
07 LOT: [Oh] goo::d.
((several lines omitted))
08 LOT: You gunna (. ) be with ‘er?
09 EMM: .hhh I don’ kno:w.
10 (0.4)
11 EMM: <I>don’t know. She’ s comin’ de:wn (. ) (u)’- (. ) drive
down by ‘erse:If:=so:
12 (0.4) ((timed instrumentally at 600 ms.))
13 EMM: .hh An’ then uh: (0.3) they’re gunna come down maybe thuh
14 fourth ‘f Au:gu:s’ we’ re gunna let=’m have that w:ee:k uh (. )
15 before we’ re rgnt- (. ) we re:nt. (. ) e-=w e j’s (. ) we jis
16 (wan’= em) on thuh weeken’ so we mi:ght=as well let thum
17 come down use- durin’ thuh we:ek.
18 (0.2)
19 LOT: Oh[:: ]
20 EMM: [We go]t that opening in Au:gu:s’ so thuh both of=’em can
21 come do:wn.

At line 8, Lottie asks Emma if she will be with her daughter at the beach house ‘a week after
next.’ After answering noncommittally by claiming to not know (lines 9 & 11; Beach & Metzger,
1997), Emma expands her answer by informing Lottie that Barbara will be driving “down by
‘erse:If:’” (lines 11–12), which suggests that Emma will not be with Barbara, at least initially.

At line 13, there occurs a 600-millisecond silence, which research suggests is accountably
long (Roberts & Francis, 2013; Stivers et al., 2009). At line 14, Emma begins by audibly breathing
in for 0.2 seconds, which projects, but does not officially begin, a new TCU (Schegloff,
Important for the present argument, when Emma begins speaking again, she progresses (re progressivity, see Lerner, 1996; Schegloff, 2007) her turn (which had previously involved ‘backward-looking’ actions involving answering Lottie’s question) by initiating a new, ‘forward-looking’ course of action. Specifically, Emma begins to inform Lottie about an *entirely different* time in which Barbara will be using the beach house: “An’ then uh: (0.3) they’re gunna come down maybe thuh fourth ’f August’” (lines 14–15). Although not analyzed in detail, Emma’s remaining units of talk (lines 15–18) all involve informing Lottie about the new, “fourth-of-August” event. The central observation is that, although Lottie’s next-turn talk—that is, her change-of-state token “Oh::” (line 20; Heritage, 1984a)—claims her understanding of Emma’s informing regarding the “fourth-of-August” event (i.e., lines 14–18), it is virtually impossible to convincingly argue that Lottie’s “Oh::”, *per se*, indexes her understanding of Emma’s initial answer at lines 9–12, which dealt with an *entirely different time in which Barbara will be using the beach house.*

Extract 1 exposes the research problem being addressed: When current speakers (e.g., Emma) progress their turns into, or as part of, multi-action/TCU turns (as Emma did at least at line 14), current speakers (e.g., Emma) do not appear to rely solely or exclusively on next-turn talk (e.g., by Lottie, which does not come until line 20) in order to manage intersubjectivity in terms of assessing whether or not recipients (e.g., Lottie) understood prior talk (i.e., Emma’s multiple, distinct actions produced across lines 9–18). What else, then, do current speakers rely on?

**ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

There is another—indeed, there must be another—type of evidence that current speakers rely on to manage intersubjectivity than recipients’ next-turn talk. This evidence is *not* found in talk itself, but rather in how talk is produced by reference to repair-opportunity spaces that are systematically provided for by conversation’s omnirelevant, generic organization of repair. The argument goes as follows. The rules for turn taking organize conversation on a TCU-by-TCU basis (Sacks et al., 1974), with TCUs being vehicles for implementing actions. TCUs/actions are social-structural objects that come to places of transition relevance (Sacks et al., 1974; Ford & Thompson, 1996), and these places are projectable (Sacks et al., 1974). Transition-relevance places are ones where it is relevant—but not mandatory—for recipients to speak next (Sacks et al., 1974; re transition relevance, see also Lerner, 1991; Schegloff, 1982). Multi-action/TCU turns almost always have multiple transition-relevance places. Due to the organization of turn taking, a repair-opportunity space—that is, a space where it is relevant for recipients/others to initiate repair—occurs at every single transition-relevance place, recognizing that, due to projectability, this transition-relevance place can begin a ways prior to possible completion (Jefferson, 1984a) and can extend a ways out from possible completion, even into the prebeginnings and beginnings (Schegloff, 1996b) of current speakers’ next TCUs. As a *social structure* (Heritage, 1984b), a repair-opportunity space is “understood [by all] to be there, to have been there, even if not activated” (Schegloff, 1992, p. 1327, emphasis added; see also Schegloff, 1982; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). As a social structure that is omnirelevant (Schegloff, 1992), a repair-opportunity space is understood by all to be there ‘every time,’ regardless of context.

At each repair-opportunity space, if recipients forgo their structurally provided opportunity to initiate repair, if current speakers do not engage in self-repair, and if current speakers continue
speaking by producing a next discrete action, then both current speakers and recipients tacitly orient to recipients as having understood the immediately prior action. (When this article refers to understanding, it includes hearing, insofar as adequate understanding is predicated on adequate hearing; Robinson, 2013.) For example, in Extract 1, in the transition-relevance place at line 13, when Lottie accountably forgoes an opportunity to initiate repair, and Emma continues speaking at line 14 (i.e., “.hh An’ thgn uh: . . .”), both speakers orient to Lottie as having understood the action implemented by Emma’s: “She’s comin’ do:wn (. ) drive down by ‘erse:If: =so:” (lines 11–12). In sum, although recipient understanding may be indexed in the course of next-turn talk, such understanding is also, and more proximately, claimed ex silentio by recipients on (at least) an action-by-action basis (which is often, but not always, a TCU-by-TCU basis) as they forgo each next repair-opportunity space.

Similar to the Higgs-Boson particle in physics (Scientific American, 2012), the repair-opportunity space is not (yet) directly observable. Rather, it must be documented by reference to observable patterns of conduct that represent expected signatures of the repair-opportunity space. One such pattern involves the fact that other-initiation of repair occurs massively disproportionately in transition-relevance places following TCUs (Schegloff, 2000), and not just following turns, per se (Schegloff et al., 1977; Schegloff, 1997). However, while this pattern supports the existence of the repair-opportunity space, it does not speak to its role in managing intersubjectivity as outlined previously.

One pattern that does support the present argument involves unmarked, open-class, other-initiation of repair (hereafter referred to open-class repair initiation, or OCR). On the one hand, OCR does index (vs. identify) some type of repair-related trouble with an immediately prior turn, and does make its repair conditionally relevant (Schegloff et al., 1977). On the other hand, and important for the present argument, at least the form of OCR (e.g., Huh?, What?, Sorry?) does not identify the location or source of the trouble. Stated differently, in the context of multi-action/TCU turns, OCR indexes trouble somewhere in the immediately prior turn, but does not identify any particular TCU as containing the trouble source. Thus, in the context of multi-action trouble-source turns, we can use trouble-source speakers’ responses to OCRs as evidence for what these speakers do, and do not, orient to as being troubling for producers of OCRs. In the context of multi-action trouble-source turns, if participants understand OCRs as targeting the whole of preceding turns as trouble sources, then we should expect trouble-source speakers to regularly respond by repairing (aspects of) whole turns, which would involve repairing (aspects of) actions that are distal (vs. immediately proximate) to OCRs. However, this is not the case. Rather, this article demonstrates that, in the context of multi-action trouble-source turns, trouble-source speakers regularly respond to OCRs by repairing only the most proximate action in the trouble-source turn (which is often, but not always, implemented in the most proximate, complete TCU in the trouble-source turn). Given that OCRs make relevant repair-related trouble (and make its repair conditionally relevant), the fact that trouble-source speakers do not repair relatively distal actions is evidence that they do not orient to such actions as being troubling for producers of OCRs. Stated positively, it is evidence that trouble-source speakers orient to producers of OCRs as having understood these distal actions. If so, this pattern supports the argument that ‘something else’ other than next-turn talk (which has not yet occurred) allows participants to manage intersubjectivity on an action-by-action basis. This ‘something else’ is the repair-opportunity space provided by conversation’s generic organization of repair.
This article is organized as follows. First, it describes its data and method. Second, in the context of multi-action/TCU, trouble-source turns, this article examines what recipients of OCRIss orient to as being troubling, demonstrating that they regularly respond to OCRIss by repairing only the most proximate action in the immediately prior turn. This article highlights the distinction between discrete TCUs and discrete actions and its importance in terms of participants’ management of intersubjectivity.

DATA AND METHOD

Data are 330 unmarked (vs. ‘astonished’; Selting, 1996) instances of one particular form of OCRI (Drew, 1997), that being What? and its permutations (e.g., Wha’?). Data were limited to What? in order to naturally control for possible action-based differences embodied by other forms, such as Huh?, Sorry?, etc. (Enfield et al., 2013; Robinson, 2004, 2006; Schegloff, 1987). Data were drawn from naturally occurring, ordinary, telephone conversation between friends and family members and are historical sources commonly used in conversation-analytic research. Names and other identifiers in transcripts were either retained from publically available sources (for NB and MTRAc data) or pseudonymized (for Call Home and UTCL data). Telephone data were used to naturally control for nonvocal behavior (Schegloff, 1968), which prior research has shown to be constitutive of practices for claiming (mis)understanding (e.g., gaze orientation, nodding, smiling, eyebrow flashing/furrowing, grimacing, etc.; Robinson, 2006; Schegloff, 1982; Seo & Koshik, 2010). All cases were transcribed by the author using Jefferson’s notation system (Heritage, 1984b). The method used is CA (Heritage, 1984b).

ANALYSIS

A common misunderstanding about open-class repair initiation (OCRI) is that it targets an entire turn, per se, as the trouble source. This is a misunderstanding because, although it might have originally been construed to be the case from early writings (e.g., Schegloff et al., 1977; Schegloff, 1997), Schegloff more recently clarified that the natural position for other-initiation of repair is the “possible completion of the trouble-source turn at the possible completion of the turn constructional unit in which the trouble-source occurred” (Schegloff, 2000, p. 225, emphasis original; see also Schegloff, 1982). Extending Schegloff’s work, the following subsection demonstrates that, in the context of multi-action/TCU trouble-source turns, trouble-source speakers normally respond to OCRIss by repairing only the most proximate action in the trouble-source turn. Insofar as OCRIss do not specify the type of repair-related trouble (e.g., speaking, hearing, and/or understanding), nor the exact TCU in which it occurs, yet nonetheless make trouble relevant somewhere in an immediately prior turn, the fact that trouble-source speakers only repair the most proximate action is evidence that they orient to OCRI producers as having (at least) understood relatively distal actions. One local systematic resource available to trouble-source speakers with which to manage intersubjectivity—that is, to assess that recipients understood distal actions—is recipients’ conduct by reference to repair-opportunity spaces following distal actions. In these spaces, recipients had a social-structural, relevant opportunity to initiate repair, but opted not to,
and thereby claimed understanding of distal actions *ex silentio*. What follows are three examples (Extracts 2–4).

The first example is Extract 2, between a mom and her adult son.

Extract 2  [MTRAc:90:2:23:a]
01 ((ringing))
02 MOM: Hello,
03 (.)
04 SON: Hi.
05 (0.3)
06 MOM: Hi.
07 (.)
08 SON: How’re you.
09 (0.2)
11 → SON: Fine.
12 (1.1)
13 → SON: What’s been goin’ on lately.
14 (0.2)
15 MOM: What?
16 SON: What’s been happening lately.
17 (2.1)
18 MOM: What’s been happening lately?
19 SON: “Yeah.”

The son initially responds to his mom’s reciprocal, personal-state inquiry (i.e., “How’re you.”; line 10; Sacks, 1975) with a neutral, non-troubles-premonitory assessment (Jefferson, 1980): “Fine.” (line 11). Although, based on the structure of telephone-conversation openings (Schegloff, 1986), the son might be expected to speak next related to the conversation’s ‘first topic’ (which he does at line 13), the possible completion of his “Fine.” (line 11) constitutes a transition-relevance place, which extends into the long gap of silence at line 12. This transition-relevance place is a repair-opportunity space for the mom to initiate repair, which she forgoes. Ultimately, the son continues speaking and initiates another discrete action: “What’s been goin’ on lately.” (line 13).

The son’s trouble-source turn at lines 11–13 comprises two discrete actions, each of which are implemented through a single TCU: “Fine.” (line 11) and “What’s been goin’ on lately” (line 13). In response to the mom’s OCRI (line 15), the son only repairs the second (i.e., the most proximate) action: “What’s been happening lately” (line 16). The son does not treat (and thus does not orient to) his initial, distal action, “Fine.” (line 11), as a trouble source, and thus treats it as having been understood. Although repairs made in response to OCRIs sometimes ‘dispense with’ certain elements of trouble-source turns because they are no longer relevant (Schegloff, 2004), the son’s “Fine.” is not one of these elements. Rather, it is a critical action to have been understood by the mom (i.e., as an answer, and his only answer, to her “How’re you.”; see Schegloff, 1986).

Regarding Extract 2, one possible explanation for why the son only repairs the action most proximate to the OCRI might involve the fact that this action is separated from the prior/distal action by an extremely long gap of silence (line 12). However, this explanation does not hold
up in the face of numerous cases like Extract 3, where there is virtually no such silence. Extract 3 involves two college-aged girlfriends. As context, Sue is calling from her boyfriend’s apartment. The boyfriend has been recording phone calls as part of a college-course assignment. At line 1, which occurs toward the end of the call, Sue asks Zia for her permission to allow the boyfriend to use the call: “B’t= is that okay if- if he turns it i:n.”

Extract 3 [UTCL:a20b:f]

01 SUE: B’t= is that okay if- if he turns it i:n,
02 (.)
03 ZIA: (h)Who’s ‘e gunna turn it in to.=hh=
04 SUE: .h Uhm just ‘is profes:oor.
05 (.)
06 SUE: But no one will know your name or anything.
07 (0.8)
08 SUE: No one will know my name. hopefully.
09 (1.0)
10 ZIA: I gue:ss.
11 (.)
12 SUE: <O↑kay.↓> gre:at. I’m s(h)orr(h)y I didn’t tell youu.
13 → ZIA: Oh=that’s okay.=I j’s t (.)(w’l)=like said stuff about
14 → Briann(a).
15 (0.7)
16 SUE: What? 
17 ZIA: I just said stuff about Briann[a. ]
18 SUE: [ O]h she’ll never hear.

At line 10, Zia reluctantly grants Sue permission to use the call: “I gug:ss.” At line 12, Sue acknowledges and positively assesses Zia’s acceptance with “<O↑kay.↓>” and “gre:at.” respectively (Schegloff, 2007). Sue then proceeds to apologize (Robinson, 2004) for not informing Zia sooner about the recording: “I’m s(h)orr(h)y I didn’t tell youu.” (line 12).

The focus is on Zia’s multi-action/TCU response (lines 13–14) to Sue’s apology. With her first unit, Zia answers Sue’s apology by absolving her (Robinson, 2004): “Oh=that’s okay.” (line 13). Zia brings this action to a place of transition relevance, which constitutes a repair-opportunity place that Sue forgoes. It is worth noting that Zia stretches (symbolized in the transcript with a colon) the final syllable of this unit, “oka:y,” (line 13), which potentially provides Sue with a little extra ‘interactional room’ to initiate repair. Zia then immediately (symbolized in the transcript with the equals sign “=”) adds a second unit to her turn, progressing it by accounting for her reluctance to give Sue permission to use the call: “I j’s t (.)(w’l)=like said stuff about Briann(a).” (lines 13–14).

In response to Sue’s OCRI (line 16), Zia only repairs her second action (i.e., the one most proximate to the OCRI): “I just said stuff about Brianna.” (line 17). As in Extract 2, Zia does not treat (and thus orient to) her initial (distal) action, “Oh=that’s okay,” (line 13), as a trouble source (i.e., she treats it as having been understood), even though, unlike Extract 2, Zia’s actions are produced adjacently (i.e., without intervening silence). Again similar to Extract 2, as an answer to Sue’s apology, Zia’s absolution is a critical action to have been understood by Sue and is not dispensable in any of the ways discussed by Schegloff (2004).
Regarding Extracts 2–3, another possible explanation for why the son and Zia (respectively) only repair the most proximate action (relative to the OCRI) is that it is a relatively ‘forward-looking’ action—for example, the son’s topic-initiating question, “What’s been goin’ on lately.” (Extract 2, line 13), and Zia’s account “I j’st (.) (w’ll) = like said stuff about Briann(a).” (lines 13–14)—whereas the distal (i.e., nonrepaired) action is a sequentially ‘backward looking’ action (i.e., The son’s, “Fi:ne.”, and Zia’s absolution, “Oh=that’s ok:ay,” are both conditionally relevant answers to a prior, sequence-initiating action). However, this explanation also does not hold up in the face of numerous cases like Extract 4, where trouble-source turns consist of multiple ‘forward-looking’ actions. As context, Marsha is calling her ex-husband, Tony, about their son, who is flying back to Tony’s home after having spent time at Marsha’s home. Marsha is concerned for her son, who has apparently not arrived on time (most likely because he has been delayed at the airport). At lines 1–2, Marsha reports that she had asked her son to call her “when ’e got in,” which he has not yet done.

Extract 4 [MTRAc: Where’s Joe?]

01 MAR: Yeah >I did< a:sk him to call me when ’e got i:n [((I/-ah-)]
02 TON: [(Okay.)]
03 (.)
04 MAR: Bu:t it wasn’t too crowded when we go:t there. so
05 (0.7)
06 → TON: Yeh he’ll probably get up ah- one=a thuh planes there.
07 → (0.4) ((timed instrumentally at 618 ms.))
08 → TON: Before too long otherwise you’ll be hearing from ‘im at thee
airport you’d prob’ly=duv heard from ‘im already.
09 → (0.5)
10 MAR: Wha?:t?
11 ( .)
12 TON: You’d of probably heard from him a:ready.
13 (0.8)
14 MAR: Y:eg:ah.
15

The focus is on Tony’s turn at lines 6–9, which contains four discrete actions. After briefly acknowledging Marsha with a ‘backward-looking’ action, “Yeh” (line 6; Action #1), Tony initiates a ‘forward-looking’ action by reassuring her that their son’s delay will be temporary: “he’ll probably get up ah- one=a thuh planes there.” (line 6; Action #2). When Marsha does not speak next—that is, in the 618-millisecond silence at line 7—Tony pursues a response and upgrades his reassurance with a syntactic increment (Ford et al., 2002; Schegloff, 2001): “Before too long” (line 8). Note that an accurate understanding of Tony’s increment relies on having understood his immediately prior action, and thus Tony orients to Marsha as having done so. Following his increment, Tony changes tack and provides Marsha with another, different type of reassurance that their son will contact her: “otherwise you’ll be hearing from ‘im at thee airport” (lines 8–9; Action #3). The completion of this action constitutes a transition-relevance place and thus a repair-opportunity place that Marsha forgoes. Finally, Tony continues to upgrade his reassurance with, “you’d prob’ly=duv heard from ‘im already.” (line 9; Action #4), which suggests that their son has, in fact, gotten on a plane, which is preventing him from calling. Note again that an accurate understanding of Tony’s final action (especially its reference to “hearing from the son
already”) relies on having understood at least his immediately prior action (where Tony initially referenced “hearing from ‘im”), and thus Tony again orients to Marsha as having done so.

In response to Marsha’s OCRI (line 11), Tony only repairs the final action in his trouble-source turn (i.e., the one most proximate to the OCRI): “You’d of probably heard from him already.” (line 13). Tony does not treat his more distal actions as trouble-sources, even though they (i.e., actions #2 and #3) constitute ‘forward-looking’ (and perhaps even sequence-initiating) actions (i.e., reassurance). Again, rather than being ‘dispensable’ (Schegloff, 2004), these distal actions are absolutely vital to understanding Tony’s trouble-source turn.

In sum, Extracts 2–4 demonstrate that, in the context of multi-action/TCU trouble-source turns, trouble-source speakers normally respond to OCRIs by repairing only the most proximate action in the trouble-source turn, which in Extracts 2–4 was implemented by the most proximate TCU. Insofar as OCRIs do not specify the type of repair-related trouble (e.g., speaking, hearing, and/or understanding), nor the exact TCU in which it occurs, yet nonetheless make trouble relevant somewhere in an immediately prior turn, the fact that trouble-source speakers only repair the most proximate action is evidence that they orient to OCRI producers as having understood distal actions.

Up to this point, readers may perceive this article to be overwrought in terms of distinguishing between TCUs and actions. However, this distinction appears to be important at least in terms of participants’ management of intersubjectivity generally, and understanding specifically. On the one hand, the (vast) majority of single/discrete actions are implemented through single/discrete TCUs (Sacks et al., 1974). On the other hand, on rare occasions, OCRIs target trouble-source turns in which (as a partial list): (a) a single action is constituted by multiple TCUs, such that the most proximate TCU in the trouble-source turn is only ‘part’ of the action; (b) the most proximate action (implemented by the most proximate TCU) is a designed proxy for a more distal action (implemented by a more distal TCU) in the same turn; and (c) the action implemented by the most proximate, complete TCU is in the midst of being self-repaired (i.e., by the current speaker) into an entirely different action. In each of these circumstances, as a response to OCRI, repairing only the most proximate, complete TCU in the trouble-source turn does not do justice to the most proximate action in that turn. Because talk is designed to accomplish action (Schegloff, 1995), it is not surprising that interactants repair actions, not TCUs, per se. As such, in the aforementioned circumstances, trouble-source speakers repair something other than just the most proximate, complete TCU in the trouble-source turn (as might have appeared to be the case in Extracts 2–4). Three examples are provided in Extracts 5–7, each representing one of the three circumstances described above.

Extract 5, involving two middle-aged college students (Sue and Marsha), is a relatively rare example of a single/discrete action—that is, Sue’s announcement of a medical problem (line 10)—being implemented through multiple TCUs.

Extract 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MTRAc:90:2:33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 ((Ringing))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 MAR: Hello?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 SUE: “Hi.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 MAR: Hi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 (0.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At line 7, Sue projects an announcement with “‘Guess what.’,” which is ‘forwarded’ by Marsha with “What.” (line 8; Schegloff, 2007). Thus, Sue’s next turn at line 10 is prefigured as involving (at least) one distinct action (i.e., an announcement). As projected, Sue continues to announce a medical problem, which is implemented through two distinct, sentential TCUs: “‘I have a low fever again’ an’ my eyeballs ’re yellow.’” (line 10). On the one hand, the first unit is brought to possible completion both syntactically and pragmatically (Ford & Thompson, 1996), constituting a transition-relevance place and thus a repair-opportunity space. On the other hand, in various ways, Sue designs these two TCUs as comprising/implementing a single, announcing action, which was prefigured by her pre-announcement (line 7). First, each TCU involves announcing the occurrence of a present-tense, medical symptom, which together can be understood to comprise a single, medical problem, and which is a common format used by patients when presenting discrete medical problems to physicians (Robinson & Heritage, 2005). Second, Sue not only connects these two TCUs/symptoms with the conjunction “and,” but with a phonetically reduced version (“an”), which research suggests is a practice for projecting within-turn connectedness (Barth-Weingarten, 2012).

Extract 5 contrasts with Extracts 2–4 insofar as, in response to Marsha’s OCRI (line 12), Sue repairs (i.e., repeats) both TCUs in her trouble-source turn, rather than merely the most proximate one: “I have a low fever again an’ my eyeballs are yellow.” (line 13). This can be explained by the fact that Sue is repairing her most proximate, discrete action—that is, her announcement, which designedly involved two connected symptoms—rather than her most proximate TCU, per se (Had Sue only repaired the most proximate TCU in her trouble-source turn—for example, by only repeating My eyeballs are yellow—she would have essentially responded with only half of her action/announcement).

For a second example, see Extract 6, between Tex and his older sister Janet. Here, the action most proximate to the OCRI is a tag question (Sacks et al., 1974) that is designed to be a proxy for an action implemented through the immediately prior (and thus relatively distal) TCU. As context, Tex’s ex-wife, who is the mother of his child, is in prison. Prior to this fragment, Tex reports to Janet that his friends have been giving him a “hard time” about his choice in women. At lines 1–2, Tex is reporting (Holt & Clift, 2007) his excuse given in response to some of those criticisms: “I said this (is e- m-) said this(‘s) not like I- I saw this comin’ or anything.”.
At lines 4 and 7, Janet seeks clarification of Tex’s reported excuse. The focus is on Janet’s multi-action turn at lines 10–13. Initially, Janet claims to now understand Tex’s reported excuse with “Oh:.” (Heritage, 1984a; Action #1). The completion of this action constitutes a transition-relevance place. The resulting repair-opportunity space, during which Tex forgoes repair, is massively enlarged when Janet subsequently breathes in for 1.2 seconds, “.hhhhhhhhhhhh ‘e:ll= h I don’t think you have a whole- hadda whole lot of experience with wo:men. hh” (line 10), which projects another unit of talk (Schegloff, 1996b). Janet continues speaking by providing her own, slightly critical opinion of how Tex ended up in his now-troubled relationship: “‘e:ll=.hh don’t think you have a whole- hadda whole lotta (0.4)” (lines 10–11; Action #2). The completion of this action constitutes another transition-relevance place. The resulting repair-opportunity space, during which again Tex forgoes repair, is again massively enlarged by the 1,086-millisecond silence at line 12. Ultimately, Janet continues speaking and produces a third action in the form of a tag question, “Do you:,” (line 13; Action #3), which is formatted as a full-fledged TCU (i.e., a polar interrogative with final-rising intonation). The action implemented by Janet’s tag question is to exit her turn and solicit a response to her immediately prior critical opinion (Sacks et al., 1974). The tag question is a designed proxy for her immediately prior action, which was implemented through her immediately prior TCU. (As an aside, note that an accurate understanding of Janet’s tag question requires an understanding of her immediately prior action, and thus the tag question indexes Janet’s orientation to Tex as having understood her immediately prior action). Extract 6 contrasts with Extracts 2–4 insofar as, in response to Tex’s OCRI (line 14), Janet repairs not the most proximate TCU in her trouble-source turn—for example, by somehow redoing her tag question—but rather Janet repairs the prior (i.e., more distal) action for which the tag question was a proxy: “I=l= ‘on’t think you hadda whole lotta (0.4) .hh experien(ce) . .’” (lines 15–16). In line with Extract 5, this can be explained if we recognize that Janet is treating Tex’s OCRI as operating on the most proximate action (vs. TCU) in the trouble-source turn.
In line with Extracts 2–4, Extract 6 further supports this article’s central argument. First, Janet does not repair her initial (distal) action, “Oh:.” (line 10), and thus does not treat Tex’s OCRI as targeting her entire trouble-source turn. Stated positively, she treats him as having understood her initial action. Especially in the wake of Janet’s previous requests for clarification (lines 4 and 7), her change of state, “Oh:.” (line 10), is important for Tex to have understood, and thus is arguably not ‘dispensable’ in the ways discussed by Schegloff (2004). Second, before Janet produces “experien(ce)” (line 16), Tex initiates a correction beginning with the same word, “Experience or relationship.” (line 17), which is evidence that Tex did, in fact, originally understand Janet’s second action (i.e., her critical opinion). Combined with the earlier observation that Janet’s tag question indexed her orientation to Tex as having understood her critical opinion, we have data-internal evidence that both Janet and Tex manage intersubjectivity on at least an action-by-action basis, without relying on next-turn talk.

For a final case, see Extract 7, between two college-aged friends. In this case, the action implemented by the most proximate, complete TCU in the trouble-source turn (relative to the OCRI) is in the midst of being self-repaired to an entirely different action. As context, Zack recently returned from a relatively extended stay in Europe. Prior to this fragment, Zack informed Emma that he lived in an apartment for a majority of the time, which was somewhat surprising to Emma. At lines 1–2, Emma seeks confirmation that Zack was not initially living in the apartment: “you weren’t living in thuh hou- in thee apartment at first were you?”.

Extract 7  [Call Home:5352:c]

In answer to Emma’s initial question (lines 1–2), Zack reveals that he lived in a youth hostel for three days before moving into the apartment (lines 3–4). The focus is on Emma’s multi-action turn at lines 5–7. At line 5, Emma initially registers and accepts Zack’s answer with a compound, sequence-closing third (Schegloff, 2007): “Oh=Okay.” (Action #1). The completion of this action constitutes a transition-relevance place, and thus a repair-opportunity space, in which Zack forgoes repair. Emma continues speaking at line 5 and assesses Zack’s process of moving into an apartment as “quick”: “that was (.) quiick that you fo:und a place to li:ve.” (Action #2). Emma’s assessment presupposes that Zack secured the apartment impromptu, or contingently after arriving in Europe, as opposed to having prearranged his accommodations. When Zack does not speak next in the brief silence at line 6 (which may prefigure his disagreement), Emma continues speaking at line 7 and inquires into an alternative (note the “Or” preface; Koshik, 2005) explanation,
which is that Zack had prearranged his accommodations: “Or had they (been) working on it—"
(Action #3). Very shortly after Emma begins her third action—that is, after only two syllables,
“Or ha . . .” (line 7)—Zack initiates repair: “What?” (line 8). Although Emma’s TCU-initial
“Or” may project some type of alternative, the action she is implementing through this third TCU
is not yet recognizable (Jefferson, 1984a).

The focus is on the fact that Emma does not repair her most proximate, complete action
(relative to Zack’s OCRI)—that being her assessment, “that was (.) quick that you fo:und a place to li:ve.” (line 5)—but rather Emma repairs her nascent/incomplete third action at line 7. That is, at
lines 9–10, Emma asks: “Had they been working on finding a place for you to li:ve: (.) before you
got there?” Note that Emma’s most proximate, complete action (relative to Zack’s OCRI) was an
assessment that embodied specific presuppositions, whereas her nascent/incomplete third action
comprises a very different type of action that embodies presuppositions oppositional to those in
her prior assessment. Extract 7 suggests that, in response to OCRI, trouble-source speakers do not
redo or repeat at least action-based error (e.g., Emma does not redo or repeat her second-action
assessment) because doing so does injustice to what trouble-source speakers now orient to as a
more correct action (e.g., Emma’s nascent/incomplete, third action).

In line with Extracts 2–4 and 6, Extract 7 further supports this article’s central argument.
That is, Emma does not repair her first action, “Oh=Okay.” (line 5), and thus does not treat
Zack’s OCRI as targeting her entire trouble-source turn. Stated positively, she treats him as having
understood her “Oh=Okay.” (line 5).

DISCUSSION

A central and enduring goal of the study of conversation has been to explain how participants
manage intersubjectivity generally (Heritage, 1984b), and common understanding specifically
(Clark, 1996; Garfinkel, 1967), once a unit of talk (and its action) has been formed up. It has
long been argued that intersubjectivity is managed by reference to next-turn talk (Clark, 1996;
Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992). While true, grossly apparent facts about the organization of
conversation suggest the insufficiency of next-turn talk alone as a proof-procedure for manag-
ing intersubjectivity. For example, granting that turn construction and allocation are organized
on a TCU-by-TCU basis (Sacks et al., 1974), if current speakers relied solely on next-turn talk
to assess recipients’ understandings, then we would expect multi-action/TCU turns that do not
involve turn-internal, responsive behavior to be extremely rare, which they are evidently not.
We would also expect that, within multi-action turns, recipients would very frequently (and
perhaps even normatively) produce behaviors that somehow index their understanding (e.g., a
continuer; Schegloff, 1982) at the possible completion of every action (at least), which also
evidently is not the case.

Accounting for these facts, this article argued that there is another—indeed, that there must
be another—type of evidence that participants rely on to manage intersubjectivity than next-turn
talk. This evidence is not found in talk, per se, but rather in how talk is produced by reference
to repair-opportunity spaces that are systematically provided for by conversation’s omniirrelevant,
generic organization of repair (Schegloff et al., 1977). As such, this evidence is antecedent to
next-turn talk. At each next transition-relevance place, if recipients forgo their structurally pro-
vided opportunity to initiate repair, if current speakers do not engage in self-repair, and if current
speakers continue speaking by producing a next action, then both current speakers and recipients tacitly orient to recipients as having understood the current speaker’s immediately prior actions. In sum, although recipients’ understandings may be indexed in the course of their next-turn talk, such understandings are also, and more proximately, claimed ex silentio by recipients on (at least) an action-by-action basis, as they forgo each next repair-opportunity space.

These findings accord with Levinson’s (1987) maxim of minimization in linguistic expression and its inferential implications, which can be grossly summed up as: “say little and infer much” (pp. 90–91; see also Grice, 1989; Levinson, 2000). If this can be glossed as ‘infer understanding if there is no evidence of misunderstanding,’ then conversation’s generic organization of repair allows participants to rely on a form of ‘negative evidence’ in their management of intersubjectivity, which researchers have not always considered to be viable. For example, Clark and Brenan (1991; see also Clark, 1996) stated:

> Once we utter something in a conversation, one might suppose, all we need to look for is negative evidence—evidence that we have been misheard or misunderstood. If we find some, we repair the problem, but if we don’t, we assume, by default, that we have been understood. . . . But if negative evidence is all we looked for, we would often accept information we had little justification for accepting. In fact, people ordinarily reach for a higher criterion. As the contribution model says, people ultimately seek positive evidence of understanding. (p. 131, emphasis original)

For Clark and colleagues (Clark, 1996), ‘positive evidence’ comes in next turns in the form of, for example, acknowledgement tokens, assessments, and other conduct. The present findings support the viability of ‘negative evidence’ in the management of understanding, and perhaps even its primacy over positive evidence (see also Heritage’s [2007] notion of ‘recognition as default’). Future research needs to consider how these findings might integrate with apparently convergent findings from psychology regarding concepts such as ‘interaction alignment’ (Garrod & Pickering, 2009) and heuristics that facilitate tacit negotiation of common understanding (Barr & Keyser, 2008).

Conversational techniques for indexing the magnitude (i.e., size and extent) of one’s understanding of a given issue (e.g., immediately prior talk) can be arrayed in terms of their ‘power,’ with some being more equivocable than others, ranging from claims of understanding to its overt demonstration (or proof or exhibition) (Heritage, 2007; Sacks, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c). For example, such techniques can include simply forgoing a repair-opportunity space (as argued herein), or producing a smile (or a furrowed brow, etc.), a continuer (e.g., a nod or Uh huh), a token of confirmation or agreement (e.g., Yeah), a change-of-state token (e.g., Oh), an assessment, a ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ repeat or redelivery of prior talk, a collaborative completion, a presentation of evidence, or some other next action. One definition of power is the degree to which the technique exposes, for a current speaker, the recipient’s understanding of the current speaker’s immediately prior talk as being relevantly correctable (Heritage, 2007). Albeit effective, the technique of simply forgoing a repair-opportunity space appears to be a relatively ‘low-power’ claim of understanding.

If this article’s argument is correct, it encourages a number of directions for future research. For example, how do we explain situations where current speakers explicitly (e.g., verbally) prompt recipient behaviors that index their understanding when such understanding might otherwise be assumed via the generic organization of repair? One answer is that, in these situations, current speakers do not orient to the generic organization of repair as being a sufficient resource.
for managing understanding. This appears to be the case in Extract 8, between two middle-aged girlfriends. As context, Nancy just completed a college class. Here, Nancy tells Emma about how the population of “older” students (i.e., middle-aged students like Nancy) declined over the course of the class, presumably because they dropped the class. Nancy’s first action—“when I first (. ) came innuh thuh cla: ss . . . there were several. (0.3) people that were older.” (lines 1–3)—projects a multi-action turn by projecting a subsequent, contrasting scenario, which Nancy goes on to produce with: “then: I: (. ) realized . . .” (lines 7–8; Halkowski, 2006; Jefferson, 2004).

Extract 8  [NB:II:2; p. 6]

01 NAN: .hhh A:n’ I >said when I< first (. ) came innuh thuh
02 cla: ss (. ) that there were so min- there were sev- eral. (0.3)
03 →

people that were older. (. ) you know.
04 EMM: [Mm: hm,]
05 NAN: [.hhh U]hh (. ) my a:ge, arou: und my a:ge there were three
06 or four fellas, a:n’ uh (. ) about three women .hhhh an’
07 I said then: I: (. ) realized each week (. ) that (0.2)
08 within couple three weeks they had all disappeared.

The question is: At line 3, why does Nancy explicitly (i.e., verbally) prompt Emma’s claim/demonstration of understanding with “you know.”? (Evidence that Nancy’s “you know” functions in this manner is found in the fact that Emma treats it as such by producing a con- tinuer (Schegloff, 1982) at line 4: “Mm: hm,”). That is, given that Emma forgoes repair—both at the transition-relevance place following “older.” (line 3), as well as throughout the elongated transition space represented by the subsequent micropause, “(. )” (line 3)—Nancy should (via the generic organization of repair) be able to infer that Emma understood the initial action-component of the telling (i.e., “.hhh A:n’ I >said when I< . . .”; lines 1–3). Furthermore, given that Nancy projected a multi-action turn/telling, the possible completion of “older.” (line 3) is not typically a place where the production of an understanding-indexing behav- ior is specially relevant or mandatory by the recipient (Lerner, 1991, 1996). In this case, we can postulate that something special is going on. In the context of American universities—where the typical age range for college students is 18–22, and thus where “older” students can be in their late twenties or early thirties—Nancy appears to orient to the possibility that Emma may not ‘appropriately’ understand the reference to “older,” by which Nancy means ‘middle-aged.’ Indeed, Nancy ultimately displays this orientation by repairing/replacing “older” with: “my a:ge, arou: und my a:ge” (line 5). In this case, the generic organization of repair may not have been (at least for Nancy, at that particular moment) a sufficient resource for man- aging understanding. Guided by this article’s findings, cases like Extract 8 should increase analysts’ knowledge of what types of actions and/or action formats are systematically vul- nerable in terms of understanding. This line of inquiry was begun by Schegloff (1987), who observed that ‘referencing’ involves just this sort of vulnerability (see also Heritage, 2007).

Extract 8 also encourages analysts to explore the whole range of practices that current speakers use to manage—that is, monitor, assess, ensure, or somehow encourage behaviors that index—recipients’ understandings at each next transition-relevant place. Sometimes these practices are explicit (and verbal), as with Nancy’s “you know.” (line 3), which, similar to ‘try marking’
(Sacks & Schegloff, 1979), can be a method for prompting evidence of others’ understandings. However, data suggest that many of these practices are much less explicit. For example, at any given transition-relevance place, current speakers who might otherwise (and relevantly) continue speaking have at their disposal a variety of methods for extending the transition space while not beginning a new unit of talk. These methods can be practices for providing recipients with an extended opportunity to speak next, including initiating repair. Perhaps the most obvious method is allowing for a gap of silence (Extract 1, line 13; Extract 2, line 12; Extract 4, line 7; Extract 7, line 6; Extract 8, line 3). Other such methods include audibly breathing out (Extract 6, line 11), audibly breathing in (Extract 1, line 14; Extract 6, line 10), and others we might anticipate, such as producing TCU-prebeginning vocalizations (e.g., “Uh:”; Schegloff, 1996b).

Extract 8 also suggests that the process whereby current speakers manage recipients’ understandings on an action-by-action basis might be guided by one or more preference organizations. For example, this process may be similar to that of person reference (Enfield & Stivers, 2007; Hacohen & Schegloff, 2006; Sacks & Schegloff, 1979), which is organized by a preference for minimization, which gets ‘relaxed’ when recognition is challenged. In Extract 8, note that Nancy initially elongates the transition space into a hearable silence (see the micropause at line 3), and only then explicitly prompts a claim/demonstration of Emma’s understanding with “you know.” Here we may have yet more evidence for a higher-order preference for progressivity in interaction (Stivers & Robinson, 2006) getting ‘relaxed’ when intersubjectivity is possibly threatened (Heritage, 2007).

Another answer to the question of why participants might explicitly manage understanding when doing so may not be systematically necessary is that sometimes participants may not actually be managing understanding, per se, but rather doing something else. For example, see Extract 9, drawn from the same conversation as Extract 8. Prior to this extract, Nancy announced that she was asked out on a date by a man named Rob. At lines 1–2, Nancy reports (Holt & Clift, 2007) her demurral: “I said wu:ll (0.4) $Rob I said you live so fa ra $wa:ly.$” (lines 1–2). Nancy’s reported demurral projects a reported response by Rob and thus projects a multi-action turn, which she goes on to produce: “. . . an’ he said well, I don’t mi:nd if you don’t,” (lines 2–3).

Extract 9  [NB:II:4; p. 8]
01  NAN:  A:n’ I said wu:ll (0.4) $Rob I said you live so fa r
02     awa:ly.$ [an’ he $said well, I don’t mi:nd if you don’t,
03     →  EMM:  [Mm hm, ]
04  EMM:  Mm hm,

The question is: If, by forgoing repair after “awa:ly.” (line 2), Emma should be able to claim understanding of Nancy’s initial action ex silentio, then what is Emma doing at line 3 by producing a continuer (“Mm hm.”; Schegloff, 1982), which can be a practice for claiming understanding? This question is sharpened given that Nancy projected a multi-action turn/reporting (see previous), and thus that the possible completion of “awa:ly.” is not typically a place where the production of an understanding-indexing behavior is specially relevant or mandatory by Emma. Furthermore, unlike in Extract 8, Nancy does not explicitly prompt Emma’s claim/demonstration of understanding.
Again, based on this article’s findings, we can postulate that something special is going on here. Rather than functioning to claim understanding, *per se*, Emma’s continuer may function to explicitly register, acknowledge, appreciate, or otherwise ‘attend to’ Nancy’s demurral as an action. This observation allows analysts to recognize that some actions—either by virtue of the social action itself, its context, and/or its design—may make recipients more accountable for responding, at least in terms of their attention, understanding, appreciation, etc. This line of research would extend that of Stivers and Rossano’s (2010) regarding how different social actions, and different methods for their implementation, differentially mobilize response. (Along these lines, it might be relevant that Emma produces her demurral in a coy fashion by using ‘smile voice,’ symbolized in the transcript by the dollar signs). Cases like Extract 9 suggest that continuers (Schegloff, 1982)—as well as other related behaviors, such as nodding—may less commonly be produced to claim understanding, *per se*, and more commonly be produced to claim attention, which raises numerous unanswered questions about the social (i.e., public and accountable) organization of attention. An alternative explanation is that recipients, such as Emma, might at times index their understanding ‘when not needed’ (i.e., relative to conversation’s generic organization of repair) in order to, paraphrasing Heritage (2007), maximize the security of common ground, but of course they do so at the possible expense of progressivity (see previous).

Future research needs to test present findings in face-to-face contexts that involve nonvocal practices for managing understanding (e.g., nodding, smiling, eyebrow flashing/furrowing, grimacing), at least some of which are systematically organized relative to talk, such as gaze (Rosanno, 2013). Given that all participants are simultaneous wardens of intersubjectivity, present findings also need to be tested in contexts involving three or more participants.

In conclusion, at least in the relatively common context of multi-action/TCU turns, more research is needed on how participants parse and progress action while managing intersubjectivity and respecting progressivity. For example, in Extract 1, at lines 14–18, Emma produces a self-initiated, (stepwise) topic-shifting telling (Jefferson, 1984b) that is not designed as a projectable, multi-action telling. Rather, it ‘becomes one’ in the course of Emma talking. All the while, both Lottie (who never produces a vocalization until line 20) and Emma (who forges ahead and never explicitly prompts Lottie’s understanding) operate without apparent concern for intersubjectivity, which is apparently unproblematically achieved. Such appearances are deceiving because participants manage intersubjectivity not only on a turn-by-turn basis, but also, and more proximately, on (at least) an action-by-action basis according to conduct produced by reference to invisible but relevant repair-opportunity spaces that are provided by conversation’s generic organization of repair.

REFERENCES


