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# Student Initiatives and Missed Learning Opportunities in an IRF Sequence: A Single Case Analysis

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Most conversation analysis (CA) studies of the initiation-response-feedback (IRF; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) sequence have focused on teacher actions in the feedback move. In this article, I use CA to analyze student initiatives (Waring, 2011) within an IRF sequence in one excerpt from a Chinese as a foreign language class. The excerpt features a teacher using an IRF sequence to engage her students in a sentence-based translation exercise. I demonstrate how a student initiates a sequence following the teacher's feedback move to make a negative assessment of the pragmatic soundness of the sentences, thus casting doubt on the teacher's epistemic authority. This initiating action and the subsequent interaction it generates bring contingency into the IRF sequence and create potential learning opportunities. As the teacher contends with the contingency, issues related to epistemic asymmetry and L1 and L2 identities are brought to the surface. Additionally, the potential opportunities to discuss the different pragmatic forces between *yao* in Chinese and *to want* in English when used in making requests are missed at multiple sequential junctures. Based on the analysis, I discuss teacher-student epistemic social relations within the IRF sequence and a methodological issue concerning the analysis of missed learning opportunities. I also offer reflection on how CA can be used for pedagogical intervention.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article offers a single case analysis of an excerpt from a Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) class at a U.S. university. In the excerpt, as a way to test the students' knowledge of how to use a target Chinese word in a sentence, the teacher invents an English sentence and asks the students to translate it into Chinese. As is typical of such a pedagogical exercise, the teacher-student interaction is organized via the initiation-response-feedback (IRF; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) sequence.

Through the lens of conversation analysis (CA), I will demonstrate how by taking initiatives (Waring, 2011) the students introduce contingency into the interaction that disrupts the otherwise highly predictable, lockstep unfolding of the IRF sequence. Specifically, I will demonstrate how one student initiates a post-expansion (Schegloff, 2007) in the form of a negative assessment following the teacher's feedback move. As the teacher contends with the contingency initiated by the student, issues related to epistemic asymmetry, L1 and L2 identities, and missed learning opportunities are brought to the surface and become consequential for the development of the pedagogical exercise.

Contingency is an indispensable feature of talk and can be illustrated through the adjacency pair of invitation-acceptance/rejection (Schegloff, 1996, pp. 21-22). When an invitation is issued, it makes an acceptance or rejection relevant next. In other words, an invitation *projects* an acceptance or rejection as the next relevant action. However, which of

these two alternative actions is selected and in what ways it is assembled by an invitee are matters of unpredictability or *contingency*. Projectability and contingency are both woven into the fabric of the sequential organization of talk. While projectability allows speakers to predict what comes next in talk, providing important clues for turn transition and the design of a relevant next action, contingency is what allows room for options and improvisation in the flow of projectable, orderly talk. When introducing the notion of contingency into the analysis of classroom discourse, van Lier (1996, pp. 169-170) seemed to collapse the concepts of projectability and contingency by describing “contingency” as a “janus-faced” notion, containing elements of “dependency” and “uncertainty,” or “predictability” and “unpredictability.” He argued that contingency provides affordances for learning because it prompts participants to combine what is known with what is unknown to engage in conversation. My analysis will illustrate that whether contingency offers affordances for learning in teacher-student interaction depends to a large extent on how the contingency is interactionally managed.

As a tool to investigate talk-in-interaction, CA provides a powerful microscopic view on: how participants tailor their contributions to the ongoing talk by closely monitoring each other’s verbal and nonverbal behavior; how they design relevant actions as part of the ongoing activity; and how their intersubjectivity, or mutual understanding, is achieved turn by turn (for an informative and accessible account of CA, see Chapter 8 in Heritage, 1984). For this reason, CA has been increasingly adopted by classroom discourse analysts as a potent analytic tool to yield significant insights into teaching and situated learning that take place through interaction in the classroom (see, for example, the special issue edited by Markee & Kasper, 2004 in the *Modern Language Journal*). CA, however, is not the sole provenance of researchers of classroom discourse. Teachers can also learn about the techniques of CA and use the analytic power afforded by CA to analyze their classroom talk with an eye to reflecting upon and improving teaching practice (for how a CA-informed analysis can be combined with teacher’s self-reflection to yield further insights into teaching practice, see Lazaraton & Ishihara, 2005). By placing a moment of classroom interaction under the microscope of CA, I hope to show that what goes awry, and thus what hinders teaching and learning, can be located in the specific conduct of the participants in the sequential organization of their talk.

The purpose of the article is thus twofold: (1) to demonstrate how CA in general, and particularly in single case analysis (e.g., Mori, 2004; Waring, 2009), can shed light on pedagogically significant moments in classroom interaction; and (2) to illustrate how second and foreign language teachers in general, and Chinese language teachers in particular, can benefit from a microanalysis of their own and others’ teaching practice. To set the stage for the analysis, I will begin by surveying some relevant studies that form the backdrop for the inquiry.

## **IRF, LEARNER INITIATIVES, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Of all the discourse patterns that characterize teacher-student interaction in the classroom, perhaps none has been more extensively researched than the IRF sequence. Beginning with Sinclair and Coulthard’s 1975 seminal work in which the IRF sequence was first identified and described, a proliferation of educational studies has been conducted to illustrate its structural organization and/or to discuss how this discourse format is harnessed to serve various pedagogical and educational ends (e.g., Cazden, 2001; Hall, 1998; Mehan, 1979;

Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Nystrand, 1997; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; van Lier, 2000; Wells, 1993). A central concern that emerges from this body of research has been whether the IRF sequence is a pedagogical constraint or resource. The IRF-as-constraint view tends to look at the IRF sequence as a monolithic structure, a controlling device of teachers, and a means to perpetuate the mode of education as transmission (Nystrand, 1997; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; van Lier, 2000). Nystrand (1997), for example, equated the IRF sequence with recitation and held it responsible for giving rise to “monolithic” (p. 11), “authoritative” (p. 12) and “inauthentic” (p. 18) classroom discourse. The IRF-as-resource view, on the other hand, while not denying that teaching and learning can be ill-served by the IRF in some contexts, contends that the IRF sequence is a dynamic, multifunctional structure deployed to organize different tasks and activities in the classroom and serve various pedagogical purposes (Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Wells, 1993).

An important contribution made by CA researchers of classroom discourse to this ongoing discussion has been their effort to ground any claim about the IRF sequence in interactional detail, and to demonstrate that a good understanding of the structure cannot be achieved unless its component moves are carefully examined *in situ* for their composition, sequential implicativeness, and action import (Hellermann, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Lee, 2007; Y. Park, 2013; Waring, 2008, 2009). That is, to fully understand the pedagogical significance of the IRF sequences, CA researchers of classroom discourse examine how each component move of the IRF sequence is assembled by the participants in real time, how one move implicates, entails, or projects the next move, what action is achieved through the design and deployment of each move, and what implications it holds for the interaction. Although CA researchers do not always make the leap from sequential (and prosodic) analysis to pedagogical implications or recommendations (Hellermann, 2003, 2005a, 2005b), when they do, they do so by carefully exploring what the findings of sequential analysis allow them to say about pedagogy (Lee, 2007; Y. Park, 2013; Waring, 2008, 2009).

Of the CA studies on the IRF sequence, most have focused on the feedback move, or the third turn (Hellermann, 2003; Lee, 2007; Y. Park, 2013; Waring, 2008). Waring (2008) examined teachers' explicit positive assessments in the third turn and found that they obstructed student questions, as they were hearable as “case-closed” pronouncements (p. 581). Y. Park (2013) investigated teachers' third turn repeats and found that they either served to close the sequence or to invite students to expand on their deemed-as-inadequate prior talk. Lee (2007) demonstrated how a host of actions such as parsing, steering the sequences, and intimating answers were contingently pursued in the third turn by teachers to accomplish the job of teaching.

With attention paid to teacher actions in the third turn, it can be said that CA research of the IRF sequence has largely been teacher-centered. One exception is Waring's 2009 study. Zooming in on a single case in which an ESL teacher led the students through a homework review activity by using a series of IRF sequences, Waring presented a vivid analysis of how one student had to wait until the end of the IRF sequences before having the opportunity to raise a question about a grammar item in an earlier IRF sequence. This initiating action of hers, along with the teacher's concerted effort, brought the tightly-packed IRF chain to an end and opened the floodgates to an eruption of questions from other students that created additional learning opportunities that would not have otherwise been afforded within the IRF sequences.

The current study intends to extend Waring's line of work on learner initiatives. Waring (2011, p. 204) defined learner initiatives as “any learner attempt to make an uninvited

contribution to the ongoing classroom talk, where ‘uninvited’ may refer to (1) not being specifically selected as the next speaker or (2) not providing the expected response when selected.” She proposed three types of learner initiatives: initiate a sequence, volunteer a response, and exploit an assigned turn. I will demonstrate that by initiating a sequence following the feedback move, the students expand the IRF sequence and turn it into an arena of actions. These learner initiatives after a teacher’s feedback can be considered a possible fourth turn in the IRF sequence.

As learners take initiatives, they use language to configure and reconfigure patterns of participation and to create learning opportunities (Waring, 2011).<sup>i</sup> This phenomenon is in line with the sociocultural view of language learning as participation (e.g., Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). It also resonates with the view of CA not as a tool to document learning, but to describe and analyze learners’ observable behavior as they use language to participate in classroom activities and to create an opportunity-rich environment conducive for language learning (He, 2004).

Previous CA studies have documented how learning opportunities were negotiated among learners (Mori, 2004), or created by learners and then facilitated or obstructed by teachers (He, 2004; Walsh, 2002; Waring 2008, 2011). In these studies learning opportunities were treated as an oriented-to, co-constructed interactional phenomenon. How they were negotiated, created, facilitated, or obstructed were all rendered manifest by analysis of the participants’ specific conduct as exhibited in the sequential organization of their talk. In this study, I attempt to further understanding in this area by demonstrating that learning opportunities can also be *missed* due to various interactional contingencies, and that whether they are facilitated or missed is intimately bound up with the participants’ epistemic asymmetry and their L1 and L2 identities.

## EPISTEMIC ASYMMETRY AND L1 AND L2 IDENTITIES

Epistemic asymmetry, or asymmetry in knowledge, is one kind of asymmetry commonly found in institutional talk and in ordinary conversation (Drew, 1991). It has long been a topic of study for CA analysts and is gaining new impetus in recent years (e.g., Heritage 2012a, 2012b). The kind of epistemic asymmetry that informs and influences the talk between the teacher and the students in this study is linguistic asymmetry, or the unequal distribution of linguistic knowledge between the teacher and the students. This asymmetry is well manifested in the IRF sequence that the teacher uses to organize the translation exercise. When the teacher asks the students to translate a sentence in the initiation move, she places herself in a more knowledgeable ([k+]) position vis-à-vis the students who are being subject to a test and are thus placed in a less knowledgeable ([k-]) position. The feedback move, where the response by the students is adjudicated as correct or incorrect, is a sequential slot where the teacher exercises her epistemic authority and further reinforces her [k+] status (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, pp. 27-28).

Linguistic asymmetry in talk-in-interaction often indexes participants’ identities as novice or expert speakers, native or nonnative speakers, or L1 or L2 speakers of a particular language.<sup>ii</sup> A locus to investigate linguistic asymmetry and identities are repair sequences. Wong (2000b), for example, examined the sentence-medial use of the token “yeah” by native speakers of Chinese in English conversation. She found that various speech perturbations preceded the token “yeah,” but following the production of the token, nonnative speakers self-repaired the problems they encountered or were able to carry on with their talk in a

hitch-free manner. This token “yeah,” as pointed out by Wong, was seldom found in native speaker talk. By virtue of its absence in native speaker talk and the interactional functions it served, Wong proposed that its use indexed learner or nonnative speaker identities. In another study, Wong (2000a) investigated the practice of delayed next turn repair initiation by native Chinese speakers in English conversation with native English speakers. She found that in response to a turn by native speakers, nonnative speakers first claimed understanding by uttering a receipt token. Then following a short pause, they oriented to the same turn by native speakers as the trouble source by initiating repair. The repair was delayed in the sense that it did not follow the trouble source turn immediately in the next turn, but was preceded by a receipt token and a short pause – hence the name delayed next turn repair initiation. Nonnative speakers’ delayed repair initiation also retroactively rendered problematic the earlier claim of understanding conveyed through the receipt token. As this repair practice was peculiar to the Chinese speakers, Wong argued that its deployment indexed nonnative or learner identities of the speakers. In concluding her study, Wong pointed to conversational repair as a potentially fruitful domain to investigate linguistic asymmetry and native/nonnative speaker identities.

Wong (2000a, 2000b) adopted a difference-oriented approach to linguistic asymmetry in nonnative speaker talk. According to her studies, differences in interactional practices index differential linguistic competence, which in turn indexes learner or nonnative speaker identities. Since Wong’s studies, more CA studies have been conducted in an attempt to tease out the relationship between repair, linguistic asymmetry and identities. In this line of CA research, analysts set out to address how the differential language expertise of L1 and L2 speakers becomes a practical concern for the participants in interaction, and how through the orientations the participants display toward the asymmetry in their linguistic knowledge, their identities as L1 or L2 speakers are made relevant (Hosoda, 2006; Kasper, 2004; Kurhila, 2004; J. Park, 2007). Hosoda (2006) examined conversation that involved L1 and L2 Japanese speakers. She found that the identity categories of L1 and L2 speakers were invoked only on occasions when a repair was invited by L2 speakers or when mutual understanding posed a problem. Similarly, Kasper (2004) demonstrated that the identity categories of novice and expert German speakers became relevant only when a repair was initiated by the novice speaker through code-switching in conversation organized for the purpose of practicing the L2. Focusing on service encounters, Kurhila (2004) observed discrepant orientations displayed toward linguistic errors by native and nonnative speakers of Finnish. While nonnative speakers oriented to their linguistic errors, thus invoking their nonnative speaker identities, native speakers oriented to nonnative speakers’ institutional identities as clients by prioritizing the achievement of institutional goals. J. Park’s (2007) study showed that language-focused repair sequences (e.g., word searches) were one of multiple discursive practices through which native and nonnative speaker identities were ascribed, negotiated, and resisted in English conversations among peers.

In L2 classrooms, especially in form-and-accuracy pedagogical contexts (Seedhouse, 2004), teachers’ repair of students’ grammatical errors figure prominently. Through such repair sequences, the “default” identities (Richards, 2006, p. 60) of teachers and students are enacted and reinforced. In other words, through repair operations, teachers exercise their epistemic authority and at the same time reassert their authority as teachers. In these cases, we can say that epistemic authority and authority as teachers coincide with each other.<sup>iii</sup> However, epistemic authority and authority as a teacher are not always synonymous. Richards (2006), for example, showed that in L2 classrooms teachers can maintain their

authority as teachers despite a reversal of epistemic authority between them and the students. In one of the data excerpts that he analyzed (pp. 63-65), a term unrecognizable to the teacher was brought up in the talk by one student, and the teacher oriented to his/her [k-] status by asking the students to explain. As the students took on the task of supplying the information, they assumed the discourse identities of primary knowers, an identity category usually reserved for teachers. However, despite a reversal of epistemic authority, Richards showed that the teacher deployed some discursial moves that were indexical of teacher talk, or talk that maintained his/her authority and identity as a teacher. The data excerpt was analyzed to drive home the point that a reversal of epistemic authority, or a change in discourse identities, in teacher-student interaction constitutes a step forward over the canonical three-turn IRF sequence because it offers “the potential for linguistic exploration” (p. 65).

Drawing on the above contributions, and examining teacher-student interaction in a classroom setting, this study will show that linguistic asymmetry and L1 and L2 identities are further compounded by the participants’ institutional identities as teacher and students, and that when epistemic authority and authority as a teacher are not synonymous, there are dire pedagogical consequences.

## DATA AND METHOD

This study is part of a larger research project that set out to investigate teacher-student interactional practices in a beginning-level CFL classroom at a U.S. university. The instructor, Lan,<sup>iv</sup> was in her late twenties and was pursuing her doctoral degree in Chinese linguistics at the time of research. Before coming to the U.S., Lan had three years of experience in teaching Chinese as a second language to international students at a Chinese university; and prior to data collection, she had taught Chinese independently for one year in the capacity of a graduate assistant at the university. Mandarin Chinese was Lan’s L1. As an L2 speaker of English, Lan had yet to develop her repertoire of interactional competence in English. While she generally had no problem in conducting lessons in English, she occasionally encountered difficulties in understanding questions and comments by the students and in expressing herself clearly.

Fourteen students were enrolled in the class. Twelve of them were L1 speakers of English while the remaining two were L1 speakers of Japanese. The students were about two months into the course when data collection began and had fewer than 35 contact hours. English, the language that all the participants shared and the L1 to most of them, was used as the medium of instruction. The students were allowed to use English liberally to ask questions and to make comments. Although a teacher-fronted class, a high level of student participation was observed.

Six class sessions were audio-recorded and yielded a total of five hours of audio data. I was physically present in all the recorded sessions and took on the role of researcher-observer. The fact that the data was not video-recorded means that embodied actions such as eye gaze, gesture, and body posture – important as they are (Mori & Hayashi, 2006; Olsher, 2004) – did not figure in the analysis. This is one limitation that needs to be acknowledged.

As I listened repeatedly to the audio, a pedagogical centerpiece caught my attention: the frequent use of invented sentences (Cook, 2001) by the teacher to test the students’

knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. She would invent English sentences spontaneously and ask the students to translate them into Chinese. Such pedagogical exercises invariably followed the IRF sequences. However, not all the IRF sequences used to organize the sentence-based translation exercises followed the canonical three-turn sequence. What was intriguing to me was the range of orientations that the students displayed toward the sentences. They would, for example, attempt to authenticate, personalize, and contextualize them, or make jocular remarks about them. These attempts by the students introduced contingency (van Lier, 1996) into the IRF sequences and made their unfolding more unpredictable and the job of teaching more complicated. The various orientations that the students displayed toward the invented sentences will be the topic for another study. In this study, I focus on just one excerpt.

Schegloff (1987) distinguished between two modes of analysis in CA. In one mode, analysis is based on a collection of excerpts, which are analyzed case by case to illustrate recurring interactional practices. *Uncovering* interactional patterns through a collection of excerpts is key to this mode of analysis. Another mode is single case analysis. Armed with various findings from previous CA studies, analysts conduct an in-depth, turn-by-turn analysis of a single episode of interaction. *Illuminating* in minute detail how various social actions are accomplished within a single stretch of talk is the purpose of this mode of analysis (for exemplars of CA's single case analysis in the field of language teaching and learning, see Mori, 2004; Waring, 2009).

My selection of this particular excerpt for analysis was motivated by its significance in bringing to light a range of issues related to classroom interaction that I mentioned earlier. Such a selection criterion is in line with Mori's (2004, p.539) argument that while CA has *unmotivated looking* as a guiding principle, "the selection of a particular case for the publication of its CA-based analysis may be motivated by the significance of the case in a given field."

The data was transcribed using a CA transcription system developed by Gail Jefferson (2004; see Appendix A). The portions of talk that were conducted in Chinese were transcribed in Chinese characters in the first line, followed by *Pinyin* – a system for romanizing Chinese characters – in the second line, a word for word English translation in the third line along with grammatical gloss (see Appendix B), and an idiomatic English translation in the fourth line.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The excerpt is taken from a lesson on the topic of shopping. Prior to the excerpt, Lan offered a short review on one of the meanings that the students had learned for the word *yao* – a future time marker. She then pointed out that *yao* can also be used as a verb to express one's wants or desires. We join the interaction as Lan asks the students to translate an English sentence – *I want to drink a cup of beer* – into Chinese by using the word *yao*.

### Extract 1

- 1 Lan: How to say (0.8) I want to::: (1.0) drink (0.3) > I want  
 2 to drink a cup of < (2.7) beer.<sup>v</sup>  
 3 Sts: [我要喝一杯啤酒。  
 [wo yao he yi bei pijiu  
 [I want drink one MSR beer

- 4 Tom: *[I want to drink a cup of beer.*  
[我要一杯啤酒。  
[wo yao yi bei piju  
[I want one MSR beer  
*[I want a cup of beer.*
- 5 Lan: Drink.
- 6 Tom: 我要喝一杯啤酒。  
wo yao he yi bei piju  
I want drink one MSR beer  
*I want to drink a cup of beer.*
- 7 Lan: 我要喝一杯啤酒。  
wo yao he yi bei piju  
I want drink one MSR beer  
*I want to drink a cup of beer.*
- 8 Sts: 我 要 [喝 一 杯 啤 酒。  
wo yao [he yi bei piju  
I want [drink one MSR beer  
*I want to [drink a cup of beer.*
- 9 Tom: [It sounds so rude [*(unintelligible)*] though.
- 10 Lan: [*(sound of chalk on board)*]
- 11 Lan: Ah? [*(the “ah” is produced amidst the sound of chalk)*]
- 12 Lan: [*(sound of chalk continues for another 1.5 seconds)*] So, =
- 13 John: =Rude.
- 14 (0.3)
- 15 Lan: What?
- 16 John: Are you ordering something? =
- 17 Mary: =Yeah. Are you ordering something or talking with your friend.
- 18 ( ): [*(sneezes)*]
- 19 Lan: [I- I would like to h(h)ave a be(h)er heheh
- 20 John: Huhe[heh
- 21 Lan: [I wou(h)ld li(h)ke to have (.)  
a [(0.6) ] [cup of- ] beer. =
- 23 John: [So rude]
- 24 Tom: [*>等一下<* ]  
[deng yixia ]  
[wait a short while ]  
[*>Wait a second<* ]
- 25 Tom: =我 想 (0.5) [我 想 ] [我想::: 要 一 杯 啤 酒。  
wo xiang (0.5) [wo xiang ] [wo xiang ::: yao yi bei  
piju  
I think (0.5) [I think ] [I think want one MSR  
beer  
= *I would like (0.5)* [*I would like* ] [*I would like a cup of beer.*
- 26 Lan: [Anyway ] [*(sound of chalk on board)*]
- 27 Mary: [给我一杯啤酒吧。  
[gei wo yi bei piju ba

[DAT one MSR beer PRT  
 [Give me a cup of beer, will you?

- 28 Lan: ((Lan explains that *yao* can be followed by a noun or a verb  
 29 phrase))

For ease of reference, I will break down the transcript into smaller segments for analysis.<sup>vi</sup>

### The IRF Sequence and the Invented Sentences

#### Extract 2

- 1 Lan: How to say (0.8) I want to::: (1.0) drink (0.3) > I want  
 2 to drink a cup of < (2.7) beer.  
 3 Sts: [我要喝一杯啤酒。  
 [wo yao he yi bei pijiu  
 [I want drink one MSR beer  
 [I want to drink a cup of beer.  
 4 Tom: [我要一杯啤酒。  
 [wo yao yi bei pijiu  
 [I want one MSR beer  
 [I want a cup of beer.  
 5 Lan: Drink.  
 6 Tom: 我要喝一杯啤酒。  
 wo yao he yi bei pijiu  
 I want drink one MSR beer  
 I want to drink a cup of beer.  
 7 Lan: 我要喝一杯啤酒。  
 wo yao he yi bei pijiu  
 I want drink one MSR beer  
 I want to drink a cup of beer.

In lines 1-2, Lan comes up with a sentence and asks the students to translate it into Chinese. The pauses and sound stretch that punctuate the sentence indicate that she invents the sentence extemporaneously to serve the pedagogical purpose at hand. In response, some students give a word for word rendition in Chinese (line 3). In overlap with these students, Tom offers his version of translation, but omits the word *be* or *drink* (line 4). Lan orients to Tom's translation as inadequate and initiates repair by singling out the word *drink* (line 5). Picking up on the repair cue, Tom redoes the translation by incorporating *be* (drink) into his sentence in line 6. Lan then offers a third-turn assessment by repeating the correct translation and brings the IRF sequence to a close (line 7). As can be seen, lines 1-7 constitute an IRF sequence with an inserted other-initiated, self-correction sequence (lines 4-6).

As the pragmatic appropriateness of the invented sentence (and its Chinese translation) will be at issue in the interaction in a moment, we now turn to take a look at the sentences. The English sentence – *I want to drink a cup of beer* – and its Chinese translation – *wo yao he yi bei pijiu* – can be judged as grammatically sound, although it is much more common to say “a

glass of beer” than “a cup of beer” in English. However, devoid of contexts, it is difficult to come to a conclusion about the pragmatic appropriateness of the sentences. To test its pragmatic appropriateness, a free-standing sentence needs to be subject to some specific contexts of use. For example, we can contextualize the sentence as a sequence initiating action, or as a response to a prior turn; we can also make it part of a conversation between family or strangers. Depending on the sequential and situational contexts, arguments for or against its pragmatic appropriateness can then be developed. Take the Chinese sentence *wǒ yào hē yì bēi pījiǔ* (I want to drink a cup of beer) as an example. If it is uttered by a 15-year-old boy in an entreating tone of voice in the middle of a dinner to his father, it expresses the boy’s wants for a glass of beer and can be understood as a request for permission. As a response, the father can grant or refuse the request.<sup>vii</sup> If it is uttered by a husband to a wife as he is heading toward the kitchen, it can be interpreted as an announcement of the husband’s intentions or wants to have a glass of beer. When used as an initiating action by a customer to order a beer at a bar, however, the sentence does not sound so natural. *Wǒ yào yì bēi pījiǔ* (I want a cup of beer) – the version of translation produced by Tom in line 4 is more appropriate for that context. The same English sentence, *I want to drink a glass of beer*, when used in the above three contexts, would seem to sound either stilted or rude. It seems better to say *Can I have a glass of beer?* (or perhaps *I want a glass of beer*, which can sound a little rude) when a son asks his father for permission or when a customer orders a beer, and *I’ll get a glass of beer* when a husband announces his intentions or wants to his wife.

A couple of observations can be made based on the above examples. One, we cannot judge the pragmatic appropriateness of a sentence unless there is a context. Two, semantically equivalent sentences in English and Chinese may fare differently in the same context.

With these observations in mind, we now return to the transcript. The inserted other-initiated, self correction sequence in lines 4-6, where Lan seeks to have Tom to incorporate the word *he* (drink) into the Chinese translation, indicates that Lan orients to the formal aspect of the translation exercise. That is, at this point in the interaction, her concern is to get the student to reproduce in Chinese a grammatically correct, word for word translation of the English sentence irrespective of its context of use. This, however, is soon to be changed by a remark made by Tom in line 9.

### Students’ Initiatives in Expanding the IRF Sequence

#### Extract 3

- 7 Lan: 我要喝一杯啤酒。  
 wo yao he yi bei piju  
 I want drink one MSR beer  
*I want to drink a cup of beer.*
- 8 Sts: 我 要 [喝 一 杯 啤酒。  
 wo yao [he yi bei piju  
 I want [drink one MSR beer  
*I want to [drink a cup of beer.*
- 9 Tom: [It sounds so rude [((unintelligible)) though.
- 10 Lan: [((sound of chalk on board))
- 11 Lan: Ah? ((the “ah” is produced amidst the sound of chalk))

- 12 Lan: ((*sound of chalk continues for another 1.5 seconds*)) So,=  
 13 John: =Rude.  
 14 (0.3)  
 15 Lan: What?  
 16 John: Are you ordering something?=  
 17 Mary: =Yeah. Are you ordering something or talking with your friend.  
 18 ( ): [((*sneezes*))]  
 19 Lan: [I- I would like to h(h)ave a be(h)er heheh  
 20 John: Huhe[heh  
 21 Lan: [I wou(h)ld li(h)ke to have (.)  
 22 a [(0.6) ] [cup of- ] beer. =

As noted earlier, Lan brings the IRF sequence to a close in line 7 by repeating the correct translation. As some students are repeating after Lan in line 8, Tom cuts in midstream to offer a post-expansion assessment. It is called a post-expansion assessment because it comes after an IRF sequence and expands the sequence by making a response from the teacher relevant (see Schegloff, 2007, pp. 115-162 for a detailed explication of post-expansion). The assessment— *it sounds so rude ((unintelligible)) though* (line 9) – is ambiguous in terms of what it targets as the assessable due to the fact that part of Tom’s utterance is unintelligible. However, based on its composition (in particular the assessment term *rude*), and its position (being placed at the closure of a translation exercise), we may infer that it probably targets the pragmatic inappropriateness of the English sentence, the Chinese sentence, or both, given that the two are supposed to be equivalent. Whether or not this is the case depends on how the participants orient to it in the unfolding interaction.

As can be seen from lines 8-10, Tom’s assessment turn (line 9) is partially overlapped with the previous turn and the following turn. As Tom is in the midcourse of producing his assessment turn, Lan can be heard starting to write on the board (line 10). Lan’s repair initiator *ah?* is uttered amidst the sound of writing (line 11). A 1.5-second pause follows her repair initiator, during which she continues writing (line 12). That no repair attempt is offered by Tom during this time may be due to the fact that Lan is writing, supposedly with her back turned to the students, and reciprocity cannot be established (Goodwin, 1981).<sup>viii</sup> As soon as the sound of writing stops, Lan says *so* with a continuous intonation (line 12). Without the video, it is difficult to determine the function of *so*. Since it is produced upon Lan’s completion of writing on the board, it can be understood as a turn-initial *so*, indicating more talk is forthcoming where Lan will probably explain to the students whatever she has written on the board. Or it can be a continuation of Lan’s pursuit of repair initiation. Recall that Lan utters a repair initiator *ah?* in line 11 which is not taken up by Tom. It is possible that after she stops writing, Lan continues to pursue a response by repeating the *so* from Tom’s utterance in line 9 to indicate that *so* is what she hears, and that she has problem in hearing the remaining part of the utterance. It is the second function of *so* that John seems to orient himself to when he offers a resaying in an emphatic tone of the word *rude* from Tom’s utterance to collaboratively complete Lan’s utterance.

Following a short pause (line 14), Lan launches yet another repair initiator *what* (line 15). This leads to a subsequent yes/no question by John to seek a confirmation from Lan: *Are you ordering something?* (line 16). Though not a reformulation of Tom’s assessment turn or his own just prior turn, the question displays John’s understanding of the contextual relevancy invoked by Tom’s assessment turn and represents an interactional move to situate the

sentences in a specific interactional context for Lan to confirm. Latched onto John's turn, Mary expands John's question into an alternative question, presenting *talking to your friend* as another possible context for Lan to choose from (line 17). It becomes relevant next for Lan either to respond to John's or Mary's question. Lan's response, which comes in line 19, and is repeated in lines 21-22 with a self-repair, is not an answer to either John's or Mary's question. Rather it is a correction on the English sentence that she had composed earlier for the students to translate. She changes *want to* into *would like to*. The repaired version of the sentence seems to sound more polite than the earlier version.

Much is going on in this short stretch of talk (lines 9-22), and a closer look is in order. The first thing to register is that after having twice exhibited troubles in hearing or understanding the post-expansion assessment and following two questions which are not a reformulation of it, Lan suddenly demonstrates her understanding of the trouble source and performs a self-repair on the English sentence. Note that Lan's repair initiators in lines 11 and 15 – *ah* and *what* – are what Drew (1997) called open-class repair initiators. They only indicate that there are troubles in hearing or understanding but do not specify the nature of the troubles or the exact trouble sources. The recipient's responses to those repair initiators can provide some clues as to how the nature of the troubles is being analyzed and oriented to. While Lan's first repair initiator *ah* (line 11) is not taken up, John's repair attempt in line 13, a partial repeat of the trouble source turn, displays his analysis of Lan's trouble as one of hearing. His question (line 16) following Lan's second open-class repair initiator (line 15), on the other hand, displays his understanding that Lan's trouble is now one of understanding rather than hearing – that is, if Lan had not got the word *rude* when Tom first uttered it, by the time he himself repeated it, she must have heard it. Her trouble is in understanding on what *rude* is intended as a comment or assessment. Lan's self-repair following John's and Mary's questions proves John's understanding to be correct. It is the hearing of *rude*, matched against the specific interactional contexts brought up in John's and Mary's questions, that touches off Lan's recognition that the English sentence may be rude to be used in some contexts – hence the self-repair. I will discuss why she does not orient to the Chinese sentence as problematic in a moment.

It should also be noted that, in addition to indicating trouble in understanding, the open class repair initiator *what* (line 15) is also being used to do surprise (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006).<sup>ix</sup> There is a short pause in line 14 before *what*, and as Wilkinson and Kitzinger pointed out, surprise tokens are usually preceded by pauses. Lan's surprise may be due to the out-of-the-blueness of the assessment term *rude*, an assessment that she seems not be able to connect to the pedagogical focus at hand.

The second thing to register is that Lan's self-repair, placed sequentially next to two consecutive questions, has the interactional effect of disregarding them. It should be noted, however, that while she sequentially deletes John's and Mary's questions, her self-repair is one possible end product that these questions are designed to accomplish in the first place. Recall that the questions are posed in an environment in which Lan has twice demonstrated troubles in hearing or understanding the assessment. They are the first pair parts of two inserted question-answer sequences within the larger repair sequence (Schegloff, 2007) designed to help Lan understand the assessment. In other words, the questions are only a subsidiary means to an end, and when the end is directly achieved, the answer to the questions can be unaccountably absent. Indeed, following Lan's self-repair, neither John nor Mary continues to pursue an answer to their question.

Skipping the questions, however, is not without pedagogical consequence. If Lan had answered John's or Mary's question, her response would have constituted the second pair part. In order to provide a relevant second pair part, she would have to consider whether the sentence can be used to order something – as suggested by John, to talk to a friend – as proposed by Mary, or to do something else in some other contexts. From there many interactional possibilities may ensue, such as a discussion on whether the sentences are too rude for that context. Furthermore, since this is a translation exercise, the question of whether or not the two supposedly equivalent sentences express the same pragmatic force when used in the same context can be broached.

### Pragmatic Appropriateness of the Chosen Sentence in English and Chinese

I will take the context invoked by John – ordering something or, more generally, making requests at service encounters – as an example and examine how well the two sentences stand up against the scrutiny of some relevant literature in research on pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics so as to illustrate the pedagogical consequence of skipping the questions.

As a semantic formula associated with the speech act of making requests, *I want* can come off as rude in English because it constitutes a direct and unmitigated request where a conventionally indirect strategy would be culturally preferred (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987). By contrast, its Chinese equivalent *wǒ yào* (I want) is not considered rude by most Chinese. Previous research has shown that Chinese prefer directness over circumlocution when making requests (Lee-Wong, 1994). In fact, *wǒ yào* (I want) is used in a wide range of communicative situations, ranging from service encounters such as ordering food at a restaurant to conversations among friends and family members, so much so that Chinese learners of English as a foreign language are frequently found transferring this request formula into English (Wang, 2011).<sup>x</sup> When Tom initiates the post-expansion assessment, it is likely that he orients to the use of the semantic formula *I want* and *wǒ yào* as rude.

Based on the above, we can conclude that while *yào* and *want* share similar semantic meanings, they differ pragmatically when used to make requests, a fact that learners of either language may be unaware of, and pragmatic transfer is possible in either direction (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Therefore, it can be argued that Lan's *interactional fast forwardness*, or her skipping the questions, resulted in the elimination of a potential pedagogical opportunity to draw the students' attention to the different pragmatic force between *want* and *yào* in request making, as well as more general cultural differences in politeness.

### The Teacher's Treatment of the Students' Comments and Questions

#### Extract 4

- 19 Lan: [I- I would like to h(h)ave a be(h)er heheh  
 20 John: Huhe[heh  
 21 Lan: [I wou(h)ld li(h)ke to have (.)  
 22 a [(0.6) ] [cup of- ] beer. =  
 23 John: [So rude]  
 24 Tom: [>等一下< ]

[deng yixia	]
[wait a short while	]
[>Wait a second<	]

Lan's repair operation, which comes in line 19 and is repeated with a self-repair in lines 21-22, demonstrates that she agrees with Tom's assessment. By agreeing with the assessment, locating the repairable, and doing the repair, she relinquishes her epistemic authority temporarily to the students. Note the laugh particles embedded in her repairs (lines 19, 21). By laughing while repairing, she exhibits "troubles-resistance" (Jefferson, 1984, p. 351).<sup>xi</sup> Her troubles have dual meanings – having to fix a language problem while simultaneously managing the interactional delicacy of relinquishing her epistemic authority. In such an environment – namely, in an environment where a speaker is dealing with her troubles – the recipient, if wishing to affiliate with the troubles-dealer, should display "troubles-receptiveness" (Jefferson, 1984, p. 351) by not laughing along. What John does is the opposite – he utters three laugh particles (line 20) following Lan's first repair (line 19), a sign of disaffiliation. When Lan restarts the sentence to add the phrase *a cup of* (line 22), he cuts in and offers yet another assessment token *so rude* (line 23). Delivered at a point where Lan has already proffered a more polite form as a repair solution, the assessment *so rude* is no longer doing a repair initiation, but achieving the action of pursuing the matter to the very end and not letting Lan off the hook.

Following John's *so rude* and just as Lan brings the revised sentence close to a point of completion (lines 22-23), Tom interjects a discourse marker *deng yixia* (wait a second) (lines 24), thereby displaying his projection that the interaction is coming to a sequence-closure relevant place and that a transition to a new sequence or activity will soon become relevant unless specific work is done to halt it. Indeed, *deng yixia* (wait a second) is just used to request that a transition be put on hold. Furthermore, by using such a discourse marker, Tom claims for himself the right to next turn. With the challenging interactional environment created by John's responses and the preemptive indication of incipient speakership by Tom, going back to answer John's and Mary's questions does not seem to present itself as a possible interactional option for Lan at this point. In fact, what she does is to ignore Tom's request and exit the sequence on her own, a point to which I will return in a moment

Before turning to the next stretch of the talk, two pertinent questions need to be addressed. One, what prompts Lan to sort out the English sentence as repairable while disregarding the Chinese sentence altogether? Two, what understanding does Lan display toward the interaction-so-far through such a self-repair?

As noted earlier, by the time the context-related questions were raised by John and Mary, Lan had already made two futile attempts to either hear or understand Tom's post-expansion assessment. A third failure can push the interaction into an even more uncertain territory. Therefore, there is structural pressure for Lan not only to respond as soon as possible but also to demonstrate understanding. Given that *wo yao* (I want) does not usually sound rude to the ear of an L1 speaker of Chinese, Lan is prompted to locate the trouble within the English sentence. Note also that the repair sequence (lines 9-22) is conducted in English throughout. English is an L2 for Lan, and one in which she has not yet developed a wide repertoire of interactional resources, which places her in a [k-] position vis-à-vis her English L1 students. By contrast, as L1 speakers of English, Tom and John are in a [k+] position due to their entitlements to the language (Drew, 1991). The entitlements, as manifested in the



English sentence. As a request to order a beer, Tom's version of the translation, which adds the verb *xiang* (think) before *yao* (want), softens the request and thus makes it sound more polite. However, as a request formula, *xiang yao* may sound incorrect to some speakers due to regional variation. What further compounds the issue here is that we do not know what specific context the speakers have in mind when they produce these sentences. Suppose both Tom and Mary are at a friend's house, and the friend offers them the options of beer, orange juice, and soda as something to drink by asking *ni xiang yao he shenme?* (What would you like to drink?). In this situation, both Tom's and Mary's Chinese sentences *wo xiang yao yi bei pijiu* (I would like a cup of beer) and *gei wo yi bei pijiu ba* (give me a cup of beer, will you?) may be appropriate – although *pijiu* (beer) alone would also suffice as a response. Remember that Mary did bring up talking to a friend as a possible context when she asked Lan the context-related question.

Devoid of contexts, therefore, it is difficult to determine the pragmatic appropriateness of Tom's and Mary's Chinese sentences. But the provision of a revised translation in accordance with the revised English sentence displays Tom's and Mary's understanding/assumption that the verb *yao* (want) in Chinese conveys the same pragmatic force as *want* in English, and therefore, once *want to* is replaced by *would like to* in the English sentence, *yao* (want) has to be replaced by something else supposedly to match the level of politeness. However, whether their Chinese translations are appropriate or sound more polite depends to a large extent on the contexts of use. This demonstrates that when Lan changes *want to* into *would like to*, she only resolves a problem with a linguistic form in English. The problem of the pragmatic force remains unresolved and the context of use unspecified, with the aftermath carried all the way to the students' revised translations.

Tom's initiation and pursuit of an uninvited revised translation, on the other hand, displays his orientation to Lan's self-repair on the English sentence as only a partial solution or not a proper solution to the repair initiation launched by his post-expansion assessment. His revised translation may indicate that while he might have oriented to both the English and Chinese sentences as equally rude, he probably had targeted the Chinese sentence as the trouble source that needed repairing when he made his post-expansion assessment. If he had targeted (or only targeted) Lan's English as what was repairable, he would not have pursued an uninvited revised translation following Lan's self-repair on the English sentence. His translation indicates that the seed of misalignment seemed to have been planted early on in the interaction and was brought to full bloom by various interactional contingencies as the interaction unfolded, with the participants' differential knowledge of the semantically equivalent but pragmatically nonequivalent pair of words *yao* and *want* lurking in the background as a propelling force.

Despite Tom's request to keep the sequence open, Lan quickly and unilaterally abandons the sequence. In line 26, as Tom just restarts the beginning of his revised translation, Lan chimes in with the discourse marker *anyway* (line 24) to close the repair sequence.<sup>xiii</sup> *Anyway*, then, is a boundary marker of Lan's orientations to two different epistemic statuses and situated identities. If in the repair sequence, Lan is "doing being" an L2 learner of English – to borrow Sacks' (1984, p. 413) words, then, when exiting the repair sequence to return to a previous activity, she resumes "doing being" a teacher of Chinese.

Following the marker, we can hear Lan writing on the board (line 26). As can be seen from lines 25-27, the sound of chalk is in overlap with the bulk of Tom's production of the revised translation and the whole of that of Mary's. This overlap indicates the parallel ongoing of two activities pursued separately by Lan and the two students, and shows that

they are following different agendas. All the while Tom and Mary are providing their revised translations, Lan is preoccupied with writing on the board. As soon as the writing stops, Lan takes up a grammatical point, explaining that *yao* can be followed by either a noun or a verb phrase (lines 28-29), and no evaluation is offered on the revised translations.<sup>xiv</sup>

By exiting the translation exercise on her own while the students are still working on it, and by resuming a Chinese lesson that has been temporarily interrupted to deal with her errors in English, Lan returns to an epistemic territory over which she can reclaim her epistemic authority and authority as a teacher. Pedagogically, her action results in a disregard of an ongoing translation exercise and another missed opportunity to discuss the pragmatic force of *yao* and *want* as well as the pragmatic appropriateness of the two translated sentences offered by the students.

In sum, in this excerpt a potential learning opportunity was created by a student when he initiated a post-expansion assessment in the fourth turn of an IRF sequence. However, various factors collided to let this learning opportunity slip by at multiple sequential junctures. These factors include: the design and delivery of the assessment; the troubles in hearing and understanding on the part of the teacher; the use of English and its status as an L1 or L2 in relation to the participants and hence their differential epistemic statuses in and entitlements to it; the interactional pressure for the teacher to agree or disagree with the assessment; as well as the challenging interactional environment created in the flow of the interaction.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I have demonstrated that central to the excerpt is a pivotal disagreement-implicative assessment<sup>xv</sup> initiated by a student following the teacher's feedback move in an IRF sequence. With the disagreement-implicative assessment as well as the sequence of interaction it subsequently generated, the participants' differential epistemic statuses and their L1/L2 and teacher/learner identities were invoked and became consequential for the development of the translation exercise.

Due to an array of factors, the disagreement-implicative assessment was oriented to by the teacher as positioning her in a [k-] status vis-à-vis the [k+] status of the students, which resulted in a few disaffiliative moments and missed pedagogical opportunities, including the teacher's unilateral abandonment of the ongoing translation exercise in order to reclaim her epistemic authority and authority as a teacher. This outcome raises complex questions about the pedagogical and social consequences of learner initiatives (Waring, 2011) within the IRF sequences in a teacher-fronted L2 classroom.

When commenting on the pervasiveness and the role of interactional contingency in talk-in-interaction, Schegloff (1996, p.22) wrote:

Contingency – or interactional contingency – is not a blemish on the smooth surface of discourse, or of talk-in-interaction more generally. It is endemic to it. It is its glory. It is what allows talk-in-interaction the flexibility and the robustness to serve as the enabling mechanism for the institutions of social life.

This quote nicely captures part of what I have intended to illustrate through the excerpt. While it may be an overstatement to say that contingency was “endemic” to the IRF

sequence, I have demonstrated that there was indeed some room for it within the structure, and that “enabling mechanism” is an apt metaphor to describe student-generated interactional contingency because it *enabled* them to initiate their own learning agenda within an otherwise constraining structure. Thanks to their initiatives, teaching and learning became less scripted and more unpredictable. What Schegloff’s quote does not capture, however, is the teacher’s reaction to the student-generated interactional contingency. As my analysis has shown, the teacher managed the contingency in such a way that the interactional contingency became a *disabling* factor that not only led to missed learning opportunities but also imperiled teacher-student social solidarity. Her reaction prompts us to revisit the argument that contingency provides learning affordances (van Lier, 1996). For researchers and practitioners alike, an important question to ask, then, is how learner-induced relaxation of the structural organization of the IRF sequence, and hence the increased likelihood of interactional contingencies leading to additional learning opportunities and possible transformation of epistemic and power asymmetries (van Lier, 1996, 2000) can be fruitfully exploited to serve the pedagogical end without jeopardizing the social relations between teachers and students. More research is needed in this area.

Another point I would like to discuss concerns CA’s methodology. One of the analytic claims that I made was that learning opportunities were missed during the interaction in the excerpt. By definition, a missed opportunity is an opportunity that does not materialize or one that arises but is not acted upon, and therefore it is in principle something that the participants cannot possibly orient to as relevant in the interaction. Indeed, the teacher and the students in this excerpt might not have realized that they had let some learning opportunities slip by. This raises the question of procedural relevance (Schegloff, 1991) and of whether missed-learning-opportunity is an analyst-imposed category – a methodological issue worthy of discussion.

In examining the data, I began with the assumption that like any other institutional interaction, classroom interaction is goal-oriented (Drew & Heritage, 1992). It can be presumed that the goals of teaching and learning in this particular class were conveyed through the statements in the curriculum and the teacher’s lesson plans, which were not collected as part of the data for this study, and thus are not available for our scrutiny here. However, there is a distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 1993) and, for that matter, lesson-plan-as-planned and lesson-plan-as-lived. Curriculum and lesson plans prescribe what should happen in the classroom, but what actually happens therein often constitutes a departure from what is prescribed due to various contingencies (see Chapter 7 in Li, 2013 and Mori, 2002 for a CA’s analysis of how students’ group work departs from what was planned). Being able to manage the lived aspects of the curriculum or lesson plans (Aoki, 1993) while being attuned to students’ needs as they arise in the classroom is a challenge and at the same a hallmark of an experienced teacher. Therefore, by goal-oriented, I do not refer to the macro-level institutional goals as reflected in the curriculum or lesson plans, but to the micro-level goals for teachers to manage various interactional contingencies and to attend to students’ emerging needs so as to create an opportunity-rich environment for language learning.

Indeed, the pragmatic force between *yao* and *want* might not be part of the teacher’s lesson plan. But since its relevance was contingently brought to the fore by the students, the teacher should take it upon herself to facilitate such a learning opportunity. It was against this specific micro-level goal that I examined the conduct of the teacher and students to see to what extent they oriented themselves to achieving the goal. In other words, the conduct

of the participants was not examined for its own sake – as CA analysts usually do with ordinary conversation – but with an interactional goal in mind. By identifying the specific conduct of the participants that hindered the achievement of the goal, I was able to pinpoint certain actions as letting a learning opportunity slip by. My analysis, therefore, was based on the participants' orientations, but informed at the same time by the micro-level goal of the talk.

In concluding an interventional study that used the findings of CA to help call-takers communicate more effectively, Kitzinger (2011, p.116) pointed out that “CA is descriptive, not prescriptive. There is nothing in CA's theory or method that gives the researcher a warrant for claiming that one way of interacting is ‘better’ than another.” That being said, Kitzinger conceded that in order to assist the call-takers in addressing their communicative concerns, CA analysts nevertheless needed to analyze the workers' talk and make judgments about effectiveness in communication. The criteria for such judgments, according to Kitzinger, were determined by the goals of the organizations for which the call-takers worked. She thus brought to light the dilemma of having to strike a balance between the need to stay within the theoretical and methodological confines of CA and the need to stretch the boundary in order for CA to be usefully applied. This was also the analytic quandary that I had to grapple with as I identified, described, and analyzed the multiple missed learning opportunities in the excerpt. Nevertheless, I believe that in order for CA to be pedagogically useful, a little boundary stretching is necessary.

Finally, in the spirit of continuing the methodological discussion, and to illustrate how CA can inform pedagogy, I will offer some rumination on how the participants could have designed their turns and actions differently at some pivotal sequential slots to move the talk in a more pedagogically beneficial direction. It can be pondered, for example, what would have happened if in the post-expansion position, or in the sequential slot where John offered an emphatic repeat of the assessment term *rude*, a clearly articulated question rather than a declaratively formatted assessment had been offered. To be sure, the interaction would have followed a different trajectory. A turn with questions such as *When do you use the sentence? Do you use it to order something?* would have contextualized the sentence and made a response from the teacher relevant. A turn that combined a declaratively formatted assessment and a question such as *That sounds rude in English. How does it sound in Chinese?* would have simultaneously expressed a student's stance while acknowledging Lan's epistemic primacy in a domain that she has expertise. Conversely, when encountering troubles in hearing or understanding, if Lan had formulated more specifically what her trouble sources were rather than simply using open-class repair initiators, the interaction would have followed a different course. Or when faced with an assessment that embodied disagreement, if Lan had been able to finesse other interactional resources – for example, asking the student to clarify – she would have been able to get back in control, at least momentarily, while allowing herself time to consider what would be the next appropriate course of action to take.

The onus for change, then, is on both parties. For the students, they can come to the interaction with a reduced sense of their entitlements (Drew, 1991) to the L1. For the teacher, she can benefit from conducting a microanalysis of and self-reflection on her own talk (e.g., Lazaraton & Ishihara, 2005), expanding her repertoire of repair strategies in the L2, and learning to be more resourceful in the interaction. What CA offers is an informed analysis of the interactional practices, and based on the findings, practitioners can make informed decision for pedagogical change and intervention (see the edited volume by Antaki,

2011, for the application of CA for interventional purposes in a variety of institutional contexts).

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One limitation of this study is not having the video of the interaction. To some extent, my physical presence at all the recorded sessions alleviated this limitation. Being there gave me a good sense of the physical environment of the classroom and allowed me to experience the teacher-student interaction first-hand. This experience became helpful when it came to transcribing the audio and understanding what was going on in the interaction. However, without the video, the participants' embodied actions were not available for analytic scrutiny and I had to make do with the analytic ambiguity thus incurred.

A central theme of the analysis of this article was the participants' orientations toward the pragmatic appropriateness of the sentences. Yet, based on the interactional data alone, I was unable to pinpoint what context the participants had envisioned for the sentences. It seems clear that context was not in the teacher's equation when she invented the English sentence. Her purpose was for the students to produce a grammatically correct Chinese sentence by using the target Chinese word *yao* based on her English sentence. It is likely that she had not intended the sentence as a request in ordering a beer but as expressing one's wants or desires for a beer. The question then arises as to why Tom considered the sentence to be rude. Did he evaluate the sentence against the context of ordering a beer when he made his post-expansion assessment? If so, why did he not pick out the non-target-like features of the sentence such as the use of *a cup of* and the unnaturalness and stiltedness of both the English sentence and Chinese sentence when used as a request to order a beer, but focused on the rudeness of the sentences instead? Unfortunately, he did not have a chance to elaborate or clarify as John and Mary soon took over the unfolding repair sequence. Relatedly, when Lan revised her English sentence, which context did she have in mind – ordering something or talking with a friend, two alternative contexts proposed by John and Mary in their questions? And when Tom and Mary offered their revised translations – *wo xiang yao yi bei piji* (I would like a cup of beer) and *gei wo yi bei piji ba* (Give me a cup of beer, will you?), did they intend the sentence for the context of ordering a beer or talking with a friend? The answers to all these and other relevant questions would shed light on the students' and teacher's thoughts and experiences in the interaction and further illuminate CA's analysis of the data. To yield the answers, however, ethnographic interviews would need to be conducted (for how ethnography can be incorporated into CA studies, see Maynard, 2003; Waring & Hruska, 2011; Waring & Hruska, 2012; Waring, Creider, Tarpey & Black, 2012). However, because of the time that passed between data collection and analysis, I no longer had access to the participants, making it infeasible to conduct ethnographic interviews. This is another limitation of the study.

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## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study, but connecting all instances of student initiatives to learning opportunities in this CFL classroom may be overstating the case, as the students were allowed to use English liberally and it can be certain that not all the actions that they initiated via the use of English had to do with the learning of the target language, Chinese.

<sup>ii</sup> CA analysts who conducted work along this line of research adopted different terms in reference to what is traditionally categorized as native and nonnative speakers. Kurhila (2004), J. Park (2007) and Wong (2000a, 2000b) used native and nonnative speakers; Hosoda (2006) adopted L1 and L2 speakers; Kasper (2004) proposed novice and expert speakers. I use L1 and L2 speakers in this paper.

<sup>iii</sup> I owe the distinction between epistemic authority and authority as a teacher to one of the reviewers.

<sup>iv</sup> All the names in reference to the participants are pseudonyms.

<sup>v</sup> It is more common to say “a glass of beer.” In Chinese no semantic distinction is made between “cup” and “glass.” A single word “bei” is used to cover both terms in English. This may be a case of semantic transfer on Lan’s part. In remaining consistent with Lan, I use “a cup of beer” throughout the transcript.

<sup>vi</sup> I thank one of the reviewers for making this suggestion.

<sup>vii</sup> To my knowledge, there is no drinking age limit in China. Although there may be parental restrictions on the matter, they vary from household to household.

<sup>viii</sup> The blackboard is in the front of the classroom. When writing on the board, one has to face the board with one’s back turned to other participants.

<sup>ix</sup> I thank one of the reviewers for this analytic insight and for directing me to the reference.

<sup>x</sup> Researchers working within an interactional perspective have criticized the static view of linguistic politeness, a view that holds that some language constructions or semantic formulae are inherently more polite than others. They argued and empirically demonstrated that politeness is something participants orient to in interaction (e.g., Curl & Drew, 2008; Watts, 2003). I agree with these researchers that an interactional, context-sensitive perspective should be privileged in the understanding of linguistic politeness. However, from a pedagogical perspective, teaching would be totally out of the question if students were simply told that everything depends on interactional contexts. Some general and context-free rules must be formulated and presented to them, and on this basis attention can be drawn to the context-sensitive aspects of use. As such, when I refer to the literatures that make general and context-free claims about the use of *I want* and *wo yao*, I do not so much endorse the view that *I want* is inherently rude whereas *wo yao* is not so regardless of the context of use, but rather suggest that this can be something that the teacher can present to the students, and as a point of departure, she can proceed to discuss with them the context sensitivity of use.

<sup>xi</sup> Although Jefferson (1984) used the term to apply to situations where troubles-tellers laugh while telling their troubles to recipients, I argue that the term also applies here – even though Lan is not in fact telling troubles but dealing with them. The same goes for “trouble-receptiveness.”

<sup>xii</sup> *Gei wo yi bei pijiu* is a command, which can be translated as *give me a cup of beer*. The final particle *ba* is a softener that tones down the command to some extent, and is translated here as a tag question – *will you?* (for the functions of the particle *ba*, see Li & Thompson, 1981, pp. 307-311).

<sup>xiii</sup> Depending on how the *so* in line 12 is interpreted, the function of the discourse marker *anyway* can be understood differently. If we consider that Lan has abandoned her repair initiation in line 11 and is initiating a new turn with the turn-initial *so* to be on her way to explain to the students what she has just written on the board, then *anyway* is used to mark the repair sequence in lines 13-22 as parenthetical, or something that interrupts an ongoing activity, and what follows as a resumption of the interrupted activity. Note that following *anyway*, Lan turns to write on the board again for a few more seconds (line 26) before she goes on to offer a grammatical explanation of *yao* in lines 28-29 – a continuation of an activity interrupted in line 12 (for this function of *anyway*, see Schegloff, 2007, p.150, following Sacks, 1992 [1972], pp. 567-568). However, if we understand the *so* as Lan’s continuing pursuit of a repair initiation which goes unheeded in line 11, then *anyway* is used to close the repair sequence, as suggested by one reviewer.

<sup>xiv</sup> Throughout the episode and in the remainder of the lesson, there is an absence of orientation by Lan toward the differences in the pragmatic meaning of *yao* and *want*. The fact that she changes *want to* into *would like to* indicates that she has explicit pragmatic knowledge of the word *want* in English, and once this knowledge is triggered, she is able to perform the repair. That she fails to connect her pragmatic knowledge of *want* with *yao* in the episode may be due to the contingencies and the pressure built up around the interaction.

<sup>xv</sup> A disagreement implicative assessment means an assessment that embodies or entails a disagreement.

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## APPENDIX A: Transcription Notations

(.)	a micro pause less than 0.2 second
(1.0)	a pause of one second
<u>underline</u>	stress
.	sentence-final falling intonation
?	rising intonation
,	continuous or slightly rising intonation
-	a glottal stop, or abrupt cutting off of sound
=	latch
[]	overlapped talk
.hhh	inbreath
(( ))	comments on background or nonverbal behavior
(h)	laughter token interspersed within words
> <	speech delivered in a faster pace than the surrounding talk
Sts	two or more students
:	prolonged sound

## APPENDIX B: Grammatical gloss

MSR	measure word
PRT	particle
DAT	dative