REPAIR IN THE INITIAL ENCOUNTER: A COMPARISON OF NATIVE-NATIVE SPEAKERS' AND NATIVE-NONNATIVE SPEAKERS' CONVERSATIONS

by

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Focusing on repair in conversation, this study describes and compares how coparticipants, in initial conversations between a native-speaker (NS) and a nonnative speaker (NNS) and between two native-speakers, do conversation repair, engage in understanding checks and, thereby, construct the situational context in and through talk. Data were transcripts of lab-generated dyadic conversations, which were examined and analyzed for the problematic sources and forms of self-repair in these conversations. Analysis demonstrates that use of repair reflects, as well as helps define, the initial NS-NNS interaction under study as a somewhat laborious one. Aside from the *a priori* coparticipants' differences, interactive patterns of repair and understanding checks contributes to the NS-NNS conversation as a communicative situation demanding greater effort of meaning negotiation at a very basic level and more attention to structural organization with less exchange of content substance.

1. Introduction

Conversation is a rule-governed, coordinated communicative activity. Conversation coparticipants do much more than simply exchange information as they talk (e.g., Craig 1986; Tracy 1984; cf. Halliday 1973 on social functions of language). In everyday conversation, people routinely present to and negotiate with each other their personal/social identity, particular role(s) they play, and their definition of the situation in question. In view of the above, then, all conversations are negotiatory, and thus problematic to some extent. Communicative problems in conversation as 'misalignment between the individual acts of participants in a situation ... ... that threatens to disrupt joint action' (Stokes & Hewitt 1976: 843), however, are often resolved promptly to prevent major communication breakdown. This is achievable because participants constantly and routinely engage in understanding checks, and exchange adaptive (verbal) messages in response to each other so as to achieve acceptable mutual understanding.

79

The purpose of this paper is to examine and compare the use of repair and its role in understanding checks in two types of situations: initial interactions between a native and a nonnative speaker of U.S. English, and between two native speakers. From an interactive perspective, this paper also seeks to describe, by a detailed comparison, how this particular kind of intra- and intercultural conversation settings are defined and constructed in conversation (partially) through repair and understanding checks.

2. Native-Native Speakers and Native-Nonnative Speaker Conversations

As a subset of intercultural interaction, conversations involving a native speaker (NS) and a nonnative speaker (NNS)[1] are often characterized by coparticipants' relative lack of a shared background, as associated with a same native language and set of sociocultural rules of interaction. Although it is not an inherent property or even a necessary outcome of such interactions, the more or less *mutual* unfamiliarity between conversation partners[2] tends to give rise to a greater possibility for misunderstanding or non-understanding compared to similar conversations between NSs (Gass & Varonis 1985)[3]. On the other hand, coparticipants of a NS-NNS conversation do share a same interaction context as well as a degree of proficiency of the language used in interaction. There is empirical evidence that coparticipants of a conversation involving NNSs (Firth 1996; Wagner 1996) are able to orient to their differences as a local condition and draw on available resources to get their message across for a successful conversation and manage to accomplish other practical tasks in the interaction. Aside from the *a priori* shared background or relative lack of it, the NS-NNS conversation, as does the NS-NS conversation, builds on and contributes to a common ground in the on-going talk. The degree to which there is shared background or knowledge at the outset between coparticipants becomes indeed manifest in their conversation moves/messages. More importantly, the degree of sharedness is changed, and added to, in and as a result of these moves/messages. At the same time, the sharedness and the moves/messages jointly influence the progress and shape the organization of the conversation. Approaching conversation as an interactive activity in the making through coordinated adaptive contributions of coparticipants enables us to

understand it as a dynamic as well as reflexive process (Schegloff 1982). Within this framework, a comparative study of NS-NNS and NS-NS conversations may examine and describe the two kinds of conversation in alternative terms. Instead of relying on the *a priori* condition, the study attends to the conversation moves coparticipants make in the condition and to the way each move constrains subsequent acts to limit the choice of alternative acts and to frame the context/condition in which these acts occur.

3. Repair and Understanding Checks in Conversation

In an everyday conversation, coparticipants' orientation toward each other and toward a mutually agreeable cause or objective of interaction, as a way to display and ensure intersubjectivity, is accomplished in their communicative acts, or conversational moves (Stokes & Hewitt 1976). A most common way of mutual orientation is a regular understanding check of various forms. Understanding checks enable coparticipants to get a grip on the current state of conversation with a more or less shared understanding of the preceding talk, in terms of what they mean and/or what they mean to do by their talk. Understanding checks mark the specific points (possibly) in need of repair and negotiation, thus also render visible the negotiable, adaptable, and coordinated nature of the seemingly smooth-flowing conversation that appears effortless and unproblematic. By rephrasing, clarifying, and refining what is previously said, repair in conversation frequently is employed to facilitate self- and other understanding and is often initiated with, and responded to, by attempts of understanding check. This is of interest as it helps demonstrate an on-going process, a process in which coparticipants of a conversation manage to understand each other and to make sense of the situation, all in attempt to defend and build on intersubjectivity (Schegloff 1992). Occurrences of conversation repair provide conversation participants with verbal (explicit or implicit) metacommunicative clues as to how accurate and/or how clear the messages in the immediately past talk are; in which direction the conversation is going; how/how well the conversation partners have understood each other; and what they have made of the situation at hand. This information then becomes

part of the context in which the conversation is situated and to which coparticipants orient to in a sequentially organized way.

3.1. Types of Repair

Repair in conversation deals with parts of conversation that are troublesome, for one or more coparticipants, in speaking, hearing, or understanding the talk in question (Schegloff 1987). Focusing on talk as its topic, repair is distinct for its metacommunicative functions as metatalk (Schiffrin 1980), which is often explicitly displayed when coparticipants of a conversation refer to and discuss something about the talk itself as a product of speech, as an act through speech, or as a speech event. Repair may occur when one (or more) phrase or utterance refers more or less directly to immediately previous utterances as a source of trouble and, thus, initiates acts to deal with it. Repair in conversation may direct at one's own talk, self-repair, or at the other's talk, other-repair. Self-repair is to make sure oneself is clearly and properly understood, and other-repair is to secure an appropriate understanding of one's partner in conversation (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks 1977). Self-repair ensures (for the partner) a correct understanding of self's talk. An instance of self-repair occurs when one or more utterances attempt to change, refine, or clarify the wording or the meaning of what one(self) has previously said, including explicit expression of the need to make the meaning clearer, referring to part or all of what is said for rephrasing, and performing a repair on some or all of what is previously said. Just as repair may focus on one's own talk or on someone else's talk, the subcategories of self-repair and other-repair may issue from either self-initiation or other-initiation.

3.1.1. Self-Initiated Self-Repair

Focusing on one's own talk, self-repair does not usually evoke targeted responses from the other when it is self-initiated, i.e., by the speaker of the trouble source, without being prompted. It locates either in the same or in the next turn when s/he speaks again. The latter occurs in the third turn after (including) the turn with the

trouble source (Schegloff et al. 1977), also known as 'the third-turn repair' (Schegloff 1996).

Example 1 (from Schegloff et al. 1977: 364) [4]

```
1[5] N:    She was givin me a:ll the people that
2 -->      were go:ne this year:r I mean this quarter y' // know
3  J:      Yeah
```

Example 2 (from Schegloff et al. 1977: 366)

```
1   Hannah:  And he's going to make his own paintings.
3   Bea:     Mm hm,
4 --> Hannah: And- or I mean his own frames.
5   Bea:     Yeah,
```

Self-repair may be also self-initiated in response to the other when one, the speaker of problematic part of talk, senses inaccuracy, or just a potential of it, in the other's response to ones utterances. In other words, self-initiated self-repair also occurs when one is (indirectly) prompted by the others and notices an actual or likely misunderstanding (from a coparticipant's remarks as a response to one's own). This kind of self-repair is what Schegloff (1987, 1992) calls the 'third position repair'.

Example 3 (from Ragan 1983: 170)

```
1   K:    Yu might like it. It's - more of an endura- endurance type
2         - thing than any thing.
3         There's not a lot of - talent to it all all. Believe me. ⌈ .hhh
4   B:                                                            ⌊ Why, thank you.=
5 --> K:   =((laugh))=hhh No. But I mean it's not something that'a-
6          you can pick up in a morning. It's not something you have
7          to spend - weeks and months learning how to do properly.
```

Example 4 (from Schegloff 1992: 1303)

```
1   Dan:     Well that's a little different from last week.

3   Louise: heh heh heh Yeah. We were in hysterics last week.
```

4 —> Dan: No, I mean Al.
5   Louise: Oh. He ...

3.1.2. Other-Initiated Self-Repair

Alternatively, self-repair may be other-initiated, when one partner in the conversation encounters trouble hearing or understanding another's talk and seeks clarification. An instance of other-initiated repair occurs when one or more utterances attempt to explicitly indicate one's suspected misunderstanding, express non-understanding of, or uncertainty about, what the other just said, or to directly seek clarification of what has been said. Structurally, therefore, an other-initiated move for repair initiates an adjacency pair, where the speaker of the troubling part of talk must respond to the point/question raised by the repair initiator with more specific information, explanation, elaboration, or clarification to satisfy the query.

Example 5 (from Schiffrin 1980: 217)

```
1 —> FC: I'm - what - what do you mean when you say get married
2        in the synagogue, do you mean marry a girl of their own
3        [              ] re -uh of their=
4    DS: [ religion]
5    FC: =religion?
6    DS:
```


3.1.3. Other-Repair

Other-repair is the conversation move that attempts to clarify or correct something another has just said in the conversation. Similar to self-repair, other-repair may be either self-initiated or other-initiated. In self-initiated other-repair, the speaker of the trouble source initiates or brings into attention the need for repair, whereas the act of repair is accomplished by another. In other-initiated other-repair, another than the trouble source speaker initiates the repair and also performs the repair.

Example 6 (from Schegloff et al. 1977: 364)

```
1 —> B:  He had dis uh Mistuh W- whatever k- I can't
2        think of his first name, Watts on, the one thet wrote that
3        piece,
4    A:  Dan Watts.
```

Example 7 (from Heritage 1984: 314)

```
1    D: Rice? °is in Louisiana.°
2    M  No[:
3 —> F:     [Tex[as
4 —> M:        [Texa[s
5    D:             [Texas. Rice. °Yeh that's (right).°
```


3.2. Sources of trouble for repair

Since repair in conversation is directed at parts of conversation perceived by the participants as problematic, sources of troubles may provide some insights into the role of repair in conversation management. As the object or content of metacommunicative exchanges in talk, trouble sources call attention to the specific point where coparticipants of a conversation become aware of their misalignment. Their subsequent efforts to repair and adjust for better understanding demonstrate, so to speak, the working of intersubjectivity that is simultaneously relied upon and being rebuilt. Besides temporary trouble in speaking and hearing, sources of trouble include at least two other substantial types: problematic references and problematic sequential implicativeness (Schegloff 1987).

Problematic references occur when a participant has no problem understanding what the other has just said, in terms of the nature of the speech acts, the speaker's communicative intent, and what the utterances are about, except for a misunderstanding, or misidentification, of a reference (a term or a phrase) in an utterance.

Example 8 (from Schegloff 1987: 204)

```
1    A:  Which one::s are closed, an' which ones are open.
```

2 -->   Z: ((pointing to map)) Most of 'em. This this,
3   ⌈this, this
4   A: ⌊I don't mean on the shelters, I mean on the roads.
5.   Z: Oh!

Problematic sequential implicativeness includes the kind of trouble that involves the accurate, or appropriate, understanding of the speaker's communicative intent in producing the utterance(s) in question. Given the complexity of communicative intent, which transpires and is interpretable in the sequential structure of the talk in context, problematic sequential implicativeness is rich in variety. Two common varieties are uncertainty about the intended speech act (e.g., complaint, joking, criticism, etc.) and misunderstanding of the pragmatic force of the language used (e.g., indirect speech acts).

Example 7 (from Schegloff 1987: 209)

1   D: I was saying at the very beginning, at the very beginning,
2   just what Louise said about Stephen and Al, or what she's
3   saying now about Ken and Al, was true about louse and
4   Al. There was an alliance there. See Al tends, it seems to
5 -->   pull in one or two individuals on his side (there). This is
6   part of his power drive, see. He's gotta pull in, he can't
7   quite do it on his own. Yet.
8   A: W'll--
9   R: Well so do I.
10   D: Yeh. ⌈ I'm not criticizing, I mean we'll just uh look
11   R: ⌊Oh you wanna talk about him.
12   D: Let's just talk.
13   R: All right.

Example 8 (from Schegloff 1987: 210)

1   G: Well what did Miss Jevon say when you spoke to her.
2   S: She said she would be glad to talk to you and she would be
3   waiting for your call.
4   G: Boy, it was some wait. Everyone else in that clinic has just
5   been wonderful to me. Both the diabetic clinic and the
6   psychiatric clinic. It's just that woman.
7 -->   S: Well, what are you going to do, Mr. Greenberg.

8   G: Well that's true. When you are a charity patient, when
9   you are a beggar, you just can't do anything about it, you
10   just have to take what's handed out to you, and--
11   S: No, I mean about yourself. What are you going to do for
12   yourself. You were wondering what to do for yourself, you
13   called me and told me you were thinking about having
14   yourself admitted to a state hospital ...

4. Repair in Native-Nonnative and Native-Native Speakers Conversations

This section examines excerpts from conversations in U.S. English between NSs and that between a NS and a NNS. Conversation transcripts are from several initial (dyadic) interactions between a U.S. American and a non-American nonnative-speaker partner and between two U.S. Americans, as two comparison types of the NS-NS and the NS-NNS conversations. These are lab generated conversations, whereby two previously unacquainted individuals were brought together to talk and get to know each other in a private room – a lab decorated to resemble a waiting area. This arrangement allowed for a relatively uniform interaction setting and also solicited a very close-to-real-life conversation. Within the constraints of the context, the interactions were essentially informal social chatting, whereby coparticipants took the interaction where they wanted it to be. Participants were undergraduate students from a large Midwestern U.S. public university, most of whom reported not knowing personally anyone with an East-Asian background, while a few reported having known one or two only on a casual basis. NNSs were international students who were non-native English speakers from East-Asian countries.

4.1. Self-Initiated Self-Repair

4 1.1. In NS-NS Conversation

Extract <1.1>, (PJTII, 3.3, p. 2) [6]

In this episode, A and B are chatting about their college life, including various courses, and, right before the following excerpt, have turned attention to the speech class each has experienced: B has just done with the class while A is still taking it.

```
1    B:  Oh really? Well, they have four different speeches, (...) I
2        like it, b'cause I have no problem getting up in front of
3        people and talking. But there are some people=
4    A:  =⌈Oh
5    B:   ⌊in there like - O::h it's awful=
6    A:  =⌈Yeah
7    B:   ⌊Don't you feel like you just want to go up there. I mean
8        I feel like I'm the one that is standing up there. I like
9        them to hurry and get it over with, b'cause it makes me
10       feel so
11   A:  Antsy form?
12   B:  Yeah. I feel like °oh my God° It's, it's - you feel terrible.
13 --> A:  Well, I'm one of those - I mean I hate getting up there
14       speaking.
15   B:  Ehun.
16   A:  I feel like I'm rushing.
17   B:  I, I've done that too. You see them people getting up
18       there. It seems they are up there forever:
19   A:  Yeah.
20   B:  And you get up there, it's like "U::::hmm. I'm done". You
21       know. ((laugh))
22 --> A:  I mean, - I don't know, I don't know. (.2) I just don't like
23       speech class - I just want to ge't over with, and get out of
24       school.
25   B:  What is that got you into Communication? (...)
```

Speaker A opens a turn (line 13) with an incomplete utterance, then immediately clarifies it with a self-initiated self-repair in the same turn. Comparing the replaced expression with the replacement, we

can see that it is a stronger case than mere repair of a wrong word(ing) or troubles in talking. A changes the sentence structure from that of a self-identification, 'I'm,' to a rephrase of a personal feeling/preference 'I hate.' The trouble also stems from perceived problematic implicativeness, the pragmatic force of 'one of those' that, by presupposition, can be construed as an acceptance of the somewhat negative connotation of B's utterance (about some people doing public speaking). By this repairing move, A distances herself from 'those' mentioned by speaker B in the previous turn. The revised utterance also presents A's self-disclosure about her feelings toward public speaking in disagreement with B's remark, but only indirectly. Without clearly committing to a definitely position against B's statement, however, this move puts the topic of (feeling about) public speaking in a very different frame. All this, plus their seemingly agreement on the feeling of '(self) antsy form,' 'wanting (others) to hurry up' (line 8-12), '(self) rushing,' and '(others being) up there forever' (line 16-18), apparently gives the impression of a real agreement, such that B, not being alerted to the (indirect) disagreement between them or simply ignoring the subtlety of the repair, continues on with her bashing of 'those' unconfident at public speaking (line 17-21). On this unsuccessful outcome, A attempts another repair (line 22) – similar to third-position repair (Schegloff 1992) but is instead at the fifth position, three turns after the next turn following the trouble source. This time she is more explicit about her own negative attitude toward the speech class, but still falls short of a direct confrontation of B's position, hedging it with a general remark about wanting to get out of school, of which wanting to get out of speech or disliking speech is naturally a part. B changes the topic as a response (line 25). It is not clear whether this is done because the repair is successful and B wants to avoid confrontation, or the repair is not successful and B simply moves on to talk about A's major related to her last utterance of getting out of school. Regardless, the episode ends and the conversation moves on.

Extract <1.2> (AAIII.5.45, p. 4)

Here, A and B are talking about campus life of which sororities or fraternities of the Greek system are an active part. Before this excerpt, B mentions he belonging to a particular fraternity, which, like many, has a residence requirement of its members.

1 A: Are you going into the house?
2 B: Yes. For the next two years. You are doing a double, your
3   junior, oh, your sophomore year and your junior year.
4   You are going to live in there, and like your senior year,
5   you can be moving out of the house.
6 A: See that, °I don't understand that°. You know I don't have
7   any thing against people that are in the sororities or
8   fraternities, you know, it just seems like - it's another
9   clique, and I had enough of that in the high school. My
10   roommate, one of my other roommates, we all went to
11   the same high school, and she is still in one of her so-called
12   cliques, and it's just=
13 B: =Well, you may understand though, all of my cliques are
14   my friends, but when you are in a school this big=
15 A: =Right=
16 B: =you want to belong to somewhere=
17 A: =Right=
18 B: =because if you don't you just feel like you are just
19   another - number, you know.
20 --> A: NO::. - I feel I belong, but I am not - ⌈in
21 --> B: ⌊I feel I belong but I
22   need an identity of who I, who my friends are, what I am
23   and whatever. Because you know, it is a lot of people here.
24   I mean, it's not like a lot of people who came here, came
25   out of a big city, came here, who who want so bad to get
26   away of big cities and then jump - to a fraternity where
27   they are with the same type of people they just left. I
28   always give myself - two thirds of the year to experience -
29   all different type of people and made friends with them.
30   And even if I am in a fraternity, I'll still be friends with
31   them and I'll still meet a lot of type of people, from other
32   classes or whatever.
33 A: °True°. I understand. Don't, don't get mad at me because
34 -->   I'm saying this. Because I'm just, people want that stuff,
35   because it's just I can never do it. I don't mean, it's just me
36   I think.
37 B: Yeah.
38 A: Well, other than that, I don't know. (...)

In this extract, we have three instances of the third-position repair type. The two participants have different opinions about the Greek system, each trying to present her/his own reason as if it does not disagree with that of the other. In doing this, each tries to repair what they themselves said previously, by fine-tuning and clarification, based on the other's response which seems to display some misunder-standing of what each has previously said. First of all, speaker A responds (line 20) to speaker B's remark (line 16) about people generally 'want to belong' to the community they are in, with a repair of her own remark about 'clique' (line 12) preceding B's repair in the following turn. A clarifies that her disliking cliques does not imply she feels that she does 'not belong,' which she seems to infer as B's misunderstanding that leads to the introduction of 'want to belong.' The trouble source is also a sort of problematic implicativeness, where 'clique' can mean either 'all that want to and do feel that they belong' or 'some that want to and do feel they belong' (to something). The first meaning, but not the second, may imply that those not in the clique do not feel they belong, which A claims is not her intended meaning, hence the repair for clarification. This self-repair of A on the other hand, provokes the same from B who also initiates repair of his own message (line 21). He points out first that by 'you want to belong' he does not imply himself 'not feel(ing) I belong,' therefore wants to be part of a fraternity so he can feel he belongs. Second, he clarifies that by 'belong' he does not mean just feeling part of the university community, but having a clear and definite sense of identity through association with an organization, i.e., the Greek system. The first is in response to the implication, while the second responds to an explicit suggestion, both inferable from A's immediately past utterance in line 20. A then proceeds to make a second attempt of repair (line 34) and re-presents her earlier position. She clarifies that her objection to the Greek system (but not the individuals in it) is a matter of personal preference, and that it does not imply anything negative about those who like the system. This last repair by A remediates the trouble source of an intended speech act, her act of self-expression of personal opinion misunderstood by B as an act of criticism.

Self-repair in <1.1> and <1.2> contributes directly to conversational management through self-initiated clarification, with or without being prompted by another. Conversation participants are

better aligned through this metacommunicative repair action, so they may, or at least appear to, see eye-to-eye with each other on the intended meaning of their talk. Through speakers' expressed concern about proper reception of one's own message and its impact, repair moves in the above excerpts also reveal a concern in impressions about one's own social propriety (within the sociocultural context), in one's talk not being misread or distorted to reflect on one's image, and in presenting oneself as cooperating and in agreement with the other as conversation partners – all being part of social politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

4.1.2. In NS-NNS Conversation

Extract <2.1>, (AFII.7.37, p. 2)[7]

This excerpt is from the early part of the conversation when the coparticipants just introduce themselves to each other. A learns that N has only recently come to the United States.

```
1      A:  So you like the states?
2      N:  United States?=
3      A:  =Yeah.
4      N:  Yes.=
5 -->  A:  =compared to Korea.
6      N:  Oh, no.
7      A:  Yeah.
8      N:  Yes. Because, Korea is my country,
9      A:  Yeah.
10     N:  so I love there.
11     A:  Right.
12     N:  But - I like in a way - United States. But (.5)
13     A:  Er. I am from just around. I am from a little town called
14         Wooster.
15     N:  Oh.
16 --> A:  It is about an hour and a half away from here. So I am not
17         too far away=I am not as far away from home as you are.
18     N:  Your parents live there?
```

In this excerpt, speaker A twice self-initiates self-repair. In line 5, he clarifies his confirmation to the question from N with added qualifications, that by 'like the states' he is asking for the latter's impression in relative terms, by comparing Korea to the US. This move turns out to be the right move, as N changes the answer to the revised question. Then later, A again realizes the ambiguity of the phrase 'not too far away' (line 17), which can mean 'my home is not too far away from here' in relation to the immediately preceding utterance but is not accurate – whether an hour and a half is far or close is relative. He quickly repairs it – as seen by the close occurrence of the repair following the trouble source, by a repeat with an added term for comparison – it is 'not far away from home as you are.' In both cases, the trouble source is the potentially ambiguous messages communicated with utterances that may convey more than one meaning in that context.

Extract <2.2> (AFII.7.37, p.1)

This excerpt occurs right after A and N have introduced themselves by name.

```
1      A:  Yeah. So you are a student here also?
2      N:  Yeah. About five months.
3      A:  OK.
4 -->  N:  Five months ago I arrived here.
5      A:  In Columbus or in the United States?
6      N:  United States. Er first time, I arrived in Atlanta - Georgia.
```

Similarly, speaker N here realizes the remark 'About five months' (line 2) is not clearly related to the question if she is a student and rephrases it (line 4) to make it more clear. The clarification is still not quite to the point but appears clear enough in the context to be read as 'I have been a student here for five months since I came'. A accepts this part of N's message but is uncertain about the referent of 'here', so he proceeds with a move of other-initiation for repair. The trouble source in <2.2> is similar to those in <2.1:>, where the speaker is conscious of foreseeable ambiguity and quickly initiates self-repair to make the message more precise and explicit.

Repairing utterances in the above four excerpts appears to be quite similar in structure, but differs a little in function as well as the

related trouble source. More often than not attempts of self-repair are made rather explicit as metacommunication referring back to one's own remark, introduced by pre-positioned phrases such as 'I mean' and 'That's', and then qualify, clarify, or refine the original utterance to make it clearer and more precise. Repair without pre-positioned phrases is structurally accomplished by either an exact repeat or a close rephrase, in part or in whole, of what is to be repaired. What is clarified, refined or qualified, however, presents some differences in terms of the type of trouble source or utterance meaning involved. (a) The trouble source for self-repair in <1.1> and <1.2>, from conversations between two NSs, involves pragmatics, something beyond the surface or literal meaning of what is said (Levinson 1983), and focuses more on what is implied in or presupposed by what is said, i.e., implicature and presupposition. These utterances display a more complex relationship in meaning among the expressed messages, which is also relevant to role relationship of participants with concerns of self image. (b) Instances of repair in <2.1> and <2.2>, from conversations with a NS and a NNS, aim rather closely at the literal meaning of the problematic utterance. The concern of the repair in <2.1> and <2.2> is about basic comprehension, hence the more precise and clearer expression, rather than more complex and overall, relational understanding as is the case in the first two.

4.2. Other-Initiated Self-Repair

4.2.1. In NS-NS Conversation

Extract <3.1>, (AAIII.5.45, p. 6)

A and B are talking about their respective hometowns and what they do in the summer. B is an out-of-state student.

```
1       B:  I spent the summer vacation, I went down to a summer
2           camp, I was a counselor there. I was like have been away
3           ever since the beginning, since I was a kid, since I was nine.
4           So we're used to be away=
5       A:  =Don't you miss that though?
6 -->   B:  What? Being home?
```

```
7 -->   A:  Being away from home.
8       B:  No, because all my friends and stuff like that.
            (data omitted)
```

Speaker B does not seem to follow the logic of speaker A's questioning, not getting what A refers to by 'that' (line 5) which he is asked about. Thus a remedying question of B's own (line 6) is asked to seek clarification from A of a problematic reference, followed by a second question offering a candidate referent, 'being home', for confirmation. His candidate is rejected by A in the adjacent turn (line 7) who repairs by specifying that by 'that' she was referring to 'being away from home'.

Extract <3.2> (AAIII.5.45, p. 7)

Here A and B are talking about bars on campus and in the vicinity areas, and what they do aside from classes.

```
1       B:  Yeah. (Noa) I like to go to like Superity, now I am back
2           with my girlfriend, I don't go to Superity as much,
3           because=
4       A:  =Because your girlfriend?
5       B:  Yes, because like Superity is the place I, we meet a lot of
6           girls there when we go.
7       A:  So - Does do you want to go there though?
8 -->   B:  What? Superity's?
9 -->   A:  Yeah - Would you like to go there?
10      B:  Yeah, I'd like to go there, but=
11      A:  =But you don't go there because of her.
12      B:  Yeah, I go there, but if I do go, I am sure we'll break up
13          again and stuff like that. I go, I go with my buddies. I try
14          to hook my buddies up. But I just standing out, usually.
```

An almost identical situation is found in <3.2>. Speaker B is uncertain of what the adverb 'there' from A (line 7) refers to, and the same tactic is used with two questions back-to-back, first general then specific, to request clarification/confirmation from the partner A (line 8). Here the proposed candidate is confirmed by A in the subsequent turn (line 9), who also repeats the question with minor rephrasing. This initiation sequence displays a degree of out-of-

expectation on part of the initiator, who apparently is caught by surprise and is momentarily at a loss. This itself may due to inattention, problem hearing, or the nature of the troublesome utterance. The first two explanations are ruled out by the order of the sequence, a general question for global request, which is often indication of the attention or hearing problem, followed by a specific question for local repair, which supersedes the first to indicate an actual trouble with the utterance. In these two particular excerpts, the trouble source is coherence of utterances that are less relevant to the topic at hand: a question/comment about the speaker's feeling <3.1> or intent <3.2> on the topic is presented as response to their neutral narrative about the topic.

Extract <3.3>, (PJTII, 3.2, p. 10)

Here B and A are talking about their activities in leisure time. B is relating her recent trip to a another city, which she enjoys tremendously. Then she continues to talk about another fun experience at King's Island presented below.

```
1      B:  Yes. It's just good time, then we went to this King's Island
2          yesterday.
3      A:  Oh, you did?
4      B:  Yeah. It was so much fun=
5      A:  =Did you ride in the ride?
6 -->  B:  Which one?
7 -->  A:  Something with like, it's like an (N) when you ride you
8          can like control the way you=
9      B:  =Oh, yeah, we almost did that. No we didn't ride that. We
10         did the roller coaster 'the Beast.'
```

Similarly, B in extract 3.3 is not certain of the referent of 'the ride' A mentions (line 6), which appears to be common knowledge as shown by the definite article A uses. So she asks a straight question (line 7) to A for identification of the problematic reference. This (other-) initiation of repair solicits from A (line 7-10) an informative description of the identity of the referent, 'the ride', and thus solves the problem.

Extract <3.4>, (PJTII, 3.4, p. 7)

A and B here are exchanging notes about their classes and schedules. Before this, A talks about her classes in the past summer that were all morning classes, and that she had to get up earlier but then seemed to have longer days after that, with the whole afternoon free. B responds with the opening utterances below.

```
1      B:  Yeah. That's how I solve my classes now. Like I'm usually
2          done by one o'clock.
3      A:  Really?
4      B:  Yeah.
5      A:  That's good. That's really good. I have, ehm communica-
6          tion 505, and - that is a three to five class, and I'm like (.3)
7          what I'm doing.
8 -->  B:  It's three to five-hour class? Is that what you're saying?
9 -->  A:  It's, it's from three to five.
10     B:  Oh. OK. I was just thinking, like a three hour class.
11         ·hhhwow. ((laugh))
12     A:  I won't do that.
```

Here we see the confusion stem from lexical ambiguity, also a variation of problematic reference. There are two likely meanings for the utterance, 'a three to five class', from A (line 6). This phrase may refer to the time of the class as from three to five o'clock or to the duration of the class as being three to five hours. B admittedly is surprised by what he hears as the last meaning and proceeds to ask for confirmation as well as for direct clarification (line 8). The other-initiated self-repair is accomplished with repair accomplished by A in her next turn, that the class is 'from three to five' (line 9).

In contrast to self-initiated repair, other-initiation of repair shows concern over the adequate receipt of the other's message in order for communication to proceed further, thus is relevant to participants' proper understanding and involvement in the interaction. By expressing explicit non-understanding, in part or in whole, of what the other has said, instances of other-initiated repair in the above excerpts focus on a particular problem in the other's utterance.

4.2.2. In NS-NNS Conversation

Extract <4.1>, (AFII.7.37, p. 4)

In the conversation to get to know each other, A and N were exchanging information of themselves from beginning to the end. Right before the following lines, N was talking about her experiences in the U.S. and in this university, and a variety of things she did.

```
1       N: Last Saturday, I went to library - main library.
2       A: Ehun - but was there a lot of people there on Saturday
3          night?
4 -->    N: Ehm?
5 -->    A: Was there a lot of people there on Saturday night?
6 -->    N: Saturday night?
7 -->    A: Is that where you were at=what did you say?
8 -->    N: Library?
9       A: Ehun.
10      N: No.
11      A: I think so. ((laughing))
12      N: No. Because of the - very nice day, so all people go out,
13         don't like to stay in library.
```

An interesting episode of mutual other-initiated repair is presented in <4.1>, with six questions in a series of five turns. The trouble source here is a problematic reference in a twist due to speaker A's mishearing and then misuse of a same reference speaker N mentions in the immediate past turn. N is confused by speaker A's reference to 'Saturday night' (line 2-3) when 'last Saturday' (line 1) is what she says. To get clarification, N first responds with a 'Ehm?' to initiate a global repair (line 4). When the repair from A, a repeat of the problematic utterance, doesn't solve the problem, N repeats the problematic part 'Saturday night?' in a second question (line 6) for a targeted local clarification. In turn, A has his own confusion, when, not realizing the source of problem is that he brings in a different time reference than N's, he attempts to repair by repeating his original question (line 5). (The repeat would have been useful if N merely mishears/misses the question which, however, is not the case here.) When this repairing move is met with another request from N

for further clarification, A attempts to verify if he misunderstood N's first remark with a question of his own, about the reference to location 'where you were at' (line 7), that misses the target. This outcome is anticipated by A, who follows up immediately with a more general, explicit metacommunicative question on the whole utterance 'What did you say' (line 7) to initiate a global repair from the start. These remarks change the direction for N. She responds by aligning to A's question about 'where'. Thus a third question is issued from N to seek confirmation (line 8). This time she has it and her interpretation is confirmed, although the original misunderstanding on 'time' remains unsolved as indicated in N's last remark (line 12), that it is a nice day (not night). It seems that the problem in the excerpt could have been helped early on with other-initiated other-repair by N in line 4 or 6: An utterance like 'Saturday' or 'I said Saturday' could have corrected the problem at either of the two junctures. This is not done probably for two reasons: the social preference of self-correction (Schegloff et al. 1977) and, more importantly in this case, N's own confusion about the actual source of trouble, making other-repair even more unlikely. Similarly, A could have responded directly in line 7 to N's second question (line 6) by focusing on the time instead of location: He would have corrected the problem by asking 'Is that when you went?' Actually, one would expect A to respond directly to N's targeted question about time as the problematic part, as this is a common way to initiate repair (Schegloff et al. 1977). A probable explanation is the unexpectedness of the problem, when there seems to be no problem at all. However, A's move from the specific to the general seems to be helpful; it at least refocuses the attention to where the partners agree, and they move on from there, in spite of the misunderstanding. For all practical purposes of their conversation, the problem is dealt with or solved, with N continuing with a delayed answer (line 10) to A's question from line 2-3.

Extract <4.2>, (AFIII.1.51, p. 3)

Before the excerpt, N is talking about his recent visit to a friend in Indiana who is also a student in a university there. This prompts A to share his own connection to the state.

```
1   A:  Is he? I have a sister who is a graduate student in sociology
2       in Indiana University.
3   N:  Indianapolis?
4   A:  No. Bloomington, Indiana.
5   N:  Where is it?
6 --> A:  Pardon me?
7 --> N:  Where is it - Bloomington?
8   A   Bloomington, Indiana. You know where Indiana is?
9   N:  Next to Ohio state.
10  A:  Yeah.
11  N: ⌈Yeah.
12  A:  ⌊She goes to Indiana University which is there. (...)
```

Speaker A in this case, is sure about his own non-understanding and asks a global question (line 6) for the other to repeat what was said. N repeats the question and further self-repairs by making explicit the referent of 'it' as 'Bloomington', in case that is the problem. Their talk continues.

Extract <4.3>, (AFII.7.37, p. 2)

N and A are chatting to get to know each other. N talks about her family and turns to ask A about his family.

```
1   N:  Do you have any brothers or sisters?
2   A:  Yeah. I have three sisters.
3   N:  Three sisters? Older or - ⌈younger?
4   A:                           ⌊Younger. Yeah.
5 --> N:  Older and younger?
6 --> A:  Pardon me?
7 --> N:  Younger.
8   A:  Yes. Two of them are in high school, one of them is in
9       junior high school.
```

Again we have two instances of repair in two adjacent turns. Speaker N seems to be not sure of what she hears from speaker A, confused by the affirmative 'Yeah' (line 4), probably meant to be a back-channeling item that responds to her remarks including both 'older' and 'younger'. She thus initiates a repair (line 5) with a repeat of the

problem source for clarification. Her move seems to be unexpected by A, who is totally at a loss of what is put to him. In turn, A initiates a global repair of his own (line 6) to have N clarify before he can respond. N, in the meantime, figures out the situation and offers what she thinks is meant by A (line 7), by way of other-repair. This time N's understanding is confirmed, and the talk moves on.

Extract <2.2> (AFII.7.37, p. 1)

```
4     N:  Five months ago I arrived here.
5     A:  In Columbus or in the United States?
6 --> N:  United States. Er first time, I arrived in Atlanta - Georgia.
```

Extract <2.2> also presents an instance of other-initiated self-repair. The trouble source is a case of problematic reference, 'here', with two possible referents. A initiates the repair by presenting both as candidates for confirmation. N accomplishes the repair by specifying 'United States' as the correct referent and further clarifies that she first arrived in Atlanta, Georgia.

Other-initiations of repair in the above extracts illustrate two circumstances of its use. It is used (a) when what the other says is heard clearly, but there is question as to the identity of a referent, as in <3.1> through <3.4> and N's second attempt to initiate repair in <4.1> and A in <2.2>. Thus the repair in (a) deals with a perceived local problem. In this case, repair is structurally accomplished by presenting the problematic part by way of seeking confirmation, which often immediately follows a nominal global question about the whole utterance. The nominal question is not to get an answer, but serves to prepare the latter for the problematic part identified. Other-initiated repair is also used (b) when it is not clear what exactly is said for various reasons. Maybe the other is too soft-spoken, the listener is absent-minded, the other says something unexpected, or the listener is not proficient in the language or not familiar with the accent. Whatever is the reason, repair is likely done by direct metacommunication from the other so the speaker of the trouble source would redo what s/he just said, or perform a global repair, as the case of A in <4.1 > through <4.3> and N's first attempt in <4.1 >. Both being other-initiated repairs, matters of (a) type, regarding referents, presuppose matters of (b) type, related to overall hearing. Thus, (a) type of local matters are at a different level of

understanding with greater degrees of involvement of content than (b) type of global matters that are more basic and are preconditions for (a) type of understanding.

Examination of data shows some differences in use of other-initiated repair between conversations of two NSs and those with a NS and a NNS. As illustrated in the excerpts <3.1> through <4.3> above, the use of other-initiated repair of type (b) tends to occur less in conversations between two NSs, but is a major form of repair in conversations with a non-native speaker. Nothing particularly surprising about this difference. Nevertheless, it helps participants defining the interaction between them in terms of mutual understanding, involvement, and structural management. NS-NNS conversations involve greater problems in basic comprehension for both coparticipants, hence are more engaging in terms of meaning negotiation and attention to structural organization of conversation. NS-NS conversations are more engaging with greater participant involvement in terms of the content substance of conversation.

It is also interesting to note another difference, in the use of global and local questions as well as their sequence when both are used for other-initiated self-repair.[8] These questions point to the source of trouble for, and initiate, the repair. First, in <3.1> and <3.2>, a global question is asked, only to signal trouble. The actual trouble is then specified by a second, local question that initiates local repair. In <4.1> through <4.3>, in contrast, the global question specifies a global problem and initiates a global repair. Second, the specific question in <2.2>, <3.3>, and <3.4> initiates repair of a specific local problem. Third, when both types of questions are used back to back, the sequence goes from the global/general to the local/specific as in <3.1> and <3.2>, whereas the order is reversed in <4.1> when it goes from the local/specific to the global/general. In the former, the perceived problem is identified by the second question. In the latter case, the perceived problem is identified by the second question.

Although there seems to be a general preference (for NSs conversation) in identification of trouble source, i.e., to go for a local problem when in doubt, it is beyond this paper to pursuit this further. What is of interest here is the contrast between NNS-NS and NS-NS conversations in this regard. As illustrated, NNS-NS conversations in this data set tend to rely on global repair more heavily, although far from exclusively, than NS-NS conversations, for which local repairs are more common. This is seen both in the use of general/specific question types and in the use sequence of two types and, again, suggests the greater difficulties coparticipants must overcome in NNS-NS conversation in terms of an overall general understanding related to basic comprehension.

5. Conclusion

Understanding checks are vital to the flow of communication, guiding participants to make necessary adjustments so as to get their messages across and to properly interpret the messages they receive. Repair is often used for, or as a result of, an understanding check. It is initiated with one coparticipant commenting, implicitly or explicitly, on one's own talk to make sure oneself is clearly understood, and on the other's talk to secure an appropriate understanding of one's partner in conversation. An examination of repair in the data reveals similarity as well as difference in the initial conversation in the NS-NS and the NS-NNS interaction. It shows that conversation coparticipants commonly initiate and engage in conversation repair, whether the talk is between two native speakers or between a native speaker and a non-native speaker. The similarity is also seen in types of trouble source that create communication problems and in repair structural sequence as resources for meanig negotiation and conversation management. This raises an interesting question for future investigations into other than English conversations, regarding the cultural general nature of repair devices.

On the other hand, self-initiated and other-initiated repair are used somewhat differently in two types of conversation, in terms of the more common kind of trouble sources involved. In both conversation situations, repair directly involves coparticipants' mutual adjustment associating with proper understanding of what is said: comprehension and/or interpretation. However, trouble sources in NS-NS conversations often go beyond the surface meaning of the remark that requires clarification and understanding in implicature, presupposition, coherence, and the like, to draw on pragmatic considerations and relational connotations and, therefore, tend to bear more on the identity and relationship negotiation. Troubles in

NS-NNS conversations tend to pertain to the comprehension of literal meaning, showing participants making efforts simply to make sure they understand the message content of what the other is telling them. Their particular use of repair reflects and contextualizes the interaction as one that demands greater effort of meaning negotiation at a very basic level. Similarly, the particular use of other-initiation of repair in the NS-NNS conversation, i.e., the circumstances of its use with greater reliance on global repair, contributes to the 'choppiness' of the conversation and highlights the mutual unfamiliarity of the NS-NNS partners. Overall, their talk is more laborious, less engaging, and more 'superficial' in the substance of the talk which, as a result, becomes part of the contextual features occasioned and established as practical accomplishment in and through which the parties define the interaction and communicate with each other in spite of the *a priori* differences.

The use of repair discussed here does not exhaust all possible types in the initial conversation under study. It is quite likely that types not identified in this analysis also occur. This, however, will not detract from the findings above. Further studies are needed for more insight into repair and its role in understanding checks as reflecting, and constitutive of, conversations between persons of different languages and cultural backgrounds.

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Notes

1. The labels of 'native speaker' and 'nonnative speaker' are used here to refer to the speakers of a language who provided data for this study, on the basis of whether or not the target language is acquired early in life as the first language and has been used since then as the primary language especially for daily communication. Given the complexity of the phenomenon of language acquisition as a natural and social phenomenon (Davies 1991), no assumption is made in this study of an empirically clear-cut or conceptually precise distinction between the 'native speaker' and the 'nonnative speaker'.

2. Mutual unfamiliarity, the focus of this study, is only one of many possible sources of intercultural communication problems in native-nonnative speaker conversations, including the issues of cultural difference, social power, prejudice, ethnicity, and cultural/ethnic identity (e.g., Day 1994; Giles & Johnson 1987; Gumperz 1982; Hall 1992; Rampton 1992), simultaneously being constituted in, as well as underlying, communication. Whereas these factors are always interacting and intertwined empirically, they are distinct analytically. In relation, although there are some variations across societies – Western/Northern European countries, especially, are an exception, lack of familiarity with a nonnative speaker or another culture is still the norm for the majority of native speakers of most languages in the world, including the United States.

3. As part of an interactive process, conversation problems and difficulties associated with mutual unfamiliarity are attributable to, just as they may be experienced by, all participants. It is as much a problem of the nonnative-speaker partner as it is of the native-speaker partner: The nonnative speaker, after all, is employing a language and abiding by conversational rules other than one's own, and is often more familiar with the native-speaker's language and interaction rules than the native speaker is with the nonnative speaker's. The native speaker, on the other hand, often is also less familiar, if not unfamiliar, with the native-nonnative speaker's interaction situation than is the nonnative speaker.

4. Symbols of transcript notation used here are as follows:

-->	specific point where an instance of the relevant device is found
[	overlapping utterances
=	contiguous utterances
-	untimed short pause
(5)	pause of .05 second
:	extension of sound or syllable
()	transcript items in doubt or unintelligible if blank
<u>my</u>	parts of utterance with emphasis
°	softer than surrounding talk
><	faster than surrounding talk
((laugh))	other vocalizations in the talk
(...)	data omitted
·hhh	inhalation

5. Line numbers are specified for ease of explanation. They do not correspond to those in the original transcripts.
6. 'A', 'B' are randomly assigned for native speakers. 'N' identifies the non-native speaker.
7. With attention to repair as part of a contextual feature with a role in conversation management and meaning negotiation, this study does not compare possible differences in, nor influences of culture on the speech patterns of NS and NNS, which are two more common sources of intercultural communication problems due to cultural differences.
8. I wish to thank an anonymous referee for bringing the point on sequence to my attention.

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