The Case of the Missing 'so': Clarification Requests, Discourse Markers and Achieving Alignment in Spoken Interaction

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Abstract: Drawing on Conversation Analysis, this paper investigates how an English native speaker interviewer utilizes clarification requests as a form of recipient design during an interview to resolve problems of non-understanding. This data is contrasted with interviews between English language learners at a private university in Taiwan. The findings reveal that learners resolve these problems of misunderstanding through ignoring requests for clarification. It is argued that this represents a lost opportunity to further participation in L2 discourse and hence a forsaken opportunity for L2 language learning. This data illustrates that discourse markers and displays of epistemic status (Heritage, 2012) aid in achieving intersubjectivity and displaying alignment between speakers, furthering language use and participation. This paper investigates how understanding the way in which clarification requests are formulated in interviews between native speakers of English can be utilized to teach EFL learners how to negotiate clarification requests during spoken interaction. This paper adopts the position that pedagogy can be informed by findings generated through Conversation Analytic methods when comparing examples of authentic usage and L2 learner data and that particular discourse patterns should be taught to EFL students through CA-informed classroom tasks and teaching materials related to clarification requests.

Anahtar Sözcükler:
Açıklama talepleri, söylem belirteçleri, konuşma analizi, görüşmeler

Eksik "öyle" Durumu: Açıklama Talepleri, Söylem Belirteçleri ve Sözlü Etkileşimde Uyum Sağlama
Özet: Söylem analizi üzerine kurulu bu çalışma, anlaşılmama sorununu çözmek için anadili İngilizce olan bir görüşmecinin açıklama taleplerini görüşme esnasındaki kullanımını araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada elde edilen veriler, Tayvan'da özel bir üniversitede İngilizce öğrenenler arasında yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen verilerle karşılaştırılmıştır. Bulgular, öğrencilerin yanlış anlama sorununa açıklama taleplerini görmezden gelerek çözüm ürettiklerini göstermektedir. Bu durum, ikinci dilde iletişimde ve ikinci dil öğretiminde hedef dildeki söyleme katılma açısından kaybedilmiş bir fırsat olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Buna ek olarak, çalışmadan elde edilen veriler söylem belirteçlerinin ve epistemik statü göstergelerinin (Heritage, 2012), öznelerarasılığa ulaşmaya, konuşmacılar arasındaki uyumu belirlemeye, dil kullanımını ve katılımı ilerletmeye yardımcı olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, anadili İngilizce olan kişiler arasındaki görüşmelerde açıklama taleplerinin formüle edilme biçiminin anlaşılmasını, İngilizce öğrenenlere sözlü etkileşim sırasında açıklama taleplerini nasıl müzakere edeceklerini öğretmek için ne şekilde kullanılabileceğini konuşma analitiği yönteminin bir sonucu olarak özgün kullanım örnekleri ile ikinci dil öğrenen verilerini karşılaştırılması ile irdelediği için çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular dil öğretiminde de konuşma analitiği yöntemine dayanan etkinlikler ve materyaller ile İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenmekte olan öğrencilere belirli söylem kalıplarının öğretilmesinde yardımcı olabilir.

1. Introduction

Negotiation for meaning (henceforth known as NFM) has been an area of research in Applied Linguistics for a number of years. Arising from the work of Doughty and Pica (1986) in task-based interaction, the argument made for NFM is that if problematic utterances are checked and clarified, learners are furnished with comprehensible input and perform comprehensible output. It is a process in which speakers employ turns-at-talk to achieve mutual understanding when either communication or linguistic problems in communication have arisen during interaction and, as observed by Ellis (2015), both problems often coincide. Achieving mutual understanding can either be brought about through comprehension checks, confirmation checks or clarification requests (Long, 1980). According to Varonis and Gass (1985), NFM is a strategy for remedying conversational stalemates and occurs in the following manner:

1. Something is not understood within the interaction (referred to as the trigger)
2. The listener expresses a lack of comprehension (known as the signal)
3. There is a response from the speaker (done in order to perform a repair of the source of interactional trouble)
4. There is a response from the listener (performed in relation to the repair)

As this description shows, in NFM sequences, interactants are required to make interactional adjustments (Foster, 1998: Foster and Snyder-Ohta, 2005). This is done in response to communication problems that need to be resolved in order for the interaction to proceed (Ellis et al., 2001, Nakahama et al., 2001). Interaction is modified (Oliver, 2002) so that participants can signal understanding as the interaction unfolds. This is done as part of a dynamic process in which interlocutors work together to collectively arrive at an understanding of both the content of the interaction itself and what the interaction is designed to achieve. Further to this, in order to communicate effectively, interactants are required to attend to each other's turns-at-talk and repair breakdowns in communication as and when they occur (Kaur, 2010). Also noted by Smith (2003), NFM is a form of feedback in which attention is drawn to aspects of talk that have engendered interactional trouble and necessitate modified output. For van Lier (2000), NFM may indicate learning processes at work or at the very least, and facilitates opportunities for learning the target language. Long (1996, p. 451-452) summarizes the value of NFM as follows:

> Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways.

In contrast to this position, proponents of socially distributed cognition argue for a view of language as action, rather than individual speakers transferring information to each other in and through turns-at-talk. The achievement of intersubjectivity and understanding is a collaborative process done in situ, in response to emerging and contingent needs that arise due to particular interactional needs, and in ecologically unique contexts. Interactants utilize turns-at-talk to display understanding in the process of monitoring and responding to the turns-at-talk of others, making understanding and cognition an inherently social achievement, achieved as it is between speakers in the process of collaboration (see Eskildsen & Markee, 2018).

It can be seen that the pedagogical argument for NFM appears to be strong. However, as NFM occurs in and through talk, how this is done can vary depending on the strategies employed by learners when engaged in this process. The argument presented here is that

learners need examples of NFM (in this case, clarification requests), in order to perform NFM. This will facilitate participation in spoken discourse with an interlocutor during spoken interaction in order to enhance opportunities for learning the target language. The rationale for doing so is as follows: There is a tendency to emphasize an individual's ability to produce correct utterances, rather than to negotiate meanings or clarify a point of view or an idea (Walsh, 2012)

Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine how speakers engage in clarification requests as a collaborative process, (cognition as a socially distributed process) and draw conclusions regarding how the findings generated may be of use to teaching practitioners in designing teaching materials to prepare students for spoken interaction. Of particular concern is how interaction can promote L2 learning through analyzing the interaction that forms and shapes clarification requests. Being able to clarify meanings or repair breakdowns requires competence to do so, and rather than individual achievement and in social interaction achieving intersubjectivity is a collaborative effort. Thus, it is a challenging process in which learners of English as a second or additional language need examples of how this is done in order to better understand how to go about performing clarification requests. As Jenks (2009) observes, knowing how and when to assume the interactional floor is potentially difficult, particularly in a language that is not one's own. Knowing how and when to speak requires a fine-tuned understanding of interactional practices. Teachers can aid learners in adding particular discourse strategies to the linguistic repertoire they possess when engaged in seeking and achieving clarification of problematic utterances during spoken interaction

1.1 Clarification Requests

In this study, the focus is on one aspect of NFM, clarification requests. The definition of clarification requests adopted in this paper is 'an interrogative utterance in which a speaker asks for explanation, conformation or repetition of an utterance previously produced by the listener, but which has not been perfectly understood' (Cicognani, 1988). The following is an example of clarification requests posited by a teacher during an EFL lesson, taken from Walsh (2006, p.134). It is included here to illustrate to the reader how clarification requests engender interactional alignment between speakers and lead to intersubjectivity; however, this example is also included because the teacher in this extract (T) utilizes the discourse marker 'so' prior to launching a request for clarification. A central argument of this paper is that learners need explicit instruction in the use of the discourse marker 'so' to prefigure launching clarification requests that will facilitate language output and aid in participants collaborating to achieve intersubjectivity. The interaction begins with the teacher asking a student to describe the funniest thing to occur at school.

Extract 1: The Funniest Thing in School

1. S1: the funniest thing I think out of school was go to picnic
2. T: go on a picnic? So what happened what made it funny?
3. S1: go to picnic we made playing or talking with the teacher
more closely because in the school we have a line you know
he the teacher and me the student=
4. T: =so you say there was a gap or a wall between the teacher and
and the students so when you=
5. S1: if you go out of the school you went together with more (gestures 'closer'
with hands)=
6. T: =so you had a closer relationship [outside the school]
7. S1: [yeah yeah]

As can be seen in this extract, turns 4 and 6 involve the teacher using 'so' to launch a clarification request in relation to S1's utterances in turns 3 and 5. In both cases, the teacher is seeking clarification in order to understand the meaning S1 is attempting to express. In turn 4 the teacher attempts to reach an understanding with S1; the teacher's turn in line 4 includes recasting S1's turn with 'gap' and 'wall' to give S1 the vocabulary that is lacking and may facilitate alignment in understanding. This is acted on by S1 in turn 5, who uses an extended turn that involves gesturing to describe a closer relationship between teacher and student when on a trip outside the classroom. Turn 6 sees the teacher seeing clarification of this gesture by stating teacher and student had a 'closer relationship' which is confirmed by S1.

What is seen here is S1 and the instructor collaborating to achieve intersubjectivity through their turns-at-talk. The clarification request launched by the teacher in turn 4 results in S1 using a turn-at-talk in line 5 to explain his meaning through an extended turn supported with gestures. The instructor's clarification request in line 6 arises out of checking if the gesture and utterance have been understood correctly, which is overlapped by S1 in turn 7 in a display of affiliation. The instructor and S1 achieve mutual understanding in the process of co-construction in which both display their understanding of each other on a turn-by-turn basis, orienting to each other's display of epistemic status as the interaction unfolds. The teacher signals a request for clarification by using 'so' to launch the request, an indication to S1 that the previous utterance needs to be clarified before interaction can proceed.

Foster and Snyder-Ohta (2005) observe that clarification requests are generally posited as questions that place an interlocutor in a position of having to provide new information or recast a previous utterance and are critical for achieving mutual understanding during episodes of interaction, as seen in the extract above. For Long (1996), such recasts make the acquisition of the target language more likely to occur, as interactants are forced to utilize new language forms to express an idea previously given. Clarification requests, then, are made due to non-understanding rather than misunderstanding (Smith, 2003) and are a common facet of interaction, making up 3 to 6% of dialogue between people (Purver, 2006). The following research questions inform this work:

1. What role do discourse markers play in prefiguring clarification requests?
2. What interactional adjustments do interactants make when requests for clarification are made in the data taken from the Comedian's Comedian Podcast?
3. How can examples of clarification requests taken from authentic language use be utilized in producing teaching materials for EFL learners?

2. Method
2.1. Research Method: Conversation Analysis

The rationale for using Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) is to examine the sequential organization of clarification requests in order to develop an enhanced understanding of the interactional resources employed by participants when performing interviews. As Schegloff et al. (2002, p. 18) state:

> CA analyses are grounded on recurrent patterns of talk situated with detailed attention to the specific sequential contexts in which these practices are found. CA possesses an emic perspective on the analysis of data; the analytic orientation is towards a participant-relevant perspective in which the analyst occupies an agnostic position. He or she does not bring to bear any preconceived ideas regarding the data. The data 'speaks for itself'.

CA was employed to analyze what the talk in the interaction examined here is attempting to do and explicate and uncover the practices speakers use to manage and negotiate mutual understanding during clarification sequences. Conversation Analysis allows the researcher an emic or insider's perspective on interaction as the researcher to examine the sequential unfolding of talk in situ; what is relevant to participants in the interaction is made available to the analyst through investigating the turn-taking procedures employed by interactants. Student interviews (the author's own data) and interviews between the host of the Comedian's Comedian Podcast, Stuart Goldsmith, and various stand-up comedians were transcribed verbatim and then subjected to the analytical detail Conversation Analysis offers. This was informed by a process of unmotivated looking in which the analyst brought to bear no preconceived notions regarding the data. After performing Conversation Analysis (Sacks, 1992), it was observed that clarification requests were a feature of the data.

2.2. Participants

The data utilized in this research are comprised of two groups – learners of English as a second or foreign language and native English speakers being interviewed about their professional identity and working processes as part of a podcast. Therefore, a brief section on each group is included here for the sake of clarity.

The learner data examined here are taken from interviews performed as part of course assessment by high-level learners in a Freshman English programme at a private university in central Taiwan. Students are placed into four levels within this English programme based on performance in an entrance exam. Both students are in Level Four, the highest level of the programme. L19 is Malaysian, and L20 is Taiwanese, while L21 is Indonesian, and L22 is from Taiwan. The interviews examined here occurred at the mid-point of the first academic semester. Learners had completed one unit from the class text about culture and were required to perform a ten-minute paired interview on topics related to culture.

The procedure followed was that students would go to the instructor's office in previously arranged dyads. Ten topics had been prepared by the instructor related to culture. This had been the content of classroom instruction up until this point. Learners were not informed beforehand what the topics would be. The procedure followed was one in which learners were shown the ten topics face-down and chose one topic. The first minute could be spent planning a response, with the rest of the time given over to the interview. The question chosen in Extract 1 was 'Describe the culture of your hometown' while in Extract 2, the question chosen was 'What does the term culture mean to you?'

The other extracts that comprise the data examined are taken from the podcast 'The Comedian's Comedian' hosted by the British stand-up comedian Stuart Goldsmith. (https://stuartgoldsmith.podbean.com/e/76-ben-hurley/). The podcast follows an interview-based format in which the host asks fellow stand-up comedians about their creative processes. The interview subjects included here are Sarah Milican, Jarred Christmas, and Ben Hurley, respectively from England, Ireland, and New Zealand.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The extracts below were listened to several times in the process of unmotivated looking and transcribed verbatim and then examined using the level of analytic detail that informs Conversation Analysis. Learner extracts were selected for analysis due to the recurrence of requests for clarification that were not attended to by interlocutors. This is then contrasted

with the treatment of clarification requests in data taken from the Comedian's Comedian Podcast in which interlocutors orient to clarification requests within the interaction.

2.3.1. Analysis and Findings

Extract 2: Sarah Milican: (20:39 – 21.04)

Prior to the interaction in this extract, Stuart Goldsmith has asked Sarah Millican how she transitioned from being a comedian with a day-job to being a full-time comedian. She has been describing how she would book gigs. This leads SG to ask how she organized her diary for bookings. The interaction begins with her describing the number of bookings she tended to have per week.

1.	SM:	but maybe there are more (0.2)
2.	SG:	.hhh s[o
3.	SM:	[if youre
4.	SG:	[>>so so what what you mean>>]
5.	SM:	[there are more]
6.	SG:	if you did three that week you booked <u>three</u> in like every time you <u>did</u>
7.		one youd book another one in for the [end of the]
8.	SM:	[<u>yeah</u>] [>>so Id look at my diary>>
9.	SG:	[I understand ok]
10.	SM:	and say Ive got four gigs in this week (.)I need to <u>book</u> four gigs
11.	SG:	.hhh
12.	SM:	<u>in</u> the future=
13.	SG:	= [for the future (.) I understand I understand ok]
14.	SM:	[yeah yeah no um sorry yeah]

In the interaction above, SG is focused on seeking clarification regarding SM's process of booking stand-up gigs, in particular how she updated her diary. This influences the interaction that occurs, as he utilizes his turns-at-talk in lines 2, 4, 6, and 7 to gain an understanding of the information she has proffered. Of note is that SG prefaces his turn with the discourse marker 'so', as he launches his turn in line 2, after an inhalation that signals his intent to speak. As noted by Yang (2011), discourse markers possess multi-functionality in conversation, that is, they serve varying purposes depending on the context in which they are utilized and help maintain conversational flow. As interaction progresses, discourse markers signal such things as topic shift and have an organizational function in spoken interaction (Jucker & Smith, 1998, Schiffrin, 1987). 'So' possesses an inferential aspect and often occurs in the turn-initial position where it signals information is about to be forthcoming in the turn to follow. In short, it advances a particular interactional agenda, and in the case of the extract above, to implement clarification.

In line 3, SM overlaps with SG as he seeks clarification which causes him to relaunch his clarification request in a rapid tone of voice. Of note is that he explicitly packages this turn as a request for clarification in line 4 through the use of a preface to the turn that will follow in lines 6 and 7 (so what you mean), which signals to SM that SG is unsure as to the meaning of her previous utterance and needs her to provide clarification in her next turn at talk. Here 'so' functions as a preface to a topic. In lines 6 and 7, SG expands upon this preface by then paraphrasing the information that SM has provided and packaging it so that the areas of misunderstanding are shown (for example, emphasizing the number three and the verb did). In line 8, it can be seen that SM orients to this request for clarification by stating 'yeah' and

describing her subsequent actions. This is overlapped by SG in line 9. SM also utilizes 'so' to preface for SG what she would do next, who then explicitly states his new level of understanding to SM (I understand), which serves to show her that he has attended to her turn and she has successfully clarified for him the earlier source of misunderstanding.

In this extract, it can be seen that SM and SG collaborate to achieve mutual understanding when clarification is sought. This is done through the use of the discourse marker 'so', as an indicator of the launch of a turn seeking clarification. The use of 'so' by SG indicates to SM that he is about to pursue a particular course of action (in this case, seeking clarification). As noted by Bolden (2009), this is a preface to enacting an interactional agenda. SG's turn design serves to initiate a particular interactional sequence in which SM is expected to clarify an earlier utterance, which she does in line 8. She has attended to the inferential aspect of SG's turn in lines 4, 6, and 7 (Sherber & Wiilson, 1986) and interpreted it as a request for clarification.

Extract 3: Jarred Christmas (13:32 – 13:49)

In this extract, Jarred Christmas has been asked about how he began his career as a stand-up comedian. After being asked by a friend to perform at a public event, he started watching performances by American comedians on television. The interaction opens with him describing this comedy and then attempting to talk about his first stand-up performance.

1.	JC:	like <u>really</u> bad ↓stuff um (0.7) and so the first set I ever ↓did (0.4) ↑I=
2.	SG:	=.hhh > >so you mean in the sense it was like commercial comedy>
3.	JC:	>(0.2)
4.	SG:	tcha [it it seems to me]
5.	JC:	[a commercial comedy] set [but] like shot
6.	SG:	[yeah]
7.	JC:	in the venue [a:nd
8.	SG:	[yeah.
9.	JC:	> >for exactly that problem were talking about> > it doesnt=
10.	SG:	=yeah.
11.		ₒ transmit well.ₒ

Line 1 sees JC formulating a description of the stand-up he had seen on television and evaluating that work (really bad stuff). In this turn, there is a pause of 0.7 seconds as he considers how to continue, adding further content through the use of the continuer 'and'. Once he begins describing his first comedy routine, SG latches with this turn in line 2. JC does not complete his turn, as it is at this moment that SG seeks clarification of JC's earlier utterance regarding the comedy he had seen on television. He prefaces this clarification request with the discourse marker 'so' and explicitly signals this is a request for clarification with the words 'you mean', used in conjunction with 'so' to signal a shift in discourse, a further example of the use of 'so' as a preface to a turn designed to implement an interactional agenda, that of seeking clarification (Johnson, 2002). SG also signals the need for clarification by using the term 'in the sense', which indicates that he is seeking clarity about the type of comedy performance JC had seen broadcast. He attempts to paraphrase JC's earlier offering, offering 'commercial comedy' as a comparison. This is done in a rapid tone of voice. There is a pause of 0.2 seconds at the end of this turn. In line 3, JC orients to SG's request for clarification by offering his opinion (it seems to me), which is overlapped by SG in line 4 as he continues his agenda of seeking clarification, reiterating his earlier turn in line 3

(commercial comedy). In line 5, JC projects turn completion by SG at a TCU (set), and orients to his clarification request by offering 'yeah', in overlap with SG's completion of his turn at talk. However, SG has not completed his clarification request and offers further information, using lines 6, 8, and 10 to proffer additional content in relation to his clarification request regarding venue and how JC's early comedy was received by an audience. Line 7 sees JC overlap with SG again as he projects turn completion after SG says 'venue'; however, SG utilizes the continuer 'and' to show he has further information to impart, which he does in line 9. JC has oriented to SG's clarification request and utilized 'yeah' to show agreement and that he has attended to this clarification request. Of note in line 8 is that SG delivers his turn in a rapid tone, an indication that he is concerned with keeping the interactional floor. This turn is latched by JC in line 9. SG appears to be aware that he has possibly kept the floor longer than he should have. In line 10, his final utterance is a sub-vocalization that indicates a tapering-off as he realizes JC has understood his request for clarification and attended to it in his preceding turn in lines 7 and 9.

In this extract, much of the interactional work performed by SG is done in order to posit a clarification request. He designs his turn in line 2 to seek clarification regarding the type of stand-up JC had seen on television. JC orients to this in line 3, seeking to express his point of view in relation to this request. The majority of this extract shows SG formulating a request for clarification and how JC orients to this. The utility of this extract is in revealing how to formulate a clarification request when overlap occurs and how to maintain the interactional floor when making a clarification request. Overlap occurs a great deal in the interaction shown here (lines 3 to 7). It can be argued such overlap is an indication that the interactants are attending to and monitoring each other's offering closely. Given that during negotiation for meaning, interactants are paying close attention to each other's talk and seeking an opportunity either to provide or respond to clarification, overlapping talk may occur.

Extract 4: Ben Hurley (20.54 – 21.43)

In the final extract examined in this paper, SG is interviewing Ben Hurley, a New Zealand comedian. This extract differs from others included here, in that it focuses on clarification requests deployed both by an interviewer but also by the interview subject, as has been the case in extracts 3, 4, and 5. The rationale for analyzing such an example is that in oral proficiency interviews, learners may encounter questions from an interlocutor that require clarification in order for the interaction to continue smoothly. In the extract below, SG asks BH to describe the kind of comedian he is to his audience at the current time, as compared to earlier in his career. Compared to extracts 3 and 4, this extract is a much clearer example of how clarification requests foster collaboration between interactants and can involve interactional modifications that further participation.

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1.    SG:      and youre I- Im just wondering we might be getting ahead of
2.             ourselves here (.) but who do you think you ar:e to your audience (.)
3.    BH:      now
4.    SG:      .hhh um (1.8) well Im most[ly
5.    BH:                               [> >on- on stage I mean (.) [xxx you
6.             know xxx
7.                                                                [right. : yeah
8.    SG:      u:m (0.5) you mean 。 uh I don't- Im not quite sure what you mean。
9.
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10.	BH:	(0.7) dyou mean like u:m w- ya know cos they they they feel they
11.	SG:	know me cos Im on the↑ telly [or
12.		
13.	BH:	[no
14.	SG:	no absolutely [not].
15.	BH:	[> >no no> >][oh ok
16.	SG:	[I mean just if if an audience wh:o had
17.		never seen you before s:aw ↑you=
18.		=[oh right.
19.	BH:	[and sort of asking] whats your relation[ship to them (.)
20.		[oh I see
21.	SG:	are you kind of like .hhh the the guy who tells the truth about the
22.	BH:	↑world (.)are you like their ↑friend (.) are you like their ↑dad (.)> >are
23.		you like you know what I mean> > whats- [whats
24.		[s:ure oh ok [cool I see]
25.		[> >and its not-]you know there may not be a
26.		specific answer> > but=
27.		=> >yeah no thats a really good question> > (.) I- I- I dont know I
28.		get u:m .hhh and a lot of (.) Australasian comics get this is the u:h I get
		guy down the ↓pub

SG uses his first turn at talk to ask BH whom he is to his audience now. He orients to this query in line 2 with a preformulation and, after a pause of 1.8 seconds, begins to answer. It is at this point that SG overlaps with BH and offers an expansion on his question. 'On stage, I mean' serves as a type of pre-clarification as SG appears to be projecting possible misunderstanding on the part of BH and so offers further information to make the meaning of his question clear. In line 5, BH acknowledges this question and after a pause of 0.5 seconds, seeks explicit clarification in line 6 (you mean). This is followed by an indicator of epistemic status delivered in a quieter tone, as BH states to himself and SG that he is unsure as to the meaning of SG's question. He follows this up with a clarification request, posited as a question, which is overlapped by SG who projects turn completion in line 8 and explicitly disprefers this interpretation of his meaning. Lines 11, 12, and 14 see SG expanding further on his meaning, offering an example in relation to his earlier question in lines 1 and 2. Line 15 involves BH displaying his state of understanding (oh I see), done in overlap with SG's expansion in line 14. Lines 16, 17, and 18 also involve SG expanding upon his question through the use of further supporting questions that serve to clarify his initial question in lines 1 and 2. Of interest is his explicit appeal to BH to display his current state of knowledge (you know what I mean). In line 19, BH orients to this appeal, once again stating, 'I see'. Lines 20 and 21 see SG acknowledge that BH may not be able to offer an answer to his question, done in overlap with BH's display of understanding in line 19. In lines 22 and 23, BH is finally able to deliver an answer to SG's question from lines 1 and 2, going on to state that he is viewed by his audience as 'guy down the pub'.

This is a longer extract than those shown previously, and it can be seen that a great deal of work is done by SG and BH to clarify the meaning of each other's utterances and facilitate effective communication. Unlike previous extracts taken from The Comedian's Comedian Podcast, there is far more work done here to signpost and display levels of knowledge and understanding on the part of the interactants, such as in line 4 when SG utilizes his turn at talk to seek clarification of meaning. His use of 'I mean' signals to BH that he has identified a possible source of interactional trouble and is attending to it in advance. BH responds to

this in his following turn-at-talk by displaying his state of understanding, by stating he does not follow SG's line of questioning, and then himself seeking clarification in lines 5 and 7. The function of this utterance is to apply an example to possibly clarify where a misunderstanding has occurred. SG is able to then respond to this in the negative; this is of interest due to 'no' being a dispreferred response in interaction in conjunction with 'absolutely not'. SG performs further clarification in lines 11, 12, and 13, attempting to use examples to support his earlier question (and source of misunderstanding in lines 1 and 2) about who BH is to his audience. What this does is give BH a reference point for answering the question (it is asking about the present moment), and he responds to this with an indication of his current level of understanding (oh I see). SG continues with his agenda of clarifying his meaning with regard to his opening question; however, proffering further examples to support his clarification. This further orients BH within the interaction as he is then able to explicitly show his level of understanding and successfully answer the question. In the process of collaboration, both interactants are able to seek clarification and display states of understanding that lead to the interaction achieving its intended goal – the posing and answering a question despite the occurrence of a great deal of overlap. Overlap is dealt with quickly and easily as SG pursues his agenda of seeking clarification and BH shows his level of understanding which serves to orient SG and himself within the interaction.

What follows is data taken from oral proficiency interviews between learners of English as a foreign language involved in paired oral proficiency interviews. It should be noted that it is not being argued that the learners shown here are not able to resolve a request for clarification. However, the interaction shown here is marked by indexical turns-at-talk that involved limited output when clarification is sought. Recall that this paper argues for a view of learning as participation in spoken discourse contingent on opportunities for employing the target language.

Extract 5: Student Interviews – Author's Own Data (3.03 – 3.17)

1.	L22	a::nd (0.6) most- and ↑they have- >>do you have been<< to th:e train
2.	L21	station=
3.	L22	=u:m to the [To- ↑Toroko]
4.	L21	[>>no no no>>] uh the
5.	L22	[the train express]
6.	L21	[the Taichung train] station (.) [Taichung train station
7.	L22	[oh no <u>no</u>
8.	L21	it:s (.) used to be the most (0.5) crowded place in [Taichung.
9.		[oh ok

The purpose of this extract is to illustrate that while clarification requests may trigger interactional adjustments on the part of an interlocutor, this may not facilitate the use of differing forms or interactional adjustments that facilitate acquiring the target language. L22 posits a yes/no question in line 1. The import of this is that she expects a particular type of response from L21 as to whether she has been to Taichung train station, and when this is not forthcoming, engages in further interaction to achieve understanding on the part of L21. Thus, L22's purpose in this episode of interaction is to lead L21 to produce a particular response, and the interaction on her part that follows is in service to this goal. L22 attends to L21's utterance in line 2 by offering explicit rejection of her clarification request (no no no) in line 3. L22 seeks further clarification of L21's utterance from line 1. This leads L21 to fill in the gap in L22's understanding in line 5 by offering the response she is seeking (the

Taichung Train Station). In this turn, L22 is signaling that she is aware there is a lack of understanding on the part of L21 and, rather than offer further input in relation to the question she has posed in line 1, utilizes her turn in line 5 to answer her own question. This interactional decision means L21 is not able to produce productive output in line 6, other than offering a negative response to L21's yes/no question from line 1.

Extract 6: Learner Interviews – Author's Own Data (3.32 – 3:47)

1.   L19   can you (.) describe this ↓food (.)
2.   L20   h.::m (1.0) its shape look like a moon and=
3.   L19   =>>look like moon<<?
4.   L20   [and
5.   L19   [a round] shape?
6.   L20   ye:ah there are some scallion-some scallion on it=
7.   L19   =scallion
8.   L20   yes(1.0) scallion (.)

The question 'What does culture mean to you?' was selected by the learners. L20 had earlier proposed food as a topic of discussion. This extract begins with L19 asking L20 to describe a Taiwanese dish, scallion pancakes. Lines 3 and 5 see L19 seeking clarification of the shape of this pancake, orienting to L20's offering in line 2 (looks like a moon). It is noteworthy that L20 never addresses L19's clarification requests in any detail other than to offer an elongated 'yeah' in line 6 in regard to the shape of the pancake. Instead, L20 orients to a general description of the pancake in line 6, stating that the pancake has scallions on it; line 7 sees L19 repeat the word 'scallion', a further attempt at seeking clarification. In line 8, L20 treats this utterance as a clarification request, first by utilizing 'yes' as an answer and repeating what he perceives L19's source of interactional trouble to be, the word scallion.

As can be seen in this extract, L20 does not engage in modified output when dealing with L19's clarification requests. Instead, he offers highly indexical responses (yeah and yes in lines 6 and 8), treating the clarification requests made by L19 as yes/no questions and offering a further description of the dish he is talking about, showing that he is orienting to L19's first question in line 1 and proffering a general description of scallion pancakes. While he is able to orient to L19's requests for clarification, this does not lead to much in the way of modified output, representing a lost opportunity to utilize the target language in a collaborative process for language learning.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

The argument made here is that a fine-tuned understanding of the interactional features and discursive practices that make for effective participation in this interactional context is needed first by language teachers, in order to facilitate instruction in how to negotiate clarification requests in oral proficiency interviews. This, in turn, leads to the creation of teaching materials that will raise learner awareness of how to undertake clarification requests successfully. As shown in Extracts 5 and 6, issuing of clarification requests led to negative responses and highly indexical turns-at-talk that did little to further L2 acquisition and participation. The following suggestions are offered to aid learners in developing awareness of the conversational features and structures that will facilitate utilizing clarification requests more effectively.

Before undertaking oral proficiency interviews, learners need to be exposed to video and transcripts of naturally occurring data, as shown in Extracts 2, 3, and 4. Exposure to naturally-occurring data offers the advantage of showing learners how clarification requests are managed in situ as the interaction unfolds. Rather than an unnoticed aspect of interviews, it can be made apparent to L2 learners that clarification requests provide an opportunity for furthering participation and use of the target language.

In relation to furthering participation, attention can be drawn to how discourse markers function as a feature of clarification requests. For example, as is demonstrated in Extract 3, the use of 'so' prefigures further action in the talk, i.e., a clarification request is about to be launched. Explicit instruction in the function and use of such discourse markers, in particular, 'so', can aid in facilitating awareness of when and how to proffer a clarification request.

Explicit instruction in revealing epistemic status (Heritage, 2012) as part of clarification requests would also facilitate effective interaction in oral proficiency interviews. As the first two extracts show, learners did little to reveal understandings as interaction developed, and as can be seen in the extracts that follow, taken from 'The Comedian's Comedian Podcast', the deployment of epistemic status fostered co-construction between interlocutors in managing clarification requests with competence. Though overlap occurred, participants oriented to each other's turns-at-talk and epistemic status to effectively manage clarification requests in a way that allowed interaction to continue to flow and allow both participants to co-construct the discourse. In other words, it is argued that for a data-driven approach to learning (Johns, 1991) that utilizes naturally-occurring data from a similar interactional context to be employed in creating teaching materials that can be used in instruction related to preparing students for oral proficiency interviews.

A further contribution of this research beyond pedagogy is that it adds to the extant research on interaction in L2 learning contexts. Building on the work of Mori (2002) and Pekarek Dohler (2010), for example, this research illustrates the discursive practices that shape and inform a particular interactional context and the 'emergent communicative needs' (ibid) that arise in relation to clarification requests. A contribution of this work is to show that interactional features such as discourse markers and displaying epistemic status play an important role in developing interactional competence when engaged in clarification requests.

Further, this work shows how clarification requests are utilized and managed in a context outside the L2 classroom. Also, unlike other work which has compared Language Proficiency Interviews and natural conversation (Lazaraton 2002, Young & He, 1998), this work has compared interactional contexts that possess the same overall institutional goal, seeking and providing information. The discursive practices necessary for co-constructing competence when undertaking clarification requests discussed and examined here add to our understanding of the interactional management and construction of clarification requests.

Ethical Issues

The author confirm that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country (Date of Confirmation: 27/8/2021).

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