

Cross-Cultural Contrasts in the Interactional Achievement of Discourse: 'Continuers' and Alignment in Central Peninsular Spanish and East Norwegian

The interactional achievement of discourse through the suspension of turn-taking (Schegloff, 1982), has been investigated in English, German, Finnish and Japanese, but remains "vastly unexplored" in other languages (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018: 110). Suspending turn-taking in order to allow for 'big packages' like storytellings or longer explanations, is said to rely on, i.a., *continuers*, that is, particles produced at transition-relevance spaces that "hand the floor straight back to the speaker to whose turn the [continuer] is oriented" (Gardner, 2001: 129; cf. Schegloff, 1982; Mandelbaum, 2012). *Mhm* is considered a 'classic continuer' in English (Gardner, *ibid.*), and *mhm/mm* as continuers are noted to be "strongly similar in form and function across unrelated languages" (Dingemans, Enfield and Torreira, 2013: 8).

However, in data from Central Peninsular Spanish, I find particles doing continuer work to be strikingly absent. In the Nijmegen Corpus of Casual Spanish (NCCSp; Ernestus and Torreira, 2012), three hours and forty minutes of dyadic conversation from 24 informants yield only four cases where a particle of any kind *may* be realizing a continuer function. In longer stretches of talk by one speaker, of which there are many in the data, the recipient instead structurally aligns (cf. Stivers, 2008) with the speaker's production of 'big packages' through *staying still*, that is, remaining silent and neither nodding nor otherwise moving (see example 1), but responding affiliatively once the speaker has reached possible completion. Such *aligning recipient stillness* contrasts with other languages and with assumptions in the general literature, and represents a considerable cultural variation in the interactional achievement of discourse.

In data from East Norwegian, continuer particles flourish. Although *mhm* is only found in marked cases, continuer work is often done by \widetilde{mm} , a disyllabic bilabial particle pronounced with the Norwegian 'second tonal accent' (a HLH wave; cf. Kristoffersen, 2000: 237; see example 2). Cases from the Database of Norwegian Everyday Conversations (NoHve; Etelämäki et al., in progress) demonstrate recipient alignment with the production of 'big packages' through the use of \widetilde{mm} and other particles at the *majority* of transition-relevance spaces, followed by affiliating responses when the 'big package' has reached possible completion. When the recipient does *not* produce such particles but instead remains still, it is found to project trouble, in the sense that it is followed by initiations of repair or by talk that does *not* affiliate with the prior speaker's stance (cf. Stivers, 2008).

The data thus indicates that speakers of some languages expect turn-taking to be suspended through the recipient staying still, while that very stillness projects trouble for speakers of other languages, who expect particles doing continuer work at transition-relevance spaces. Such contrasts in alignment behavior could impede intercultural achievement of discourse on a sub-conscious level, and should be further investigated and included in second language teaching for the purposes of raised awareness and development of interactional competence.

Example 1 NCCSp (Torreira and Ernestus, 2012) ID: 17_31-03-2008. Time: 00:35

1 AIN >nosotros nos acost↑am↑os<
Pr-1P RPr-1P V-SPP-1P
we went to bed
LUC silent and still, gazing directly at AIN---->
2 pero él::: >se quedó un rato viendo la ↑te↑le=
OC Pr-3S RPr-3S V-SPP-3S InAr-M N Ger DeAr-F N
but he stayed a while watching TV
3 =lu'go se acostó,=
Adv. RPr-3S V-SPP-3S
later he went to bed
4 =y se- se debió levantar< súper↑pro:nto
CC RPr-3S V-SPP-3S V-Inf Adv.
and he had to get up super-early
5 .FF habló con mi ↑madre=
V-SPP-3S P PosPr-1S N
he talked with my mother
6 =que había llegado a ↑Fra:nkfurt=
ReC V-Pluscuam-3S P N
that had arrived ≈in Frankfurt

P: Preposition. Pr: Pronoun. RPr: Reflexive Pronoun. PosPr: Possessive Pronoun. 1P/3S: 1st person plural / 3rd person singular. SPP: Spanish Simple Perfect Preterite, formerly "Indefinido".

DeAr/InAr-M/F/Neu: Definite/Indefinite Article Masculine/Feminine/Neutral.

OC: Oppositional Conjunction. ReC: Relative Conjunction.

Example 2 NoHve (Etelämäki et al., in progress) "50 Hverdagskveld". Time: 06:29

1 LAR så gikk det forbi meg et litt hhh eldre par,=
Adv V-Pret NeuPr P RPr-1S InAr-Neu Adv Adj N
then a slightly older couple walked past me
2 EVA -> =mm̃ (0.3)
3 LAR en dum liten hund e::: :: fhhh£ løs da selvsagt.
InAr-M Adj Adj N Adj Adv Adv
a stupid little dog loose then of-course

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