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Re-engaging and dis-engaging talk in activity

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how members of small work groups use audible and visible actions to coordinate conversational interaction. The analysis of this activity context includes some methods for re-engaging turn-by-turn talk after it has lapsed, as well as some methods for making relevant a lapse in talk, and dis-engaging it, once it has been engaged. In addition, the actions positioned at conversational boundaries, both pre-re-engaging and post-dis-engaging, show the members' orientation to phases of lapse and phases of turn-by-turn talk. (Talk in activity, social organization, conversation analysis)*

For participants engaged in activity, conversation is a central resource: They can resolve task problems, check their work, or comment on their progress by talking to others around them. Yet as central a resource as talk is for people gathered together, talk-in-interaction is not always continuous. Talk may occur, then lapse, then occur again. This article examines the ways in which participants engaged in activity are able to accomplish interactively two conversational tasks: (a) to re-engage turn-by-turn talk after it has lapsed; and (b) to IMPLICATE (or make relevant) a lapse in turn-by-turn talk once it has been engaged.

Re-engaging turn-by-turn talk and implicating a lapse in it, in an activity context, differ from opening or closing talk in a single conversational encounter (Schegloff 1968, 1979, Schegloff & Sacks 1973). In a single conversation, opening and closing sequences are used to coordinate conversational engagements and dis-engagements, and they have the consequence of initiating or terminating the encounter. In talk in activity, the initiation and termination of turn-by-turn talk do not coincide with the beginning and end of the encounter. After a lapse in talk in copresent activity, participants are not engaging initial conversational interaction but rather are producing subsequent turn-by-turn talk. After initial engagement, talk between the participants is incipient and has the ongoing possibility of occurring at any moment. For this reason, Goffman noted (1963:137) that strangers on a train car typically exchange greetings on meeting. Through this conversational exchange, however brief, the participants establish an incipient state of talk which leaves open the occasion for a subsequent re-engagement, rather than a delayed initial engagement.

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Participants in physical proximity maintain COPRESENCE: an interactional state resulting from their awareness of others around them, and from their knowledge that others have the same awareness of them (Goffman 1963:17). Copresence provides the participants with the ongoing opportunity to interact, and thus the ongoing possibility of re-engaging talk, or of implicating its dis-engagement. Copresent participants have common access to a range of interactionally relevant items (activity, place, personal attributes etc.). This common orientation can provide for an organized interaction of some kind, and turn-by-turn talk may be re-engaged.

Goffman (1963:24) describes conversational exchanges as occurring "when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of action typically by taking turns at talking." Note, though, that however germane turn-taking is to the production of conversation, Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974 describe the turn-taking system as involving SEQUENCES of action. A sequence can consist of a first action that elicits a range of next relevant actions. Sequences can take many forms: summons–answer, greeting–greeting etc. The use of sequence organization in conversation provides the current speaker with a resource to select the next speaker. As the data will show, sequence organization is a primary resource not only in re-engaging talk, but also in dis-engaging turn-by-turn talk in activity.

Schegloff & Sacks (1973:296) formulate the closing or dis-engaging problem as the coordination of the participants' "suspension of the transition relevance of possible utterance completion." To suspend the relevance of transition, a last utterance must suspend the speaker-change mechanism, so that the participants do not hear the silence following this last utterance as a gap – a silence belonging to one of the participants. Sequence organization is one resource for suspending speaker change. This analysis builds on the research of Sacks et al. 1974 by showing how silence is produced in copresent conversational interaction; how the participants orient to silence; and how they display to one other their understanding of its status as a gap or a lapse in the conversation.

The participants examined in this study are third-grade students involved in a reading and writing curriculum that utilizes a group format. Seated in groups of four, the students engaged in common reading and writing tasks which each was responsible for completing. The students were L1 Spanish and L2 English speakers, making the transition from reading and writing tasks in Spanish to similar tasks in English. For the purposes of this analysis, the focus was not on the participants' use of a particular language, but rather on the organization of the actions that constituted their talk in activity – the actions accomplished by their language use.

Approximately 80 hours of video and audio recordings were made of several groups as they progressed through their school tasks. As the data were collected, the researcher made every effort not to stand behind the camera; almost exclusively, the excerpts selected for analysis do not include an adult participant. The

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data were computer-indexed and activity-coded; select segments were then transcribed and analyzed using conversation-analytic methods.

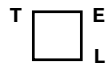
METHODS FOR RE-ENGAGING TALK

After talk has lapsed, participants recurrently use certain actions to re-engage talk in the work group. Three methods for re-engaging talk are discussed here: questions, noticings, and announcements. Each is shaped by the action being done by the first turn at talk, because this action makes relevant some set of next-turn actions. The structural organization of all these re-engaging turns, as for sequences used to initiate an occasion for talk, is the adjacency pair (Schegloff 1968).

Questions

Participants can successfully re-engage turn-by-turn talk through the use of a question. Because of the activity context, the source of the re-engaging question is often the common task in which the participants are engaged, and the question can be produced without being preceded by other talk. In ex. 1, when the students are all engaged in answering story-comprehension questions, T stops writing and produces a re-engaging question, the source of which is a rephrased version of the written question that she is currently answering.[1]

(1)



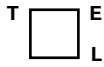
	1		((all are writing))
	2		(1.0)
⇒	3	**T:**	((stops writing, looks up)) **do you think**
	4		**tha- the DAD will still go off?**
	5		((L and E stop writing))
	6	**L:**	**may[be.]**
	7	**E:**	**[no:]:**

In the process of writing her answer, T looks up and in line 3 immediately poses the question to the other participants at her table. T produces a re-engaging question that makes relevant an answer by either L or E, since she does not specify a particular recipient of the question. In lines 6–7, L and E respond almost simultaneously to T's question, which was locally occasioned from her individual question/answer activity.

Questions that arise in the activity context may be very closely linked to the written task. For example, as the students are writing answers to story-comprehension questions, the oral reading of a written question can double as a task marker and as a re-engaging question. In ex. 2, when the students are independently writing answers to a set of story-comprehension questions, L reads the question she is about to answer aloud; this action results in the re-engagement of talk.

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(2)



	1		((T and E are writing, L finishes writing))
	2		(12.0)
	3	**L:**	**{R>} what did the family find out about**
	4		**breakfast this mor:ning, {<R}**
	5		((L and E look at each other))
	6		(1.2) ((T stops writing))
⇒	7	**T:**	**that they were– that– that– HH da– that**
	8		**their dad was gonna move to a different**
	9		**apartment.**
	10	**L:**	**yeah.**

Here L re-engages turn-by-turn talk by using a resource available to all the students: the set of story-comprehension questions. In lines 3–4, she reads aloud the question she is currently answering, and in so doing, she raises two relevant issues: (a) her place in the activity,[2] and (b) the answer to the question she has verbalized. T elects to respond to the latter issue with a potential answer to the question in lines 7–9. L follows in line 10 by agreeing with the proposed answer.

Participants may enhance the relevance of a next-turn response by accompanying their re-engaging questions with other devices. In ex. 3, D produces a question, followed by a challenge that is designed to re-engage turn-by-turn talk about the spelling of the word *cats*.

(3)



	1		(4.0) ((D looks to G))
⇒	2	**D:**	**how do you spell cats?**
⇒	3		**I bet yo– you cats [I bet you–]**
	4	**G:**	**[cats?]**
⇒	5	**D:**	**uh huh, I bet you °can't°.**
	6	**G:**	**cats. DUH HUH HUH.**
⇒	7	**D:**	**how do you spell it?**
⇒	8		**is tha– without seeing.**
	9	**D:**	(·) ((S then E look up from their work))
	10	**G:**	**uhm, ce: (·) a: (·) te ese.**
			C A T S

D produces a re-engaging turn, in lines 2–3 and 5, which consists of a question plus a challenge to spell *cats*. D directs this action to G through her gaze. G responds to her question in line 6 by repeating the word to be spelled and by emphatically remarking, "DUH HUH HUH", an expression that implies the task is simple. G's responses in lines 4 and 6 show that the turn-taking machinery has been re-engaged; yet D's purpose for re-engaging talk, her request for help in spelling *cats*, still has not been addressed.

Therefore, D pursues the spelling in lines 7–8 by rephrasing her initial question, accompanied by a condition to her prior challenge: Spell it "without seeing." This action further disguises D's request for help as a challenge for G to perform

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the spelling. D shifts the focus from her own spelling difficulty to G's ability to perform the spelling, (a) by expressing her doubt that G can spell the word, and (b) by heightening the game-like nature of the challenge, by creating additional conditions and further incentive for G to respond.

Following D's second pursuit, the two other participants at the work table, S and E, stop writing and focus their attention on the in-progress conversation between D and G. The change in the interactional dynamic, from an encounter between G and D to one involving the attention of all the participants, significantly modifies the challenge presented to G. Now S and E are witnesses to G's pending action, either to spell the word or to refuse the challenge. In line 10, G simultaneously answers D's question and addresses her challenge by spelling the word *cats*.

In summary, the method of re-engaging turn-by-turn talk through the use of a question relies greatly on the activity at hand. Exx. 1–3 have shown that the topic of the re-engaging question arises from the writing or drawing task. Re-engaging questions of this sort enable recipients to rely on the context of the common academic task in which they are engaged, in order to locate the source of the action. The common task, along with devices such as challenges, enhances the success of re-engaging turns by drawing on the local resources of the copresent activity context.

Noticings

In addition to posing questions arising from their activity on the task, participants may use a NOTICING to comment on things that exist or are happening around them (Sacks 1992:87–97). Like a question, a noticing makes relevant a response – typically agreeing or disagreeing – to the noticed claim. Depending on who is the intended recipient of the noticing, a response may come from either (a) the student who is the subject of the noticing turn, or (b) other students who join in to collaborate in the noticing.

In ex. 4, when the students are writing answers to story-comprehension questions, E produces a re-engaging turn in the form of a noticing about S's action on the task. E notices that the letters on S's paper are very big, a comment that makes a response by S relevant.

(4)



	1		(10.0)
⇒	2	**E:**	**están bien grandes las pala:bra:s**
			these words are written very big
	3		(·) **estas**
			these (ones)
	4		(1.5) ((E points to S's paper, S looks))
	5	**S:**	**que no, dijo que**
			no, she said that
	6		**tú ha que hacer así, nah**
			you have to do it like this, nah

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E notices the product of S's writing action in line 2, selecting her to respond. Among S's alternative responses, she may agree or disagree with E's claim. Here S rejects the worth of E's noticing in lines 5–6, and she indirectly quotes the teacher as instructing her to do the task as she has done it. By evoking the teacher's instructions, S gives a reason for her writing action, negating the criticism raised in E's noticing.

In ex. 4, the person implicated in the noticing responds and re-engages turn-by-turn talk. In some instances, however, a person other than the one implicated in the noticing may respond. This is the case in ex. 5. The students are answering story-comprehension questions, and one student, A, is searching for the answer to a question in her book. As A searches, she reads a word from the text and repeats it. Her utterances provide the others at the table with a possible topic for further talk. Interestingly, it is not the word that A has been uttering that provides the occasion for E to make a noticing, but the smell of her breath. From across the table, E comments on the odor of A's breath and launches a word search. J then joins in to aid in the word search and collaboratively formulate the noticing.

(5)



	1		((A stands looking at her book
	2		while J, B and E are writing))
	3	**A:**	**{R>} °noise° {<R} noise**
	4		((A sits down, prepares to write))
	5		(0.2)
⇒	6	**E:**	**hueles como tomaste AGUA de esa– ah–**
			you smell like you drank water flavored with ah
⇒	7	**J:**	**tomato juice=**
	8	**E:**	**=uh huh– no:, agua como:**
			uh huh– no:, water like
	9		**(de) chocolate see:ds,**
			made from chocolate seeds
	10	**A:**	**shut u:p.** ((said while smiling)

A produces a brief utterance in line 3, and as she prepares to write, E makes a noticing about her breath. E notices that her breath smells like a flavored, water-based drink, but he has difficulty identifying which flavor it resembles. So E embarks on a word search (*de esa– ah–*/of that ah) which invites the other participants to supply the flavor. In line 7, J responds with *tomato juice*, a candidate solution to the word search; in so doing, he collaborates in formulating the noticing. E initially accepts J's word-search candidate, then rejects it and identifies the source of the smell as chocolate seeds. In response to the noticing, A tells E to *shut u:p*, an utterance that she produces with a smile, showing that she treats the noticing in a lighthearted manner.

Thus, in addition to soliciting responses, noticings require their recipients to look somewhere or do something in order to verify the claim being made, or to resolve the issue being raised. In ex. 4, E's noticing requires S to look at the

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handwriting on her paper. In ex. 5, E's noticing directs the other students to smell the air in A's direction, and J shows that he orients to this in his offer of a candidate drink. Further, noticings are often produced by someone other than the subject of the action, because one of the features of a noticing is its "coming into a state of knowing something." Comments about one's own work usually take the form of announcements.

Announcements

When participants make noteworthy comments about their own work, it is often in the form of an announcement (Sacks 1992:87–97). Like a noticing, an announcement solicits the response of its recipients, and it requires them to look somewhere or do something in order to verify what is being announced. The distinction between announcements and noticings is in the quality of their production. Noticings are produced as observations of the "passing world" (Sacks 1992:90), while announcements are produced to highlight an action as noteworthy.

In ex. 6, D makes an announcement about her own action, summoning the others in her work group to look at her written work. When all the students are writing, D announces to the others that she has written in cursive – a recently introduced skill that all the students are practicing.

(6)



	1		(2.0) ((all students are writing))
⇒	2	**D:**	**I was that– writing handwriting**
	3		(·) ((turns to G))
⇒	4		**look, I write it in handwriting,**
	5		((G continues writing, does not look up))
	6	**E:**	**no sabe escribir en inglés o sea–=**
			she doesn't know how to write in English I mean–
	7		((G glances at E, both continue writing))

D's re-engaging utterance in line 2 is an announcement about the form of her written work. She announces that she has written in handwriting, then turns to G for a response. After a micropause, D reformulates her announcement, prefacing it with a summons for the others to "look" at her handwritten words. Here the summons accomplishes three actions: (a) It gathers the attention of the others; (b) it identifies the announcement as something that can be viewed and visually appreciated; and (c) it explicitly directs the others to "look". The summons directs the other participants to look, as an action preliminary to assessing the announcement's claim, and it highlights the claim's noteworthiness. In line 6, E responds, making a counter-announcement, showing that he orients to the prior turn as a brag. He claims that D does not seem to know how to write in English – another relevant skill for these students, since they have recently made the transition to content instruction in English.

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The re-engaging turns presented thus far all have an adjacency pair organization. This is a powerful resource in re-engaging turn-by-turn talk because of "conditional relevance", the normative expectation that a relevant second part is due next from another speaker. In the case of a question, the production of an answer is conditionally relevant; if it is not forthcoming, its absence is noticeable. Like questions, announcements and noticings by one member in a group elicit responses that assess their accuracy or their newsworthiness as conditionally relevant. The production or lack of a second pair-part provides a basis for speakers to determine the success or failure of a re-engaging turn.

In addition to the re-engaging turn's structural organization, the activity context can enhance the success of a re-engaging turn by enabling the participants to set the interactional stage for talk to occur. For example, the initiating actions in exx. 1–5 emerged largely from the participants' common tasks. The participants' copresence in the work group also provides a resource for re-engagement, because the visibility of every participant's actions provides a basis for their holding one another accountable and regulating the group's activities.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR RE-ENGAGING TALK IN ACTIVITY

In order to situate re-engaging action so that a response will be forthcoming, participants can set the stage or create a place for re-engaging talk to occur. This pre-re-engagement action can take two forms: visible or audible action.

Copresent individuals may make visible a place for re-engaging talk by discontinuing individual work, or by producing physical movements that show one's availability. These include (a) stopping work, (b) sitting back from one's work, and (c) leaning away from the table or the other participants. Participants may also show they are no longer doing a task by using an object in an unconventional or off-task manner; thus a student can make visible that he is no longer writing by tapping his pencil on the desk. Similarly, showing that one is not reading can be done by quickly paging through a book. The participants' physical position with respect to the task, as well as their off-task use of school tools, can alert the other participants to the possibility of upcoming re-engaging talk.

Audible actions can also alert other participants to a possible place for re-engaging talk. As students accomplish tasks, they can show where they are in the activity, or verbally locate troubles in the task – by producing utterances that refer to the trouble source, or by self-directing an oral reading of a written answer or question. In addition, students regularly verbalize their writing syllable by syllable as they produce it; this too provides a resource for turn-by-turn talk to be re-engaged.

Audible and visible actions allow the copresent group members to follow the individual activities of those around them. When a student reads the next question to be answered, in addition to showing his or her place in the task, he or she is verbally marking a transition from independent, writing-the-answer activity to

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potentially collaborative, answering-the-next-question activity.[3] Furthermore, visual and audible actions are organized with respect to the production of a re-engaging turn. Participants may prepare to produce their own re-engaging first through the use of audible and visible actions that show them to be in a hiatus from individual activity. At the same time, these audible and visible actions can provide a place for some other member to re-engage talk. Thus, the participant who produces the visible and audible actions to show a break in individual activity, along with those who receive these actions, can collaboratively achieve a place for re-engaging talk.

In ex. 7, an extended version of ex. 4, S provides a place for E to re-engage talk through a series of actions: discontinuing her writing, putting her pencil down, moving away from her work, and audibly exhaling while she looks straight ahead. By showing that she is momentarily finished with her task, S draws attention to her written work, the evidence that she has finished. In response to these audible and visible actions, E looks at S's paper and makes a noticing regarding the size of the words she has written.

(7)



⇒	1	**S:**	((stops writing, scratches head, puts
	2		pencil down, sits back then moves back
	3		toward table, looks straight across
	4		table))
⇒	5	**S:**	**HHH**
	6		((E looks at S's paper))
	7	**E:**	**están bien grandes las pala:bra:s**
			the words are very big
	8		(·) **estas/éstas**
			these/these ones

In lines 1–4, S shows that she has finished some portion of her written task by moving away from the table and putting her pencil down. The last action in particular calls E's attention to S's paper, since it is the source of her prior activity. In line 5, S sighs heavily to accomplish two actions: (a) It alerts the overhearing members of future talk, because it is a possible pre-utterance; and (b) it serves as an initiating action, because its placement in the course of action calls attention to her completion of a particular aspect of the task. Through E's look at S's paper in line 6, and S's physical positioning and off-task actions with relation to her work, both participants have collaboratively created a place for the re-engagement of talk. E re-engages talk with a noticing about S's writing in line 7 – an utterance specifically designed to reflect on the product to which S's actions have drawn attention, emphasizing its completion.

Similar pre-re-engagement actions can be seen in ex. 8. As the students are drawing a picture to illustrate a story they have just read, L makes an erasure, an audible pause in her drawing task. This action sets the stage for a re-engaging turn, in this case a summons plus a question about how to draw a car.

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(8)



	1		((L and V are drawing))
	2		(4.0)
⇒	3		((L looks at V, L brushes erasings))
⇒	4	**L:**	**oyes,**
			hey
	5		**how dyu: (·) do you do a CA::r,?**
	6	**V:**	**pues así::.** ((stops drawing, leans back,
			like this
	7		looks up at L and starts to erase))

By brushing off her paper and looking up at V, L alerts the others that she is not engaged in the drawing task. When V does not look up, L proceeds to summon her (*oyes*/hey) and to project further talk by her re-engaging question.

The examination of action that precedes re-engaging talk in exx. 7–8 shows that audible and visual actions provide the copresent members with places in which to situate their talk. In particular, actions that can be heard, such as exhalations or erasures, call attention to the possibility for future talk. Further, the organization of non-vocal and vocal actions creates a sequential context for re-engagement.

METHODS FOR DIS-ENGAGING TALK

Once talk is re-engaged, how does it terminate or lapse into silence? The devices that provide the sequential context for the talk, or implicate a lapse in it, are like the devices for re-engaging talk in not being primarily organized by the turn-taking system. The dis-engaging issue is not so much one of identifying how to exit from talk, so much as it is of determining the places and ways of extending talk that would otherwise end. Dis-engagement has a continuing relevance, unless talk is extended. Furthermore, there are ways of specifically showing and/or seeing whether talk has ended.

Sequence organization is a resource for exiting from talk (Button 1987, Schegloff & Sacks 1973). The dis-engagement of talk relies on the organization of sequences of action, just as the re-engagement of turn-by-turn talk does. The analysis of re-engaging methods, above, has shown how a sequence-initiating turn elicits a range of responsive actions and thereby effectively re-engages talk. The antithesis of this is producing a sequence-completing action that does NOT elicit a next action, and instead leaves open the possibility that a next action may not be produced. In the absence of a next action, a lapse in conversation will occur.

Termination upon the adequate completion of a sequence

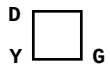
An initiating action that re-engages turn-by-turn talk may project the organization of the upcoming spate of talk by projecting a range of actions that will appropriately complete or be a satisfactory response to the initiating action.

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Sequences that are shaped by their initiating action have at their onset a projectable contour. The completion of a projectable action contour provides an occasion for, and can result in, the dis-engagement of turn-by-turn talk.

Ex. 9 shows how a student produces a re-engaging action that initiates a projectable sequence. Amid writing activity, D poses a question that delineates a shape for the next turn's utterance, and for the conversational exchange over all. The completion of the sequence leaves open the possibility that talk may lapse.

(9)



	1		((all write answers to story questions))
	2		(4.0)
⇒	3	**D:**	**what's this wo:rd,?** ((points to Y's paper))
⇒	4		(0.4) **what's this word ≫right here,?≪**
	5		(0.2) (Y looks to where D points))
⇒	6	**Y:**	**existed.**
	7		(0.2) ((D looks at her own paper, Y
	8		continues writing))

While the students are involved in individual writing activity, D requests help in the form of an informational question, soliciting Y to provide an unfamiliar word written on her question-answering sheet. Note that D's question is not positioned amid an ongoing conversation, but rather after individual work, inserted in her work project. Once the identified word is produced by Y, in line 6, the sequence initiated by the re-engaging utterance is complete, and the reason for the re-engagement is fulfilled. D visibly shows Y's responsive action to be adequate by looking at her own paper and continuing with her individual work, in line 7. After reading the word, Y also continues her writing activity, and conversation lapses.

Often, turn-by-turn talk is initiated with an utterance projecting the sequence's completion, but it extends beyond the utterance completing the sequence. The next turn after a sequence-completing utterance provides the participant who initiated the sequence with a place to clarify any misunderstandings that the last turn's speaker has revealed in the initiating utterance (Schegloff 1992). In ex. 10, E produces multiple questions before receiving an answer that he first rejects, then accepts.

(10)



1		((all are writing answers to story questions))
2		(2.4)
3	**E:**	**≫cuál es la número los tres,≪** ((looks at S))
		what is number the three of them
4		**≫pregunta de número tres?≪**
		the third question
5		(0.2) ((sits back))

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	6		**≫cuál era pregunta del número tres,?≪**
			what was question number three
	7		(·) **≫cuál era la pregunta número tres,?≪**
			what was question number three
	8		((E leans toward S))
	9	**J:**	**that she's gonna die.**
⇒	10	**E:**	**no,** {R>} **what did the Old Oni men** ((text
	11		reads "Old One mean")) **[when** {<R}
	12	**D:**	**[**{W>} **when she::**
⇒	13	**E:**	**oh, yeah, that she was gonna die huh,**
	14		((E begins writing))
	15		(1.0)

Repeatedly, E solicits the answer to the third story-comprehension question, pausing after his second utterance in line 4 and after his third attempt in line 6. His fourth formulation of the question, in line 7, is responded to by J with the completion to the question/answer sequence. Although J's response in line 9 is an action that was projected in E's sequence-initiating action, it is only potentially adequate to bring closure to the sequence. Other next actions may expand the sequence, or they may initiate new, related sequences. For example, in his next turn, E has the opportunity to raise any troubles he has with J's utterance as it responds to his sequence-initiating action.

Here E locates trouble in J's answer in the third turn of the sequence, in line 10. E begins to read the question to which he referred in his initiating question, showing a mismatch between J's proposed answer and the targeted question. In midsentence, E stops reading the question and shows he has a change of opinion as he utters *oh* and repeats J's proposed answer in line 13. E ends his turn by uttering *huh*, thereby transforming the statement into a tag question and a candidate answer (Pomerantz 1988). This provides a place for J or another group member to respond to E's turn, but no uptake is made. E resumes his individual work in line 14, and talk is dis-engaged.

Ex. 10 shows one way in which talk can extend beyond its potential completion through the use of a post-insertion repair sequence, which resolves trouble in some prior-action sequence (Schegloff 1972). Upon completion of the repair sequence, talk lapses into silence. The projectability for interaction provides the place and the possibility of dis-engagement. Other post-expansion sequences may take the form of rounds of action, rather than a single action pair consisting of an initiating and a responsive action.

Post-expansions and rounds of action

Completed sequences may be expanded by a ROUND of action initiated with a reflective statement about the prior interaction. Such a round of action occurs when several or all of the group members produce similar actions in turn. Upon the completion of such a series, a lapse in the talk is implicated.

In ex. 11, an extended version of ex. 3, a student initiates a sequence with a projected completion by requesting help with the spelling of the word *cats*. Fol-

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lowing the spelling of the word, each of the onlooking students makes a reflective comment about the difficulty of the task before talk lapses.

(11)



	1	**D:**	**how do you spell it, is tha– without**
	2		**seeing,**
	3		((G turns his paper over))
	4		(0.4) ((S and E look up at G and D))
	5	**G:**	**u:hm, ce: (·) a:h (·) te ese,**
			C A T S
	6		((D looks at her paper))
	7	**D:**	**yeah, [cats,**
⇒	8	**S:**	**[that one's easy**
⇒	9	**G:**	**DU:H, that's easy huh,?**
	10		(·) ((G coughs, then continues working))
⇒	11	**E:**	**ce ah (·) te ese,**
			C A T S
	12		((all continue writing answers))

Here D initiates a sequence with a projected completion by asking that a particular task be performed: the spelling of the word *cats*. G responds to this by spelling the word, completing the sequence projected by D's initiating question. D shows receipt of G's spelling and her agreement with it in her utterance *yeah, cats*. Here resuming individual work becomes relevant.

In overlap with D's receipt of the spelling, S extends talk by initiating a post-expansion sequence. In line 8, S comments that *cats* is an easy word to spell, which makes relevant an agreeing or disagreeing response from the other participants. G agrees with S in line 9, upgrading her comment with the use of the expression "DUH." G reformulates S's comment as a tag question, which solicits yet another agreeing or disagreeing response. In line 11, E shows his agreement with G's comment by spelling the target word. All three turns are post-actions or summarizing of the prior, completed question/answer sequence.

Interestingly, E's response is designed to accomplish two actions simultaneously: agreeing with the reflective comment (*that one's easy*), and performing the action projected as adequate for the completion of the re-engaging sequence (spell *cats*). In this way, E's utterance completes the round of reflective statements initiated by S, and it also re-evokes the completion of the re-engaging sequence. This again implicates a place for a return to individual work, which implicates and here results in the dis-engagement of turn-by-turn talk.

The reflective statements shown in ex. 11 are characteristically similar to utterances that offer the moral or lesson of the prior sequence's topic. Schegloff & Sacks (1973:306) found that participants use such utterances in a "topic bounding" technique. Participants may use utterances that comment on the topic of a prior sequence potentially to close down talk about that topic, and to initiate a closing for the entire conversational encounter. In the spate of talk of a single

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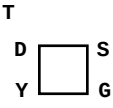
conversation, summarizing utterances are closing-relevant and serve a pre-closing function; for talk to lapse, a closing sequence needs to occur.

A lapse in talk in activity is the byproduct of the recognizable completion of a course of action, be it a projected sequence or a sequence of post-expansions. Furthermore, a lapse is often the result of the students' return to their individual tasks. A return to the task can be invoked by references to the students' position in the task.

Formulations of position in the task initiate a sequence of action, but they function differently from question/answer pairs. A question solicits an answer and minimally projects a two-action sequence. In contrast, a turn that comments on one's position in the task makes a response relevant for every other group member, because it evokes the group as a collective of individuals working independently on shared tasks. In this way, formulation of a group member's position holds all the other participants of the work group accountable for their position in the task. The accountability for one's position in the task may shape the contour of conversational encounters in activity by organizing rounds of action, rather than two-turn sequences.

To show how the participants invoke the task as a strategy to return to individual work, we will examine a single excerpt in which several attempts to invoke a return to the task are produced before talk lapses. In ex. 12, while G and S are engaged in a discussion about the smart people who could do their homework, their work is invoked as a resource to get back on task. Here a return to the task is induced by G when he sees the teacher (T in the diagram below) monitoring the group.

(12)



	1		((Y and D are writing))
	2	**G:**	**who invented electricity,**
	3	**S:**	**she did.**
	4	**Y:**	((to D)) **what are: (·) you doing,**
	5	**G:**	((shakes head 'no')) **Abraham Lincoln**
	6		((G laughs then S laughs))
	7	**S:**	**[Abraha:m Lincoln**
	8	**Y:**	{R>} **but [their bodies** {<R}
	9		((Teacher stands across room, watching
	10		table, she hesitates then starts walking
	11		toward table))
	12		(·)
	13	**Y:**	{R>} **WERE [(·) not intelligent.** {<R}
⇒	14	**G:**	**[you're finished?**
	15		(1.0) ((Teacher turns away from their table))
	16	**S:**	((looks at papers in front of her))
⇒	17		**I have to check something=**
⇒	18	**G:**	**=y' have to wait for us** ((reorients to work))

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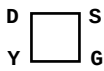
As ex. 12 begins, G asks S who invented electricity. S responds with *she did* – which, although a gender-inappropriate pronoun, presumably refers to the previously mentioned *Einstein*. G offers a non-serious candidate to his own question, responding with *Abraham Lincoln*, at which they both laugh.

The teacher, standing across the room in G and S's field of vision, witnesses their laughter and hesitates before walking toward their table. G orients to the teacher's action by simultaneously moving the talk to a task-oriented topic about S's position in the task. G initiates a position-in-the-task sequence which makes terminating talk relevant by introducing the task as the topic in his question *you're finished* in line 14. This refocuses both G and S to the task and makes their work on the task a next relevant action. In line 17, S tells G that she has to check something, and G responds, in line 18, by monitoring S's behavior in his command for her to wait for the group. This sequence of turns shows that the movement in talk (a discussion about the task) and potentially out of talk (for S to check something or to wait for G to finish) is evoked by actions guiding S's future activity.

At this point, the students' individual activity on the task is the next action. The fact that S tells G she has to check something implies that S has finished with the answers, but needs to review something. The fact that G goes back to his individual activity is evidence that he is not finished. Although going back to their work implicates a lapse in the talk, the conversation does not terminate there.

In ex. 13, an overlapping continuation of ex. 12, talk continues as a student initiates another sequence by formulating her position in the question-answering task as being on question number five. This initiates a round of formulations of position which extend talk.

(13)



	1	**G:**	**[you're finished?**
	2		(1.0) ((Teacher turns away from their table))
	3	**S:**	((looks at papers in front of her))
	4		**I have to check something=**
	5	**G:**	**=y' have to wait for us** ((reorients to work))
⇒	6	**D:**	**I'm on number five**
⇒	7	**G:**	**I'm on numbe:r** (·) **I'm on number five,**
⇒	8	**S:**	**I'm on number [twelve,**
	9	**Y:**	**[I'm on number five**
⇒	10	**D:**	((to G)) **you're n– only on number fou:r**
	11	**G:**	**heh,**
	12	**S:**	**I:'m o:nly on nu:mber**
	13		(·)
⇒	14	**G:**	**but I 'most I 'lmost [finished,**
	15	**S:**	**[(°°twelve)**
⇒	16	**Y:**	**kay,** ((sits back in her chair))
	17		**°we'll wait for 'im°,**

D's announcement of her position in the common task, in line 6, makes relevant the other group members' return announcements. Accordingly, each participant

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announces his or her position in the five-question task. In line 7, G counters D with an announcement that he is on number five, and S contributes with a non-serious formulation, citing her position as being on number twelve (in the five-question task). In line 9, Y adds her formulation. In line 10, D initiates repair on G's formulation in line 10, a reformulation to which he concedes in his laugh in line 11, and in his alternate formulation in line 14, "'lmost finished." Since Y and D are partners, Y shows receipt of G's turn and projects their future action. Since G is behind the rest of the participants on the task, Y states, in her closing relevant utterance, that they will wait for him to catch up to their position in the task.

A lapse is relevant upon the completion of Y's utterance, because it completes a round of action of formulating position in the task; but talk does not terminate there. Instead, in ex. 14, an overlapping extended transcript of ex. 13, D continues by summarizing the group members' positions in the task.

(14)



⇒	1	**G:**	**but I 'most I 'lmost [finished,**
	2	**S:**	**[(°°twelve)**
⇒	3	**Y:**	**kay,** ((sits back in her chair))
	4		**°we'll wait for 'im°,**
	5		((S and G are writing, D and Y are waiting))
⇒	6	**D:**	**you're on number five,** ((motions to Y))
⇒	7		**I'm on number five,**
⇒	8		**you're finished,** ((points to S))
⇒	9		**and he: I'm waiting for him.**
	10		(3.0) ((S and G write, D and Y wait and
	11		look at S and G as they work))

D continues talk by summarizing each participant's position in the task, except G's, in lines 6–9. D designs her turn to end not with an announcement of G's position, but instead with the activity in which she is engaged, because G is not done. One might speculate that, because there was trouble earlier concerning G's formulation of his position, D avoids mentioning it. This announcement makes relevant her subsequent waiting action. Talk lapses as G and S continue their writing activity, and as D and Y engage in waiting as they had announced they would.

Up to this point, the combination of two actions has implicated a lapse in conversation: the production of a sequence-completing action, and going on with the individual task. In completing a sequence containing formulations of position, participants are able to shift out of conversational interaction by re-evoking the task and by projecting future action on the task. Other forms of talk also implicate a return to independent work on the task. I now turn to the ways in which forms of visible and audible action play a role in the termination of turn-by-turn talk.

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Showing dis-engagement

The analysis of pre-re-engaging talk has shown that participants create a place for producing a re-engaging turn through the coordination of their visible and audible actions. The interactional antithesis of this is participants' visible or audible showing that they are not coordinated, and thus unavailable for turn-by-turn talk. The transition between states of engagement and dis-engagement may be more transitory. As Goodwin (1981:106) states,

> the boundary between full engagement and mutual disengagement is not structured as a sharp, clear break. Instead, participants are afforded a space within which they can reorganize their bodies and actions in a way that both is relevant to the change and permits them to display to each other their proposals about and understanding of what is happening.

One way in which participants can show their lack of orientation to future talk-in-interaction is by visibly and audibly "going on" with their present task. In audibly continuing with an individual activity, participants may use talk in task-specific ways.

Ex. 15 shows how S demonstrates her involvement in the writing task by saying the words that she is writing. E makes a noticing about her writing, and S responds by initiating repair on E's re-engaging turn. The verbal response elicited by E's initial noticing is not produced by S. Instead, she uses nonverbal actions to show that she is going on with her work. Following this, she vocalizes her writing, further evidence that she is continuing with the task.

(15)



	1		**(43.0)** ((J looks around, others are writing))
	2	**S:**	{W>} **°go to°** {<W} (0.2) **mothE:R.**
	3		(2.0)
	4	**S:**	{W>} **mo**
	5		(0.2) ((E pauses from writing and looks at S))
	6	**S:**	{W>} **the** (·) **er.**
⇒	7	**E:**	**≫no me gusta**
			I don't like
	8		**cómo usted está escribiendo≪**
			how you (formal) are writing
	9		(0.1)
⇒	10	**S:**	((stops writing)) **qué?**
			what
	11		((S looks to E's paper then back to her own,
	12		looks at E's paper on production of *qué*))
⇒	13	**E:**	**tú** ((points with pencil to S's paper,
			you ((familiar form))
	14		then looks at his paper, continues writing))
	15		(·) ((S and E are both writing))
⇒	16	**S:**	{W>} **she** {<W}
	17		(23.0)

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E re-engages talk in lines 7–8 by announcing that he does not like the way S is writing her answer. S responds in line 10 with a repair initiator (*qué*/what) which identifies her difficulty in hearing and/or understanding his announcement. E addresses S's trouble in line 13 by repeating the targeted object of his announcement, *tú* 'you', and by pointing to her writing. E's repair potentially implicates a close to turn-by-turn talk; however, an agreeing or disagreeing response by S about E's initial announcement remains a relevant next action. Instead of producing this action verbally, S visibly returns to her writing task with her gaze, as E repairs his announcement in lines 11–12. Subsequent to this, S audibly goes on with the task by vocalizing her writing activity, in line 16. By vocally monitoring her writing activity, S shows that she is unavailable for subsequent turn-by-turn talk. S's verbal action shows her to be continuing with her individual activity, and E also returns to his individual activity. As a result, turn-by-turn talk lapses momentarily.

Ex. 16, the extended version of ex. 9, also illustrates how participants' use of task-related talk audibly shows their lack of availability for future turn-by-turn talk. Here D re-engages conversation by initiating a projectable question/answer sequence; on its completion, D visibly orients to her work. Then both Y and D verbally show their engagement in writing and reading activities respectively.

(16)



	1		((all write answers to story questions))
	2		(4.0)
	3	**D:**	**what's this wo:rd,?** ((points to Y's paper))
	4		(0.1) **what's this word ≫right here,?≪**
	5		(0.1) (Y looks to where D points))
	6	**Y:**	**existed.**
	7		(0.2) ((D looks at her own paper, Y
	8		continues writing))
⇒	9	**Y:**	{W>} **do WE:,** {<W}
⇒	10	**D:**	{R>} **do you know that (·) dinosaurs ever**
	11		**exist?** {<R}
	12		(2.0) ((D looks ahead, then starts writing))

At the completion of the question/answer sequence in line 6, D looks at her paper and continues her individual activity, showing that Y's answer was adequate. Following this, Y shows her lack of focus on further talk by resuming her writing activity. Further evidence that she has resumed her individual activity is the vocalized writing that she produces at line 9. Subsequently, D shows her focus on the task by reading aloud a story question in lines 10–11; this organizes her next action, the writing of its answer.

By vocalizing their individual reading and writing activity, participants are able to signal multiple interactional states. First, they can show their understanding that the prior talk is completed and effectively dis-engaged. Second, they are able to show their orientation to an individual activity (reading or writing), which

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serves as a signal to the copresent members of their lack of focus on turn-by-turn talk at that moment. Thus a participant's vocalized activity is a multiple closing signal; it retrospectively shows one's understanding of an achieved termination to a prior conversational encounter, and it reaffirms prior terminating-relevant action by showing one's engagement in post-terminating activity.

Overwhelmingly, states of lapse contain talk. The next section considers how utterances produced outside turn-by-turn talk, especially those utterances related to the participants' position in the task, are organized with regard to dis-engagement and re-engagement.

Outlouds

To set the stage for or to occasion re-engaging talk, participants may use OUTLOUDS, utterances that are not produced for any particular recipient yet are available for all the copresent participants. Usually a participant maintains continued involvement in her or his individual activity while an outloud utterance is being produced. Goffman (1978:796) referred to these utterances as "self-talk," noting that the place for them to occur is in the "interstice between a state of talk and mere co-presence."

Outlouds are resources for the re-engagement of turn-by-turn talk, and they are used by the re-engaging speaker to alert the others to the possibility and topic of upcoming talk. Thus, through the use of outloud announcements of position in the task, members vocally mark their progress in a course of action. Outloud utterances may not be designed in their production specifically to re-engage a next turn at talk; however, they can provide a source for future talk about specific aspects of the task. Responsive next actions can turn the outloud into an occasion or source for re-engagement, or a pre-re-engaging action that establishes places for re-engaging talk to occur.

In ex. 17, A completes the writing of the answer to the first question, and she begins the task of answering the second question as she announces her position out loud. Like an outloud, her voiced activity shows her engagement in the individual activity, but at the same time, it provides the overhearing group members with an interactional "hook" by which to re-engage turn-by-turn talk.

(17)



	1		(2.0) ((All students are writing in a
	2		standing position, leaning over the table))
⇒	3	**A:**	((looking down)) **I'm finished, the first**
	4		**one.** {R>} **hm hm hm.**{<R} {W>} **the** {<W}
	5		(0.1)
⇒	6	**J:**	**°tch gosh, I can't believe you guys,**
	7		**[a GIRL is beating us,**
	8	**A:**	[{W>} **°noise** {<W}
	9		(0.2)

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	10	**J:**	**we're boys.**
⇒	11	**E:**	**≫I on' care≪** ((sits down))
	12		((J stands tall, removes lapel microphone and
	13		takes off his sweatshirt))
⇒	14	**G:**	**she hasn't finished yet**
	15		(0.1) **she barely started**
	16	**E:**	{R>} **does– does** {<R} ((picks object up from
			floor))
	17	**A:**	**no 'm on the second,**
	18	**E:**	{R>}**the [noises that .hh Peter's house makes**
			{<R}
	19	**A:**	[{R>} **did the cow make Peter's**
	20		**house [any quieter,] explain.** {<R}
	21	**E:**	[{R>}( )]
⇒	22	**G:**	**NO.**
	23	**A:**	{W>} **it (·) the CO:W** {<W} (·)
	24		**YEA:H, le hizo (feeling) mira,**
			yeah, he caused him look
	25		**mira, mira hhm**
			look, look hhm
	26		((A points to picture in book that shows
	27		Peter covering his ears))
	28	**E:**	{R>} **the noises that** (·) **Peter's house**
	29		**makes [**(·)**the storms,?** {<R}
	30	**A:**	[{W>} **CO:W did** {<W}

Amid individual activity, A announces her position in the task in lines 3–4. She formulates her announcement first as a broad statement of her finished positioning, and later she specifies which place in the task she "finished": the first of five story comprehension questions. A does not look up at any of the other members at her work table as she produces the announcement; rather, her announcement marks her completion of one task and anticipates another. She displays her continued activity on the next task by vocalizing her silent reading of the next question and her voiced writing of this question's answer. In her outloud utterances, A clearly shows that her statement of position was not a bid to re-engage talk.

In lines 6–7 and 10, J makes a comment to the other boys in the group; this is responsive to a source locatable in A's outloud utterance in line 3, and it details the ramifications of her announcement. As the only girl at the table, A's finishing before the others signifies that a girl is ahead of the boys in the task. J's statement is responsive to A's announcement of position, and it elicits the response of E and G, who are implicated in two ways: (a) they are behind A in the task, and (b) a girl is ahead of them in the task, so they are categorically selected as boys (Sacks 1992). While A shows her continued involvement in the task with her voiced writing in line 8, both E and G respond to J's noticing. Interestingly, A's outloud utterance generated the occasion for turn-by-turn talk among the rest of the members at her work table.

In line 19, A proceeds vocally to show her continued engagement in individual activity by reading the second question aloud. G uses A's voiced activity, her outloud reading of the question, as an initiating action in a question/answer se-

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quence. In line 22, G completes the sequence by stating "NO" to the yes/no question A had read. A continues answering the question, and begins to voice her writing in line 23 before responding to G's answer. Here A's vocalizations provide evidence that she had begun the writing task prior to G's answer, and that G's answer interrupts her ongoing writing action. In line 24, A rejects G's answer, pointing to a picture in the story to support her position. Talk is disengaged as both E and A audibly continue with their individual activity in lines 28–30.

G uses A's voiced activity as a resource to re-engage turn-by-turn talk, because her voiced activity provides him with an opportunity to produce a responsive action (answering a specific question) in her ongoing course of action. The fact that G responds to A's outloud reading of the question shows that the adjacency-pair relationship between questions and answers is formally available, even though the local production of the question is not soliciting an answer. G's course of action (answering A's question) overlaps with A's course of action (formulating and writing the answer to the story question), and their courses of action intersect in line 24 as A replies to G's answer.

Voiced activity is not produced to gain recipiency, and it shows the speaker's course of action to be distinct from that of turn-by-turn talk; nonetheless, it is a resource for the occurrence of conversational interaction in a copresent setting. In copresent activity, the state of talk moves from states of visible lack of talk, or silence, to states of fully engaged turn-by-turn talk. Among the varying states of talk, voiced activity and outloud utterances can prepare for the re-engaging and dis-engaging of turn-by-turn talk. The task provides a way to make the group cohere in parallel instances of the same activity, and it is a recurrent resource for engaging in both conversation and dis-engaged states of talk-in-interaction.

CONCLUSION

I have provided an analysis of one of the fundamental social organizations of turn-by-turn talk in an activity context: methods of re-engaging and dis-engaging. Unlike face-to-face conversations, in which the initiation and termination of talk coincide with the participants' coming into and moving out of each other's physical proximity, the work group members' copresence creates challenges and resources for re-engaging and dis-engaging.

Members of the work group address the challenge of gaining another participant's focus, amid individual activity, by using initiating actions that strongly implicate a range of next-turn, responsive actions. These re-engaging turns take the form of questions, noticings, and announcements; they arise topically from features of the interactional context (e.g. the smell of another person's breath) or aspects of the activity at hand (e.g. how to spell a word). The dis-engagement of turn-by-turn talk is accomplished by turns which are closing-relevant, which implicate the termination of talk. Sometimes dis-engaging turns complete the sequence of work initiated by the re-engaging turn; at other times, the dis-engaging

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turns shift the participants' focus from conversational interaction to the individual activity of the school task.

Both re-engagements and dis-engagements in this copresent work group are equally fragile; sometimes they are successful, and sometimes not. The actions positioned at the boundaries of the work group's conversational interaction contribute to the achievement of re-engaging and dis-engaging talk. Members can alert others to the possibility of future talk, and they can create places in which initiating turns may be situated in order more strongly to implicate a response. Similarly, it is found that talk, instead of silence, often followed successful dis-engaging turns. Typically, members vocalize their reading and writing activity in post-dis-engaging positions in order to show their orientation to the individual task, their lack of availability for future talk, and their understanding that turn-by-turn talk has been dis-engaged. Outloud utterances, produced during states of lapse, provide a resource for the re-engagement of turn-by-turn talk, because they show a participant's lack of availability; they may be taken up in a next turn that retro-re-engages conversation once again. In this way, phases of lapse are interrelated with phases of turn-by-turn talk.

NOTES

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[1]The diagram preceding each example shows the students seated at the work table, approximately a 40 × 50 inch area. For readability, the original talk is in boldface, with interlinear glosses beneath. Most of the transcription conventions are Gail Jefferson's (see Jefferson 1972), and are more fully described in Atkinson & Heritage (1984:ix–xvi). I developed the first two symbols listed below to handle the qualities of talk in a language arts classroom:

{R>} {<R}	reading out loud
{W>} {<W}	vocalized writing activity
[ ]	overlapping talk
( )	unsure hearing
(( ))	transcriber's or analyst's comments
:	lengthened pronunciation
?	final rising intonation
(·)	micropause
(0.2)	two-tenths of a second pause
goodbye	stressed pronunciation
HEY	increased volume in relation to surrounding talk
=	latching of speakers' utterances
–	truncation (e.g. what ti– what time is it?)
(hi/he)	alternate hearings
°noise	softly spoken
≫here≪	rapidly spoken in relation to surrounding talk
h	out-breath

[2]Announcing one's position in the task is a recurrent and pervasive method for re-engaging turn-by-turn talk; it is discussed further in this paper, as well as in Szymanski 1996.

[3]For further discussion of reading-the-question-aloud as a resource in the accomplishment of the question-answering task, see Szymanski 1996.

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