NEGOTIATING STORIES:
STRATEGIC REPAIR IN ITALIAN MULTI-PARTY TALK*

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1. Introduction

Conversational storytelling presents an interesting environment for empirical observation of repair phenomena which serve specific interactional purposes. A regular occurrence of self-repair in storytelling has been described by Polanyi (1978) as an "unconsciuos narrative device" ("true start", cf. Polanyi 1978:628) which is deployed by the narrator in order to introduce a section of background information. The following provides an example of such occurrence in Italian conversation:

(1) (TRS2, 1985: TV programmes. Speaker A is telling about a concert broadcasted by the R.A.I., the Italian Broadcasting Corporation.)

1 - > A; e la rai (0.2) per il - (0.6) era l'anno santo 'and the rai (0.2) for the - (0.6) it was the jubilee year'

2 (1.0)

3 A; 'na robbia di questo gene- ma:: tipo dieci anni fa = 'something like I tha- I mean sort of ten years ago' =

4 L; hh uh uh

5 L; = mhm

6 - > A; e la rai fece (0.3) pagata dal vaticano (0.3) 'and the rai broadcasted (0.3) supported by the vatican (0.3)'

7 alle due di notte (0.2) un concerto ... ((continua))

'at two in the night (0.2) a concert'... ((story continues))

In the fragments above the narrator has just introduced the story. Before moving to the climax section, he self-interrupts in the middle of his ongoing turn (1.1), provides some relevant background information (1.1-2) and then resumes the main storyline by coming back to the sentence previously broken off (1.6-7).

Occurrences of typical markers of self-repair in storytelling, such as re-starts, phrasal breaks and speech perturbations have also been noticed by Goodwin (1984: 233-234) and described as means for soliciting the recipient's gaze.

Jefferson (1978: 246) located the systematic occurrence of various forms of speech perturbations (i.e. markers of self-repair) in story-entry sequences as signals of junctures between conversational activities. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977: 380) point out that a typically dispreferred repair technique, namely other-correction, may be purposefully exploited by conversationalists in storytelling as a particular "sequence-type environment". In such contexts, a story recipient, by correcting the ongoing teller can have the opportunity of getting his turn, thus aligning him/herself as a co-teller.

Rather than being random or casual phenomena, the repair techniques mentioned above may be seen as accomplishing a strategic function. Such occurrences of strategic repair have typically been detected in the "telling sequence" (rather than the "preface sequence") and been treated as related to the management of speaking turns produced during the actual narration of the story. In particular, the repair phenomena noticed by Goodwin (1984: 234) and Schegloff et al. (1977: 380) are concerned with storytelling in multiparty conversations, where some recipients are already informed and others are not, as often happens in naturally occurring storytelling.

Following such research interests, the present work focuses on descriptions of a repair strategy that, while being relevant to multiparty settings, emerges at the very beginning of stories in conversation, in what has been defined as the story telling negotiation phase, and draws the attention to the interactional work carried out by both the teller and recipients of the story when managing
problems of story acceptance.

In earlier work, Sacks (Fall lecture, 1971) analyzed the sequential development of stories in conversation and located the occurrence of an adjacency pair following the preface sequence: he noticed that the first part was produced as a request of the type "What?" (as a question following the preface) and the story was actually delivered as a second part of the pair, that is, as an answer to that question. The analysis proposed in the present paper may be regarded as a further characterization of such conversational conduct: empirical observation of storytelling in Italian conversation [1] reveals the occurrence of an other-initiated repair technique emerging as an expected product of a trouble source, produced by the would-be teller in story prefaces or story characterization (cfr. Sacks, 1974:340). It is claimed that ambiguous or implicit mention of story referential descriptions may be produced by the narrator as a strategic device to prompt co-participants' intervention. Thus, the elicitation of an other-repair initiator occurs as a solicited signal warranting a legitimation for telling the story. Such occurrence of repair may be regarded as a particularly effective story-entry procedure, exploited by prospective tellers in order to avoid or solve problems of overt story rejections in multiparty conversations.

2. Storytelling as an object of negotiation and common consent

Telling a story in conversation involves delicate preliminary work through which conversationalists negotiate how the story will be produced and a successful accomplishment of their narrative purpose. Within the CA approach, many studies have been concerned with 1) description of the sequential organization of the story (Sacks, 1972; 1974); 2) the relations between participants interactional organization and story structure as displayed through vocal and non vocal behaviour (Goodwin, 1984); 3) the techniques through which the story is locally occasioned and established as topically coherent with the preceding discourse content (Jefferson, 1978: 220); 4) the actual modalities exploited by the teller in getting in and out of the story ("entrance/exit talk", cf.

The entry-stage (which is for our purposes the main concern) may be performed according to an economic modality (i.e. "single-turn entry device", Jefferson, 1978: 224), where story telling does not involve an explicit recipient's acceptance [2].

Other modalities require the would-be teller and his addresses exchange at least a minimal pair (i.e."two-turn sequences", cfr. Sacks, 1974: 340), thus featuring storytelling as an activity engendered out of a common interactional work and a by-product of a negotiated process [3]. Such a minimal exchange involves a first turn conveying a story-announcement and an offer/request for telling containing an initial characterization of the story, on the grounds of its newsworthy status or the surprising character of the event (cf. Sacks, 1974: 353; see also ex. 2, in this paper).

Delivery of a story-preface or pre-sequence thus implies both a checking procedure on story newsworthiness and a next turn in which co-participants display recognition and acceptance (or rejection) of the teller's narrative purpose, thus aligning themselves as story recipients or rejectors of the story.

In comparison to dyadic conversation, in multi-party talk such preliminary stage may present features of higher elaborate interactional work, in as much as issues such as getting the floor and allowance of turn-taking suspension implies for the prospective teller a process of negotiation aiming at the acquisition of a much larger consent. A variable particularly at issue is the likelihood that storytelling might be frustrated by a co-participant who already knows the story, thereby causing a failure of previous speaker's intended activity [4] (see ex. 3, 4). In such settings problems concerning the different distribution of information among co-participants requires greater conversational skills and makes the teller's task a much more delicate activity (cf. Goodwin, 1981a, chap. 5).

If story-prefaces perform a checking operation on recipients' knowledge state, providing at the same time for the possible constitution of teller/recipients as distinctive conversational roles, they may also provide for
a deletion of the whole telling sequence, in the case the story happens to be shared by a co-participant (cf. Levinson, 1987: 82). As a consequence, the problem of story legitimation may be faced and managed by prospective tellers according to different interactional modalities.

In order to examine the procedure through which speakers handle and solve problems emerging from their interaction, the analysis will focus on a description of two fragments (ex. 3, 4), each displaying an attempt to introduce a story, by means of a story-preface. In both extracts the story is initially rejected on the grounds of its non-informative status and subsequently re-introduced following the production of an other-initiation of repair. Descriptions of apparently smooth story-entry talk reveals the exploitation of the same self-induced-other repair technique both in presence and omission of a story-preface (respectively ex. 2, 5 and 8).

3. Soliciting the request for repair

3.1. Pre-sequences and referential activity

As mentioned earlier, story pre-sequences perform a distinctive referential activity through which the speaker establishes the story as a new referent of the conversation and signals its likely newsworthy status. If the story is pre-announced as new, and on such a basis offered as socially and interactionally relevant, acceptance or rejection of storytelling will be likely to occur on the same grounds (cf. ex. 3, l. 12; ex. 4, l. 7-8).

The difference between other sequential occurrences of referential activities in conversation [5] is that non-recognition of the story as a referential item leads to a successful accomplishment of the next intended action, by virtue of its newsworthy status, which legitimates narration. In other respects, prospective tellers employ the typical techniques used for referential work, requiring from their recipients a collaborative effort, where speaker's and recipients' distinctive referential technique may be clearly detectable (cf. Auer, 1984).
By establishing a referential activity in a pre-sequence, the speaker overtly signals to his recipient that referent recognition may be problematic ("explicit referential technique", cf. Auer, 1984: 632); on the same lines, a story-pre-sequence performs the distinctive function of explicitly marking the story as a problematic referent, soliciting an overt recipient's response on his/her ability to recognize it.

In the following excerpt (ex. 2) participants are talking about customs restrictions in different countries. At line 6, the speaker produces a typical format of story-pre-sequence, through which an event is introduced in order to emphasize the previous speaker's assertion (1.1-2). As displayed in C's turn, in the pre-sequence the prospective teller provides a cue for the story recognition, that being a reference to the main character (il fatto di quella ragazza là/ 'the story of that girl'):

(2) (drawn from Duranti, A. 1984: 283)

1 A; e infatti alla frontiera - alla dogana a noi c'hanno
 'and as a matter of fact at the border - at the customs we were'
2 chiesto se portavamo animali
 'asked if we had any animals'
3 (1.5)
4 B; mh
 'mh'
5 (1.5)
6 -> C; embe' non te ricordi il fatto di quella ragazza là ?
 'well don't you remember the story of that girl ?'
7 (1.0)
8 A; stanno facendo tutta quanta una campagna contro la rabbia
 'they are doing a whole campaign against rabies'
9 che [ stanno facendo no,
 'that [ they are doing aren't they,'
10 -> B; [ quale ragazza ?
 'which girl ?'
11 C; una ragazza italiana (1.5) è andata in vacanza in
 'an Italian girl (1.5) she went on vacation in'
12 America s'è portata il gatto ...
 'the States she brought her cat ...'

Note that although turn 6 may be seen as an offer to
narrate, so featuring the event as new for his recipient, the prospective teller characterizes the story as if it were shared by her addressee, as it is also highlighted by the presequence format (non te ricordi/'don’t you remember'). She also issues a recognitional, namely an implicit or definite description (cf. Duranti, 1984: 282), marking it indexically with a demonstrative, quella/'that', which reveals that the speaker is establishing the introduced referent as a recognizable object [6]. At the same time, the exploitation of the pre-sequence question format makes relevant the absence of a recipient’s response. As a first part of an adjacency pair, it projects the occurrence of an other-initiation of repair, should the story come out as new (cf.Terasaki, 1976). In so doing, she subjects the explicit/indefinite referential description (una ragazza italiana/ ‘an Italian girl’, 1.11) to a request of repair overtly produced by her addressee (1.10).

Such a referential technique features storytelling as an activity specifically prompted by another party and engendered as a product of the other-initiated repair. It is worth noting that the other-initiation of repair not only engenders the storytelling, but also it shapes C’s turn as a pre-sequence. Should recognition have occurred, the preface would have simply been ascribed the status of an utterance issued to confirm the assertions previously made by A (see A’s continuation of his previous turn, after C’s). Therefore, the occurrence of a request for clarification embodies a recognition of C’s narrative purpose by B, an acceptance of the storytelling and carries the potential status of storypreface of the utterance into effect: the telling sequence is in fact started only after the production of referential repair, which gives priority for the floor to C even if the other-initiator is started as an interruption of the prior speaker (1.10).

Although at first sight such an example of successfull story introduction may be seen as an obvious and natural course of action, the occurrence of an interactively performed repair sequence features storytelling as an achieved accomplishment, emerging out of a tacit choice among different possible alternatives. In this regard, Schegloff (1982) points out:
"Once it has happened that 'a speaker continues' (for example 'a teller continues his story'), that appears entirely 'natural'; we lose sight of what were contingent alternatives; they do not become 'ex-alternatives' or alternatives-not-taken'; they simply disappear and leave the achieved outcome in the splendid isolation of seeming inescapability. For analysts this is a great loss. Great analysis retains a lively sense of the actual as an achievement from among possibilities; it retains a lively sense of the contingency of real things" (p.89).

Conversational excerpts displaying unsuccessful attempts to develop a story provide evidence of the strategic character of such occurrences of repair. In the following, a similar technique is in fact overtly pursued by the would be teller in order to solve a problem of story rejection (ex. 3a, l. 11-12):

(3a) (Evening conversation; 4 participants, talking about video-recorders)

1 C; **Eh. = e invece io senza telecamera non me riesce a**
   'yeah. = and on the contrary I without the camera it can't'
   **convince' = ma perché un pochettino ce tengo di**
   'convince me = well cos I don't care'
   **meno n- a conserva' queste cose perché non** (0.5)
   'much for keeping this sort of things cos I don't'(0.5)
   **non seguо né cinema né i concerti**
   'I don't go to either movies or concerts' (0.3)

6 C; [ (...............)]

7 A; [ **ma come ? co' un frate** ]llo (0.3) co' un fratello
   'what ? with a brother (0.3) with a brother'
   **il tuo ? Marce'. =**
   'like yours ? Marce'. =
   **mbè . =**
   'yeah' . =

10 -> A; **tremendo = tu la sai questa storia di Antonio che:**
   'terrific = do you know this story about Antonio who:'
   (0.6) **praticamente collezione ná perché lui ^**
   (0.6) 'sort of colle|cts cos he'^

12 B; **sì lo so**
   'Yes I know'
Here, as in example 2, the speaker issues a story pre-sequence mentioning the main character as a cue for its recognition (1.10). However, a detailed analysis of the pre-sequence shows that the prospective teller modifies the emerging structure of the sentence in the course of its production:

a) she initially builds her turn in form of a presequence, thereby projecting the occurrence of a direct question (explicit technique).

b) she also marks indexically the story with a demonstrative (questa/’this’), which signals a story non-recognitional reading (see Sacks, Lecture 5, Fall, 1971);

c) she then changes the interrogative construction of the ongoing turn by replacing the rising intonation of the projected question with try-markers (see vowel lengthening and pause, che: (0.6), 1.10-11).

d) finally issues another turn-unit in positive form, adding further descriptive data.

In this regard, Auer (1984) points out that marking the referential item by means of both a demonstrative and hesitational signal represents an intermediate referential technique through which the speaker signals the possible problematic status of the referential item, but differently
from the explicit technique (pre-sequence question format, see ex. 1), this leaves his recipient the option of displaying implicitly (withholding of repair) or explicitly (initiation of repair) the identification or non-identification of the referent. Such a technique takes on a distinctive relevance, considering that the current speaker introduces the story by relying on an inferential process which allows him only a rough estimation of the recipients’ knowledge (cf. Auer, 1984: 629).

In extract 3, the prospective teller, by changing the format of the ongoing turn (l. 10-11), is attempting an immediate and economic transition from story announcement to storytelling. She thus avoids eliciting an explicit recipient’s response on his ability to recognize the story as a referential item. Through such procedure the current speaker exploits an intermediate referential technique which, in case of new information, allows his recipients to signal the newsworthy status of the story implicitly, by simply withholding the repair-initiator and avoiding turn transfer. Several clues, in fact, reveal that the would be teller has already assessed the story is new for her addressee:

a) the exploitation of the intermediate technique (demonstratives + hesitational signals, l. 10-11) shows that she is introducing the story as a likely problematic item (non-recognizable). Moreover, the story is marked by a demonstrative signalling a non-recognitional reading [7];

b) the production of a pause in a non terminal syntactic position (l.11) [8] signals the speaker’s intention to continue her turn; it also provides a recipients’ response-space, which projects, as an expected response [9], a likely withholding of repair rather than a repair-initiator. The non-occurrence of recognition is then considered a go-ahead for the current speaker, without involving turn-exchange, as happens at line 11.

Such a referential technique is particularly effective since it allows a minimum interactional effort in case the story is not shared by other conversationalists (i.e. avoidance of turn transfer as teller’s referential technique and withholding of repair, namely silence, as
specific recipient's technique). Moreover, it answers conversational demands tending to minimize the interactional work, when such opportunities may be met (informal conversations, where common background knowledge and mutual acquaintance allow the speaker to forecast knowledge states, competence and information acquired by co-participants previously and independently from the current exchange).

The problem emerges as soon as the occurrence of a recognition in anticipatory position (cf. Testa 1988: 293) brings about a self-interruption of current speaker's turn, thereby producing a rejection of the proposed storytelling (l. 11-12).

At this point the rejected teller does not simply recycle the interrupted segment (l.14), but she does it in such a way as to produce a trouble source: she avoids mentioning the object of collection (dei film/'of films', cf. l. 18), which is the story characterization item, and replaces it with a generic term (delle cose/'of the things', l. 14); then issues a tag-question specifically prompting a repair initiation by the speaker who had previously recognized the story (l.16); that eventually demonstrates that the story is not shared. Note also that even after B's request for repair, the teller hesitates before repairing the trouble source, leaving her recipient another opportunity of completing the ongoing turn (delle: (0.3) / 'of the: (0.3)', l.18):

(3b)
14  ->  A; colleziona i titoli delle cose no ?
    'he collects titles of the things doesn't he ?'
15       (0.2)
16  ->  B; de che ?
    'of what ?'
17       (0.6)
18  A; delle: (0.3) i titoli dei film
    'of the: (0.3) titles of films'
19       (1.0)
20  A; colleziona ^
    | 'he collects' ^ |
21  D; l come_i titoli ?
    'what do you mean titles ?'
22  A; heh eh ((ride))
    'heh eh' ((laughs))
The outcome of the repair sequence (i titoli dei film/ 'titles of films', l. 18) gives evidence for the newsworthy status of the event and demonstrates that B's recognition was based on an inferential mistake.

Thus, whereas the speaker, by means of the referential technique used in the pre-sequence (l. 10) allows an omission of the initiation of repair, by producing a trouble source (delle cose), she explicitly creates the conditions for its occurrence. Again, the presence of specific clues mark such phenomenon as strategic and not casual: although the nature of the trouble source, i.e. the use of a generic term (l.14), may lead to interpret it as a casual production of lexical search, the absence of specific indicators (hesitational signals) and the exploitation of a tag-question provides evidence for its nonrandom occurrence [10].

However, although the repair sequence has been satisfactorily completed (l.18), the prospective teller does not initiate the telling sequence, but awaits a successive intervention of the speakers (l. 21; see also the relevant pause and the turn recycled for the second time, l.19 and 20 respectively). It is this occurrence of repair which eventually legitimates the story and authorizes its telling as overtly elicited by conversationalists. Then, both occurrences of other-initiated repair may be seen as induced by the prospective teller, but the purpose of the first repair sequence (l.14-18) is addressed to solve a problem of story rejection emerging in the presequence, whereas the second one is expected (see the laughs, l. 22, as signals of satisfaction) and interactively performed as a story authorizing strategy [11]. The story telling will be so delivered as a completion of the second repair sequence.

The extract below (ex. 4) shows the same repair technique exploited again as a solution to a story rejection, though in the following the trouble source does not involve a referential problem:
(4) (Context: dinner conversation, 5 participants. A has just introduced her father as a referent of the conversation. Then, she reports an argument occurred between him and his daughter, Paola)

1 A; Oggi s'è acchiappato co' Paola = Paola s'è messa = 'Today he had a fight with Paola = Paola burst'
2 a piagne'.
3 'into tears.'
4 (0.5)
5 B; aa:h per quella storia. 'aa:h for that story'
6 A; 'la storia della direttrice.'
7 = senti che storia. (1.0) Paola s'è (sentita male) =
8 = 'listen what a story. (1.0) Paola (felt ill)'
9 C; ma ancora quella storia ? = 'but what ? that story again ?'
10 A; ancora. 'again.'
11 (0.5)
12 -> A; alla fine i'ha detto tu sei fesso = 'in the end she said you are daft'
13 B; heh ((ride)) 'heh ((laughs))
14 (0.3)
15 -> D; ma perché :: ?
16 'but why:: ?'
17 (0.3)
18 A; perché sta a fa' 'sto tirocinio = 'because she's doing this training course'
19 e in effetti le amiche sue (0.4) hanno trovato (0.3)
20 'and actually her friends (0.4) have found' (0.3)
21 n'altro direttore che (0.2) ia messo 'na firma = 'a different headmaster who (0.2) puts his signature' =
22 e ie farà fa: pochi giorni = 'and allows them to attend the course only for: a few days' =
23 un mese cosi' = 'a month' =
24 D; mhm =
25 B; mhm mmm
26 (0.2)
27 A; a lei mo' ... ((continua))
28 A; 'now she'... ((story continues))
This extract clearly shows how narration emerges through a process of interaction. B's intervention (1.4) not only provides a recognition of the story, but also prompts an elicitation of its telling. Here, the actual story pre-sequence format (1.5) is not by chance specifically designed as a listening invitation, instead of a request for telling, since the occasion for the story has already been established (1.4).
Although C's objection does not seem to discourage the teller, she actually does not attend the projected organizational development of the story and goes directly to its resolution (1.11) by skipping some structurally important parts (i.e. background information, gradual development of the climax). Note that after the request for repair (1.14), she goes back to the initial background information section and starts telling the story from its very beginning (1.16).

3.2. Omission of story-preface

In the previous section, occurrences of a solicited other-initiation of repair have been analyzed both as remedial devices following rejections of a proposed storytelling (ex. 3, 4) and as a means for eliciting its ratification (ex. 2). I will now focus on an extract displaying the exploitation of a referential problem as a story-entry procedure in the absence of an explicit story announcement. It is worth noting, that since a pre-sequence overtly signals the occasion for the story, it may engender an acceptance as well as an explicit rejection of the telling. On the contrary, the omission of a pre-sequence does not commit the speaker to overtly express his narrative purpose and at the same time does not compel his recipients to overtly display acceptance of the story; thus the possibility of an explicit rejection may be avoided.

In the next fragment, the occasion for the story is not explicitly announced by means of a pre-sequence, but is directly introduced by an utterance (1.6) that will take the shape of an abstract of the story only following the development of the subsequent turns:
(5) (Context: 5 participants; dinner conversation: they are talking about role differences between elementary teachers and their headmaster. The current speaker, A, is now comparing the relationship between secondary school teachers and their head).

1. A; da noi non esiste anche come problema 'nsomma:: (0.5)
   'at us not exist also as a problem well::'
   'at our place we don't even have this well::' (0.5)

2. dice ma (.....) ma f- finiscila tu non hai capito
   'says but (.....) but sh- shut up you've never understood'
   'he says but (.....) but sh- shut up you've never understood'

3. niente nella vita (0.2) questo glielo dice (0.2)
   'nothing in the life (0.2) this her/him says'(0.2)
   'anything you haven't (0.2) he says that'(0.2)

4. tranquillamente poi
   'perfectly calm too'

5. (7.9)

6. -> A; l'altra volta ie volevano mena'
   'last time her/him wanted they to beat'
   'last time they were about to beat him up'

7. (1.6)

8. -> B; a: alla preside tua ?
   'to: to the headmistress your ?'
   'your: your headmistress ?'

9. (0.4)

10. -> B; [ al pre side ? =
       [ 'to the headmaster ?' =
       [ 'the headmaster ?'

11. A; [ mhm
        [ 'mhm'

12. C; a alla.
   'to the' ((feminine))
   'the headmistress.'

13. A; [alla
        [ preside (0.3) perché ora =
        [ l'headmistress (0.3) cos now'=

14. tra l'altro s'è messa:: (0.3) fino a settembre
   'among other things she is:: (0.3) till September'

15. in vacanza (0.8) perché ... ((storia))
   'on holiday (0.8) because' ... ((story continues))

As in extract 2, the speaker refers to what will be the main character of the story implicitly, by using a clitic pronoun [12] (je l. 6), although it has only been
established for the first time in the discourse context. Note that in his previous turns (l. 1-4), A does not specify either of the two new referents (the headmistress and the teacher); he simply signals that he is now making reference to role relationships in secondary schools, by using a membership categorization device (cf. Sacks, 1972; henceforth MCD), da noi/at our place, and relying on conversationalists’ knowledge of his being a secondary school teacher.

Duranti (1984: 289) points out that in Italian conversational storytelling main characters may be referred to by third person subject pronouns when first mentioned if their identification is implied by the fact that they belong to a set previously identified. However the informative reading conveyed by MCDs as minimal referential descriptions (cf. Levinson, 1987:85) applies when the use of a pronoun raises no ambiguity. In our case the speaker not only employs a clitic pronoun, usually referred to objects that have already been established as referents of the conversation (cf. also Duranti and Ochs, 1979), but it is also produced in the language variety spoken in Rome, which makes it difficult for his recipients to identify the referent’s gender, as in such variety je may refer to both masculine and feminine gender [13].

The production of such an ambiguity is made evident by the other-initiation of repair (l. 8, 10), which again is induced and handled by the prospective teller as a sort of go-ahead or ratification for his telling (l.13-15). As a result, in this case too, narration is delivered as a completion of the repair-initiated sequence.

By comparison with ex. 2, 3 and 4, this example presents different features in that the speaker does not explicitly announce the story through a pre-sequence. By producing an implicit referential description and thus avoiding signaling a possible referential problem by means of a pre-sequence, the teller makes a repair of specific recipients’ option, leaving them the opportunity of asking for the story.

Furthermore in the absence of repair, the projected story may simply be abandoned or not engendered, avoiding an explicit rejection: it may simply retain the character of a newsworthy item which is not being developed into storytelling [14].
Apart from the specific trouble types dealt with by such repair technique (word-replacement, ex. 3; person reference ex. 2, 5; omission of story sections, ex. 4), all the examples previously described share a common feature: after the production of the first sequence, containing the trouble source, the prospective teller does not provide additional information. That is, s/he does not develop the story, but awaits the emission of the other-initiation of repair, as displayed by the pauses occurring after the trouble source turn (ex. 2, l. 7; ex. 3, l. 19; ex. 4, l. 13; ex. 5, l. 7). This should confirm and display the strategic character of such phenomenon of repair and marks its occurrence as a solicited and expected object.


Descriptions of interactional practices in Anglo-American ordinary conversation have often raised questions concerning possible variations of conduct in different socio-cultural and linguistic contexts. Although such questions were not central to the original purpose of this paper, the description of a repair technique deployed in storytelling in a South Pacific community allows to look at the repair strategies examined above from a comparative perspective.

Instances of self-induced-other initiations of repair have been found and described in Tuvali, a Polynesian society, (cf. Besnier, 1989) as typical features of that linguistic community. It is claimed that in such cultural context they occur as conversational devices used by the current teller to draw the attention and increase involvement of recipients in his/her telling. Besnier identifies two different formats of other-initiated repair invitations. The first type shares the same features found in the Italian extracts: the current speaker solicits an other-initiation of repair by withholding essential information or producing an ambiguous or problematic reference either at topic boundaries or in the middle of a narrative, without attempting at repairing the trouble source (cf. ex. 6):
As Besnier notes, in this case the invitation of the other-initiated repair occurs at the beginning of a gossip narration, after a long pause signaling the introduction of a new topic. Such features make the example particularly suited for a comparison with extract 5 in my Italian corpus (cf. par. 3.2).

The second format type found in Tuvaluan gossip narration differs from the former (and from all the Italian extracts examined so far) since the teller does signal the occurrence of a problematic item by locating the trouble source with typical markers of repair (i.e. glottal stops, self-interruptions, vowel/consonant stretches):

(7) (drawn, from Besnier, 1989:328)

1 K; ((whisper)) Ae (muimui) hoki naa a te- te:-
   'and complain also there Cnt the- the'
   ((chuckle))
2 -> F; ((whisper, smiling)) [ A ai ? ]
   'Foc who'?
3 (. )
4 K; ((high pitch)) Aalisi mo Faalogo!
   'Aalisi and Faalogo'
And there was a complaint from the-Aalisi and Faa logo!

The three-turns repair sequence here contains a first turn with a self-initiation of the trouble source, a recipient's invitation to repair the problem (other-initiation of repair) in the following turn and a self-completion of the trouble yielding a solution of the repair sequence in the last turn. But see the following Italian extract where, as in Tuvaluan conversational storytelling (ex. 7) [15], an other-initiation of repair (1.8) is being issued following the prospective teller's production of a trouble source, which is self-located as a problem of lexical search (ex. 8, 1.5):

(8) (Context: dinner conversation, 7 participants. They are engaged in typical dinner activities, serving, making room for dishes on the table)
The only difference that may be noticed by comparing the Tuvaluan and the Italian examples (respectively ex. 7, ex.8) is the sequential occurrence of the solicitation of repair, which in the Italian extract occurs as a story-entry device. Apart from that, the interactional conduct displayed by such a repair strategy in this and other Italian extracts seems to be similar to that described as a typical vernacular practice of the South Pacific community. A deeper observation of our own vernacular practices may then be sometimes revealing not only of cultural differences, but also of similarities that the obviousness surrounding our ordinary interactional behaviour leaves still unexplored and not yet analyzed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The different sequential positions from which repair can be initiated in conversation show that trouble sources, commonly occurring in unplanned, ordinary talk, are overwhelmingly located and solved by the current speaker in his/her ongoing turn (cf. Schegloff et al. 1977). Repairs initiated by recipients, though regularly occurring, may have a significant interactional import and be analyzed in relation to particular sequential contexts and activities (cf. pre-disagreement, Schegloff et. al. 1977: 380).
A typical conduct for introducing stories (as well as news) in conversation is to elicit a pre-announcement sequence engendering a request for telling by a co-participant (cf. par.1). Such requests are usually shaped as other-repair initiators; then, the initiation of repair in such contexts is a relevant and expected response, whose occurrence both signals the newsworthy status of the event and explicitly displays co-participants' acceptance of prospective tellers' communicative purpose.

However, in multiparty talk several variables, such as the number of participants, the struggle for the floor or the possibility that the story is already shared, may undermine the successful development of the telling.

The conversational fragments reported above show that a repair initiator, methodically delivered as a request for telling, may be strategically triggered by would-be tellers by producing a trouble source both in story-presequences (see ex. 2) and in the absence of explicit story-announcements (es. 4, 8). Extract 3 and 5 also display how such initiations of repair may be invoked by the teller following a rejection of his/her projected activity; thus, the occurrence of a trouble source prompting an other repair-initiator acts as a remedying device which re-establish the conditions for developing the story. The observable consequences that such repair practices have on the ongoing activity reveal that, though dealing with an understanding problem, they manage and solve questions of interactional concern.

Cross-cultural studies on storytelling [16] have shown that narrators' discourse choices do not only depend on basic cognitive processes and observance of common norms of conversational cooperation, but also they can be subjected to the different narrative strategies that speakers may deploy to accomplish specific tasks.

Thus, the use of ambiguous referential forms in story introductions, far from being random deviations from conversational norms of relevance, may highlight the occurrence of significant activities. In particular, they disclose an interactional conduct serving communicative purposes which are only indirectly pursued. Conversationists have been shown to rely on sequential cues for dealing with the emergence of ambiguities in conversation (cf. Schegloff, 1984); such practices also display how sources of ambiguity, inexplicitness or non-accuracy may be exploited as
interactional resources for carrying out tactics of indirect solicitation. Their interactional significance could be better appreciated by taking into account a context of action where the teller's performance cannot neglect contingent issues such as the members' consent, their legitimation and the possible consequences that a failure of the prospected action may have on his/her self-presentation. The solicitation of a recipients' request for repair may then be characterized as a protective tactic for both tellers and recipients: it allows the current speaker to avoid eliciting a straightforward acceptance and/or rejection of the storytelling, providing at the same time his/her partners with the opportunity of either proffering or simply withholding a request for telling. In this sense it may be regarded as a strategy satisfying principles of non-commitment typical of a communicative behaviour orientated to indirectness.
NOTES

1. The extracts have been drawn from a group of naturally occurring conversations, dinner or evening conversations, among adult native speakers of Italian. The repair techniques have been produced by different speakers within different conversational groups.

2. In such a case the story may be occasioned as a confirmation of some previous speaker's assertion (cf. Jefferson, 1978:224).

3. See Jefferson (1978) for a description of story-entry techniques involving longer stretches of speech between the would-be teller and co-participants.

4. It is sufficient that one participant is already informed to frustrate the narration (cf. also Levinson, 1987: 80-84). It is also worth noting that rejection of storytelling and failure of the speaker's communicative activity involves problems concerned with issues such as self-representation and 'loss of face' in Goffman's terms.

5. Successful referential activities in conversation typically involve recipients' recognition of the referent being introduced, upon current speaker's delivery of recipient-designed reference forms, i.e. recognitionals (cf. Schegloff and Sacks, 1979).

6. In this case, the deictic term, quella/that, signals his recipient to search for additional information for referent recognition beyond the verbal expression, in the discourse context and in their memory. See also Sacks, (Lecture 5, p.13, Fall, 1971) for such recognitiononal reading of that in English.

7. The exploitation of the textual deixis questa/this monitors her recipient to refer to the following sequential context to fill in the contextual meaning of the verbal expression. See also the use of questa/this at line 23, when the the newsworthy status of the story has been confirmed.

8. The would-be teller issues a pause just following the beginning of a clause dependent, thereby monitoring his intention to continue the projected turn.

9. A presequence question format would have provided an other-initiation of repair as the expected response type (ex.1). An alternative type of expected response in this case might have been a guessing attempt or a next speaker's completion of previous speaker's utterance.
10. Lexical search trouble types involve both a self-initiated monitoring of a trouble source through different types of indicators and a self-initiated attempt to repair the trouble as a first sequential opportunity. On the contrary, the use of a tag-question, whose primary function is to solicit a recipient's response, specifically entrust next speaker with the opportunity of either asking or completing repair.

11. The prospective teller proposes the story as tellable by virtue of the surprise involved in the event. The repair sequence works accordingly as an acknowledgement of such a peculiarity and ratifies its telling on the same grounds.

12. Clitic pronouns are atomic forms of personal pronouns. They differ from tonic pronouns since they have a fixed position with respect to the verb and no independent stress (cf. Duranti and Ochs, 1979).

13. In the English translation, the ambiguity conveyed by use of the clitic pronoun has been rendered by means of a contracted form which might refer to a 3rd person object pronoun, singular or plural (beat 'm up, l. 6); however in Italian the ambiguity has to do with gender agreement and not number.

14. Such a course of action may be found in A's previous turns (l. 2-3), where although the prospective teller avoids any explicit mention of the two referents involved in his reported speech, included the use of subject pronouns, no signal soliciting the storytelling is produced by co-participants.

15. A distinctive feature of repair practices in American conversation is a next speaker supplying a candidate last word, completing the previous speaker's turn. This alternative conduct is also provided by the guessing format following the trouble source in the Italian extract, ex. 8, l. 10. The absence of such a practice in Tuvaluan conversation may be, on a macro-level of analysis, related to a culturally specific view (cf. Schegloff, 1987).

REFERENCES


