

A CONVERSATION ANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF  
UTTERANCE PARTICLES IN CANTONESE

submitted by  
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March 1988

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## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Steve Harlow and John Local for their constant guidance and help and unfailing support throughout the entire period of the planning and writing of this thesis. Heartfelt thanks too are due to Bob Le Page and Patrick Griffiths for intellectual stimulation as well as hospitality. I also owe a special debt to Tony Wootton and Paul Drew for their generosity with their time and attention, and, according to the biased view of the linguist at any rate, a rare interest in 'other languages' like Cantonese. Without their encouragement and constant support, a project like the present one would have been unthinkable. I must thank Gail Jefferson too for being so available for comments, and always so encouraging. I have been extremely fortunate to be at the University of York at a time when all of them were there, providing a serious and open intellectual atmosphere that is vital to productive research.

My two years' of work on this project from 1985 to 1987 was made possible by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the form of an Academic Staff Scholarship, for which I am truly grateful. I also wish to thank the University of Hong Kong for giving me leave to take up the scholarship.

Many friends and students have helped me a lot in obtaining speech data. In particular, I wish to thank Tang Tsui Yee, Tam Lai Fong, Ku Lap Hang, Philip Ng, Flora Tam, So Lai Fong, and Mak Yui Kwan. My sister Nim Tsz has for a period of time regularly recorded speech materials for me, for which I am very grateful.

A special word of thanks to Patrick Yu for steering me through a great deal of deep panic when my micro broke down, and to Gloria for her encouragement and concern. In this regard, as in many other ways, Rajmil Fischman and Jan Rong Quei have always given me help and advice when they were most needed.

The life of reading and writing under extreme pressure of time was alleviated somewhat by cheerful friends and neighbours during our stay in York. Dalit, Fang-mei, Cai-ping and Nobumi kept bringing life and activities to a house which was proving to be much too dry and stoical for human life. Azzouz Diafat and Shoko Kato brought much needed care and friendship. So did Alan Chan through his letters.

I am grateful to my colleagues at the Department of English Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong for their encouragement and support: John Preston, Helen Kwok, Kingsley Bolton, Rosie Chen, and Owen and Cathy Nancarrow. Thanks too to Lai Jak Chung for technical support. Elaine Ho and Douglas Kerr have as always been understanding and encouraging. They kept me informed about Hong Kong, and the existence of an outside world generally, at a time when writing had confined me to an almost total seclusion from human reality.

I owe a great deal to my parents for seeing me through at every stage of my work with great confidence. But most of all, I owe it all to Jennifer, to her love and care, her concern and encouragement, her patience and perseverance. None of this would have been possible without her.

## ABSTRACT

### A Conversation Analytic Approach to the Study of Utterance Particles in Cantonese

Utterance particles, also known as modal particles or sentence-final particles, form a class of words in Cantonese which is of great descriptive and theoretical interest to linguists. Most of them do not have any semantic content (truth-conditional meaning), and few can be said to have a consistent grammatical function. They are notorious for being extremely resistant to conventional syntactic and semantic analysis. The aim of this thesis is to seek a better understanding of utterance particles by concentrating analytical attention on three of them; namely, LA (la55), LO (lo55), and WO (wo44).

Adopting a set of theoretical assumptions and analytical methods in the tradition of Conversation Analysis within an Ethnomethodological framework, an attempt is made to approach these objects by examining them in the context of interactional details in naturally occurring conversations.

From this point of view, each of the three particles is found to be capable of performing an immense variety of work. LA has uses that are related to the establishment of common ground. LO contributes in interesting ways to the achievement of endings in narratives and other sequences. WO is responsive to sequential expectedness, and participates in preference organizations.

However, rather than having a central, more or less fixed meaning, each of these particles has a set of properties which enter into intricate family relations with each other. The contribution that it makes to meanings-in-context at particular points in an unfolding social scene is to some extent the result of the contextualization of its properties in sequential environments. They are linguistic items which provide a resource for the management of a range of conversation organizational problems.

To the extent that it has produced compelling accounts of, and fresh insights into these utterance particles, this study raises a number of theoretical and methodological considerations for linguistics, including the status of data and evidence in linguistic description and argumentation, as well as the possibility of a socially constituted linguistics.

## Transcription and Glossing Conventions

The following contains a list of the conventions that are used for the transcription of the data extracts and the provision of English glosses throughout the thesis. Some symbols are idiosyncratic and needed specially for Cantonese; others are now more or less standard practice in conversation analysis. For a fuller description of these conventions, see Atkinson & Heritage (1984: ix-xvi, "Transcript Notation")

<u>Notation</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
(n)	a pause; n is the length of the pause in seconds
(.)	a slight pause of 0.1 second or less
(****)	a stretch of unidentifiable sounds; in so far as this can be determined, each * represents one syllable
(( ))	a non-linguistic action/event such as someone coughing, clearing his throat or the telephone ringing
[xxxx] [ ] [ ] [yyyy]	overlapping of 2 or more utterances (e.g. "xxxx" "yyyy") produced by different speakers; "[" marks the onset of such an overlap; "]" marks its end.
xxxx= =yyyy	"latching"; "="s are used in pairs, one at the end of an utterance (eg. "xxxx") and the other at the beginning of the following utterance (eg. "yyyy") to show that there is no discernible pause between them
:	the lengthening of a vocalic segment; the more ":"s the longer the vocalic segment; each ":" is of about 0.1 second's duration.
CC	the lengthening of a consonantal segment, where C is a consonant; each C is of about 0.1 second's duration.
.hh	in-breaths; the more "h"s the longer the in-breath; each "h" is of about 0.1 second's duration.
hh	out-breaths; the more "h"s the longer the out-breath; each "h" is of about 0.1 second's duration.
<u>xxxx</u>	speech (e.g. utterance "xxxx") accompanied by laughter.

#	a brief glottal stop
#(n)#	a glottal stop held over n seconds.
xxxx-yyyy	"xxxx" and "yyyy" are joined together with the "-" to show that they are being treated as one unit, for the sole purpose of facilitating the gloss on the right hand half of the page; no claim of any kind is made about the phonological, morphological, or grammatical status of such units.
PT	utterance particle
GEN	genitive morpheme (cf. English "of")
CL	classifiers
EMPH	various kinds of 'emphatic locution'; an a-theoretical term used for the convenience of providing an English gloss for each utterance.

## Romanization Conventions

The system used in this thesis is based on the Yale system, but tones are not represented, because a gloss is already provided for every word and a free translation for every utterance.

<u>Symbols</u>	<u>IPA Equivalents</u>	<u>Symbols</u>	<u>IPA Equivalents</u>
b	p	a	ɔ
d	t	ai	ɔɪ
g	k	au	ɔʊ
p	p <sup>h</sup>	aa	ɑ
t	t <sup>h</sup>	aaɪ	ɑɪ
k	k <sup>h</sup>	aaʊ	ɑʊ
l	l	e	ɛ
m	m	eɪ	eɪ
n	n	eu	œ
ng	ŋ	i	i
f	f	iu	iu
h	h	o	ɔ
s	s	ou	ou
j	ts	oi	ɔɪ
ch	tʃ	u	u
gw	kʷ	ui	uɪ
kw	k <sup>h</sup> w	eui	œj
w	w	yu	y
y	j		

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: UTTERANCE PARTICLES IN CANTONESE

#### 1. Grammatical Descriptions of Particles

Most grammars of Chinese since Ma Shi Wen Tong,<sup>1</sup> including such widely influential works as Li 1955 [1926], Lü & Zhu 1953, Wang 1955, Chao 1968, and Li & Thompson 1981, identify a word class, variously referred to as "helping words" (*zhuci*), "mood words" (*yuqici*), or "sentence-final particles". (I will, for reasons to be given presently, refer to them as utterance particles.) This word class includes, for Mandarin Chinese, such bound forms as *le*, *ne*, *ba*, *ma*, *a/ya*, *ou*, etc. In Cantonese, we have (ignoring tones for the moment) *a*, *la*, *lo*, *wo*, *ne/le*, *me*, *je*, *ja*, *jek*, *ama*, *gwa*, *tim*, and others. While my concern in this thesis is with utterance particles in Cantonese, not Mandarin Chinese, it would be useful to take a brief look at the work that has been done on these particles in both dialects. We can expect at least some of what has been said about utterance particles in Mandarin Chinese to be relevant to the study of their counterparts in Cantonese. On the other hand, the Cantonese system seems to be much richer and more complicated than the Mandarin one. In terms of sheer numbers, Cantonese utterance particles far outnumber their Mandarin counterparts, or those of any other language that I know of. Previous work on utterance particles in Cantonese has identified thirty or so of them, but because they can be used in combination, the actual number of particles (simple and compound) currently in use in spoken Cantonese should be in the region of a hundred.

While most modern grammars of Chinese have identified such a class of words, not a great deal has been said about them. It is interesting to note, for example, that they have received relatively little attention in Y.R. Chao's classic work, A grammar of spoken Chinese (1968). Of the 819 pages of the book, only 20 are devoted to these particles. What's more, apart from giving some rough English glosses to a few invented examples containing some of these particles,<sup>2</sup> Chao offers no particular insight on the nature of either individual utterance particles, or the class as a whole. Nor has he indicated any useful way in which these objects can be approached.

Li and Thompson's Mandarin Chinese: a functional reference grammar (1981) gives considerably more attention to this class of words, reflecting a growing concern in contemporary linguistics to attach greater importance to 'performance', 'natural speech', 'use', and 'discourse' (although what these terms refer to, and how the subject matter should be approached are questions that are far from settled). They have made a commendable attempt to come to some understanding of these particles in Mandarin Chinese, by describing them in terms of their functions in discourse. For example, one of the uses of *le* is described as relating what is being said to *what the addressee has been assuming* (p.263). Another use is to "wrap up a story", in which case it "signals to the hearer that the speaker is through with what s/he wanted to say, so that the hearer can now say something if s/he wants to" (p.287), which is clearly a description that rests upon some of the insights gained in conversation analysis (the notion of turn-construction units, for example). In

describing *ne*, they note that it is a "conversational particle that requires at least two conversationalists, since the function of *ne* is to bring the hearer's attention to the significance of the information conveyed by the sentence in connection with the hearer's claim, expectation, or belief". (p.305) In the same vein, *ba* is described as a particle that is used to "solicit approval/agreement" from the addressee. (p.307)

While it is a definite improvement on Chao's grammar in this respect, Li and Thompson's treatment of the utterance particles is not without its problems. For one thing, there is a distinct lack of empirical data. It shares with Chao's grammar the convention of basing analysis on invented examples. I will argue in the next chapter that invented examples, be they sentences in isolation, or 'imagined conversations', are no substitute for spontaneous conversational data. More importantly, they fail to show how the varied uses of particular particles are related to some general description of their unique properties. Scattered statements are made about isolated uses of various particles, but no general framework is provided in which these can be seen as parts in relation to a whole. No general picture emerges from their description which would throw light on the special status of the utterance particles as a class of linguistic objects.

## 2. Four Features of Utterance Particles

How have these particles been defined and identified? While linguists have disagreed about whether particular morphemes should be included in the class of utterance particles -- eg. Wang 1955 lists *7a* and *de* as "mood words" in Mandarin Chinese, which are not included in Li and Thompson 1981, and, in Cantonese, a few particles identified in Yau 1965, eg. *ha24* and *ho35*,

are not considered to be "basic" particles in Kwok 1984 -- there seems to be a certain amount of agreement as to the kind of criteria required for their identification. The distinctive features of this word class that have been identified in previous studies include:

1. They have no semantic content.
2. They serve to indicate the mood of a sentence.
3. They are used to express attitudes and emotions.
4. They are attached (as bound forms) to the end of sentences.

Let us examine each in turn.

First, they have no semantic content. The Chinese grammatical tradition draws a basic distinction between "full words" and "empty words". One account of this distinction goes as follows:

"Words can be assigned to two broad categories: full words which are representations of concepts, and empty words which do not in themselves represent concepts, but are instruments in the organization of language. The categorization of full words should be based on the kinds of concepts that are represented, while the categorization of empty words should be based on their functions in sentences." (Wang 1954; my translation)

In another account, the distinction is explicated in terms of "actual things and events": empty words are defined as those which do not refer to "actual things and events". (Lu 1955:34).

This suggests that the distinction in question is very similar to the one that is sometimes made between "form words" and "content words".<sup>3</sup> For the utterance particles, this means that they would, as empty words, share with other form words such as aspect markers and various suffixes the feature that they do not have readily specifiable truth-conditional meanings. One would also expect them, as form words, to serve certain grammatical functions.

This takes us into the second feature, viz. the function of utterance particles as indicators of grammatical moods. It might seem that the distribution of utterance particles can be stated in terms of co-occurrence restrictions which hold between them and sentence types. But a close investigation would reveal a great deal of criss-cross and overlap. In the scheme presented in Wang 1955, the same particle can be used to indicate a variety of moods. On the other hand, the same mood can be signaled by more than one particle. No apparent pattern emerges from his description. For example, the particle *ne* is listed under both "Assertives" and "Dubitatives"; similarly, *ma* is found under both "Expressives" and "Dubitatives". On the other hand, one of his mood categories, "Dubitatives", includes a variety of utterance particles: *ma*, *ne*, and *ba*, among others. Thus, while Wang's characterization of empty words would seem to suggest that each utterance particle could perhaps be described in terms of the unique grammatical functions that it serves, his own investigation reveals that precisely the opposite is true.

If we distinguish between sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, etc.) and speech act categories such as statements, questions, and commands, on the grounds that there is not always a regular and direct correspondence between the two, then it is conceivable that utterance particles may be markers not so much of grammatical mood, but of modalities or speech act types. But this is not true either.

As an illustration, consider the particle *lo55* in Cantonese. It has been described in previous accounts (eg. Yau 1965, Gibbons 1980, and Kwok 1984) as a particle that is attached to utterances which function as statements. But this does not hold up to a

detailed analysis of its uses in natural conversation. Given an appropriate context, an utterance containing this particle can function variously as a statement, a question, or an instruction, as the following examples show.

- (1) A: mou baasi me?  
no bus PT  
[are there no buses?]  
B: hai lo, baa-gung lo  
yes PT strike PT  
[no, they are on strike]
- (2) A: keui daap luk-dim-jung baan che lai  
he take six-o'clock CL car come  
[he's coming on the six o'clock train]  
B: goun mai hou ngaan sin lai-dou lo?  
so PT very late only arrive PT  
[so he'll be arriving very late then?]  
A: hai aa  
yes PT  
[yes]
- (3) A: dim heui le?  
how go PT  
[how do I get there?]  
B: cho-baasi lo  
take-bus PT  
[take a bus]

It is clear that B's utterances in these examples are recognizable as doing the work of reporting ([1]), asking a question ([2]), and giving an instruction or a piece of advice ([3]). And yet in each case, the same final particle *lo* is used. One might argue that the functional categories statement, question, and command are not the right kind of categories, and need to be replaced by other taxonomic schemes (eg. Searle 1976); or that the phonological make-up of the utterance particle may vary from one instance to the next. I will deal with these and related objections in the final chapters after I have presented the results of my detailed analyses of three particles in the body of this thesis. For the moment, I only wish to point out the problems with the idea that the functions of utterance

particles can be explicated in terms of some direct and regular correspondence between them and speech act types. Also, the particle used in these examples is not an exception: the same can be said about most of the other utterance particles in Cantonese.

In addition to the idea of mood, it has often been said that one of the features of the utterance particles as a word class is the expression of various attitudinal and emotive meanings.

"When we speak, we often cannot describe something purely objectively. In most cases, every utterance contains certain emotions. Such emotions are sometimes expressed through intonation. But the kinds of emotion that can be expressed by intonation are after all rather limited. So there are certain empty words in Chinese which assist the intonations, in order to make various emotions more recognizable. We shall refer to the various ways in which emotions are expressed in language as mood, and those empty words which express moods, mood words." (Wang 1955:332; my translation)

The range of functions that have been included under this general rubric are extremely varied. The variety of "emotions" and "attitudes" that have been mentioned include affirmation, doubt, rebuttal, exclamation, the seeking and granting of permission, consultation, pausing, request, order, advice, and a host of others. But these notions are notoriously intractable. Li and Thompson remarked that the utterance particles' "semantic and pragmatic functions are elusive, and linguists have had considerable difficulty in arriving at a general characterization of each of them" (1981:238). One of the main concerns of the present investigation is to arrive at an understanding of the unity that underlies the immense range of work that some particles can do. I will deal with this problem in the analysis chapters.

The last feature, that these particles are "sentence-final", is not without problems either. This feature is highlighted in

the now familiar term "sentence-final particle". The problem is that most of these objects that have been identified as "sentence-final particles" do not actually occur only at the end of sentences (not that 'sentence' itself is a particularly useful notion in our attempt to come to a better understanding of the nature and properties of these objects in the first place). They also occur at the end of 'smaller' syntactic units such as clauses and phrases. They may occur at the end of free-standing words too. Consider the following:

- (4) lei si-haa daa-go-dinwaa bei keui la  
you try-ASP phone to him PT  
[try giving him a call]
- (5) hai Gou-gaai, jee chausin godou la  
at High-Street that-is just-now there PT  
[at High Street, I mean that place just now]
- (6) yumou-kau la, bingbambo la, tennis la  
badminton PT ping-pong PT, tennis PT  
[badminton, and pingpong, and tennis]

The particle *la* ("la55") occurs in these examples after a variety of constituents --sentences ([4]), adverbial phrases ([5]), and noun phrases ([6]). It may be tempting to think that these are 'really' surface manifestations of underlying sentences, which are recoverable through expansion, taking into account factors like reference and ellipsis. Labov and Fanshel (1977), for example, employed such a procedure to make explicit the underlying propositions of the utterances produced during a therapeutic interview. On the basis of "factual material" gathered from the interview as a whole, and what is believed to be shared knowledge between the participants, and by filling out the referents of the pronouns and other deictic terms in particular utterances, they provided reconstructions of their underlying propositional contents. The following is one example

of such an expansion. (Labov & Fanshel 1977:50)

(7) (a) Utterance:

An-nd so --when-- I called her t'day, I said,  
"Well, when do you plan to come home?"

(b) Expansion:

When I called my mother today (Thursday), I actually said, "Well, in regard to the subject which we both know is important and is worrying me, when are you leaving my sister's house where your obligations have already been fulfilled and returning as I am asking you to a home where your primary obligations are being neglected, since you should do this as head of our household?"

But expansions and reconstructions are not as simple and straightforward as they might seem. Labov and Fanshel admit that such expansions are "open-ended":

"There is no limit to the number of explanatory facts we could bring from other parts of the interview, and the end result of such a procedure might be combining everything that was said in the session into one sentence. For this reason, there is no fixed relation between text and expansion." (ibid, p.50-51)

Garfinkel (1967:38-42) has shown convincingly (as Labov and Fanshel acknowledged) that the sense of every ordinary utterance is "specifically vague" and indefinitely expandable. The task of expansion quickly becomes impossible, as more and more relevancies get drawn into the reconstruction that are generated by the very process of expansion itself.

In the case of "sentence-final particles", consider the following conversation extract.

- (8) A: lei gamyat m sai faanhok me?  
you today not need go-to-school PT  
[don't you need to go to school today?]  
B: ngaanjau aa  
afternoon PT  
[in the afternoon]

Here, the particle *aa* (ie. *aa44*) occurs at the end of B's utterance, and forms part of that utterance. It might seem possible to expand this utterance, so that what underlies it can

be seen to be "really a sentence". But I see no particular reason to choose among such possible expansions as:

- (9) (a) I have to go to school in the afternoon.
- (b) Si (to borrow a useful French word here), I have to go to school today, only that it is still early. I will go in the afternoon.
- (c) I see that you are mistaken in thinking that I don't have to go to school today. Your mistaken belief stems from the wrong assumption that if I am at home at this hour of the morning, then it must be the case that I don't have to go to school today. But in actual fact, although I am at home now, I will be going to school in the afternoon.

And many more such versions can be constructed. In fact, indefinitely many expansions are possible, and each one can be justified. No one particular expansion can be identified as the underlying sentence of what B said. Are we to conclude that the particle aa is attached to the end of a sentence, two sentences, or a paragraph? And this, as Garfinkel pointed out, is not a problem to do with the massiveness of the content of an utterance either. Rather, "the very way of accomplishing the task [of expansion or clarification] multiplies its features" (1967:26) and renders the task impossible. This is an example of a very general misconception among linguists, the illusion that a unique underlying sentence *can somehow be recovered from what is said*, which is merely its surface manifestation. It is due partly to this assumption that "sentence-final particle" has been the accepted term for this class of morphemes. We must recognize 'expansions' for what they are: an expansion is nothing more, or less, than a translation in disguise. In 'expanding' an utterance, we translate ordinary language into another language, one in which, for example, information exchange is the primary task, and is done always through complete sentences that encode propo-

sitions, a language in which there is supposedly total clarity and explicitness, in which what is meant and what is said enter into a perfect and incorruptible relationship. As an analytical tool, expansion is no more and no less useful than translation. In translating an utterance into another language, we have not thereby solved the problem of specifying what it means; we have merely delayed the question. Thus, there is no principled way in which 'underlying sentences' can be reconstructed from ordinary utterances, for the particles that are found suffixed to them to be characterized as sentence-final.

That is why I believe that the term "utterance particle" is a more appropriate one than "sentence-final particle", or traditional terms like "helping words" and "mood words". Be that as it may, my terminology does not alter the identity of the target set of objects under investigation. The set of objects which I refer to as utterance particles are by and large the same as those which have been designated in previous accounts under one of these alternative names.

### **3. The Linguistic Interests of Utterance Particles**

What interests do utterance particles have for the linguist? The very first thing that one notices about them, as soon as one actually looks at some natural speech data, is that their presence in ordinary conversation is massive. The regularity with which utterance particles occur in Cantonese varies a great deal depending on the mode of language use. In formal written Chinese, one finds very few particles. Formal speaking contains some, but not many, while informal, jocular writing which attempts to 'imitate' speech contains considerably more. The same

has been observed of the sentence particles in Japanese:<sup>4</sup>

"Sentence particles in general are not used in written materials, such as directions for use, newspaper articles or essays. Exceptions to this are informal, personal letters and books written for small children where the writers' intention lies in producing the effect of person-to-person conversation. Needless to say, written records of conversations such as scenarios are also exceptional cases. Sentence particles, on the other hand, are essential in conversations where person-to-person communication is intended." (Uyeno 1971:50)

When utterance particles occur in writing in Cantonese, they are represented by made-up (to some extent *ad hoc*) characters in a similar way that ordinary words are represented. In this respect, they are treated by native speakers as, if not 'full words', at least 'quasi words' (unlike, eg. intonation, tone of voice, and kinesic features which are never represented in this way). In terms of the tripartite distinction among verbal, prosodic and paralinguistic resources of meaning, particles are definitely verbal.

The regularity with which utterance particles occur in natural, mundane conversation in Cantonese is truly astounding. An informal count reveals that an utterance particle is found in continuous talk on the average every 1.5 seconds. It is no exaggeration to say that they constitute one of the hallmarks of natural conversation in Cantonese.

But there are indications that this is not a peculiar phenomenon confined to Cantonese or Chinese. Utterance particles have been studied in other languages. I shall only mention some of the studies here, and will leave a discussion of them for a later chapter, when they can be seen in the light of the findings reported in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Some languages for which similar objects have been identified include Japanese (Uyeno 1971;

Tsuchihashi 1983), Finnish (Karttunen 1975), German (Schubiger 1972), and various American Indian languages in Columbia and Ecuador (Longacre 1976, 1979). In English, particles like *well*, *why* and *oh* have been studied from an interactional perspective (Lakoff 1973, Heritage 1984, Local & Kelly 1986). Brown and Levinson (1978) have also identified a number of "particles which encode hedges in linguistic structure" (p.151) in their study of politeness phenomena in a number of languages, including Tamil and Tzeltal. Of such particles they observe that they "often constitute among the most commonly used words in a language, but are typically omitted from dictionaries and given little theoretical attention." (ibid) On the whole, it is fair to say that little attention has been paid to utterance particles, and the little that has been said about them are often vague, confusing and inadequate, at times patently false.

Thus one interest of utterance particles for the linguist is their pervasive presence in natural conversation. How can this be accounted for? And in what way is this pervasiveness related to their distinctive nature as a class of linguistic objects?

This, however, requires adequate descriptions of the particles. How should they be described? We have seen that one of their defining features is the lack of either a truth-conditional meaning or a well-defined grammatical function. This might tempt us into dismissing them as some kind of an optional extra. On the other hand, while they do not enter into syntactic or semantic relations, the interpretation of an utterance often depends crucially on them: the sense of an utterance often cannot be determined without taking note of the particle that occurs in it. For instance, given appropriate contexts, the meanings of the

following utterances could be glossed as follows:

- (10) (a) hou bikyan LA "it must be crowded"
- (b) hou bikyan LO "it was crowded, as you would expect"
- (c) hou bikyan WO "I now realize that it was crowded"
- (d) hou bikyan GWA "It's probably crowded"

If, as seems evident from these examples, these particles have some contribution to make to the overall sense of the utterances in which they occur, just what kinds of contribution are they?

In order even to begin asking interesting questions about these objects, we must plant them firmly where they belong: the conducting of ordinary conversations. They must be seen in relation to the discourse of which they form a part, and be approached from that standpoint. In this connection, two linguists have expressed a similar view as follows:

"Traditional Chinese grammar refers to the sentence-final particle as yuqici 'mood words'; this term aptly suggests that the function of these sentence-final particles is to relate to the conversational context in various ways the utterance to which they are attached and to indicate how this utterance is to be taken by the hearer." (Li & Thompson 1981:317)

"Many times in studying a language we find that there are certain particles of uncertain meaning which cannot be defined by the language helper, who nevertheless, insists that he wants them used at certain points and not used at others. Almost invariably such particles of apparently random distribution are subject to discourse constraints." (Longacre 1978:266)

To give a taste of the kind of contexts in which utterance particles are regularly found, and to formulate some questions which may be of linguistic interest, let us examine a short extract very briefly.

(11) [TC11:1:169]	
L: 'goummmm e::m	L: so em
(1.0)	(1.0)
L: a:::::	L: em
(0.8)	(0.8)
1-->L: daai-biu-go aa	L: first-cousin
daa-gwo-lei <u>wo</u>	has-phoned PT
	[so em first cousin
	has phoned]
S: geisi aa	S: when PT
	[when?]
L: ((clears throat))	L: ((clears throat))
2-->    gamyat <u>lo</u> =	today PT
	[today]
S: =hai <u>me</u>	S: yes PT
	[really?]
L: goum ngo yigaa jau	L: and I now em
lam-jyu daa-bei-keui::	thinking phone-him
	[and I'm thinking about
	phoning him now]
S: haa#	S: yeah
L: jau::: tai-haa keui	L: em see he
tingyat dim	tomorrow how
(.)	(.)
L: yahai giu maai keui	L: maybe ask too him
seung-lei	come-up
	[em, to see what he's doing
	tomorrow, maybe we can ask
	him to come as well?]
3-->S: sidaan <u>la</u> yugo-hai::	S: whatever PT maybe
	[I don't mind]
4-->L: tai-haa keui dim <u>la</u> :	L: see he how PT
.hh[hh	.hhhh
[	[depends on what he's doing]
S:    [haa	S: yes

I have underlined the various instances of utterance particles that are found in this extract, which is taken from a telephone conversation between two cousins, L and S. To begin with, if one were to imagine the same conversation taking place, but without any of the particles occurring, it would sound overly terse to some, hostile or perhaps funny to others, but in any case unreal, almost unintelligible. Why? What contributions are being made by the particles to the meaning of the utterances individually, and the episode as a whole?

Consider L's first turn. The utterance arrowed 1 is in a sense a declarative which contains a piece of information, and

what L might be said to be doing is passing this piece of information on to S, the addressee. From the point of view of the "information/content" of this utterance, the particle *wo* (wo44) does not appear to be making any contribution: it does not add any substantive content which is not already represented in the rest of the utterance. Does it perhaps signal the act of informing itself? Apparently not, because the informing could just as well be done without it. Similarly, in L's reply to S's question "when?" in the next turn (arrow 2), the particle *lo* (lo55) does not seem to add any substance to "today", which seems as simple and straightforward an answer to S's question as one can get. Neither can it be said to signal the act of answering. Essentially the same remarks would apply to the two instances of the particle *la* (la55) in S's and L's utterances towards the end of the extract (arrows 3 and 4). What are these particles doing here? Why are they used at all?

If we look at the episode from the point of view of what the two participants might be said to be hoping to achieve, ie. from the point of view of the purposes that, as overhearers, we might be able to read from what they have said, things seem to look clearer. Let us say that what L is trying to do in this episode is to get S to consider (and even accept) his proposal that in the meeting that they are arranging, "first cousin" should be invited as well. Given this assumption, we would be in a position to consider how the particles that occur in the utterances that L uses for that purpose might contribute to that purpose. On S's part, let us say that he begins by waiting to see what L will eventually say about "first cousin", and, as soon as he realizes that L is proposing to invite him to their meeting, offers a

response to the suggestion. The questions that were posed in the last paragraph can now be given more substance. We can begin to ask more specific questions about the part that the utterance particles play in the achievement of the participants' purposes. How, for example, is the use of *wo* (wo44) in L's first turn related to the job of signalling an upcoming proposal? Or, how does *7a* (7a55) contribute to S's formulation of a response to L's suggestion? These are questions that may lead to observations that are of relevance and interest to our understanding of the particles.

How does L signal an upcoming proposal? How does S show interest, and how does he show his readiness to hear what L has to say next? How is the proposal made and received? And how do the participants handle its consequences? The way in which participants make manifest to each other what their intentions are; the way their behaviours are made intelligible to each other (hence interpretable as (social) actions); and the way in which some purpose gets established through conversational exchanges -- in this may lie a clue to the secret of the particles.

Questions like these can only be answered by taking a much closer and more detailed look at the episode in question, which in turn requires close analyses of many more episodes containing the same particles. One would also have to chart their distribution which, as I will show in later chapters, is far from random. But these will be distributions that can only be stated in terms of sequential contexts, and not in terms of syntactic or semantic relations. These will be my sustained concerns in the analysis chapters. My point here is to illustrate how questions like these cannot even be asked unless we situate those utterance particles that we want to study in conversational interaction

which is their natural habitat. The asking of these questions will, I believe, provide a worthwhile point of departure for an investigation which may yield worthwhile results.

An understanding of the functions of utterance particles in discourse should be of theoretical interest. For example, it would reveal ways in which languages have evolved systematic means of coming to terms with problems that participants are faced with in conducting practical affairs through everyday conversational interaction. It would be of interest to a theory of language to see how such devices are grammaticalized in linguistic structure.

To look at these objects from an interactional point of view is to adopt what might be described broadly as a sociolinguistic perspective. We would expect a close investigation of these particles to throw light on the sociality of language: the relationship between language and social interaction would be thrown into sharp profile through an intimate understanding of the workings of these objects.

Finally, in so far as the description of utterance particles can be regarded as pragmatic specifications of the uses of linguistic items, a consideration of the form such specifications may take in the case of utterance particles should be of interest to pragmatics. It should also be of interest to those who are concerned with the problem of the relationship between grammar (syntax and semantics) and pragmatics, which has generated some debates and discussions. But I will take up these and other general issues until after I have presented my analysis and findings on three utterance particles in Cantonese.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH STRATEGIES

A general account of the properties of the class of utterance particles in Cantonese must presumably rest upon adequate descriptions of at least a handful of individual members of the class. It thus seems a reasonable schedule to proceed by examining initially a small number of particles in some detail. In practice, it is all too easy to yield to the temptation of studying the whole class all in one go. But this has proved to have undesirable consequences. One consequence is that one becomes far too ready to come to conclusions about the properties of individual utterance particles before their range of uses has been identified and subjected to detailed analysis. Another consequence is that, governed by a drive to capture generalizations as well as provide all the contrasts necessary to distinguish one particle from another, one tends to approach problems conceptually rather than empirically. However, it will, I hope, become clear in the next three chapters that to build a convincing account of even one utterance particle is not as easy a task as it might seem, and requires close attention to empirically found details in the course of trying to come to grips with particular instances of that utterance particle in use. It can be argued that at our present state of knowledge, even this is lacking. A worthwhile project would thus be to start with a manageable number of particles, and, in the course of dealing with the particulars of individual instances, develop and test a set of analytical tools that may prove to be a useful

starting point for further investigations which would eventually lead to a deeper understanding of the class as a whole.

I have therefore set myself the much less ambitious, but relatively manageable task of examining three utterance particles which are routinely used in ordinary conversations in Cantonese, with the aim of providing unified accounts of the basic properties of these particles on the basis of which the multifarious contributions that each can make to a variety of interactional tasks can be explicated.

At the outset of such a project, a number of methodological considerations need to be taken into account. What form should the data take? How should one go about analysing the data? What kinds of evidence *is one to look for in developing an analysis?* What criteria are there for assessing the adequacy of descriptions? These are the main concerns of this chapter.

## **1. Everyday Conversational Data**

### *1.1 Naturally Occurring Data vs. Constructed Data*

For any claims about the distinctive properties of individual utterance particles to have an empirical content, some data base containing instances of these particles must be obtained. One familiar strategy in previous studies is to construct sentences which contain the particles in question and to identify their forms and functions through comparisons and contrasts. For example, one could construct minimal sentence pairs, which are formally identical except for the final particles that they contain, and ask what meaning differences correspond to the formal contrasts. This method hinges on an appeal to native speakers' intuitions about what each of the sentences in question means, and the relationship between them.

Indeed, native speakers' intuitions have been a standard form of data in linguistic studies since the 'Chomskyan revolution'.

However, while constructed examples based on intuition or memory may supplement natural speech data, they can never replace them. The meanings of example sentences are not identifiable independently of a target community of readers. In practice, readers are implicitly asked to supply 'standard contexts' with reference to which definite senses can be assigned to constructed sentences. In thus appealing to, and taking for granted, the readers' common understanding of such things as the ordinary meanings of linguistic expressions, or what is a reasonable thing to say in a given situation, the relationship between context and interpretation is rendered invisible. More importantly, the constraint on what counts as a reasonable example makes a great deal of what actually happens in naturally occurring talk unobservable by *fiat*.

"... however rich our imaginations are, if we use hypothetical, or hypothetical-typical versions of the world we are constrained by reference to what an audience, an audience of professionals, can accept as reasonable. That might not appear to be a terrible constraint until we come to look at the kinds of things that actually occur. Were I to say about many of the objects we work with "Let us suppose that this happened; now I am going to consider it," then an audience might feel hesitant about what I would make of it by reference to whether such things happen. That is to say, under such a constraint many things that actually occur are debarred from use as a basis for theorizing about conversation... Our business will be to proceed somewhat differently. We will be using observation as a basis for theorizing. Thus we can start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened. We can then come to see that a base for using close looking at the world for theorizing about it is that from close looking at the world we can find things that we could not, by imagination, assert were there. We could not know that they were 'typical'. Indeed, we might not have noticed that they happen." (Sacks 1984:25)

The limitations of data generated by intuition and memory are particularly obvious in the study of utterance particles. Considered in isolation, the meanings of utterance particles are notoriously elusive: attempts to provide conventional dictionary definitions are fraught with difficulties.

Placing them in the context of constructed sentences does not take us very much further. Without recourse to 'contextual factors' such as who is speaking in what capacity to whom, the topic of conversation, the type of speech event that is taking place, etc., the sense of a constructed sentence like (1), in which the particle *la55* has been inserted, remains indeterminate. Any of the glosses in (2) may be appropriate in some context, and many more glosses can be provided with a corresponding change in the circumstances in which the utterance is heard.

(1) *toi seungmin yau pun faa LA*  
table on there-be CL flower PT

- (2) a. There must be a pot of flowers on the table then?  
b. One of the things that I noticed was that there was a pot of flowers on the table.  
c. Let us suppose that there is a pot of flowers on the table.

As will become clear in the next three chapters, the range of positions-in-conversational-sequences and the variety of contributions that utterance particles can make to interactional tasks is not something that can be appreciated without actually looking at a fair amount of conversational data. I do not think, having performed such a task, that this can be done through the collection of materials on the basis of intuition or memory alone. Constructed sentences in isolation do not as a rule tell us a great deal about the functional properties of these objects.

Constructed dialogues too have to be used with care and discretion. While they may look 'more natural', in practice they appeal to essentially the same kind of imagination and projection as constructed sentences. The same question remains: the procedures with which meanings are arrived at of sentences in constructed dialogues is just as much in need of investigation and explication as the case of sentences in isolation. Further, no amount of imagination can produce the kinds of linguistic and interactional details that have been shown to be crucial to our understanding of participants' interpretive procedures. Empirical work in conversation analysis has identified a range of such finer details in the organization of talk: pauses and the phonetic details around them, laughter, false starts, self-repair, overlapping, and many more (see, for example, two of Jefferson's perceptive analyses of the fine details of talk : the "a/an" alternation [1974], and the role of laughter in creating an auspicious environment for the "unpackaging of a gloss" [1985]; also, Local & Kelly 1986 on the interactional significance of different phonetic renderings of the particle "well"). In general, "anyone who is familiar with conversational materials ... will be vividly aware of the limitations of recollection or intuition in generating data by comparison with the richness and diversity of empirically occurring interaction." (Atkinson and Heritage 1984:3)

The preference for intuition-generated data in linguistics stems in part from a distrust for spontaneous speech as a viable source of data. It is sometimes believed that speech (as opposed to language) is prone to all sorts of inconsistencies and mishaps (performance errors), and is by their very nature not amenable to

systematic investigation, and therefore unusable as data. Even if they can be handled in some systematic way, the description of performance regularities must await corresponding advances in our understanding of those aspects of competence relevant to their description, ie. the study of competence is logically prior to any attempt to come to terms with performance.

However, this apprehension about the usability of natural speech data has, since Chomsky's (1965) widely influential programmatic statement on this issue, proved to be unfounded. Work in sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, to name just two areas of research, has shown that performance data can be treated systematically on various levels of analysis. On the levels of phonological and morphological structure, Labov (1972a, 1972b) has shown that some aspects of performance are not only amenable to systematic treatment, but yield important insights into the ways in which the form a linguistic item takes is indicative of social group membership. Research in conversation analysis has shown beyond any doubt that, when one examines linguistic actions and interactions closely, it soon transpires that naturally occurring talk is every bit as orderly and regulated as any other kind of social phenomenon.

If, as has been abundantly shown in the literature, natural conversation is subjectable to formal description, what about the objection that, even if this is a viable form of data, it presupposes some prior understanding of linguistic competence? Since this objection rests on the assumption that linguistic performance (action) is the realization of competence (knowledge), it raises the whole question of the relation between linguistic knowledge and action. I shall consider this question

in more detail below. Suffice it to note at this point that this is not a necessary assumption to make, and, if indeed there are strong reasons for not making it, then there would not be any need to meet the objection in the first place.

### *1.2 'Raw' Data vs. Elicited Data*

Within the broad category of 'performance data', a distinction can be made between what one might call 'raw' conversational data on the one hand (consisting simply of recordings of, say, chats between friends and neighbours, or members of the family), and data collected from structured interviews and questionnaires on the other. The use of the latter kind of data (which might loosely be called 'survey data') is often dictated by the adoption of a dependent-and-independent-variable paradigm. For correlational sociolinguistics, the basic strategy is to collect instances of linguistic items, assign them to classes (variants) within a set of dependent variables, describe their distribution vis-a-vis a set of 'contextual factors' (independent variables) which are supposed to be identifiable independently of the use of those linguistic items, and then work out by statistical methods the relationships between the two sets of variables. One central aim of this kind of research is to show that variations in the forms of linguistic items can be predicted, in statistical terms, on the basis of these relationships.

While many of the findings of correlational sociolinguistics provide us with interesting facts about the systematicity of linguistic variation, this kind of research glosses over the ways in which social categories such as age, sex and social class figure in the actual interpretive work that constitutes the

dynamics of linguistic interaction. The assumption that 'context' is identifiable and definable independently of language (and that the relation between context and language is essentially a determining and one-sided one) oversimplifies the picture. In reality, it is more likely to be one of "mutual elaboration" (Sharrock & Anderson 1986:53):

"Activity in and observation of the setting are ways of acquiring a progressively full sense of what the code is and how it works, and a progressive awareness of that also gives an increasing capacity to identify actions for what they are." (ibid)

Thus, while it is true that the statistical relationships that are found to hold between linguistic items and contextual factors cannot be expected (and are not meant) to have any predictive power with regard to particular occurrences, it is worth considering how one might provide an account for those cases where a particular instance does not fit a proposed statistical relationship. For example, what are we to say about the use of a variant by a female speaker, which is supposed to be used by male speakers 'most of the time'? The problem is not that there are always exceptions to rules. Rather, in what way is the interactional work that is being achieved in this particular instance related to its 'unpredictability'? It would be unwise to dismiss such instances as random variation, because these are the cases which would provide us with the most interesting kinds of evidence for our understanding of the complex relationship between language and society --the ways in which linguistic items contribute towards the shaping and definition of the 'context'. These are therefore cases which are in the greatest need for close analytical attention. And yet it is precisely these instances that the dependent-and-independent-variable approach

has the least to say about.

Rather than to chart the social distribution of utterance particles or to summarize their normal usage statistically, my aim, in the first instance, is to come to an intimate understanding of the properties of three utterance particles which make it possible for them to perform the kinds of interactional work that they can be empirically found to perform. To achieve that aim, I would need to look in detail at the ways in which they contribute to the meanings of situated utterances in particular instances of conversational interaction. For the reasons outlined above, the data for such a project would best be in the form of 'raw' recordings of natural conversations.

Apart from these considerations, there is an important reason for using 'raw' conversational data. One of their attractions lies in the fact that recordings of naturally occurring talk, in virtue of their public availability, are conducive to analytical advance. Alternative and subsequent analyses can always be performed on them. For instance, any disagreement over the proper analysis of a particular data piece would have that very record as a common ground on which the relative merits of contending analyses can be assessed. Insights not available at some stage of knowledge in which a particular analysis is performed can be used to subsequently analyse an 'old' extract, thus providing for the constant refinement of our understanding of it. Thus, with a recording of naturally occurring talk, "... I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and ... others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me." (Sacks 1984:26)

### 1.3 *Everyday Conversation*

Before presenting a description of my data-base, I should give an account of what I understand to be 'everyday conversation'. The most explicit account of what 'everyday conversation' is usually taken to mean in sociology and linguistics is the following, given by Goffman.

"...conversation, restrictively defined, might be identified as the talk occurring when a small number of participants come together and settle into what they perceive to be a few moments cut off from (or carried on to the side of) instrumental tasks; a period of idling felt to be an end in itself, during which everyone is accorded the right to talk as well as to listen and without reference to a fixed schedule; everyone is accorded the status of someone whose overall evaluation of the subject matter at hand --whose editorial comments, as it were-- is to be encouraged and treated with respect; and no final agreement or synthesis is demanded, differences of opinion to be treated as unprejudicial to the continuing relationship of the participants." (Goffman 1981:14)

This characterization is, as Goffman himself noted, a rather restricted one. For the purpose of data-collection, I have relaxed some of his criteria slightly to include a few more kinds of data that were readily available.

*1.3.1 Number of participants.* Due to practical constraints imposed by relatively detailed transcriptions (eg. identifying different voices on the tape), I have limited myself to collecting only conversations in which there are a maximum number of four participants; in the majority of cases, there are two or three participants. In any case, it seems that everyday conversation with a single shared focus of attention does not normally involve more than three or four participants. When four, five or more persons do get together to talk, they tend to split up into smaller conversational groups quite quickly.

*1.3.2 Non-instrumental purposes.* The distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental purposes is a difficult one to make. In addition to idle chats, I have included informal counselling sessions and unstructured interviews, where there is in a sense some instrumental purpose to the talk. Nevertheless, I think they are sufficiently unscheduled and unplanned to warrant inclusion.

*1.3.3 Course unscheduled.* This is a criterion which I have not only adopted but taken to be central. In terms of turn-allocation, everyday conversations are invariably locally managed, ie. turns are never pre-allocated. There is never a 'fixed agenda'.

*1.3.4 Continuing relationship of the participants.* This too is retained as a criteria, although I have included some less than clear cases like informal counselling sessions and encounters between strangers. In a broad sense, however, the possibility is always left open that the relationship of the participants may continue into the future.

*1.3.5 Co-presence.* A further feature, which is implicit in Goffman's characterization ("when... participants get together") is that of 'co-presence'. Everyday conversation takes place in situations where participants are 'present together', ie. can directly see and hear each other, and attend to each other's behaviour. The fundamental importance of face-to-face conversation in human linguistic interaction, while in a sense patently obvious, cannot be emphasized more. Lyons (1977:63-64) refers to it as the primary use of language:

"The most typical form of language-behaviour is that which occurs in face-to-face conversation between members of the same culture; and this is what will be meant by the term 'normal language behaviour'. All other uses and manifesta-

tions of language, both written and spoken, are derived in one way or another from normal language behaviour understood in this sense." (Lyons 1977:63-64)

Levinson (1983:43-44) underscores its centrality for functional approaches to the study of language acquisition and language use:

"...rather than look for a series of static functions or contextual parameters, one should attend directly to the single most important dynamic context of language use, namely, conversation, or face-to-face interaction. The centrality of this functional matrix for language use hardly needs arguing: face-to-face interaction is not only the context for language acquisition, but the only significant kind of language use in many of the world's communities, and indeed until relatively recently in all of them. Those interested in functional explanations of linguistic phenomena ought then to have a considerable interest in the systematics of face-to-face interaction." (Levinson 1983:43-44)

#### *1.4 The Observer's Paradox*

Finally, consideration must be taken into account of what is often cited as the main practical difficulty in recording naturally occurring talk, namely, the so-called 'Observer's Paradox'. According to Labov (1972a:61), the investigator whose aim is to collect samples of the vernacular, the form of speech employed by speakers when they are most at ease, is faced with the problem of how to reconcile this with the contradictory fact that when informants are aware that they are being observed, they cannot be fully at ease. While this is to some extent a problem that we have to live with, there do seem to be two mitigating factors. First, tape recorders are perhaps not as strange and intrusive as when they were first used in early linguistic fieldwork. Not only has their size been greatly reduced, many people have got used to it as a natural part of ordinary household settings. This is true at least in the metropolitan environment of Hong Kong, where most people are much less

conscious of tape-recorders than they were, say, twenty years ago. More importantly, given what is known about the finer details in the organization of conversation, it is unlikely that small linguistic details can be consciously monitored for any length of time. My experience is that conversationalists' initial uneasiness soon (after at most a couple of minutes) gives way to whatever is the current conversational concern: one just cannot both attend to what is being talked about and keep worrying about the recorder at the same time for too long.

### *1.5 The Database of the Present Study*

Working under the guidance of the various methodological considerations outlined above, I have selected from a collection of audio-recordings twenty hours or so of conversational data obtained from a variety of sources, including face-to-face chats, casual interviews, telephone conversations, and radio programmes. They contain speech samples from a large number of speakers whose social characteristics in terms of such conventional parameters as age, sex, socioeconomic class, occupation, and education are extremely diverse, who were involved in one way or other in some natural, mundane conversation for a variety of purposes and in a range of situations. The spontaneity or naturalness of these conversations obviously varies from one kind of situation to another. For instance, chats among friends are more natural than conversations among presenters and personalities on radio programmes, while casual interviews are of a rather different character again. But they all provide instances of everyday social interaction conducted largely through talk, and are in this respect, fundamentally different from imaginary data.

## 2. Ethnomethodology

In analysing the utterance particles in the next three chapters, I will be developing and demonstrating an approach to the analysis of the particles, on the basis of a set of analytical tools and research procedures commonly used in Conversation Analysis (CA). Many of CA's fundamental assumptions cannot be appreciated without an understanding of Ethnomethodology, where its roots lie. I will therefore discuss, in this section, some of the theoretical tenets of Ethnomethodology. Instead of giving a detailed account, however, my aim is to outline those salient features of Ethnomethodology which are of special interest to linguistics in general, and to my present purposes in particular, while ignoring those aspects which relate more closely to philosophical and sociological research.<sup>1</sup>

Of the many insights of Ethnomethodology, which interlock and intertwine to form a systematic and thoroughly consistent approach to the investigation of social action, I have singled out three fundamental components, and shall discuss them under the following headings.

1. The reflexive character of the accountability of social actions
2. The indexical character of natural language descriptions
3. The documentary method of interpretation

### *2.1 The Reflexive Character of the Accountability of Social Actions*

Arguably the central insight of Ethnomethodology is encapsulated in the idea that social actions are accountable, and that this accountability has a reflexive character. Garfinkel summarizes this theoretical stance as follows:

"... the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'account-able'. The 'reflexive', or 'incarnate' character of accounting practices and accounts makes up the crux of [ethnomethodology's] recommendation." (Garfinkel 1967:1; emphasis mine)

Social actions are "account-able" in the sense that they are "observable-and-reportable, ie. available to members as situated practices of looking-and-telling" (ibid.) Thus an utterance is an answer-to-a-question insofar as it is recognizable, and recognized, ie. observable, as an answer-to-a-question. It is also reportable: it can be formulated as an answer-to-a-question. There are numerous ways of doing formulating, one of which is to report to a third party that my interlocutor has answered my question; another is to formulate it in the immediate conversation itself, eg. in the turn after the one in which my interlocutor is heard to have provided an answer, I can display my hearing of it as an answer, and in so doing ask for confirmation, clarification, justification, etc. But the point is not merely that linguistic actions can be so recognized/observed and formulated/ reported. Their accountability, their patently rational, objective and orderly character resides in the very activities through which such things as a question-answer sequence are managed as situated practices. That is, the procedures whereby participants' manage, for example, a question-answer sequence are identical with the interpretive schemes with which sense is made of a linguistic action as an answer-to-a-question. The analytic focus here is on the way participants organize their linguistic activities in such a way that they are accountable, ie. on their procedures or methods of sense-making.

The idea that social actions are accountable is not new or

even terribly interesting, if all one is saying is that actors can observe and report their own activities. Self-reports, in linguistics as in sociology, are fraught with difficulties as a form of data: they may be misleading or wrong in the sense that they may not be an accurate or true representation of 'what really happened'. What Garfinkel is recommending, however, is not that we should ask actors to provide us with accounts of their actions and take those accounts as data, still less as the truth. Instead, the whole question of the goodness of fit between actors' accounts of their actions and what these actions 'really are' (eg. from the point of view of 'exact sciences') is bracketed (as in phenomenological bracketing), and, as it were, put to one side. It does not concern us and it does not interest us. We have bracketed it because our aim is to study how actors can determine, to their satisfaction, that a particular action on a particular occasion of use is in fact what it is made out to be. How this is managed is a distinctly ethnomethodological question. Having thus bracketed such questions as the reliability, validity or scientific adequacy of actors' accounts, we are in a position to see how speakers actually use those same accounting practices in interpreting and making sense of (assigning senses to) each other's actions.

One way in which this fundamental insight can be appreciated, from the point of view of linguistic studies, is to consider the relation between linguistic knowledge/norms and action/use/behaviour.

A fundamental question in linguistic studies is how linguistic communication is possible. The usual form in which this question is posed is: what is it that a community of

speakers must know in common in order that linguistic expressions have the meanings that 'speakers of the same language' understand them to have? According to the prevalent, rationalist view, the aim of linguistic investigations is to specify, as accurately as possible, the nature of this common knowledge, ie. linguistic competence. The understanding of a linguistic expression is modelled as a process which, given a linguistic form as input, computes, with reference to a dictionary and a set of linguistic rules, a meaning. This takes place (ideally) irrespective of the 'contexts' in which linguistic expressions are used. The possibility of communication is then attributed to the fact that speakers of the same language share essentially the same machinery which assigns meanings to linguistic forms.

The relation between form and meaning is, however, neither simple nor straightforward. One of the nuisances that linguists have encountered is the part that 'context' plays in the assignment of meaning representations to linguistic forms. The problem is this: if, as mentioned in the last paragraph, the production and comprehension of linguistic expressions is to be captured by a model which assigns meaning representations to linguistic forms in a decontextualized manner; and if, as has been found to be the case in empirical study after empirical study, the meaning of linguistic expressions often cannot be sufficiently specified without taking into account 'contextual factors', how should context be accommodated within such a machinery?

Various lines of attack have been followed in the search for a solution. For instance, insurmountable problems which have cropped up in syntax and semantics have been taken over by pragmatics, where an attempt is made to relate truth-conditional

meanings to meanings-in-context (eg. Searle's speech act theory and Grice's ideas about conversational cooperation and implicatures). On another front, some sociolinguistic research has tried to deal with contextual variation, by studying the way variation in linguistic form can be stated in terms of contextual variables. Other sociolinguistic studies have identified socio-cultural norms as a means of describing the order and regularity underlying linguistic behaviour. All these can be characterized as attempts to fill the gap between system-meaning and meaning-in-context, by providing the decontextualized machinery with various supplementary devices.

Despite arguments over a great many details in these proposals, one basic assumption remains unchanged: to the extent that there is order in linguistic actions/behaviour, it is to be sought at the level of linguistic knowledge/norms. There is general agreement amongst linguists that the meaning of an utterance is 'given' in the rules, conditions, norms and maxims that govern or guide linguistic behaviour, independently of the actual, situated, occasioned contingencies surrounding their occurrence. Knowledge or norms provides, in this view, mechanisms that would determine the grammaticality, acceptability, appropriateness, or felicity of linguistic actions (performance, speech acts, behaviour, use), and a basis for the possibility of communication.

But there is a fundamental difficulty with this conception of how rules and norms of linguistic actions can be used to explain speakers' behaviour. For rules and norms to be able to account for linguistic actions and behaviour, one must show how they can be applied to specific instances of linguistic actions.

One must show, for example, that the meaning of a particular utterance spoken on a particular occasion can be computed by applying certain relevant rules or norms. However, far from being automatic and unproblematical, their application to specific, concrete, situated 'points' in an unfolding scene requires crucial decisions to be made as to whether and how particular rules or norms are to apply in each particular case. A prerequisite for the successful application of context-sensitive rules or norms is that a particular situation must be recognizable and identifiable as one to which they can apply. Thus, social actors are often assumed to be "cognitively equipped to recognize situations in common and, once the situation is commonly recognized, the application of common norms enables the actors to produce joint actions." (Heritage 1984:108) But the rules and norms do not themselves tell the actors how to recognize situations, and how to arrive at identical/common recognitions/ definitions of the situations in which they interact. In order to apply these rules and norms, we would therefore need a further set of rules to tell us how to recognize situations and circumstances so that we would know whether a certain rule or norm can be invoked, and how to use it. What is needed is a set of rules which would govern or guide our identification and definition of situations independently of the original rules. But it can be shown that we can never have such a further set of rules, because the criteria for identification, etc. can never be given in advance of the use of the original rules in our attempt to make sense of each other's utterances. Even if we could give some specification in advance, there is no guarantee that it would apply to a particular case.

I propose to show this by considering, as a specific example, one of Grice's famous maxims of conversation (Grice 1975, 1978), the maxim of Quantity. Before doing that, however, we must be clear about the nature of these maxims, and what they are supposed to be designed for. Grice makes it very clear that the primary motivation behind this proposal is to show that the alleged discrepancies between formal logic and natural language are not as great as they are usually made out to be, by providing an apparatus which would fill the gap between 'what is said' and 'what is meant'. Specifically, these devices are "conditions governing conversation" (1975:43), ie. they are normative constraints which, in speaking to each other, participants can be seen to be following. They are not meant to be prescriptive stipulations of how people should speak, or even descriptive statements of how people do speak (although there is a sense in which they should, and do, speak in the manner stipulated in these maxims). Rather, they form a "basis which underlies" (1975:48) participants' conversational (and other purposive and rational) behaviour. Throughout his presentation, Grice talks about the "following" and "observance" of the maxims. For him, therefore, the order with which conversations are conducted is to be sought at this level of description. The maxims are in this sense norms that underlie, and explain, behaviour. This is also the standard way in which the maxims are understood in the literature. Levinson, for example, characterizes them as "a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation" (1983:101). They are conduct-guiding in the sense that they are normative constraints which regulate conversational conduct, the adherence to which gives conversational conduct its orderly

character.

Consider now the maxim of Quantity:

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

In the following discussion, I will use the expression 'optimally informative' to describe an utterance which conforms to the maxim of Quantity. In this sense, the maxim of Quantity may be regarded as an 'optimal informativeness' requirement. With reference to this requirement, then, optimally informative responses to a question will be seen as normal and unproblematical, while responses which are not optimally informative (ie. more, or less, informative) will be heard in such a way that some reason will be sought as to why the response is not optimally informative. As mentioned, the point of the maxim is not that speakers should, or do, literally contribute optimally informatively every time they speak. Rather, it is meant to be a norm which guides or regulates conversational exchanges, so that speakers and hearers can invoke it, and check to see if in saying something their interlocutors are following it, and, if not, why not.

For this maxim to be usable for the purposes for which it is designed, we need to know, for any specific case, what is to count as following, and what is to count as not following, the norm. In order to do that, we need to have some criteria for assessing the degree of informativeness of utterances, because according to this maxim, utterances which are optimally informative have followed the requirement, and those which are not have

not. To be sure, Grice is not saying that how informative an utterance is is something that can be determined independently of the context in which it is used. In fact, he stresses that the informativeness that this maxim refers to is informativeness "as is required for the current purposes of the exchange", ie. given the purposes of the current exchange, an utterance that is more, or less, informative than is required will be deemed to have violated or flouted the maxim. Thus the apparatus needed is one which would assess the informativeness of utterances relative to a given set of purposes.

Consider in the light of this the following example:

"Suppose I say: 'Nigel has fourteen children'. I shall implicate [by the maxim of Quantity] that Nigel has only fourteen children, although it would be compatible with the truth of [this statement] that Nigel in fact has twenty children. I shall be taken to implicate that he has only fourteen and no more because had he had twenty, then by the maxim of Quantity...I should have said so. Since I haven't, I must intend to convey that Nigel has only fourteen."  
(Levinson 1983:106)

Notice that, as the utterance in question is presented as one to which the maxim of Quantity applies, it must be considered in relation to some circumstances in which it is said, for the maxim is formulated specifically to apply to utterances in context. While we are not actually told what "the current purposes of the exchange" are, we can, and do, nevertheless imagine that the utterance occurs, say, in some 'usual' conversation, for some 'usual' purposes. Thus the recognizably natural and plausible character of the example turns on the fact that we are willing to accept that, for the kinds of 'usual' situations which we can imagine, the utterance in question would not be deemed to be more, or less, informative than is required. That is, we are willing to accept that for the kinds of 'usual'

purposes that we can imagine, the difference between fourteen children and twenty (or nineteen, or fifteen) is not an immaterial one. On the basis of this judgement, we are willing, like Levinson, to draw the implicature "only fourteen, and no more than fourteen" by the maxim of Quantity. The application of the notion of 'optimal informativeness' seems in this case to be unproblematical.

But now, suppose, in response to my neighbour's request "I need fourteen plates", I said, "I've got fourteen plates". Unlike in the previous example, it might not matter if in fact I had twenty. To this it might be countered that, in this case, the current purpose of the exchange is to establish whether I have no less than fourteen plates, and so whether I in fact have more is, unlike in the previous case, immaterial. Therefore no similar implicatures are to be drawn from this utterance. This is certainly true. The problem, however, is this: if there are situations in which such implicatures can be drawn, and other situations in which they cannot be drawn, how are we to tell whether a particular situation is a case of one or the other kind? Clearly, some further guidelines will be needed in order that the maxim of Quantity can be used to derive the "only, but no more than..." implicature in some situations but not others. Would it be possible, in general, to provide specifications which would allow us to assess the informativeness of an utterance relative to certain "current purposes", in advance of particular instances of the application of the maxim?

This might be done by adding to the maxim a supplementary condition such as: "In the case of numerically quantifiable items, the stated value will be taken to implicate 'only the

stated value, and no higher than the stated value', unless the current purposes of the conversational exchange are such that the difference between the stated value and some higher value is immaterial".

But such a supplementary condition does not take us any closer to a solution of the problem. We would still need a set of procedures with which to decide whether a specific case at hand is one in which the difference between the stated value and some higher value is immaterial. Suppose I say "I've got ten pounds". And suppose it turns out that I have eleven pounds in my pocket. How would the 'optimal informativeness' requirement be applied? Will my utterance be judged to be less-than-informative? Will I be held accountable for this inaccuracy? But clearly these questions cannot be decided in advance of a specific occasion on which the maxim is invoked and applied to an utterance. If this is what I said to my wife who was gazing into a shop window, contemplating whether we had enough money to buy a saucepan that would cost eleven pounds, then my action may well be taken as an attempt to conceal the truth. It might then become an accountable matter. But if what she wanted to buy was a loaf of bread, then the difference between ten and eleven pounds might (hopefully) be judged to be 'immaterial', then this question would not, and cannot reasonably, be raised. Notice that the supplementary condition does not help, because whether a particular situation is such that the difference between ten and eleven pounds is material is a decision that needs to be made in every particular case, and cannot be made independently of the situated contingencies surrounding the application of the norm. That is, whether the difference between a stated value and some higher

value is material is a matter that is open to negotiation. 'What is sufficiently informative' relative to some current purposes can never be specified in advance: it is essentially and always, an occasioned accomplishment. Instead of having a set of stipulations as to what counts as optimally informative in certain situation types, participants have to demonstrate, to their own satisfaction, the fit between the norm and the case at hand, every time the norm is invoked. They have to, as Garfinkel puts it, apply the rule every time "for another first time".

It is clear from these examples that the maxim of Quantity can only work if we assume that some procedures can be specified in such a way that whether a specific situated utterance is as informative as is required for some current purposes can be determined. However, rather than being a question that can be answered independently of the application of the maxim, such decisions are made in the very act of applying the maxim to a specific case at hand. The decision concerning an utterance's informativeness in part constitutes an interpretation of that same utterance. From an ethnomethodological point of view, social actions explicate and at the same time are explicated by conduct-guiding norms like the maxims of conversation. Hence the reflexivity of the accountability of actions.

Returning to our original question about the relation between linguistic knowledge and use, what light has our discussion shed on this relation? It is customary in Linguistics to conceptualize linguistic knowledge as that which underlies and determines use. The meaning of an utterance is to be derived from information that is in a sense already there in the system. An utterance can be understood, its meaning recovered, insofar as

it can be decoded as an instance of an underlying sentence, whose sense can be determined in terms of system-internal relationships. Against this, Ethnomethodology insists that an utterance can never be explicated in terms of a meaning residing intrinsically in the code. To understand the meaning of an utterance is to assign it a sense. This requires two (not one) mutually dependent preconditions: knowledge of a code, and mastery of its use or application. Using the code as an interpretive scheme, an utterance is treated as an instance of (a document pointing to) the code (a presupposed underlying pattern), and a meaning assigned to it in terms of that code. But this instantiation is always open to negotiation, always accountable. Thus while our knowledge of the maxims of conversation must be assumed in order that our conversational conduct can proceed in an organized, orderly manner, the knowledge does not consist of instructions about what decisions are to be made at particular points in actual situated interactions. We are still left to apply these rules every time "for another first time". In general, while our linguistic actions cannot be recognized for what they are without the rules, the rules (knowledge) are empty, and explain nothing, without the use. What emerges is a relation between knowledge and action that is "profoundly reflexive" (Heritage 1984:6).

"[persons, including both lay and professional analysts] frequently must elect among alternative courses of interpretation and inquiry to the end of deciding matters of fact, hypothesis, conjecture, fancy, and the rest, despite the fact that in the calculable sense of the term 'know', he does not and even cannot 'know' what he is doing prior to or while he is doing it." (Garfinkel 1967:78).

Garfinkel uses the phrase "in the calculable sense of the term 'know'" to refer to the sense in which (for linguistics) speakers are said to have internalized a set of rules (including

norms, maxims, and conditions of appropriate usage) which determines the way meaning is to be computed from a given utterance. In this sense, actors cannot be said to know what the utterance means prior to the act of hearing and interpretation, for meaning does not reside in the code, waiting to be recovered. Nor can they be said to know what the utterance means while they are hearing and interpreting it, for that is not how they go about computing its meaning. Rather, they appeal to 'what everyone knows' and common-sense rationality (what is reasonable) by getting others to agree that this particular case fits a rule. In contrast to the idea that senses are already there in the system, Garfinkel proposes to look at meaning-in-context and common understanding as 'occasioned accomplishments', products of concerted work by participants in giving definite senses to utterances by negotiating, demonstrating, and establishing their goodness of fit to presupposed rules and norms.

It is interesting to compare here Wittgenstein's similar remarks on what one can (or cannot) be said to be doing when one says one understands. Wittgenstein stresses the futility of the misguided project of looking for something (eg. a mental process) that is understanding. He also stresses the procedural character of understanding.

"B understands the principle of the series" surely doesn't mean simply: the formula " $a_n = \dots$ " occurs to B. For it is perfectly imaginable that the formula should occur to him and that he should nevertheless not understand. "He understands" must have more in it than: the formula occurs to him. And equally, more than any of those more or less characteristic accompaniments or manifestations of understanding. ... (1958, para.152)

"We are trying to get hold of the mental process of understanding which seems to be hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments. But we do not succeed; or, rather, it does not get as far as a real attempt. For even supposing I had found something that

happened in all those cases of understanding, --why should it be the understanding? And how can the process of understanding have been hidden, when I said 'Now I understand' because I understood?!  
And if I say it is hidden --then how do I know what I have to look for? I am in a muddle."  
(1958, para.153)

The possibility of linguistic communication and common understanding becomes, in this view, not a substantive, but an operational, problem. Actors in a common-sense world who choose rational courses of action as means for the achievement of practical ends do not proceed on the basis of prior substantive agreements, eg. what the scope of application of a rule is, and how it is to apply to particular cases. The very fact that decisions and judgements are constitutive of rule applications means that such prior agreements cannot be there. This is not a question of rules having accidental exceptions; it is a problem that arises in every act of rule-application itself.

In highlighting the centrality of the reflexivity of the accountability of social actions, Garfinkel draws our attention to the common sense rationality of everyday activities, what he calls 'practical reasoning'. The problem is to learn about how persons, in the course of conducting everyday affairs for practical purposes, make a recognizable feature of their actions the 'goodness of fit' between those actions and certain interpretive schemes. One important thing to learn about is therefore the methods in terms of which the reasonableness or otherwise of actions can be determined. Their recognizably rational character is a product of concerted work on the part of participants in 'making of' accounts, such 'making-of' being bound up with (not independent of) "the socially organized occasions of their use" (Garfinkel 1967:3). It is in this sense

an ongoing, contingent accomplishment.

The rationality of our actions is not to be measured against some independent scientific criteria, but must be a topic of study in its own right, for the reasonableness and rationality of our actions is a practical problem that we as social actors are confronted with in the everyday activities that we are engaged in. Participants in interaction rely on and take for granted, the procedures whereby their practical actions can be made out to be reasonable, normal, expectable, appropriate, etc. The deeply reflexive relation between knowledge and action is a condition of their interactions.

"Not only do members... take that reflexivity for granted, but they recognize, demonstrate, and make observable for each other the rational character of their actual, and that means occasional, practices while respecting that reflexivity as an unalterable and unavoidable condition of their inquiries." (Garfinkel 1967:8)

It is this fundamental reflexivity that Ethnomethodology proposes to treat as a topic of study in its own right. Instead of asking what members' substantive agreements (eg. 'mutual knowledge', 'shared knowledge', 'common ground', 'presupposition pool') consist of, on the basis of which linguistic communication is possible, Ethnomethodology focuses on the procedural, operational structure of 'common understanding' and the how of intelligibility. How do participants design their actions in such a way that their 'motives' and 'intentions' are made a recognizable feature of their talk? How is intelligibility accomplished in situated interactions?

For the linguist, these Ethnomethodological insights mean

that many basic assumptions of the enterprise have to be reconsidered. One doesn't 'explain linguistic behaviour' in terms of rules of competence, conditions governing the successful performance of speech acts, maxims of conversation, variable rules, sociocultural norms guiding linguistic interaction, etc. Rather, linguistic knowledge can be regarded as assumed underlying patterns which are used as interpretive schemes in participants' performing and making-sense-of each other's linguistic actions. Instead of going round in circles about the epistemic and ontological status of linguistic knowledge and use, Ethnomethodology proposes a shift of investigative attention to organizational issues.

## *2.2 The Indexical Nature of Natural Language Descriptions*

The centrality of the notion of 'indexical expressions' for Ethnomethodology can be seen in the following programmatic statement of Garfinkel's:

"I use the term 'ethnomethodology' to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life." (1967:11)

The notion 'indexical expression' is a familiar one in philosophy and linguistics. These are words and phrases whose sense and reference cannot be determined independently of the contexts in which they are used. In linguistics, canonical examples of indexical expressions are often discussed under "deixis", which include demonstrative pronouns like "this" and "that", personal pronouns like "I" and "you", adverbs of place and time like "here" and "now", as well as grammatical categories like tense, and 'discourse-deictic words' (Levinson 1983:96) like "so" and "well".<sup>2</sup> They have been a constant source of trouble for linguistic analysis, because of the way their interpretation is tied to the contexts of utterances, so that the truth-value of 'the same sentence' containing these expressions may vary from situation to situation depending on who said it, to whom, when,

and where.

Ethnomethodology's proposal is not that there are indexical expressions in language, but that natural language expressions are essentially indexical. In this view, contrary to what is sometimes assumed, a definite sense cannot as a rule be assigned to a linguistic expression in isolation. The point is not that sentences may be semantically ambiguous; that, for instance, "Visiting relatives can be a nuisance" has two possible senses. Rather, the argument is that the terms of a linguistic expression are intrinsically indeterminate and negotiable, and that the sense of an utterance in context is determinate only insofar as it is made out to be so through sense-making procedures that assign definite senses to indeterminate expressions.

Assuming that the sense of an utterance is in part a function of the senses of the words in it, consider the word "relatives" in the above sentence. In what way can it be defined so that it can be said to have a determinate meaning, independent of the context in which it is used? Can a set of necessary and sufficient conditions be specified with reference to which the appropriateness of the application of the word in every instance of use can be assessed? Whatever criteria one might propose to circumscribe the use of the word 'relative', there are bound to be occasions of its application in which some part of this definition may turn out to be defeasible. For instance, is my brother-in-law's brother a relative of mine? Perhaps, but I am not all that willing to call him that because I have only met him casually once or twice. On the other hand, I am perfectly willing to accept that I have a few relatives who live in some far-off land in China, although I have not even seen them or

heard from them. This is not to say that we don't really know what 'relative' means. On the contrary, we believe, and assume, that everyone knows what 'relative' means. But this presumed common knowledge consists not so much in some shared substantive definition which stipulates what the range of cases is that the word can be used correctly to label, but in the very practice of applying a more or less "uncircumscribed" concept in actual instances of use (Wittgenstein 1958, para.70). It is in this sense that the assignment of a sense to an utterance is always, in Ethnomethodological terms, an occasioned accomplishment.

While most linguists would readily recognize the existence of deictic expressions in languages, many would hold that these are after all only exceptions to the rule. Most other words are semantically fairly 'stable', and can by and large (as long as we admit of 'borderline cases') be defined in terms of semantic features. Many would be wary of taking the ethnomethodological position too seriously, namely, that other linguistic expressions are not really different in nature from what are traditionally recognized as indexical expressions.

Thus it might be argued that while the interpretation of linguistic expressions may vary according to the contexts in which they are used, core semantic specifications are necessary in order that the minimal set of meaning contrasts that exist in the linguistic system can be captured, a core meaning that remains constant and independent of contextual impingements. It might even be argued that one cannot begin to document the contextual variations of the meaning of a linguistic expression until this central structurally necessary meaning has been specified. That is, a distinction needs to be made between the

system-internal meaning (truth-conditional meaning) of words and sentences, and their meanings-in-context.

Against this view, Ethnomethodologists argue that such a distinction cannot be upheld, and that all linguistic expressions are intrinsically indexical. That is, what is true of deictic expressions turns out also to be true of words which are not in the usual sense deictic. Consider the word "chair". If some linguistic expressions can be said to be objective (as opposed to indexical), this must be one of them. But as soon as one actually proposes some features in an attempt to set up the necessary semantic contrasts which would enable the linguist to state the meaning differences between "chair" and other lexical items in the language, one realizes that they can always be shown to be defeasible. For instance, what are the defining features of a chair? Let us suppose that one of the defining features of a chair is that it has four legs. But a chair with only three legs can nevertheless be referred to as a chair. Or, it might be argued that its defining feature is a functional one, namely, a piece of furniture for sitting on. But this does not take us any further: a three-legged chair may not be fit to sit on, but it could be referred to as a chair all the same. Obviously, further refinements can be made to the definition, but the defeasibility of the conditions would remain the same. Further, as Wootton (1975) shows, even if one were able to invoke a certain definition of a chair, and came to understand it on the basis of this definition, that still would not provide for the assignment of a determinate sense to the word 'chair' independently of a particular occasion of its use.

"Suppose I wanted to sell a chair, and after I have placed an advertisement in a newspaper someone comes to the door and says, 'I've come about a chair.' Assume that I have done a componential analysis of the word 'chair' and on this basis can assign a semantic description to that word in this utterance. The problem is, however, that I do not hear this utterance as referring to any old chair but to a very specific chair, the one that I advertised, and if I did not hear it in that way then one could surely expect considerable misunderstanding." (Wootton 1975:35)

While native speakers may well be convinced that a particular semantic representation captures 'the usual meaning' of a sentence, this should not mislead us into thinking that the sense thus arrived at is somehow the meaning of the sentence (default, neutral, literal, or whatever). As soon as we start talking about what a sentence ordinarily or usually means, we have entered the common-sense world of everyday social interaction, for which speakers' common understanding is itself in need of explication.

There are as usual interesting parallels in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. His doctrine of "finitism" is a case in point (Bloor 1983:25). Against the background of the traditional realist-nominalist controversy, ie. the arguments over whether a class of things to which a concept applies have something in common other than the name with which they are labelled, Wittgenstein proposes the famous notion of "family resemblance". He shows that while a class of things to which a concept applies do in a sense share features in common, they do not all possess some indispensable feature that defines the essence of the concept. Nor are they grouped together only because they happen to have the same name. Individual instances are assigned to the same family, and referred to by the same name, on the basis of occasioned decisions about their family resemblances. Thus, supposing that X, Y, and Z are members of the same family, there might be features shared by X and Y which are also shared between

Y and Z. On the other hand, some common features between X and Y need not be shared by Z at all. And none of these features can be said to be necessary or defining of the class. "Their common property is the result of their being assigned to the same class, not the cause." (ibid., p.31)

The point of this is that the sense of a word is not 'fixed in advance', so that its application to things and events is governed without problem or residue by a set of criterial features. Rather, its meaning is determined on particular occasions of its use.

It might be argued that communication would hardly be possible if words have no fixed meanings. But, as we have seen in the discussion of "reflexivity" above, common understanding, from the ethnomethodological point of view, does not consist of agreements on substantive matters (such as the criterial features of the words in a language), but of 'design principles', methods or procedures by which meanings are made of forms which are indexical, which by this very nature, require 'context-tying' in order to be interpretable. If human linguistic communication were to depend entirely on objective expressions, we would not be able to say even the simplest things without running into an endless chain of demands for elaboration and clarification. Thus, far from being a hindrance to communication, the indexicality of linguistic expressions provides the very basis for communication.

"Garfinkel proposes a change in attitude, pointing out that indexical expressions are not a nuisance in the context of ordinary discourse, for such discourse goes about its orderly way through the use of such expressions. Everyday discourse has a plain sense which the users have no difficulty in grasping. Their exchanges, rather than suffering from, actually depend upon the indexical nature of

expressions, and it is through a grasp of the circumstances of an utterance that persons are able to assign it a definite sense." (Sharrock & Anderson 1986:43)

### 2.3 *The Documentary Method of Interpretation*

We saw that one of the questions that can be asked within an ethnomethodological framework about linguistic communication is: what sense-making procedures are available to participants in interaction through which meanings are occasioned? A topic for investigation is therefore the methods with which 'what is known' and 'what is said' are used in a mutually elaborative way to produce 'what is meant'. Garfinkel describes 'the documentary method of interpretation' as follows:

"The method consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of', as 'pointing to', as 'standing on behalf of' a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other." (Garfinkel 1967:78)

Most of the ingredients needed for an explication of the documentary method of interpretation have already been introduced in our consideration of "reflexivity" and "indexicality" above.

We saw that and how linguistic knowledge and action are mutually elaborative. Thus, the use of rules, norms, and maxims as interpretive schèmes provides a "seen but unnoticed" background against which sense can be made of utterances. With reference to these interpretive schemes, linguistic 'appearances' (ie. utterances) are treated as 'documents pointing to' underlying patterns. On the other hand, the use of utterances as documents pointing to patterns, provides the evidence that is needed to project and establish patterns underlying actions.

We also saw that utterances, as indexical expressions, do

not have given, essential meanings. Rather, meanings are a result of participants assigning senses to utterances through 'contextual determinations'.

"Given the enormous array of possible contextualizations for a statement and hence of possible interpretations for it, and given also that the producers of the statements can never literally say what they mean, then the producers of statements can only make themselves understandable by assuming that the recipients are accomplishing the relevant contextual determinations for what is being said."  
(Heritage 1984:96-7)

A demonstration of the method of documentary interpretation was given by Garfinkel (1967, ch.3) in the form of a 'student counselling experiment', in which students were told that research was being done to "explore alternative means to psychotherapy 'as a way of giving persons advice about their personal problems' (sic)" (ibid., p.79). The subjects were told that they should ask about ten 'yes/no questions' about a particular personal problem that they had. They were told that the counsellor would answer their questions to the best of his ability. Without the subjects knowing it, however, the counsellor's 'yes' or 'no' answer given at the end of each question was pre-given from a table of random numbers.

Despite the admittedly artificial character of the experimental situation, many of Garfinkel's findings are of great interest to students of linguistics. Here is a small sample of them: (ibid., pp.89-94)

1. The counsellor's 'yes's and 'no's were perceived as answers-to-questions. They were heard as "advice".
2. "Subjects sometimes started with the reply as an answer and altered the previous sense of their question to accommodate to the reply as the answer to the retrospectively revised question".
3. "Incomplete, inappropriate, and contradictory answers" are handled with a variety of means, as sensible answers-to-questions, eg. they may be inappropriate

"for a reason".

4. Patterns in the advice were searched for and perceived.

In general, what were from one point of view senseless dialogues were given definite sense through the subjects' use of the documentary method, employing interpretive schemes to produce patterns (meanings) to 'appearances' treated as evidence, and to organize and accomplish what for them were 'counselling sessions'. Random 'yes's and 'no's were treated as evidence pointing to underlying patterns which make them meaningful.

Subsequent research in Conversation Analysis, using natural speech data, has confirmed many of Garfinkel's insights in this demonstration, and shown that participants have means available to them to make sense of, and understand, each other's utterances-in-sequence.

An important implication of this ethnomethodological insight for linguistics is that one can approach natural dialogues by looking for (1) the kinds of resources available to participants for treating linguistic forms as documents of underlying patterns; (2) the underlying patterns that are established on the basis of linguistic evidence; and (3) the ways in which meanings-in-context are constructed through these interdependent means.

For my present purpose of investigating utterance particles in Cantonese, these proposals suggest that instead of looking for 'core/intrinsic meanings' of the particles, or a set of criterial semantic or pragmatic features, these objects may be approached from the point of view of their discourse-deictic properties. Close examination of instances of their use in context can be expected to yield insights into the ways in which aspects of the documentary method feature in the organization of language.

### 3. Conversation Analysis

Having thus set an ethnomethodological backdrop, I will outline in this section a number of methodological considerations distinctive of Conversation Analysis (CA). My aim is to record briefly only those assumptions which are most relevant to the analyses to be developed in the next three chapters. I will therefore not go into detailed arguments which may be necessary to establish some of these assumptions.<sup>3</sup>

Following Heritage (1985:1), I will start with a discussion of the basic orientation of CA, under the following three headings:

- "1. Interaction is structurally organized;
2. Contributions to interaction are both context shaped and context renewing; and
3. These two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order of detail in conversational interaction can be dismissed *a priori* as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant."

#### 3.1 *The Production of Orderliness in Conversation*

One of the fundamental assumptions of research in CA, which is derived from Ethnomethodology, is that the order and organization of conversational interaction are to be described as "structures in their own right, which ... stand independently of the psychological or other characteristics of particular participants" (ibid.) Instead of viewing participants in interaction as bundles of idiosyncratic, 'social', or psychological attributes, CA treats them, just as they treat each other, as rational social agents who are partners in concerted activities. "Settings of organized everyday affairs" (Garfinkel 1967:1) are produced and managed through sense-making procedures with which meanings are occasioned in conversational contexts. Utterances are in this

sense documents or evidence via which participants' psychology (eg. their intentions) are made manifest. Wootton describes this central concern in CA as "the concern that conversation analysts have with how people, in their dealings with each other, document for each other what is taking place" (MS:8) Thus, private intentions and feelings have no place in linguistic communication until they are demonstrably publicly displayed. The documentary method of interpretation provides no 'time-out', so that every utterance produced in some context is treated, essentially and unavoidably, as purposeful action, ie. as 'meaning something'. This provides a basis for the possibility of meaning, and therefore communication.

### *3.2 The Mutual Explication of Utterance and Context*

The assumption that utterances are context shaped and context renewing is derived from the notion of reflexivity discussed above. Thus while utterances, being essentially indexical, cannot be interpreted independently of a context, the occurrence of each utterance in itself reconstitutes and transforms the context. A context explicates and is at the same time explicated by an utterance.

While it is a mundane observation that the actual business of linguistic interaction takes place in real time, the consequences of this for the conduct of conversational interaction have not always been taken up seriously. One consequence of the time-bound nature of conversational interaction is that linguistic objects find themselves in constant sequential relationship to one another. A solid finding which has merged from CA studies is that inferences and

interpretations of utterances draw on these sequential relationships. Indeed, it has been argued that these relationships constitute a primary aspect of an utterance's 'context', so that its interactional import cannot be sufficiently determined independently of its placement in a sequence. Schegloff, for example, maintains that

"...no analysis, grammatical, semantic pragmatic, etc. of... utterances taken singly and out of sequence, will yield their import in use, will show what co-participants might make of them and do about them." (1984:31)

An utterance such as "did you" may, in different sequential contexts, be made out to be a question, an acknowledgement, a threat, a compliment, a complaint, etc., depending in part, but crucially, on the immediately preceding and following turns at talk. Thus, "sequences and turns within sequences, rather than isolated sentences or utterances" have been identified as CA's "primary units of analysis" (Atkinson & Heritage 1984:5).

The mutually elaborative relation between utterance and context also means that utterances must be built with a specific orientation to the circumstances in which they are used. In particular, they need to be designed with reference to the participants for whom they are intended. This central feature of conversational interaction is often referred to in the literature as "recipient design". The primacy of "recipient design" has been documented time and again in CA studies. Thus, Schegloff's study of "place formulation" (1972a) stresses the importance of assumptions about who the recipient is, where he lives, what places he has been to, and a host of other contingencies, for the design of place descriptions. Jefferson (1985) shows how "glosses" (undetailed descriptions) are "unpackaged" (detailed)

at precisely those points in conversations where the recipient has clearly manifested a "willingness" to go into the details of the glosses.

### 3.3 *The Empirical Investigation of Observable Details*

Conversation analysts assume that features such as those mentioned so far inhere in the details of interaction. For conversation, this means that no 'small phonetic details', apparent 'performance errors', and other 'irrelevancies' of talk should be ruled out *a priori* as perfunctory, haphazard or non-contributive. Heritage mentions two major consequences arising from this assumption. First, this has led to "a general retreat from premature theorizing" (1985:2), and the building of what Levinson (1983:285) calls "an empirical tradition" which is lacking in pragmatics, and in linguistics generally. Second, "every effort is made to render empirical analyses answerable to the specific details of research materials and, in every way, to avoid idealizing the latter." (1985:2)

A related point may be referred to as 'respect for the individual case'. The best known example of this orientation is Schegloff's (1972b) reanalysis of conversation openings to take into account one apparent exception out of 500 data extracts. He changed his initial analysis "call-recipient speaks first" into one which hinges on a "summons-response" organization, which turned out not only to be able to handle all of his data, but explicated them better, eg. the third position being, under the new analysis, a means for the introduction of 'first topic'. Another example is Jefferson's (1984) intensive analysis of one single data extract, out of which a great number of insights have

been gained on "disjunctive and stepwise topic shifts". While it would be unrealistic to pretend that the analysis of single cases does not have limitations, it would be equally unwise to dismiss its value too hastily. At the very least a meticulous and perceptive account of a single case would provide a valuable point of entry for the examination of further and more data. In any case, whatever descriptive account is offered for any class of phenomena, it must ultimately be answerable to individual cases.

### *3.4 Evidence*

Next, we need to consider what kinds of evidence are usually sought in CA studies. The crucial feature here is what might be called the 'proof procedure', which means that the professional analyst's interpretations of particular turns at talk are constrained by the interpretations that are made by the participants themselves of those same turns at talk in the course of their conversation. These latter interpretations are manifest and available in the data themselves, as interpretations of prior turns are evidenced and displayed in subsequent turns. As conversational data are publicly available and can be subject to independent scrutiny, particular analyses are always open to revision and re-analyses. Thus, far from being what might at first sight seem an unconstrained subjective exercise, claims made in CA studies on the basis of data that are publicly available are empirical in nature, ie. they are systematically open to confirmation and disconfirmation.

"While understandings of other turn's talk are displayed to co-participants, they are available as well to professional analysts, who are thereby afforded a proof criterion (and a search procedure) for the analysis of what a turn's talk is occupied with. Since it is the parties' understandings of

prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is their understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns affords both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns -- resources intrinsic to the data themselves." (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974:729)

Wootton (MS) lists five types of evidence that are regularly used in CA to support empirical claims: (MS:9)

1. matters concerning sequential placement
2. co-occurring evidence within a turn
3. subsequent treatment of the object in question
4. discriminability of the object
5. exploitation of the object's properties

*3.4.1 Sequential placement* As mentioned in connection with the 'proof procedure', detailed consideration of the sequential placement of conversational objects (such as the utterance particles that are being studied in this thesis) often furnishes the analyst with evidence about their properties. Specifically, examination of the distribution of a conversational object across a range of sequential types (eg. different kinds of adjacency pairs) may turn up properties that are not perspicuous when it is considered in relation to only a limited number of language games.

*3.4.2 Co-occurrence within a turn* Other linguistic materials that occur within the same turn as a conversational object under investigation may provide supporting evidence for a particular analysis. In the case of utterance particles, examination of a collection of data may reveal co-occurrence patterns between a particular particle and some syntactic or semantic structures. These can then be used to support or cast doubt on a proposed analysis.

*3.4.3 Subsequent treatment* Another kind of evidence is available in the form of the way instances of a conversational object under investigation are treated in subsequent turns within particular conversations. This kind of evidence can only be gathered through detailed examination of individual data extracts. Thus claims about the properties of an utterance particle may find support in the kinds of sequential implications that are evidenced in subsequent turns.

*3.4.4 Discriminability* The properties of a conversational object may be more adequately specified when it is compared with other objects which occur in similar sequential positions. Wootton emphasizes the importance of evidence obtained from systematic comparisons, "the absence of [which] weakens the discussion of many interactional items in the literature" (*ibid.*, p.14). For example, comparisons may be made between two particles both of which occur regularly in reporting sequences, which may yield evidence that help to discriminate one from the other.

*3.4.5 Exploitation of the object's properties* Particular instances of an object which fail to confirm a proposed analysis may usefully inform an analysis by providing evidence of the way properties of the object can be exploited for special interactional purposes. Apparent counter-examples and deviations must therefore be examined in even closer detail, to see whether they demand modifications or overhaul to a proposed analysis, or else provide evidence for the correctness of the analysis in ways that have been overlooked.

### 3.5 *Criteria for Assessing the Adequacy of an Account*

Finally, I should mention briefly the kind of criteria that have been used in CA for assessing the adequacy of proposed analyses. Wootton (MS:23-24) gives an explicit account of the main kinds of considerations involved.

1. "The analysis should be based on thorough and compelling accounts of the data fragments from which it derives, accounts which attend to the unique and context-specific features of these interactions as well as their decontextualized properties."

(*ibid.*, p.23)

2. Restrictions as to the positions and sequences within interaction in which the analysis holds should be stated.

3. Analytic claims need to be supported by the kinds of evidence mentioned above. "Any analysis which relies heavily on frequency considerations while leaving a residue of relevant cases unaccounted for must be considered weak" (*ibid.*)

### 4. **The Present Project**

Transcriptions of conversational data were scanned, and data extracts containing instances of three particular utterance particles were collected. The three particles selected for investigation are LA (*la55*), LO (*lo55*) and WO (*wo44*), which are among the small handful of utterance particles that are most frequently used in Cantonese conversation. About a hundred data extracts containing each were studied, of which fifty were subjected to close contextualized examination, in which process developing analyses were constantly tested and refined. The work of each particle in any particular interactional moment was examined in relation to the manifest purposes of the participants concerned. Particular attention was paid to their sequential

contexts, ie. their placement in a variety of sequential environments, and their sequential implications as evidenced in their treatment in subsequent turns.

While particular data extracts have received sustained analytical attention, my aim is not to defend a series of fragmented analyses. I wish to show that the particular kinds of work that these particles are demonstrably capable of performing are relatable to unified accounts of their discourse-deictic properties. I shall argue that the range of interactional tasks that each of them can contribute to can be seen to be the product of the mutual elaboration of the particle's presumed general properties and the particularities of the sequential environments in which it occurs. More generally, I wish to show how the application of CA techniques to the investigation of these conversational objects would tell us about the kinds of interactional problems that their uses orient to, and the ways in which solutions to such problems have impinged upon the structure of the language.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMON GROUND IN CONVERSATION: THE UTTERANCE PARTICLE *LA*

By 'LA', I refer to the utterance particle which has the segmental shape /la:/ and the suprasegmental accompaniment of the high level tone; hence its representation in other accounts variously as la1, la55 and 1la (ie. /la/ with tone 1). There are other particles with the same segmental make-up but different tones, eg. /la:/ with low level/falling tone, and /la:/ with mid level/falling tone, but they will not be studied here. I have used LA consistently, both in the transcripts and in the text, and since, of the three /la:/s, this is the only one that I will be concerned with, the proposed convention should not cause any confusion. The actual phonetic make-up of instances of LA may vary, particularly as a result of a variety of intonational modifications, but I will ignore these complications unless they seem relevant to an argument, and will proceed to analyse all those utterances in my conversational data which can be clearly and unambiguously identified as containing instances of LA. Further, although I will be analysing mainly instances of LA in which it occurs singly as a simple particle, if we assume that the properties of compound particles are partially determined by that component particle which occurs last in the compound, my treatment should in principle be extendible to compound particles where LA constitutes the last component.

## 1. Previous Descriptions of LA

Previous studies of Cantonese utterance particles have been few and far between. What follows is a brief survey of available definitions and descriptions of LA.

Three of the more widely used Cantonese-English dictionaries have included LA in their entries. Lau (1977) describes it as a "final particle" which "expresses the idea of requesting, commanding, or advising at the end of imperative statements; expresses the idea of an agreement of some kind having been reached." Meyer and Wempe (1935) also identifies it as a "final particle", and describes it laconically as "emphatic or euphonic". Huang (1970) describes it as "sentence final; used with commands or requests, or final agreement".

Yau (1965), a study in which one of the aims was to gauge native speakers' intuitions about utterance particles in Cantonese, adopts a descriptive framework which treats the function of every particle as a bipartite union of a denotative value and a connotative value. A particle's denotative value is its "S-Q function", which we can think of as a scale ranging from Statement (S) to Question (Q). Subjects in Yau's experiments were asked to place an inventory of particles along the scale, and, by averaging the results, Yau assigns each particle to one of five types: "S-type" (ie. basically statement-particles), "Q-type" (basically question-particles), "SQ type" (half-way in between),<sup>1</sup> and so on. As a result of this experiment, LA was classified as a member of the "Q-type", "question" being defined as "an utterance which demands a verbal confirmation" (p.39) Further experiments asked the subjects to judge the degree to which a selection of particles were "relevant" to a set of

descriptive labels, including "coaxing", "surprised", "hesitating", "fault-finding", and eight others. On the basis of the results obtained from this second experiment, each particle is assigned a set of connotative values. For LA, these include: "coaxing", "persuading", "reminding", and "politely urging".

Gibbons (1980) describes a selection of utterance particles using a speech act framework. Particles are categorized in terms of one major dichotomy : representatives vs. directives. Within the class of directives, a sub-division is set up between "questions" ("those [speech acts] that require a response in terms of a reply"), and "mands" ("those [speech acts] that require a response in terms of action") (p.767). Further, a three-point scale is used to indicate the "strength" of a particle, the degree to which a response is expected, "1" being the weakest and "3" the strongest. In terms of these taxonomic parameters, LA is described as a mand which has a strength of 2. It is also briefly glossed as a "request".

The most recent study to date is Kwok (1984) whose main concern is to identify the "core meaning" of each utterance particle from an examination of a two-hour corpus of telephone conversations. LA is said to be "...similar in function and, indeed, in pronunciation to 'la' in Putonghua", and has the function of expressing (following Chao 1968) "lively enumeration". It has "a certain lack of definiteness, a lack of finality or completeness [and] hesitation" It may express "the idea that we are dealing with a list of something which is not complete", or "indicate that the speaker has not yet reached the end of the story." (p.55-57)

The most striking thing about these descriptions is that they tell us rather different things about the particle. It is almost surprising that they claim to be characterizing the same particle, rather than two or three different ones. It should become clear in the course of this chapter that the reason for these discrepancies is that these authors have provided us with partial pictures of the kinds of work that this particle can perform. Each has given emphasis to some uses but played down or ignored other uses. I will show that each of these descriptions could be a viable interpretation of some aspects of the functioning of the particle in discourse, but none has succeeded in capturing the essence of the problem, namely, how is it that LA can be used in such a large variety of ways?

Taking these characterizations as revealing the authors' (and their informants') intuitions about the particle, we may summarize these intuitions as follows:

- (1) LA is an utterance particle;
- (2) It is used in requests, commands, and 'urgings', and in some way 'demands' or 'requires' a response;
- (3) It may express 'agreement' of some kind;
- (4) It has a certain element of 'indefiniteness' and 'incompleteness';
- (5) In a story or account, it indicates that the speaker has not yet reached the end.

For ease of reference I will refer to utterances of which LA forms a part 'LA-suffixed-utterances'. Part of my task will be to examine the distribution of LA-suffixed-utterances.

In the following sections, I shall examine data fragments in which LA-suffixed-utterances are found to occur in various kinds of sequential contexts, and describe the kinds of properties that LA exhibits by explicating its contributions to the overall

meaning of the utterances in which it occurs in relation to the sequential contexts. The main kinds of sequences in which LA-suffixed-utterances occur include:

- (1) Reportings and Story-tellings
- (2) Listings and Instructions
- (3) Understanding checks
- (4) Suggestions
- (5) Agreements
- (6) Pre-closings

## **2. Reportings and Story-tellings**

One of the conversation organizational problems that co-participants have to deal with in reportings is the need to sustain mutual orientation as to what they are doing, where they are at any point in the report, and what to do next. Reportings regularly proceed in a step-by-step fashion, with the co-participants pausing at certain points in the reporting to check out their whereabouts (eg. Sacks, 1972a, 1972b, Schegloff 1972a, and Pomerantz 1984b). These are specifically points in a reporting where the establishment of certain 'facts' about times and places, people, situations, etc. as things-known-in-common are dealt with as subsidiary, background issues, the clearing of which may facilitate the report's progress. This kind of ground-clearing work can be done in a variety of ways. For example, a certain 'fact' in a report may be formulated as a thing-known-in-common on the assumption that this is "what everyone knows"; a place may be formulated as known-in-common which the co-participants "just passed through", and so on.

LA is not the only particle that can be used to segment an extended reporting into chunks; neither is it a necessity that some particle be used. In fact, reportings may be segmented into chunks which do not end in a particle at all. The point, however, is that LA is sometimes used for such segmentation; and we want to know, just in those cases where LA is used, why it is used: what are the regular features that go with LA-segmentation?

Consider first an instance of LA in a reporting sequence.

(1) [TC:1:134]

<p>P: .hhh hai# goum le::: wajee Mrs Wong le:[: heui-jigei tung o= [ [mm L: [mm P: =gong le::: jau [waa (.) a:m [ [mm L: [mm (0.8) P: jee: (.) e::: (.) gamchi hai::: (0.5) keui::i: jei# aa::: seuiyiu- dou hai keui::: godi::: hoksaang --&gt;LA:  L: mm P: ge bongsau [(.) soyi le::: jau::: [ [mm L: [mm (0.7) L: keui: [: P: [yatding yiu chingcho lo=  L: =hai= P: =ha# yatding yiu chingcho hai matye  L: ha ha</p>	<p>P: .hhh yes so PT perhaps Mrs Wong PT herself with me [yes and perhaps Mrs. Wong she talked to me--] L: mm P: talk PT em say (.) em [and said--] L: mm (0.8) P: I-mean (.) e: (.) this-time is (0.5) she I-mean em need be she those students LA [I mean, em, now that her students are needed] L: mm P: of help (.) so PT em [to help, so em--] L: mm (0.7) L: she P: must should clear PT [she has to be clear--] L: yes P: yes must should clear be what [she has to be clear what it's all about] L: yes yes</p>
--	---

This is an extract from a longer telephone conversation where P has called to tell some 'bad news' to L. But before he discloses what the bad news is, P embarks on a report of the circumstances leading up to the occurrence of the bad news. Focusing on the LA-suffixed-utterance, which I have arrowed, a few observations can be recorded. First, it occurs in a place

where P is recognizably in the middle of his report. Notice how, on the appearance of LA, L produces a minimal continuer, "mm", following on from which P continues. Second, P is manifestly seeking confirmation as to his assumption that the description of the situation in question ("now that her students are needed") is something that L, the recipient, can be expected to know. Third, this ground-clearing will serve as a basis for further detailing of the circumstances which will eventually lead up to the communication of the 'bad news'.

In [2] below, L, the reporter, is giving P an extended account of what kind of research he has been doing.

(2) [TC:1:140]

<p>L: ... soyi jee::# e:: ngo# jee in#  ngo m-hai waa jou yatgo:: .hhh (.)  --&gt;e:: systematic ge survey LA=</p> <p>P: =hai</p> <p>L: soyi::::: .hhh (0.3) 'jiugai jau  m yinggoi yau mee mantai ge:</p>	<p>L: so I-mean# em I# I-mean in#  I not say do one .hhh (.)  em systematic of survey LA  [so I, I mean I'm not  doing a systematic survey]</p> <p>P: right</p> <p>L: so .hhh (0.3) probably then  not should there-be any  problem PT  [so there shouldn't be any  problems]</p>
--	---

LA occurs at a point when the formulation "systematic survey" is presented. P's perfectly timed minimal recognition token ("hai") confirms the reporter's assumption, as displayed in the LA-suffixed-utterance, that "systematic survey" is a thing-known-in-common. In so doing, the conversational participants have managed to clear the ground for further telling to proceed. Notice that L's turn following P's minimal recognition token is designed in such a way as to tie back to his previous turn, and is clearly hearable as a continuation of the report. It is interesting to note how this continuation is related to the ground-clearing work initiated through the use of LA, and the

subsequent co-ordinated establishment of a common understanding.

Consider next an instance of LA at a point in a report where the identity of a location is at issue.

(3) [MAK:1:055]

M:	ngodei:: gamat dou cho dik-s yaai ngo dak yat-gaa che je: (0.4) ngodei [leung-gaa che [ [ [	M:	we today also take dik-s cos I have one car only (0.4) we two cars [today we took a [taxi] too cos I have only one car (0.4) we needed]
J:	[haa	J:	yes
M:	siin gau aamaa (0.4) gamat chaichai heui aamaa (0.5)	M:	before enough aamaa (0.4) today together go PT (0.5) then### in G street
1->	goumaa### hai::: G gaai	(.)	that-is just-now there LA
2->	(.)	(0.6)	my brother place they take one taxi (.) then pick- up us one person go (.) so we also other one aa car this car go= [two cars, cos all of us went together today, so in G street, I mean that place just now, my brother's place, they took one taxi (.) then picked up one of us (.) and we took another em this car]
3->	jee chausin go-dou LA		
4->	(0.6)		
5->	ngo sailou dou keuidei cho yagaa diksi (.) mei pick-maai ngodei yago yan heui (.) goum ngodei yau lingngoi yagaa aa cho yigaa che heui=		
J:	=ha#	J:	=yeah

This extract is taken from a longer sequence in which M reports to J what she did earlier that day : she and her family went to have lunch in a restaurant. The reporting reached a point when M, upon mentioning the name of a street ("G street"), pauses to seek mutual identification and recognition of the location in question. Her assumption of shared knowledge is exhibited through the production of a LA-suffixed-utterance (arrow 3: "the place just now LA") which re-formulates the earlier "G-street", and presents it now as a location whose identity the recipient ought to be able to establish. However, unlike the last episode where the recipient issues a continuer,

the LA-suffixed-utterance in this instance is met with a silence (arrow 4). In response to that, M does another re-formulation (arrow 5: "my brother's place"), this time without the particle, leaving no gap for recognition noises, and carries straight on with her report.

The silence following LA in this data fragment shows that the occurrence of LA does not guarantee a response (at least a verbal response such as a continuer), which, given the nature of the turn-taking system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), is only to be expected. What is interesting, however, is the way in which silences immediately after the production of LA are interpreted by the reporter.<sup>2</sup> While it is conceivable that such silences might be heard as indicating trouble, eg. that the recognition and identification being sought is not available, an inspection of the data shows that this is regularly not how silences in this position are interpreted. A common way in which reporters deal with these silences is to sequentially delete the ground-clearing project initiated by the prior LA-suffixed-utterance, and proceed with the report as if the display of recognition being sought was after all inconsequential. Thus, in [3], while M does produce a second re-formulation (arrow 5) after the silence, she continues the report as if the identity of the location being referred to by the previous two formulations does not matter. This suggests that while LA is a means for the initiation of a subsidiary project the aim of which is to establish common understanding, the main project (in this case, the report) need not be held up until the ground is cleared.

Nevertheless, the pause following LA is a potential place for recognition or supportive noises like "mhm" and "ha"

("yeah"), ie. J could have provided some kind of ground-cleared/go-ahead signal during that brief interval. It is one thing to keep going in the course of reporting, not leaving any gap for potential confirmation of common ground being achieved, and quite another to move on after a display of the assumption of the availability of common ground. I suggest that during the 0.6-second-silence (arrow 4) M would be looking for signs of confirmation or else possible trouble (e.g. non-recognition), and, upon not getting any response one way or the other, moves on in a way that is mutually endorsed, and therefore warranted. Her assumption of the availability of shared knowledge concerning the identity of "G street" has now been publicized and put on record. By virtue of that, the next bit of reporting can now be seen as being continuable as a result of the 'silent endorsement'.

The examples studied so far may have given the impression that we are dealing with a simple rule according to which any expression of the form "C + LA" (C=constituent) is to be interpreted as saying that the speaker intends to check whether the hearer can successfully identify the referent designated by C. The procedures involved, however, seem rather less straightforward. The next extract shows that the observations made so far would need to be refined in order for the work of LA in reportings to be fully explicated.

(4) [FEEL1:1:306]

P: gamaa mui-yat-go gong-daai-waa-ge-  
yan ne:: du:: yau buihau-ge yansou  
ge nei yiu::w jee wan-cheut  
go leiyau heui wai-mee-si goum  
jungyi gong-daai-waa [sinn-dak ]

[  
[  
[  
[  
[keui LA::]

1-->C: jee la peiyu keui:: e: fong-jo-hok  
2-->LA: ngo m-jungyi keui keui  
3-->jau-wai heui waan LA::=

L: =mm mm

4-->C: goum keui a yigaa nei ji LA  
hou-do-di ye hou kapyan saimanjai  
5-->LA::=

P: =mm mm=

C: =gogo waan dinjiyauheigei aa goum  
keui heui di hou jaap aa di  
deifo:ng .hh

P: well every one-who-lies  
PT also has background  
reason PT you must I-mean  
find-out the reason he  
why so like lie first  
[well everyone who lies  
has a reason, you have  
to find out why he likes  
to lie]

C: he LA  
I-mean PT for-instance he  
um after-school LA I  
not-like he he everywhere  
go play LA  
[he, I mean for instance,  
after school, I don't like  
him to go and play  
everywhere]

L: mm mm

C: but-then he um now you  
know LA many things very  
attract children LA  
[but then he um, these  
days you know there's  
such a lot that attract  
children's attention]

P: mm mm

C: everybody play video-games  
PT so he go some very  
scruffy PT the places .hh  
[everybody's playing video  
games so he goes to these  
really scruffy places]

C, a parent, is here calling a phone-in programme on the radio to ask for advice about the trouble she is having with her son, who "goes to play everywhere after school". In response to P's suggestion that she should "find out why her son likes lying", C gives an account of her trouble. One interesting feature of troubles-tellings is that 'facts' are given not merely for the sake of the record, but are also sensitive to the nature of the state-of-affairs-being-reported as a complainable. It is important for an appreciation of the work accomplished by LA in this fragment to note that C's portrayal of the situation provides not only a statement of the problem she is having, but also the grounds for treating that state-of-affairs as a

complainable.

Five LA-suffixed-utterances occur in close proximity, providing not only a background against which the problem can be stated --"so he goes to these really scruffy places", but also the grounds for C's assessment of the situation. It can be seen that all five occurrences of LA exhibit a design which is geared towards the portrayal of the state-of-affairs as a complainable. In this sense, the contribution of LA in this kind of sequence may be described as ground-laying rather than ground-clearing, although the two kinds of work are obviously related. The LA-suffixed-utterances in (4) are concerned with various aspects of the situation that is causing her worries: the person who is the source of the trouble (arrow 1); the time and kind of situation pertaining to the son's (mis)behaviour (arrow 2); an expected, reasonable, seen-by-any thing to feel on the part of a parent under similar circumstances (arrow 3); the times they're a-changing (arrow 4); and the proliferation of undesirable temptations to the young (arrow 5). In thus furnishing a basis for her anxieties, and displaying her assumption that the recipients can be expected to understand her situation and see the reasonableness of her actions and feelings, C is managing an appeal for sympathy.

As a background against which C's trouble is to be located and understood, the import of the various LA-suffixed-utterances cannot be determined prior to C's statement of her problem. Take for instance the two utterances arrowed 1 and 4. In 1, the successful identification of the referent of "he" as C's son would not allow the recipients to work out what the problem is or why it is causing worries, still less what C is trying to do.

Similarly, in (4), the sense of "now" cannot be determined until at least after the next clause has been delivered --e.g. "now" this very moment in time, "now" on this occasion, or "now" these days? In general, the identity of an object, a state-of-affairs, etc. is often determinable only retrospectively. What is crucial to a description of LA is the display of the assumption that common understanding is available, rather than the substantive sharing of information or propositions. In this data fragment, the contribution of LA to the overall management of appeal for sympathy can be systematically accounted for, though not in terms of a simple mechanism which would compute the interactional import of utterances on the basis of the correct identification of the referent of each constituent preceding every occurrence of LA.

One further observation should be recorded. It was noted in connection with the last extract that, while LA in no way guarantees a response, there is evidence that it sets up a special kind of place for such objects to occur. It was suggested that a gap may be left immediately following LA in which potential problems of recognition and identification can be raised and resolved. The instances of LA in the present extract suggest that a strategy is available where no gap is left at all, namely, the vowel of the particle can be lengthened, and similar analytic work as described above can be carried out during such time as the speaker holds on to his/her vowel (arrows 1, 2 and 4). Further, since the basic phonetic shape of the particle is such that it ends in a long vowel, it may well be that not even special lengthening is necessary. That is, the very duration needed for the production of even the shortest instance of this

particle is, with regard to the kinds of problems that typically crop up at such points, enough for an analysis to be made and a decision reached.

Another use of LA which is related to the ground-clearing and ground-laying kinds of work is one in which this particle contributes to the announcement of a 'topic area' on which some extended talk is about to be delivered. Examples can be found in a variety of topic-initial positions, eg. in post-greetings position, where LA-suffixed-utterances are used to gain ratified access to an extended slot for the delivery of a story or report. Consider an example of this in (5).

(5) [TC:1:095]	
L: wei	L: hello
P: wei ngoi Mr. Lam aa	P: hello please Mr. Lam PT [hello Mr. Lam please]
L: ngo hai aa	L: I be PT [speaking]
P: aa Mr. Lam aa	P: em Mr. Lam PT [em Mr. Lam?]
L: hai aa	L: yes PT
P: aa Patrick aa=	P: em Patrick PT [em it's Patrick here]
L: =aa Patrick	L: oh Patrick
P: hai	P: yes
L: hai=	L: yes
P: =aa:: jau::[: (ngo#)	P: em well (I)
1-->L: [dim aa lei# ha#	L: how PT you yes [howareyou/whatsup]
P: ngo tung ngo haaujeung (.)jau joi	P: I with my headteacher (.) em again talked PT [I've talked to my headteacher again]
2-->king-gwo LA:	L: mm
3-->L: mm=	P: about you I-mean want do interview that CL event [about you-- I mean want to do interviews]
P: =gwaanyu lei::: jee seung jou interview go gin si	L: yes
L: hai	

This is the beginning of a telephone conversation, an extract of which was examined earlier, where P has called to deliver L some bad news. Without going into details, and following Schegloff (1968) and Button and Casey (1984), I assume

that the first arrowed turn (L's "what's up, P?") can be characterized as a topic initial elicitor, which invites the recipient to state his 'reason for call' ('first topic') or otherwise initiate some other topic. It happens that in the immediately subsequent turn (arrow 2), P does introduce first topic, indicating that his call is to be about something somehow arising from his "further talk with the headteacher". This turn can therefore be identified as first-topic-initial. The point of interest here is that the topic that is being introduced is introduced in such a way as to require an extended 'preface' of some kind, in which P will give an account of the kind of circumstances that led to the news-as-yet-to-be-disclosed.

This interpretation is not being offered as one that has the benefit of hindsight. On the contrary, I am suggesting that signalling an upcoming extended report which will lead up to the first-topic, and, arising from that, proposing a provision for some extended slot in which to do the reporting, is what P's turn (arrow 2) is doing. A piece of evidence would be L's response in the next turn (arrow 3) where a minimal continuer is offered, which signals 'go-ahead', whereupon the turn is returned to P once again for further reporting.

The turn arrowed 2, the first-topic-initiator, does its job of topic-initiation in a way that is specially marked by LA, namely, it introduces a topic, which although opaque in its specifics, nevertheless is claimed to be known by the recipient in a special way. Specifically, LA effects one big claim, which is that L should, upon hearing the description offered in this LA-suffixed-utterance, know the kind of thing that he (P) is going to talk about. A rather subtle distinction is involved

here. It's one thing to not know what someone is talking about, and quite a different thing to not know what particular topic it is that one's co-conversationalist is going to end up introducing, but nevertheless know 'the sort of thing' that they are up to, the kind of business that they have in mind. Indeed, given sufficient and sufficiently specific prior dealings with the co-conversationalist, even more specific (though necessarily as yet uncertain) inferences can be made. Thinking in terms of the particulars of this present instance, P's first-topic-initiator is designed in such a way as to record P's assumption that the mention of "further talk with the headteacher" should ring a bell for L, and, although it is clear that until P discloses the news L is not going to know exactly what he is talking about, he (L) is assumed to be able to make inferences sufficient to make sense of P's upcoming reporting. Contrast this with the kind of situation where one simply has no idea what one's interlocutor is talking about.

As mentioned in connection with the last extract, what is at issue is not reference-recognition. Thus, through the use of LA, the topic introducer displays his/her assumption that the recipient can work out the import (in some way that is less specific than the eventual topic, but more specific than the mere referent) of the topic initial. Here, P is proposing and seeking L's confirmation that it is a warranted assumption that L, upon hearing the LA-suffixed-utterance, should be able to make the necessary inferences to arrive at the conclusion that he (P) is going to talk about some particular business related in some way to his "talking to the headteacher", and not just something about the headteacher. The possibility of dealing with fairly fine-

tuned intentions such as this is, I suggest, accomplished through the kind of work that LA can perform.

In story-telling sequences, LA sometimes appears at points where, for one purpose or other, the assumption of certain common understandings between story-teller and recipient needs to be documented. Through LA-suffixing, the story-teller can clear or prepare the ground for subsequent stages of the story to be told, while maintaining his/her claim to an extended slot to carry on and finish telling the story.

(6) [SS:CH:1:408]

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>E: ee: o ochi ge s saigo si<br/> o changge teng-go: z yau-ya-chi<br/> yat-chi le: .h[hh<br/>                                   [<br/>                                   [<br/> L:                               [ha#=<br/> 1-&gt;E: =jee tai ngaujai le (.)<br/>           jee go# jee gogo sengbaan heui<br/> 2-&gt;   tai ngau LA=</p> <p>L: =mm=<br/> E: =.hh tai yun ngau le jau:: honang<br/> o gochi m ji yaumou lokyi aa=</p> <p>L: =mm=<br/> E: gogo jau-lok-heui tong dou<br/> yauseui aa=</p> <p>L: =mm=<br/> E: =.hh dimji daiyat le (.) gogo o<br/> beng saai WO hh=</p> | <p>E: um I once GEN s small time<br/> I have heard z once<br/> once PT .hhh<br/> [um once when I was small<br/> I once heard]</p> <p>L: yeah</p> <p>E: I-mean watch cows PT I-mean<br/> every# I-mean everyone all<br/> go watch cows LA<br/> [I mean watching cows, I<br/> mean everyone went to watch<br/> the cows]</p> <p>L: mm</p> <p>E: .hh watch finish cows PT<br/> then perhaps I that-time<br/> not know whether rain PT<br/> [when we finished watching<br/> the cows, I dont know<br/> if it was raining]</p> <p>L: mm</p> <p>E: everyone go-down pond at<br/> swim PT<br/> [everyone went down to the<br/> pond to swim]</p> <p>L: mm</p> <p>E: .hh it-turned-out next-day<br/> PT (.) everyone all ill all<br/> PT hh<br/> [it turned out everyone<br/> became ill the next day,<br/> all of them]</p> |
|---|--|

Notice that E's report of "cow-watching" has been formulated twice: once through the utterance ending in le (arrow 1), and then again through the LA-suffixed-utterance (arrow 2). The LA-

suffixed-utterance is in this sense a reformulation of the immediately prior utterance. For one reason or another, the recipients' recognition of the activity of "cow-watching" on the basis of the first formulation is judged by the story-teller to be potentially problematic. The second description is thus designed in such a way as to provide for the issuance of recognition displays. As it turns out, this is offered by L, the recipient, in the form of a minimal continuer (mm), which gives a go-ahead, whereupon the story-teller continues with the story.

(7) instances LA in a similar position, but the problem here is not a straightforward one of recognition.

(7) [SS:CH:1:325]

A: yau-di-yan hou dakyi gaa

A: some-people are very weird PT  
[some people are really weird]

L: mm

L: mm

A: heui le: o# o sik yat go

A: he PT I# I know one CL  
[he em, I-- I know one]

L: mm

L: mm

A: yigaa jung heung ngodei hokhaau duk ge

A: now still in our school study PT  
[he's still studying in our school]

L: [mm

L: mm

A: [hou dakyi ge=

A: very funny PT  
[he's really funny]

L: =mm

L: mm

A: .hh jau:::

A: .hh and

(0.3)

(0.3)

-->A: m-ji heui haimai mee-si LA  
sanfu ding mee mee gaau-go-lai LA

A: don't-know he whether what LA father or what what taught LA  
[I don't know what has happened to him, the Father or whoever it was has taught him or something]

L: mm

L: mm

A: heui sengyat le

A: he always PT

(0.3)

(0.3)

A: dou yau siusiu:::

A: also has a-little

(0.3)

(0.3)

A: waigeui yan

A: apprehensive-of people

(0.4)

(0.4)

A: ge gangok seng:yau ...

A: GEN feeling often-has  
[he's always a bit apprehensive of other people]

The arrowed utterance here has an interesting feature. It is (to borrow Garfinkel's term) specifically vague. The speaker "doesn't know what has happened" to the protagonist of the story, but indicates clearly that something has happened to him, one such thing being that "the Father or whoever it was" had taught him. These descriptions provide vague but suggestive background material which would come into play in the interpretation of the story-teller's subsequent portrayal of the protagonist's behaviour. Thus, while this background material is brought up only to be quickly dropped again (as events-of-a-certain-kind-that-need-not-concern-us-here), the strangeness of such circumstances has nevertheless been put on record as known-in-common, such common understanding constituting a condition for the appreciation of the import of subsequent components of the story.

To summarize, in Reportings and Story-tellings, conversational participants are constantly and pervasively oriented to the recognizability, identifiability, and understandability of objects, persons, times, places, situations, and, more generally, the kinds of things that are being talked about. The utterance particle LA regularly contributes to the public recording of mutual understandings which may serve to clear or prepare the ground for the continuation, appreciation, and understanding of subsequent stages of a report or story.

### **3. Listings and Instructions**

One of the most likely places to locate instances of LA is in listing sequences, where the 'lister', for one purpose or another, provides a list of items.

(8) [SS:D2:178]

1 I: goum hokhaau leuibin yaumou di	I: so school in whether some
2 matye clubs lei yau:: (0.7)	what clubs you have (0.7)
3 e:: yaumou join-dou di matye	e:: whether joined some
4 club	what club
	[so are there some clubs
	in the school? have you
	joined some clubs?]
5 A: e::: poutungwaa LA::	A: e: Putonghua PT
6 [.hh	.hh
7 I: [mm	I: mm
8 A: science club LA:	A: science club PT
9 I: mm	I: mm
10 A: e#	A: e#
11 (1.5)	(1.5)
12 A: jung yau: me (.)	A: other there-be what (.)
13 astronomy LA::=	astronomy PT
	[what else (.) astronomy]
14 I: =mm	I: mm
15 A: .hh e:::m	A: .hh e:::m
16 (0.9)	(0.9)
17 A: table tennis LA:: hh hh	A: table tennis PT hh hh
18 [.hhh .hh heh heh]	.hhh .hh heh heh
19 I: [mm hou do wo ha#]	I: mm very many PT yeah
	[mm such a lot]
20 A: heh heh heh heh	A: heh heh heh heh
21 I: ha#	I: yeah
22 A: hai-goum lo	A: that's-it PT

(8) is a listing sequence in which A, in response to I's question about the clubs that she has joined in the school, sets out to list the clubs that she has joined. The first feature to note about these listing sequences is the 'one-at-a-time' manner in which they proceed. This means not simply that the lister segments his/her list up into item-by-item chunks and delivers one item at a time. The 'one-at-a-time' feature is a coordinated achievement, in which the 'completion' of an item involves as much work from the recipient as it does from the lister. Witness how at each 'stage' in the listing, the recipient produces an acknowledgement/ recognition token, which marks the stretch of talk in the prior turn (from the lister) as constituting 'one item on the list': 7 in response to 5-6, 9 to 8, 14 to 12-3, and 19 to 17-8. Another regular feature of listings is that LA is suffixed at the 'end' of each item. More precisely, the

occurrence of LA constitutes a proposal that an item has been delivered, ie. it provides a recognizable 'end' to an item on a list. That is, part of the job of LA in this kind of sequence can be characterized in this way: one, it marks the lister's proposed boundary/end of the current item and seeks acknowledgment/ recognition; two, it displays the lister's intention to move on and disclose the next item on the list. This 'continuation proposal' is an important feature of LA in this kind of sequence. Notice how the two silences (lines 11 and 16) are demonstrably interpreted by I, the recipient, as A's. In both cases, I is manifestly doing waiting, it being incumbent on A, having produced the last item and suffixed it with LA, to 'move on' with the listing. Note also that, after A's "table tennis LA" (line 17), and the immediately subsequent laughter, I returns the turn to A with "yeah" (line 21) for possible further listing, although, as it turns out, A could not find a further listable item and thereupon proposes to finish the listing ("that's it", line 22). This is a neat example of how lay conversationalists produce analyses of turns of talk in a way that is responsive to the properties of this utterance particle.

(9) gives another example of the use of LA in a listing sequence. In this case, the listable items are persons. Notice how, as in the previous fragment, LA signals the end of one item, and promises the beginning of a next item.

(9) [DJ2:2:430]

H: <u>OK .hh yiu-m-yiu dimcheung aa</u>	H: OK .hh whether-want dedicate PT [OK do you want to make any dedications?]
C: e:: dim bei ngo dedi maami LA:: ngo sailou WxFx LA:: .hh Celina LA Judy LA::	C: um dedicate to my dad mum LA my brother WxFx LA .hh Celine LA Judy LA [um I dedicate ((the next song)) to my dad and mum, my brother

<p>(0.3)  C: Jeng-SM LA fei-G LA::  Amy-K LA:: .hh e::  aa-Kay LA Wendy LA::</p> <p>(0.4)  C: e:: Nancy LA::</p> <p>(0.2)  C: Ellen LA::</p> <p>(0.4)  C: aa-D LA SxSx LA::</p> <p>(0.4)  C: HT Gongng Gongyip Junghok  form fri yi: chyun-baan LA::</p> <p>(0.5)  C: Jeung-HY LA Jeung-GW LA  Alan LA YxNx LA:</p> <p>(0.5)  --&gt;C: leidei leung-go LO=  H: =doje:  M: hai waa sik 'goumm do yan  gaa lei</p>	<p>WxFx, Celine, Judy]  (0.3)  C: Jeng-SM LA fat-G LA  Amy-K LA .hh um  Kay LA Wendy LA  [Jeng-SM, fat G, Amy-K, um  Kay, Wendy]</p> <p>(0.4)  C: um Nancy LA  [um Nancy]</p> <p>(0.2)  C: Ellen LA  [Ellen]</p> <p>(0.4)  C: D LA SxSx LA  [D, SS]</p> <p>(0.4)  C: HT Tech-- Technical School  form three E whole-class LA  [HT Technical School Form  3E, the whole class]</p> <p>(0.5)  C: Jeung-HY LA Jeung-GW LA  Alan LA YxNx LA  [Jeung-HY, Jeung-GW, Alan, YxNx]</p> <p>(0.5)  C: you two PT  [you two]  H: thank-you  M: yes wow know so many people PT you  [yes, wow you know such a lot  of people]</p>
--	--

The amazingly long list (as M, one of the two DJs, found it, as evidenced in the last turn in the extract) is segmented into chunks, the boundaries of which are demarcated by LA. Instances of the particle are either followed by a brief gap of silence, or latched on to a next item. In either case, the recipients offer no continuer or acknowledgement token. Notice that the first turn in this fragment projects a dedication job, and provides the caller with an extended slot in which she can mention all the names that she wants to mention. Given this structural provision, continuers and acknowledgement tokens are not strictly necessary. One thing, however, is necessary for the DJs to do in order to co-ordinate the construction of a list: they must listen for the caller's end-of-list proposal, come in at the right

moment, and respond to it in some way. In (9), the end-of-list proposal comes with two features. First, the item delivered is "you two", which can be heard in terms of the convention that the last persons to whom one may dedicate a song are the DJs themselves. Thus "you two" strongly implicates end-of-list. Second, the item is bounded this time by L0 (the subject of the next chapter), not LA.

A related kind of work that LA does in listing sequences, which might be called updating, can be seen in (10).

(10) [MAK:1:036]

<p>J: =gammmaa: oi-jo: go: (.) lei#  teng lei gong maa Fansi-haai-bou  lo:=</p>	<p>J: and-then had one (.) you#  listen you say maa Vermicelli-  crab-hot-pot lo:  [and then we had a (.) you#  I took your advice, Vermi-  celli-and-crab Hot-pot]</p>
<p>M: =aa ha ha ha ha ha=</p>	<p>M: aa yes yes yes yes yes</p>
<p>J: =Fansi-haai-bou (0.6)  --&gt;saam-go LA gam yinhau (.)  aa: jau: yat-go</p>	<p>J: Vermicelli-crab-hot-pot (0.6)  three LA then and-then (.)  aa: then one  [Vermicelli-and-crab Hot-pot  that's three, and then then  one]</p>

This is taken from a longer listing sequence in which J tells M what dishes she has had at a restaurant the night before. She has gone through two items, and is currently listing the third.<sup>3</sup> The arrowed utterance proposes an update: "so that's three", and, through LA-suffixing, records the assumption that both parties are now agreed that they have gathered three items on the list, and are now going to embark on a possible fourth.

Another kind of sequence which shares a lot of similarities with listings are instruction sequences. Again, some of LA's properties make it a useful particle in instruction-giving, of which (11) is an example.

(11) [TC:2:165]

K: goum ngo: yinggoi (0.4) dimmm  
jou le [yigaa

C: [la lei sausin le em ngo  
-->tung lei cheut jeung fei sin LA=

K: =ha[i

C: [dou lei: ng seunglei lo fei  
pick up ticket go yat le

K: so I should (0.4) how  
do PT now

[so what should I do now]

C: PT you first PT em I for  
you issue CL ticket first LA  
[now first you, I'll issue  
the ticket for you]

K: yes

C: when you ng come-up get  
ticket pick up ticket  
that day PT  
[when you come to get the  
ticket, on the day when  
you pick up the ticket]

Like listings, instructions also regularly proceed in a step-by-step manner. A 'step' in the instruction is achieved through co-ordinated work on the part of both the instruction-giver and the instruction-recipient. In (11), K's confirmation token after C's LA-suffixed-utterance marks the proper receipt of the first step in the instructions and at the same time signals 'go-ahead' for the second step to be described. One of the problems in instructions, especially when the steps are construed as dependent one on another, is that the imparting of subsequent steps is often conditional upon the proper giving and receiving of a prior step. Hence the need for pausing and checking.

#### 4. Understanding Checks

Given the kinds of properties of LA that have been identified so far, it comes as no surprise that the particle can occupy positions in sequences where the professed immediate aim is to check that mutual understanding obtains.

Understanding checks are performed typically as a side-sequence, 'inserted' in the middle of an ongoing project which has not come to conclusion. The 'checking' is analyzable as an insertion by virtue of the fact that upon its completion, the

next turn will be designed so as to tie back to the utterance which immediately preceded the inception of the understanding check sequence. This is important because understanding checks are rarely performed for the sake of checking; they can be used for a variety of interactional purposes.

Given this distinction between an on-going 'main project' and a checking side-sequence, understanding checks can be characterized as either speaker-initiated or recipient-initiated. By speaker is meant that person who is speaking, and in speaking, is addressing himself/herself to the on-going main project, just before the understanding check sets in. Now it is not necessary that the speaker first pauses, and then produces a separate utterance to start an understanding check. More often, they would design utterances in such a way as to build in a check. In this way, many of the examples that we have considered so far are characterizable as cases of speaker-initiated-understanding-checks. One regular feature of speaker-initiated-understanding-checks is that, upon completion, the floor will then be returned to the speaker for further pursuance of the on-going project. In the case of recipient-initiated-understanding-checks, they can be designed in a variety of ways, one of which is to build in a display of 'confidence', showing understanding or appreciation, and, as a further consequence of that, perform some interactional task pertaining to the project at hand. An example of this can be seen in (12).

(12) [MAK:1:040]

M:                                   saam bak ng  
man dak m dak aa

M: three hundred five  
dollars can not can PT  
[did it cost three hundred  
and fifty dollars? (is my  
estimate too low?)]

(0.4)

J: m-sai aa saam bak yi jaa::=

(0.4)

J: less aa three hundred two jaa

M: =o ngo lam-jyu hai gamseungha	[less, it was only three hundred and twenty]
[ga]a haa ]	M: =yeah I thinking be about
[ ]	PT haa
J: [gam lin-maai] be-jau wo:[::	[yeah, I guessed it's about that]
[hei-	J: so including beer PT
seui aa go-di gam-ge-ye	[and this included beer]
--> LA: [hamaa	M: soft-drinks PT those things-like-that LA right?
[ ]	[soft drinks and things like that, right?]
J: [haa::[: gam]	J: yeah so
M: [hahaha]	M: yeah yeah
(.)	(.)
J: dou gei dai aa	J: still quite reasonable PT
o go[k-dak hou dai] aa	I feel very reasonable PT
[ ]	[it was rather reasonable, I feel it was very reasonable]
M: [haahaahaaha ]	M: yeah yeah yeah yeah

(12) is taken from near the end of a price-assessment project, in which J provides M with a list of information about the food that she has had in a restaurant the night before, their prices, etc. and asks M to give her opinion on whether the prices are reasonable. The first turn in this extract is where M, having received all the information that she needs, attempts a guess about the total cost of the meal in question ("could it be as low as 350 dollars?"). As it turns out (J's next turn, "not that much, only 320 dollars"), the actual cost was slightly lower than M's estimate. Subsequent to that J reveals that she has not even mentioned all the food that they had ("and that included beer as well"). It is at this point that M displays her understanding through a LA-suffixed understanding check (the arrowed turn), which exhibits her assumption that by "beer" J is also referring to "soft drinks and things like that", although she did not actually mention them. This supplementary formulation that M is offering therefore performs the task of checking the validity of her expanded version, and embodies at the same time a claim of

access to J's mind. In short, a strong and confident way of demonstrating one's understanding of 'the kind of thing that the interlocutor is talking about' is managed through the offering of a LA-suffixed understanding check for confirmation.

(13) is an extract from a point earlier on in the same conversation, when J and M are still doing the listing.

(13) [MAK:1:036]

J: =gammmaa: oi-jo: go: (.) lei# teng lei gong maa Fansi-haai-bou lo:::=-	J: and-then had one (.) you# listen you say maa Vermicelli- crab-hot-pot lo: [and then we had a (.) you# I took your advice, Vermi- celli-and-crab Hot-pot]
M: =aa ha ha ha ha ha ha=	M: aa yes yes yes yes yes
J: =Fansi-haai-bou:: (0.6) 1->saam-go LA gam yinhau (.) 2->aa: jau:: yat-go .hh=	J: Vermicelli-crab-hot-pot (0.6) three PT then and-then (.) aa: then one [Vermicelli-and-crab Hot-pot that's three, and then then one]
3->M: =sei-go [sung LA:] [ ]	M: four dishes LA [four dishes]
4->J: [louseunn]nnnn mee sjiu louseunn [daaiji aa [ [ [	J: asparagus what chili asparagus scallops PT [asparagus, what, chili- asparagus-scallops]
M: [aa	M: yeah

Following the update (arrow 1), and just when she is displaying her intention to deliver the fourth item, J begins to show signs of difficulties with the search (arrow 2: "then-- one-"). The interest of M's next turn (arrow 3) lies in the fact that it proposes to further update the list as now containing four items, before the fourth item is delivered ("so that's four dishes"). Further, the offer of the update is done in such a way as to suggest that the main project (price-assessment) should be carried on, in spite of the unavailability of the name (and identity) of the fourth item, and as long as it is mutually understood that there is a fourth item. It thus projects a

possible side-sequence which, if it were successful, would have avoided the search problem that the conversational participants are faced with at this point in the price-assessment project. As it turns out, however, J overlaps and produces the name of the fourth item, thus sequentially deleting M's checking-sequence-initiator. It is interesting, nevertheless, to see the role LA plays in this exchange, and the way it contributes to the design of M's understanding check, by virtue of its 'ground-clearing' and 'continuation' properties.

The next fragment provides an example of a variation on the understanding check which is speaker-initiated, and which succeeds in generating a side-sequence.

(14) [TC:1:175]

L: [ngo daa-go-dinwaa lok-lei si:nn= [	L: I phone down first [I'll phone first]
S: [o#	S: aha
L: =tai-haa lei faan-jo mei=  S: =hai L0=  L: =goum ngo haang lok-lei ji-ma  S: haa (.) hou kan je 1-->lei ji ngo lidou dinwaa LA lei du:  L: e::::: yau  S: ( ) L: yi gau ng baat ling sei= S: =haa L: GxxLxxFaaYun dai-yat-kei=  S: =hai aa hai [aa L: [yasaam lau (0.5) L: Y  S: haa= L: =hou aa= 2-->S: =goum lei:::: (0.5)	L: see you return not [to see if you have come home]  S: yes PT [right]  L: and I walk down PT [I only need to walk down]  S: yeah (.) very near PT you know my here phone-number LA you anyway [yeah it's so near, you know my phone number here anyway dont you]  L: em have [em I have it]  S: ( ) L: two nine five eight zero four S: yeah L: GxxLxxFaaYun phase-one [((S's address))] S: yes PT yes PT L: twenty-third floor (0.5) L: Y [((Flat)) Y] S: yeah L: good PT S: so you (0.5)



L: goum-a janhai m-syun ngamlyn	with someone]
wo::[::::	L: then really not-really
[	secretly-in-love PT
[	[well then it really isn't
P: [mhhh heh heh	secretly in love]
	P: mhhh heh heh

C, the caller to a radio phone-in programme, is here seeking advice about his problem, which, as he formulated earlier on in this conversation, is that he is "secretly in love" with a girl. There then follows a series of fact-finding questions in which P, one of the presenters, asks about the caller's age, occupation, the circumstances in which he came to know the girl, and so on. [15] begins with P issuing yet another question ("so have you ever dated her?"), and, upon finding out that C has in fact dated the girl, and the girl has "sometimes" agreed to go out with him, she presents, in the arrowed utterance, a version of C's relationship with the girl for confirmation. This utterance is LA-suffixed, and has the appearance of an understanding check. Indeed, it can be argued that officially P is doing an understanding check, 'trying to get the facts straight'. Notice, however, that the understanding check is designed with no gap left following the particle LA. Instead, P delivers right on the heels of the understanding check the conclusion she has come to ("that isn't really being secretly in love with someone"). Thus, while P is officially offering a proposition for confirmation, the way in which it is executed overrides the possibility of getting any confirmation or disconfirmation. This suggests that the display of understanding and the seeking of confirmation, when done through the use of LA, can have a strong, confident quality. Through presenting *paakto* ("going out") as a (possibly) valid description of C's relationship with the girl, and through offering this formulation in such a way as to display

her intention to assume that C should know this too, and should therefore confirm her understanding, P can be seen to be 'actually' challenging C's earlier formulation ("secret love"). That this is what she is doing is, I believe, plain to C, as it is to any lay overhearer and professional analyst alike. In addition, the challenge will be felt to have a particularly sharp edge, as, thanks to LA, the utterance is designed in such a way as to point to the fact that P somehow has strong reasons to believe that C knows that the counter-formulation now being put forward is correct, and would go with it, implying therefore that C must know that his original formulation is incorrect. That is, in officially seeking to establish a common ground, which turns out to be one that is incompatible with a previous one, P manages, within the contextual particulars of the conversation, to challenge the validity of the old common ground on which the original self-diagnosis was based.

To summarize, the utterance particle LA is a resource which plays a role in various procedures with which conversational participants can establish to each other's satisfaction the degree to which mutual recognition or identification of objects, persons, events, etc. are available, or that common understanding of situations and contexts obtain. Further, in such sequence types as reportings, story-tellings, listings, and instructions, it often contributes to ground-clearing and ground-laying work, and strongly implicates continuation.

## **5. Adequate Descriptions**

Schegloff (1972) has shown that particular descriptors of locations ("formulations of place") produced on particular occa-

sions of use can be seen as context-sensitive<sup>4</sup> selections from an indefinitely large set of equivalent descriptions of 'the same thing'. He shows that one kind of consideration relevant to the selection of a location formulation (eg. whether to say "America", "California", "San Diego" or "Miramar Street") has to do with the identifications made by interactants as who each other is (eg. Is the interlocutor an American, a Californian, a San Diego resident, or whatever?). The question whether a particular description selected and presented is an adequate one is a constant and pervasive conversational concern. A description is adequate in so far as the recipient, upon hearing the description, can make out its import in terms of whatever interactional work is being accomplished through the use of that description. This often requires constant monitoring of the recipient's understanding, constant checking to see if the shared understandings that are being assumed are actually available. There are a few kinds of interesting evidence in my data to throw some light on the work that LA can perform which is sensitive to this sort of problem.

First, instead of occupying turn-final position, LA is often immediately followed, within the same turn, by an explicit questioning of the availability of common understanding, ie. by such objects as *haimai*, *haamaa* and *haawaa* (objects similar to question tags in English, eg. "isn't it", "don't you", etc.). Each of the arrowed instances of LA in (16)-(19) is followed by some variant of *hai-m-hai* ("is it not"). And, in every case, a response confirming the adequacy of the LA-suffixed-formulation occurs in the following turn.



L: jee m-seuiyiu-waa:-heui::  
(0.5)  
L: gaabaan m-housiu goumeung aa

L: I-mean no-need-to  
(0.5)  
L: pretend not-funny like PT  
[there's no need to pretend  
that they're not]

Second, LA is regularly found following 'approximations', descriptions which are either explicitly modified by such adverbs as *dou35* ("about"), as in (20)-(22), or couched in particular kinds of syntactic constructions, eg. *leung saam go* ("two or three"), *sei m yat* ("four or five days"), as in (23).

(20) [FEEL1:2:112]

B: o: (.) mhm (.) gei-noi jichin  
ge si aa

-->S: e: yat lin chin dou LA

(0.5)

B: yat nin chin  
S: ha [ha  
B: [hm hm

B: I-see (.) mhm (.) how-long  
ago 's thing PT  
[I see, mhm, how long ago  
did this happen]

S: e: one year ago about LA  
[em about a year ago]

(0.5)

B: one year ago  
S: yes yes  
B: hm hm

(21) [TC:2:98]

K: jau:: 'yinggoi le (.)  
keui jauhai:: e::  
ss-CPS yat-baak (.) luk-sap

W: ha#

(0.8)

K: goum le: jau: yau near letter  
quality daanhai ngo jau m-ji  
heui gei faai

K: and should PT (.)  
it be e::  
ss-CPS a-hundred-and-sixty  
[and it should be CPS a  
hundred and sixty]

W: yeah

(0.8)

K: and PT and has near letter  
quality but I then not-know  
it how fast  
[and it has near letter  
quality but I don't know  
how fast it is]

(.)

W: ha#

(0.6)

K: e:: h# yu# ngo man-go:: yaudi  
poutau keui jau waa saam-sap  
-->dou LA goum=

(.)

W: yeah

(0.6)

K: e:: h# yu# I have-asked some  
shops they then said thirty  
about LA like  
[I've asked some shops and  
they said it's about thirty]

W: ha# (.) ngo lam dou hai goum-  
seunghaa

W: yeah (.) I think also be  
about-that  
[yeah, I think it should be  
about that too]

(22) [TC:2:665]

K: bwo ngo lam m-hai hou do ye  
-->geje (.) [yat doi dou LA

[  
[  
[  
[mm

W:

W: mm

(0.6)

K: haa lo-saai# gwo-lei tai-haa  
dimeung ...

K: but I think not very many  
things PT(.)one bag about LA  
[but I don't think there are  
too many things, about one  
bagful, I should think]

W: mm

W: mm

(0.6)

K: yes take-all over-here see  
how  
[yes, we can take everything  
over here, and see what  
it's like ...]

(23) [TC:1:158]

S: heui dou geido-dim-jung dou aa

(1.4)

L: jiugai m-wui hou: 'ye: (.)  
yanwai:: mee je: (.) sikfaan ji-ma

S: o:: 'gamm aa=

L: =ngo lammmmm (.) baat-dimmmmm (.)  
--> baat-dim gau-dim LA::

(0.4)

L: 'lei:: tingmaan# tingyat faan  
mee gaang aa=

S: =tingyat faann (.) gau::-dimm

S: go till what-time about PT  
[you'll be there until  
about what time?]

(1.4)

L: probably won't very late(.)  
because what PT (.) have-a-  
meal PT  
[probably not too late,  
because em it's only for  
a meal]

S: oh so PT

L: I think (.) 8-o'clock (.)  
8-o'clock nine-o'clock LA  
[I think 8 8 or 9]

(0.4)

L: you tomorrow-night tomor-  
row work what shift PT  
[which shift are you working  
tomorrow night-- tomorrow?]

S: tomorrow work(.)9-o'clock  
[the 9 o'clock shift]

The third kind of objects with which LA regularly co-occurs within the same turn, which are in a sense also approximation markers, are modifiers like *goum*, *goumyeung*, *godi* --which may be glossed in English as "like", "sort of", "sort of thing". In the three extracts to follow, LA is found attached to formulations of time ([24]), manner ([25]), and people ([26]). (26) is particularly interesting, where an individual proper name is used to designate groups of individuals --thus, "Angel godi LA" (roughly, "Angel et al.") is used to refer to Angel and other persons who are associated with her.

(24) [TC:2:553]

K: lei dak-m-dak aa yugo#

(0.7)

K: yathai ngo heui LA

W: ngo tung lei lo LA

(0.3)

W: lei yau m sik lou

(0.3)

K: mm

(0.8)

K: ting::yat (.) e fong-jo-gung  
-->goum LA

(25) [SS:CH:1:384]

E: haubin je# jaai mou-  
yan WO danhai keui li# (.) ji  
gwan (.) dakyiingan heungchin  
jong-yat-jong go bo WO (.)  
-->yau m-hai hou daailik goum LA

L: mm

E: .hh honang o jigei:::

(0.9)

E: jigei gamgok keui LA hhh [hhh  
[  
L: [mm

(26) [DJ1:2:271]

T: ...dim go hou-m-hou

P: .hh hou aa

(0.6)

P: .hh e:::

(1.4)

P: goum mou-mat yan gala=

T: =aihhyaa heh heh heh .hhh  
lou:[yau heimaa dou yau]=

P: [e:: yau geigo:: ]

T: =leung go gw[a:::  
[  
[

P: [geigo chi-jo-jik

K: you whether-can PT if#  
[can you do that, if#]

(0.7)

K: perhaps I go PT  
[maybe I can go]

W: I for you get PT  
[I'll get it for you]

(0.3)

W: you also not know way  
[and you don't know the way  
there]

(0.3)

K: mm

(0.8)

K: tomorrow (.) e after-work  
like LA  
[tomorrow, em after work,  
like]

E: at-the-back real# really  
no-one PT but it li# (.) CL  
cue (.) suddenly forward  
hit CL ball PT (.)  
but not very hard like LA  
[there was really no one at  
the back, but it-- the cue  
suddenly hit the ball, it  
wasn't very hard]

L: mm

E: .hh perhaps I self  
[perhaps I myself--]

(0.9)

E: self feel it PT hhh hhh  
[felt it myself hhh hhh]

L: mm

T: dedicate song would-you  
[would you like to do  
your dedications]

P: .hh good aa  
[yes]

(0.6)

P: .hh e:::

(1.4)

P: and not-many people PT  
[there aren't many people]

T: my-god heh heh heh .hhh  
buddies at-least also have

P: e: there-are a-few

T: two CL PT

[come on, you must have at  
least two buddies]

P: a-few quitted those few PT

go geigo lo:::	[a few, those few who've quitted]
T: hou aa:::	T: good PT [OK]
P: e:: aa-Hing aa aa-Keung -->godi LA:	P: e:: Hing PT Keung those LA [e:: Hing, and Keung, and those]
T: m[hm -->P: [Angel godi LA:	T: mhm P: Angel those PT [Angel and those]
(0.2)	(0.2)
T: yaumou do: wan keuidei kinggai aa	T: do-you often see them talk PT [do you often see them and talk to them]

Finally, LA is found attached to non-committal answers to questions, such as "so so" in (27), "a bit" in (28), and "it depends" in (29).

(27) [DJ1:2:205]	
T: goum dou houchi ge seunnei aa	T: so really seem quite smooth PT [so things seem to have gone quite smoothly for you then]
(0.3)	(0.3)
-->P: .hhh maamaadei LA:::	P: .hhh so-so LA [well, so so]
T: yi:: houchi e:: m-[hai hou jung]yi=	T: oh like e:: not very like
P: [(***) ]	P: (***)
T: =goum wo hawaahh heh [heh heh heh [ [ [	T: like PT do-you heh heh heh [oh, you don't sound as if you like your job too much, do you]
P: [hai aa m-hai	P: yes PT not very like [no I don't like it much]
hou jungyi	

(28) [DJ1:1:118]	
B: yanwai keui:: hou hoisam jaulei yau gaulik sannin gwo aa	B: because he very happy soon have Lunar New-Year pass PT [because he's very happy that it'll be Chinese New Year soon]
C: ha#=	C: yeah
B: =haawaa	B: is-that-right?
(.)	(.)
-->A: mmmmm mm-ji aa (.) siusiu LA	A: mmmmm don't-know PT (.) a-little-bit LA [mmmmm I don't know, a little bit]
B: hhh heh heh	B: hhh heh heh

(29) [SS:CH:1:384]

L: lei seun-m-seun aa lei m seun

L: you whether-believe PT  
you not believe  
[do you believe it? you  
don't]

(0.6)

A: leung-tai LA

(0.6)

A: both-view PT  
[it depends]

This range of co-occurrence evidence suggests that one way in which the particle LA is used can be explicated in terms of procedures in conversational interaction with which common understanding of objects, processes, times, places, manners, persons, feelings, assessments, situations, --in short, 'what is being talked about', is established. LA-suffixing provides a device at points in a conversation where the establishment of such common understandings is an immediate concern. Through the use of LA, speakers can display their trust in the recipients' ability to work out the situated sense and interactional import of formulations presented as adequate descriptions.

It is interesting to note that a number of particles in English have apparently similar uses. For instance, James (1983) identifies a set of "compromisers", including expressions like "sort of", "like", and "you know". These discourse particles are treated as "metaphorical expressions" which "compromise on" the literalness of the heads that they modify.<sup>5</sup>

"...the significance of compromisers such as "kind of" ... is not to qualify, 'downtone', 'hedge on', or, paradoxically, 'compromise on' the propositional content of their heads. ... What compromisers do 'compromise on' is the literalness of their heads --as figurative constructions."  
(James 1983:200-201)

According to James, a central function of these compromisers is that they indicate to hearers how the meanings of the heads which they qualify are to be derived. Thus, the meanings of phrases and clauses with which compromisers are in construction

are to be derived from figurative interpretations, treating the actual phrases and clauses used as representations of, or standing for, equivalent expressions in absentia, expressions which are 'socially synonymous'. The significance of compromisers would therefore lie in their indication of a "something-like" relationship between their heads and socially synonymous expressions, and, through this, contribute to "a certain 'informality' of style and 'intimacy' of relationship" (ibid.,p.202).

"the LIKE-element may be glossed as 'I invite you to interpret the head as a synonym of like significance'. The assumption underlying this invitation is that there is sufficient perceived, desired or imagined interpersonal rapport --however specified-- to warrant, justify or support an appeal to these hearer interpretation capacities." (p.199)

It is clear that the kind of compromiser-constructions discussed by James share many characteristics in common with the kinds of LA-suffixed-utterances discussed in this section. It might therefore be possible to regard LA as having a similar role to play in conversations.

However, while there do appear to be a great number of similarities between this Cantonese utterance particle and the English compromisers, one reservation needs to be considered. Notice that James' account relies on an implicit distinction between imprecise expressions and full or exact propositional specifications. Compromisers are regarded as linguistic objects which mark their heads as vague, imprecise expressions, which need to be interpreted in special ways (ie. as opposed to exact locutions). Within an ethnomethodological framework, any distinction between vague, imprecise, metaphorical expressions on the one hand, and exact, precise, literal ones on the other is

problematical. It has been argued in the last chapter that all linguistic expressions are essentially indexical. That is, linguistic forms, be they 'precise' or otherwise, are made sense of through the employment of essentially the same kinds of contextualization and interpretive procedures.<sup>6</sup> In this view, the work of LA consists not so much in marking the linguistic forms to which they are attached as expressions of a special kind, inviting the hearer to apply special interpretive procedures. Instead, we can think of LA-suffixing as a resource that may go into the design of utterances, one which displays the speaker's assumption that the recipient can be trusted to carry out the required contextualizations and to determine the sense and import of certain formulations. Obviously, such a display need not, and cannot, be done at every turn in a conversation. Nevertheless, should such a display be needed for some interactional purpose (eg. the charting of multi-stage projects), it is a device that can be employed. In this way, it can contribute to the constant negotiations of common understandings on the basis of which further reportings, descriptions, tellings, etc. can proceed. We are therefore dealing not with substantive matters like the degree of exactness, explicitness or precision with which states-of-affairs are designated, but organizational issues.

Another particle in English which seems to have comparable properties is "OK". Condon (1986) describes its distribution in terms of various "levels of organization" (topics, adjacency pairs, speech-acts), noting that it often occurs at junctures where more than one of these levels converge: "OK appears at points in the discourse when the organization of the talk

coincides with a larger, non-linguistic organization of the event." (1986:73) It is often found to occur at such junctures to signal a return from off-task activities (such as joking) to the main task (but never the other way round). In so doing, it re-invokes interpretive schemes that have been temporarily held in abeyance in the course of a side-sequence. In this sense, it is said to have an "orientation" and "keying" function.

"One function that an utterance with the properties of OK might serve is orientation. ... By keying or calling into play all those expectations not made explicit by utterances in the interaction, OK creates environments in which functions can be accomplished by extremely elliptical forms." (Condon 1986:95)

It will be clear from these descriptions that the kinds of organizational problems that "OK" is sensitive to are very similar to those that LA is oriented to. As we have seen in the examples so far, LA is used in certain kinds of sequences to initiate a subsidiary project, in which the immediate concern is to confirm the availability of common ground, and, upon finishing with that side sequence, participants would re-attend to the ongoing main project. This suggests that different languages may have evolved different formal means to deal with very similar interactional problems. Observations that have been made on various kinds of discourse particles in different languages may well generate empirically motivated functional categories which should be of great interest to students of linguistic universals.

Before such general issues are taken up, however, we must turn to examine three further kinds of sequential contexts in which LA has a major role to play: suggestions, agreements, and pre-closings.

## 6. Suggestions

Previous descriptions of LA have sometimes referred to the particle as some kind of a marker of requests (see section 1 above). Some instances in my data do seem to be characterizable as requests within the particular sequential contexts in which they occur. (30) and (31) below provide two such examples.

(30) [TC:1:178]

S: =goum lei:::  
(0.5)

S: lei tai ngo faan-jo mei  
1-> sin LA= .

2->L: =ha ngo d# ngo daa-jo-dinwaa  
bei lei sin lo

S: so you  
(0.5)

S: you see I return not  
first LA  
[see if I'm home first]

L: yeah I d# I phone  
to you first PT  
[yeah I'll phone you first]

[31] [TC:1:115]

L: ha# .hhh goum ngo::: (.) tingyat  
daa-bei-keui aa

P: hou aa  
(0.3)

P: a::[:: nei yugwo daa=  
[

L: [jau::

1->P: =jau seungjau daa LA

L: [hai

P: [yanwai ngodei haajau jau wui:

(0.5)

P: je:i [( ...fong... )

L: [a::: m-sai faanhok] hai=

P: =yat-dim-sei:: jihau jau fonghok

2->L: o goumyeung hou aa  
.hhh ngo tung keui gongaagong  
tai-haa keui gokdak dimyeung

L: right .hhh so I (.)  
tomorrow phone-her PT  
[right so I'll phone her  
tomorrow]

P: good PT  
(0.3)

P: em you if phone  
[em if you phone,--]

L: so

P: then in-the-morning phone LA  
[phone in the morning]

L: yes

P: because we afternoon then  
will  
[because in the afternoon  
we'll--]

(0.5)

P: I-mean (...breaks...)

L: em no-need-to go-to-school  
yes

[em no classes yes]

P: twenty-past-one after then  
finish  
[school finishes after  
twenty past one]

L: oh then good PT

.hhh I with her talk  
to-see she feel how  
[oh that's fine I'll talk  
to her to see how she feels]

That the LA-suffixed utterances (arrow 1) in [30] and [31] are heard as requests is evident from the recipients' responses

(arrow 2). In (30), this comes in the immediately next turn, where L shows his understanding of, and intention to comply with, S's request that he (L) should phone to see if he (S) is home first. In (31), L's initial response "hai" ("yes") is overlapped by P's detailing of the grounds of his request. However, as soon as this is done, L returns to the request and shows his compliance by indicating that the proposed course of action ("phoning her") is something that he intends to take up.

(32) instances a variation on this 'Request followed by Response-to-the-Request' pattern.

(32) [DJ1:2:270]

P: hou mun aa	P: very bored PT [I'm so bored]
1->T: haaiyaa m-hou oum mun LA::: heh heh heh [ngodei sung di]= [  ] [  ] [  ]	T: come-on not so bored LA heh heh heh we give some [come on, cheer up, heh heh heh]
P:   [heh heh heh                   ]	P: heh heh heh
T: =go bei lei teng la# aiyaa paa-aa lei la# heh heh .hhhh dim-go hou-m-hou	T: songs to you listen PT frightened-by you PT heh heh .hhhh dedicate-song good- not-good [we'll] play you some songs, I'm giving in, heh heh dedicate a song, OK?]
2->P: .h hou aa	P: .h good PT [OK]

Here, instead of getting an immediate response (notice that P could have responded during the time when T is holding on to the vowel of her LA), T finds herself in a position where her plea is not responded to one way or another. She then produces laughter, to retrospectively key her plea as a not-so-serious, perhaps friendly one. And, upon getting some response this time from P (in the form of laughter), she proceeds to offer her something other than 'mere words' to cheer her up (ie. songs). Thus the plea "come on, cheer up" gets transformed in the course of a fairly short space of time into an offer, one that P finally takes up (arrow 2). But the fact that the offer is made

explicitly as an alternative/additional means of cheering her up means that her acceptance of it can now be seen as a positive response to the initial plea, ie. she can be deemed to have (indirectly) agreed to comply with it after all.

It was noted in the last section that LA often co-occurs with "hai-m-hai" ("isn't it") or some variant thereof. In connection with requests, it was found that, apart from "hai-m-hai", LA is also regularly followed, within the same turn, by "hou-m-hou" (literally, "good not good", ie. "Is that agreeable to you?"). Consider an instance of this in (33).

(33) [FEEL1:1:260]

L: nei# nei batyu se fung seun bei  
1->keui LA::::: (. ) hou-m-hou aa=

L: you you perhaps write CL  
letter to her LA (. ) whether-  
good PT  
[perhaps you can write her a  
letter, what do you think?]

2->C: =hou aa

C: good PT  
[OK]

L: hai fung seun dou se chingcho lei  
waa ngo m seung jou lei sailou

L: in CL letter in write clear  
you say I not want be your  
brother  
[in the letter tell her  
once and for all I don't want  
to be your brother]

This suggests that LA can be used not only to display the assumption of shared knowledge, it can also display the assumption of the availability of mutual agreement on, or endorsement of, a proposed course of action. The two kinds of uses can be united if we characterize these uses of LA as a device for displaying the assumption of common ground, and elicitation of agreement on the recognizability of objects, events or states-of-affairs, the adequacy of descriptions, or the desirability or efficacy of proposed courses of action. Thus, the properties of LA are such that while it can lend itself to the performance of requests, it can on the same systematic basis be used for

plea, advice (as in (33)), and suggestions in general.

Further support comes from the following fragments, in which it is clear that LA-suffixed suggestions need not propose courses of action that are to be carried out by the addressee. They may also be about actions that are to be carried out by the speaker.<sup>7</sup> What matters, for LA-suffixed suggestions, is not whether some future action is predicated of the addressee, but the elicitation of mutual agreement on some proposed course of action, as extracts (34) and (35) show.

(34) [TC:2:553]

W: e:::: ngo lam-jyu 'tingyat  
heui lo

(0.3)

K: tingyat

W: ha#

(.)

K: .hhhh goumyeung (.) e:::::

(1.0)

K: lei dak-m-dak aa yugo#

(0.7)

1->K: yathai ngo heui LA

2->W: ngo tung lei lo LA

(0.3)

W: lei yau m sik lou

(0.3)

K: mm

(0.8)

K: ting::yat (.) e fong-jo-gung  
goum LA

[35] [TC:2:176]

X: o keui hai: hokhaau aa

K: o keui gamyat faan-jo  
hokhaau aa=

X: =hai aa hai aa=

K: =o goum ngo daa-heui hokhaau  
-->LA (.) m-goi (.) baaibaa

W: e:::: I thinking tomorrow  
go get  
[em I'm thinking of fetching  
it tomorrow]

(0.3)

K: tomorrow

W: yeah

(.)

K: .hhhh like-that (.) e:::::

(1.0)

K: you whether-can PT if#  
[can you do that, if#]

(0.7)

K: perhaps I go LA  
[maybe I can go]

W: I for you get LA  
[I'll get it for you]

(0.3)

W: you also not know way  
[and you don't know the way  
there]

(0.3)

K: mm

(0.8)

K: tomorrow (.) e after-work  
like LA

[tomorrow, em after work, like]

X: oh he at school PT  
[oh he's at school]

K: oh he today has-gone  
school PT  
[oh he's gone to school  
today, has he]

X: yes PT yes PT  
[yes yes]

K: I-see so I phone school  
LA (.) thanks (.) bye

[I see, well I'll phone  
him at school then,  
thanks, bye]

(34) contains an interesting instance where a LA-suffixed suggestion is responded in the next turn by a counter-suggestion which is also LA-suffixed. Both utterances predicate a proposed course of action of the speaker. Instead of hearing L's turn (arrow 1) as a promise, notice that W's response (arrow 2) treats the prior turn as doing a suggestion. Through presenting a counter-suggestion, W makes it plain that no agreement is being offered on L's proposed course of action. W proposes instead that he (W) should do the collection, and follows that up with a provision of the grounds for making that counter-proposal. Similarly, in [35], the arrowed utterance is one in which K, the speaker, proposes to do the phoning. Again, while the utterance is in a sense an exhibition of the speaker's intention to perform some future act, it is characterizable more as a proposal to deal with the problem created by the unavailability of the person the speaker was calling to find, rather than a commitment.

It will be clear from the extracts examined in this section that LA-suffixed suggestions include, but form a much more general class of actions, than requests. By virtue of its common ground securing properties, LA contributes to the doing of suggestions by eliciting recipients' agreement on some proposed course of action. Thus, instead of describing LA simply as a marker of requests, the present account provides a systematic basis for the explication of the way in which this particle contributes to the performance of a variety of requests, suggestions and advice.

## 7. Agreements

From what has been said about LA so far, it should come as no surprise that it regularly occurs in agreement sequences as well. Far from being a device which is used only to elicit and secure agreements, however, LA is often found suffixed to utterances which offer (positive) responses to such elicitations, as can be seen in (36) and (37) below.

(36) [DJ1:2:203]

T: 'o (.) jaudim gunnei goumyeung  
haamaa=

P: =m-hai gunnei ge::

T: o (.) jee j# e: jaudim fongmin-ge  
1->yatdi 'jisik goumyeu[ng LA hamai]

[  
[  
[  
[  
[hai LA haha]

2->P:

T: I-see (.) hotel management  
like isn't-it

[I see, hotel management  
sort of thing, isn't it]

P: not management PT

[not really management]

T: oh (.) that-is j# e: hotel  
concerning some knowledge  
like LA right?

[oh, so it's some knowledge  
about hotels, that sort of  
thing, right?]

P: yes LA yeah  
[yes, yeah]

(37) [DJ1:2:246]

P: m-hai ge:: jigei .hh jigei yau  
duksyu han dou yigaa mmaa aaai  
hhh yigaa jeutji jouye lak

P: no PT self .hh self from  
studying long-for until now  
PT EXCL hhh now at-last work  
PT

[not really, I .hh I've  
always wanted (to travel)  
since I was in the school,  
and now at last I'm working]

1->T: ha# waan-aa samyun goum LA:::  
hai[mai aa

[  
[  
[hai LA::

2->P:

T: yeah realize wish like LA  
right PT  
[yeah, so now you'll be able  
to do what you've always  
wanted to do, right?]

P: yes LA  
[that's right]

In both fragments, an understanding check (arrow 1) is responded to by a confirmation that is LA-suffixed (arrow 2). Rather than characterizing LA strictly in terms of speaker-elicitation or hearer-confirmation, it would seem to be much more sensitive to the properties of this particle to stress the role that it plays in displaying mutual agreement and common under-

standing. This also shows why attempts to state the meaning of this particle in terms of simple glosses have proved to be extremely difficult and unprofitable. For instance, one might want to gloss LA as 'I now invite you to confirm that ...'. However, it should be clear, at least from (37), that such a gloss would only work for some occurrences of LA in some contexts, but not others.

Notice that to say that LA-suffixing provides a device for the signalling of agreement is but a minimal characterization. Other interactional tasks may be accomplished through the use of LA-suffixed agreements.

(38) [FEEL1:1:243]

C: aahai ngo maanmaann dou  
teng ni::: ligo jitmuk aa  
(hai japgaang)

1-->P: [hawaa

2-->L: [hawaa

C: hai aa=

P: =goum nei teng ngodei ligo jitmuk  
le:: yinggoi teng-dou ngo sisi dou  
hyun yandei (nge) jou mee dou yiu  
jigei choicheui jyudung aa .hh  
mouleun nei wan-gung yau-hou:::  
.hhhh e::: wan nei-ge chintou  
yau-hou:: .hh samji hai  
'sik 'neui'jai (.) hai-mai?

(0.5)

C: hai (maa)

P: nei [yiu jigei baangaak aamaa  
[

C: oh-yes I every-night too  
hear you this programme PT  
(be habit)

[oh yes I listen to your  
programme every night  
(its a habit)]

P: really

L: really

[do you really]

C: yes PT

[yes]

P: so you hear our this  
programme PT should have-  
heard I often too advise  
people (nge) do what too  
must self take positive  
PT .hh whether you look-for-  
a-job be-it .hhhh em look-  
for-your-future be-it .hh  
even be get-to-know-a-girl  
(.) right?

[well if you listen to our  
programme you should have  
heard how I often advise  
people to take the initiative  
whether they are looking for  
a job, or looking for a  
future, even getting to know  
a girl, right?]

(0.5)

C: yes (PT)

[yes/(is that so?)]

P: you have self grasp PT  
[you have to take the

L: [ mmmm ]  
P: baangaak geiwui tungmaai .hh e  
baangaak lei  
[seung jou ge ye aamaa]  
[ ]  
[ ]  
C: [k e u i y a u s i #]  
C: yausi m-bei geiwui ngo be:::

P: keui m-bei geiwui nei? ho:::  
jigei wannn gmaa geiwui m-hai  
yiu tang yan lei bei:: gaa  
hai yiu jigei 'jai::jou gaa  
ming-m-'ming?

L: daai keui yausi dou yingsing  
tung lei heui-ha-'gaai dou m-wui  
waa m-bei geiwui lei golowo

3->P: hai [LA:::  
[ ]  
L: [bagwo lei jigei dou m  
ji dim hoi hau go::ng je  
hamaa[::  
[ ]  
[ ]  
[ ]  
C: [( hai aa ... )

opportunities yourself]  
L: mmmm  
P: grasp opportunity and .hh  
em grasp you want do 's  
thing PT  
[take the opportunities to do  
what you want to do]  
C: she sometimes  
C: sometimes not-give chance  
me PT  
[sometimes she doesn't  
give me any chance]  
P: she not-give chance you? PT  
self find PT chance not must  
wait people come give PT  
be must self create  
whether-understand  
[she doesnt give you any  
chance? So what? You have to  
find the chances yourself,  
not wait for someone to give  
you chances, you have to  
create the chances, do you  
understand?]  
L: but she sometimes too agree  
with you go-out also won't  
say not-give chance you PT  
[but she sometimes goes out  
with you too, so you can't  
really say she doesn't give  
you any chance]  
P: yes LA  
[quite right]  
L: but you self really not  
know how open mouth say PT  
is-that-so?  
[but you don't really know  
how to say it to her, is  
that so?]  
C: yes PT

(38) instances one way in which LA-suffixed agreements can contribute to the accomplishment of participant alignments. Here, a three-party talk is going on in which the caller tells troubles and asks for advice from the two presenters, who also act as counsellors. Now, there is no mechanism whereby the two presenters are automatically aligned vis-a-vis the caller: there are clear instances where the two openly disagree. But there are also moments of achieved unity between the two, when they are aligned as one party giving advice, thanking, praising or

reproaching the caller. Witness just such a moment (arrows 1 and 2) where the presenters respond in unison to C's disclosure that he listens to the programme every night. I suggest that what is going on in the turn arrowed 3 can be explicated in terms of this possibility of achieved unity. The three parties concerned have been talking about possible ways of solving C's problem of not knowing how to tell a girl that he is "secretly in love" with her. He complains that the girl never gives him a chance. L then gives counter-evidence to show that the woman in question does actually give the caller chances to express his love from time to time, thus challenging the caller's earlier claim. It is at this point that P, the other presenter, comes in and issues an agreement: "hai LA" (arrow 3). Through exhibiting her claim of sharing common judgments with L on the current issue, P displays her affiliation to L's position, and is in a sense joining in to do some team-work. The unity-as-a-team is an achievement in that it is a product of the work that the two members collaboratively put into this agreement (disagreement would be a more appropriate label, because what the two as a team is doing is disagreeing with C's assessment of the intention of the girl in question) sequence in which one member produces evidence against the caller's claims, and the other offers agreement.

## **8. Pre-closings**

The presence of LA in pre-closing sequences is pervasive.<sup>8</sup> Consider first a few fragments extracted from near the end of conversations where some LA-suffixed-utterances seem to have a role to play.

(40) [TC:2:144]  
-->W: hou LA ngo tung lei man:: saai W: good LA I for you ask all  
--> sin LA [OK I'll ask everything for  
you first]  
K: hou aa K: good PT  
W: dak gala yinggoi mou mantai ge W: can PT should no problem PT  
[it's OK shouldn't be any  
problem]  
-->K: hou LA K: good LA  
[OK then]  
W: OK [hai-goum-sin W: OK that's-it-then  
K: [mm baaibaa K: mm bye-bye

(41) [TC:2:156]  
J: OK= J: OK  
-->K: =goum: laibaa-sei gin LA K: so Thursday see LA  
[so see you on Thursday]  
-->J: hou LA J: good LA  
[right]  
K: ha= K: yeah  
J: =laibaa-sei gin lei J: Thursday see you  
[see you on Thursday]  
K: OK K: OK  
J: baaibaa J: bye  
K: baaibaa K: bye

(42) [TC:2:172]  
K: mmmmmm (.) sap-dim-leng aa K: mmmmmm (.) about-10-o'clock  
hou[-m-hou aa PT is-that-OK PT  
C: [hou aa hou [aa C: good PT good PT  
K: [sap-dim-bun K: half-past-ten  
[dou about  
C: [OK hou aa hou aa= C: OK good PT good PT  
K: =ha= K: yeah  
C: =hou aa= C: good PT  
-->K: goummm tingyat gin LA= K: so tomorrow see LA  
[so see you tomorrow]  
-->C: =tingyat gin LA C: tomorrow see LA  
[see you tomorrow]  
K: m-goi-[saai K: thank-you-very-much  
C: [m-goi-saa-nei C: thank-you-very-much  
K: baai[baai K: bye  
C: [baaibaa C: bye

An examination of the arrowed turns in these extracts yields two observations. First, the turn components in question have the form "X + LA" where X is one from a limited set of objects -- either the word "hou" ("good"), or a restatement of some arrangements made earlier in the same conversation (eg. "... gin" ["see you on ...] or its variants). Second, the final exchange of

goodbyes do not get done until each participant has produced at least one such turn. It can be seen from (40) to (42) that both of these conditions apply just before closing. Turn components that have this design may be characterized as pre-closing initiators, the primary function of which is to generate pre-closing sequences which may lead eventually to conversational disengagement.

An immediate interest of such turn components lies in the light that they shed on the question of how the properties of LA that have been identified so far may constitute a systematic basis for the particle to play a part in the kind of work that is accomplished in preparation for the final suspension of the turn-taking system. The pervasiveness of LA's presence in these environments is something that clearly deserves close attention, and demands an account which would relate its contribution to this kind of closing-preparatory task to its other uses that have been studied so far in this chapter.

The contribution of LA to the accomplishment of this kind of task is especially transparent in the environment where such LA-suffixed-utterances come right at the heels of arrangement sequences, as in (43) and (44).

- (43) [TC:1:177]
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| S: =goum lei:::  | S: so you   |
| (0.5)  | (0.5)   |
| 1->S: lei tai ngo faan-jo mei sin LA=                                  | S: you see I return not first LA<br>[see if I am back first]  |
| L: =ha ngo d# ngo daa-jo-dinwaa<br>bei-lei sin lo=                     | L: yeah I d# I phone-you<br>first PT<br>[yeah I'll phone you first]                                     |
| S: =hai lo hai lo (.) ha#=   | S: yes PT yes PT (.) yeah   |
| 2->L: =ha=   | L: yeah   |
| S: =ngo chaamdo dou-hai:::<br>yugwo 'baat-'dim-bun-jung<br>dou jau le= | S: I about probably<br>if half-past-eight<br>about leave PT<br>[if I leave at about<br>half past eight] |
| L: =mm=  | L: mm   |

S: ngo gau-dim-'saam dou aa  
yinggoi faan-dou-lai gala=

S: I quarter-past-nine about  
em should be-back PT  
[I should be back by  
quarter past nine]

L: =ha#=

L: yeah

Immediately prior to this fragment, S and L have agreed to meet the following day, and that L should phone to see if S is home first. While it seems clear that in one sense the co-participants here are engaged in 'reconfirmation' work, checking out agreements made earlier about the future meeting, there is a case for reading more into the exchanges. One of Schegloff and Sacks's (1973) findings about pre-closings is that 'reconfirmation' sequences of the kind illustrated in [43] are often likely candidates for the generation of pre-closing sequences. Notice that S's restatement of a prior arrangement (arrow 1) could have developed into a pre-closing sequence and established the relevance of conversational closure. As it turns out, however, just when L has bidden "pass" (arrow 2), S re-opens the topic about the time he should be home the next day, thereby generating further talk on the topic. This lasts four more turns, before the pre-closing is attempted again. It can be argued that part of the work that LA is doing in the turn arrowed 1 is ironically precisely not seeking confirmation, although that is what it professes to do officially. The whole point of re-stating arrangements that have already been made, without saying anything new about them, and, in addition, to offer this for the co-participant's confirmation, is a means of proposing that a point has been reached in the conversation where movement into closing can become a relevant, appropriate, opportune next activity.

(44) provides an example of a successful pre-closing initiator.

(44) [TC:1:154]

L: =hou aa hou aa (.) ha# .hh goum  
ngo hoyi tingyat tung keui gong

P: hou aa=

L: =((clears throat)) hou aa=

P: =lei yau sigaan jau bei go dinwaa  
-->keui LA: [(keui dou)

[  
[  
L: [ha# ha# ngo tingjiu daa  
bei keui=

L: good PT good PT (.) yes .hh  
so I can tomorrow with her  
talk  
[fine, yes, so I can talk  
to her tomorrow--]

P: good PT

L: ((clears throat)) good PT

P: you have time then give a  
call her LA (she too)  
[give her a call then when  
you have time]

L: yes yes I tomorrow-morning  
phone to her  
[yes yes I'll call her  
tomorrow morning]

P and L have, prior to this extract, arranged for L to phone P's headteacher the following day. In the arrowed turn, P re- does his suggestion: "give her a call when you have time". Following our line of argument, this utterance can be characterized as a pre-closing initiator. Unlike in the previous extract, this pre-closing initiator successfully generates the following sequence.

(45) [TC:1:154]

(continuation of (44) until the end of the conversation)

P: =lei yau sigaan jau bei go dinwaa  
1-->keui LA: [(keui dou)

[  
[  
L: [ha# ha# ngo tingjiu daa  
bei keui=

P: you have time then give a  
call her PT (she too)  
[give her a call then  
when you have time]

L: yes yes I tomorrow-  
morning phone to her  
[yes yes I'll call her  
tomorrow morning]

P: OK

L: OK (.) mm=

P: =hou=

L: =hai-goum-sin

2--> LA [(.) Patrick (.)

P: [hou

L: =mm=

P: =hou=

L: =baaibaai=

P: =baaibaai

P: OK

L: OK (.) mm

P: alright

L: OK-then PT (.)Patrick(.)  
[OK then Patrick]

P: alright

L: mm

P: alright

L: bye

P: bye

In the turn arrowed 1, P, through re-making his suggestion, and specifically re-making it in such a way that it contains nothing unsaid before, and, further, through building it in such

a form as to project a reconfirmation sequence, passes the turn on to L for possible reconfirmation or topic generation. L, in his turn, re-iterates his intention to do as arranged, reiterating while not opening up unmentioned mentionables (such as new topics), and passes the turn back to P, who acknowledges receipt of reconfirmation with a free-standing "OK", making it plain that he is not opting for further topic generation either. There follows an exchange of 'passes' (L's "OK mm" then P's "alright"). With both participants having had their chances to offer further topic for talk, then having passed them, the stage is set for gradual disengagement. This is done by L in the turn arrowed 2, a familiar pre-closing formula, "hai goum sin LA" (literally "that's it for the time being LA"), which proposes that, should nothing else be raised in the next turn, co-participants may move on to do closing. As it happens, P concurs with "alright", passing the turn back now to L to do an exchange of "goodbyes".

Consider finally a variation of this in (46).

- (46) [TC:1:182]
- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| S: =yugo taai ye::               | S: if too late<br>[if it's too late]                                 |
| (0.6)                            | (0.6)  |
| L: ha#=                          | L: yeah  |
| S: =jeui-do m jau lo<br>yugo hai | S: thats-all not leave PT<br>maybe<br>[maybe you can stay here]      |
| L: dak gala m-wui hou ye ge      | L: can PT won't very late PT<br>[that's OK, it won't be<br>too late] |
| (.)                              | (.)  |
| L: ha#                           | L: right   |
| (.)                              | (.)  |
| 1->L: [hou aa                    | L: good PT   |
| 2->S: [hou LA                    | S: good LA   |
| L: OK=                           | L: OK  |
| 3->S: =hou hai-goum-sin LA=      | S: good that's-it-then LA  |
| 4-> =Wxx faan-jo mei aa          | Wxx return not PT<br>[fine that's it then is Wxxx<br>back yet?]      |
| L: faan-jo la                    | L: returned PT<br>[he's back]  |

Here, a pre-closing-favourable environment is simultaneously and jointly produced by the participants (arrows 1 and 2, said in unison). S eventually takes on the task of initiating pre-closing, again with the familiar object "hou hai goum sin LA" (arrow 3). However, as it turns out, just at the point when the turn is being passed on to L for a possible 'go-ahead' which would lead on to closing, he (S) latches it up with a question that has all the characteristics of a 'rush-through': an abrupt increase in loudness, and a concurrent sudden increase in tempo and pitch height (arrow 4).<sup>9</sup> The latching is done perfectly, leaving no gap for L to respond to the closing proposal. Through doing this rush-through, S exhibits a 'sudden change of mind', sequentially deletes the immediately preceding pre-closing initiator, and mentions an unmentioned mentionable: "is W back?" (47) shows how the conversation continues from that point, and how the pre-closing is eventually re-done, leading, the second time, to a successful closing.

(47) [TC:1:183]

(Continuation of (46) until the end)

L: OK=	L: OK
1->S: =hou hai-goum-sin LA=	S: good that's-it-then PT
2-> =Wxx faan-jo mei aa	Wxx return not PT
	[fine that's it then is Wxxx
	back yet?]
L: faan-jo la	L: returned PT
	[he's back]
(.)	(.)
S: o: [( )	S: I see
L: [mou aa keui dou mou	L: no PT he anyway not
cheut-heui houchi=	go-out apparently
	[no he didn't go out
	apparently]
S: =haa?	S: really?
L: hai-dou aa keui	L: be-here PT he
	[he's here]
S: 'goum gwaaijai?	S: so good-boy
	[staying in and behaving
	like a good boy?]
L: ha#	L: yeah

S: aa::: siuho wo=	S: EXCL rare PT [oh that's rare]
3->L: = <u>ha</u> =	L: <u>yeah</u>
4->S: =janhai (.) goum hou LA=	S: really (.) so good PT [really. OK then]
5->L: =hou LA=	L: good PT [OK]
6->S: hai-goum-sin LA=	S: that's-it-then PT
L: =mm hai-goum=	L: mm OK-then
S: =baaibaaai=	S: bye
L: =baaibaaai	L: byebye

The newly generated topic --the whereabouts of W-- lasts nine turns (from arrow 2 to arrow 3), in the course of which the asking of W's whereabouts gets turned into a joking sequence (the details of which need not concern us here), ending in the turn arrowed 3 (L's "ha", "yeah" done with laughter, but very short), which displays L's understanding of, and retrospectively formulates the prior turn as the end of, the joke, as well as his token (one might say 'formulaic') appreciation of it. At the same time, the lack of enthusiasm evidenced in L's response to the joke makes it quite clear that there is no intention on his part to pursue the subject (W's "behaving like a good boy", etc.). In the turn that immediately follows (arrow 4), S then proposes to end the subject ("goum hou LA"). Following L's 'pass' in the next turn (arrow 5), S re-initiates pre-closing (arrow 6), again using the 'classic' LA-suffixed-token that was used in the first attempt (arrow 1). This second time, the turn is passed successfully on to L, who concurs, subsequent to which closing is achieved through an exchange of goodbyes.

Our examination of these examples suggests that the part that LA plays in a variety of pre-closing sequences goes something like this. First, a pre-closing favourable environment needs to be constructed in order that preparatory work can be done to effect conversational disengagement. There appear to be

two major ways of achieving such an environment. One is to produce a 'contentless' signal ("hou LA") which records the speaker's assumption that mutual understanding and agreement obtains, but adds nothing new to what has been said so far in the conversation, and, in so doing, proposes to yield the turn. Another way is to re-state prior arrangements in such a way as to highlight their agreed-on, mutually-understood status, again adding nothing new, and yielding the turn.

Following on from such pre-closing favourable environments, one of the participants can initiate pre-closing. One available procedure is to produce ready-made tokens like "hai goum sin LA" ("that's it then for the time being") which propose that, should the speaker have the other party's consent, closing can be a relevant next activity. Thus pre-closing initiators would need to be built under three requirements. One, it needs to put on record the speaker's assumption that whatever needed to be dealt with in that conversation have, to the satisfaction of both parties, been dealt with. Two, it needs to signal that the speaker has no further matters to raise. Three, upon the successful clearing of such grounds, they can move on to the next activity, which, in this sequential position, is closing.

In this we find a basis for the pervasiveness of LA-suffixing just prior to, and in, pre-closing positions. The production of pre-closing favourable environments, as well as the doing of pre-closings, are interactional tasks that require design resources with which participants can document to each other their analysis of the conversation's progress. Specifically, the establishment of a mutually endorsed 'no further business' analysis is a condition, and preparation, for the co-

ordinated entry into closing.

## 9. LA as a resource for establishing common understanding

Having studied a variety of instances of LA, we are now in a position to attempt a general characterization of its systematic properties. The fundamental question that needs to be asked is: what constitutes the basis for this particle to occur in the wide range of sequential environments in which it has been found to occur, and, in so doing, to perform the considerable variety of interactional tasks that it has been found to perform? The customary question asked by the linguist is: what does this (and any other) particle really mean? What semantic and/or pragmatic specifications are needed to circumscribe this meaning? A profitable reformulation of this question would seem to be: how can its contributions to the performance of a variety of interactional tasks be systematically explicated in terms of the mutual elaboration of its presupposed unique, underlying properties and the specifics of particular contexts in which it occurs?

Let us begin with a recapitulation of some of the observations made in the previous sections which will need to be taken into account in a general description.

(1) In Reportings, Story-tellings, Listings and Instructions, LA may occur at points where participants are temporarily oriented to the recognizability or identifiability of certain objects, persons, places, times, manners, events, situations, etc., --in general, the thing-known-in-common status of some thing-being-talked-about. In these sequential environments, the establishment of shared understandings may be a condition on which the continuation of the ongoing project

depends. By displaying the assumption of the mutual recognizability, identifiability or understandability of one description or another, LA contributes to the accomplishment of ground-clearing or ground-laying work which may be needed for the continuation, appreciation, or understanding of subsequent stages of the current project (reportings, listings, etc.).

(2) LA is often used to initiate a side sequence the purpose of which is to establish that some state-of-affairs has been understood, recognized or identified to the participants' satisfaction. These side sequences have been referred to as Understanding Checks, which, as we saw, may be speaker-initiated or hearer-initiated. These occur regularly in the course of some ongoing project, and, upon their occurrence, a side sequence is generated which deals with some matter which is subsidiary to the main project, but whose clearance is somehow a condition for its continuation, or moves onto a projected next activity. LA-suffixing provides a means with which understanding checks can be built in such a way as to display strong claims of access to the co-participant's private world (eg. 'what they have in mind'). In fact, the uses of this particle in Reportings, Story-tellings, Listings, and Instructions can be seen as particular kinds of speaker-initiated understanding checks.

(3) The adequacy of a description is a constant and pervasive interactional problem that participants are oriented to and needs to be dealt with from time to time in the course of a conversation. LA is a device with which this problem can be addressed by displaying the speaker's analysis (ie. understanding) of the current situation as one in which the formulation fits and is adequate. When certain common grounds are

assumed to obtain, expressions which look imprecise, vague, or non-committal (neither-here-nor-there) may be produced and presented as adequate descriptions.

(4) LA occurs in utterances which are used to make requests, suggestions and advice and contributes to the seeking of mutual agreement on the desirability or efficacy of a proposed course of action.

(5) LA can be suffixed to agreement-seeking as well as agreement-giving tokens to signal that common assessment or judgement of some matter at hand obtains.

(6) LA has a pervasive presence in pre-closings. Some of the most familiar ways of initiating pre-closings involve the employment of LA-suffixed-utterances. In this environment, LA contributes to the work of confirming that no party concerned has further topics to open, and the establishment of mutual agreement on a move into closing.

This summary suggests that the many ways in which this particle is used in a range of sequential positions to accomplish a variety of interactional tasks can be systematically related to a common basis. A minimal characterization of this basis goes something like this. At the minimum, the particle provides a linguistic resource with which conversation participants can, at particular points in an unfolding interactional scene, document to each other their assumption that what is being talked about is something known-in-common. Depending on the sequential context, this property of LA can be put to many varied uses. Thus, in an ongoing report or story, the reporter/story-teller's use of LA-suffixing to establish common understanding would be heard as 'pausing before continuation'. When produced by the report/

story-recipient, however, LA-suffixed-utterances would be heard as understanding displays and checks. In the environment after a first assessment, the same device used to secure common ground would be heard as an agreement. When used with certain kinds of turn components, it may be heard as an attempt to initiate pre-closing.

Notice that it is not the aim of such a characterization to provide a definition of the particle by giving a gloss of 'what it means'. The meaning-in-context and interactional import of particular instances of LA-suffixed-utterances cannot be computed from decontextualized glosses of its components (one of which being the particle). Instead, they can only be derived from complex contextualization procedures whereby the general properties of the particle are integrated within the particulars of the context (the sequential context being a crucial consideration) in which it occurs.

Thus there is no mechanism which guarantees that one thing or other is bound to happen when LA appears. In this sense, LA is not a marker of some readily definable functional category. As Brown & Levinson (1979) point out, meanings-in-context are derived using linguistic resources as guides to highly complex inferential processes.

"...interactants do not generally treat socially significant linguistic features as simple signals of social facts --but rather take into account the interactional and social context in their evaluation of these features in highly complex ways." (1979:292)

With this proviso, the particle LA can be described as the grammaticalization of a solution to a specific problem in the social organization of conversation, namely, the interactional problem of the availability of shared recognition, identifica-

tion, and understanding at particular points of an ongoing discourse. It is a linguistic resource with which co-participants can secure shared understanding, and through that, to achieve a variety of interactional tasks.

We seem to be dealing with a phenomenon that lies in between two kinds of ways in which understandings are achieved in conversation. On the one hand, participants obviously must rely on assumptions about what their conversational partners must know and understand. They may proceed by simply assuming that the interlocutor knows what they are talking about. In this sense, what is said and what is meant is treated as unproblematical. This kind of assumption is clearly needed, or else one would not be able to say anything at all to anyone. For instance, while resources are available to check whether one's recipient has successfully identified the object, person, place, etc. that one is talking about, conversation participants do not do this at every possible turn. Notice that one kind of evidence in support of this comes from repair sequences, which do in fact occur from time to time. That repair sequences should occur at all points to the fact that something which was assumed to be a thing-known-in-common turns out to be problematical.

On the other hand, there are cases where the recognizability, identifiability, or understandability of an object, an event, a situation, etc. is raised explicitly as a problem. That is, a description may be presented in such a way that its adequacy is 'problematized'. In my Cantonese data, the utterance particle *ge35* is regularly used to perform this kind of task (and generate identification sequences). These, then, are cases where speakers make little or no assumption that their co-

participants know what they are talking about.

In addition to these two kinds of ways in which understandings can be accomplished, there is an in-between method with which speakers can display their assumption that the interlocutor ought to know what they are talking about, although they are not entirely prepared to take that as a certainty. In these cases, speakers can, through the employment of resources available to them, design their descriptions in such a way as to display the assumption (as opposed to simply assuming) that the object, event, situation, etc. being portrayed is a thing-known-in-common. The very fact that this assumption is displayed would of course give rise to the possibility of a response, which may support that assumption, or 'problematize' it. What I am suggesting is that LA is a resource in Cantonese with which this third kind of procedure is made available to conversational participants.

Notice that there is a fundamental difference between my treatment of LA as a device for the establishment of common ground in the course of an ongoing interaction and other studies in which notions like "mutual knowledge", "shared knowledge", and "presupposition pool" are employed.<sup>10</sup> It has been suggested, for example, that the notion of "mutual knowledge" is required for a psychological model of speech comprehension.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, an even more fundamental role in linguistic studies has been attributed to it:

"virtually every ... aspect of meaning and reference ... requires mutual knowledge, which also is at the very heart of the notion of linguistic convention and speaker meaning."  
(Clark & Marshall 1981:58)

According to the mutual knowledge model of speech comprehension, hearers' interpretation of utterances depends on a context, which is conceptualized as a set of propositions that are shared, and known to be shared, by the speaker and the addressee. For instance, in connection with the problem of definite reference, Clark & Marshall (1981) claim that in order to successfully communicate what a definite description refers to, the interlocutors must have certain shared knowledge, and know that they share this knowledge. Thus, for a definite description *t* (eg. "the movie showing at the Roxy tonight") to successfully refer to a referent *R* (eg. "Monkey Business"), the speaker must know that *t* refers to *R*, and the hearer must also know that *t* refers to *R*. On top of that, A must know that B knows that *t* refers to *R*, and B must know that A knows that *t* refers to *R*, and so on ad infinitum. In general, this infinite chain of conditions may be represented as follows: (Sperber & Wilson 1982:63)

"A speaker S and an addressee A mutually know a proposition P if and only if:  
(1) S knows that P.  
(2) A knows that P.  
(3) S knows (2).  
(4) A knows (1).  
(5) S knows (4).  
(6) A knows (3).  
... and so on ad infinitum." 12

According to this mutual knowledge model, for two or more persons to successfully perform a co-ordinated act, eg. upon hearing the request "please shake hands", to shake hands with each other, they will need to be sure that each knows, and that each knows the other person knows, etc. (ie. mutually know) what "shake hands" mean. If either person does not know what it means to shake hands, or if he/she cannot be sure that the other person knows, or if he/she cannot be sure that the other person knows

that he/she knows, etc., then the co-ordinated act will not come off. Even if they somehow managed to perform an act that could be recognized as hand-shaking, but without the intention and the mutual knowledge, they would not be deemed to have successfully done as requested.

To see how this position is untenable, let us imagine that, upon hearing the request "shake hands", A holds out his hand, only to find that B is not doing the same. What is one to make of this scene? Would one say that the co-ordinated act has failed to come off, because one of the parties does not understand what shaking hands means, or has failed to grasp the illocutionary point of the request? This is certainly one of many possible accounts of the scene, but it need not be the only one. That is, one might equally well have reached other, quite different, conclusions. For instance, the failure might be attributed to B's unwillingness to shake hands: perhaps he is holding a grudge against the other person? Or it could transpire that B was having his hands tied at the back. Perhaps it was a practical joke. It is impossible to say what conclusions can be drawn without access to the actual circumstances in which this utterance was produced and heard, and the subsequent behaviours performed by the parties concerned. To make sense of the scene is to see that the hand shaking has failed to come off for a reason. What that reason might be cannot be determined independently of what one makes of the scene. For instance, 'the same event' may be seen and described as 'an English language lesson' or 'referee dealing with two rough players'.

Next, imagine that A and B do actually shake hands upon hearing the request. The mutual knowledge theory requires that

they must share an identical, or at least sufficiently similar, definition of what hand shaking means, and, further, that each must know that this knowledge is shared, and that the other knows that he/she knows, etc., before the appearance of hand shaking can be regarded as a true and successful joint act. In order to be able to decide whether A and B's actions are genuine manifestations of the joint act of hand shaking, one would presumably have to ask at some point the question whether they have actually understood the request and performed as requested; or whether they might not have somehow hit upon the right thing to do without knowing it. But as soon as we ask such questions, we notice that they are loaded questions, not disinterested or necessary ones, ie. they are themselves questions asked for a reason. Further, we notice that, should accounts be needed, essentially the same accounting practices are involved in cases of failure as in those of success. That is, one's account of the successful performance of hand shaking cannot be constructed independently of one's reading and understanding of the scene. In a scene describable as 'an English lesson', one might say "Look, he obviously understands the expression!", or "He deserves full marks: he wouldn't be able to do that if he did not know what the expression means." In a scene describable as 'referee dealing with two rough players', however, no such things are likely to be thought or said in the first place. 'Knowing what an expression means' is not a description that applies to every case of a successful co-ordinated act. It applies only to some language games.

Mutual knowledge is thus something that one may infer from the behaviour of interactants --for example, what, upon hearing

an utterance, they then go on to do. Far from being a pre-condition for common understanding and a guarantee of successful communication, mutual knowledge is a result of inferences and interpretations applied to observable behaviour.

Implicit in the concept of mutual knowledge is what one might call a substantivist assumption, ie. the assumption that "successful communication", "correct comprehension", or "genuine understanding", consists in "recovering intended interpretations". The problem is formulated as : how is it possible for participants to understand each other's utterances? What must a hearer rely on to ensure that the interpretation of a particular utterance is the one intended by the speaker? And the form of the solution is taken to be a mechanism whereby this match between two (or more) minds can be ensured. In reaction to this prevalent view, Garfinkel (1967:30) proposes that

"'Shared agreement' refers to various social methods for accomplishing the members' recognition that something was said-according-to-a-rule and not the demonstrable matching of substantive matters. The appropriate image of a common understanding is therefore an operation rather than a common intersection of overlapping sets."

Our study of LA has provided evidence for the idea that common understandings are an interactional achievement, and that there are linguistic means with which participants can carry out operations that are needed to establish common understanding. The range of work that LA has been found to perform shows that it is sensitive to the establishment of common ground as an organizational issue. LA is a linguistic resource with which participants can document to each other their analysis (and therefore understanding) of the situation --"where they are" in the course of a conversation, "who they are" and what each can be expected to know, and "what they are doing"-- and, through that,

to accomplish a variety of interactional tasks. We saw, for example, how an understanding check can, in a particular sequential context, be heard as a challenge.

Rather than being a pre-condition for the successful recovery of "intended meanings", common ground is treated here as an interactional achievement. Participants are constantly oriented to the availability of common ground (shared understanding) as an interactional problem, and deal with it through a variety of means in a variety of ways in the course of conversation. LA is of special interest in this respect, for the light that it sheds on the relationship between linguistic forms and the management of common agreements and understandings.

## 10. Summary

A close examination of LA in ordinary conversation reveals that it can be put to use in a large variety of ways. The specific interactional tasks that it can be used to perform within the particulars of concrete conversational moments can, however, be explicated in terms of its conversational structural properties. Such a description is required for the diversity of its positional and functional characteristics in a range of sequential environments to be related to a common basis.

One way of looking at this common basis is to regard LA as the grammaticalization of a solution to a particular kind of problem in the organization of conversation, namely, the need to negotiate and achieve common ground. Thus, a description may be presented as an adequate formulation, and its assumed adequacy is displayed to the recipient through the use of LA. It may also be that the clearing or laying of certain grounds (eg. background

material) would provide a basis for further stages of some current main project to proceed. Or it may be that some course of action is proposed in such a way as to display the suggester's confidence in the suggestion-recipient's agreement as to its desirability, appropriateness or efficacy.

A bonus of this account is that it is capable of providing a basis for a range of intuitions that previous studies of LA have yielded. We noted at the beginning of this chapter a number of intuitions that have been documented in previous studies. These include: (1) LA is used in requests, 'demanding' or 'requiring' a response; (2) it may express 'agreement having been reached'; and (3) it has an element of 'indefiniteness' and 'incompleteness'. I have shown that LA can partake in the formulation of requests and suggestions, as well as agreements, and that it can be used in extended accounts of various kinds to 'show that the account has not reached the end'. But I have also shown that it can do much more. More importantly, the range of work that this particle can perform are now systematically related to "common ground establishment" as a central feature.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ENDINGS IN CONVERSATION: THE UTTERANCE PARTICLE *LO*

The utterance particle to be dealt with in this chapter is represented throughout as 'LO'. Following the convention established in the last chapter, 'LO' (written in capital letters) is used as an abbreviation for /lo<sup>55</sup>/, that particle which has the segmental shape /lo:/, and the suprasegmental accompaniment of the high-level tone. Confusion should not arise from this convention as we are dealing only with /lo/ in the high tone, and not /lo/ in the mid or low tones, which are regarded as different particles.<sup>1</sup> As explained in the last chapter, phonetic variations will not be considered in detail unless they seem relevant to an argument.

Following the practice established in the last chapter, I will refer to utterances where LO occurs at or near the end as LO-suffixed utterances. In the following sections, a number of LO-suffixed utterances will be examined in relation to a range of sequential environments. While the aim of such a survey is to uncover organizations that may shed light on the particle's general properties, attention will be given to the interactional tasks that are achieved through particular instances of its use. A number of general observations arising from this survey will then be discussed and the properties of the particle will be noted with a view to arriving at a unified account, on the basis of which its varied uses can be explicated. Finally, I will demonstrate how various intuitions documented in previous

descriptions of this particle can be handled systematically in my proposed account.

### 1. Question-Answer Sequences

L0 can be found suffixed to utterances which occupy the second position in a Q-A sequence, i.e. utterances which are designed as 'answers' to a 'question' in the preceding turn. 'Question' and 'Answer' are categories that have to be defined with reference to each other. The occurrence of a question sets up a sequential implication such that the immediately following turn will be examined and interpreted with 'answer' as a central possibility. An answer, in its turn, constitutes evidence of the recipient's analysis of the preceding turn as a question. Let us begin with a few examples.

- (1) [TC11:1:169]
- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| L: 'goummm e::m<br>(1.0)             | L: so em<br>(1.0)   |
| L: a:::::<br>(0.8)                   | L: em<br>(0.8)  |
| L: daai-biu-go aa daa-gwo-<br>lei wo | L: first cousin em<br>has-phoned PT<br>[so em first cousin has<br>phoned] |
| 1-> S: geisi aa                      | S: when PT<br>[when?]   |
| L: ((clears throat))                 | L: ((clears throat))  |
| 2-> gamyat L0=                       | today PT=<br>[today]  |
| 3-> S: =hai me                       | S: =yes PT<br>[did he?]   |
- (2) [FEEL1:1:576]
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1-> B: .hhh goun nei yigaa jou<br>maye gaa                 | B: .hhh so you now do what PT<br>[so what are you doing now]                     |
| C: ngo yigaa hai: ee:::                                    | C: I now at um   |
| S1-> (.)   | (.)  |
| C: jee#  | I-mean   |
| S2-> (0.6)   | (0.6)  |
| C: jou# ee hai# mau yago daai<br>geikau dou jou hangjing:: | C: do um at a-certain one big<br>organization place do<br>administration         |
| S3-> (0.4)   | (0.4)  |
| 2-> C: ge:: ee yanyun L0                                   | C: GEN um staff PT<br>[I'm, I mean, working in, um<br>a certain big organization |

3-> B: h[ai ma	as an administrative staff]
[	B: yes PT
[jee:: di=	[are you]
B: =jee siusiu-ge neu-	C: I-mean some
keungyan	B: That-means little strong-
	woman
	[so you're a little strong
	woman]
C: .hhh heh heh	C: .hhh heh heh
(3) [FEEL2:3ii]	
1-> L: mm yau-geidaai aa=	L: mm how-old PT
	[mm how old is he]
C: =keui gamnin ee duk	C: he this-year um study
form-one	First-form
2->    sapsei seui LO::	fourteen years PT
	[he's in First Form this
	year he's fourteen]
3a->B: sap[sei-seui	B: fourteen
3b->L:    [o: o: ligo lingei	L: oh oh this age ee:::
ee::: hai goum gaa-la	is like-this PT
	[oh well] children at this
	age <u>are</u> like that]

In each of these extracts, the asking of a question (arrowed 1 throughout) is followed by an answer from the recipient (arrowed 2) in the next turn, and then, in the turn following that, the questioner responds to the answer by issuing some form of information receipt (arrowed 3). We thus have a three-position sequence with the following structure:

Position 1 : Question

Position 2 : Answer

Position 3 : Receipt

Each of the LO-suffixed utterances in extracts (1) to (3), which occupies Position 2 in the above structure, is offered as an answer to a question in Position 1. That they are intended and heard as answers can be seen from two observations. First, each of these utterances provides a piece of information in order to fill a gap left by a WH-question in the previous turn (Position 1): "today" in response to "when?" in (1); "administrative staff in a certain big organization" in response

to "what job?" in (2); and "fourteen years old" in response to "how old?" in (3). These L0-suffixed utterances are clearly designed with an orientation to the preceding turn as a question, and their own status as an answer to that question. Second, the turn components occupying Position 3 in the above examples can be characterized as "information receipts": *hai me?* (did he?), *haima?* (are you?), and *sapsei-seui* (fourteen). They are information receipts in the sense that they display the speakers' treatment of the preceding turn as one in which some information has been supplied --in the case of the above examples, information supplied in response to an information-seeking question occurring in Position 1.

Looking more closely at the placement of these information receipts, notice that each begins at a point immediately or very soon after the occurrence of the particle L0, defining thereupon the previous stretch of talk as not only an answer, but an answer that has come to an end. That an answer has come to an 'end' is not a matter of unilateral decision: an answer can only be said to have come to an end when a co-participant has initiated a receipt. The end of a turn is constituted by a turn transition. Thus, 'the end of an answer' is a co-ordinated achievement: it requires a speaker to propose that an utterance has come to a possible end, and a recipient to 'agree' that it indeed has come to an end. One of the features of L0 in a Q-A-R sequence can be stated precisely in terms of this kind of interactional work: it acts as an 'end-of-answer' proposal.

To detail: in (1), the information receipt occurs without any noticeable time gap right on the heels of L0. In (2), notice that C's utterance in Position 2 contains several 'pauses': the

intra-turn silences marked S1, S2 and S3 in the transcript. Their characterization as 'pauses' turns on the way they are heard by the co-participant. They are, as it were, 'disregarded' and treated as pauses, not completion, and are not exploited for turn transition. In terms of syntax and semantics, C's utterance up to the point where the 0.4-second silence occurs could be regarded as 'complete' -- "*hai mau yago daai geikau dou jou hangjing*" is syntactically complete, and can be glossed, roughly, as "I'm doing administrative work in a large institution", which is just as good an answer to the question as the one that is eventually constructed. As it turns out, C 'prolongs' the answer by 'adding' "staff L0", at which point turn transition occurs, showing that the answer is now, at this point, treated as having 'really' come to an end. In this sense, L0-suffixing can be characterized as a completion proposal, signalling, in a Q-A-R sequence, that the answer has reached a point of possible completion. B's placement of her response evidences her agreement to treat the point marked by L0 as the end of C's answer. In general, since sentences could be extended indefinitely, on the basis of syntax and semantics alone, there is no telling in the course of the production of a sentence where it is going to end.

(3) contains further evidence of the way in which L0 is heard as a completion proposal. Notice how the two answer-recipients (B and L) are agreed on where the answer ends: they come in to issue their respective receipts almost simultaneously just after C's L0-suffixed utterance. It can be seen from B and L's placement of their information receipts that they have independently reached a similar hearing of L0 as an end-of-answer proposal, and, in response to that, effect turn transition to

establish the L0-suffixed utterance as a complete answer.

Another interesting feature of these answers is that states-of-affairs are presented as simply and unproblematically known, ie. having a sound common-sense epistemological basis. Thus they may be information pertaining to an individual's personal biography (e.g. one's job, as in (2)); 'facts' stamped with the authority of a subject's first-hand experience (e.g. the time of a phone call received by the speaker, as in (1)), or things which the speaker can claim to know about (e.g. the age of one's son, as in (3)).

Apart from personal biography, first-hand experience, and the like, another major basis for a knowledge claim is natural logic. A proposition can be presented as having the status of knowledge on the basis that it is a conclusion reached through practical (common sense) reasoning. The particle L0 is a resource in Cantonese with which such presentations can be designed. Consider an example of this in detail.

(4) [MAK:1:001]

J: mhai aa mhai wokman lei gaa i ji igo mee lei gaa=	J: no PT not Walkman it-is PT you know this what it-is PT [no it isn't a Walkman you know what it is?]
M: =samgei lei gaa (0.4)	M: radio it-is PT [is it a radio?] (0.4)
--> M: keset [lei goL0:] [ ]	M: cassette-recorder it-is PT [it's a cassette recorder]
J: [l i g o :]::	J: this
J: luk-gan-yam gowo (.) hoyi:	recording PT (.) can [this is recording, it can]

J's second utterance in the first turn ("you know what it is?") can be characterized as an 'exam' question. Following Heritage (1984:284-290), who quotes Searle (1969:66), 'exam' questions can be distinguished from 'real' questions in this way: "In real questions the speaker wants to know (find out) the

answer; in exam questions, the speaker wants to know if the hearer knows." Heritage argues that the status of a question (whether it is a 'real' question or an 'exam' question) cannot be determined independently of its sequential context : there is nothing in the form of a question that can identify it as 'real' or otherwise. He suggests that one of the regular ways of finding out what the status of a question is is to look for some evidence in the third turn of a three-part sequence, in which the question forms the first part, and the answer, the second. The status of the question (in the first turn) can be retrospectively formulated as being 'real' or 'exam' in the third turn. Thus, an information receipt in the third turn (such as "oh", a "change-of-state token") points back to the question in the first turn as a 'real' question. Assessments and evaluations of answers (such as "that's correct", "no", "you're guessing", etc.), on the other hand, point back to the question as an 'exam' question. That is, 'real' questions are defined in terms of a "question-answer-receipt" format, whereas 'exam' questions are defined in terms of a "question-answer-comment" format. (5) and (6) below are examples of real questions and exam questions respectively.

(5) (=Heritage's (31), p.285)

1--> S: .hh When do you get out. Christmas week or the week before Christmas.

(0.3)

2--> G: Uh::m two or three days before Ch[ristmas,]

3--> S: [0 h :, ]

(6) (=part of Heritage's (34), p.288)

1--> T: Where else were they taking it before they (1.0) started in Western Australia?

(2.0)

T: Mm hm?

(0.5)

2-->P1: Melbourne?

(0.5)

3--> T: No[:::]

2-->P2: [( )

3--> T: No::

In the light of Heritage's account, J's question in (4) can be identified as an 'exam question', not because the object whose identity is being questioned (the cassette recorder) belongs to J, so that she should know what it is, for there is no guarantee that people should always know the identities of objects that belong to them. Rather, the status of J's question can be determined retrospectively from her own response to M's answer (ie. the third turn: "this is recording, it can"), which indicates that she did not ask the question in order to find out what the thing is.

A closer look at the interactional tasks achieved in this episode will throw some light on the properties of LO. We may begin by asking what practical problem J is facing and how she goes about trying to solve it. Roughly, the problem that J is facing is how to get M to agree to be recorded. Specifically, her problem is to 'find some place' in the conversation where it would be appropriate for her to 'reveal her purpose', which is that she intends to seek M's consent to be recorded. One way in which this problem can be solved is to provide for an occasion in which she can get to do a request. And one way of doing that is to set up a sequence in such a way that, by virtue of features in its organization, a slot is provided for in which a request (though not necessarily an explicit asking for permission) can be 'properly' and 'naturally' done.

Levinson (1983:6.4.3) shows how pre-requests operate to gain ratified access to a turn at talk in which the request can be dealt with. The structure of pre-request sequences is (1983:357):

Position 1: Pre-request

Position 2: Go ahead

Position 3: Request

Position 4: Response

One use of pre-requests is to set up a sequential environment which would allow the requester to get to do a request as a 'proper thing to do' upon the issuance of a go-ahead. Looking at (4) in this light, we can see how a comparable (but different) kind of work is being achieved. J's test question sets up a three-part sequence in such a way that the one who asks the initial question in Position 1 (in this case, J herself) will get a slot in Position 3 in which she can make a comment on the answer by addressing such issues as its correctness. This then will be a place where she, the 'examiner', can 'reveal the true identity' of the object in question, which can lead up to the doing of her request. In this way, the request or announcement can be built naturally as a response to the preceding turn, and 'packaged' in the form of a revelation.

M's response in Position 2 consists of two successive attempts at answering J's question. A tentative 'guess' is first ventured, in the form of a question ("is it a radio?"). Then, upon not receiving an immediate confirmation (note the 0.4-second silence following this first answer attempt), M quickly switches into a declaration: "*keset lei go LO*" ("It's a cassette recorder"). Note how this second answer attempt is presented as a conclusion that follows naturally from information gathered from the first attempt: the object in question is either a radio or a cassette recorder; it is probably not a radio (from the lack of confirmation); therefore it must be a cassette recorder.

Thus, with the use of LO, the second answer attempt is built in the form of a conclusion reached through practical inference.

To detail the part that LO plays in this sequence, remember that the target utterance (arrowed in the transcript) is produced as a candidate answer to a test-question. Not just any answer, but an answer designed in a particular way. It is formulated as a description of 'what the object must be', and makes it clear that the identity of the object in question is anything but a mystery to the examinee, which would then suggest that what is problematic and unknown is the point of the exam itself: why question the identity of an object which is known? This is the 'implied question' that J's response in turn 3 must now orient to. Thus, the LO-suffixed utterance, through formulating an answer to an exam question as a fact the known-ness of which rests upon a sound basis, passes the turn back to the examiner, who must now give an account of the purpose of the exam. But this turns out to tie in exactly with what the examiner set out to do: she can now get to do her request through 'naturally' revealing the purpose of the exam in response to that challenge. In this way, a solution to an interactional problem is achieved through a Q-A-C sequence, in which LO has a systematic contribution to make.

In addition to the 'completeness' and 'epistemology' features is what might be called a 'backward-looking' feature. Unlike some other kinds of answers, the sense and import of a LO-suffixed answer can generally be established independently of further information. Formulating a piece of information with LO-suffixing displays the assumption that the context within which that piece of information can acquire its full sense and import

can be constructed either from the immediate interaction, or through a backward search. Consider (7) and (8), two extracts that are highly revealing in this respect.

(7) [DJ7:1:091]

D1: wei::	D1: hello
(0.7)	(0.7)
C1: w[ai	C1: hello
D2: [wai::	D2: hello
D1: hai:: lei giu mee meng neui-jai	D1: hello you called what name girl [hello what's your name, girl?]
(.)	(.)
C1: Ada	C1: Ada
D1: Adah[hh	D1: Adahhh
C1: [hai	C1: yes
? : g[oum	? : so
D2: [Ada lei dou ji go yauhei dim waan gaalaa haa	D2: Ada you too know CL game how play PT PT [Ada you know how to play the game don't you]
(.)	(.)
C1: ji-ji-dei	C1: know-a-bit
LA[:	PT
[	[a little bit]
D1: [hhh [heh .hhh ]	D1: hhh heh .hhh
D2: [ji-ji-dei]	D2: know-a-bit PT
LA[:	[a little bit]
1-->D1: [laam-jai le	D1: boy PT
	[what about the boy]
(0.3)	(0.3)
2-->C2: aa-(k)hei	C2: aa-(k)hei
	[((speaker's name?))]
(0.2)	(0.2)
3-->D1: hai lei giu mee meng aa	D1: yes you called what name PT
	[yes what's your name?]
(0.3)	(0.3)
4-->C2: aa-kei LO	C2: aa-kei PT
	[Kei]
(0.5)	(0.5)
5-->D1: aa-kei 'LO:: (. )	D1: aa-kei PT (. )
ngo dou m[ei jidou]=	I yet not know hhheh heh
[	["aa-kei LO::", I don't
[	know yet hhheh heh]
D2: [aa#-kei:]	D2: aa-kei
D1: =hhheh heh	D1: hhhheh heh
D2: aa-kei haimai dai-yat-chi daa-lei waan li-go yauhei gaa	D2: aa-kei whether first-time phone play this game PT [aa-kei, is this the first time you called to play this game?]

Here, two callers, one female (C1) and the other male (C2), have called to take part in a game on a radio phone-in programme, hosted by two Disk-Jockeys (D1 and D2). Two L0-suffixed utterances occur in this extract, once in C2's second mention of his name (arrow 4) in response to D1's question, and then again in D1's response to that answer in the immediately following turn (arrow 5).

Starting from the turn arrowed 1, D1's "what about the boy" is clearly heard by C2 as a question asking him what his name is. Witness his provision of an answer in the turn arrowed 2. In the midst of a great deal of laughter, D1 somehow missed the answer, and issues a rephrased, more explicit question (arrow 3). Thus C2 finds himself being asked the same question for the second time. He responds by giving his name again, but suffixes it this time with L0. Of greatest interest in the present context is how the recipient, D1, interprets this L0-suffixed utterance, as displayed in her next turn (arrow 5).

Features in the design of this turn provide solid evidence of the way in which tiny, apparently unintegrated objects like particles are taken fully into account by co-participants in assigning meanings to utterances in conversation. The turn begins with D1 quoting and mimicking C2's prior turn ("aa-Kei 'L0::"), exaggerating it and heightening its dramatic effect by giving "L0" extra stress, also lengthening the vowel considerably. Following that an account is given ("I don't yet know [your name]") of her asking the caller's name in her previous turn (ie. arrow 3). The provision of this account displays D1's reading of C2's prior turn as something of a complaint. Through presenting a justification for her question,

D1 constructs a line of defence against the complaint.

That C2's "aa-Kei LO" (arrow 4) can be heard as a complaint is, I wish to suggest, illustrative of what I referred to as the backward-looking feature of LO. The particle invites the recipient to look backward in the discourse for some feature in the context in order to establish a link between the present utterance and something that has been said before (in this case the giving of his name the first time round). The interactional import of the utterance (complaining through answering a question in a special way) is to be worked out on the basis of such a link.

Consider one more example of this backward-looking feature in (8) below.

- (8) [MAK:1:044]
- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 1-> | M: hai laa:: ngodei gamyat<br>dou yiu# heui la#<br>ngodei saa-at-dim-jung<br>heui <u>yamchaa laa ha ha ha</u><br>deng-jo wai | M: yes PT we today<br>also want# go PT<br>we eleven-o'clock<br>go <u>have-tea PT ha ha ha</u><br>reserved seats<br>[yes today we also want#<br>went we went to have tea at<br>eleven (we had) reserved<br>a table] |
| 2-> | J: hai-mai hou do yan aa=  | J: whether very many people PT<br>[was it crowded]   |
| 3-> | M: =aa m ngo deng-jo wai LO::  | M: =PT m I reserved seats PT<br>[um I had reserved seats]  |
| 4-> | (0.4)  | (0.4)  |
| 5-> | M: ngo mai waa:-teng [ngo=<br>[  | M: I EMPH told-you I<br>[didn't I tell you]  |
| 6-> | J: [o o o<br>M: =seung singkei-luk heui<br>deng-ding aamaa=  | J: yeah yeah yeah<br>M: last Saturday go reserve PT<br>[last Saturday I went and<br>reserved ((a table))]  |

The most interesting feature of (8) in the present context is the 'repeat' of the string *deng-jo wai* ("have made a reservation"). It occurs first at the end of the first turn (arrow 1), and is 'repeated' in the turn arrowed 3, this time LO-suffixed. There is a fundamental difference between these two

occurrences, in that the second time the string occurs, it is offered in response to a question in the preceding turn (arrow 2: "was it crowded?"). Note, however, that while it clearly orients to J's preceding utterance as a question, this turn is not formulated as a straightforward answer to it. The question being couched in an 'A-not-A' form, a straightforward answer would be "A" or "not A". But the propositional content of M's response departs from these limits. Instead of directly answering the question, the response is built in the form of a LO-suffixed utterance which points back to an earlier mention of "seat reservation". By attributing the status of a known fact to "seat reservation", this response points to the availability of an answer by means of an inference from a known state-of-affairs: the fact that M had made a seat reservation means that she could not possibly have had any difficulty in getting seats.

So far, we have seen how LO can be used to formulate answers to questions in ways that are systematically explicable. But this particle can also be found suffixed to answer-receipts (ie. Position 3 in a Q-A-R sequence). While answers may be received with 'plain' tokens of receipt such as "o" ("I see"), resources are available for the recipient to display his/her treatment of an answer as 'expected' in some way. This is certainly relevant to 'exam' questions, where the questioner passes some comments on the answer, but it has a wider use than that. (9) below contains an instance of LO used in a way that displays the answer-recipient's recognition that the answer has provided evidence which confirms an expectation.

(9) [FEEL1:1:452]

- B: goummmm neidei dongsi  
fansau hai wai mee  
yunyan aa
- (0.7)  
C: keui [( #)  
B: [jee wai (.) jinghai  
jidou nei jou gwo  
cheuisi:: goumyeung aa
- C: hai [aa  
[  
1-> B: [seungseun m jingji  
goum ge  
(0.7)  
2-> C: ee::: keui waa ngo:::  
(.)  
C: jee keui waa ngo hou m  
hou m saisam la:::
- (0.3)  
3-> B: m'hm [hai LO::=  
[  
C: [ha# ha#  
B: =jee .hhh ee holang keui  
wui gokdak nei:: .hh ee  
m gau taitap la:::  
haimai aa
- B: so you then separate  
be for what reason PT  
[so when you separated,  
what reason was it for]  
(0.7)  
C: she ( #)  
B: I-mean for (.) only  
know you do ASP  
cook like-that PT  
[I mean was it only because  
she knew you had been a  
cook]  
C: yes PT  
[yes]  
B: believe not only so PT  
[not only that, I believe]  
(0.7)  
C: um she say I  
(.)  
C: I-mean she say I very not  
very not caring PT  
[um she said I mean she  
said I wasn't wasn't  
very caring]  
(0.3)  
B: mhm yes PT  
[mhm that's it]  
C: yeah yeah  
B: I-mean .hhh um perhaps she  
would feel you .hh um  
not enough loving PT  
right PT  
[I mean perhaps she felt  
you weren't loving  
enough, right?]

The three turns arrowed 1, 2 and 3 can be identified as forming a Q-A-R sequence. Without going into details, I take it that B's utterance in Position 1, in spite of its syntactic form of a declarative, is intended, and heard, as a question (as evidenced, for example, by C's provision of an answer in the next turn, and B's subsequent receipt of this answer). Further, it is heard as a question that seeks information concerning 'other reasons that C's girl friend has left him'. Notice that the question is built in a special way: it is not formulated as a 'straight-forward/ naive question' that seeks some information that B does not have but wants to have; rather, the 'asking' is

done in the form of a 'statement' of a belief that what is known so far cannot be 'the whole truth' (arrow 1: "not only that, I believe"). In this way, the questioner indicates her 'suspicion' that more has yet to be revealed. Let us call this kind of question 'leading' questions. There are some interesting similarities between leading questions and exam questions. We noted that the questioner in an exam question sequence can retrospectively formulate the question in Position 1 as an exam question by displaying his/her knowledge of the answer 'all along'. In a similar way, the questioner in a leading question sequence can deal with the answer in a way that relates it to the 'suspicion' that was built into the original question. In the case of B's question in (9), the design of the question is such that it signals B's 'suspicion' that some information of a certain nature has been missing. That is, B's question signals 'suspicion' of a quite specific kind: she suspects that there is some reason why C's girl friend has left him which C has not yet revealed. Looking at the question in this way, it can be seen that B's token of receipt in Position 3 has a special kind of design, namely, the answer is received in a way that ties it back to the leading question. That is, L0 in B's answer-receipt (arrow 3: "yes L0" [that's it]) displays that the information being received is treated as providing evidence that confirms an earlier suspicion. Thus, the receipt is built, through the use of L0, as one that treats some state-of-affairs (there being additional reasons why C's girl friend has left him) as something that confirms an earlier suspicion.

A similar kind of work is done through the use of L0 in the following episode.

(10) [MAK:1:048]

J: =haiaa hou aa# (.)	J: =yes good PT (.)
J: daanhai le: e hai yau go mantai:: (.)	J: but PT e be there-be one problem (.)
J: mee mantai le (.)	J: what problem PT (.)
J: jau-hai [.hhh [ [ [	J: it-is .hhh [yes it's good, but there is a problem, and what's the problem? it's .hhh]
M: [gaau-[tung mantai	M: transport problem
J: [odei ssss=	J: we ssss a-few persons
J: =ge::i-go yan heui le (0.3)	a-few persons go PT (0.3)
J: dou mou che: ge=	J: none not-have car PT [we ssss none of us who went has a car]
M: =hai la (.)	M: yes PT (.)
M: gaautung mantai ngo jau-hai waa . . . . .	M: transport problem I EMPH say [that's right (.) it's the problem of transport, that's what I said]
. . . . .	. . . . .
. ((8 turns omitted in which J related to M how she and her friends had a lot of trouble finding transport to go home))	
. . . . .	
J: daahai jau keui hai:: yugo lei yiu yim le: jau yim keui go-dou:: [ge ma#-yee: [ [	J: =but then it be if you have-to dislike PT then dislike it there GEN what [but if there's anything to say against it, it's that the place is--]
--> M: [nei pangyau gaaksip LO mai-jau-hai	M: you friend inaccessible PT PT EMPH-be [inaccessible to your friends]

In the first part of this extract, J and M have mutually identified "a problem of transport" as a negative feature of the restaurant that they have been talking about. The object that I wish to focus on is M's LO-suffixed utterance in the arrowed turn ("it's inaccessible to your friends LO"). This is produced in response to J's preceding turn, in which the question of what

negative features the restaurant can be said to have is raised again (J: "but if there's anything to say against it, it's that the place is ...". But just when J has provided sufficient indication of her intention to name a negative feature of the restaurant, she displays signs of a search difficulty ("...*godou*::"). It is at this point that M's LO-suffixed utterance comes in, and a central task that it can be seen to be performing is to display understanding of J by supplying her with the name of the problem she was having difficulties identifying. Notice that the 'help' being offered is constructed in such a way as to include a description of some state-of-affairs portrayed as a previously mentioned 'fact'. Hence, M's portrayal of her suggested problem as something that she had mentioned before (*jau hai waa* "that's what I said").

To take an inventory of the observations made in this section: LO is regularly used, in Question-Answer sequences, to make an end-of-answer proposal, ie. to present an utterance as the whole contribution. It is also a means with which answers can be presented as known facts. In addition, it provides an instruction for co-participants to initiate backward searches and to establish links between information presented in an utterance and information recoverable from what has been said or done before, so as to determine the sense and interactional import of the utterance.

## 2. Reportings

Reportings consist, among other things, in the construction of one, or a series of, descriptions that can be interpreted as an account of 'what happened/ is happening/ will happen'. Let us call each of these descriptions a report-component. Some,

although not all, report components present 'what happened', etc. as natural, reasonable, or necessary consequences that follow from some conditions or circumstances.

(11) [MAK:1:073]

J: =goum o o mou aa go-an-si jau chuet-dou-lai le cheut-dou-lei jau hou genghok aa [goum-jau]= [ ] [ ] [ ]	J: so I I didnt PT then so came-out PT came-out then PT very thirsty PT so-then [so I I didn't and then we came out when we came out we were very thirsty so]
M: ['mmm ]	M: 'mmm
J: =seung wan deungfong yanye goumj yap-jo-heui --> yanye LO	J: =want find place drink so went-in drink PT [we wanted to find some place for a drink so we went in for a drink]
M: o:: o o	M: oh I see

(12) [MAK:1:050]

J: =gameung le: ngodei chamyat jau yiwai:: e: baasi jung yau aa jee [sik-yun laa= [ ] [ ] [ ]	J: =and-then PT we yesterday then thought e: bus still there-be PT I-mean finish-eating PT [and we thought yesterday there would still be a bus running I mean after the meal]
M: [mou gaalaa=	M: not-have gaalaa [there wouldn't be]
M: =o (0.3)	M: yeah (0.3)
J: gameung dimji cheut-dou- lei le yunloi heui sei- sap-hou jaam godou le yiging::=	J: and-then unexpectedly came- out PT realize go service- 40 stop there PT already= [and when we came out, we realized (when) we went to the stop for service 40, it was already--]
M: =mou che la#=	M: =no bus PT= [there weren't buses anymore]
J: =sei-sap-hou em le yiging (0.3)	J: =service-forty-M le already (0.3)
J: mou-saai laa=	J: no-more PT= [there weren't any service 40M anymore]
M: =hai-gam jeui-hou [ge fongfaat( )diksi LA] [ ] [ ]	M: in-that-case the-best GEN way ( ) taxi PT [so the best thing to do is ( ) a taxi, right?]
J: [gou::m soyi le jau (.) ]=	J: so therefore le then (.)

	J: =aamaam: jau-yau diksi	there-happen to-be taxi
	m-mai jit-jo diksi	so stopped taxi
-->	cheut-lei LO[:	come-out PT
	[	[there happened to be a
	[	taxi so we took a taxi
	[	and came out]
M:	[o:::	M: o:::
		[I see]

(11) and (12) are two extracts from the same conversation in which J is giving M a report on 'what she did' on two occasions. In each case, a report component is constructed as a description of 'what happened'. Further, the events that 'happened' are presented as ones that follow naturally from some given circumstances. Their naturalness has a specific basis: they are portrayed as events that took place as a result of, or in response to, some set of circumstances, ie. as things that can be expected to happen given those sets of circumstances. In (11), LO is suffixed to "so we went in for a drink", an event portrayed as 'what happened' as a result of the circumstance "when we came out we were very thirsty so we wanted to find some place for a drink". "Going in for a drink" is thus portrayed, not, for example, as something that was in any way unusual, but as something that arises naturally from the circumstances described. Similarly, in (12), "so we took a taxi and came out" is depicted as a consequence of there being no bus service left, and "there happened to be a taxi". Again, "taking a taxi", which is reported as that which happened, is presented as something that followed naturally or reasonably from a set of circumstances. Thus, in both examples, we see how a report component can be constructed as the description of an action/ event which is natural.

Consider next a sequence which throws further light on this feature. (13) below shows how a compliment may be built in the form of a report, and is do-able in this way by virtue of LO-

suffixing, with which a state-of-affairs is portrayed as arising naturally and reasonably from a given set of circumstances.

(13) [FEEL1:1:288]

B:=gei loutou-ge syutwaa jiyiu houteng jau jongyi teng ge-[la [ [ [ [	B: however hackneyed saying as-long-as nice-to-hear then like hear PT [however hackneyed some words are, as long as they are nice to hear, we like to hear them]
C: [hai aa [ngo maanmaan teng= L: [mou-cho	C: yes PT I every-night hear L: right
C: =dou dou m hang fangaau yiu teng yun sin seung fan -->LO[: [ [ [ [	C: until really not willing sleep have-to hear finish before want sleep PT [I listen to it ((your programme)) every night, wouldn't go to bed until it's over]
L: [o: goum-[yeung haimai aa m] [haiwaa .hhh ]=	L: oh like-this isn't-it PT m [oh really]
B: [haiwaa .hhh ]	B: really .hhh

The report here consists in the provision of a description of a 'habit': C can't go to bed until she has finished listening to the programme every night. Nowhere is a compliment explicitly stated. C's LO-suffixed utterance, however, is clearly heard as a compliment. What is the basis for this hearing? A central feature of the arrowed utterance is that it presents C's listening to the programme as something that is regular and predictable (it happens "every night"), as well as being a natural consequence of some circumstances that have been left unstated. Through LO's portrayal of C's listening as a consequence, the report points to the radio programme as the circumstance that induces 'compulsive hearing'. Hence the possibility of hearing it as a compliment.

(14) is a longer report in which E relates an 'inexplicable event' to two recipients L and A at a point in their conversation when they are talking about 'the supernatural'.

(14) [SS:CH:1:408]

- E: ee: o ochi ge s saigo si  
o changge teng-go: z  
yau-ya-chi  
yat-chi le: .h[hh  
[  
[  
L: [ha#=  
E: =jee tai ngaujai le jee  
go# jee gogo sengbaan  
heui tai ngau LA=  
  
L: =mm=  
E: =.hh tai yun ngau le  
jau:: honang o gochi  
m ji yaumou lokyi aa=  
  
L: =mm=  
E: =gogo jau-lok-heui tong  
dou yauseui aa=  
  
L: =mm=  
E: =.hh dimji daiyat le  
(.)  
E: gogo o beng saai wo hh=  
  
L: =mm=  
E: =jau: gogo tong le aamaam  
yau-yan ne: jau hai-o-dou  
jam-sei-go aamaa=  
  
L: =mm=  
E: =.hh goum gogo yiwai godou  
1--> yau mee si L0=  
  
L: =chyunbou beng saai  
  
(0.3)  
E: ha#=  
2-->E: =[gogo beng L0]  
[  
A: [hou laan-gong seun]-m-  
seun ge idi ye:: seun-bat-  
seun-yau-lei ...  
  
E: um I once GEN s small time  
I have heard z  
once  
once PT .hhh  
[um once when I was small  
I once heard]  
L: yeah  
E: I-mean watch cows PT I-mean  
every# I-mean everyone all  
go watch cows PT=  
[I mean watching cows, I  
mean everyone went to  
watch the cows]  
L: mm  
E: .hh watch finish cows PT  
then perhaps I that-time  
not know whether rain PT=  
[when we finished watching  
the cows, I don't know  
if it was raining]  
L: mm  
E: everyone go-down pond at  
swim PT  
[everyone went down to the  
pond to swim]  
L: mm  
E: .hh unexpectedly next-day PT  
(.)  
E: everyone all ill all PT hh=  
[it turned out everyone  
became ill the next day,  
all of them]  
L: mm  
E: and that pond PT just some-  
one PT then there  
drowned PT  
[and in that pond, someone  
had just been drowned  
earlier]  
L: mm  
E: .hh so everyone thought  
there there-be what thing PT  
[so everyone wondered what  
it was]  
L: all ill all  
[everyone became ill?]  
(0.3)  
E: yeah=  
E: =everyone ill PT  
[yeah everyone was ill]  
A: very difficult-to-say  
whether-believe PT these  
things believe-it-or-not  
[it's difficult to say,  
whether one should believe  
such things, it's up to you to  
believe or not believe them]

The two L0-suffixed utterances (arrows 1 and 2) in (14) have very similar characteristics as those examined in some of the previous extracts. The utterance "so everyone wondered what it was L0" (arrow 1) is constructed as a description of 'what happened' as a result of a set of circumstances, namely, that everyone who swam in the pond got ill, and someone was drowned in the pond earlier the same day. The "wondering" is portrayed as arising from the co-occurrence of these two events. "Everyone was ill L0" (arrow 2), like (8) (the seat reservation episode), is formulated as a factual description, the *known-ness of which is* establishable on a prior identical description (E's earlier turn "it turned out everyone became ill the next day, all of them"). In both instances, the work of L0 can be described in terms of the analysis developed so far : some state-of-affairs is being related to a prior description, or as a natural consequence of a given set of circumstances.

Another notable feature of the two instances of L0 in this datum is the relation between the occurrence of the two L0-suffixed utterances and the 'ending' of the reporting. The first of these utterances can be characterized as a story-ending proposal that comes on the heels of a particularly 'smooth' reporting sequence, in the course of which minimal continuers ("ha#"s and "mm"s) are provided at all the 'right places'. The ending becomes relevant upon E's utterance "so everyone wondered what it was" (arrow 1). L returns with "everyone became ill?", and, in so displaying his understanding and appreciation of the import of the story, contributes to its 'ending' (Sacks 1974). Notice how A, the other recipient, also produces, on his part, an independent display of understanding and appreciation: "it's

difficult to say, etc". This constitutes an evidence that the two report-recipients are agreed on 'where the story ends'. For our present purposes, note that both E's story-ending proposal and his confirmation of L's story-ending response (arrows 1 and 2) are LO-suffixed. One property of LO which can be seen clearly from these two instances is that it can be used to propose that an account/ report/ story has come to an end, and to invite some response from the story-recipient(s) to jointly achieve an ending.

Observe that, by virtue of this 'end-of-story proposal', the "wondering" is described not only as an action that arises naturally from a set of circumstances, it is also presented as 'the reporter's whole contribution (for the moment)'. Through the ending proposal, this report about people's "wondering" can serve as the punch line. The 'moral' of the story is thus that there are strange happenings that make people "wonder why". The use of LO to mark the story's possible completion at this point is done for a particularly apt reason: under the circumstances as portrayed in the story, one 'naturally wonders why'; beyond this wondering, however, is a realm not to be trespassed by language.

Finally, consider two data extracts in which LO occurs, not in utterances which do reportings, but in those which are issued in response to reports or report components. I will refer to these utterances as 'report responses' in the rest of this section. Report responses can 'make of' the preceding report (or report component) in a variety of ways, but I shall only examine two instances, (15) and (16), which will throw some light on the properties of LO. These are examples of how 'comments' can be offered in response to a report component in such a way as to

exploit the properties of L0 in order to achieve a variety of interactional tasks; in the case of (15) and (16), 'dismissing a complaint' and 'fooling someone' respectively.

(15) [MAK:1:011]

M:	lei hou laan waa go:-dou#	M:	you very difficult say
	yatyeung gaamaa haimai-laa		everyone same gaamaa right?
	[peiyu-waa (.)]		for-instance (.)
	[		[it's difficult--everyone's
	[		not the same, right? for
	[		example]
J:	[hai-la::	J:	yes
M:	tingjiu heui haang pe	M:	tomorrow-morning go walk
	aa-R ayaa:: jeui jang		e.g. R EXCL most hate
	a haang la haang		is walk PT walk
	[matgwai		what-on-earth
	[		[about going for a walk
	[		tomorrow R (said) god I hate
	[		walking what's the point]
1--> J:	[gam mai m-hou haang	J:	so then don't walk PT
	[LO:		[don't walk then]
2--> M:	[gam mai m-hou haang LO:	M:	so then don't walk PT
	lei [haidou		you here
	[		[don't walk then, you're]
J:	[heui mai hai ukei	J:	she then be home
	[hon-munhau		look-after-the-house
	[		[she can stay behind and
	[		look after the house]
M:	[ <u>heh</u>	M:	<u>heh</u>
3--> J:	[dang di yan lei LO:::	J:	wait the people come PT
	[		[wait for people to come]
M:	[ <u>heh hh hh</u>	M:	<u>heh hh hh</u>

A brief examination of the interactional tasks achieved in this sequence will reveal some properties of L0 which should by now be familiar. M, in the turn preceding arrow 1, reports to J that R "hates walking". The reporting (like all reportings) is formulated in a way that bears the signature of the reporter, i.e. the formulation of the report represents the reporter's reading/understanding of the 'reportable'. In this case, R is reported as saying she "hates walking" in a way that is hearable as a 'complaint'. J's response to this reported complaint, in her L0-suffixed utterance (arrow 1: "don't walk then L0") is constructed in the form of a 'recommendation' (as if R was there to receive it, hence the 'play-acting' character of this and the following

two turns). Further, it is a recommendation built as a conclusion that follows naturally from some given circumstances. It proposes that the description of R's dislike for walking can be treated as a premise, and that "don't walk then" is a reasonable inference from this premise, ie. "if she hates walking, she can not walk" is being presented as a natural course of action, something that anyone under similar circumstances can be expected to do.

How then does our characterization of these two turns tie in with the interactional task of 'dismissing a complaint'? J's "don't walk then L0" is a report response, in the sense explained above. We noted that this report response is built in the form of a recommendation. Further, it is a recommendation that is formulated as a 'natural' conclusion that can be drawn from the reported complaint as a premise, ie. it embodies the claim that it is 'natural' and 'reasonable' to infer from the fact that one hates walking the conclusion that one should not walk. The status of this recommendation as a warrantable conclusion is crucial for the work that it is designed to perform, which is that it evidences J's treatment of the reported complaint as somehow 'puzzling': if one doesn't like walking, one can simply not walk, why complain? Thus, the claim that the recommendation being offered is a warrantable inference --a claim that is exhibited through the use of L0,-- by pointing to its own 'reasonableness', 'exposes' R's counter-position, and thus her complaint, as 'unreasonable'. (cf. (4), the "cassette recorder" episode examined in the last section, where M's L0-suffixed utterance displays puzzlement, and, through that, questions the ground for J's initiation of the 'exam').

The next two LO-suffixed utterances (arrows 2 and 3) can be characterized along similar lines. M's "don't walk then LO" (arrow 2) is identical in form to J's utterance in the preceding turn. Just as the preceding turn is constructed in the ways as described above, M's 'echo' is built with an orientation to its own warrantability as an inference drawable on the basis of R's complaint as a premise. By providing a 'copy' that overlaps with the 'original' (M's turn begins in overlap with J's production of LO), M exhibits her understanding of J's position. While the use of this kind of understanding display does not guarantee the hearing of it as providing support and sympathy, that this particular instance is so hearable can be seen from the fact that M's laughter in response to J's next LO-suffixed utterance (arrow 3) evidences her retrospective formulation of her own previous turn as doing an alignment. The 'chorus' effect that is achieved through M's 'echo' highlights the coparticipants' mutual ratification of the status of the inference being drawn as warrantable, natural. Without going into details, the third LO-suffixed utterance can similarly be heard as a warrantable inference drawn from the premise that R "hates walking", as a means of, first, displaying her treatment of M's preceding turn as hearable-as-supportive; second, extending her dismissal of the reported complaint in a more explicit way; and, finally, summarizing the work mutually achieved so far and proposing topic closure.

Thus each of the three instances of LO in (15) performs a similar kind of work. In each case, an utterance is constructed in such a way as to make transparent its status as a conclusion inferred from known premises.

(16) shows how this and related properties of LO can be

exploited to do 'fooling someone'.

(16) [MAK:1:013]

J: aa-L hou seung haang aa:: L tung A-J waa haang aa:: heui waa baat-dim-jung lei-dou aa:: [tingyat (.) [ [ [ [ [	J: L very-much want walk PT L and A-J say walk PT she say eight-o'clock arrive PT tomorrow (.) [L wanted to walk very much L and A-J said they would come for a walk she said (they) would arrive at 8 tomorrow]
M: [o: ngaam aa	M: o: correct PT [that's a good idea]
J: giu ngodei dang-maai heui heui [wo: M: [hou:: hou hou hou [hou J: [gam o #aak-gwai heuidei o waa lei bat-dim-jung lei aa [(.) o m-ji ]= [ [ [ [ [	J: ask we wait-for her PT [asked us to wait for her] M: good good good good good J: so I fool them I say you eight-o'clock come PT (.) I not-know PT [so I fooled them and said are you coming at 8? I don't know]
M: [#aan di bo:]	M: late too PT [that's too late]
J: bo::[:: gameung M: [#aan di bo:(.)][haa [ J: [haiaa (.) J: yanwai odei:: haang-saan di ye dim ji je waje [odei m luk luk [m luk dim [ [ [ [ [ [ [ [	J: PT like-this M: late too PT (.) yeah [that's too late, yeah] J: yeah (.) J: because we walk-hill GEN thing how know PT maybe we 5 6 6 5 6 o'clock [yeah (.) the thing about mountain walking is you just don't know maybe we'll get up at five six six five or six]
M: [haa [heisan lok (.) gammai haang 1--> haang [LO: ho [ [ [ [ [ [	M: yeah get-up PT (.) then walk PT right? [yeah when we get up we'll walk, right?]
J: [haiaa 2--> haiaa o haiaa gameung LO:	J: yeah yeah I yeah like-this PT [yeah yeah I yeah that's it]

Let us focus our attention on the first arrowed turn. "We'll walk" is portrayed as an action the occurrence of which is dependent upon the condition "when we get up", ie. what time the "walking" takes place will depend on what time the "getting up"

takes place. LO-suffixing helps to relate the "walking" to the "getting up", ie. the utterance is designed in such a way as to embody the claim that the time at which the walking is to take place follows plainly, naturally, and reasonably from the condition. The dependency is portrayed as 'in the nature of the thing being talked about', something that is neither unusual or out of the ordinary.

For the co-participants, the point of the exercise is to (in a play-acting sort of way) fool L and A-J. But how is the fooling achieved? It is done by making L and A-J believe that the time they proposed to come may be too late. *That the time L and A-J proposed to come is assessable as "too late"* turns on the claim, embodied in the LO-suffixed utterance, that it is in the nature of "morning walks" that they are done "when one gets up", and one might just get up "at five or six", a time earlier than the time at which L and A-J proposed to come. The contribution of LO to this fooling project is that it can be exploited to mark the fact that it is in the nature of morning walks that their happening depends naturally on some circumstances: the time at which people get up being unpredictable (it could be "five or six" in the morning), the time at which they start walking may be earlier than "eight o'clock". Whether L and A-J find this claim plausible and whether they would be taken in is irrelevant. In fact, part of the fun may come from the implausibility of the proposal. For instance, the ones being fooled might reason that the time at which one gets up and the time at which one starts walking can surely be decided on and fixed in advance. But then what does it matter, if fooling is heard as a joke?

To summarize this section, report components, as well as report responses, can, through LO-suffixing, be so constructed as to present a state-of-affairs as dependent upon, or arising from, some given circumstances, or as a conclusion that is naturally inferable from some known premises. LO can also draw co-participants' attention to the possibility of story completion or topic closure.

### 3. Cognate Formulations

The understanding/ interpretation of an immediately preceding turn can be displayed in a number of ways, one of which is to offer a 'cognate formulation', a formulation which captures the import of the preceding turn in a variant form. LO is often found suffixed to such cognate formulations.

(17) [SS:CH:1:163]

M: dinsi samgei sengyat  
gaau aa

M: TV radio all-the-time  
teach PT  
[((Putonghua)) is being  
taught on TV and the  
radio all the time]

P: a:

P: yeah

M: dou mou-mat-dim hok #e

M: really not-really learn PT  
[haven't really learned  
much of it]

--> P: hh heh heh .hh jau-mm  
teng-gwo aa syun LO:

P: hh heh heh .hh just listened  
PT forget-it PT  
[heh heh one just listens to  
it and then forgets all  
about it]

M: ha#

M: yeah

(18) [SS:CH:1:165]

P: dinnou godou dou:#  
(0.7)  
jee gong yingman jung  
dogo gong jungman

P: computer there also  
(0.7)  
I-mean talk English even  
more-than talk Chinese  
[about computers, I mean,  
one uses English more than  
Chinese]

M: mm  
(0.6)

M: mm  
(0.6)

P: yingman ji beiga::u (.)  
yi-[di daa]-yap-heui aa  
[ ]  
[ ]

P: English words more (.)  
easier enter PT  
[it's easier to enter  
using English words]



cognate formulation in the following turn: to enter information in Chinese, "one has to learn again". As in the previous instance, L0 helps to present "one has to learn again" as a fact independently known to M, the offering of which as a variant description of the disadvantages of using Chinese in computing, at the point in which it occurs, displays M's understanding of the import of P's formulation.

(19) below evidences a similar procedure, where L's 'summary' of C's trouble is followed by C's confirmation, by means of a cognate formulation. Again, C's "fear of losing both" is presented through L0 as something that she already knows, and, being placed next to L's description of her problematic situation, offers itself as an independent confirmation of it.

(19) [FEEL1:1:587]  
 L: goum aa "yu-yu-hung-jeung-bat-lang-gim-dak go[bo  
 C: ['hai aa soyi leaa hou ge:ng (.)  
 C: leung-go-dou sat-jo-heui L0::  
 L: so PT "fish-and-bear-palm-you-can't-have-both" PT  
 C: yes PT so one very afraid (.)  
 C: both lost PT [yes, so I'm afraid that I may lose both]

#### 4. Confirmations

"hai L0" can occur in the sequential position immediately following a description, characterization, summary, --in short, some formulation claiming to represent a situation in some way-- to signal the speaker's confirmation of the validity/ appropriateness of the formulation.

(20) [FEEL1:1:312]  
 C: =gogo waan dinjiyauheigei aa goum keui heui di hou jaap aa di deifo:ng .hh  
 C: everybody play video-games PT so he go some very scruffy PT the places .hh [everybody's playing video games so he goes to these

		really scruffy places]
L: mm=		L: mm
C: [(ngo jee)]		C: (I I-mean)
=[		
B: [o jee ] nidi le		B: oh so these PT
keui yau		he actually
(.)		(.)
jehai .hhh e nei gun-dak		I-mean .hhh um you control
keui hou yim goum keui		him very strict but he
yau sheung heui waan		but want go play
goumjau ngaak nei		so lie you
hai-mai aa		is-that-it PT
		[oh well in that case he
		really, um, you are very
		strict with him but
		he wants to go and play
		so he lies to you, is
		that it?]
--> C: hai LO::		C: yes PT
		[that's it]

C's first turn in extract (20) forms part of a multi-turn report on her problems with her son. Note how the two recipients, L and B, hear this report component differently. L treats it as 'incomplete' by issuing a continuer ("mm"), which C picks up and 'starts to continue' ("I I mean..."). B, however, hears it as 'complete' and moves in to claim the floor. This creates a floor-competing situation where B's intended report response starts in overlap with C's intended report continuation. Having outlasted C's start and gained the turn, B delivers a 'summary' and 'diagnosis' of C's problem. The summary takes the form of a description of C's problem with her son: "you are very strict with him but he wants to go and play so he lies to you". Further, it is formulated in cause-and-effect terms, proposing not just a characterization of the problem but also a diagnosis which contains an explanation of the child's behaviour. She ends the diagnosis by asking for C's confirmation. In the arrowed turn, C confirms the characterization with "hai LO" ("yes LO").

By asking the reporter to evaluate the summary being offered, the counsellor (B) explicitly raises the question of the

correctness of her description. The question is now being raised whether her understanding of the report, as evidenced in the summary, 'fits the facts'. In this we see a point in C's building her confirmation in the form of a LO-suffixed utterance, namely, by being designed in this way, the confirmation indicates C's 'satisfaction' with B's summary as a fair description of the facts that are known to her (C) all along.

Notice also that C stops right there after the confirmation, leaving it up to B and L to take up the matter in some as yet undetermined direction.

Consider next a confirmation in an arrangement sequence.

(21) [TC11:1:175]  
 L: goum ngo dousi:: (0.7) L: so I by-that-time (0.7)  
 L: [ngo daa-go-dinwaa= L: I phone  
 [ [I'll phone first]  
 S: [o# S: aha  
 L: =lok-lei si:n tai-haa L: down first see  
 lei faan-jo mei= you return whether  
 [to see if you have  
 come home]  
 --> S: =hai LO S: yes PT  
 [right]

This episode comes from a longer sequence, in which L and S are making arrangements to meet the following day. Their collaborative description of the circumstances pertaining to the meeting is followed, in this extract, by L's proposal to "phone first and see if S has come home", to which S responds with "hai LO". This expression --"hai LO"-- is very difficult to explicate through paraphrasing or translation. Depending on the context, it may be translated as "I thought so too", or "exactly, that's what I think", or "now you're beginning to talk", etc. In this particular context, it serves as a means for S to confirm L's proposed arrangement, as something that he would have suggested

anyway, something that he has known to be the thing to do all along.

A similar sort of evidence comes from the following fragment, where B produces an agreement of a positive assessment of herself, which amounts to an acceptance of praise, which is unusual. Let us examine this sequence in some detail to see how the work that LO does in the arrowed utterance strengthens some of the earlier observations about the particle's properties.

(22) [FEEL1:1:568]

<p>B: yau bindou king hei aa nei seung</p> <p>(1.2) C: mm ngo dou m ji chung bindou gong hei h[ou [ [ B: [mhm (.) B: goumm .hhh ee haa: (0.3) 1--&gt; B: nei waa-bei-ngo-teng nei:: lei-jo Heunggong gei loi aa</p> <p>(0.5) C: 'aa? B: hai-dou cheutsai ga</p> <p>(0.3) C: hai aa</p> <p>(0.4) B: hawaa C: hai aa</p> <p>B: y[igaa L: [dimgaai lei gokdak hai l1# hai hai diadou lei Heunggong le</p> <p>B: mmm kaukei wan di-ye gong haa jim[aa [ [ [</p>	<p>B: from where talk start PT you want [where do you want to start]</p> <p>(1.2) C: mm I really not know from where talk start good [mm I really don't know where to start]</p> <p>B: mhm (.) B: so .hhh em yes (0.3) B: you tell-me you have-been Hongkong how long PT [mhm, so um yes tell me how long you've been in Hongkong]</p> <p>(0.5) C: what? B: here born PT [you were born here?]</p> <p>(0.3) C: yes PT [yes]</p> <p>(0.4) B: is-that-so C: yes PT [yes]</p> <p>B: now L: why you feel be l1# be from somewhere- else come-to Hongkong PT [why do you think she's from somewhere else]</p> <p>B: mmm random find something talk ASP PT [well just something off the top of my head (for the sake of starting the</p>
---	--

	[	conversation)]
2a-->C:	[haa le[i=	C: well you
L:	[o:	L: yeah
C: =janhai houye gejek		C: really good PT
		[well you're really good]
B: hhh heh [heh heh]		B: hhh heh heh heh
2b-->C:	[wan-dou]=	C: found
C: =di waatai		C: some topic
		[finding some topic]
3--> B: [.hhhh] <u>hai</u> LO=		B: .hhhh yes PT
[		[.hhhh right]
L: [ha ha]		L: ha ha
B: =.hhh goum nei yigaa		B: .hhh so you now do what PT
jou maye gaa		[so what are you doing now]

C's 'praise' of B's ability to find a topic for conversation (arrows 2a and 2b: "you are really good, finding some topic") arises from the immediately prior sequence where B can be shown to have done a misidentification. The turn in question (the misidentification) is arrowed 1 in (22) ("tell me how long you've been in Hongkong"). Evidence that this turn is (for the participants) a misidentification comes from three independent sources. First, C's response to the question how long she had been in Hongkong --a period of silence signalling possible trouble, followed by "what?", which points back to the question as now a repairable-- indicates that for her, the question is problematic in some way. Second, instead of recycling her question or treating C's "what?" as evidence of non-hearing, B responds to it with a repair which identifies and names the repairable ("you were born here?"), ie. the problematic assumption in her first question, that C was not born in Hongkong. Third, subsequent to that, L, the third participant, explicitly questions B about the reason for her making that problematic assumption ("why did you think she's from somewhere else?") Thus each participant has provided evidence to show that they have independently arrived at the same reading of the original question, that it is a misidentification.

Following on from the repair sequence, C offers B a compliment, praising her for the ingenuity of her attempt to find a topic for conversation. Research on assessments (Pomerantz 1984, Davidson 1984) has shown that responses to assessments are sensitive to a preference organization such that compliments (praise of the recipient), like speaker's self-deprecations, are regularly rejected (disagreed to). When they are agreed to, resources are used which would mark the agreement's dispreferred status. The operation of such a preference organization means that it can be exploited to serve a variety of interactional purposes. One way of using this resource is to purposefully 'violate the norm' as a means of 'cracking a joke'. It is in the light of this that B's acceptance of the praise (arrow 3) and the laughter that accompanies and surrounds it can find a basis. Briefly, the action sequence goes something like this. It begins with C's offering of a compliment (which ironically turns on an error [B's misidentification] as evidence for the positive assessment). B responds to this with laughter (between 2a and 2b), displaying her treatment of it as something that 'cannot be serious'. Upon the completion of 2b, B does an acceptance of the compliment, issuing more laughter as she goes along. This 'unqualified acceptance' is designed, through the accompaniment of laughter, as an unserious acceptance of an unserious compliment, ie. it is designed to be heard as a joke. To understand the work of the particle LO in all this, let us examine B's praise acceptance and the form which it takes in greater detail.

The compliment acceptance in question is couched in the form of a LO-suffixed utterance (*hai LO*). I wish to show that this

particle has crucial contributions to make to the tackling of a complex of interactional problems that B is faced with at this particular point in the conversation. Specifically, L0 contributes to two tasks that are achieved through the compliment acceptance. First, by virtue of its 'backward-looking' property, L0 ties the acceptance back to the misidentification and repair sequence. Now C's praise is based on a piece of evidence : the evidence that B is ingenious in finding a topic for conversation comes from her (B's) act of finding "where C comes from" as a topic for conversation (arrow 1). However, ironically, this topic-offer was, as we have seen, treated as a 'mistake'. By confirming, therefore, through "yes L0", that the praise is a valid, reasonable inference to make, on the basis of the mistake as evidence, B endorses C's (ironic) inference as appropriate. Looking at the basis of the praise in this way, B's compliment acceptance turns out to be an ironic acceptance of deprecation, an unusual action that is 'justifiable' in terms of the embarrassment caused by her mistake.

The particle's other contribution to this episode can be explicated in terms of the way in which a completion proposal may serve to initiate a change in topic. Through the use of L0, B proposes an end to the current topic, which is promptly abandoned, and initiates a new topic (last utterance in (22): "so what are you doing now?"). Thus, a complex of actions is achieved through the 'cracking of a joke' which exploits, among other things (such as preference organizations), the properties of L0, in such a way that an unserious (ironic) compliment is ironically accepted as a deprecation, in an act to 'level the score' in the wake of a misidentification that has caused some

embarrassment.

## 5. Suggestions

Suggestions can be formulated in a variety of ways, one of which is to put forward a proposed course of action as one that naturally arises from, or is necessitated by, certain specified circumstances. LO-suffixing is a regular device for the formulation of suggestions that are backed by a reason or justification.

(23) [TC11:1:153]

P: =hai (.) jungyau godi daai	P: yes (.) also those tapes
<u>le: hh kheui jau [waa</u>	<u>PT hh she then said</u>
[	[yes, also those tapes,
[	she um said]
L: [ha#	L: yes
(0.5)	(0.5)
P: jeui-hou bei keui tengteng	P: best let her listen PT
tim-wo	[it would be best if she
	could listen to them]
L: hou aa hou aa (.) ha#=	L: good PT good PT (.) yes
P: =goum ngo aa <u>shheung</u>	P: so I um <u>want</u>
<u>lam-jyu waje bei heui</u>	<u>thinking perhaps let her</u>
--> <u>teng-maai sin LO=</u>	<u>listen first PT</u>
	[so I um was thinking maybe
	I should let her listen to
	them first]
L: =hou aa hou aa	L: good PT good PT (.)

The target utterance in (23) can be characterized as a suggestion in which one participant proposes a future course of action and puts it before his interlocutor for consideration. One notable feature of this suggestion is that it is placed after an account: the suggestion that W should listen to the tapes comes right after a report of how "she [ie. W] said it would be best if she could listen to them"). Thus, the proposed course of action is portrayed as one which is a result of a third party's wishes. LO helps to tie the suggestion to this account, and to relate it to a basis, thus giving it the status of an action that is grounded on some given circumstances.

The following sequence illustrates a similar concern with, and a similar solution to, the problem of how a suggestion can be presented as having a justification. Here, E's suggestion to set an earlier time for the meeting that is being arranged is presented as an 'unavoidable' one, necessitated not by her own personal preferences but by some 'external circumstances' that are beyond her control. The utterance which performs the suggestion (arrow 1) is again suffixed with L0.

(24) [TC:11:1:001]

E: tingyat le (0.5)	E: tomorrow PT (0.5)
E: yunloi le:: tingyat aa (.)	E: turns-out PT tomorrow PT (.)
E: e: yan[wai ngodei= [ [	E: e: because we [tomorrow, it turns out tomorrow, because we--]
L: [ha#	L: yes
E: =lidou e jou godi mee sangunghei jing# tingyat hai e tinhaudaan jingdaan aa=	E: here e perform those what opera proper# tomorrow be e Tin-Hau-Festival proper PT [have those opera perform- ance here, it's proper-- Tin Hau festival proper]
L: =hai=	L: yes
E: =goum le:: jau keu::i ( ) jau wui fungbai yat dyun hou wou# siu-ge lou=	E: so PT then it ( ) then will close one section very ver-- small road [so a very small section of the road will be closed]
L: [o# =	L: oh
E: [goum jee-waa le: 'che jau lai-m-dou ngo ukei lak	E: so that-means PT car then can't-reach my home PT [so that means cars won't be able to reach my place]
L: o:=	L: I see
E: =goum jee-waa le waiyat fongfaat le jauhahi ngo (.) yiu cheut KxFxx ( )e# [(.) jip-lei= [ [ [	E: so that-means PT the-only way PT is I (.) have-to go-out KxFxx e (.) pick-you-up [so that means the only way is for me to go out to KF to pick you up]
L: [mm	L: mm
M: =yaplei yugo-m-hai lei	M: come-in or-else you

	m sik yaplei galak		not know come-in PT [or else you wouldn't know how to come in]
	L: o goumyeung		L: I see
	E: yiche le: jau heimong		E: also PT then hope
1-->	hoyi jou-di L0:		can earlier PT
	joudi le: jau e gaautung		earlier PT then e traffic
2-->	yungyi-hungjai-di L0		easier-to-control PT [also I hope we can make it earlier, traffic will be easier to control if it's earlier]
	L: 'mmm		L: mmm
	E: gou:m e:: lei:::		E: so e:: you:::
	(1.5)		(1.5)
	L: KxxFxx		L: KxxFxx
	E: baatdimbun heui-m-heui-dou		E: half-past-8 whether-can-
	KxxFxx aa		reach KxxFxx PT [can you be at KxxFxx by half past eight?]
	(0.9)		(0.9)
	L: e: (.) hou aa		L: e: (.) good PT [e: OK]

This extract is taken from near the beginning of a conversation in which L and E arrange to meet the following day. As in the previous example, E's suggestion (arrow 1) is preceded by an account of certain 'external circumstances' ("a small section of the road will be closed", etc.). The suggestion to "make it earlier" is designed in such a way as to make transparent its unavoidability given the circumstances (ie. possible traffic problems). L0 relates the proposed course of action to a set of circumstances, thus furnishing a basis for the suggestion.

In the second L0-suffixed utterance (arrow 2) an advantage of the suggestion is given as a favourable consequence of the suggested course of action. Notice how the same particle is used to highlight the relationship between an antecedent (if we make it earlier) and a consequent (then traffic will be easier to control).

An important design feature of L0-suffixed suggestions is an

element of 'ground-provision', ie. a proposed course of action is presented as one that is backed by a reason or justification. Particular instances of such a design may be interpreted differently in different conversational contexts. However, one interactional function that it recurrently serves is 'negative politeness', or the avoidance of imposition (Brown & Levinson 1978). The two examples above are clear illustrations of the way in which the speaker's awareness of a suggestion's potentially inconveniencing nature can be displayed in the form of an attempt to provide some grounds for the suggestion. Thus, in (23), the suggestion to "let her listen to the tapes" is formulated as a consequence of "somebody else's wish". In (24), the suggestion to arrange an earlier time for a meeting (which eventually leads up to E's proposal to meet at eight in the morning, towards the end of the extract) is presented with a display of the speaker's awareness of the proposed time being potentially unreasonably early. Thus, through relating a proposition to some ground or circumstances (to be recovered through a backward search), the particle L0 contributes to a negative politeness strategy.

## 6. Advice-givings

In advice-seeking-and-giving exchanges, L0 can be found suffixed to utterances in which a piece of advice is offered. Through L0-suffixing, a piece of advice or recommendation can be presented as a reasonable course of action to take, given certain 'external circumstances'.

(25) [FEEL1:1:234]

C: =keui# gokdak dong ngo  
hai sailou aa

P: hha

C: gokdak dong ngo hai

C: she feel treat me as  
brother PT  
[she feels she thinks of  
me as her brother]

P: what?

C: feel treat me as brother PT

sailou aa	[she feels I'm her brother]
(0.5)	(0.5)
P: keui dong nei hai	P: she treat you as brother PT
sailou aa	[she treats you as her brother?]
C: hai aa	C: yes PT
	[yes]
P: goum nei mai biusi bei	P: then you EMPH show to
keui teng nei m-hai	her hear you not
--> sailou LO	brother PT
--> jungyi keui mai dak LO:::::	love her EMPH can PT
	[well all you have to do is
	to show her that you are
	not her brother, that you
	love her]

Following C's disclosure of his problem with a woman he is "secretly in love with", namely, that the woman in question thinks of him as her "brother", P offers the advice "all you have to do is to show her that you are not her brother, that you love her" as an 'only-reasonable' course of action to take under these circumstances. The use of LO marks the advice being offered as a course of action that follows from, or is necessitated by, the set of circumstances described in the advice-seeker's report of his problem.

But the advice is rejected (arrow 1 of (26)). This is how the conversation continued:

(26) (Continuation of (25))	
P: goum nei mai biusi bei	P: then you EMPH show to
keui teng nei m-hai	her hear you not
sailou LO=	brother PT
jungyi keui mai dak LO:::::	love her EMPH can PT
	[well all you have to do is
	to show her that you are
	not her brother, that you
	love her]
1--> C: hou laan gong wo	C: very difficult say PT
	[but it's so difficult to
	say that]
P: mee goum naan je	P: what so difficult PT
	[what's so difficult
	about that?]

((about 30 turns later...))

2--> P: nei yatchai sikfaan nei	P: you together eat you
hoyi man keui .hhh nei	can ask he .hhh you

<p>waa keisat ngodei goun  friend a:: nei hai-mai  dong ngo:::::::::: e:  sailou baan je (.) goun</p>	<p>say in-fact we so  friend PT you whether  treat me e:  brother as PT (.) so  [when you have a meal with  her you can ask her, you  can say well we're such  good friends actually but  are you treating me as  your brother?]</p>
<p>3--&gt; C: hai aa keui batlau  hai dong ngo hai  sail[ou aa  [  [</p>	<p>C: yes PT she all-along  be treat me as  brother PT  [yes she has been treating  me as a brother all along]</p>
<p>4a-&gt; P: [gam hh nei waa (.)  keisat ngo yau m seung jou  [lei ] sailou aa=  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  C: [keui]</p>	<p>P: then hh you say (.) in-fact  I really not want be  your brother PT  [then you can say to her.  I don't really want to be  your brother]</p>
<p>4b-&gt; P: =ngo seung jou lei-go  frie::nd wo  goummm [heh heh heh heh  [</p>	<p>C: she  P: I want be your  friend PT  so heh heh heh etc.  [I want to be your friend]</p>
<p>5--&gt; C: [(keui )=gojansi  ngo::: a:: ying keui jou  gaaje aa goun aa=</p>	<p>C: (she ) before  I em took her as  sister PT so PT  [( ) I took her as a  sister before, you see]</p>
<p>6a-&gt; P: =nei::[jigei]=  L: [aa:::]</p>	<p>P: you self  L: aa:::</p>
<p>6b-&gt; P: =yiu ying keui jou  gaaje jimaa nei waa  ngo yigaa yau m seung  jou gaa:je: m seung lei  jou ngo gaa:je: aa  ngo seung nei jou ngo  girlfriend aa goun  mai dak LO</p>	<p>P: want to take her be  sister PT you say  I now anymore not want  be sister not want you  be my sister PT  I want you be my  girlfriend PT so  EMPH can PT  [you took her as a sister  yourself, you can say now  I don't want you to be  my sister, I want you  to be my girl friend,  that's all you have to do]</p>

C responds negatively to P's advice-offer in the first turn: the recommendation is very difficult to implement (arrow 1). The topic is subsequently abandoned, until, at a later point in the conversation, C re-introduces it, once again seeking advice from P, who then presents a scenario in which C can clear the

misunderstanding by asking the woman a question (arrow 2: "are you treating me as your brother?"), whereupon C rejects it again as impractical (arrow 3). Following that, P offers yet another piece of advice (arrows 4a and 4b), which is again rejected (arrow 5). Finally, this series of repeated advice-giving and rejection leads up to P's L0-suffixed utterance in the turn arrowed 6.

The design of this advice-offer (arrows 6a and 6b) must be seen from within this particular sequential context. It is placed at the end of a long series of exchanges in which recommendations have been advanced but rejected. In the light of this, the L0-suffixed advice-offer can be seen as one desperate attempt on the adviser's part to convince her interlocutor, once and for all, of the reasonableness of the recommended course of action. It can thus be characterized as 'a final offer' in the sense that similar recommendations have been advanced before, so this one should by now be familiar. Further, it contains a completion proposal, and acts as a bid to end the topic: the advisor is not prepared to continue with this offer-and-rejection business any longer.

To give a piece of advice is to offer a recommendation as to how a problematic situation may be handled. It is responsive to a problem and presupposes an understanding of the circumstances which have created that problem. L0-suffixing is a regular feature in advice-givings for it provides a means of establishing a link between a problem or a set of circumstances on the one hand, and a recommended solution on the other.

## 7. Two Properties of L0

The scattered observations made in the previous sections in relation to particular instances of L0 will now be stated more generally and systematically. The properties of this particle will be discussed under two main headings: as a dependency token, and as a completion proposal.

### 7.1 *L0 as a Dependency Token*

One way of looking at the dependency feature is from the point of view of how states-of-affairs are portrayed and presented in conversation. From this point of view, L0 can be characterized as a device for portraying a state-of-affairs as one whose sense and significance is dependent on some other, often previously mentioned, state-of-affairs. For instance, given a problematic situation, a state-of-affairs may be portrayed and presented as a reasonable course of action to take in an attempt to solve the problem. In relation to an action which has been taken, a state-of-affairs may be portrayed as a natural consequence or result. On the basis of some known premises, a state-of-affairs may be presented as a logical conclusion that can be inferred from those premises.

From the point of view of the hearer, the particle can be thought of as a device which invites a dependency reading of an utterance, ie. a reading in which the state-of-affairs presented in the current utterance is linked up with some other state-of-affairs in one or more of the following ways, or ways like them: antecedent-consequent, premise-conclusion, problem-solution, cause-effect, stimulus-response, intention-behaviour, action-result, etc.

Recall some of the examples discussed in the previous sections. A decision to go for a drink was presented as a result of "feeling thirsty" (fragment (11)); a course of action was suggested as a reasonable solution to a problematic situation (person having problems with a woman who treats him as her brother: fragment (26)); a conclusion that an object must be a cassette-recorder was derived, among other considerations, from the premise that it was not a radio.

More generally, as part of a report or story, an event can be portrayed as something that follows naturally, reasonably, or necessarily from some given conditions. In a similar way, suggestions and advice are sometimes offered as courses of action that are natural, reasonable or justified, when seen against the background of some circumstances.

Answer-receipts are sometimes designed with L0-suffixing to point back to a suspicion, belief or item of knowledge as one that has been in existence all along. Similarly, a description may be formulated as one that has been reached independently and known prior to the other speaker's mentioning of it. In this way, it can serve to provide a cognate that confirms and supports the formulation presented in the prior turn.

In these related senses L0 is a linguistic resource for the portrayal of phenomena --be they objects, persons, actions, events, places, times, manners, or situations-- as known-to-be-so, reasonable, necessary, or natural, by relating them to some basis or background.

## *7.2 L0 as a Completion Proposal and a Topic Closure Device*

It was noted several times in the previous discussion that L0 can be used as a completion proposal, ie. completion and

ending are possibilities that L0 regularly attends to. For instance, we saw how this particle can mark an answer as having reached an end; also, it can raise the possibility of closing talk on some current topic. Let us take up these issues in a more systematic way, by looking at some of the examples that have been considered so far in the light of this 'completion' feature, as well as some further examples, to examine in greater detail this property of L0 in terms of turn-transition and topic organization.

To begin with, note that a L0-suffixed utterance often ends the current turn, and is followed by a change of speaker. In that next turn, instead of, for example, a continuer being offered, some response is produced which deals with such matters as the reception of information, the acknowledgement of a report component, the confirmation of a summary, etc., ie. a response that treats the previous turn as doing information-giving, reporting, summarizing, etc., and deals with it in a way that displays the hearing of L0 as marking the possible completion of that action.

Consider in this connection a few data extracts, paying special attention to the turns immediately following the L0-suffixed utterances (those turns that are asterisked in the transcripts).

(27) [MAK:1:073] (=11)

J: =goum o o mou aa go-an-si	J: so I I didnt PT then
jau chuet-dou-lai le	so came-out PT
cheut-dou-lei jau hou	came-out then PT very
genghok aa	thirsty PT
[goum-jau]=	so-then
[                  ]	[so I I didn't and then we
[                  ]	came out when we came out
[                  ]	we were very thirsty so]
M: ['mmm          ]	M: 'mmm
J: =seung wan deungfong	J: =want find place

--> yamyé góumj yap-jo-heui            drink so went-in  
yamyé LO                                drink PT  
   [we wanted to find some  
   place for a drink so we  
   went in for a drink]

\*--> M: o:: o o                            M: oh I see

(28) [MAK:1:050] (=part of 12)

J: =sei-sap-hou em le yiging    J: =service-forty-M le already  
(0.3)                                    (0.3)

J: mou-saai laa=                        J: no-more PT=  
   [there weren't any service  
   40M anymore]

M: =hai-gam jeui-hou                    M: in-that-case the-best  
[ge fongfaat( )diksi LA]                GEN way ( ) taxi PT  
[    ]                                [so the best thing to do  
[    ]                                is ( ) a taxi, right?]

J: [gou::m soyi le jau (.)] = J: so therefore le then (.)  
J: =aamaam: jau-yau diksi                there-happen to-be taxi  
m-mai jit-jo diksi                        so stopped taxi

--> cheut-lei LO:[                        come-out PT  
   [    ]                                [there happened to be a  
   [    ]                                taxi so we took a taxi  
   [    ]                                and came out]

\*--> M:                                    [o:::                                    M: o:::  
      [I see]

(27) and (28) contain simple report receipts (ie. the asterisked turns) that evidence the report-recipients' treatment of the previous turn (which ends in a LO-suffixed utterance) as having reached a point of completion. It is in this sense that LO can be characterized as a 'completion proposal'. Further, it is a proposal which is 'agreeable with', ie. should the co-participant display an agreement to end, the LO-suffixed utterance can be interactively made an ending.

Essentially the same procedures are operative in sequences other than reporting and information-giving. (29) and (30) are examples of the achievement of the completion of an advice and a suggestion respectively.

(29) [FEEL1:1:234] (part of 26)

P: góum nei mai biusi bei                P: then you EMPH show to  
keui teng nei m-hai                      her hear you not  
--> sailou LO=                                brother PT  
--> jungyi keui mai dak LO:::::            love her EMPH can PT  
   [well all you have to do is  
   to show her that you are

		not her brother, that you love her]
*--> C: hou laan gong wo		C: very difficult say PT [but it's so difficult to say that]
 (30) [TC11:1:153] (=23)		
P: =hai (.) jungyau godi daai	P: yes (.) also those tapes	
<u>le: hh kheui jau [waa</u>	<u>PT hh she then said</u>	
[	[yes, also those tapes,	
[	she um said]	
L: [ha#	L: yes	
(0.5)	(0.5)	
P: jeui-hou bei keui tengteng	P: best let her listen PT	
tim-wo	[it would be best if she could listen to them]	
L: hou aa hou aa (.) ha#	L: good PT good PT (.) yes	
P: =goum ngo aa <u>shheung</u>	P: so I um <u>want</u>	
<u>lam-jyu waje bei heui</u>	<u>thinking perhaps let her</u>	
--> <u>teng-maai sin LO=</u>	<u>listen first PT</u>	
	[so I um was thinking maybe I should let her listen to them first]	
*--> L: =hou aa hou aa	L: good PT good PT (.)	

The asterisked turns in these two extracts are produced as responses to the actions performed in the immediately preceding LO-suffixed utterances in a way that evidently treat them as having finished doing what they set out to do. In (29), B's two LO-suffixed utterances are responded to by C in a way (in this case, a rejection) that signals her hearing of the preceding utterance as constituting the end of B's act of advising. Similarly, L's response in the asterisked turn in (30) shows his treatment of P's talk up to the point where LO occurred as constituting a suggestion.

Related to completion proposal is a tendency for LO-suffixed utterances to pass on to the co-participant the responsibility for providing a direction for further talk. Extracts (31) and (32) are illustrations of this feature.

- (31) [FEEL1:1:587]
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| B: goum keuidei yigaa yiu<br>nei syunjaak me                           | B: so they now want<br>you choose PT<br>[well do they want you to<br>choose now]   |
| (0.9)  | (0.9)  |
| C: jee#  | C: I-mean  |
| (0.4)  | (0.4)  |
| C: jee mou yat fong bing   | C: I-mean not one side   |
| (.)  | (.)  |
| C: jee yiu o   | C: I-mean want me  |
| (.)  | (.)  |
| C: jee kyutding LO::   | C: I-mean decide PT<br>[I mean, I mean neither has<br>asked me to decide]  |
| (0.3)  | (0.3)  |
| *--> B: o o leuung go d ee<br>.hhh goummmm nei<br>jungyi bingo dodi aa | B: oh oh two CL both d um<br>.hhh so you<br>love which-one more PT<br>[oh oh both .hhh so which<br>one do you love more] |
| C: leung go dou<br>chaa-bat-do aa                                      | C: two CL both<br>about the same PT<br>[about the same]  |
- (32) [MAK:1:020]
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| J: lei gamyat heui-jo<br>bin aa                            | J: you today went where aa?<br>where PT<br>[where did you go today]   |
| (0.7)  | (0.7)   |
| M: ngo gamyat le (.) ngaanjau<br>--> heui-jo WxxLxxTxx LO: | M: I today PT (.) afternoon<br>went WxxLxxTxx PT<br>[today I went to WxxLxxTxx<br>((a restaurant)) in the<br>afternoon] |
| *--> J: .hh aiyaa o kamyat<br>teng lei waa aa              | J: .hh EXCL I yesterday<br>listen you say PT<br>[oh I took your advice<br>yesterday]                                    |
| (0.2)  | (0.2)   |
| J: heui-jo WxxLxxTxx aa                                    | J: went WxxLxxTxx PT<br>[and went to WLT<br>Restaurant]   |

In (31), C's answer to B's question in the first turn is heard as completed upon the production of the LO-suffixed utterance, whereupon B receives the answer and then goes on to ask another question. Here, it is interesting to note that not only is C's answer treated as the whole contribution for the moment, it is also interpreted as showing that the speaker does not intend to take up the lead for providing a direction for

further talk. This means that in the next turn, one needs to deal not only with the completion proposal, but also the problem of direction-giving. In this connection, note how J's asterisked turn in (32) is designed to deal with these two problems at once: through a display of sudden remembering, J manages to receive M's answer as having been completed, and at the same time, offers a possible new direction for further talk (ie. her own experience with the restaurant).

As completion proposals, the particle raises, in some sequential contexts, the further possibilities of topic closure and conversational termination. When attached to report components, LO may serve as a device for constructing conclusions and punch-lines, thus proposing report completion or topic closure. Consider two examples in (33) and (34).

(33) [MAK:1:079]

M: (jing kamyat) sik jo saa	M: only yesterday eat ASP
<u>l-lung dimsam</u> aa	thirty CL dimsum PT
heh heh heh	heh heh heh
	[only yesterday we had thirty
	plates of dimsum]
J: gamyat?	J: today?

. ((6 turns omitted in which M reports to  
. J the different kinds of food that  
. made up the thirty plates))  
.

M: ...	M: ...
(.) wugok cheun-gyun lei	(.) taro-cake spring-rolls
lam-haa yiging goun	you think already so
do lak lei lam-haa mui#	many PT you think ever#
ung# do yan mai	so# many people then
.hh mui yeung leung lung	each kind two basket
yee saam lung .hh e:	or three basket .hh e:
(.)	(.)
M: monggwo-boudin	M: mango-pudding
(0.4)	(0.4)
M: [di sailougo jungyi=	M: the kids love
[	[taro cake, spring rolls
[	just imagine there's a
[	lot already, there were
[	so many of us, we ordered
[	two or three baskets of
[	each kind, and mango

	[	pudding, the kids love--]
J:	['mmm	J: mmm
M:	=sik boudin (.) mmm-mai	M: eat pudding
	(.)	(.)
-->	M: mmm-mai lidi LO	M: so these PT
		[pudding, so that's
		what we had]
*->	(1.5)	(1.5)
*->	((J then went on to initiate a new topic))	
(34) [MAK:1:013] (=part of 16)		
J:	gam o #aak-gwai	J: so I fool
	heuidei o waa lei	them I say you
	bat-dim-jung	eight-o'clock
	lei aa [(.) o m-ji ]=	come PT (.) I not-know PT
	[	[so I fooled them and said
	[	are you coming at 8? I
	[	don't know]
M:	[#aan di bo:]	M: late too PT
		[that's too late]
J:	bo::[:: gameung	J: PT like-this
M:	[#aan di bo:(.)][haa	M: late too PT (.) yeah
	[	[that's too late, yeah]
J:	[haiaa	J: yeah
	(.)	(.)
J:	yanwai odei:: haang-saan	J: because we walk-hill
	di ye dim ji je waje	GEN thing how know PT
	[odei m luk luk [m luk dim	maybe we 5 6 6 5 6 o'clock
	[	[yeah (.) the thing about
	[	mountain walking is you
	[	just don't know, maybe
	[	we'll get up at five six
	[	six five or six]
M:	[haa [heisan	M: yeah get-up
	lok (.) gammai haang	PT (.) then
-->	haang [LO: ho	walk PT right?
	[	[yeah when we get up
	[	we'll walk, right?]
J:	[haiaa	J: yeah
-->	haiaa o haiaa gameung LO:	yeah I yeah like-this PT
		[yeah yeah I yeah
		that's it]
*-->	(1.1)	
*-->	((Following that M returns to the subject of R's not wa'king))	

In (33) and (34), L0 proposes, as in the previous examples, turn completion. But since each of these utterances is a component of a report, the possibility of turn-ending raises at the same time the possibility of the completion of the report itself. In each case, a silence (as opposed to speaker continuation or turn transition) immediately follows the L0-suffixed utterance. This is left until it accumulates into a

substantial pause, following which a new topic is initiated. Thus, when suffixed to report components, L0 can be used to propose report completion or topic closure.

Topic closure in its turn raises the possibility of conversational termination. When, upon topic closure, no further topic is raised, co-participants may move on to do pre-closing. Consider an example of this in (35).

(35) [FEEL1:1:379]

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1--> L: wakje `seungsi haa yung<br>[goum-ge fongfaat LA<br>[<br>[   | L: perhaps try ASP use such<br>method PT<br>[you can perhaps try<br>using this method]   |
| C: [daanhai ngo yau geng<br>keui je loi jo di deifong<br>hok-waai aamaa<br>. . . . .  | C: but I still afraid he<br>he I-mean long ASP some<br>place learn-bad PT<br>[but I'm afraid he may<br>pick up bad things if<br>he keeps going to those<br>places]             |
| ((24 turns omitted in which participants<br>deal with the problem of "bad places"<br>and matters arising from it))<br>. . . . . |  |
| L: jee yau ditgoumdeu ge<br>`haan`jai (0.4) jau m-hou<br>`haanjai saai `soyau-ge-ye   | L: I-mean have a-little-bit-of<br>constraint (0.4) but don't<br>constrain all everything<br>[I mean have a little bit<br>of constraint, but don't<br>put limits on everything] |
| C: o  | C: oh  |
| 2--> L: [lei seungsi haa<br>[<br>[  | L: you try ASP<br>[try it]   |
| B: [tungmai jee yugwo hai<br>ngaak nei gewaa le ngo<br>seungseun nei dou yiu bei<br>keui jidou<br>(0.5)                         | B: and I-mean if EMPH lie you<br>lie-to you if PT I<br>believe you also should let<br>him know<br>(0.5)  |
| B: jee nei m-hai-waa goum<br>jungyi bei keui ngaak<br>dou ge g[oum<br>[<br>[<br>[<br>[  | I-mean you aren't so<br>easy let him cheat<br>ASP PT so<br>[and I mean, if he does lie<br>to you, I think you should<br>let him know that you are<br>not that easy to cheat]   |
| C: [hai aa ngo hai<br>bei heui [jidou ga::<br>[   | C: yes PT I do<br>let him know PT<br>[yes, I do let him know]  |
| L: [mm  | L: mm  |

B: mmhm	B: mmhm
(0.4)	(0.4)
B: m[m	B: mm
3--> L: [hai LO	L: yes PT
4--> (0.8)	(0.8)
5--> L: lei:: seungsi haa aa	L: you try ASP PT alright?
houmaa	[try it, OK?]
C: hou aa hou aa	C: good PT good PT
	[good good]
L: OK	L: OK
C: goun m-goi-saa-i-lei	C: so thank-you-very-much
lowo[::	PT
L: [hou aa	L: good PT
hou:: [hou	L: good good
C: [baaibaai=	C: bye
L: =baaibaai	L: bye

Looking at the way in which the three participants coordinate to bring the conversation to an end, consider three of L's utterances in this extract. The turn arrowed 1 ("try using this method LA") can be characterized as a candidate pre-closing, for reasons which have been discussed in some detail in the last chapter, where the ways in which LA contributes to the building of pre-closings were examined. Briefly, through its placement after a diagnosis sequence and an advice-seeking-and-giving sequence earlier in the conversation, a suggestion that the caller follow the counsellor's advice is regularly heard as an invitation to move into closing. As it turns out, however, C overlaps with a report of her "fear", with which an unmentioned mentionable is introduced, thus initiating possible further talk on the topic (her "fear"). This in effect erases L's candidate pre-closing.

Later in the conversation, L makes an attempt to close the current topic (arrow 2: "try it"). However, like the first attempt, it is again aborted, but this time as a result of the other counsellor's offering of an additional piece of advice. Following these aborted efforts, L finds a place again in the turn arrowed 3 to make yet another attempt. This is built in the

form of a LO-suffixed confirmation ("yes LO"), signalling L's approval of C's action as reported in the preceding turn, but in such a way (using a bare "yes LO") as to draw the caller's attention to the possibility of topic completion, and, through that, conversation closure. This is met with a considerable silence (hearable as a "pass" from the caller), providing an auspicious environment for the movement into pre-closing, whereupon L issues for the third time his suggestion that C "try it". C's minimal acceptance ("good good") makes it clear that she is now prepared to move into closing, following which the participants proceed to an exchange of "goodbye"s and bring the conversation to an end. Thus, it can be seen that, when placed in an appropriate sequential environment, LO can contribute to the work of proposing conversation closure.

We have seen in this section how LO regularly raises the possibility of completion and ending. Before moving on to the next section, let us look at an interesting counter-example to the analysis developed so far.

(36) [FEEL1:1:586]

<p>C: mou          (.)          ngo seung waa-bei-          lei-te::ng          (.)          ee jee ngo# yau go mantai          gaaikyut m-dou:          (.)          ngo seung man haa lei          dimyeung gaaikyut-dou hou</p>	<p>C: no          (.)          I want          tell-you          (.)          ee I-mean I# have a problem          solve can't          (.)          I want ask ASP you          how solve should          [no I wanted to tell you          um I mean I have a problem          that I can't solve I          wanted to ask you how          to solve it]</p>
<p>B: ngo dou m sik daap          mantai gaa bago lei          --&gt; jikgwun gong LO</p>	<p>B: I really not know answer          question PT but you          might-as-well say PT          [I don't really know how          to answer questions, but</p>

		you might as well say it]
C: hhh hhh heh [heh heh .hhh	C: hhh hhh heh heh	
B: [hnn hnnhnn	B: <u>nn hnnhnn</u>	
.hhhh	.hhhh	
C: ee ngo sik jo yau leung	C: um I know ASP have two	
go pangyau::	CL friend	
	[um I've made two friends]	

The problem that (36) poses for my analysis is as follows.

The first two turns in this extract can be characterized as a pre-sequence: the first turn seeks access to a multi-turn slot for the doing of an extended report ("I have a problem that I can't solve, I wanted to ask you how to solve it"); the second turn offers a go-ahead. If, according to my analysis, completion is a central possibility that L0 regularly attends to, then the last thing that we would expect is its being suffixed to utterances which display an orientation to 'beginning'. But beginning (eg. the beginning of an extended account) is precisely what go-aheads regularly attend to, and the go-ahead in this sequence is L0-suffixed. Thus, it appears that we have here an instance of L0 which, far from proposing some kind of ending, is suffixed to a go-ahead that provides for the beginning of a projected extended account.

But let us examine the arrowed turn more closely. It is placed after an extended account proposal, ie. a position in which a response should be done which will deal with the proposal in some way. The turn begins in a way that can be heard as a rejection of the proposal ("I don't really know how to answer questions"), or else a reason for an upcoming rejection of the proposal, ie. not offering a go-ahead. Having done that, however, B produces a conjunction ("but") that retrospectively formulates the prior utterance as not really projecting a rejection. Further, it marks the upcoming talk as a concession.

Following that, a permission is finally given ("you might as well say it L0"), in the form of a L0-suffixed go-ahead.

But this go-ahead has a special character. It is interestingly self-contradictory. A permission is officially given, but the person who is giving this official permission portrays herself as not "really" being in a position to give the permission (she "can't really answer questions", but C "might as well" go ahead). In thus offering a go-ahead which is inconsequential (ie. she would not be able to answer any questions, and so there is little point for C to go on and ask for advice), a context is created which is at odds with the institutional context which has been operative up to this point in their interaction, namely, that what the co-participants are engaged in is recognizably a 'counselling session', where callers tell their troubles and counsellors wilfully listen. In contrast to this, an alternative reality is proposed: someone wants to tell troubles, but the recipient is not 'really' in a position to listen. Nevertheless, permission is given as a concession that is necessitated by the circumstances, which ironically turns back on the possibility of reading the situation as a counselling session, ie. given that what they are engaged in is a counselling session, it would be natural and only-reasonable for the counsellor to give a go-ahead when a caller projects an extended account. By building the go-ahead as a concession, B manages to play on the relationship between a counselling context in which she is a counsellor and one in which she is not 'really' a counsellor.

Thus, partly through the work of L0, B's go-ahead acquires a contradictory character. It is officially an invitation for an

account to begin, but it is constructed in such a way that it can be heard as 'really' meaning that an account should not begin. In response to this, C produces laughter, displaying her intention to hear B's contradictory go-ahead as a joke, and, in so doing, proposes to restore the counselling context. B then confirms this hearing by producing laughter herself, displaying her own treatment of the problematic turn as a joke, thus accepting C's proposal to return to the counselling context.

Notice that an utterance like "gong LO" ("say it LO") in this kind of sequential context could be heard as an unwillingness to listen. A certain sense of reluctance could be read into this kind of LO-suffixed go-ahead because they are invitations to proceed which are portrayed as being offered as a result of the interlocutor's asking (hence a sense of "since you asked"). In this particular example, however, this reading is kept in the background, as the co-participants make a concerted effort to treat the problematic turn as non-serious.

This example suggests that there are ways in which the potentials of LO can be exploited to build into an utterance which officially attends to beginning and continuation, an implicit completion/termination proposal that contradicts it. Therefore, far from being a counter-example, this extract provides further evidence that supports my account.

## 8. The Management of Continuation and Extension : LA and LO

It would be wrong to construe 'completion proposal' as a device that more or less automatically triggers turn transition. A completion proposal may be dealt with in various ways, and the co-ordination to end a turn and effect transition is but one of many possibilities. For instance, we have seen in the last section extracts in which what comes after LO is silence. An examination of the data revealed that post-LO silences are handled in two main ways. They may be lengthened and turned into a substantial pause (of, say, one second's duration or more), and used to mark a topic boundary, as we have seen in the previous section. But another way of handling silence in this environment is for the speaker to pursue a response. In so doing the participants will be involved in the business of producing an extension. The phenomenon of extension, and the related phenomenon of continuation, are of special interest to this study for the light that they throw on the two particles LA and LO in particular, and the Cantonese particle system in general. For this reason, they will be examined separately in this section.

To begin with, consider an example in which a speaker, upon the occurrence of silence following a LO-suffixed utterance, pursues a response.

(37) [MAK:1:044] (=8)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| M: hai laa:: ngodei gamyat<br>dou yiu# heui la#<br>ngodei saa-at-dim-jung<br>heui <u>yamchaa laa ha ha ha</u><br>1-> deng-jo wai | M: yes PT we today<br>also want# go PT<br>we eleven-o'clock<br>go <u>have-tea PT ha ha ha</u><br>reserved seats<br>[yes today we also want#<br>went we went to have tea at<br>eleven (we had) reserved<br>a table] |
| 2-> J: hai-mai hou do yan aa=  | J: whether very many people PT<br>[was it crowded]   |
| 3-> M: =aa m ngo deng-jo wai LO::  | M: =PT m I reserved seats PT<br>[um I had reserved seats]  |

4->	(0.4)		(0.4)
5->	M: ngo mai waa:-teng	[ngo=	M: I EMPH told-you I
		[	[didn't I tell you]
6->	J:	[o o o	J: yeah yeah yeah
	M: =seung singkei-luk heui		M: last Saturday go reserve PT
	deng-ding aamaa=		[last Saturday I went and reserved ((a table))]

From the point of view of L0 as a completion proposal, it may seem problematic that M's L0-suffixed utterance (arrow 3) does not immediately effect turn-transition. Instead, the current speaker (M) goes on talking. But the observation that L0 functions as an ending-proposal does not mean that it could end a turn unilaterally. The co-ordinated character of endings must be emphasized. The point is not whether L0 effects turn transition upon its every occurrence, but rather, how the next action is designed in ways that are responsive to its sequential implications. The L0-suffixed utterance is followed, in this instance, by a silence (arrow 4), which can be heard by the speaker as signalling possible trouble such as non-understanding or non-recognition on the part of the recipient. How do the participants deal with this problem?

One way of dealing with this problem is for the speaker to pursue a response. And this is what M seems to be doing in the utterance following the silence (ie. arrow 5). Starting with J's turn arrowed 2 ("was it crowded?"), M delivers a response (arrow 3) which is designed to show that, while it does not directly provide an answer to the question, nevertheless an answer can be inferred from it (cf. the dependency feature of L0 discussed earlier). The point of interest here is that M, upon seeing in the silence following her answer (arrow 4) that she has failed to get a response from the co-participant, issues further talk after the silence. What is the nature of this talk? In what sense can

it be described as an extension of the pre-silence utterance?

M's post-silence utterance takes the form of a confirmation-seeking reminder (arrow 5: "didn't I tell you ...") --a reminder that she has told J that she had made a seat reservation. Issuing confirmation-seeking reminders is a way of 'getting facts straight', and has in an independent study (of English conversation) been found to be a regular way of pursuing a response. Pomerantz (1984b) presents interesting evidence to show that one of the three methods for the pursuance of a response is to go over the facts and information, which are assumed to be known by the recipient, on which the original utterance was based. Here in (37), what M does after the silence is precisely this: she goes over the fact that she had told J before that she had made a seat reservation. From this known fact, one should be able to deduce that she would not have had any problem in getting seats, and so the question whether the restaurant was crowded would have been answered.

In the sense that it is an act of pursuing a response upon not getting one the first time round, M's reminder is perceived by the interactants as an extension of the previous utterance rather than a continuation (eg. in the sense of LA being a continuation proposal). As a piece of evidence, note how J, in response to this reminder, issues a change-of-state display (arrow 6), signalling her remembering now of the fact that M has indeed told her about the seat reservation before. Following that, the question about crowdedness is abandoned.

Consider next a more complicated case, in which M is giving P, a classmate of his, an account of MBasic, a programming language that he "likes most".

(38) [SS:CH:1:227]

M: ... jeui jungyi hai MBasic M: ... most like be MBasic  
(.)  
.hh MBasic le: hoyi .hh  
jik-cheut printer

(.)  
.hh MBasic PT can .hh  
straight-out printer  
[I like MBasic most, MBasic  
can go straight out to the  
printer]

(0.6)  
M: .hh jee peyu# ee:::  
(.)  
list jo go program le  
msai waa P R jeat gaamaa=

(0.6)  
M: .hh I-mean like um  
(.)  
list ASP CL program PT  
no-need-to say P R #1 PT  
[I mean like um listing a  
program there's no need to  
say PR#1]

P: =ha#=  
M: =keui a# L L list  
jau-dak la#

P: yeah  
M: it PT L L list  
will-do PT  
[L-List will do]

(0.3)  
M: jee line printer

(0.3)  
M: that-is line printer  
[line printer that is]

P: o[:  
M: [line printer list jo  
heui mmaa-dak la#

P: I-see  
M: line printer list ASP  
it will-do PT  
[line printer list it,  
that'll do]

(0.8)  
M: waje hai .hh ee jaumm  
L print le L print yau  
(.)  
print gogo statement  
1--> lokheui LO

(0.8)  
M: or be .hh um just  
L print PT L print also  
(.)  
print the statement  
down PT

(0.2)  
M: yau msai hoi P R jeat  
.hhh jau msai  
2--> cheut go P R jeat  
cheut-lei LO::

(0.2)  
M: also no-need-to open P R #1  
.hhh then no-need-to  
show CL P R #1  
out PT  
[or um just Lprint, Lprint  
will print the statement,  
no need to open PR#1, no  
need to show PR#1]

(0.3)  
P: run le

(0.3)  
P: run PT  
[what about run]

(0.3)  
P: e-lou:: run aa

(0.3)  
P: L run PT  
[Lrun?]

(0.3)  
M: msai e-lou run

(0.3)  
M: no-need-to L run  
[you don't need LRun]

(0.3)  
M: jaugoum run aa dak=

(0.3)  
M: just run PT can  
[just Run will do]

P: =run

P: run

(0.4)  
P: m[m

(0.4)  
P: mm

<p>M: [run (1.3) M: goummm lei-di result dosou hai print lokheui aamaa goun a gaa L 3--&gt; lokheui LO:</p> <p>(0.8) P: o: (0.5) M: hou-waan aa MBasic=</p> <p>P: =goun yugo jinghai cheut go::: (0.3) P: pin# ee mon le</p> <p>(0.7) M: jinghai cheut go mo# 4--&gt; m-sai jaumm print LO</p> <p>(0.3) 5--&gt;M: [msai e-lou LO [ P: [(msai) (0.4) M: L gaa maai lok mai lok 6--&gt; printer LO</p> <p>P: o::: (0.6) M: hou-waan</p>	<p>M: run (1.3) M: so your result usually be usually be print down PT so PT add L down PT [so your results are usually printed, so you add L]</p> <p>(0.8) P: oh (0.5) M: fun PT MBasic [MBasic is fun] P: so if only output CL (0.3) P: pin# um monitor PT [what if you only want to see it on the monitor]</p> <p>(0.7) M: only output CL mo# no-need-to just print PT [only outputting to the mo((nitor)), you don't need to, just Print]</p> <p>(0.3) M: no-need-to L PT [you don't need L] P: (no-need) (0.4) M: L add ASP down then down printer PT [if you add L, it'll go to the printer]</p> <p>P: I see (0.6) M: fun</p>
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The main interest of this episode lies in the light that it sheds on the connection between LO on the one hand, and the notions of 'ending' and 'extension' on the other.

One way of looking at the kind of work that LO performs in this episode is to consider its contribution to topic organization. In terms of topic organization, we may think of the episode as a whole as a 'unit' (with "MBasic" as the topic), and refer to its sub-units as "sections". But sections are only identifiable as sections retrospectively. At the moment in which each section reaches a point of possible completion, there arises

concomitantly the possibility of unit closure, ie. each section is itself a candidate unit.

Consider then the way in which the participants deal with the problem of unit-closure. M starts with the feature "can go straight out to the printer" as a thing that he likes about MBasic, and explains how it works by describing the command "LList". When that is done, he moves on to a second feature, "LPrint". This second feature is formulated with a LO-suffixed utterance (arrow 1: "LPrint will print the statement LO"), which can be heard as marking the completion of a feature formulation, ie. it signals that the description of a feature of MBasic has reached a possible point of completion. In the context of a report, this raises the further possibility of 'end of report'. That is, the completion of a description opens up the possibility of the completion of the report, ie. talk on the current topic ("MBasic"). In this sense, this utterance can be heard as a unit-closure proposal. It is met, however, with no response (such as an acknowledgement of receipt) from the recipient. Hearing in the silence following LO (0.2 second in arrow 1) potential non-understanding or non-recognition, M produces a second LO-suffixed utterance (arrow 2: "no need to open PR#1 no need to show PR#1 LO"). This second LO-suffixed utterance has one central property. It is, like the last utterance, also a description of LPrint. However, it is not just any description of LPrint, but one that is built in the form of a supplementation or elaboration of the last formulation (elaborating "LPrint can print a statement" with, in effect, "without entering PR#1"). In being so designed, it retrospectively formulates the preceding silence as signalling possible non-understanding, and a possible

need for supplementation and elaboration. More importantly, it retrospectively formulates the last LO-suffixed utterance as an extendible. This then, like the previous example, is an instance of one kind of extension, a "speaker-initiated extension" in which the current speaker, upon not getting some response from the recipient to a unit-closure proposal, produces further talk, by building the next utterance as a supplement, detailing, or elaboration of the pre-silence one.

Being itself a LO-construction, the supplementary formulation (arrow 2) raises again the possibility of unit closure. P offers a response this time, although not in a way that can be heard as agreeing to the ending proposal. Rather, his response ("what about Run?") initiates a new direction in which talk on the topic can be extended. In this sense, it is a hearer-initiated extension, or an "extension invitation". Upon the occasion of this invitation, M extends his account by dealing with the feature "Run". Having dealt with it, he returns to the LPrint feature by issuing another LO-suffixed utterance (arrow 3: "so your results are usually printed, so you add L LO"), thus proposing unit closure for the second time. Following a considerable silence (0.8 second), during which M could have, but did not initiate extension, P produces a receipt token, in the form of a free-standing "o:" ("I see"), which makes unit closure now seem a 'real possibility'. In response to that, M re-issues a positive assessment of MBasic, evidently attempting to close the topic.

Just when unit closure seems imminent, however, P issues a second extension invitation, raising this time the question of outputting to the monitor. The topic-talk gets extended even further, with M dealing with the question in a succession of LO-

suffixed utterances, each of which is followed by a silence ("just Print L0" (arrow 4); "no need for L L0" (arrow 5); and "if you add L, it'll go to the printer L0" (arrow 6)). Upon the occurrence of L0 in each of the first two report components, the possibility of unit closure arises, but P offers no response. As it turns out, the completion proposal that comes with the third description (arrow 6) is finally responded to with a receipt and change-of-state display ("o:::" [I see::]), one that is free-standing, and not accompanied by a further extension invitation. This is evidently heard by M as a possible agreement to end the current topic, as seen in his response: a reiteration (for the third time) of his positive assessment of MBasic, ie. 'filling' the turn in such a way that nothing new is said, constituting a possible topic-boundary. This time neither participant deals with the matter any further, thus mutually bringing the sequence to an end. Subsequently, following a long silence, a new topic gets generated.

Note that, unlike the extended accounts that were examined in the last chapter in connection with LA, M's series of L0-suffixed descriptions of MBasic has quite a different kind of organization. When a L0-suffixed utterance is used to present a feature of MBasic, the feature is presented as 'complete', in the sense that this is all that the speaker has to offer for the moment. The speaker (M) does sometimes 'go on' to deliver further descriptions, but this is done in a way that retrospectively formulates the L0-suffixed utterance as an extendible --a detailing, elaboration or rephrasing of the previous utterance. In extended accounts which make use of LA, continuation is conditional not upon the recipient's production

of extension invitations (recipients' questions would, as we saw in the last chapter, be dealt with as side-issues to the main project). In reportings that make use of LO, further descriptions are presented as occasioned, 'brought up', not 'planned' or 'promised'. They are offered as after-thoughts, additions, and elaborations rather than projected continuations.

As a final example of the way participants deal with the problem of unit closure, consider (39), an extract in which C describes to B and L a problem she is facing as the 'reason for the call'. It will be seen that, contrary to LA, which has a forward-looking quality, LO has a backward-looking quality. Also, it passes the responsibility on to the recipient to provide a direction for further talk, if further talk is indeed invited.

(39) [FEEL1:1:587]

<p>C: ee ngo sik jo yau leung go pangyau::</p> <p>B: o=</p> <p>C: =keuidei dou deui ngo hou hou ge</p> <p>B: m[hm</p> <p>C: [daa ngo yau m ji# (.) jee# (0.4)</p> <p>1--&gt;C: jee# jungyi bingo hou LO:</p> <p>B: goum keuidei iigaa yiu nei syunjaak me</p> <p>(0.9)</p> <p>C: jee# (0.4)</p> <p>C: jee mou yat fong-bing (.) jee yiu o (.) (.)</p> <p>2--&gt; jee kyutding LO::</p>	<p>C: um I know ASP have two CL friend [um I've made two friends]</p> <p>B: oh</p> <p>C: they both to me very good PT [they're both very nice to me]</p> <p>B: mhm</p> <p>C: but I yet not know (.) I-mean# (0.4)</p> <p>C: I-mean love which-one should PT [but I don't know, I mean, I mean, which one I should love]</p> <p>B: so they now want you choose PT [we] do they want you to choose now]</p> <p>(0.9)</p> <p>C: I-mean (0.4)</p> <p>C: I-mean not one side (.) I-mean want me (.) I-mean decide PT [I mean, I mean neither has</p>
--	---

(0.3)  
 B: o o leung go d ee .hhh  
 .hhh goummmm nei jungyi  
 bingo dodi aa

C: leung go dou  
 chaa-bat-do aa  
 (leung [go do]u) 'jee  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 B: [hamaa ]  
 C: =.hhh leunnn (.)  
 (.)  
 hoklik aa:  
 (.)  
 jilik aa leung go dou  
 3--> chaa-m-do [LO:  
 [ ]  
 [ ]  
 B: [waa=  
 =goum hou gaa=  
 C: =hhh hhh [heh heh heh heh  
 B: [heh heh heh heh

asked me to decide]  
 (0.3)  
 B: oh oh two CL both d um .hhh  
 .hhh so you love  
 which-one more PT  
 [oh oh both .hhh so which  
 one do you love more]  
 C: two CL both  
 about-the-same PT  
 (both) I-mean  
 [about the same, (both)  
 I mean]  
 B: is-that-so  
 C: .hhh in-terms-of  
 (.)  
 education PT  
 (.)  
 qualification PT two CL  
 both about-the-same PT  
 [in terms of education and  
 qualification they're  
 about the same]  
 B: oh so good PT  
 [oh that's really good]  
 C: hhh hhh heh heh heh heh  
 B: heh heh heh heh

. ((9 turns omitted in which  
 . participants dealt with B's  
 . professed "envy" of C's good  
 . fortune of "having two boyfriends"))

B: =hawaa .hhh aa:::mmm goum  
 nei::: ee:::  
 (.)  
 gokdak bingo::: ge chimjat  
 (.)  
 hou-di waje  
 cheuimeising do-di aa

B: is-that-so .hhh um so  
 you ee:::  
 (.)  
 feel which-one GEN potential  
 (.)  
 better or  
 interesting more PT  
 [really? .hh um so you um  
 which one do you think has  
 more potential or more  
 interesting]

(0.9)  
 C: leung go dou chaa-m-do  
 aa [leung go jou# jee]=  
 B: [waa goum hou aa ]  
 C: =jou ge:::  
 (.)  
 jou-ge-ye dou  
 4--> chaa--m-do LO

(0.9)  
 C: two CL both about-the-same  
 PT two CL do I-mean  
 B: oh so good PT  
 C: do GEN  
 (.)  
 do GEN work both  
 about-the-same PT  
 [they are about the same,  
 I mean, their jobs are  
 about the same]

L: goum aa "yu-yu-hung-  
 jeung-bat-lang- gim-dak"  
 go[bo  
 C: ['hai aa soyi

L: so PT "fish-and-bear-palm-  
 one-can't-have-both"  
 PT  
 C: yes PT so one very afraid

	leaa hou ge:ng	two CL both
	(.)	(.)
	leung go dou	lost PT
5-->	sat-jo-heui LO::	[exactly, I fear that one might lose both]
	(0.3)	(0.3)
	B: mhm	B: mhm
	L: mm	L: mm
	B: dou-mmai-yat-ding ge::	B: not-necessarily PT these
	lidi:: gaijuk haang-	these continue going-
6-->	jyu-sin tai:-ding-di LO:	out wait-and-see PT
		[well not necessarily, keep going out and wait and see]

(39) can be characterized as a consultation sequence in which C, the 'patient', gives a series of reports on her problems under the direction of B, the counsellor. While the reporter is supposed to know the circumstances that are relevant to her troubles, she is ironically not supposed to know 'what really went wrong' --in any case, what the cure or solution to the trouble might be, the point of this kind of troubles-telling being, after all, consultation. The sequence proceeds in this way: in each report component, the reporter presents a description of her situation, ending in a way that suggests that the report has come to a point of possible completion. Each LO-suffixed utterance is used to mark such a boundary. This means that the patient will stop and wait for further directions from the counsellor in order to provide her with further 'symptoms'.

Each of the first three instances of LO (arrows 1, 2 and 3) is followed by a question from B, one of the counsellors, that invites report extension in an indicated direction. Upon the completion of C's fourth LO-suffixed utterance, L, the other counsellor, delivers a proverbial ("fish and bear-palm, one can't have both"). Schegloff and Sacks (1973:306) suggest that one use of "proverbial or aphoristic formulations of conventional wisdom" is as a "topic-bounding technique". That is, a proverbial

formulation of convention wisdom can be offered by a recipient as a means of inviting topic-closure or conversation-closure. In the light of these observations, L's utterance in question can be seen as doing a similar kind of work: it proposes a boundary (an end) to the troubles-telling by indicating that the information given by C has been sufficient, that her problem has been understood, can be summarized, perhaps even diagnosed. In response to this proverbial, C produces a L0-suffixed confirmation, (arrow 5: "exactly, so one might lose both L0") which endorses L's summary as fitting the known facts, and moves into unit closure.

That the fact-finding (symptom-finding) project is heard as having come to an achieved end can be seen in B's subsequent turn (following confirmation tokens from both counsellors), in which B, having now identified C's problem, offers an advice/solution (arrow 6). This provides evidence of her hearing of the diagnosis sequence as having come to an end: the diagnosis having reached a point of completion, the offering of advice can then be done as a proper next activity.

It should be clear from these examples how, upon the occurrence of L0, various procedures are available to conversational participants to produce extensions. Thus there does not exist a simple mechanism whereby whenever an utterance ends in L0 (or, for that matter, any other particle), it will automatically signal the end of a report or a story or whatever. Far from it; reports and stories and other sequences can be extended in various ways, but the extension has a distinctly different kind of organization from that which was encountered in reportings using LA in the last chapter. The crucial point is

that LO has sequential implications quite distinct from those of LA. Rather than marking the following as a subsidiary task (a side sequence) relevant to the continuation of the main project, LO throws wide open the direction in which subsequent talk can move. Instead of looking forward to a continuation, LO looks backward to a sequence or sub-sequence as having now been potentially completed, and at the same time passes the 'responsibility' on to the other participant(s) to take the conversation in some as yet undetermined direction.

The functions of the particles LA and LO are, from this point of view, diametrically opposed to each other. In this respect, LA and LO are particles that, as it were, look in two different directions in discourse. LA instructs the hearer to look forward for more things to come, so that the full sense and import of the present utterance can be determined at a later point in the talk. For instance, the significance of assuming a certain common ground will not become clear until a later point in the conversation. LO, on the other hand, invites co-participants to look backward so as to locate facts and information in the background which would help determine the sense and significance of the current utterance.

This contrastive account will explain a whole array of differences in the distributional and co-occurrence behaviour of the two particles.

(1) Receipt tokens like "o:::" ("I see"), "hawaa" ("did you", "was it", etc.), and "janhai?" ("really?") are often found following LO, but not LA. This can be explicated given the analyses proposed for these two particles so far. According to this account, LA regularly seeks or records the sharing of common

ground, in order to move on with the current project (eg. reporting), whereas LO is regularly used to signal the end or conclusion of the current action, in order to bring the relevant action sequence to a point of completion. Thus when, for example, a report component is suffixed with LA, it normally signals the speaker's intention to check out the ground so far shared in order to continue, but when a report component is suffixed with LO, the aim normally is to propose that the report has come to a point of possible completion. Also, the information contained in the LO-suffixed report-component need not be shared by the recipient (in fact it usually is not known to the recipient). This is why LO is often followed by such receipt tokens, but not LA.

(2) "lei ji" ("you know") is regularly suffixed with LA, but not LO. Not that LO is never suffixed to "you know" --it is,-- but when it is, it means something like "the fact is that you know", and cannot be used to check out common ground. This observation is readily explicable in terms of my analyses. Also, "you know LA" is regularly followed by more talk within the same turn from the current speaker, detailing what it is that is being claimed to be shared.

(3) When LA is not responded to, the speaker would simply assume that the common ground being referred to is available, and would continue with the on-going project. When LO is not met with a response such as acknowledgement, however, what follows is usually some elaboration, in which the speaker pursues some display of understanding. Alternatively, the silence may be construed as an endorsement of topic closure. This has been discussed above, so I won't go into it again.

(4) My account would also naturally explain why continuers like "mhm" and "mm" regularly follow LA, but less regularly LO. Being 'tickets' for continuation, these tokens are used to give the clearance that LA regularly seeks. On the other hand, when this kind of continuer is given in response to LO, they are often hearable as 'not really understanding (yet) what is being done in the LO-suffixed turn', thus generating elaborations and explications. It also seems that there is some kind of limit to how long this elaboration and explication business can go on (3 or 4 at the most, apparently), but for LA, the continuation can go on for quite long.

(5) One of the most notable differences between "hai LA" ("yes LA") and "hai LO" ("yes LO") is that while the former usually generates more talk from the speaker, "hai LO" often occurs singly. Again, this follows naturally from my analyses, which would predict that a LA-suffixed-yes 'promises' further talk on the topic, but a LO-suffixed-yes will often be the speaker's whole contribution for the moment.

As an interesting illustration of some of these features, consider extract (40), an analysis of which in relation to the particle LA has been presented in the last chapter.

(40) [SS:D2:178]

1 I: goum hokhaau leuibin	I: so school in
2 yaumou di matye clubs	whether some what clubs
3 lei yau::	you have
4 (0.7)	(0.7)
5 I: e:: yaumou join-dou	I: e:: whether joined
6 di matye club	some what club
	[so are there some clubs
	in the school? have you
	joined some clubs?]
7 A: e::: poutungwaa LA::	A: e: Putonghua PT
8 [.hh	.hh
9 I: [mm	I: mm
10 A: science club LA:	A: science club PT
11 I: mm	I: mm
12 A: e#	A: e#

13	(1.5)	(1.5)
14	A: jung yau: me (.)	A: other there-be what (.)
15	astronomy LA::=	astronomy PT [what else (.) astronomy]
16	I: =mm	I: mm
17	A: .hh e:::m	A: .hh e:::m
18	(0.9)	(0.9)
19	A: table tennis LA:: hh hh	A: table tennis PT hh hh
20	[.hhh .hh heh heh]	.hhh .hh heh heh
21	I: [mm hou do wo ha#]	I: mm very many PT yeah [mm such a lot]
22	A: heh heh heh heh	A: heh heh heh heh
23	I: ha#	I: yeah
24	A: hai-goum LO	A: like-that PT [that's it]

Throughout this episode, I provides continuers and waits for further items to be delivered upon the occurrence of every instance of LA, until the last line, in which LO indicates that the listing has reached a possible point of completion. Since this episode has already been analyzed in the last chapter, and since many interesting features can be readily seen on the basis of the above discussion, I will not go into any details here.

To summarize, from the point of view of how continuations and extensions are interactionally managed in conversation, the major difference between the particles LA and LO can most briefly be stated as follows: LA has a 'forward-looking' character, while LO has a 'backward-looking' character. LA seeks some kind of clearance in order to 'move on', while LO ties what is being said to what has been said before, or else proposes that what has just been said can stand as the whole contribution at the moment, leaving it up to the other participant(s) to take the conversation in some as yet undetermined direction.

## 9. LO and the Production of Realities

### 9.1 *The Uses of LO*

In very general terms, the particle LO makes available to conversational participants a means with which they can indicate to each other that the full sense and interactional import of what is being said is to be determined by reading the current utterance in such a way as to link it up with something else. More accurately, the current utterance --be it a description, representation, report, account, suggestion, advice, agreement, confirmation, or whatever--is to be interpreted as entering into a dependency relation (as described in Section 8) with some state-of-affairs.

Thus, this particle is not a simple device with which utterances are marked as belonging to certain semantic, pragmatic, or logical categories. It would be a futile exercise to try and define an intrinsic or original meaning of the particle, or even a small number of basic meanings. The contribution of individual instances of the particle in particular sequential environments to the overall sense of particular utterances and to the performance of particular interactional tasks will always be an occasioned accomplishment. The particle provides nothing more than a 'loose index', pointing to ways of reading and interpreting.

For instance, while LO is sometimes read as indicating a cause-effect relation, it does not invariably mark an utterance as "cause" or "effect" as such. An utterance like *chi-jo LO* (late LO) in the right contexts can be taken to mean "Because I was late, therefore [eg. I missed the lecture]" or "Because [eg. there was a traffic jam], therefore I was late". Rather than

marking a proposition as "cause" or "effect", "premise" or "conclusion", "circumstance" or "action", what LO does is to invite co-participants to assign a dependency reading to the utterance. In addition, it displays the speaker's assumption that the co-participant can be relied on to assign those links and connections that are needed for the utterance's interpretation.

From the point of view of conversational organization, one problem that this particle serves as a means to tackle is what I have referred to as the 'course-charting problem'. By that I mean the problem of making it mutually clear 'where in the course of some conversation the participants are' at any given point in time, and the related problem of 'how to go on, where to go from here'. In this respect, LO sets up a turn transition relevance place in such a way that 'ending' is highlighted as a central possibility. How it is dealt with is of course tied up with what kind of an action this current action is. For instance, if the current action is hearable as 'doing a request', then the completion of this action sets up a constraint on what the next might be (eg. dealing with the possibilities of granting or non-granting). If, however, this occurs at a place that can be heard as 'at the end' of a report, then it might be a possible thing to do in the next slot to receive the report in a way that would reconstruct the last as a topic-closure proposal by 'agreeing with' it, thus possibly setting up a topic-boundary.

Further, should turn transition occur, then very often in that next turn, a new direction is provided for further talk to proceed. The part played by LO in this is that it points to the possibility, stronger in some sequential contexts than others, of

the talk moving off in a new direction, a direction which has yet to be determined up to the point when it occurs. From this point of view, LO is a means of passing on to one's co-participants the responsibility of providing a direction for further talk.

In the light of the observations made so far concerning LO's dependency and completion-proposal properties, let us examine several apparently widely shared intuitions about what this particle means.

### *9.2 Conclusions and punch lines*

The conclusion of a report, the punch line of a joke, the end result of a reasoning process and the like, often take the form of a LO-suffixed utterance. This is anything but a mystery given the observations made earlier about dependency: the sense and significance of these propositions are typically derived from linking them up with what comes before. Notice, however, that from the point of view of conversational course-charting, these conclusions and punch lines are prime candidates for proposing topic closure. Thus in these constructs one can see more clearly the connection between the particle's dependency and completion-proposal features.

### *9.3 Unnoteworthiness and Obviousness*

"To point out what is obvious" (Kwok 1984:58) is sometimes regarded as one of the meanings of LO. Let us examine this in terms of the notion of 'noteworthiness'.

A recurrent concern among participants in ordinary conversation is whether something is noteworthy. By noteworthy I do not mean the more familiar problem of newsworthiness. The problem of newsworthiness has to do with whether the recipient

already knows what the speaker wants to say. Noteworthiness, however, refers to a different kind of concern. The problem goes something like this. In showing recipients that and/or what they know about something, conversational participants are faced with a problem of presentation. Knowledge can be presented in a variety of ways. One decision that often needs to be made is whether to present some knowledge as something that is ordinary or extraordinary. This is quite different from the question of whether the recipient already knows. A speaker may have reason to believe that the hearer does not already know something, but the problem still arises as to whether this piece of information that is unknown to him should be presented as ordinary or otherwise. For example, when asked what time the train leaves, I may, knowing full well that the asker does not know what time the train leaves, still have a 'choice'. I can tell you the time the train leaves in a way that presents this information as something that, while you do not already know, should not appear to you to be in any way unusual or noteworthy.

One regular way of portraying states-of-affairs as unnoteworthy is to set them against a certain background of circumstances and conditions in the light of which their reasonableness and naturalness can be appreciated. LO provides in this sense a means of constructing natural, reasonable, and unnoteworthy descriptions. In this we find a basis for the intuition that this particle "means that something is obvious".

#### *9.4 The "explanation" reading*

Another recurrent reading of this particle is that it is used to "explain things". To say "that's why you need to do that" is not only to advise or suggest but also to back up the

advice or suggestion with a reason or justification. Similarly, it is one thing to tell you that this object in front of me is a table, and quite another thing to tell you that that's what it is. The difference is that in the latter case, the utterance can be read within a context in which an account is somehow being called for. That is, it will involve a relational reading, one that is partly induced by LO, in which the description is related to some circumstances with reference to which it can be heard as an instruction, demonstration, explanation, and the like. It has been shown (Pomerantz 1986) that states-of-affairs can be portrayed in ways which would 'justify an action', eg. an action can be reported in such a way as to show that it is a reasonable thing to do in the form of "extreme case formulations" (such as "everyone", "all", "every time"). From this point of view LO is a means of making such portrayals. A state-of-affairs can be presented through LO as an objective fact, a reasonable action, or a necessary, unavoidable event that arises from some given situation.

#### *9.5 Uncommunicativeness and Irresponsibility*

Finally, consider the ways in which, on the basis of this particle's properties, psychological predicates are ascribed to social agents, as intentions and motives behind their actions; as attitude and state of mind; or as more permanent personality traits, even group attributes and character.

As a clear formulation of an intuition about what this particle means --what it tells us about the speaker, consider the following explicit description by a University lecturer in Hong Kong of "problematic youths in society" as habitual users of LO,

and their "psychology" and "mentality", as evidenced in their frequent use of this particle on TV programmes in which they are interviewed by journalists, counsellors, social workers, and educationists. (Note, in this connection, that "reluctance" has also been recorded as an attribute that is closely associated with the particle LO in Yau 1965:314)

"[The use of LO] shows that the speaker is reluctant [to talk or communicate], and unwilling to take up responsibilities. [In response to questions in interviews], all that they manage to do is to repeat other people's words uncritically. [In their behaviour], they do little more than imitate what others say is the in-thing to do." (Siu 1985:77; my translation)

This comment provides a series of explicitly formulated psychological predicates that are attributed to a social group on the basis of their frequent use of the particle LO. It should be clear from what has been said about LO in this chapter that these ascriptions can be systematically accommodated in my analysis. A basis for the "reluctant" and "uncommunicative" readings can be found in the particle's conversation organizational properties: it is a completion proposal, marking the talk up to that point as the whole contribution, and a means of passing on to the co-participant the 'responsibility' of providing a direction for further talk. Hence impressions like "the speaker does not really want to talk".

But this is precisely the kind of impression that these "problematic youths" are managing through their talk. From the point of view of the present analysis, the tendency of these persons to use a great deal of LO in *their speech in situations* in which they are being interviewed can be seen in terms of how the social scene called 'an interview' is managed and produced. The bad impression that is created by these sloppy, reticent and

uncooperative youths contributes to the feeling that these interviews are somehow unsatisfactory. To examine the part played by LO in these unsatisfactory interviews, let us contrast them with ordinary, satisfactory interviews. To put it very crudely, in an ordinary interview, an interviewer is expected to ask a series of questions and an interviewee willingly and happily answer the questions. The interviewee, that is to say, is expected to display (in many different ways) cooperativeness. One of the reasons why an interview "doesn't feel right", then, is that the interviewee withholds such cooperativeness displays.

From the point of view of an interview as a joint production, its success will depend crucially on whether the two parties involved (interviewer and interviewee) subscribe to the same reality and inhabit the same discourse. But clearly an interviewee may not accept the institutional definition of the situation. According to this definition, an investigative interview (of this kind to be shown on TV) is one in which the aim is to objectively and dispassionately find out the roots and causes of a variety of "social problems". Within such a project, the role of the interviewee is to provide information that may throw certain light on the causes of these problems. More importantly, however, the interviewee is to, under the guidance of the interviewer, analyse their own problems and to lay them open for all to see. The aim of that is to show to the audience how a problematic personality can be guided gradually towards a realization of his/her own inadequacies and mistakes. In short, the problematic youth is to be made to publicly admit that he/she is sick.

Being laid on the operation table, as a specimen of a (social) disease, and being dissected and examined in the public eye, the problematic youth may refuse to take part in the complicity that is required to jointly and successfully produce the interview. They may try to defend themselves by refusing to accept the premise that there is something wrong with them that society would benefit from finding out about. I wish to suggest that one of the devices that can contribute to the management of that resistance is the particle L0. Through the use of this particle, answers can be formulated as facts that are unnoteworthy and simply known to be so, or as natural and reasonable consequences of conditions and circumstances. In addition, the particle would propose to end the turn, stop there, and leave the business of continuing to come up with probing questions to someone who regards that as a worth-while activity. Thus, equipped with L0 and other resources, the problematic youth works towards undermining the investigative interview as it is institutionally defined by refusing to buy that reality -- refusing, literally, to speak its language.

Looking at it in this way, L0 can be characterized as the grammaticalization of a means to deal with an interactional problem that participants in conversation are faced with from time to time. This is bound up with the question of how realities are presented and interpreted. What counts as an objective fact? What counts as a warranted inference? What is a reasonable thing to do in some situation? These are recurrent concerns of social agents in interaction. The properties of L0 show clearly that, far from being given, 'objective reality' is constructed in the details of social interaction. We present to

each other pictures of the objective world: what things are in it, what they are like, what laws govern their behaviour. The problem for pragmatics and sociolinguistics is therefore not how to identify action-types and event-types, etc. on the one hand, and linguistic means of realizing them on the other; and then try and link them up in some way. Rather, what seems to be going on in linguistic interaction is that realities are constructed, presented, attacked, defended, shared, and modified in and through language. An 'ordinary object' for instance, does not have some set of essential features that, when measured against some universal principles, will make it 'an ordinary object'. Rather, it can be formulated as an ordinary object, ie. its status as an ordinary object is closely bound up with the way it is presented and interpreted in interaction. In this sense L0 is a linguistic resource that facilitates and constrains the construction and negotiation of realities as interactional achievements.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXPECTATION AND NOTEWORTHINESS: THE UTTERANCE PARTICLE *WO*

The linguistic object represented throughout this chapter, both in the text and the transcripts, as *WO* (in capital letters) refers to the utterance particle which has the segmental shape /wo/ in mid-level tone. It is variously represented in the literature as *wo*, *wo44*, *↑wo*, and *wo3* (ie. /wo/ in tone 3). There are two other particles in Cantonese which have the same segmental shape but different tones: *wo24* (low-rising), and *wo21* (low-falling). But they will not be studied in this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

*WO* has two major variant forms: /wo44/ and /bo44/. In fact, some studies in the past have referred to this particle as "bo". For instance, Kwok (1984:93) observes that "bo44 [is] sometimes pronounced as wo44". But the /wo/ variant, with an initial labio-velar, is by far the most frequently found form in the Cantonese of contemporary Hong Kong, although the /bo/ variant, with an initial bilabial stop, is sometimes used. Examination of the distribution of these two variants in my data does not reveal systematic variation along any of the usual social parameters, nor do "contextual factors" seem to matter. While I am perfectly willing to leave the possibility of systematic variation open, I will, for the present purposes, treat these two forms as phonological exponents of the same utterance particle "WO".

Like many other particles in the language, including LA and LO examined in the previous two chapters, WO can be used in combination with other particles, forming particle clusters (compound particles). Like LA and LO, when it does appear in a cluster, WO always occurs as the last component in the cluster. Some of the most frequently encountered combinations include the two-particle clusters /go44wo44/, /jo44wo44/, /lo44wo44/, and the three-particle clusters /go44lo44wo44/ and /go44jo44wo44/. The actual phonetic shape of the vocalic segments in the other components may vary from a front [e] or a central [ə] to the back [o], but there is a tendency for vowel harmony to be maintained, ie. [o] is the most common shape of the vocalic element in each of the syllables of the clusters.

There is no better way to develop a firm grasp of the properties of a particle than to look at a fair amount of conversational data carefully and closely. As in the previous chapters, an account will be gradually built up from detailed examination of instances of WO in a range of sequential contexts.

### **1. Reportings and Story-tellings**

In the course of giving a report or telling a story, one of the devices for portraying actions and events as unusual or extraordinary is WO-suffixing.

As a first example, consider extract (1) below, in which C, in reporting on her son's misbehaviour, formulates "he likes telling lies" as a fact that puzzles and intrigues her, something that she "does not know why". She then gives her reason for calling as to ask for the counsellors' advice

as to "how to teach him".

- (1) [FEEL1:1:304]
- L: mm yau-geidaai aa= L: mm how-old PT  
[mm how old is he]
- C: =keui gamnin ee duk form C: he this-year um study Form  
one sapsei seui LO:: One fourteen years PT  
[he's in Form One now  
he's fourteen]
- B: sap[sei-seui B: fourteen  
L: [o: o: ligo lingei L: oh oh this age  
ee::: hai goum gaa-la ee::: is like-this PT  
[oh well children at this  
age are like that]
- C: keui le:: C: he PT  
(0.4) (0.4)
- C: jeei::: C: I-mean  
(.) (.)
- C: jee ngo tung ngo sinsaang C: I-mean I and my husband  
leung-go-yan le both-of-us PT  
jau hou jik gaa PT very straight PT  
(0.5) (0.5)
- C: jau m jungyi jee ee yiu C: PT not like I-mean um  
gongdaaiwaa aa ngaak yan have-to lie PT cheat  
aa goum LA: people PT so PT  
[he, I mean, I mean me and  
my husband we are both  
very straight we don't like  
to lie and cheat others]
- L: mm= L: mm
- C: =daanhai keui le jau `hou C: but he PT PT very  
--> jungyi gongdaaiwaa goWO like lie PT (0.7)  
(0.7) (0.7)
- C: ngo m ji dimgaai soyi ngo I not know why so I  
seung chingng-gaau-haa-lei want seek-advice-from-you  
ngo yinggoi `dimyeung-heui I should how-to  
gaau kei le teach him PT  
[but he really likes  
telling lies I don't know  
why so I want to ask for  
your advice how should I  
teach him?]
- (1.1) (1.1)
- P: gamaa mui-yat-go gong-daai P: well every one-who-lies  
waa-ge-yan ne:: du:: yau PT also has  
buihau-ge yansou ge background factors PT  
nei yiu::w jee wan-cheut you must I-mean find-out  
go leiyau heui wai-mee-si CL reason he for-what so  
goum jungyi gong-daai-waa like lie first  
sinn-dak [well everyone who lies  
has a reason, you have  
to find out why he likes  
to lie]

The son's "liking for telling lies" is presented  
against the background "me and my husband ... don't like to

lie and cheat others", which sets up a contrast between the parents, who are "straight", and the son, who is, as implied by the contrast, not so straight. C's formulation of her son's lying behaviour has this central character: by portraying the son's behaviour in the light of the parents' truth-loving character, it sets up a contrast which puts the son's habit of telling lies in a bad light: it is not something that straight people are expected to do. The contrast in question is set up specifically between the nature of the parents and that of their son (not anybody else's), invoking some "like parent, like son" rule, according to which the son ought to be truth-loving and honest too, but he isn't. The son's behaviour is therefore seen as something that is strange and puzzling: C "does not know why", and "wants to ask for advice". Through the report component "but he really likes telling lies", which has the form of a WO-suffixed-utterance, C formulates a state-of-affairs as something that is unexpected and morally unsettling, something that needs accounting for.

In (2), M is reporting to J how she wanted to get some ham from the market, but it was closed.

(2) [MAK:1:006]

M: sau gei-dim jek  
sau baat-dim me

M: close what-time PT  
close eight-o'clock PT  
[what time does it close?  
does it close at eight?]

(.)

J: sau baat-dim aa=

(.)  
J: close eight-o'clock PT  
[it closes at eight]

M: =aiyaa ngo yiwai sau  
chat-dim aa ngo lok  
gaai:: [(si) maai foteui aa

M: EXCL I thought close  
seven-o'clock PT I go-down  
mar--(ket) buy ham PT  
[oh I thought it closes at  
seven I went to the market  
to get some ham,]

J: [sau baat-dim aa

J: close eight-o'clock aa

	[it closes at eight]
-->M: maai-m-dou WO	M: couldn't-buy PT
(0.5)	(0.5)
M: ( ) cheungjaan yau sau-	M: ( ) Cheungjaan also all-
gwai-saai-do::ng	closed
(0.4)	(0.4)
M: je seung maai mee#=#	M: I-mean want buy what#
	[couldn't get any (0.5)
	Cheung-jaan (a shop's name)
	was all closed (0.4) I mean
	I wanted to get what's-it]
J: =o: jau heui maai-jo di	J: I then go bought some
foteui lam-jyu tingyat	ham thinking tomorrow
jing-ye batgo sat	make-thing but for-sure
sik-m-saai maai-jo	can't-finish bought
saam baau aa	three packs PT
	[I went and bought some
	ham to cook something
	tomorrow but we won't
	be able to finish it
	I bought three packs]

The WO-suffixed-utterance is the report component "couldn't get any", which is presented against the background "I went to the market to get some ham". A contrast is set up between an initial expectation --that she could get some ham from the market, and a result --that she couldn't get any. That she could not get any ham from the market is thus formulated not just as a "brute fact", but as an unfulfilled expectation.

While a contrast can be constructed explicitly between two states-of-affairs, as in (1) and (2), extract (3) shows that WO can be used to set up an implicit contrast.

(3) [SS:CH:1:196]	
M: ze:i-m daabo yeng-jo	M: Friday play-(basketball)
	won
	[played basketball on Friday
	and won]
(0.6)	(0.6)
P: se:i-m?	P: Friday?
(0.5)	(0.5)
P: tung bin-deui aa=#	P: with which-team PT
	[with which team?]
M: =daai-ek-sing	M: Big-Sing
(0.4)	(0.4)
P: o:	P: I see
M: .hh go baak fan aa	M: .hh over hundred points PT

	[scored over a hundred points]
(0.7)	(0.7)
P: [geido b]ei gei aa= [ ]	P: how-many compare how-many PT [what was the score?]
M: [yatbaak]	M: hundred
M: =yat-ling-gau baa-gau	M: one-hundred-and-nine eighty-nine
(0.6)	(0.6)
P: baa::-gau aa	P: eighty-nine PT
(.)	(.)
P: waa mm do ge yap-jo	P: wow so many PT scored [eighty-nine? wow how come you scored so many points?]
M: .hh hai aa [daa# ] daa= P: [pings]	M: .hh yes PT play# play= P: usually
M: =sei jit	M: =four periods [yes, we played four periods]
(0.7)	(0.7)
P: sei:: jit?= M: =daa MBA gam aa	P: four periods? M: play MBA like PT [like MBA]
P: o:: M: sap-m fanjung yat jit P: gwaai-m-ji LA::	P: I see M: fifteen minutes a period P: no wonder PT [no wonder]
M: gwui dou sei (3.4)	M: tired to death (3.4)
-->M: daa-daa-haa yau yiu ting WO	M: in-the-middle-of-the-match too had-to stop PT [and we had to stop in the middle of the match]
P: heh heh [heh heh M: [keui siusik e: siuhok keui siuhok linmaai yat gaan haause gaamaa	P: heh heh heh heh M: their recess e: primary-school their primary-school connected-to one CL premises PT [their recess--the primary school is connected (with the secondary); they share one set of premises]

Here M is reporting to P about a basketball match he played on Friday. The turn in question (the WO-suffixed-utterance) is the report component "and we had to stop in the middle of the match". While, unlike the previous two examples, no explicit background is provided to contrast this report component against, two pieces of evidence in the data would support the contrast reading. First, notice that P responds to the report component in question with

laughter, thus exhibiting his reception of the report component in question as some state-of-affairs that is somehow out of the ordinary, hence laughable. Second, M goes on to provide an account for such a state-of-affairs -- it was recess time, and the kids from the primary school, which is connected with the secondary school, occupied the playground, thus stopping the match. M's giving of an account retrospectively formulates the state-of-affairs in question (stopping in the middle of the match) as something that calls for an explanation, ie. something that is extraordinary, unexpected.

It seems clear from examples like (1), (2) and (3) that one kind of work that W0 can do is to contribute, in reporting sequences, to the construction of report components which present some state-of-affairs as unexpected, out of the ordinary, through setting up an explicit or implicit contrast between a state-of-affairs that is normal, or expectable, and one that is somehow deviant, which is in need of an explanation.

To see this property of W0 in sharper focus, consider two extracts in which this particle is found suffixed to story components in which some event is presented as mysterious and inexplicable. In (4), E tells of an experience he has had with the supernatural at the snooker table.

(4) [SS:CH:1:384]

L: lei seun-m-seun aa  
lei m seun

(0.6)  
A: leung-tai [LA

L: you whether-believe PT  
you not believe  
[do you believe it? you  
don't]

(0.6)  
A: both-view PT

<p>E: [haubin je#  --&gt; jaai mou-yan WO  danhai keui li#  (.)  ji gwan  (.)  dakyingaan heungchin  --&gt; jong-yat-jong go bo WO  (.)  yau m-hai hou daailik  goum LA</p> <p>L: mm  E: .hh honang o jigei:::  (0.9)  E: jigei gamgok keui LA  hhh [hhh  [  L: [mm</p>	<p>[it depends]  E: at-the-back real#  really no-one PT  but it li#  (.)  CL cue  (.)  suddenly forward  hit CL ball PT  (.)  but not very hard like PT  [there was really no one at  the back, but it-- the cue  suddenly hit the ball, it  wasn't very hard]</p> <p>L: mm  E: .hh perhaps I self  [perhaps I myself--]  (0.9)  E: self feel it PT  hhh hhh  [felt it myself hhh hhh]  L: mm</p>
---	---

Here, WO is found suffixed to two report components -- "there was really no one at the back", and "the cue suddenly hit the ball". I take it that the point of the story is that "something mysterious happened to me". The implicit background invoked by the mentioning of "no one", "the back", "the cue hitting the ball" is that under normal snooker-playing circumstances, one would not expect the cue to hit the ball of its own accord. Thus, like (3), while no background is explicitly provided for, a contrast is nevertheless set up, through the use of WO, between what ought not to happen, and what actually happened. Notice also that, as in (3), an explanation --at least an attempt to explain-- is subsequently given ("perhaps I just felt it myself"), thus retrospectively formulating the report components in question as descriptions of events that somehow call for an account.

In (5), E is telling another story about a mysterious event that he heard about in his native village.

(5) [SS:CH:1:408]

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| E: ee: o ochi ge s saigo si<br>o changge teng-go: z<br>yau-ya-chi<br>yat-chi le: .h[hh<br>[<br>[<br>[ | E: um I once GEN s small time<br>I have heard z<br>once<br>once PT .hhh<br>[um once when I was small<br>I once heard]  |
| L: [ha#=<br>E: =jee tai ngaujai le jee<br>go# jee gogo sengbaan<br>heui tai ngau LA=                  | L: yeah<br>E: I-mean watch cows PT I-mean<br>every# I-mean everyone all<br>go watch cows PT<br>[I mean watching cows, I<br>mean everyone went to watch<br>the cows]                                      |
| L: =mm=<br>E: =.hh tai yun ngau le jau::<br>honang o gochi m ji<br>yaumou lokyi aa=                   | L: mm<br>E: .hh watch finish cows PT<br>then perhaps I that-time<br>don t know whether rain PT<br>not know whether rain PT<br>[when we finished watching<br>the cows, I don't know<br>if it was raining] |
| L: =mm=<br>E: gogo jau-lok-heui tong<br>dou yauseui aa=   | L: mm<br>E: everyone go-down pond<br>at swim PT<br>[everyone went down to the<br>pond to swim]   |
| L: =mm=<br>E: =.hh dimji daiyat le<br>(.)<br>---> gogo o beng saai WO hh=                             | L: mm<br>E: .hh it-turned-out next-day PT<br>(.)<br>everyone all ill all PT hh<br>[it turned out everyone<br>became ill the next day,<br>all of them]  |
| L: =mm=<br>E: =jau: gogo tong le aamaam<br>yau-yan ne: jau hai-o-dou<br>jam-sei go aamaa=             | L: mm<br>E: and that pond PT just some-<br>one PT then there drowned<br>ASP PT<br>[and in that pond, someone<br>had just been drowned<br>earlier]  |
| L: =mm=<br>E: =.hh goum gogo yiwai godou<br>yau mee si LO=  | L: mm<br>E: .hh so everyone thought<br>there there-be what thing PT<br>[so everyone wondered what<br>it was]   |
| L: =chyunbou beng saai<br>(0.3)<br>E: ha# gogo beng LO  | L: all ill all<br>[everyone became ill?]<br>(0.3)<br>E: yeah everyone ill PT<br>[yeah everyone was ill]  |

As in the previous extract, the WO-suffixed utterance in (5) presents an event (that "everyone" somehow "became ill") as unexpected, strange, even inexplicable. Hence "so everyone wondered what it was". Its inexplicableness can also be seen precisely in E's attempt to provide, prospectively, some possible (but not certain) explanation, "I don't know if it was raining" --so perhaps it was the rain that made everyone ill? But perhaps it was something else? A mysterious link is set up as an alternative explanation: a possible relation between people getting ill and "someone had just been drowned earlier in the pond". Whatever the cause may be, the event is clearly portrayed, partly through WO, as out of the ordinary and in need of accounting for.

Extract (6) below provides an extraordinary example of a report that figures ten occurrences of WO in a row.

(6) [MAK:1:306]

J: aa-S ji-m-jidou o[dei::	J: S whether-know we
[	[does S know we--]
M: [m ji aa	M: not know PT
(.)	(.)
M: .hh aa-S chamat ju:ng	M: .hh S yesterday even
hou-siu aa	funny PT
--> jau-jo jek gai WO	lost CL chicken PT
(.)	(.)
chyu::n: saigaai dou ji	the whole-world all know
keui gau# jau-gai janhai	he gau# lost-a-chicken
.hhh keui le yau	really .hhh he PT has
--> jek [gai WO yeung-jo] jek	CL chicken PT kept CL
[	[no, he doesn't, .hh S
[	was really funny yesterday.
[	Lost a chicken, the whole
[	world knew he had really
[	lost a chicken. He had a
[	chicken, kept]
J: [tschhhhh jhhhhh]	J: tschhhhh jhhhhh
-->M: <u>gai WO hai kelau WO</u>	M: chicken PT in balcony PT
.hhh goum ne keui jau	.hhh so PT he then he# CL
[heui# go] j(h)ai le=	son PT then say
[	[a chicken on the balcony,
[	and then he he# his son
[	said--]



really let loose his  
chicken]

The story being told here plays on a linguistic twist. "jau gai" which literally means "letting loose a chicken" in Cantonese, is a more or less frozen metaphor often used to mean something like "opportunity lost". The expression is, however, applied here to an event in which S lost a chicken while playing with his son, which application is, of course, ironically apt. The comical character of the report turns on the fact that, through a happy coincidence, a frozen metaphor, which has been stabilized through frequent application of the description "letting loose a chicken" to events in which someone has not literally let loose a chicken (but has, for example, missed an easy goal), unexpectedly acquires new life and energy through being appropriately applied to an event in which someone has literally let loose a chicken. Thus, the fun of the story is derived not merely from the fact that, given the urban environment of Hong Kong, something like someone literally letting loose a chicken can actually happen, but, more importantly, from the unexpected aptness of a linguistic twist. This unexpectedness is highlighted throughout the story by the use of a whole sequence of WO-suffixed utterances, marking every turn of the event as happy and ludicrous.

This extract shows that WO can be used repeatedly throughout a report or story to heighten the sense of unexpectedness of the event(s) being related. It also shows that this particle does not necessarily confine itself to marking only the unexpectedness of the event portrayed in

that particular proposition to which it is attached.

Rather, it can be used to give the whole event or state-of-affairs being reported an unexpected character.

Yet another way of portraying events as out of the ordinary is to explicitly invoke some rules, on the basis of which the normality of some state-of-affairs can be assessed. In so doing, states-of-affairs can be portrayed as deviations from norms. In the following extracts, WO marks such deviations from norms.

(7) [DJ1:1:108]

T: wai keisat le:: la aa-C  
aa hou# yugwo nei mei  
gitfan laa haa daanhai  
lei yau yaagei-seui WO

(.)

goum lei yau-di tunghok  
aa pangyau yiging git-  
jo-fan galak goum nei  
yiu tung keuidei baailin  
lei sau-m-sau heuidei-di  
laisi le

(.)

hou gaamgaai goWO ngo  
sengyat gokdak

T: hey actually PT PT C PT ver#  
PT ver# if you not  
married PT PT but  
you are twenty-odd-  
years-old PT

(.)

then your some schoolmates  
PT friends already got-  
married PT and you  
have-to with them say-New-  
Year-greetings you whether-  
accept their red-packets PT

(.)

very embarrassing PT I  
always feel

[hey actually look, C, if you  
were not married, but you  
were twenty-odd years old,  
but some of your schoolmates  
and friends had already got  
married, and you had to say  
New Year greetings to them,  
would you accept their red  
packets? I always find this  
quite embarrassing]

C: o: jee (.) ngo: mei gitfan

C: oh so (.) I not married  
[oh so I wasn't married]

T: ha[a

T: yeah

C: [ngo-di pangyau  
git-jo-fan

C: my friends married  
[but my friends were]

.  
.  
(3 turns omitted)

T: wei bago m-hai WO yausi  
ngo jau godak hou  
gaamgaai goWO laa lei

T: hey but no PT sometimes  
I really feel very  
embarrassing PT PT you

<p>1--&gt; lam-haa seng saa:-seui-  yan dou mei gitfan loWO  yiging hai <u>je hou</u>  <u>gaamqaai LA .hh</u>  lei joi[heui::</p>	<p>consider almost 30-years-  old still not married PT  already is I-mean very  embarrassed PT .hh  you still go-and  [hey but no, sometimes I  really feel that this is  very embarrassing, just  think, someone who's almost  thirty but is not  married, that's, you know  embarrassing enough, if  in spite of that you still  go and--]</p>
<p>2--&gt;C: [dimwui saa:-seui-  yan mei gia# leidei godak  dim aa ligo: ligo: faaidi  bokchik aa-T</p>	<p>C: how-come thirty-year-olds  not-yet marr# you feel  what PT thi:s thi:s quick  rebuke T  [how come thirty-year-olds  who aren't marr# what do  you feel about this, this,  rebuke her, quick]</p>
<p>3--&gt;H: yigaa m-hai galaa</p>	<p>H: now not PT  [that's not true anymore  these days]</p>
<p>T: hhh heh heh heh heh</p>	<p>T: hhh heh heh heh heh</p>

T, in the turn arrowed 1, explicitly invokes a norm according to which people are expected to get married before thirty ("just think, someone who's almost thirty but is not married, that's, you know, embarrassing enough"). The problem she poses for C goes something like this. Given this norm that she has invoked, and another norm which has been left implicit, namely, that traditionally, married couples are expected to give unmarried persons red packets during Chinese New Year, a conflict between these two norms would arise in the following situation. People who ought to have married but have not, would find themselves in an impossible situation: when saying new year greetings to friends and peers who are married, should they ask for and accept red packets? According to the "red packet norm", they should, because they are single. But to do so would amount to an admittance of their unmarried status, which,

according to the "age for marriage norm", would cause them embarrassment.

Rather than tackling this problem as it is posed, however, C challenges the validity of T's "age for marriage norm" by appealing to the other participants in the conversation to "rebuke her quick" (arrow 2). Thus the appropriate age for people to get married is turned into an issue through C's challenge of its validity. H then comes in to support C's position by characterizing T's norm as an assumption that is out-of-date (arrow 3).

For our present purposes, we need only note that one way in which social behaviour is made mutually intelligible to participants in conversations is through the explicit invocation of norms. Against the background of such norms, a state-of-affairs (in this case, "someone who is almost thirty but is not married") can be marked "deviant" through the use of WO.

A similar use of WO can be seen in (8), where the way in which a particular kind of goods is packed is described as "not ordinary". Such a description will make sense only if L assumes that both he and W, the interlocutor, know what it means to have some goods packed in the ordinary way. In this extract, L explicitly states that the packing he is describing is "not ordinary packing", invoking a norm as background against which to characterize the object in question. As in (7), the unusualness is portrayed through the use of WO.

(8) [TC11:2:574]

L: keui yat go hap goun	L: it a CL box like [it's like a box]
(0.2)	(0.2)
L: da# [keui] keui m-hai=	L: but# it it not
W: [ ( ) ]	W: ( )
L: =jipei ss jee keui m-hai	L: cardboard ss I-mean it not ordinary those packing PT [but, it's not cardboard, I mean, not ordinary packing]
--> poutung godi fungseung goWO	
W: [ha ]	W: yeah
L: [.hh] keui hai:	L: .hh it is (.) has CL ss
(.)	(.)
L: yau go ss gaau-ge sauchau hai seungbin ge	L: has CL ss plastic handle at top PT [it has a plastic handle on top]
W: o:	W: oh
L: jee lei saan-maai go goi le jau godou dat-faan go sauchau cheut-lai	L: I-mean you close CL top PT PT then there come-through CL handle out [I mean when you close the top the handle comes through]

We have seen in this section how WO can be used, in reportings and story-tellings, to present some state-of-affairs as unusual, extraordinary, and unexpected. Such deviations from norms and expectations can be portrayed through the provision of some background which sets up a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens (as in (1), (2) and (3)); or the provision of a set of circumstances in which some strange or inexplicable event takes place (as in (4) and (5)); or through an explicit invocation of norms on the basis of which some situation can be seen as abnormal or out of the ordinary (as in (7) and (8)).

## 2. Challenging a Position

Previous descriptions of WO have referred to "disagreement" or "objection" as one of its uses (eg. Lau 1977). But this is not very accurate, if by "disagreement" one means a unitary class of utterances having a consistent status in conversational

exchanges; for instance, that it is always confrontational. Research in CA has shown that disagreements, like agreements, can be 'preferred' or 'dispreferred', depending on the kind of sequential environment that one is talking about. For instance, in the turn after a self-deprecation, agreement (and not disagreement) is a dispreferred next. By 'dispreferred turns' is meant not utterances that individual speakers, for one reason or another, subjectively prefer not to produce. Rather, it refers to turns that are dispreferred in terms of specific preference organizations.<sup>2</sup> We noted in an earlier chapter that dispreferred turn components have special design features. WO is from this point of view a resource that contributes to the building of dispreferred turns in three kinds of sequences that are sensitive to preference organizations, namely, challengings, contact establishments, and confirmation/ disconfirmation sequences. Let us look first at challengings, and then the other two environments in the next sections.

One of the places where WO is most commonly found is in a turn immediately following one in which a position on some issue is advanced through the invocation of a rule or a norm that is put forward as generally valid. Specifically, WO is often found suffixed to turns which undermine or challenge, in one way or another, the truth, validity or generality of a rule proposed in the prior turn. Consider an example of this in (9).

(9) [FEEL1:1:330]

L: yanwai sargei-seui le  
duk form one ge::: jee  
yaukei laamjai le:::

L: because adolescents PT  
study Form One GEN I-mean  
especially boys PT  
[because children at this  
age, studying in Form 1,  
especially boys,]

C: o=

C: oh

L: =hai beigaau houdung  
tungmaai wutyek di ge=

L: are relatively active  
and energetic more PT

<p>--&gt;C: =keui yau m hai hou wutyek WO</p> <p>(0.5) C: ngodei daai keui cheut- heui waan le keui le jau sei-se- laan-sin goum m yun --&gt; yuk goWO</p>	<p>[do tend to be more active and energetic] C: he really not be very energetic PT [well but he isn't really very energetic]</p> <p>(0.5) C: we take him out play PT he PT then dead-snake- rotten-eel like not willing move PT [when we take him out to play, he's like a dead snake he wouldn't move]</p>
--	---

In an attempt to make sense of (and account for) the behaviour of C's son, L, the counsellor, explicitly invokes a rule, according to which adolescents, "especially boys, do tend to be more active and energetic". In response to this proposal, C presents evidence according to which her son is anything but "active and energetic", evidence which suggests that the rule proposed by L is perhaps not as general as it sounds. But most important of all, it seems to have failed to apply to this particular case, and therefore needs to be modified or even replaced if it is to have any value in understanding the child's problems.

Similarly, in (10), in the turn after C's first turn, in which he complains that the woman he loves does not give him any chances, L produces evidence that calls the validity or accuracy of that description into question.

<p>(10) [FEEL1:1:249] C: yausi m-bei geiwui ngo be:::</p> <p>P: keui m-bei geiwui nei? ho:: jigei wan::: gmaa geiwui m-hai yiu tang yan lei bei:: gaa hai jigei 'jai::jou gaa</p>	<p>C: sometimes not-give chance me PT [sometimes (she) doesn't give me any chance] P: she not-give chance you? PT self find PT chance PT chance not must wait others come give PT be must self create PT</p>
---	--

ming-m-`ming?

understand?

[she doesn't give you any chance? So what? You have to find your own, not wait for someone to give you chances, you have to create chances, do you understand?]

L: daai keui yausi dou  
yingsing tung lei  
heui-ha-'gaai dou m-wui  
--> waa m-bei geiwui lei golowO

L: but she sometimes too agree with you go-out EMPH won't say not-give chance you PT [but she does go out with you sometimes, so you can't really say she doesn't give you any chance]

P: hai [LA::::

P: yes PT [quite right]

L: [bagwo lei jigei dou  
m ji dim hoi hau go::ng je  
hamaa[::

L: but you self really not know how open mouth say PT is-that-so? [but you don't really know how to say it to her, is that so?]

C: [( hai aa ... )

C: yes PT [yes]

As a further example of how evidence can be presented to challenge a position, consider (11), an interesting case in which a participant points to a silence as evidence which casts doubt on a professed position.

(11) [DJ1:1:088]

C: hh .hh laa  
(.)  
yausi le ngodei sengyat  
dou yau di# yau yat jung  
gamge lamfaat aa ganghai  
le: jee yugwo bei laisi  
(.)  
e# ngaang gele jau  
m munyi ge  
(.)  
haa haiyu jee yapbin  
yun-ge le jee sinji gopda#  
gokdak hoisam leidei yaumou  
lidi goum:: pingin aa goum  
m-yiu-dak-ge siseung le

C: hh .hh PT  
(.)  
sometimes PT we always  
EMPH have some# have a kind  
like thought PT always  
PT I-mean if give red-packets  
(.)  
e# hard PT then  
not satisfied PT  
(.)  
PT have-to-be I-mean inside  
soft PT I-mean before feel#  
feel happy you whether-have  
these so biased PT so  
worthless thought PT  
[look, sometimes we always  
have this this kind of idea,  
when people give us red  
packets, we aren't satisfied  
if they are hard (coins),  
they have to be soft (notes)  
before we feel happy, do you

	have such biased, worthless ideas?]
-->(1.1)	(1.1)
F: mou-sowai ge::: m-hou mm si-kwui siak ga:::	F: it-doesn't-matter PT don't so philistine EMPH PT [it doesnt matter really, don't be so philistine]
(0.3)	(0.3)
-->C: m-hai W0 lei yu# lei tausin ngo gin nei dou yiu haau-leui-jo hou loi sii daap mou-sowai ge keisat dou yau gaa haamaa::	C: no PT you yu# you just-now I saw you also have-to consider very long before answer it-doesn't-matter PT actually too it-does-matter right? [but no, you you I saw that just now you had to think for quite a while before you said "it doesn't matter", so actually it does, doesn't it]
(0.3)	(0.3)
F: goum m-hai goum m-tung man heui lo# lo# lo# lo do yat fung me haimai sin	F: so no so can't ask them get# get# get# get more one CL PT right? EMPH [well you can't ask people fo# fo# fo# for another packet can you?]

C exhibits in the target turn his reluctance to take F's statement at its face value, and questions its truth by citing the long silence before the answer as evidence that makes him doubt F's honesty. W0 lays open a discrepancy between the appearance of F's answer, and some unexpressed reality.

An alternative way in which positions are challenged is by pointing to aspects of a situation as having been overlooked, so that should these aspects be taken into account, the inadequacy of a rule or a norm invoked in the prior turn will become apparent. (12) is an example of this in which a rule put forward by C, a parent, gets challenged in the next turn by a counsellor (L). The rule invoked by C says: "bad guys like to prey on thirteen or fourteen year olds", and, since her son is in that age range, and has been found to frequent places where such preying is thought to be particularly intensive, the son is

portrayed as being in considerable danger of contracting bad influence. L, in response to this suggestion, puts forward "a person's intrinsic tendency" as a factor which, when it is taken into consideration, would weaken the generality of C's proposed rule, and therefore the basis of her worries.

(12) [FEEL1:1:383]

<p>C: goum godi waai-yan le: hou jungyi hau jyu di goum sap-saam-sei seui ge seimanjai gaamaa::</p> <p>L: [keisat hok] B: [liyeung aa] jan aa=  L: =goum aa hai (.) daanhai keisat hok-waai le 1--&gt; ngo jau goum gokdak WO (0.3) L: keui jigei 'bunsan yaumou 2--&gt; goum ge kingheung goWO</p> <p>C: o</p>	<p>C: but those bad-people PT very like prey-on ASP the such thirteen-fourteen years GEN children PT [but those bad guys like to prey on thirteen or fourteen year olds] L: actually learn B: this PT true PT [that's true] L: such PT true (.) but actually learn-bad PT I EMPH so feel PT (0.3) L: he himself self whether have such GEN tendency PT [that's true, but actually I feel that whether a child would pick up bad things depends on whether he himself has the tendency]</p> <p>C: oh</p>
---	---

Yet another technique for doing the challenging of a position is one in which a situation (or scenario) is presented as one which would, as it were, make life difficult for the proposed rule. Thus, in (13) below, M's claim that Cantonese speakers should be able to (at least "sometimes") understand Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) is challenged by L who presents a scenario in which one who "has not learnt Mandarin at all before" may not find Putonghua quite as easy to understand as M's generalization might suggest.

(13) [SS:CH:1:059]

<p>M: danhai odei yugo tung Gwok-yu hoyi chaa# s# (.)</p>	<p>M: but we if with Mandarin can al#(most?) s# (.)</p>
---	---

M: lei hoyi teng-dak-ming ge hoyi (.) M: yausi	M: you can understand PT can (.) M: sometimes [but if we-- Mandarin is al#, you can understand it, sometimes]
L: hoyi teng-dak-ming M: ha L: danhai yugo lei janhai yunchyun mei-hok-go Gok-yu le: M: mm --> L: dou gei-laan-haa goWO	L: can understand M: yeah L: but if you really completely not-learned Mandarin PT M: mm L: also quite-difficult PT [you can understand it, but if you really haven't learned Mandarin at all before, it's quite difficult too]
M: mm P: hoyi seji aa	M: mm P: can write PT [then we can write]

Some common features shared by the target turns in the above extracts are found recurrently in turns which to different degrees and in different ways challenge the position espoused in the prior turn. First, they are often prefaced with words like "but" and "that's true, but", which contribute to the shape of the current turn as a dispreferred. Second, they often contain mitigators such as *yau m hai hou* ("not very") and *dou gei* ("rather"), which 'soften' the challenges. Third, they are either accompanied by some evidence that supplies a basis for the alternative position (as in (9): "when we take him out, he's like a dead snake he wouldn't move"), or qualified in one way or another (in (10): "I feel" characterizes the alternative view as a personal feeling or belief; in (11), a conditional clause provides some qualification to the contrastive formulation: "if you really haven't learnt Mandarin before").

Thus the validity of descriptions which are advanced as general rules or norms may be challenged or undermined in the next turn. A position is often challenged in such cases by

pointing to evidence, or (real or hypothetical) situations or aspects of a situation to which the proposed rule or norm fails to apply. I suggest that WO plays a part in this by virtue of a feature which one might think of as "mismatch". With this I wish to highlight the observation that turn components can be constructed in such a way as to expose a mismatch between rules and norms on the one hand, and, on the other hand, features and aspects of situations which cannot be accommodated by those rules or norms.

Incidentally, note that the utterance arrowed 1 in (12), at the point in time at which it occurred, has no specifiable propositional content: *ngo jau goun gokdak WO* ("I feel this way WO"). This suggests that to state the function of WO in terms of the proposition to which it is attached would be over-restrictive. Rather, it would seem that the 'scope' of WO must include at least the current turn as a whole.

### 3. Contact-establishments

By "contact-establishment" I refer to a two-position sequence in which a participant exhibits, in the first turn, his/her intention to locate or get into contact with someone or something via the recipient, following which the recipient responds in some way to this request for contact in the second turn. Instances of this are routine occurrences at the beginning of telephone calls, where the caller wants to speak to someone who may not be the call-recipient. But they may also appear under other circumstances: for example, when someone is looking for something, and seeks help from a co-participant.

Data extract (14) shows one relatively simple case in which

L, the caller, attempts to establish contact with S through X, the call-recipient.

(14) [TC11:1:258]	
((beginning of a phone call))	
X: (wan bin-) go	X: look-for who [who do you want to speak to?]
(0.4)	(0.4)
L: wai	L: hello [hello]
(.)	(.)
chingman S haidou ma	please S here PT [is S there please?]
--> X: fan-jo-gaaу loW0	X: slept PT [she's already in bed]
L: o: mgoi-lei ha	L: oh thank-you PT [oh, thank you]

In response to L's request for contact, the arrowed turn in (14) provides a reason for X's inability to establish the contact as requested. As a reason for S's unavailability, "she's already in bed" is given as a circumstance which would make the fulfillment of L's request for contact difficult or impossible.

(15) provides an example of a slightly more complex variation of a contact-establishment sequence:

(15) [TC11:2:018]	
((beginning of a phone call))	
X: H. International	X: H. International
L: wai	L: hello
(.)	(.)
chingman C haidou maa	please C here PT [is C there please?]
1-->X: a (.) lei dangdang ha	X: a (.) you wait-a-little PT [em just a second please]
L: hou aa mgoi	L: good PT thanks [fine, thanks]
(8.0)	(8.0)
2-->X: wai (.) maafaan lei dangdang hou-m-hou aa=	X: hello please you wait-a-little alright PT [hello, do you mind waiting for a while?]
L: =hou aa mgoi	L: good PT thanks [fine, thanks]
(48.0)	(48.0)
3--> Y: deui-m-jyu C gonggan W0	Y: sorry C talking PT [sorry C is on the phone]
(0.3)	(0.3)
L: o: (.) e::	L: oh (.) e::

X's turn arrowed 1 may be characterized as a positive response to L's request for contact, and is evidently treated by L as a promise to get him in touch with C (as evidenced in the 8-second silence that follows, in which L waits for the promise to be carried out). As it turns out, however, a follow-up is given (arrow 2), which delays the contact establishment while maintaining the promise (note the subsequent 48-second wait). Following that, however, Y (another recipient) issues yet another follow-up, providing this time a reason for X's failure to get C to talk to the caller (arrow 3: "sorry C is on the phone"). It is interesting to note the contrast between the first two arrowed turns on the one hand, which furnish positive responses to L's request for contact, and the third arrowed turn on the other. The latter, which constitutes a negative response to the caller's request for contact, is WO-suffixed, but the two earlier positive responses are not. In general, in contact-establishment sequences, WO is used only in negative responses, ie. responses which propose that the requester's expectation for contact cannot be fulfilled.

Essentially the same observations would apply to extract (16) below, which is taken from a face-to-face situation. This shows that WO performs a similar kind of task in contact-establishment sequences other than at the beginning of phone calls.

(16) [SS:D1:123]  
 X: Mr. Wong 1e hhh heh                    X: Mr. Wong PT hhh heh heh  
       [heh hhh                                [where's Mr.Wong?]  
 --> I: [Mr. Wong:: ngo m ji WO            I: Mr. Wong:: I not know PT  
   [Mr. Wong I don't know]  
       (0.7)                                    (0.7)  
       I: keui::[:                            I: he::: a#  
       X:            [goum dim aa] ngodei X: so how PT we  
   [so what should we do?]

X: [( )]	X: ( )
I: [neidei hai] cheutbin# (.)	I: you at outside (.)
cheutbin dang hou-m-hou?	outside wait OK?
	[wait outside, OK?]
(0.5)	(0.5)
X: hou aa	X: good PT
	[OK]

One way of characterizing the arrowed turns in (14)-(16) is to say that they serve to decline a request for contact. As declinings their design is sensitive to a preference organization according to which a positive response to a request for contact is short and brisk (eg. *dang-dang* "hold on"), whereas negative responses are longer, usually provide a reason (the provision of an account is an evidence of its negativeness), and WO offers in such sequential places a regular device for building declinings.

Another way of describing this phenomenon is to say that WO contributes to upsetting an official expectation contained in the prior turn, namely, the expectation to get into contact with someone. Notice that in this context "expectations" refer to those that are generated by the sequential context, and have nothing to do with what the caller subjectively thinks. We may need to distinguish between "subjective expectations" and what one might call "official expectations". For instance, it is perfectly possible for someone to make a phone call while saying to oneself "I don't expect she'll be there". It is obviously not necessary for call-recipients to first identify what the caller's subjective expectations are in this respect before they can decide whether these expectations can be fulfilled. Within the structure of the contact-establishment sequence, call-recipients may display, through suffixing a negative response with WO, their interpretation of the caller's request as embodying certain

official expectations, e.g. that the person the caller wants to speak to is available. Marking a negative response to a request for contact with WO is thus one way of doing being unable to establish contact.

By formulating a negative response to a request for contact in a special (marked) way, WO can be seen to be sensitive to politeness. In Brown and Levinson's (1978) terms, responding negatively to a request for contact, like turning down a request, would be a potential face-threatening act, and to do it, through WO-suffixing, by relating some incapacitating circumstances which make the fulfillment of the caller's official expectations difficult or impossible amounts to a positive politeness strategy. This would explain why a response like "fan-jo-gaau" ("she's already in bed", without a final WO) sounds less polite. This, however, is a separate question. For our present purposes, we need only note that the kind of work that WO can perform in contact-establishment sequences is to present a situation as one which deviates from a given set of expectations.

These findings should be generalizable in the following way. We have seen how, when someone or something is unavailable, the response can be suffixed by WO. But it seems at least intuitively plausible that the same should be true of cases where, when someone or something is expected to be unavailable but in fact is available, WO can be used too. It is also generally true of other kinds of requests.

#### **4. Disconfirmations**

In the same way that WO partakes in the building of challengings and declinations as dispreferred turn-shapes, an utterance following a confirmation-seeking turn may be WO-

suffixed to do disconfirmation.

(17) [MAK:1:079]

M:	<u>.hhh ha ha ha jing-hai</u> <u>dimsam dou</u> <u>sa[a l# lung</u> [	M:	only dimsum even dimsum even thirty l# baskets [we had thirty six baskets, and that's just dimsum!]
J:	[daanhai heui m-hai hou do variety lei mai sik-lai-sik-heui [go gei yeung ye? [ [ [	J:	but it not very very many variety you didnt keep-eating the few kinds thing [but there isn't a lot of variety, wouldn't you be eating the same things over and over again?]
--> M:	[m-hai WO: hou do la	M:	no PT very many [no there was a lot of variety]
	(.) la ngo m sou bei lei teng la ...		(.) look I can count for you hear PT [let me tell you ...]

In (17), J, working on the assumption that the restaurant in question does not offer a large variety of snacks ("but there isn't a lot of variety"), presents what she perceives to be a likely consequence ("wouldn't you be eating the same things over and over again") for confirmation. M's response in the arrowed turn, however, rules out that assumption, and informs J that in fact quite a large variety of snacks was available. An account then follows in which M provides a whole list of snacks that she had as evidence that would support her counter-formulation. "No", suffixed with WO, is used here to do a disconfirmation by highlighting a discrepancy between an assumption expressed in the previous turn, and a body of evidence which cast doubt on the validity of that assumption.

Similarly, in (18), E disconfirms L's speculation that "CH school" was his (E's) "first choice" with "m-hai WO" ("no"), and then goes on to provide an account of his actual choice. As in the previous extract, an explicit assumption presented in a

confirmation-seeking turn is disallowed in a particular way: an assumption of the co-participant's is set against some facts which contradict it.

(18) [SS:CH:1:277]	
L: dai-yat#	L: first
(0.3)	(0.3)
L: go:: jiyun	L: CL choice
	[the first choice]
(1.1)	(1.1)
E: [dai-yat]	E: first
L: [jauhai ] seun e::	L: be choose e:: CH ((name of
CH [hokhaau]	school)) school
[ ]	[the first choice was
[ ]	CH school]
-->E: [m-hai ] WO	E: no PT
	[no]
L: m-hai	L: no
E: ngo heui goaan z# seung	E: I go that-CL z# want
heui gaan san haau aa	go CL new school PT
danhai keui yau m ji	but it then not know
dingaai m paai dak o heui	why not allocate can
	me go
	[I went, wanted to go to
	a new school, but for
	some reason they didn't
	allocate a place to me]

As a final example of the use of WO in disconfirmations, consider (19):

(19) [SS:CH:1:384]	
((following on from E's story about his experience with the supernatural at the snooker table))	
L: bago lei: holang lei	L: but you perhaps you
wui-m-wui yausi gwui:	whether-would sometimes
le::: yausi[:	tired PT sometimes
[ ]	[but you perhaps couldn't
[ ]	it be that you were tired?
[ ]	sometimes--]
1-->E: [m-hai WO=	E: no PT
	[no]
L: [ha?	L: perhaps?
=	
A: [sam[lei-jokseui]	A: imagination
2-->E: [aamaam waan] joWO	E: just play PT
	[I had just started playing]
.	
.	
.	
..((4 turns omitted))	
.	
E: [waje hai::]	E: maybe be
[ ]	[maybe it was-]
L: [yaumou kei#]	L: whether-had oth#
E: yau s# ya#	E: have s# ha# si# a-little

<p>[si# siusiu yunyan LA]          [ ]          [ ]          L: [yaumou si-go keitaa ]=          L: =sin (.) jee#</p> <p>(0.6)          L: jee cheui-jo li chi          ji-ngoi</p> <p>3--&gt;E: mou WO</p> <p>L: keitaa [yatchai          E: [yatheung          dou m-hai          (.)          E: dou mou:: mat yi-dou          yidi goum ge ye</p>	<p>si# a-little reason PT          [part of it was          imagination]          L: whether-had tried other          EMPH (.) I-mean          [have you had other,          I mean]</p> <p>(0.6)          L: I-mean other-than this          time apart-from          [um, other than this          one?]</p> <p>E: no PT          [no]          L: other together          E: all-along          really not          (.)          E: really no what met          these like GEN thing          [haven't really come across          this sort of thing before]</p>
---	--

In the discussion that follows an extended report in which E described his experience of the supernatural at the snooker table, L and A, the report-recipients, suggest various possible explanations for what happened (A: "imagination"; L: "couldn't it be that you were tired?"). to L's suggestion of tiredness as a possible explanation, E disconfirms with "no", and then goes on to provide evidence for his claim: "I had just started playing". Again, in the turn arrowed 3, E attributes to the questioner (L) the expectation that he (E) may have had similar supernatural experiences before, by characterizing his negative answer as one that is incompatible with this expectation.

Thus, WO-suffixed utterances which do disconfirmations share a common feature: they set up a contrast between an assumption retrospectively assigned to a previous turn on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what the respondent construes to be what he/she knows to be a fact that does not support that assumption. In each case, the respondent treats the confirmation-seeking turn as one which embodies certain assumptions which are disconfirmed

by factual evidence.

To sum up the observations made in this and the previous two sections, we have seen how, in three kinds of sequential positions (ie. challengings, contact-establishments, and confirmation/disconfirmation), WO contributes to the design of dispreferred nexts. It serves as a resource for the construction of turns which, with reference to the immediately prior turn, call into question the validity of a rule or norm invoked in that prior turn, or its goodness-of-fit to particular cases. They may also be turns which upset an official expectation, or overturn an assumption or premise.

## 5. Thankings

Given the kind of properties that WO has in the sequential types considered so far --the contribution to the portrayal of events and states-of-affairs as unusual or extraordinary, and to the building of dispreferred turn shapes, it might come as a surprise that this particle can also contribute to the doing of thanking. And yet WO is one of the most frequently used particles in thanking sequences. However, once it is realized that thanking is, in Brown and Levinson's (1978) terms, one kind of face-threatening act (FTA), then the contribution of WO will become more apparent. To thank someone is to admit that one has incurred a debt. According to Brown and Levinson (1978:72), expressing thanks is an act that potentially threatens the speaker's negative face. By putting himself in an indebted position, the thanker will be seen to be humbling his own face. This would have the unfortunate consequence that the thank-recipient may seem not to care about maintaining the thanker's

face. Further, the act of thanking carries with it the potential implication that one motive of the thank-recipient's in doing the thanker a service is to bring about a state of imbalance (in terms of the exchange of goods and services between them), in which case the thank-recipient's doing of a service may not be an act that is motivated by pure generosity. One way of avoiding these undesirable implications is to claim indebtedness in such a way as to show that the speaker does not think that the hearer expects to receive any thanks. WO provides a resource with which a speaker can construct an indebtedness claim in such a way as to highlight its "unexpectedness", thus managing to portray the recipient as more generous and pure in motives than he/she might otherwise appear.

Thus a sort of long-hand for the WO-suffixed utterance in (20) might be: "although you will not be expecting this, I am indebted to you for doing me that favour".

- (20) [FEEL1:1:409]
- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| L: lei:: seungsi haa aa<br>houmaa    | L: you try ASP PT alright?<br>[try and see if it works<br>alright?] |
| C: hou aa hou aa                     | C: good PT good PT<br>[good good]                                   |
| L: OK                                | L: OK   |
| C: goum m-goi-saai-lei<br>-->loWO[:: | C: so thank-you-very-much<br>PT                                     |
| L: [hou aa= `                        | L: good PT  |
| =hou:: [hou                          | good good   |
| C: [baaibaai=                        | C: bye  |
| L: =baaibaai                         | L: bye  |

Similarly, L's expression of thanks in (21) is suffixed with WO to give it an unexpected character.

- (21) [TC11:1:151]
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| L: goum ngo dou seung tung<br>keui gong chingcho | L: so I too want with<br>her talk clear<br>[so I too would like to<br>clarify this with her] |
| (0.7)  | (0.7)  |
| L: ha#   | L: yes   |
| P: .hh hou aa=                                   | P: .hh good PT   |

L: =hou m hou aa goum# goum	L: good not good PT so so
--> maafaan-saai lei WO (.)	trouble you PT (.)
tung ngo:[:#	for me
[	[OK? thanks for taking
[	all the trouble]
P: [m hou goum gong=	P: don't mention it

## 6. Informings and Reminders

From the point of view of conversational sequencing, the provision of information can take at least two forms: a piece of information may be given in response to an inquiry, or it can be volunteered, ie. offered by the speaker on his/her own initiative. Volunteering is a means of highlighting an information item's prominence, and presenting it as noteworthy information.

One way in which an information offer can be marked as volunteered is to sequentially misplace it. WO is a regular feature of such misplaced turns. Consider an instance of this in (22).

(22) [MAK:1:072]	
M: ayaa	M: EXCL
(.)	(.)
M: lei gam aa	M: you dare PT
(.)	(.)
1-->M: gwo-saan-che lei	M: roller-coaster you
dou waan aa	even play PT
	[ooh did you dare, you
	even rode the roller-
	coaster?]
J: o mou# o mou waan aa::	J: I didnt I didn't play PT
(.)	(.)
2-->J: yiche gwai aa	J: and expensive PT
o m-se-dak waan	I wouldn't-pay-so-much
di-mui waan	play sisters play
[jhhaa o kei hai]-dou tai=	PT I stand there watch
[	[I didn't I didn't play,
[	and it was expensive
[	I wouldn't pay so much,
[	only my sisters played,
[	I stood there and watched]
M: [yigaa chat-sap#]	M: now seventy
3-->M: =yigaa chat-sap man	M: now seventy dollars
baau-saai WO	all-inclusive PT
lei ji-m-ji [aa	you whether-know PT
[	[it's seventy dollars now

	[	including everything do
	[	you know?]
J:	[o m ji aa .hh	J: I not know PT .hh
		[I didn't know that]
M: chat-sap man toupiu		M: seventy dollars full-ticket
'yam-waan aa		play-anything PT
		[for a full ticket of
		seventy dollars you can
		play anything]

Note in this extract the sequential placement of the information offer (arrow 3). It comes after two turns in the first of which M has asked a question (arrow 1), and, following that, J has provided an answer (arrow 2). A specific sequential implication has therefore been set up, namely, that the next turn should deal with the answer in some way. However, instead of an information-receipt like "o" ("oh") or "hai me" ("really?"), this next turn consists a piece of information suffixed by the particle WO. That is, instead of dealing with such matters as information receipt, Position 3 is now filled by an information offer. To the extent that information provision is not the kind of job that this structural position is reserved for, the target utterance (arrow 3) can be characterized as one that is "structurally unexpected".

The notion of structural expectation, like preference, is not to be understood as referring to individual participants' psychological states (for instance, whether I expect the weather to be fine tomorrow), but rather to features in the organization of conversational interaction. Thus, in terms of sequential structure, each place in a sequence is associated with certain kinds of actions (but not others) that can be performed in that environment. A turn which occupies a particular place in a sequence but performs an action that is not structurally provided for in that place would in this sense be structurally unexpected.



to topic generation can be explicated, as in the case of misplaced turns, in terms of its highlighting property, ie. giving a turn of talk a noteworthy character.

(24) [TC11:1:168]

S: gau-dimmm	S: nine
(0.3)	(0.3)
1-->S: bu:n-jung `jung	S: thirty anyway
faan-dou-lei gala=	come-back PT
	[should be back by half
	past nine anyway]
2-->L: =haa gau-dim-leng-jung	L: yeah about-nine back
faan=	[yeah back about nine]
3-->S: =haa#	S: yeah
4-->(0.8)	(0.8)
L: 'goummmm e:::m	L: so em
(1.0)	(1.0)
L: a::::	L: em
(0.8)	(0.8)
L: daai-biu-go aa	L: first-cousin
5--> daa-gwo-lei WO	has-phoned PT
	[so em first cousin
	has phoned]
S: geisi aa	S: when PT
	[when?]
L: ((clears throat))	L: ((clears throat)) today PT
gamyat L0=	[today]
S: =hai me	S: yes PT
	[really?]

Notice that the silence arrowed 4 in (24) comes at a sequential place where the three preceding turns (arrows 1, 2 and 3) can be seen to have completed a sequence. Following this silence, L takes up the turn, and, after producing a few turn-holding devices, delivers a WO-suffixed utterance (arrow 5). From the point of view of topic organization, this turn can be characterized as a topic initial (Button & Casey 1984) in the sense that it is a proposal which may contribute to the generation of further talk, if and when it is retrospectively established as a next topic. Assuming without going into details that the 0.8-second silence (arrow 4) is construed by the participants as a place where the exchange about what time S is going to be at home may have come to an end, then L's subsequent

offer of a piece of information ("first cousin has phoned WO") which is portrayed, through WO-suffixing, as noteworthy, would amount, in this sequential position, to suggesting or proposing a topic for further talk. WO is in this sense a resource for the construction of certain turn-shapes which, when placed in the environment after a potentially completed sequence, can contribute to the work of retrospectively constituting a topic boundary, and generating a new topic.

This highlighting property has an interesting implication: it provides a basis for a reading of WO-suffixed utterances which has often been cited as the particle's meaning, or function, or force --namely, as a reminder (eg. Gibbons 1980, Kwok 1984). From the point of view of the present analysis, "reminding" is an interactional import that is regularly derived from an utterance which is designed in such a way as to present a piece of information as somehow unusual or noteworthy. Consider an example of this in (25).

(25) [DJ1:2:012]

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>A: goum e:: ngo gaigwo la<br/>saamlau yau hou do aa=</p>                    | <p>A: and e:: I counted PT<br/>third-floor there-be very<br/>many PT<br/>[and em I've done a count,<br/>there's a lot on the third<br/>floor]</p> |
| <p>B: =mm[m<br/>1--&gt;A: [di department head le<br/><u>git-sai-fan ge</u></p> | <p>B: mmm<br/>A: those department heads PT<br/>all-married PT<br/>[those department heads are<br/>all married]</p>                                |
| <p>2--&gt;B: hai aa</p>  | <p>B: yes PT<br/>[yes]</p>  |
| <p>A: <u>ngodei yau m-sai bei-faan</u><br/>3--&gt; <u>keui WO</u></p>          | <p>A: we also no-need-to return<br/>them PT<br/>[and we dont have to give<br/>them (red packets) in<br/>return]</p>                               |
| <p>4--&gt;B: hhh heh <u>h(hh)ai WO</u></p>                                     | <p>B: hhh heh yes PT<br/>[hhh heh oh yes]</p>   |
| <p>A: ho (.) gei dai [aa<br/>[</p>   | <p>A: PT (.) very reasonable PT<br/>[what a good bargain]</p>   |
| <p>B: [dai aa mm</p>   | <p>B: reasonable PT mm</p>  |

[a bargain, yes]

A is describing here a potentially lucrative situation: it was close to Chinese New Year time, and, since, in the company in which A and B work, "the department heads are all married", they can ask them for New Year red packets (arrow 1). Following B's receipt (arrow 2), A presents a further feature (arrow 3): being unmarried, they (A and B) need not give any red packets in return. So it would be "a bargain" to say New Year greetings to them.

The turn arrowed 3 has a feature that is reminiscent of some of the WO-suffixed utterances that we have seen before, namely, it volunteers noteworthy information --in this case, drawing the co-participant's attention to a feature of the situation that she has been describing as one which would make its lucrateness even more apparent. That this is heard as a reminder is evidenced by B's response (arrow 4) in which the information is received in a way that displays the recipient's treatment of it as something that has led to a realization or remembrance. I return to the question of WO-suffixed information receipts in the following section.

In the same way that 'factual information' can be volunteered, suggestions and advice can also be formulated as unsolicited offers of views and opinions that are worthy of notice and attention. In this way, they can, like information offers, be heard as reminders. (26) instances such a suggestion.

(26) [TC11:1:009]

E: goum tingyat daaiyeuk  
wui yau:: e:m mm m  
luk go yan dou LA

E: so tomorrow about  
will there-be e:m five five  
six CL people about PT  
[so there'll be about five  
or six people tomorrow]

L: o:: ha hh

L: I-see ha hh

E: ha# goum=

E: ye# so

=lei:[: e:# ngo okei le=	you e: my home PT
L: [ha#	L: yes
E: =jau yau leung# leung	E: then have two two
gaa:: lukyamgei	CL recorder
	[we have two recorders]
(0.7)	(0.7)
L: o: ngo dou yau gei	L: oh I too have machine
(.)	(.)
L: ngo daai maai lei aa=	L: I bring too come PT
	[oh I have recorders too
	I'll bring them]
E: =ha# gou:mm yiu daai	E: fine, so:: have-to bring
--> daai WO	tapes PT
	[fine, so:: got to bring
	some tapes]
L: hai (.) ngo yau (.) haa	L: yes (.) I have (.) yes
	[yes, I have some, yes]

Assuming that the relevant interactional task here is that E is trying to get L to bring some tapes to a meeting, then in building the turn with WO, the speaker's assumption is displayed that the need to "bring some tapes" somehow needs special mention. One reason why it is noteworthy is that L may not, at that moment in which the information is presented to him, be aware of it. Hence the possibility of hearing it as a reminder.

Like suggestions, advice-offers are often constructed in the form of WO-suffixed utterances. (27) instances one such advice-offer.

(27) [DJ1:2:249]	
T: 'wei (.) bago dou hai	T: hey (.) but also be
yat go ngaigei lei gaa	a CL crisis be PT Pat
aa-Pat	[hey, but there's a danger
	too, Pat]
(0.3)	(0.3)
-->T: siusam di WO	T: careful more PT
	[be more careful]
(0.5)	(0.5)
T: .hh e: yugwo gougungjok	T: .hh e: if so work keep-on
lokheui le jee go yan wui	PT I-mean CL person will
hou pe ge	very worn-out PT
	[if you kept on working
	like this, you'd be
	worn out]
(0.7)	(0.7)
P: pe-sai la yiging	P: worn-out PT already
	[I <u>am</u> worn out already]
T: yaumou gaa::ucho aa	T: whether-have mixed-up PT
jou-jo luk go yut gung	worked six CL months work

lei jau waa waa-bei-  
ngo-teng lei pe:::?

you EMPH say tell-  
me you worn-out  
[how can that be? you've  
only worked for six months  
and now you're telling me  
that you're worn out?]

The utterance *siusam di WO* ("Be more careful") in the arrowed turn in (27) is portrayed, through WO-suffixing, as an opinion volunteered and presented to the recipient for her consideration. It is also formulated as something that is worthy of the recipient's attention. Note in this respect another feature of this utterance: it is prefaced by a turn-initial *wei* ("hey"), which is a regular "listen-to-this" (attention-demanding) device. In this sense the initial and final particles are complementary devices for the construction of this kind of advice-offers.

So far in this section, we have seen that WO-suffixing is a device with which informings and reminders can be constructed. But just when is an utterance a case of informing, and when is it a reminder? If to inform you is to tell you something that you do not already know, and to remind you is to tell you something that you already know, then informing and reminding would seem to be two categories that are quite distinct. But many of the extracts examined above suggest that the relationship between informing and reminding is much more intricate than this. In any case, one would need to explain how the same particle has come to be used for both kinds of acts.

From the point of view of expectation as a parameter to which the design of utterances is sensitive, eg. whether a piece of information is portrayed as supporting or upsetting an expectation, or whether it is presented as noteworthy or unnoteworthy, the distinction between informing and reminding

becomes much less clear-cut. There are cases in which whether some turn is doing informing or reminding is a question that cannot, and perhaps need not, be answered. Consider for example (27), in which the distinction between informing and reminding seems to have dissolved.

(27) [TC11:2:068]

K: ngo::[::]	K: I
Y: [seung geidim aa	Y: want what-time PT
	[what time do you want?]
(1.0)	(1.0)
K: ngo:: leu::ng-di:mmm-	K: I two-something PT
leng-jung aa	[I -- after two?]
Y: OK (.)	Y: OK (.)
leung-dim-bun [aa	half-past-two PT
[	[OK, half-past-two?]
K: [hou maa	K: good PT
	[OK?]
(.)	(.)
K: leung-dim-bun aa	K: half-past-two PT
	[half-past-two?]
Y: hou (.) hou aa	Y: good (.) good PT
	[fine, fine]
K: goum ngo jau:: seung-lai	K: so I then come-up your
lei dou aa=	place PT
	[so I'll] come up to your
-->Y: =hak baat-m-chat WO	place]
	Y: yeah eight-five-seven PT
	[yeah it's eight-five-
	seven]
K: bat-m-chat	K: eight-five-seven
Y: ha ha=	Y: yeah yeah
K: =N aamaa	K: N PT
	[N Building, right?]
Y: hai hai	Y: yes yes
K: hou aa	K: good PT
	[fine]

Is the arrowed utterance an instance of informing or reminding? From the point of view of the participants' knowledge states, K either knows or does not know Y's room number, and so the utterance must be either a case of informing or a reminder. But there is no way in which one can find out from this utterance alone whether K knows, or whether Y knows whether K knows. Neither the particle nor any other feature of this utterance provides any clue on these questions. Therefore, whether Y was

informing L or reminding him cannot, on the basis of the utterance alone, be determined. From the point of view of noteworthiness, however, it turns out that these need not be separate categories. An offer of information, opinion, or advice may be presented in such a way as to point to its own noteworthiness, and on the basis of this feature, can be heard as an instance of informing, or reminding, or both. That is, the question whether the speaker is informing or reminding does not arise; it does not matter to the interpretation of the utterance whether the labels 'informing' and 'reminding' can first be applied to it. In fact, the question whether the target utterance is by itself a case of informing or a reminding turns out to be a false question; its 'ambiguity' is but the product of a wrong question, an artefact that results from over-analysis. To the participants in interaction, its conversational import cannot be clearer. Therefore, while it may appear that informing and reminding are, from an epistemic and logical point of view, distinctly different categories, from the point of view of conversational interaction, they are very closely related. In some contexts, the distinction may even dissolve into irrelevance.

To sum up, one of the uses of WO is to serve as a device for the design of turns which offer unsolicited information, views, and opinions, by highlighting their unexpectedness or noteworthiness.

## 7. Realizations

Following a report-component or story-component, a turn constructed with W0 often serves to display understanding and appreciation of the import of that report- or story-component. It does this by retrospectively pointing to the action, event or state-of-affairs presented in the prior turn as unusual and noteworthy in some way.

In (28), for example, whilst B and C's report-receipts are almost perfectly synchronized, the ways in which they treat M's report component ("...I had my first puff of heroin") are quite different. Whereas C issues only a minimal, free-standing *o* ("I see"), B receives the information in a way that points to the availability of drugs in prison as something that is unusual and noteworthy.

(28) [DRUG:2:011]

M: tungmaai le ngo hai  
gaamfong yapbin le  
yau yingsik-jo baan  
panyau

(.)

M: heui hai sik baakfan ge

C: hak

(0.5)

M: goun aa jigei yau  
yinghung-gam chung LA

C: ha

M: mmmmm

(.)

M: ngo yau seung hochi  
heui goun le jau hochi  
toubai yatdiye goun aa

C: o

M: goun le jau ngo chungyi  
le jau hai gaau-dou-so  
SB Gaau-dou-so le  
mm ngo aa:::

M: and PT I at  
prison inside PT  
also got-to-know CL  
friends

(.)

M: they be take drugs PT  
[and also I made some  
friends in prison, they  
all took drugs]

C: yeah

(0.5)

M: and PT self also  
heroism strong PT  
[and also I had a strong  
sense of heroism]

C: yeah

M: mmmmm

(.)

M: I also want like  
them so PT then like  
escape something like PT  
[and, like them, I also  
wanted to escape from  
something]

C: I see

M: so PT then I therefore PT  
PT then in detention-centre  
SB detention-centre PT  
then I PT

		[so therefore in the detention centre, in the SB detention centre, I aa]
(0.9)	M: seungsi ngo daiyat daam baakfan	(0.9) M: tried my first CL heroin [had my first puff of heroin]
C: o	-->B: jee hai:::# gaamyuk yapbin sik goW0=	C: I see B: that-means at prison inside smoke PT [so you smoked it inside the prison]
M: =ha		M: yeah
B: jee keudei dou yau lidi goum-ge dukban hoyi:: [gungying [ [ [yichin ne= =jau yau ge		B: that-means they also had those drugs can supply [so there was a supply of those drugs] M: before PT then have PT [there was in those days]

(29) below contains an instance of a proverbial (in the arrowed turn), which, as we have seen in connection with an earlier data extract, is a regular device for displaying understanding and appreciation of a story, and accepting an ending proposal. B's proverbial retrospectively formulates the problematic situation as reported in C's earlier turns as a dilemma: "one can't have the cake and eat it"; and, through that, displays his sympathy towards C for facing such a tricky situation.

(29) [FEEL1:1:604]	B: =hawaa .hhh aa:::mmm goum nei:: ee:: (.) gokdak bingo:: ge chimjat (.) hou-di waje cheui-meis-ing do-di aa	B: is-that-so .hhh um so you ee:: (.) feel which-one GEN potential (.) better or interesting more PT [really? .hh um so you um which one do you think has more potential or more interesting]
(0.9)	C: leung go dou chaa-m-do aa [leung go jou# jee]= B: [waa goum hou aa ] C: =jou ge:: (.)	(0.9) C: two CL both about-the-same PT two CL do# I-mean B: oh so good PT C: do GEN (.)

jou-ge-ye dou chaa-m-do LO	work also about-the-same PT [both are about the same, I mean, their jobs are about the same]
-->L: goum aa "yu-yu-hung- jeung-bat-lang-gim-dak" go[WO yau [ [	L: so PT "fish-and-bear-palm- you-can't-have-both" PT then [so one can't have the cake and eat it]
C: ['hai aa soyi leaa hou ge:ng (.) leung go dou sat-jo-heui LO::	C: yes PT so one very afraid (.) two CL both lost PT [exactly, so one might lose both]
(0.3) B: mhm L: mm B: dou-mmai-yat-ding ge:: lidi:: gaijuk haang- jyu-sin tai:-ding-di LO:	(0.3) B: mhm L: mm B: not-necessarily PT these these continue going- out wait-and-see PT [well not necessarily, keep going out and wait and see]

As a third example, consider (30) in which an information item is received with a WO-suffixed utterance. Note here the co-occurrence of turn-initial *waa21* with final WO, both regularly used in this sequential position to do "feeling impressed".

(30) [MAK:1:037] M: sei-go [sung LA [ J: [louseunnn (0.6) J: mee sjiu-louseun- [daaiji a= [ [ [ M: [o --> M: =waa:: hoisin WO --> gm gwai WO di ye:	M: four dishes PT [four dishes] J: asparagus (0.6) J: what black-beans-and-chili asparagus-and-scallop PT [what was it, asparagus and scallop with black beans and chili] M: o M: wow sea-food PT so expensive PT the things [Wow, seafood, that must be expensive]
---	--

In the last section, we saw examples of WO-suffixed utterances which are heard as reminders. Interestingly, a WO-suffixed *hai* ("yes WO") is also a means of doing "being reminded". Thus, a WO-suffixed information-offer is sometimes followed in the next turn by a receipt in the form of a WO-

suffixed *hai*. When that happens, the information receipt will, as a "being reminded" display, point back to the information-offer as a reminder. (31) is an instance of such a sequence.

(31) [DJ1:2:012] (=29)

<p>A: <u>goum e:: ngo gaigwo la</u>  <u>saamlau yau hou do aa=</u></p> <p>B: =mm[m</p> <p>A: [di department head le  <u>git-sai-fan ge</u></p> <p>B: hai aa</p> <p>A: <u>ngodei yau m-sai bei-faan</u>  1--&gt; <u>keui WO</u></p> <p>2--&gt;B: hhh heh <u>h(hh)ai WO</u></p> <p>A: ho (.) gei dai [aa  [</p> <p>B: [dai aa mm</p>	<p>A: and e:: I counted PT  third-floor there-be very  many PT  [and em I've done a count,  there's a lot on the third  floor]</p> <p>B: mmm</p> <p>A: those department heads PT  all-married PT  [those department heads are  all married]</p> <p>B: yes PT  [yes]</p> <p>A: we also no-need-to return  them PT  [and we don't have to give  them red packets in return]</p> <p>B: hhh heh yes PT  [yes]</p> <p>A: PT (.) very reasonable PT  [what a good bargain]</p> <p>B: reasonable PT mm  [a bargain, yes]</p>
--	---

However, the information-offer need not be WO-suffixed, as

(32) shows:

(32) [TC11:2:060]

<p>Y: lei# aa  (.)  Y: lei seung geisi aa</p> <p>(0.7)</p> <p>K: e:::  (1.0)</p> <p>K: tai lei s# j(h)au lei  sigaan LA::  [ngo# ngo li-gei-yat d]ou=  [ ]</p> <p>Y: [ngo yigaa dou-hai:: ]  K: =dak</p> <p>1--&gt; Y: ngo yigaa (.) geibunseung  dou-hai goigyun je</p> <p>2a--&gt;K: o: yigaa lei goigan-gyun</p> <p>2b--&gt;(.)</p> <p>2c--&gt;K: hai WO hai WO=</p>	<p>Y: you# PT  (.)  Y: you want when PT  [when would you prefer]</p> <p>(0.7)</p> <p>K: e:::  (1.0)</p> <p>K: see you s# suit your time PT  I# I these-few-days all  [it's up to you, I# I'm  free these days]</p> <p>Y: I now only  K: can</p> <p>Y: I now (.) basically only  correct-scripts PT  [I'm only correcting scripts  these days basically]</p> <p>K: oh now you correcting-  scripts</p> <p>(.)</p> <p>K: yes PT yes PT</p>
---	--

	[oh you're correcting scripts (these days), of course, of course]
Y: =gam dou mou mat	Y: and really no nothing [and not much else really]
(0.5)	(0.5)
Y: e::[:	Y: e:::
K: [goum-yeung	K: so
(.)	(.)
K: mou mat keita ye	K: no nothing other thing [so you don't have other commitments]

In (32), Y's information-offer (arrow 1) is met initially with the receipt "o" (arrow 2a), a change-of-state token (in the sense of Heritage 1984), which displays a change in the speaker's epistemic state from "ignorance" to "knowledge". Notice, however, that following a micro-pause (arrow 2b), the recipient goes on to issue two W0-suffixed "yes"s (arrow 2c). By means of these tokens, he manages to do more than simply receive a piece of information, but also assign this newly acquired information a special status, namely, that it is something that the recipient should have known, or something that has led him to a realization or remembrance (eg. that Y marks scripts at around this time every year; or, since Y is a teacher, and this is exam time, he must be marking scripts "these days", etc.).

It can be seen from this example that "remembering something" and "realizing something" are done in a very similar way. To realize something is to see something in a new light, ie. to establish some hitherto unnoticed relations, by placing some old information in a new context. To remember something is to call back to mind, to retrieve something from one's memory (past) into the consciousness (present). Indeed, to re-member is to re-assemble, putting old bits of information together to form a new picture, assigning to them a significance which they did not have until now. It is interesting that these two kinds of

"mental processes" are both accomplished through W0.

We have seen two major ways in which "realization" is interactionally managed. First, it can be done through an adjacency pair, as follows:

- (1) Informing/Reminding
- (2) Realizing/Remembering

In this structure, Position 2 is regularly occupied by a W0-suffixed *hai*, as we have seen in the preceding examples.

A related structure is a three-position one, in which a confirmation follows in position 3:

- (1) Revelation
- (2) Realization
- (3) Confirmation

Here, a W0-suffixed comment in Position 2 retrospectively formulates the preceding turn as one in which some unusual or extraordinary state-of-affairs has been revealed. The structure requires certain techniques and resources in the design of a turn occupying Position 2. This turn should be designed in such a way as to signal a change in the speaker's knowledge state as a result of some recently received information, and, further, an indication that this newly acquired piece of information is somehow unusual, extraordinary, or unexpected.

(33) - (35) provide three examples of this structure in operation.

(33) (=part of 28)

M: goun le jau ngo chungyi  
le jau hai gaau-dou-so  
SB Gaau-dou-so le  
mm ngo aa:::

(0.9)

M: so PT then I therefore PT  
PT then in detention-centre  
SB detention-centre PT  
then I PT  
[so therefore in the deten-  
tion centre, in the SB  
detention centre, I aa]

(0.9)

1-->M: seungsi ngo daiyat daam baakfan  
 C: o  
 2-->B: jee hai:::# gaamyuk yapbin sik goWO=  
 3-->M: =ha  
 (34) (=part of 29)  
 1-->C: =jou ge::  
 (.)  
 jou-ge-ye dou chaa-m-do LO  
 2-->L: goum aa "yu-yu-hung-jeung-bat-lang-gim-dak"  
 go[WO yau  
 3-->C: ['hai aa soyi leaa hou ge:ng  
 (.)  
 leung go dou sat-jo-heui LO::

M: tried my first CL heroin  
 [had my first puff of heroin]  
 C: I see  
 B: that-means at prison inside smoke PT  
 [so you smoked it inside the prison]  
 M: yeah  
 C: do GEN  
 (.)  
 work also about-the-same PT  
 [both are about the same, I mean, their jobs are about the same]  
 L: so PT "fish-and-bear-palm-you-can't-have-both"  
 PT then  
 C: yes PT so  
 one very afraid  
 (.)  
 two CL both  
 lost PT  
 [exactly, so one might lose both]

In (35), notice that there is an additional feature in the WO-suffixed comment (Position 2) that is worthy of attention, and that is the turn-initial *waa21haa35* (arrow 2a), an exclamation that often contributes, singly or in collaboration with other resources, to the doing of "being impressed". This co-occurrence provides a piece of evidence in support of my proposal, namely, that in these sequences, WO is a device with which the prior turn is retrospectively constructed as a noteworthy and commentworthy phenomenon.

(35) [TC11:2:189]

1-->K: ... yanwai .hh ngo yigaa jungng jou-gan-ye  
 (.)  
 1-->K: goum ngo jau yiu:: .hh laibaai-m go yat le jau:: heui maai-ye LO::  
 (.)  
 1-->K: jee ngo lam-jyu yiu

K: because .hh I now still working  
 (.)  
 K: and I so have-to .hh Friday that day PT then go shopping PT  
 [because I'm still working, so I have to do shopping on Friday]  
 (.)  
 K: I-mean I thinking have-to

<p>        yiu maai godi ye</p> <p>(0.4)</p> <p>2a--&gt;Y: waahaa=         K: =jau laibaai-ng heui             maai= 2b--&gt;Y: =hou-gwai gon WO             lei dou</p> <p>3--&gt; K: hai aa::</p> <p>(0.3)</p> <p>        K: yinhau-sin faan-lai             jap-hanglei</p>	<p>buy those things [I mean, those things that I have to buy]</p> <p>(0.4)</p> <p>Y: wow K: then Friday go buy [I'll go and buy on Friday] Y: terribly pressed PT you too [You must be terribly pressed for time then] K: yes PT [yes]</p> <p>(0.3)</p> <p>K: only-then come-back pack-up [only then can I come back here to do the packing up]</p>
--	---

This organization can be put to many uses, to help accomplish a range of interactional tasks, eg. the expression of interest (in stories and reports), concern or sympathy. In what follows, let us examine one particular kind of purpose to which this structure is routinely put, namely, offering compliments.

<p>(36) [SS:CH:1:270]</p> <p>E: li gaan hokhaau i ye         ngo m-hai hou suk aa:</p> <p>(.)</p> <p>E: lai-jo mou gei loi=</p> <p>L:=hai me</p> <p>E: haa=</p> <p>L: =jee lei yap-jo         li gaan hokhaau         [mou gei loi ]         [                  ]         [                  ]</p> <p>A: [heui yat lin jaa]         yap-jo-lei</p> <p>E: gau# aamammmm gamlin         yap LO</p> <p>L: goum lei yichin hai         bin-gaan aa</p>	<p>E: this CL school POSS things I not very familiar-with PT [the things in this school, I'm not very familiar with them]</p> <p>(.)</p> <p>E: come not very long [havent been in this school very long]</p> <p>L: yes PT [really?]</p> <p>E: yeah</p> <p>L: that-means you joined this CL school not very long [so you haven't been in this school for vey long?]</p> <p>A: he one year PT came-in came-in [he's only been here for one year]</p> <p>E: las# just this-year came-in PT [just came las# this year]</p> <p>L: so you before at which- one PT [so which school were you attending before?]</p>
--	--

1-->E: DL  
L: DL  
E: hou chaa [aa ho  
[  
L: [goum jee lei  
2--> singjik# hou hou golowO::  
(0.3)  
(0.3)  
3-->E: m m-syun hou aa  
L: m-hai lei hou laan  
jyun goWO  
E: .hhh seung jyun m-hai  
naan aa hai ts# gobin  
di hokhaa:u::  
(0.5)  
L: [o  
E: [jee saauwai yung-di-gung  
le jau hoyi jyun-dak-  
dou LA  
E: DL  
L: DL  
E: very bad PT PT  
[really bad, dont you think?]  
L: so that-means your results  
results very good PT  
(0.3)  
[so your exam results must  
be very good]  
(0.3)  
E: not not-really good PT  
[not all that good really]  
L: or-else you very difficult  
transfer PT  
[or else it'd be difficult  
to transfer]  
E: .hhh want transfer not  
difficult PT at ts# there  
those schools  
schools  
[.hhh it isn't difficult to  
transfer from those  
schools]  
(0.5)  
L: oh  
E: I-mean a-little hard-working  
PT then can transfer PT  
[I mean if you just work  
a little harder you can  
transfer]

(37) [SS:D2:178]  
I: goum hokhaau leuibin  
yaumou di matye clubs  
lei yau::  
(0.7)  
I: e:: yaumou join-dou  
di matye club  
I: so school in  
whether some what clubs  
you have  
(0.7)  
I: e:: whether joined  
some matye club  
[so are there some clubs  
in the school? have you  
joined some clubs?]  
A: e::: poutungwaa LA::  
[.hh  
I: [mm  
A: science club LA:  
I: mm  
A: e#  
(1.5)  
A: jung yau: me (.)  
astronomy LA::=  
I: =mm  
A: .hh e:::m  
(0.9)  
1--> A: table tennis LA:: hh hh  
[.hhh .hh heh heh]  
2--> I: [mm hou do WO ha#]  
A: e: Putonghua PT  
.hh  
I: mm  
A: science club PT  
I: mm  
A: e#  
(1.5)  
A: other there-be what (.)  
astronomy PT  
[what else (.) astronomy]  
I: mm  
A: .hh e:::m  
(0.9)  
A: table tennis PT hh hh  
.hhh .hh heh heh  
I: mm very many PT yeah  
[mm such a lot]

3--> A: heh heh heh heh  
I: ha#  
A: hai-goum LO

A: heh heh heh heh  
I: yeah  
A: like-that PT  
[that's it]

In both (36) and (37), a compliment is offered by way of a display of realization. By retrospectively pointing to the respective reports as extraordinary and impressive, the W0-suffixed comments achieve in offering a compliment. That these are heard as compliments can be seen from the construction of the turns arrowed 3 (ie. turns occupying Position 3 in our structure). In (36), a rejection is issued ("not all that good really"), and in (37), the W0-suffixed comment is responded to by laughter (ie. no explicit agreement is given to the complimentary assessment). This is consistent with the general finding that Denials/Rejections often follow Compliments.

We have seen in this section how, in two sequential environments, a W0-suffixed utterance can contribute to the management of realizations. And this contribution can be explicated in terms of the unexpectedness and noteworthiness properties that have been identified in relation to other kinds of sequences.

## 8. Intuitions on W0

An examination of previous descriptions of the particle reveals a number of intuitions, which are both instructive and problematical.

Yau (1965) describes W0 as a sentence particle that belongs to his "S-Q type". By that he means that it is a particle which, when attached to an utterance, neither clearly marks it as an assertion nor a question. Since Yau's characterization was based on results obtained from a questionnaire that attempted to elicit

native speakers' intuitions about this and other particles, this indeterminacy between statement and question suggests that either intuitions about this particle are hazy and uncertain, or that native speakers find it hard to come to any consensus about its "grammatical function". In this respect, a look at the way in which Yau glossed the examples given in the relevant section of his work (p.301) is instructive: it shows his own intuitions at work.<sup>3</sup>

(38) jungyiu jigei yau jibun bo(=W0)  
besides self have capital PT  
[besides, you need to have your own capital, you know]

(39) hoyi jauwai yau bo(=W0)  
can around tour PT  
[you can tour around, you know]

While single sentences in isolation do not as a rule reveal a great deal about the point of using this, and, for that matter, any other particle in the language, the English translations provide valuable evidence of the author's own intuitions about this particle. The fact that both (38) and (39) are translated with a final "you know" suggests that one function of W0, as seen by Yau, is to mark a statement as one that is made for confirmation. It is perhaps in this sense that W0 is characterized as a semi-statement/semi-question: it is not used to assert or state, or to ask or enquire, but to present a description for confirmation.

Lau's Cantonese dictionary (1977), however, describes W0 as a final particle that "expresses the idea of contradicting or objecting in the form of a question"<sup>4</sup> (my emphasis). This goes against Yau's characterization, according to which this particle does not mark a question.

Gibbons (1980), on the other hand, characterizes WO (his "bo") as an indicator of the illocutionary force of "assertion". Further, it is described as an assertion marker of "strength 3", which, in his model, means that the speaker is most strongly committed to the truth of the proposition.

The same particle is described by Kwok (1984) as one which "may be suffixed to statements without altering their grammatical status as statements" (1984:41), ie. WO has the grammatical function of marking an assertion. The compound particle "la44-wo44" (=lo44wo44), however, was singled out, and described in quite different terms. It is a "disyllabic particle" which "should be distinguished from the combination of la44... and... bo44" (1984:93), and is "an interrogative particle which when suffixed to a declarative [sentence] changes it into a question." (1984:41). Apart from the problem that there do seem to be uses of this particle cluster which are non-interrogative,<sup>5</sup> such an account would seriously undermine the general claim that particle clusters function essentially as clusters, ie. their functions in combination can be stated in terms of the properties of the individual components. Unless there are good reasons why this particular combination should behave so differently from the others, one would have to adhere to the assumption that "lo44wo44" is a compound having WO as a final component. If that is the case, then Kwok's account will have to be taken to mean that some uses of WO are assertive, while other uses are interrogative, in which case we have yet another characterization which is distinctly different from the three accounts reviewed so far.

The difficulties with approaches which rely primarily on intuitions as linguistic data, coupled with traditional assumptions about the relationship between sentence types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) and functional categories (assertions, questions, and commands/ requests) --for example, the assumption that declarative sentences are (normally) used to make assertions, and interrogatives to ask questions-- show up most dramatically in previous treatments of this particle. My brief review shows that the state of our knowledge concerning WO is nothing short of total confusion, where four investigators have come up with such disparate, even contradictory accounts of the same particle. It is variously characterized as a marker of strong assertions (Gibbons), confirmation-seeking-statements (Yau), questions (Lau), and sometimes assertions and sometimes questions (Kwok). Which account is correct? Is WO a question particle or is it not a question particle? The disparity with which this particle has been described cannot but make us wonder whether there isn't something fundamentally wrong with the question itself. Apart from highlighting the scale of the difficulties in the task of describing WO (or any other utterance particle in Cantonese for that matter), my review suggests that there may be fundamental problems with the way in which utterance particles have been studied. In particular, there would seem to be formidable problems with such traditional notions as "assertions" and "questions", understood in grammatical, linguistic-semantic or speech-act terms. For instance, in the appropriate contexts, (40) can be glossed as "So we had to go." (a declarative), "So you had to go then, didn't you?" (an interrogative), or "You better go then!" (an imperative).

(40) goum yiu heui loW0  
so have-to go PT

Similarly, the utterances (41) and (42), when isolated from their respective sequential contexts, lose the senses that they had in those particular contexts in which they were first encountered (as an assertion and a confirmation-seeking question respectively).

(41) [taken from (7)]  
seng saa-sui yan dou mei git-fan loW0  
almost thirty-years-old person still not married PT

(42) [taken from (28)]  
hai gaam-yuk yap-bin sik goW0  
in prison inside eat PT

There is nothing in the morphology or word order of these sentences on the basis of which their grammatical status (eg. whether each is a declarative or an interrogative) can be determined. Also, in Cantonese (as in Mandarin Chinese), subject noun phrases are particularly prone to be "deleted" or "understood". Problems like these have led investigators to suppose that perhaps sentence particles would provide the necessary clues. But it should be clear from many of the data extracts analyzed in this chapter that in isolation from sequential contexts, whether WO is a question particle is not a very meaningful question. In fact, this is the kind of question that is often asked in linguistics which, because it arises from some misguided assumptions, turns out to be unsolvable, even misleading.

Another misleading question is: what does this particle really mean? In an attempt to pin down an answer to such a question, previous descriptions have often confined themselves unnecessarily narrowly to one particular use, and called that the particle's intrinsic meaning. Lau (1977), for example, describes

WO as a particle which is used for "contradicting" and "objecting", ie. for disagreements. Although, as we have seen in an earlier section, the use of this particle in several sequential types can indeed be associated with the doing of contradictions and objections, there are many more kinds of uses to which these labels cannot be applied (eg. thankings). What's more, disagreement in certain sequential types is but a special case of a much more general phenomenon, namely, preference organizations. Thus, even in so far as disagreements are concerned, it would be a more adequate description to say that WO serves as a means with which dispreferred turn shapes are formed. More importantly, in a description which is sensitive to preference organizations, one can find a basis for "contradicting" and "objecting" to be derived as possible readings when the particle's properties are sequentially contextualized.

Gibbons (1980) attempts to state the meaning of WO in terms of the notion of illocutionary force. According to him, WO indicates that the speaker is "passing on information new to hearer/ forgotten by hearer" and "shows that the speaker believes the hearer should already know the proposition" (1980:771). It is not clear how "new information" is to be understood here, especially if, according to this account, the hearer is supposed to "know the proposition already". From the point of view of the knowledge states of the speaker and the addressee, this would constitute something of a paradox, for how is it that WO can be used to pass on both information that is new to a hearer and information that is already known to him/her? However, I have argued that the notions of informing and reminding are, from an

interactional point of view, rather more closely tied to each other than they might at first appear. Thus, WO is sensitive not so much to questions like whether a piece of information is old or new, or known or unknown, but rather to the question of how an information item can be presented to a recipient in such a way as to build into that information-offer a reference to background expectations against which the value of that information can be assessed. Thus, while it is true that one kind of work that WO can perform is related to "informing and/or reminding", as a characterization of the functions of WO, this can only give a partial, not to say inaccurate, picture.

Finally, WO has been described as a particle that "is used to remind the hearer to take something into special consideration" (Kwok 1984:64). Two examples from this account should illustrate this characterization.

(43) keui bat-jo-yip hau you chin sin waan-dak bo(=WO)  
 he graduated after have money before pay-back-can PT  
 [you must take into consideration the fact that you have to  
 wait until he graduates and is able to make some money  
 before he is able to pay you back]

(44) nei yiu bun-hoi-saai di-ye bo(=WO)  
 you have-to move-away the-things PT  
 [but I must tell you that you will have to move  
 everything away first]

Kwok's "special consideration" looks in some ways rather similar to my notion of noteworthiness. However, in my account, "noteworthiness" is used in close connection with the notion of expectation, so that something is noteworthy in so far as, when placed against a set of background expectations, it can be seen to be unusual, extraordinary, deviant, exceptional or unexpected in some way. Thus, for example, the part played by WO in the building of information volunteering can be explicated in terms

of this particle's sensitivity to sequentially defined structural expectations. In Kwok's account, "special consideration is not specified in those terms, and it is not clear how it can accommodate this and other uses of WO.

Further, how should the meaning of an utterance in context be derived from "special consideration", which is meant to be a definition of the particle's basic meaning? For instance, if one assumes that the meaning of an utterance in context is somehow computed by putting together the meaning of the sentence with the meaning of the final particle, then one would presumably need to attach the "meaning" "take this into special consideration" to the meaning of the sentence to which the particle is attached. In the case of WO-suffixed "yes"s, what would be the product of that operation? Would the utterance mean something like "take special consideration of my agreement"? But if, as we have seen, *hai WO* is an information receipt which, when placed after an information-offer, regularly serves as a means of doing "being reminded", then how can this be derived from the "special consideration" definition? In general, it is not clear what role sequential context is supposed to play in this account.

Instead of thinking of noteworthiness as what this particle "really means", my approach regards meaning as always to some extent an occasioned accomplishment. From this point of view, rather than computing the meaning of an utterance by putting together the meaning of the sentence and that of the particle, in an act of interpretation, the properties of a particle will be sequentially contextualized to yield a specific, occasioned contribution to the utterance's overall sense and import.

## 9. Expectation and Interpretation

Linguistic communication is unimaginable unless participants assume some degree of sharing of background expectations. Expectations play a crucial role in the assignment of meanings to utterances in natural conversation. They form, to use Garfinkel's term, schemes of interpretation which, when applied to talk, produce meanings:

"The member of the society uses background expectancies as a scheme of interpretation. With their use actual appearances are for him recognizable and intelligible as the appearances-of-familiar-events." (1984:36)

One major kind of expectations in ordinary conversation is generated by sequential organizations. Through the use of these organizations as schemes of interpretation, strings of sounds are rendered recognizable and intelligible to co-participants as utterances with determinate meanings, performing definite actions. In the course of a conversation, various organizations are constantly at work, so that every utterance will set up various expectations, eg. expectations as to what the next utterance might look like. When an utterance is issued which in one way or another violates or upsets these expectations, then they will need to be built in special forms. WO is from this point of view a means with which such structurally unexpected turns are designed. Hence, the part played by this particle in the formation of turns that are dispreferred (eg. disconfirmations) or sequentially misplaced (eg. in information volunteering).

In general, WO is sensitive to expectations generated by various kinds of conversational structures. Thus, apart from sequential organizations, WO is sensitive also to preference and topic organizations. It is in this sense a linguistic object

whose functions cannot be adequately described without taking into account features in the organization of conversational interaction.

As a design feature, WO is sensitive to expectations in another way. With it, descriptions of persons, objects, actions, events, or situations are built in such a way as to invite readings in which some rules or norms are invoked and applied to the current case, and, against these rules and norms as background expectations, that which is being described can be seen to be deviant. In this way, states-of-affairs can be presented as unexpected and highlighted for noteworthiness. Hence, the use of WO in stories and reports for the formulation of situations and happenings as somehow unusual, extraordinary, inexplicable, or unexpected.

In other contexts, WO functions to display that something noteworthy has recently come into the speaker's consciousness. In so far as the item or pattern was until recently not "on the speaker's mind", its appearance or re-appearance can be portrayed as unexpected. Hence the use of WO in the management of sudden rememberings, reminders, and realizings.

Given the primacy of "background expectancies" in linguistic communication, it would not be surprising to find in natural languages resources with which conversational participants can invoke norms and standards. But the business of presenting objects, events and states-of-affairs as unexpected and noteworthy is seldom done for its own sake. Instead, it contributes to a variety of practical purposes, e.g. to assess the value of an object, the truth of a description, or the reasonableness of an action or argument. To portray something as

exceeding or falling below a standard is a means of managing a range of interactional tasks, such as accusing someone, offering compliments, sympathy and appreciation, justifying an action or defending a position, and so on. The particle *WO* is precisely such a resource in Cantonese.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that "expectation" has been used in the description of some Mandarin Chinese items too.<sup>6</sup> For example, Li & Thompson (1981) characterize the particle *ne* in Mandarin Chinese as follows: "As the final particle of a declarative sentence, *ne* has the semantic function of pointing out to the hearer that the information conveyed by the sentence is the speaker's response to some claim, expectation, or belief on the part of the hearer." (p.301)

From their description, *ne* would seem to share many similarities with *WO*. The properties of the Mandarin particle as described by Li and Thompson<sup>7</sup> would, however, be over-restrictive for the Cantonese one. For one thing, *WO* does not occur only in responses to "claims, expectations, and beliefs". For instance, we have seen how story- or report-components can be built using *WO*. In those positions they can hardly be said to be responding to a claim or expectation. What's more, the expectations that *WO* invokes cannot be restricted to the recipient's. In realization displays, for example, there is a sense in which the speaker's expectations have been disturbed. In general, however, *WO* is sensitive not so much to expectations as subjective psychological states, but structural expectations which are intersubjective. Expectations generated by sequential organizations, for example, cannot be said to "belong" to the speaker or the hearer.

We saw in the previous chapter how states-of-affairs are sometimes portrayed through the particle LO as unnoteworthy and "only to be expected". In the light of this, WO is a particle that does an opposite sort of job: it helps to portray things and events as unexpected and noteworthy. In this sense it may be called a marker of unexpectedness. However, in the same way that LO is not a label to be tagged onto "ordinary objects" and "unnoteworthy events", WO is not to be regarded as a label to be attached to things and events whose deviance from ready-made rules and norms has been independently established. Rather, the status of a state-of-affairs (in terms of expectedness) is to some extent always an open and negotiable matter, to be constructed in the details of linguistic interaction. For instance, an event may be presented as unusual or extraordinary in a report or story. But its unusualness or extraordinariness is not something that is given prior to or independently of the accomplishing (telling and receiving) of the report or story itself. Far from independently given, background expectations are often occasioned through WO. Thus, in a realization sequence, the unexpectedness, noteworthiness, or remarkableness of a state-of-affairs is not something intrinsic to the state-of-affairs itself or determinable on the basis of some general scale or measurement. Rather, unexpectedness is a quality that is retrospectively attributed to it partly through the work of WO in subsequent turns. In this sense, the background expectations against which this state-of-affairs is to be seen as remarkable were not even there when the state-of-affairs was reported.

In conclusion, WO is a particle which can be characterized in the most general way as a linguistic device with which

objects, persons, events, situations, etc. can be highlighted for noteworthiness, unexpectedness, or remarkableness. However, far from defining the particle's basic meaning, these properties are meant to be contextualized before they would yield any specific contributions in relation to particular interactional tasks. In particular, the kinds of work that it can perform are closely tied to different kinds of sequential positions. Thus, in the environment after a turn which seeks agreement, confirmation, or contact, it would serve to mark a dispreferred response. In the position after a turn in which some general rule or position is stated, it would serve to challenge or undermine a position. Within the context of a story or report, it is used to highlight the unusualness or remarkableness of an action or event being reported. In the position after an information offer, it can be heard as remembering or realizing something. In general, the kind of contribution that this particle has in any particular occurrence cannot be determined independently of the sequential environment in which it occurs.

## CHAPTER 6

### UTTERANCE PARTICLES AS CONVERSATIONAL OBJECTS

#### 1. The Meanings of Utterance Particles as a Product of the Interaction between their Presumed Underlying Properties and Sequential Contexts

An attempt was made in the previous chapters to provide descriptive accounts of the properties of three utterance particles in Cantonese. Throughout the discussion, I have stressed that each particle can be used to serve a wide variety of interactional tasks, and that the contribution that each makes towards the overall meaning of the utterance in which it occurs is anything but simple or straightforward. Indeed, the contribution of a particle to the sense and import of an utterance cannot be given prior to, or independently of, the context in which it is placed. From an ethnomethodological point of view, characterizations of the properties of linguistic objects, however empirically informed and painstakingly done, would provide but half of a dialectic. Whatever basic, decontextualized properties a particle may be construed to have, these underlying properties will need to be contextualized within the particulars of an interaction, before definite sense can be made of it. For some purposes (eg. writing a dictionary), it is of course possible to talk about 'the meaning of a particle', in much the same way as one might talk about 'the meaning of a word'.<sup>1</sup> But this is not the same as to say that the properties that are identified for such purposes would then constitute a definition of the meaning of the particle.

For instance, in my description of the particle L0, we saw how it can be put to a variety of uses, depending in part on its sequential positioning. In a narrative (report- or story-component), it is regularly used to present the event-being-reported as a consequence arising from some circumstances, or as an effect resulting from some causes. It is also used to present a proposition as a reasonable conclusion to draw from some given premises. It would seem natural, given this kind of use, to find that this particle occurs also in suggestions and advice-givings, where some course of action is presented as arising naturally from, or necessitated by, some circumstances, and therefore a reasonable thing to do. We may identify a common feature in these uses as *consequence*.

But we saw that L0 in the position after a report-component or an assessment, can also contribute to the construction of cognate formulations (rephrasings of a prior turn) and to display understanding and appreciation. There is some affinity with the previous uses, in that there may be said to be an *arising-from* feature involved, which bears some resemblance to the *consequence* feature --although this has now become somewhat transformed. But at the same time there has now emerged a new feature, namely, *independent motivation* (the sense of "I've always felt this way", "I've always believed this", etc., of a cognate formulation).

When we turn to the position following confirmation-seeking turns, (eg. "yes, that's what happened L0"), L0-suffixed utterances often serve as confirmation tokens which seem to share with cognate formulations the *independent motivation* feature. Indeed, this feature has become, in these kinds of uses, considerably more central than the *consequence* feature).

Continuing the extension, we find that while *Independent motivation* is still a prominent feature in L0-suffixed utterances which are used to do "belief/suspicion confirmed" (often in Position 3 of a Question-Answer-Comment sequence, eg. "*hai L0*" [I knew it ]), there now seems to be yet another additional feature: with L0, the *known-all-along* character of a state-of-affairs is highlighted.

Finally, a L0-suffixed utterance, in the sequential context following an information-seeking question, can be heard as a description of some state-of-affairs as a simple *fact*. Thus, in response to a fact-finding question about her son's age, a mother said "*sap-sai seui L0*" ("Fourteen").

To facilitate an examination of the complex and fluid relationships among the various features mentioned above, I have attempted to arrange them schematically as follows. It should be clear that the scheme below is but one out of many possible ways of arranging these features (and that is precisely the point I am trying to make here, ie. we do not have one necessary or inevitable way of summarizing these features).

1. *Consequence/result* (eg. to do 'explaining something')
2. *Conclusion* (eg. to propose ending of episode/account)
3. *Cognate formulation* (Arising from a prior turn)
4. *Independent motivation* (I've always felt that way too)
5. *Belief confirmed* (That's what I said)
6. *Fact* (something known all along)

.  
. .  
. . .

With this simplified, schematic representation, I wish to

underscore the family resemblance relations that hold between these features. As one moves from one feature to the next, each transition looks minimal and unexceptionable. And yet after a few moves, one finds that one has imperceptibly moved quite a long way from a few steps back, until one reaches a point when what seemed a naturally related feature a few moments ago suddenly becomes, upon looking back, almost unrecognizable. Thus, while a consequence or result might seem unproblematically related to a story- or account-ending, it is not entirely clear how that can be used to build a cognate formulation, still less a confirmation. And when we reach *fact*, the lineage between this and the first feature (*consequence*) has become rather hard to trace.

It is therefore quite clear that it will not do to describe LO as a particle that marks declarative or interrogative sentences, or to say that it marks an act of explanation, confirmation, or fact-provision, although it can indeed be used in all of these ways, and many other ways besides. One would need to break away from the confines of popular conceptual strait-jackets such as "marking" (eg. sentence-type marking or speech-act -marking), and study the range of uses of a particle by examining the ways in which its properties, when sequentially contextualized, contribute to the production of meanings-in-context. As argued in Chapter 2, linguistic items, particles included, are essentially indexical: they do not have meanings given in advance. Rather, their presupposed general, context-free properties are drawn upon as a resource to which contextualization applies to yield occasioned meanings.

However, although there can be no adequate specification of the meaning (or meaning contribution) of a particle prior to its use, the assignment of meanings in a particular context does presuppose the existence of certain underlying properties. Far from claiming that there is nothing one can say about these particles independently of context, I only wish to underscore the inherent incompleteness, extendibility, and fluidity of their properties.

With this proviso, I will now summarize, for the sake of quick reference, some of the structural and functional properties of the three particles studied in this thesis, as in the table on the following page.

Summary of some of the structural and functional  
properties of LA, LO and WO

\*\*\*\*\*

SEQUENTIAL

ENVIRONMENTS	LA	LO	WO
*****			
Narrative (Story and Report components)	To put on record the availability of common under- standing of a certain descrip- tion, and to propose contin- uation of narrative	To formulate event as a natural consequence of some circumstances; narrative complet- ion proposal	To portray event as unusual or extraordinary against a background of norms and expectations
Report- receipt	Understanding check	To indicate receipt of information which is expected or 'known-all- along'; cognate formulations; confirmation	To challenge a claim or a position; or to do realizing something
Suggestions & Advice	Seeking mutual agreement on the efficacy and desirability of a certain proposed course of action	To portray proposed course of action as 'only reason- able'	To present proposed course of action as a reminder
Agreement- seeking & giving	To propose continuation upon having established common under- standing of a description	To propose completion upon having reached an agreement	To disconfirm or disagree
Second pair part of Q-A sequences	To portray answer as adequate description	Completion proposal	To highlight status of answer as unexpected
Thankings	-----	-----	To present thanks as unsolicited
Pre-closing	To pass turn	-----	-----
*****			
(Suggestive labels:)	Common under- standing and Continuation	Conclusion and Completion	Deviation from norms and Misplacement

The "suggestive labels" in this table are meant to provide a convenient mnemonics, and must in no way be taken to be the meanings or definitions of the particles. It should be clear that it is not my aim to provide, for each particle, a basic, primary, intrinsic, fundamental, default, inherent, underlying, system-internal, context-free semantic or pragmatic specification --what may be regarded as its dictionary definition. Instead, I wish to learn about the ways in which meanings are achieved in conversational interaction through contextualizations which draw upon the presumed underlying properties of these objects. Rather than giving a specification in terms of a system of semantic or pragmatic contrasts (eg. among a set of particles that can occupy the same structural slot in a syntagm), I wish to emphasize the relationship between the presumed generalized and decontextualized properties of each particle and the contextualization of these properties in different sequential environments, as well as the production, out of this interfacing, of situated interpretations (meanings-in-context). In this sense the previous analysis chapters can be regarded as demonstrations of the ways in which utterance particles as conversational objects contribute to the assignment of meanings to utterances in context.

On a more general level, I wish to address the question of the *raison d'être* of these objects in the language: what are they in the language for? It was noted in the first chapter that, as a word class, utterance particles are semantically contentless morphemes that are regularly found 'attached to' utterances. They do not in general contribute to the truth-conditional, literal, denotative meaning or propositional content of the utterances in which they occur, but have to do with the way in

which something is said. While these particles do not enter into syntactic relations, and do not have semantic content, the sense of an utterance cannot be determined without taking note of the particle(s) that occur(s) in it. A general objective of this study, as set out in the beginning, is therefore to determine just what kinds of contribution these objects have towards the situated interpretation of utterances in conversational sequences.

I wish to address these issues by relating the findings reported in the previous chapters to work that has been done on utterance particles and similar objects in other languages. Utterance particles have been approached from various perspectives in the literature, including: the sentence-type perspective, the modality perspective, the speech-act perspective, and the discourse perspective. I will examine each in turn. While many previous studies in fact adopted a mixture of perspectives, I shall, for the convenience of exposition, organize the discussion under these rubrics. Thus the same study may appear under two or more headings.

## **2. Utterance Particles as Grammatical Markers of Sentence-types**

A classic strategy is what may be called the substitution method. Particles are inserted into a constant syntactic frame to see what grammatical or semantic differences such substitutions may make. This procedure may yield observations that would sometimes allow the analyst to say that a particle marks a certain sentence-type. Thus, if the substitution of a particle into a constant syntactic frame renders the sentence an interrogative one, it would be described as a marker of the sentence-type "interrogative".

Karttunen (1975c), for instance, describes the particle *-ko* in Finnish as "a marker of yes/no questions" whose function is to tell the addressee: "this is a yes/no question. You are directed to answer this." (p.236)

Corum (1975) identifies two particles in Basque which mark negations and questions:

"*ez* negates the statement, *a1* (and *othe* in the Northern dialects) changes a statement into a question" (p.91).

Similarly, one of the criteria used in Kwok (1984) for the classification of sentence-final particles in Cantonese is whether the attachment of a particle to the end of a declarative statement would change its sentence type.

In these and other studies, certain particles are depicted as markers which are sensitive to such sentence-type distinctions as positive vs. negative, or declarative vs. interrogative. The assumption is that the simple, positive, declarative sentence is somehow basic, and that certain particles change them into other kinds of sentences, eg. interrogatives or imperatives. In this sense they are regarded as grammatical markers of sentence types.

This way of looking at particles may have an initial attraction, because there do seem to be particles in the world's languages which mark the sentences in which they occur as interrogatives. For instance, *ka* in Japanese, *-ko* in Finnish, and *aa21* in Cantonese. But clear cases of this kind of marking invariably turn out to be in the small minority. Most particles that have been investigated do not clearly, straightforwardly and exclusively mark sentence-types. For example, the Cantonese particle *LO* might be described as a particle that marks the grammatical status of the sentence to which it is attached as

declarative; semantically, this corresponds to the marking of an assertion. But there are difficulties with such claims.

First, L0-suffixing is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the identification of declarative sentences. It is simply not the case that sentences that are suffixed with L0 are always identifiable syntactically as declaratives, or semantically as assertions. There are clear instances of L0-suffixed utterances which are intended and heard as questions and suggestions, among other things. It is not a necessary condition either, because declaratives are not necessarily marked by L0. Essentially the same can be said of most of the other particles in Cantonese: they do not consistently signal a particular sentence-type.

Second, traditional sentence-type categories are vastly outnumbered by the utterance particles that have been identified in Cantonese. If the primary function of these particles were to mark sentence-types, then the fact that there are so many of them in the language would become something of a mystery.

Thus, while in some ways attractive and useful, the sentence-type perspective has rather serious limitations.

### **3. Utterance Particles as Carriers of Attitudinal and Emotive Meanings**

It has been observed time and again that there are classes of words in languages which, rather than modifying the propositional content of a sentence, function to signal the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition. Arndt, for example, in a study of "modal particles" in Russian and German, says of this class of words that one of their characteristics is that they "convey no element of the objective message content... but the subjective emotion or mental attitude of the speaker to

his interlocutor, to the objective message content, or to another element of the linguistic situation." (1960:326)

Also, these objects are often likened to prosodic (eg. intonation) and paralinguistic features (eg. gestures). For example, Schubiger (1972) compares utterance particles in German to various intonation patterns in English, and suggests that the kinds of modalities expressed by some German particles are comparable to the emotive or attitudinal meanings signalled through intonation in English.

Similarly, Arndt compares modal particles to intonation and gestures in the following way:

"Semantically, these minimal morphemes are additives which complement communication and ease interpretation of the message beyond its cognitive range, without themselves carrying a semantic charge. Representing, as they do, subjective shorthand signals of speaker's attitude to referent and/or interlocutor, they have some functional resemblance, not to traditional 'parts of speech', but to phonemes of intonation and to gestures such as the French and Mediterranean concessive or remonstrative gesture complexes." (Arndt 1960:327)

While some utterance particles in Cantonese do seem to have a modal kind of function, eg. *wo24* (not *W044*) may be described as a marker of 'Quotative' modality,<sup>2</sup> and *LO* may be said to have an 'Evidential' kind of function,<sup>3</sup> their properties cannot be described wholly in terms of such modal categories. For one thing, features have been identified in the previous chapters which show that very often, in making sense of what the interlocutor is saying, the recipient will turn to the particles not only as evidence of the speaker's attitude towards whatever he is saying (in isolation), but as evidence of the kind of interactional problem they are dealing with. Within a modal perspective, these interactional and conversation organizational

parameters which many utterance particles are sensitive to would be overlooked.

A more serious misgiving is that the literature on the emotive and attitudinal functions of utterance particles is filled with such problematical and intractable notions like "degrees of insistence" (Uyeno 1971), "mild disappointment" (Karttunen 1975 a,b,c), and "unpleasant surprise" (Schubiger 1972). Far from being ready-made functional categories to which utterance particles can be assigned, these labels are psychological predicates which are themselves in need of explanation -- how do hearers come to these conclusions about the speaker's psychological states? More important, since particular particles do not as a rule consistently or exclusively signal one or two of such categories, what part do they play in this process of psychological-state attribution?

Apart from psychological labels, another widely used method in the description of particles as modality markers is glossing, where the "meaning" of a particle is given in the form of an expansion or paraphrase. For example, in a study of the particle *doch* in German, Schubiger (1972) describes it as a particle whose central meaning is: "by the way you talk (or act), one would think you didn't know (or were ignorant of the circumstances)". But it is apparent even from her own examples that *doch* cannot in every case be paraphrased in the same way. For instance, it is sometimes glossed as "obviously", and sometimes as "since you don't know this, let me tell you ...". The two may in some contexts be equivalent, but in other contexts they need not be equivalent. In any case, many of her example sentences have been glossed differently presumably because there are

certain differences in their meanings, or else they could have been paraphrased in exactly the same way.

Glossing makes sense only in relation to a context. For example, the use of the Cantonese particle WO in certain contexts can be glossed as "I find this an extraordinary thing to happen", and will, for just those contexts, be an adequate gloss. In other kinds of sequences, however (eg. in informings and reminders), it would not do to paraphrase this particle in the same way. In these other contexts, it might be glossable as "in case you don't know already" or "you may not be aware of this". A consequence of this is that every gloss has only a limited range of applications. On the whole, a general gloss works only for a certain kind of sequential environment, different glosses being needed for other kinds of sequential environment. There may be family resemblance relations among these glosses, but no one of them can subsume all the others. In short, a particle does not mark or signal one single way of speaking, only a family of ways of speaking.

A final problem for the modality perspective is that it would be hard put to explain why utterance particles are pervasively present in natural conversation, but appear much less frequently in certain modes of language use (eg. newsreading and lecturing) and writing. Specifically, what would the factors be which motivate the apparent preference, in these modes of language use, for 'attitude-indicating devices' other than utterance particles (eg. adverbials)? The key to this problem lies in the fact that the difference between formal speech and writing on the one hand and ordinary conversation on the other is that the former is essentially monologic whereas the latter is

dialogic. As the kinds of interactional problems that many utterance particles are sensitive to typically do not come up in monologues, they do not as a rule figure very prominently in these modes of language use.

#### **4. Utterance Particles as Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices**

Another perspective from which utterance particles have been studied is what might be called the speech act approach.

According to this view, utterance particles are first and foremost indicators of illocutionary forces. Analytical frameworks which fall into this category are those in which particles are described in terms of parameters such as the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of the proposition, the extent to which an utterance expects or demands a response, the relative status between the speaker and the hearer, the "strength" of a speech act (eg. how "strong" a suggestion is), and the relations between an utterance and "the rest of the discourse".

Tsuchihashi (1983), for example, attempts to describe sentence-final particles in Japanese in terms of a speech act continuum, a "semantic space" ranging from declaratives from one end to interrogatives at the other. The particles are then arranged along this scale according to their relative declarativeness and interrogativeness, determined on the basis of a number of considerations, including speakers' degree of certainty to what they are saying, the extent to which a response is "allowed", etc.

Utterance particles in Cantonese too have been described in speech act terms. In Gibbons (1980), a number of parameters like the ones mentioned above are proposed. Particles are then assigned a value (eg. "+" or "-") against each parameter. As a

result, each particle is described as a matrix of feature specifications, in much the same way as sound segments in a feature-based phonology, or lexical entries in a feature-based lexicon. In the context of contemporary linguistics, this is a very tempting option, because it offers a framework in terms of which things can be seen to fall neatly into some place within an overall system of oppositions. In practice, however, as soon as one looks in detail at some speech data in which these particles are actually used, one often finds that important, even crucial, aspects of their structural and functional properties have been left out of these tidy systems.

The simple fact is that upon detailed and contextualized analysis, most utterance particles turn out to perform quite a range of tasks, and cannot be assigned to one or two illocutionary classes. One of the major findings of my investigation is that utterance particles typically do not consistently mark a class of moves or acts. Rather, they have been found to have some rather general and open properties which, when interpreted within a sequential environment, would contribute to the construction of particular meanings-in-context.

A similar finding has been reported on some clitics in Finnish. Karttunen (1975b) describes the functions of the clitics *-han* and *-pa* as follows:

"By adding *-han* to sentences, we get amelioration, contradiction, announcement of discovery, appeal to common knowledge, and request for assurance or giving of assurance. *-pa* is every bit as diverse. It appears in expressions of certainty, of something just observed, as an intensifier, in appeals to common knowledge, in rhetorical questions, at the beginning of stories to mean 'you see', in wish sentences ['if only ...'], in concessives, and in contradictions."  
(1975b:4)

Thus, rather than marking a small number of action types, utterances in which particles and clitics occur can often perform a wide range of actions. In this respect, categories like "declaratives" and "directives" are extremely crude labels whose value in the description of particles must be rather limited. For one thing, a great deal of utterance particles simply do not mark any of these categories. Whether an utterance is an assertion or a mand or a question often cannot be determined outside of a sequential context. Rather than having a constant function such as the marking of an utterance as a question or a directive, an utterance particle typically interacts with the sequential environment in complex ways to contribute towards the overall sense and import of an utterance.

For instance, the particle WO has been described as a marker of the illocutionary force of "passing on information new to hearer or forgotten by hearer" (Gibbons 1980:770). Putting aside the problem of how illocutionary forces can be enumerated, and assuming that there is an illocutionary force which we can identify as "passing on new or forgotten information", it can be (and has been, in Chapter 5) shown that this is but one of the many kinds of acts that this particle can take part in. For instance, we saw how this particle can contribute to describing unusual and extraordinary things and events; challenges, disagreements, disconfirmations and declinations; thankings; realizings and remembering; and many others. In view of this, the fact that WO can be used to inform or remind is itself in need of explication: the basis on which a particle can perform such a wide range of work must be sought elsewhere than in terms of the marking of illocutionary forces. In the case of WO, its

varied uses will need to be stated in terms of such notions as "remarkableness", "commentworthiness", and "unexpectedness", which are interactional, not actional, categories. In general, utterance particles in Cantonese (and, I suspect, in many other languages which have similar objects) cannot be adequately described as markers of (classes of) illocutionary forces.

### 5. Utterance Particles as Discourse Markers

Most descriptions of utterance particles in the past have used a combination of the above perspectives. However, more recent studies have begun to adopt what may loosely be called a discourse perspective. I would include under this rubric a range of methods and approaches which may be quite diverse in theoretical orientation and analytical methods, but nevertheless share one or more of the following features. First, a framework will be regarded as adopting a discourse perspective if it looks at particles in relation not only to other sentence elements but also to units and structures 'beyond the sentence'. Second, if it attempts to explicate the forms and functions of these objects within an overarching discourse or conversational context. Third, it should typically be based on natural speech data, rather than hypothetical sentences or stock examples.

For my present purposes, it will suffice to illustrate this perspective by singling out for a brief summary a handful of discourse particles in English that have received some recent attention, about which interesting findings have been reported. These include *you know*, *well*, *OK*, and *oh*.

### 5.1 *You know*

*You know* is one of several short expressions in English which are syntactically loose and semantically elusive. It looks superficially unstructured and meaningless. However, a closer investigation reveals that it has an important role to play in discourse organization.

Following a few schematic remarks by R. Lakoff (1972), which pointed to the possibility of certain expressions in English being functionally motivated by factors such as politeness, Östman (1981) proposes to analyse *you know* as "a hedge". Its "prototypical meaning" is described in the following way: "The speaker strives towards getting the addressee to cooperate and/or to accept the propositional content of his utterance as mutual background knowledge." (Östman 1981:17) For him, therefore, *you know* is an expression which can be employed in conversational interaction to secure common ground.

In a similar vein, James (1983) identifies a set of "compromisers", which include expressions like *you know*, *sort of* and *like*. They are analyzed as "metaphorical expressions" which "compromise on" the literalness of the heads that they modify.<sup>4</sup> In his account, these expressions serve as pointers or indicators to facilitate the interpretation of utterances: they indicate to hearers how the the heads which they qualify are to be interpreted. Specifically, they instruct hearers to derive the meanings of these heads from figurative interpretations, treating the actual phrases and clauses used as representations of, or standing for, equivalent or synonymous expressions.

While no attempt is made to relate this particle to discourse structures, both analyses give prominence to the

interactional contexts within which *you know* plays a role in meaning assignment. Thus, James (1983:202) suggests that *you know* displays "interpersonal rapport", and appeals to the hearer's interpretive capabilities in deriving the intended sense and import of a description.

Following the lead of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), who suggested that expressions such as *well*, *so*, and *OK* may be pre-starters or post-completers in terms of the turn-taking system, analysts became increasingly aware of these particles' discourse properties. For instance, Goldberg (1980) offers an analysis of *y'know* on the basis of a corpus of natural conversational data, and explicates the role that this expression plays in topic organization. *Y'know* is said to be a marker that is tagged onto topically significant items, marking them as "moves" that introduce or re-introduce conversational topics. She argues that, rather than being a free-floating and meaningless filler, *you know* is a linguistic device that contributes to the creation and sustenance of discourse coherence.

Schiffrin (1987) makes a similar attempt at describing the properties of expressions like *you know* in terms of their functions in discourse. In Schiffrin's framework, discourse particles are treated as markers of the "contextual co-ordinates" of an utterance at one or more planes of discourse organization: ideational structure, action structure, exchange structure, participation framework, and information states,<sup>5</sup> and contribute to discourse coherence by anchoring a text to a context.

Whereas Goldberg focuses on the role that *you know* plays in topical organization, Schiffrin stresses the way in which it acts as a marker of "transitions in information states" (1987:267),

eg. from 'speaker knows that hearer does not know' to 'speaker knows that hearer knows', and is used to establish shared knowledge. As such it can serve to "gain attention from the hearer to open an interactive focus on speaker-provided information". (ibid.) In this way, it contributes to such interactional tasks as topic generation. Thus, while Schiffrin's analysis gives greater prominence to the informational aspect of *y'know*, it supports Goldberg's contention that this particle (and similar objects) has important properties that need to be stated in terms of the organization of discourse.<sup>6</sup>

## 5.2 *we'll*

R. Lakoff (1973b) first observes that *we'll* is an expression that seems to be sensitive to the question of the adequacy of an utterance as a response to a prior utterance (eg. a question, request, or invitation). Making use of Grice's Maxim of Quantity, she suggests that *we'll* can be handled as a marker of the violation of that maxim, ie. as a "maxim hedge". Thus, one of its uses is "to serve notice that the speaker is aware that he is unable to meet the requirements of the Maxim of Quantity in full". (Levinson 1983:162). This is consonant with my characterization of utterance particles as one kind of linguistic resource that provides evidence necessary for inferential processes that take us from form to meaning-in-context.<sup>7</sup>

A Conversation Analytic approach confirms these observations and yields further insights. Various analysts (eg. Pomerantz 1975, 1984; Wootton 1981; Levinson 1983; Owen 1981; Schiffrin 1985, 1987) have produced evidence to show that *we'll* is a design feature that contributes to dispreferred turn shapes: it is regularly found in locations where it prefaces turns which follow

questions, requests, invitations, or assessments, and which are structurally dispreferred. Far from upsetting the organization of discourse, *we'll* contributes to it by partaking in and reproducing preference structures. The work of this particle provides a clear example of the way in which linguistic items are used to display participants' orientation to the orderly character of talk and to the joint production of orderliness in an ongoing conversation.

Closer phonetic analysis of this particle has uncovered further organizations. Local & Kelly (1986) observe that *we'll* has a number of phonetic realizations. When occurring before a vocalic segment, it takes a form that ends in a lateral (some form of [l]). But when the following is a consonant, the variant that occurs is one that ends in a vocalic segment. However, in addition to these positional variants, there is a form that is sensitive to sequential placement: *we'll* with certain phonetic characteristics ("with a vocalic ending, not accompanied by faucalization and not accompanied by a lateral articulation" [p.190]) occurs only in those sequential contexts in which it precedes reported speech, regardless of whether the following segment is a vowel or a consonant. Thus, according to this analysis, *we'll* is not a unitary phenomenon, but a conflation of at least two forms. Nevertheless, the distributional patterns in question have to, and are, stated precisely in terms of conversational organization. Thus, while their study does invite analysts to look more closely at the phonetics of speech materials, it confirms the claims made in previous studies concerning *we'll*'s conversational organizational properties. Indeed, it adds further substance to the general observation that this

and similar particles in English have important contributions towards discourse organization.

### 5.3 *OK*

Taking up Goffman's (1974) suggestion that expressions like *OK* and *now then* may be regarded as "bracket markers", Condon (1986) examines the distribution of *OK* with reference to the organization of verbal and non-verbal actions, and notes that it often occurs at junctures where more than one of these levels converge.<sup>8</sup> One specific location in which it is often found is at junctures between a main task and an off-task activity. Specifically, *OK* often signals at such a juncture a return from off-task activities (such as joking) to some main task, but not the other way round. In so doing, it re-invokes interpretive schemes that may have been temporarily held in abeyance in the course of a side-sequence. In this sense, it may be said to have an "orientation" and "keying" function.

If Condon's description is correct, then like several other expressions in English, *OK* is a particle which has at least one kind of use which is primarily discourse organizational.

### 5.4 *oh*

One of the most interesting studies of discourse particles in English is Heritage's (1984) investigation of *oh*. A distinctive feature of his account is the way in which the properties of *oh* are described with close reference to the kinds of sequential environment in which it occurs. Thus, it is found to preface responses to information-offers, question-elicited informings, and counter-informings, to signal the *oh*-producer's change from a state of ignorance or misinformation to one of

knowledge. It is also found occupying turns that immediately follow other-initiated repairs and similar environments, as a means of acknowledging receipt of information for a variety of purposes. The particle is therefore characterized as a "change-of-state token": an item which "is used to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation, or awareness." (Heritage 1984:299) This contributes not only to sequential organization, but also to speaker alignment, and helps to define and re-define, in an ongoing discourse, participant-role constellations (eg. knower/ information-supplier and non-knower/ information-recipient).

In addition to these characteristics, *oh* also has certain properties that are storable in terms of topic organization. In this respect, a free-standing *oh* in a number of sequential environments (eg. after a news-announcement) is found to be a systematically inadequate response, in the sense that it withholds rather than progresses the topic.

Thus, a particle that has always been thought to be unstructured and not particularly meaningful is found through meticulous attention to sequential details, to systematically contribute to the production of meaning, and the determination of the sense and import of an utterance in context. Heritage concludes:

"Although it is almost traditional to treat *oh* and related utterances (such as *yes*, *uh huh*, *mm hm*, etc.) as an undifferentiated collection of 'back channels' or 'signals of continued attention', such treatments seriously underestimate the diversity and complexity of the tasks that these objects are used to accomplish" (1984:335)

Schiffrin (1987) has reached comparable conclusions. *Oh* is described as a "recognition display" and an information receipt. According to her, the primary function of this particle is information management, which is a cognitive task. But once verbalized, this has pragmatic effects and interactional consequences. For instance, it can be used to preface repairs, to signal a change in orientation, and to do recalling old information.

### *5.5 The Systematic Contributions of Particles to Discourse Organization*

In this section, we have seen how, in many recent studies, certain 'tiny expressions' which have always been thought to be unstructured and 'not very meaningful', have been found, upon closer study using natural speech data, and from a discourse perspective, to have highly systematic contributions to make towards meaning assignment in interaction-- much more so than it has ever been realized before. This general perspective for the study of these and similar objects has, I believe, proved itself to be worthy of the linguist's serious attention, for the insights and discoveries that it has generated and made possible.

## **6. Utterance Particles as Conversational Objects**

My study of three utterance particles in Cantonese has shown that they form a class of items in the language which cannot be satisfactorily handled by the usual analytical tools of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics alone. The description of many of these objects would benefit from a discourse perspective. They are best approached from the point of view of how they take part in the procedures with which interactional problems are handled in the course of a conversation. I summarize in this section the

general properties of this class of objects as a whole under the following headings: recipient design, sequential organization, preference organization, topic organization, conversational charting, and the pervasive presence of utterance particles in naturally occurring data.

### *6.1 Recipient Design*

One useful way of looking at these objects which have persistently resisted conventional linguistic analysis is to think in terms of their functional motivations, or the communicative pressures in response to which they may have emerged and developed. For instance, politeness has been proposed as one major source of functional pressure on linguistic structure, which has exerted fundamental and far-reaching effects on the structure of many languages (Brown & Levinson 1978 and 1987, and references therein).

My investigation of utterance particles in Cantonese suggests that they may be regarded as one kind of means available to participants in their attempt to handle a variety of problems arising in conversational interaction. One set of recurrent problems has to do with what form an utterance is to take on a particular occasion as a result of who the recipient of that utterance is construed to be. The design of an utterance on a particular occasion embodies, among other things, an analysis of who the recipients are, what they can be expected to know, what their expectations are, and how they might respond to the utterance.<sup>9</sup> From this point of view, one pervasive conversational concern is "newsworthiness", ie. the question of whether a piece of information is tellable, whether the recipient knows it

already (Sacks 1974, Jefferson 1978a, Heritage 1984). Another concern is the need to furnish a basis for knowledge --to build into an utterance an indication of "how I know" (Pomerantz 1984). Yet another recurrent concern is with the why of behaviours. Conversational participants are constantly engaged in telling why --providing, for a variety of purposes, reasons for some action, argument, or assessment, and, in so doing, appeal to the recipient's rationality and understanding (Pomerantz 1986).

Each of the three utterance particles studied in this thesis is responsive to some aspect of recipient design. As we have seen, the particle LA is responsive to the question of the availability of shared understanding, and the adequacy of a description. With the use of this particle, a formulation is *presented explicitly* as one whose sense and import the recipient can be counted on to work out.

LO is a device with which conversational participants *display their orientation to questions* such as whether something is a reasonable thing to do given some circumstances, or whether some proposition is a logical conclusion to draw from a set of premises, and, related to these, whether a state-of-affairs is natural, unremarkable, and unremarkable. All this presupposes a recipient-analysis. To present something to a recipient as natural, only-reasonable, or unremarkable is to appeal to his/her ability to see it that way, eg. to apply certain principles of common-sense reasoning to a particular situation and arrive at a similar conclusion or judgement.

The third particle, WO, is sensitive to questions concerning the expectedness or unexpectedness of a situation --whether an utterance should be presented as confirming or upsetting the

recipient's expectations. With WO, a state-of-affairs may be described as one which is unexpected and therefore noteworthy and commentworthy, and, through that, a variety of interactional purposes may be served.

From this point of view, then, utterance particles in Cantonese are a means with which speakers can signal their awareness of and orientation to the recipient. They provide a resource in the language for conversational participants to design their utterances with particular reference to the person to whom a stretch of talk is directed.

Just what categories and distinctions are relevant here? What are the parameters that enter into recipient design? And what kinds of linguistic means are available to express them? These are empirical questions through and through. It would be interesting to find out what parameters there are, which ones are universal, and which ones specific to particular communities, cultures, and languages. Being grammaticalizations of categories and distinctions relevant to recipient design, utterance particles in different languages may well provide us with invaluable clues as to what these parameters are and how they figure in different languages. My study has revealed that parameters such as "the adequacy of a description", "remarkableness" and "expectedness" are built into the design of utterances through the use of utterance particles in Cantonese. As these are intersubjective categories and are pragmatic and social in nature, it should come as no surprise that utterance particles are best approached from the point of view of their functions in social interaction.

## 6.2 Sequential Organization

It has been shown how the contributions of utterance particles to meanings-in-context need to be analyzed with reference to sequential environments. The statement of sequential structures in turn has to make reference to particular utterance particles.

For instance, in specifying the structure of a Realization sequence, WO needs to be recognized as one of a small set of resources that can serve as a turn constructional component. Recall that the structure of a Realization sequence (see Section 7 of Chapter 5) is as follows:

Position 1: Revelation

Position 2: Realization

Position 3: Confirmation

The construction of a turn occupying Position 2 of this sequence typically makes use of certain kinds of turn constructional resources. Specifically, it needs to be designed in such a way as to signal a change in the speaker's knowledge state as a result of some recently received information, with an indication that this newly acquired piece of information is somehow unusual, extraordinary, or unexpected. WO is one of the regular devices that can be used in constructing turns with these features. It is therefore often found occupying this particular position in a Realization sequence, and contributes to its organization.

As another example, recall that LA has a special role to play in pre-closing. Following a topic boundary, pre-closing is regularly achieved through the use of an adjacency pair, both parts of which are occupied by turns containing LA suffixed to such materials as "see you on Saturday" (*singkei-luk gin LA*),

"good" (*hou LA*), "OK" (*OK LA*), and "that's it" (*hai goum sin LA*). As in the previous example, the statement of the pre-closing adjacency pair will need to make special reference to certain types of LA-suffixed utterances.

On the basis of such findings, it should be an expectable feature of many utterance particles in the language that, as a kind of turn constructional resource, they would have significant contributions towards sequential organization.

### 6.3 Preference Organization

Mention has been made in the analysis chapters to the ways in which some occurrences of utterance particles are responsive to, and describable in terms of, preference structures. Indeed, at least one of them contributes in interesting ways to their organization.

Some of the uses of WO are best described in terms of preference organizations. In sequences which contain in their first position a rule- or norm-citation, a request to establish contact, or a confirmation-seeking token, second pair-parts are differentially designed, depending on whether they respond positively or negatively to the first pair-parts. In particular, positive responses in these sequence types are systematically preferred. Negative responses are dispreferred, and are designed in special ways. One of the uses of WO is to contribute to the design of dispreferred turn shapes in such sequences: it is regularly found suffixed to challenges to a rule- or norm-citation, non-compliance with a request to establish contact, and disconfirmations.

#### 6.4 *Topic Organization*

One recurrent theme of this study is the way resources are made use of by participants to organize their talk in terms of topic. In this respect, it is interesting to consider the role that utterance particles play in the initiation, establishment, continuation, and termination of a topic. (Goldberg 1981, Button & Casey 1984, Jefferson 1984, Schiffrin 1987)

Since I have already considered in some detail the uses of the three particles as linguistic resources for the accomplishment of topic generation, continuation, shift, and termination, I will do no more than summarize the most significant findings in fairly general terms.

In Chapter 5, we saw how WO is sometimes used to do 'informing someone', ie. to provide a piece of information that is likely to be unexpected to the recipient. In various sequential locations this has the effect of a news announcement. Following a substantial pause, a WO-suffixed utterance can often be heard as retrospectively constituting the silence as a topic boundary, and, further, offering a topic-initial elicitor (Button & Casey 1984), ie. introducing potentially topicalizable material, and, through that, contributing towards the generation of topic.

LA occurs in various kinds of sequential structures (eg. reportings and listings) and behaves in many ways like a topic continuer. Its occurrence in these sequences is regularly heard as a continuation proposal. Thus, unlike WO, which may be heard as proposing to start a new topic, LA contributes systematically to the maintenance and furtherance of talk on a current topic.

In this respect, LO has properties rather different from the other two particles. Its occurrence in specific sequential places (eg. in an answer-turn) is non-contributive to topical progression. It is regularly heard in such positions as passing the turn back on to the co-participant, and withholding progress on the current topic. In other sequential environments (eg. in a story- or report-component), it often functions to propose ending.

It should therefore be clear that a description of utterance particles in Cantonese would benefit from a consideration not only of the various kinds of organizations so far mentioned, but also the ways in which these objects have systematic contributions to make to conversational interaction at the level of topic organization.

### *6.5 Conversational Charting*

A related problem in the business of conducting a conversation, which participants orient to, and exploit linguistic resources in order to deal with, is that of charting; for example, 'where we are' and 'what to do next'. Utterance particles provide a means with which this problem can be handled, so that participants can make manifest to each other at what point they are in a co-ordinated project, and what they might do next. This aspect of conversational organization has been described in the following terms:

"...CA is examining conversation ... as a self-explicating system...The policy involves seeing how the setting makes its own organization visible to participants, how its arrangements can be examined from within so that people can see 'what is happening here' and determine 'what we are supposed to do now'. Thus, when applied to conversation it means examining how the talk

making up the conversation is organized so that parties to it can determine 'what has been said', 'what we are talking about', 'where we are in this conversation', 'what further course this conversation might take' and so on." (Sharrock & Anderson 1987:313)

In this respect, LA and LO are particularly interesting. As mentioned above, LA has a forward-looking quality and regularly projects further talk. In this sense, it is a device for the doing of continuation and carrying-on-with-an-unfinished-account. LO, on the other hand, is essentially backward-looking and withholds topical progress. It is thus a device that contributes mainly to the doing of ending, concluding and the like. An interesting consequence of this difference is that should further talk from the current speaker follow their occurrence, these are heard in systematically different ways. Further talk from the current speaker following the occurrence of LA can be, and regularly is, heard as continuation. In the case of LO, however, this will typically be heard as the speaker pursuing a response; as, in general, an extension.

From the point of view of conversational charting, it is an important question whether an ongoing project (eg. the telling of a story) is being continued, and yet to be finished, or whether it has come to a possible end, but is now being extended. These are matters that have been shown to be pervasively oriented to by participants (eg. Sacks 1974). My analysis of the particles LA and LO suggests that different means may be available in different languages to deal with these interactional problems. Conversation being a minimally two-party activity, methods must be available to interlocutors with which problems to do with the co-ordination of their actions can be tackled. Utterance particles are from this point of view one kind of resource in

some languages with which participants can from time to time document to each other where they are in the course of a project. The conversation would then be constantly and reflexively providing information about itself. Here we have a good example of the sense in which "a conversation" itself may be said to be a joint accomplishment.

#### *6.6 The Pervasiveness of Utterance Particles in Natural Conversation*

In addition to the above dimensions, my study has, I believe, rendered noticeable a question which, once mentioned, and seen in the light of the kinds of properties discussed above, would seem as if it could not possibly be simpler and more obvious. It is a question that stares one in the face as soon as one confronts some speech data: why are utterance particles so massively and pervasively present in naturally occurring Cantonese conversation? My results and findings suggest that they form a class of conversational objects whose functions are primarily conversation organizational. It should therefore come as no surprise that they are pervasive in ordinary conversation but drastically reduced in frequency of occurrence or prominence in writing and other modes of communication.

All in all, I believe that a conversation interactional approach offers a fresh point of departure for the study of linguistic objects like utterance particles which are particularly unyielding to conventional linguistic treatments. The range of observations that this perspective has allowed me to make about three utterance particles in Cantonese should have provided good evidence that this approach has interesting potentials worthy of further exploration.

## CHAPTER 7

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

#### 1. The Relevance of Conversation Analysis to Linguistics

##### *1.1 Inter-disciplinary Considerations*

One of the most exciting standpoints for an understanding of language is at the cross-roads between disciplines which share a theoretical interest in linguistic phenomena. Unfortunately, for someone who wants to occupy such a position, there is a price to pay. These inter-disciplinary points of contact are often places where one is most likely to feel disoriented, even lost. This is particularly true when the disciplines involved are striving to become 'scientific', and are determined to maintain their respective boundaries in the fear that impurities from outside might weaken their claim to a scientific status.

Linguists and sociologists are often quick to point out that certain kinds of interest in, and certain ways of dealing with, language and speech, are un-linguistic or un-sociological. Button & Lee, in their Preface to a recent collection of CA papers (Button & Lee 1987), record the somewhat unusual fact that Ethno-methodologists and Conversation Analysts are often considered by sociologists as linguists, and by linguists as sociologists. (pp.1-2) One intriguing problem raised by CA is, in so far as linguistic interaction is concerned, whether inter-disciplinary collaboration between Linguistics and Sociology is possible. While this is a question that many 'borderline workers' must have considered, there have been relatively few direct discussions of the problems involved.<sup>1</sup>

In the Prologue and Epilogue to Button & Lee (1987), Lee and Sharrock & Anderson present two much needed in-depth discussions of the problematical inter-relation between CA (as a sociological school) and linguistics. Lee notes that the two disciplines have very different theoretical and methodological orientations, so much so that CA's theoretical insights and empirical findings may be of limited interest to linguists because of the incompatibility between two very different sets of assumptions.

"The problem is that by and large the methodologies of current linguistics militate against an interest in natural conversational organization. Linguists tend to work with a *priori* theories, 'scientific' models or with interest in what is taken to be grammatical construction. If linguists approach naturally occurring materials at all, they tend to do so with a 'scientific' model or hypothesis in mind. Natural materials under such a scheme represent a resource or an auxiliary for testing or supporting a *priori* theorizing. Problems which linguists pose relate to whether or how the data might confirm a theory or support the use of a model. This has the consequence that *natural materials are not, and cannot be, investigated in their own right.*" (Lee 1987:50; original emphasis)

It is true that on the whole the two traditions have quite different theoretical and methodological assumptions. Current schools of linguistics are almost without exception hypothesis-forming-and-testing in character. With a *priori* theorizing as a primary and overarching concern, most linguists are debarred from taking a genuine interest in naturally occurring speech and conversation. Natural linguistic data are of interest to this kind of enquiry only in so far as they provide a means of confirming or disconfirming an hypothesis formulated as a set of predictive statements about what would and what would not happen. But what does happen and the details of what happens (ie. linguistic activities) are left imperceivable, and therefore unattended to and unanalyzed. CA, on the other hand, tends to

start its enquiries from within natural speech data, looks for patterns that emerge from the data, and seeks to explicate how participants manage to produce those patterns. That is, it sets out to study speech data as phenomena that are of theoretical interest in their own right.

On the basis of these observations, both Lee and Sharrock & Anderson argue that "*at present* there are severe difficulties of understanding" between the two subjects. (Sharrock & Anderson 1987:319) In other words, the present state of the art is such that the possibility of a mutually beneficial collaboration seems remote. According to this view, if CA has anything to offer to *linguistics*, it would do so only at a highly abstract and general theoretical level, rather than in the form of any specific contributions to the solution of linguistic problems.

"...the main value of CA to linguistics and to discourse analysis is not to be found in the way it might provide an auxiliary basis for testing already existing theories or contributing to the solution of pre-established puzzles, but in revealing the significance of the fact that... language-in-use is pervasively a matter of social organization." (Lee 1987:51)

The revelation that "language-in-use is pervasively a matter of social organization" is by no means a peripheral matter or a neglectable message for linguistics. Even if this were all that CA had to offer to linguistics, it would still be a proposition that merits linguists' close attention. Taken seriously, the fact that language-in-use is in a fundamental way socially organized is an insight that should have immense repercussions for our investigations into the question of the possibility of communication. This is not only a preoccupation of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, but must also be of central relevance to linguistic theory, which is concerned among other things with the

nature of the organizations that govern the operation of linguistic communication.

While Lee's and Sharrock & Anderson's are by and large fair appraisals of the situation, it seems to me that there is perhaps more to the connection and interaction between the two disciplines. It would be a most unsatisfactory state-of-affairs if a powerful and successful line of investigation of language-in-use like CA were to have little relevance to linguistics. Whatever happens to be currently in vogue, linguistics is after all a subject whose primary preoccupation is with the understanding of how languages work. It would seem rather strange that two disciplines, both claiming to take an active interest in language, should have little to say to each other.<sup>2</sup>

And it is not entirely true that the questions and concerns underlying the CA programme are alien to the linguist either. For example, one of the aims of CA is to specify the mechanisms with which meanings are assigned to utterances in conversation. Its central concern being the problem of social order -- specifically, the problem of the relationship between the meaning of social actions and their organization and coordination-- an important problematic is the relationship between the meanings of utterances and the principles that govern their organization. Clearly, to the extent that linguistics is concerned with the relations between linguistic forms and meanings, the specification of meaning is precisely one of its central concerns. That is, whatever else linguists may be interested in, they would not wish to avoid the problems of the description of the meanings of linguistic expressions. But since semantics has traditionally been the most problematical, if not the weakest, area in linguistics, contemporary studies of meaning have found it useful

and beneficial to import ideas from other disciplines, most notably philosophy (eg. both Searle and Grice are philosophers). In this context, it is interesting to note that CA's concerns as outlined above would seem to bear some resemblance to those that motivate speech act theory (Searle) and theories about the nature and mechanism of conversational inferencing (eg. Grice's ideas about conversational implicatures). In the same way that these ideas have provided some much needed stimulation for the linguist, I believe that many difficulties linguistics has been having in the area of semantics and pragmatics would benefit from a greater awareness and familiarity with the CA tradition.<sup>3</sup>

I submit that however incompatible the two disciplines may seem to be in some respects, and however difficult it is in practice to foster inter-disciplinary collaboration, there are important reasons why CA's theoretical insights, analytical techniques, and empirical findings ought to be made more widely known to, and taken more seriously by linguists.

Some recent linguistic studies have been conducted using theoretical and methodological tools from CA, and have made significant contributions to our understanding of existing linguistic problems, as well as discovered new (hitherto imperceivable) ones. In a series of papers, John Local, Peter French, and their colleagues (eg. French & Local 1984; Local et al. 1985, 1986) have opened up unprecedented and exciting ways of looking at and tackling a range of problems in phonological description. For instance, in a paper on Tyneside English, Local et al. (1986) tackle a long-standing problem in phonology: how is the delimitation of linguistic units organized at the phonological level? As the authors point out, this is a problem

that goes at least as far back as Trubetzkoy (1939), but has received relatively little attention since then. Little progress has been made on the identification and description of the phonological properties of delimitative systems. Traditionally, the assumption has been that phonological means of signalling the boundaries of linguistic units (eg. sentence, word, morpheme) are ancillary. Phonological features are from this point of view optional extras haphazardly tagged onto units which are identifiable independently (eg. syntactically and/or semantically). Using the turn in conversation as a basic unit, the authors were able to identify and describe clusters of phonetic features having systematic distributional properties in terms of the turn-taking system (eg. positions definable as "turn-beginnings" and "turn-ends"). More importantly, the features so identified and described are shown to be attended to not only by the analysts but also by the conversation participants themselves. The problem of the phonology of delimitative systems thus turns out to be one that can be handled systematically and satisfactorily in terms of how turns are interactively constructed, and how phonetic resources take part in such organizations. By thus re-examining an old problem in a new light, the authors have succeeded in opening up interesting possibilities for phonological description.

In a number of related studies using naturally occurring conversational data from other varieties of English, more has been uncovered concerning the relations between clusters of phonetic features and interactive functions. (French & Local 1984, Local et al. 1985, Local 1986, Local & Kelly 1986) As a result, much more is now known about the ways in which complexes

of phonetic features are used to do interactive work such as turn-transition, turn-competition, turn-holding, and turn-yielding. Thus, far from being irrelevant, or of merely peripheral interest to linguistics, CA has proved through these studies to be capable of generating questions and analyses that would address the linguist's stock-in-trade, and issues which are central to the linguist's preoccupation with the relations between linguistic forms and functions.

My own investigation of utterance particles in Cantonese supports the position that some linguistic problems would benefit from an integration with CA. Various kinds of speech particles in many languages have been known to linguists for a long time. However, as shown in the previous chapter, traditional descriptions using sentence-type, modality, or speech act perspectives have proved unsatisfactory in constructing comprehensive and compelling accounts of these linguistic items. Recent theoretical and methodological input from CA has given rise to new ways of looking at these expressions and has led to the discovery of organizations hitherto unnoticed and undescribed. For instance, the Cantonese utterance particles LA and LO turn out to have interesting roles to play in the interactive management of *continuation* and *extension* in reporting and story-telling. More generally, it has become clear in my investigation that their *raison d'être* is fundamentally conversation interactional in nature. On the whole, I think it is fair to say that CA has provided a useful impetus to our investigation of these objects, and has shown that, before linguistic expressions are dismissed far too quickly as meaningless or unstructured, much more needs to be done to

examine in detail their distribution and functioning in natural conversation.

But the benefits do not simply go in one direction. Linguistics should have something to offer to CA too. One way in which linguists would have a contribution to make to the study of conversational interaction arises from the fact that they have long been concerned with the identification and description of phonetic details. Thus, for instance, an important area of research left fairly open in Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson's seminal paper on turn-taking (1974) concerns the characterization and specification of the notion of transition relevance place -- for instance, what linguistic resources are there in different languages for the constitution of TRPs? This is obviously of great importance to CA, and it is a problem that should benefit from analytical efforts from linguists. Unfortunately, on the whole linguists have not been very forthcoming on these problems, partly as a result of a lack of understanding between the two disciplines. However, the various papers discussed above by Local, French and others on the applications of CA methods to phonological description are an honourable exception to this impasse. In their various papers, these workers have identified significant phonetic features that go into the operation of the turn-taking system which Conversation Analysts have either ignored, overlooked, or, because of their lack of linguistic expertise, been unable to describe.

It is interesting in this connection to note that Gail Jefferson, a leading worker in CA, has acknowledged the linguist's contribution. In a recently published paper (Jefferson 1986) she suggests that greater care would need to be

taken in capturing finer phonetic details in the transcription of conversational data. For this, phoneticians and linguists would be able to provide a valuable contribution. The view is clearly expressed in this paper that expertise from "sequentially-oriented phonologists" (1986:182) would be an asset and a gain to CA.

Thus, while I appreciate the magnitude of the problems involved in trying to make linguists and Conversation Analysts listen to each other, these difficulties are perhaps not insurmountable. As a linguist, I believe that CA does have relevance to linguistic research. But it may not be the kind of relevance that is immediately apparent. Rather than providing linguists with "a *mechanical* procedure for identifying the interactive function of a given utterance type" (Sharrock & Anderson 1987:305), CA invites them to reflect upon some fundamental aspects of their practice. In what follows I shall mention very briefly a number of specific contributions of CA to linguistic methods.

## *1.2 Methodological Reappraisal*

*1.2.1 Linguistic data.* The value and crucial importance of naturally occurring speech data is not often recognized in linguistics. I have argued in Chapter 2 that not only are natural speech data admissible and usable, there are reasons why they are superior to other kinds of data (eg. those generated by intuition, memory, or imagination; or 'survey data' of the socio-linguistic kind). This is especially true for those who claim to be studying linguistic behaviour. For these linguists, it would be most unrealistic to dodge naturally occurring data. Rather

than dismissing them out of hand, or merely treating them cursorily, we have no alternative but to face them squarely, and make our descriptions accountable to them. One of the most disturbing problems that has been plaguing the subject is that research results often do not add up to anything or do not seem to be heading anywhere. Disagreements often begin from the very basic question of whether some alleged linguistic activity does or does not actually occur, making arguments, not to mention progress, extremely difficult. Until linguists can sit down and examine records of what speakers do and say, and take that as uncontroversial data, there would not be any hope for arguments over the relative merits of competing *analysis* to contribute to progress in the subject. It is only on the basis of naturally occurring data which are open to re-examination and re-analysis that research efforts in linguistics would become truly cumulative.

*1.2.2 Linguistic details.* A related question is the amount of trouble that linguists are willing to take in examining speech materials. Conventional linguistic descriptions typically gloss over such details as the exact location of the onset of an utterance, laughter, pauses and silences, etc. Work in CA has shown convincingly that participants often attend to details which might be dismissed in an *a priori* manner as inconsequential. My analyses of the utterance particles have provided numerous examples of the ways in which the identification of the interactive functions of a particle depends on such linguistic details being taken into consideration. For example, post-LA silences are typically dealt with in very different ways from post-L0 silences. Were such silences not treated seriously, many

interesting observations would have been missed. I believe that linguistic research would benefit from a greater readiness to go into the details of linguistic activities.

*1.2.3 Evidence.* It should be in the interest of the subject to set stringent requirements on what is to count as evidence for or against proposed analyses. It is customary in linguistics to be given an example sentence, and be told that its meaning is so-and-so, or that it is ambiguous. And yet we are seldom given an account of how these 'meanings' are arrived at. For instance, what kinds of context would need to be presupposed? It could be argued that the analyst's specification of the meaning of a sentence is but one possible interpretation of it, and not necessarily the most interesting one either. If we want to learn about the ways in which meanings are arrived at in the actual course of a speech event, then it would be desirable to have a constraint according to which claims and proposals must be built upon evidence in the data: the analyst needs to show that such claims and proposals fit in with the way in which the utterance in question is actually treated by the conversational participants. With such a constraint, we would be in a better position to argue about the relative merits of competing proposals.

*1.2.4 Linguistics for the Hearer.* One of the characteristics of conventional linguistic research is a prevalent preoccupation with 'the speaker'. As recently as 1987, the need was felt to publicize and advocate the hearer's perspective: a collection of papers was published with a view to "redress the speaker-oriented bias" of the subject. (McGregor 1987) In the Preface, Parker-Rhodes is quoted as saying:

"Ours is a speakers' civilization and our linguistics has accordingly concerned itself almost solely with the speaker's problem... The skilful speaker wins praise; the skilful listener, despite the mystery of his achievement, is ignored." (McGregor 1987, p.xi)

It can be argued that the hearer's perspective should be given as much, if not greater, attention in linguistic theory. For one thing, speaker intentions are in principle not open to observation or verification, and would therefore be a dubious parameter to use for a basis of linguistic description. But the hearer's perspective needs to be stressed too if for no other reason than the crucial role that hearing plays in the production of meaning in communicative situations. Further, there is a range of linguistic phenomena the satisfactory handling of which will require a hearer's perspective, eg. speech processing, speaker recognition, child language acquisition, sociolinguistic variation, and the effect of different kinds of hearer roles (eg. addressee vs. eavesdropper) on comprehension, to name just a few.

The same is true for grammar. Hockett, in his contribution to McGregor (1987), argues that grammar for the hearer should have priority over grammar for the speaker, since "hearing... involves all the operations involved in speaking, but speaking involves all the operations involved in hearing, plus the logistic operation of scanning ahead and making choices." (Hockett 1987:67)

Thus, one beneficial influence of CA's would be a healthy shift of focus from an over-concern with such parameters as speaker-intentions and speaker-identity to a more balanced approach which takes the hearer's perspective duly into account.

*1.2.5 A Badly Needed Empirical Tradition.* As a summary of the points mentioned above, consider again this somewhat puzzling

feature of modern linguistics, namely, its relative neglect of speech materials and naturally occurring linguistic behaviour and activities. One would have thought that linguistics, being a discipline that studies language and speech, would be interested in questions such as the ways in which people get things done through speaking. In this sense, it might come as something of a paradox that modern linguistics is much more well known for its *a priori* theorizing about such matters as the properties of the human mind, than its interest or expertise in handling speech materials. This in itself is neither a praise nor a criticism, until one realizes that the progress and the future of the subject may depend critically upon the existence of an empirical tradition. In aspiring to become an academically respectable discipline, linguistics would need at the very least a tradition in which researchers share the conviction that an account of any linguistic phenomenon must stand or fall on the basis of its adequacy vis-a-vis linguistic materials that are publicly available. In this context, it is worth considering seriously the following searching question of Levinson's (1983), which applies just as much to pragmatics as it does to linguistics on the whole; viz. the question of:

"... whether pragmatics is in the long term an essentially empirical discipline or an essentially philosophical one, and whether the present lack of integration in the subject is due primarily to the absence of adequate theory and conceptual analysis or to the lack of adequate observational data, and indeed an empirical tradition." (1983: 285)

For the various reasons briefly mentioned in this section, if for no other, the relevance of CA to linguistic studies ought, in my view, to occupy a much more central place in our theoretical and methodological deliberations.

## 2. Towards a Socially Constituted Linguistics

### 2.1 *Traditional Sociolinguistics as a Social Adjunct to Linguistic Theory*

One place in linguistics where the beginning of an empirical tradition might be found is sociolinguistics. An impetus for the rapid development of modern sociolinguistics has been a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the *a priori* and highly idealized character of linguistic theorizing. Generative grammar is clear and explicit in excluding linguistic performance as a viable form of empirical data (Chomsky 1965). Sociolinguistics represents in this sense a major attempt to break away from the limitations imposed by linguistic theory on the study of speech phenomena (linguistic performance). In some ways it can be seen as a proposal to put an empirical element back into linguistics.

However, instead of happily going on to put substance into that proposal, sociolinguistics quickly found itself slipping back into the same mould of thinking from which it sought to free itself.

For a time, the most popular brands of sociolinguistics were the sociology of language (Fishman 1970, 1972) and the quantitative paradigm (Labov 1972a, 1972b). The former is concerned with the description of patterns and changes in the 'habitual language use' of a community of speakers; for example, how, in a multi-lingual community, the language varieties making up the community's linguistic repertoire are distributed in terms of socio-culturally defined spheres of activities (the notion of *domain*, eg. Fishman 1970, 1972). The quantitative paradigm, in its turn, is concerned primarily with the problem of variation; for example, how the variant forms of a linguistic item are distributed in terms of such social categories as class, sex and

ethnicity.

On the face of it, these two fields of research may look rather different. The sociology of language is concerned with highly abstract and schematic societal patterns of language use and language choice. The quantitative paradigm, on the other hand, deals with 'smaller-scale' regularities in the occurrence of linguistic items (mostly phonological segments) in the speech of individuals. And yet in a crucial sense these two fields of research share a very similar notion, which is the *social distribution of language*. They are united in so far as there is no difference between them on the question of how "social factors" should enter linguistic description. For both approaches, "social factors" provide a basic, pre-existing, and independently identifiable grid in terms of which the *distribution of language varieties or language items* can be charted. Essentially in both types of sociolinguistics, language (as *variety or as item*) is regarded as a dependent variable, and a host of social categories as independent variables. The aim is then to test the statistical significance of relations between these two sets of variables. In this sense, the two fields of research may be regarded as versions of a correlational sociolinguistics.

Correlational sociolinguistics has created at least two sorts of problems. Firstly, there is the problem of empirical data. As mentioned above, sociolinguistics could be seen as an attempt to put an empirical element back into linguistics. But neither the sociology of language nor the quantitative paradigm are too much about linguistic performance or the activities of speaking as such. Working with highly idealized categories like

class and ethnicity, correlational sociolinguistics takes an interest in natural speech data only in so far as occurrences of linguistic variables can be found in them, counted, and used to confirm or disconfirm *a priori* hypotheses concerning the relations between linguistic and social variables. The hope of replacing grammatical theory with an empirical tradition has therefore been ironically abandoned.

A second problem with correlational sociolinguistics has to do with the status of its descriptive statements. Roughly, the problem is: how can the patterns that it has identified and described be, as it were, translated into actual and particular instances of talk? More accurately, how can actual scenes of, and moments in, verbal interaction be seen through these alleged schemes and patterns, and be described in terms of them? For example, a particular act of code-choice may violate the specifications in a dominance configuration. An instance of a particular variant form of a linguistic item neither confirms nor disconfirms a variable rule. It has of course been argued that these statements are not meant to be predictive, and that systematicity exists only at the level of statistical descriptions. Nevertheless, it would not be unfair to ask: if sociolinguistic patterns are in the last analysis summaries of observations made at the level of face-to-face interaction, then why is it that actual acts of speaking and the dynamics of interaction have suddenly become invisible once these sociolinguistic patterns have been formulated?

A deep source of trouble underlying these difficulties is the static character of these frameworks. Most models of language are static in character, in the sense that the

relationship between form and meaning is regarded as (at any synchronic stage of a language) unchanging and "omnipresent". The imagery here is mapping, or function, in the mathematical sense. A set of forms is mapped onto a set of meanings. While the relations between these sets of elements may undergo changes and modifications as a result of contextualization, they remain essentially and fundamentally constant. Correlational sociolinguistics has added some social categories to the set of meanings, but the nature and character of the framework remains essentially the same.

Thus, far from challenging or rectifying the limitation imposed by this structuralist axiom (one form, one meaning) on the empirical study of speech data, correlational sociolinguistics accepted it with minimal modifications. "Extra-linguistic factors" enter the description in a way which only reinforces the staticness of the form-meaning relationship. But the question of whether, and if so, how, these social categories are *constituted* through linguistic activities is left unasked. A consequence of having a static model is that little attention can be given to the ways in which meaning unfolds dynamically in the course of a verbal interaction, and the ways in which sociolinguistic patterns feature in the actual business of communication.

In this way, correlational sociolinguistics, rather than breaking away from linguistic theory, was ironically reinforcing its assumptions. At the level of theory, therefore, sociolinguistics was in the danger of becoming nothing more than a kind of social adjunct to theories of grammar. Indeed, for a time, the sociolinguistic literature was littered with such

notions as variable rules, statistical competence, community grammar, and the like --notions which were devised to supplement conventional grammatical descriptions, and to ensure that they generate the correct output.

## 2.2 *A Socially Constituted Linguistics*

The "social factors" that form the backbone of correlational sociolinguistics have come to be seriously questioned in recent years.<sup>4</sup> One of the most articulated statements is the following by Gumperz (1982:29):

"Social scientists of many persuasions are now questioning the very basis of traditional ethnic and social categories. Earlier views in which larger social aggregates were seen as made up of independent culture bearing population units have begun to be abandoned in favor of more dynamic views of social environments where history, economic forces and interactive processes as such combine either to create or to eliminate social distinctions.

"In this view, ethnic categories, like the social categories studied by sociologists interested in small group interactions, are coming to be seen as symbolic entities which, subject to constraints imposed by history, can be manipulated by individuals to gain their ends in everyday interaction. If both social and linguistic categories are thus signalled and subject to change in response to similar forces, how can one set of categories be used to establish an objective basis against which to evaluate the other?"

Gumperz is questioning here the very assumption that linguistic variables can be described in terms of social variables which are somehow definable and identifiable independently of language, and that this somehow constitutes an explanation of linguistic phenomena. But if the social categories themselves turn out to belong to the symbolic order, then the relationship between them and language is likely to be much more complex than a straight-forward one of language marking or signalling social categories, which has been the assumption behind traditional sociolinguistics.

For instance, it is customary in sociolinguistics to think

of social relationships as determinants of linguistic forms. But there is also a sense in which social relationships can be *heard through talk*. Indeed, the Ethnomethodologist would suggest that there may even be a reflexive (mutually explicating) relation between these two sorts of categories. There is a need therefore for "a shift from considering how social relationships determine the course of talk to asking what social relationships consist in, considered as exchanges of talk." (Sharrock & Anderson 1987:318)

Le Page has also expressed interesting views on these issues. He insists that every act of speaking is to some extent an "instant pidgin" (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985:202), created on a particular occasion, designed in specific ways to suit the particularities of the circumstances, and responsive to such parameters of variation as who the interlocutor is (construed to be), what he or she can be expected to know, and so on. That is, the "social meaning" of an act of speech cannot be given exhaustively by a set of sociolinguistic rules (or, for that matter, any other kind of rules). Thus, for him, "meaning is always to some extent idiosyncratic" (ibid., p.208) This in a way echoes the ethnomethodological notion that meaning is always to some extent an occasioned accomplishment. Traditional models of language and society cannot really allow an analyst to see the kinds of complex relations between language and society alluded to by Le Page, let alone handle any of these insights satisfactorily.

It would seem worthwhile in this context to reconsider a programmatic statement made by Hymes back in 1972 about the need for an as yet non-existent kind of sociolinguistics, a "socially

constituted linguistics", in addition to, and ultimately to replace, a "socially realistic" one. In a concluding address to the 23rd Round Table on Language and Linguistics, Georgetown University, Hymes (1974:196) proposed a "socially constituted linguistics" as a vision for the future:

"The phrase *socially constituted* is intended to express the view that social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life...Such a point of view cannot leave normal linguistic theory unchallenged... A 'socially constituted' linguistics is concerned with... language as part of communicative conduct and social action." (Hymes 1974:197)

The emphasis here is on the way in which language may be seen and studied as part of communicative conduct and social action; indeed, as communicative conduct and social action. One interpretation of this proposal is that a socially constituted linguistics will be one in which "social factors" are given the meanings that they have for the participants themselves in an emerging social scene; where the 'socio' of linguistics is no longer an adjunct but an essential ingredient of linguistic theory. When seen in this light, sociolinguistics as we know it today has a long way to go before anything approaching an adequate description is available of the complex ways in which the meaning of an act of speech is reflexively related to the social setting in which it occurs, and of which it forms a constitutive part.

Nevertheless, some attempts have been made in that direction. For instance, Gumperz (1982) has established a valuable research tradition in which the primary focus is on language as social interaction, and the ways in which common-sense reasoning enters into interpretation and understanding. Hence, "interactional sociolinguistics". On another front, Labov

& Fanshel (1977) illustrate an approach to the study of talk by turning the analytic attention away from social categories and their correlations with linguistic items towards the explication of linguistic forms and meanings within the context of an unfolding discourse.

These traditions share certain similar concerns and interests with, although they are also very different from, conversation analysis.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the outcome of their mutual influence, they have drawn our attention strongly towards the possibility and value of studying *speaking* as a social activity in its own right, and to shift our emphasis from static *linguistic items and patterns of variation* to *speaking* as a dynamic process.

My own investigation of the Cantonese particles has, I hope, *provided some illustration for the value of an interactional and interpretive sociolinguistics* in tackling linguistic problems. In particular, as discussed in the previous chapter, the close contextualized examination of these conversational objects has uncovered a number of interesting ways in which interactional problems can be seen to have motivated their participation in the organization of language.

In the light of this scenario, it is interesting to note two developments in recent years, namely, a shift of emphasis from speaker to hearer, or, more accurately, to language as social interaction; and, secondly, a change from the concern with linguistic items (phonological and other variables) to the investigation of how linguistic resources participate in and integrate with complex inferential and sense-making procedures in communicative situations. Brown and Levinson (1987:2) describe

this shift thus:

"a shift in emphasis from the current preoccupation with speaker-identity, to a focus on dyadic patterns of verbal interaction as the expression of social relationships; and from emphasis on the usage of linguistic forms, to an emphasis on the relation between form and complex inference." (Brown & Levinson 1987:2)

This shift of focus from the speaker to the hearer would mean that one can begin to envisage not only rules of speaking, but also "rules of listening" (Coulter 1973:181). Hymes (1986:59) shares the view that traditional perspectives have been restricted far too much to "the speaker as a reference point".

While it is always dangerous to predict or to project, it might not be too optimistic to say, at this juncture, that the prospect of a socially constituted linguistics is looking a little more of a possibility than before, although this is still far from being a certainty. It would be rewarding indeed if the investigation reported in this thesis turns out to have made a contribution to this emerging tradition, and to have paid tribute to the various sources of inspiration which could well be on the way to forging a new kind of linguistics for the future.

## Notes

### Chapter 1

1. Ma Shi Wen Tong, first published in 1898 by Ma Jianzhong, and generally regarded as the first modern grammar of Chinese, has been highly influential in Chinese grammatical studies in the twentieth century. Y.R. Chao, for example, in his A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, mentions Ma as the first person to whom he owes an intellectual debt (Chao 1968:ix).

2. There has been an implicit assumption in grammatical studies of Chinese in the past that, when an English gloss is given to an example sentence, the linguistic phenomenon (whatever it is) is then somehow deemed to have been described. But the provision of a gloss is clearly not the equivalent of, nor can it ever be a substitute for, analysis. To give a gloss in another language is to translate, which achieves nothing more than delaying the analysis.

3. Chao (1968:503) discusses the distinction between form and content words as follows:

"(1) Full or content words, of open classes, or low or medium frequency, mostly tonal, for example, *zhu* (pig), *lan* (blue), *pao* (run), *kwai* (fast), and (2) empty or function words, of listable classes, of high frequency, mostly atonal (neutral), for example, *shi* (is), *de* (thereof), *zai* (at), *ba* (interrogative or advisative particle)."

It is interesting that he gives an utterance particle as an example of a function (empty) word.

4. The same observation has been made about Finnish clitics. Karttunen (1975b:9) remarks that these clitics, which from Karttunen's description in many ways look like sentence particles in Chinese and Japanese, are a "speech phenomenon", frequently encountered in speech, but much less so in writing.

### Chapter 2

1. Apart from Garfinkel's own work (1984 [1967]), general accounts of Ethnomethodology are available in , Wootton (1975), Atkinson & Drew (1979), Heritage (1984), Sharrock & Anderson (1986), and the Introductions to various collections, eg. Atkinson & Heritage (1984) and Button & Lee (1987).

2. See, for example, Lyons (1977), ch.15 and Levinson (1983), ch.2.

3. More detailed and comprehensive accounts of CA are available in the literature: Atkinson & Drew (1979), ch.1; West & Zimmerman (1982), Levinson (1983), ch.6; Heritage (1984), ch.8 and (1985); Sharrock & Anderson (1986), ch.6; and Wootton (1975).

### Chapter 3

1. Yau is forced by his own conception of a "denotative value scale" into postulating half-way categories like "SQ-type". They do not on the whole seem very convincing intuitively, nor is it very clear from his own description what such categories might refer to except as summaries of the subjects' scalar ratings demanded by the experimental situation itself.

2. Admittedly, during that period of silence, non-verbal cues may be available to M on the basis of which she could have come to the "no-recognition-problem" interpretation, which might then have motivated her continuation. Unfortunately, no video-recording is available here.

3. That the item in question is suffixed with the particle LO rather than LA is a complication that cannot be dealt with until an account of LO has been given in the next chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the use of LO in this position is related to J's treatment of the item as one that was ordered on M's recommendation.

4. I use 'context-sensitive' here in the sense of 'context-shaping and context-shaped', as discussed in Chapter 2.

5. In James' account, expressions like "a very sort of matter-of-fact friend" and "all right kind of thing" are represented as "compromiser + head" and "head + compromiser" structures respectively.

6. Admittedly, there may be degrees of context-dependency. For instance, Bernstein's distinction between "elaborated" and "restricted" codes is obviously intuitively appealing and useful for certain investigative purposes. However, the point remains that the extent to which a particular formulation selected on a particular occasion is an adequate description is essentially and always a negotiable matter, a potentially open question.

7. Indeed, they can propose courses of action that are to be performed by a third party. For instance, in the course of deciding on the positions of a football team, one might say, in the absence of X, "X daa lungmun LA" ("X keeps the goal, OK?")

8. The discussion in this section relies heavily on Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

9. For more discussion on 'rush-through's, see Schegloff 1981, and Local & Kelly 1986.

10. See, for example, Lewis 1969, Schiffer 1972, Karttunen & Peters 1975, Karttunen 1977, Stalnaker 1977, 1978.

11. See, for example, Clark & Marshall (1981), and Clark & Carlson (1982). Smith (1982) contains many arguments on this issue, as well as a useful bibliography.

12. In order to avoid the difficulties of this infinity of conditions for a psychological model, in which the processing time that can be spent on an utterance must be finite, Clark & Carlson (1982) modify this schema by postulating "mental primitives of the form: 'A and B mutually believe [or know] that p', along with the [recursive] inference rule: 'If A and B mutually believe [or know] that p, then (a) A and B believe [or know] that p and believe [or know] that (a)'." (1982:5) These details, however, will have no bearing on my argument, and need not concern us here.

#### Chapter 4

1. The relationship between the segmental make-up of utterance particles and their tonal accompaniment is a question on which little work has been done. While there do seem to be certain connections and similarities between particles which share the same segmental composition, the exact degree and nature of their relatedness is unknown, and extremely elusive and hard to pin down. For instance, it has been observed that *lo55* and *lo21* may "occur in the same contexts" (Kwok 1984:58). But it is at least equally clear that in many contexts they have quite different meanings. Take another example: the three particles *wo44* and *wo24* and *wo21* have rather different uses. *wo24* has a Quotative use ("hearsay"), which, although to some extent shared by the other two, is arguably much less prominent. On the other hand, the "unexpectedness" property of *wo44* which will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis does not seem to be as relevant the descriptions of the other two particles.

The other aspect of the question concerns the question of whether the tones involved have any systematic contribution that can be stated independently of the segments. Here again, the picture is confusing. For instance, it might seem that the low level tone is associated with "questions" --eg. *aa21* and *jaa21* are often used to ask questions. And yet there are plenty of counter-examples to that too, eg. *wo21* and *lo21* cannot be described as question markers in any sense.

The conclusion at the present state of knowledge about such questions is that they might turn out to be interesting and productive questions, but then again they might not. Without a considerable degree of knowledge and understanding of a large number of these particles, one simply does not know. The remarks offered here are *a priori* thoughts based on some rather uncertain and hazy intuitions, and should not (and do not deserve to) be treated seriously. My point is that rather than theorize about such things, the surest and most interesting way of finding out about them is look at a whole range of actual instances of particles across a whole range of situations in considerable detail. This is an immense project which would require a great deal of time and research efforts. The present study could well turn out to be a small contribution towards an understanding of these and related problems.

## Chapter 5

1. Of the three, W0 (ie. wo44) is by far the most frequently encountered: instances of this particle can be easily found in any conversation that lasts more than a few minutes. And it is this particle which will be studied in this chapter. wo24 appears relatively infrequently in my data, probably due to its rather specialized and restrictive functions (basically a "hearsay" particle, for formulating reports the authorial source of which lie elsewhere than the speaker). The third particle with the segmental shape /wo/, wo21, is extremely rare: there is only one instance of it in over twenty hours of natural speech data. Interestingly, Yau (1965) also found only one instance of this particle in over twenty hours of data. Due to the scarcity of data, I will ignore this particle altogether in the following discussion.

2. The notion of *preference organization* is presented in some detail in Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), in which it is observed that repairs in conversation are achieved in ways which are systematically sensitive to such structures as (very roughly) "self initiation of repair being preferable to other-initiated repair", and, in the case of other-initiated repairs, "self-completed repair being preferable to other-completed repair". Such patterns are observable in the design of the turns constituting the repair initiations and completions. See also Owen (1983), Wootton (1981b), and Pomerantz (1975, 1984a).

3. The word-by-word glosses are provided by me, in keeping with the conventions used in this thesis, and were not found in the original; the translations, which are the point of interest here, are quoted from the original.

4. In fact there is no entry for wo44, only one for wo33 (woh6 in Lau's notation), but since there is no /wo33/ in the language, I take it that his woh6 is equivalent to my W0.

5. Data extracts (7) and (14) are clear instances of non-interrogative uses of *lowo*, ie. there is no evidence in either case of the speaker intending the utterance as a question, or the recipient hearing it as one.

6. Apart from the particle *ne*, *cai* in Mandarin has been described variously as an "adverb" (Tsao 1976) or a "focusing particle" (Biq 1984) which marks unexpectedness. This suggests that many of the questions considered in this chapter may also be relevant to the study of certain linguistic items in Mandarin.

7. I am assuming here that their description of *ne* is valid and adequate. But it seems to me that in some ways Li and Thompson's description is probably just as restrictive for *ne* as it is for W0. But this is a question that cannot be answered short of a detailed investigation of *ne*.

## Chapter 6

1. McGinn (1984:37) talks about Wittgenstein's "multiple application thesis", according to which "the repeated use that is required for there to be meaning is something spread out over time; meaning is, so to say, an essentially diachronic concept." There is also a sense in which to different degrees a word can acquire a meaning as it were, diachronically (through time) through a process of decontextualization. Dictionary-makers, for example, take a special interest in collecting particular instances of words in use, and then generalizing and decontextualizing from those instances a small set of meanings for each word.

2. It is interesting to note in this connection one hearsay particle discussed in Blass (MS). She notes that the utterance particle *re* in Sissala, a Niger-Congo language, has been described traditionally as a modal particle whose function is to indicate that some information being reported was gathered from someone else. She argues, however, that to describe this particle in terms of the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition would be a distortion: it has important discourse functions which would be missed in a modality account.

3. One of the more fully developed accounts of modalities and the linguistic means in different languages which encode such modalities is Palmer's (1986). Palmer (1986:88-89) cites sentence-final particles in (Mandarin) Chinese as an example of there being a "close relationship between discourse and modality" (p.93).

4. For details of James' account, see Chapter 3, section 5.

5. Schiffrin's framework includes five planes of discourse organization. "Exchange structure" includes such organizations as adjacency pairs and a range of sequential structures, with "turn" as the basic unit. "Action structure" concerns the situation of speech acts within social settings. The basic unit is "act". "Ideational structure" are semantic in nature, but it also includes cohesive and topical relations. The basic unit here is "proposition". "Participation framework" is borrowed from Goffman (1981), and is the component that deals with different participant constellations, of which *speaker* and *addressee* is only one kind. Finally, "information structure" focuses on the cognitive capacities of speakers and hearers, eg. their knowledge states at particular points in an interaction. For more details about these planes of organization, see Schiffrin 1987, chapters 1 and 10.

6. Closer attention to the phonetic details of *you know* has yielded interesting results. Local, Wells & Sebba (1985), in a study of turn delimitation in London Jamaican (a variety of English with influence from Jamaican Creole, spoken in London by Black speakers of West Indies descent), argue that a set of phonetic features is regularly found at turn endings. When *you know* is accompanied by this set of phonetic features (eg. rhythmically short and integrated to the preceding syllables,

narrow falling pitch movement, absence of decrescendo), it serves as a turn-delimitation device. There is however a second class of *you know* occurrences, which is prosodically characterized by a step-up in pitch from the first syllable (*you*) to the second (*know*). These usually are post-completers that occur after a turn transition relevance place. Although it might appear that this study has cast doubt on the idea that *you know* and similar objects are particles that have discourse functions (because it is the phonetic features, not the particle, that performs the turn-delimitation), it should nevertheless be compatible with their position to say that particles like *you know*, in combination with, or as carriers of, certain phonetic features, may have conversation organizational functions that are stable in terms of the turn-taking system.

7. Unfortunately, many particles cannot be defined in terms of a specific maxim or set of maxims. To take the example of *WO*, it is used regularly to signal deviance from normal expectations, not the non-fulfillment of some conversational maxims. Nor is it used to mark an utterance as somehow not fully co-operative. A general description of this particle needs to make reference not to some specific maxim or the co-operative principle, but to 'normal expectations', which is a notion of an entirely different order. It is true that in order to describe these objects adequately, one has to make reference to conversational inference ("the description of certain lexical items [such as discourse particles] requires reference to modes of conversational inference." (Levinson 1983:163)), but the admission of this general conclusion does not commit one to analysing the utterance particles specifically in terms of Grice's maxims.

8. For further details of this account, see Chapter 3, section 5.

9. The notion of 'recipient design' is widely known and accepted within the CA tradition. See, in particular, Sacks & Schegloff 1979. A summary of this notion can be found in Sharrock & Anderson (1987).

"Utterances in conversation are not directed towards anonymous 'speakers of the language' but toward specific others, and conversationalists therefore pay pervasive attention to the issues of to whom they are talking, what such persons may be expected to know, what they will be interested in and so forth. 'Recipient design' points the investigation towards the ways in which utterances are constructed specifically so that they will be understood by *this* recipient." (Sharrock & Anderson 1987:312)

## Chapter 7

1. Concerning the problematical relationship between linguistics and sociology, little direct and in-depth discussion is available in the literature. In such research traditions as represented by Gumperz (1982), there are traces of CA influence. But even in the latest work in this tradition, Schiffrin's (1987) study of discourse particles in English, there is little discussion of this problem of interdisciplinary

relationship. Conversation Analysts are very often regarded by linguists as a different kind of animal. Part of the problem is no doubt to do with the radical, if not revolutionary, character of their theoretical assumptions. But it may also be due in part to a relative lack of communication between the two traditions.

2. Although it is true that in a sense what Conversation Analysts are really interested in is not conversation as such, but conversation as a locus for the observation and study of the the coordination of social actions at work, I think it is still fair to say that they do take an active interest in language and its description as a serious task.

3. For a discussion of CA's conception of meaning, see section 2 of Chapter 2.

4. Although she has not expressed any explicit dissatisfaction, Milroy's (1980) notion of social networks is the first "social variable" that was used in correlation studies which has a built-in element of language, ie. its very identification takes into account the fact that a large part of daily social interaction is linguistic. While her approach as a whole is still largely Labovian, it provides an interesting example of an early step towards a different conception of "social factors" in conventional sociolinguistics.

Hudson (1980) looks at this from a different point of view, and records explicitly his doubt about whether the conception of *society as consisting of objectively distinct groups of people, using language each in their peculiar ways*, is the most fruitful approach to sociolinguistics. The alternative approach which is briefly considered, but not discussed in any detail, is the use of a model in which "typification" plays a central role.

5. Some linguistics have expressed on the whole rather positive views about the relevance of CA to sociolinguistics. For instance, Levinson (1983:374-375) argues that CA ought to have a lot to offer to sociolinguistics:

"Indeed conversation analysis in general has a great deal to offer to sociolinguistics. For example, the view of conversation as basic or paradigmatic and other forms of talk exchange as specializations... may help to put the ethnography of speaking on a sounder comparative basis... Similarly, the variationist paradigm associated with Labov... would benefit greatly from the systematic application of Labov's own observation that sociolinguistic variables are in part discourse-conditioned.... But the fields have so many common concerns that there is no real danger of the lack of cross-fertilization, especially amongst sociolinguistics with an interest in language understanding."

Similarly, Hymes suggests that the concept of context would benefit from a conversational perspective (1986:68):

"...the inspiration to understand the orderliness of interaction as an accomplishment of those who interact is a major source of revealing work, affecting anthropologists

like John Gumperz, whose notion of 'conversational inferencing' can be seen to have an ethnomethodological character, in that it interprets the notion of context as something not fixed throughout an interaction, but as something evolving and redefinable by the participants."

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