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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6rd574v1>

Journal

Issues in Applied Linguistics, 8(2)

ISSN

1050-4273

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Publication Date

1997-12-30

DOI

10.5070/L482005258

Peer reviewed

Demonstrating Reciprocity: Knowledge Displays as a Resource for the Unaddressed Participant

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This paper expands conversation analytic notions of reciprocity by considering recipient proactivity. At issue are the methods by which an unaddressed participant of a story-in-progress makes claims on a teller's attention through a series of upgraded responses to the story. These claims range from gaze direction toward the teller, to displays of knowledge of particular story components. The recipient's displays of knowledge regarding the story provide a resource for her to elicit the teller's attention, thereby providing her a method of challenging the participation framework of the ongoing talk.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine the methods by which an unaddressed participant of a story-in-progress displays her reciprocity to a teller who addresses her talk to another participant. At issue is a shift of emphasis in how we have so far regarded reciprocity. With the exception of Goodwin (1981), conversation analytic work has addressed the issue of reciprocity primarily from the point of view of speakers' actions. That is, how do speakers orient to others as potential recipients of their talk, and how is talk organized as a response to recipient action? Goodwin (1980, 1986, 1987) and others (e.g., Streeck, 1993; Heath, 1992) have examined the relationship of eye gaze, gesture, speech perturbations, and recipients' knowledge states to speakers' moves to elicit and maintain recipients' attention to their talk. Another angle from which these topics might be addressed, however, is from the point of view of recipient action: how do recipients orient to others as speakers and display their "entitlement" to talk-in-progress? What are the methods through which reciprocity is organized as an activity in its own right, one that, like speakership, warrants a ratified status by other parties - especially the speaker - to an interaction?

Goodwin, in "Designing Talk for Different Types of Recipients" (1981), proposes that speakers are sensitive to recipients' states of knowledge regarding their talk, and consequently design their talk for *knowing* and *unknowing* recipients. Recipients and speakers' common knowledge of particular components of talk, such as a name or a reference to a shared experience can be used by speakers as a warrant for recipient attention. For example, in Goodwin's paper, "Forgetfulness as an Interactive Resource" (Goodwin, 1987), Mike, who is sitting at a table with five other people, begins to tell a story but cuts off in the middle of a word

and produces a new sentence that formulates a search for a name:

Mike: I was watching Johnny Carson one night
 en there was a guy by the na—*What* was
 that guys' name. = Blake?

As Mike initiates the search for the name he turns to his wife Phyllis, designating her a *knowing* recipient and one who can likely provide the name being searched for. The particular format of this action provides Mike with a resource for altering the course of the interaction as it is unfolding at that moment: Phyllis has been engaged in a competing line of talk with the other woman at the table, and although she doesn't respond to Mike's request for help in the name search, Mike's action draws the other participants into the search and effectively dislodges Phyllis from the competing line of talk.

This example demonstrates how a speaker (Mike) uses a recipient's knowledge state (Phyllis') as a resource for eliciting attention to his story from the others present: his wife's lack of a response to the search opens up the search to others at the table who become co-participants in the word search activity (Goodwin, 1987: 127). It is argued in this paper that *recipients* similarly make use of their knowledge states to assert and maintain their participation status. In the case of an unacknowledged recipient, showing one's self to be a knowing recipient (i.e. knowledgeable in some way about the talk-in-progress) can make an effective claim on speaker attention and can provide recipients, like speakers, with a resource for reshaping the trajectory of an interaction.

“R”, THE UNACKNOWLEDGED RECIPIENT

In the following segment of talk, three women are sitting around a table waiting for a fourth to join them so they can continue their game of Pictionary. Arian, who initiates and proceeds to tell a story, orients to Tee as her primary recipient. A third participant, Rose, displays herself as a recipient to Arian's story, but is mostly unnoticed by Arian. The transcript below shows Rose, more than Tee, vocalizing her attention to the story, but it is evident through Arian's body behaviors and use of particular lexical items that she is addressing Tee.

Example 1 [Game Night 1]

- 1 A: =did I tell you that I met another recovering M-A-S-N volunteer:r this wee:k?
 2 I actually (.) knew him but I didn't know that he was a recovering M-A-S-N
 3 volunteer. .hh °I go (sh) someho:w,° (.) I don't even remember how I—O:h
 4 that some one, (0.2) °ok° this is a guy who's organizing query? which is
 5 this [new radio show
 6 R: [hmm hmm
 7 A: on WORDS= ((radio station name))

- 8 R: =hm[m hmm
9 A: [okay
10 A: which I have started sort of (.) talking to them about.
11 And we were talking about (.) ide:as fo:r (1.0) for repor:ts,
12 and one of them (.) somebody had brought up talking to
13 Mary Ann Rodriguez apparently she 's a very spiritual person with a lot of
14 spirituality and stuff like this .hh=
15 R: =M-A?
16 A: hhmm?
17 T: mm:h[m:
18 R: [Is that M-A?
19 A: m:m.

Given that Arian is directing her story to Tee, and Rose shows herself to be attending to the story, how does Rose, an unaddressed participant in this segment of talk, constitute herself as a recipient of it?

Prior to the segment of talk presented here, Rose has asked Arian and Tee how they know each other, and in overlap they explain that they met through an organization called "MASN" (Midwest Aid's Services Network). The mention of the organization touches off a story by Arian about how she came to meet someone whom she calls "another recovering MASN volunteer". In initiating and telling the story, Arian uses eye gaze, body movement, intonation, and lexical design to frame certain story elements as recognizable to Tee, in effect invoking the knowledge and experience that she shares with Tee as a warrant for Tee's attention to her talk. My analysis will focus on how Rose, in the context of Arian addressing her talk to Tee, displays herself as a recipient to that talk and attempts to elicit Arian's attention through a series of upgraded responses to Arian's actions that range from gaze shift toward Arian, to displays of knowledge of particular components of the story-in-progress.

A PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

Arian's actions in this segment of talk shape a participation framework in which Tee becomes an addressed recipient and Rose becomes an overhearer of Arian's talk to Tee. Arian's utterance in line 1, "Did I tell you I met another recovering MASN volunteer this week?", incorporates elements of talk that invoke Tee's knowledge of MASN, and formulates a proposal to recount a story that relates to members of the organization. Arian's use of the word "another" ties the story initiation to the prior explanation of how she and Tee met, and links what she is proposing that Tee already knows, which is what a "recovering MASN volunteer" is, with what she is proposing that Tee does not know - the story about how she came to meet someone else who is a "recovering MASN volunteer". Arian uses Tee's knowledge of the organization, and their past experience with it, as a method of "interesting" Tee in the story, and thus warranting Tee's attention

vicinity of the table, and Arian begins to tell the story she has proposed, Rose maintains a steady gaze toward Arian, and subordinates another activity she is engaged in—eating—to the activity of gazing, using her body behaviors to show that she is an attentive recipient of Arian’s talk (figure 3).

At issue here is how an attentive recipient of current talk, in this case Rose, deals with the teller’s disattention toward her as a recipient. Rose’s gaze shift toward Arian, which displays her readiness to listen to Arian’s story, is relevant, given that she is sitting at the table with Arian and Tee, and Arian has just proposed telling a story that was touched off by a question that she asked. However, with the shift in topic to the proposed story and Arian’s corresponding gaze shift toward Tee, Rose’s participation status becomes ambiguous. Arian, as speaker of an initiating action (“Did I tell you I met another recovering MASN volunteer this week?”), designates Tee the recipient of her talk. In so doing, she disattends Rose as an “entitled” recipient of that talk. Rose, however, maintains her gaze on Arian as Arian addresses her talk to Tee, constituting herself as a “recipient-in-waiting” of sorts, one who, as the story progresses, will seek to transform her participation status to recipient.

**UPGRADED CLAIMS TO RECIPIENCY:
CLAIMS TO RECOGNITION AND A REFERENCE CHECK**

In this segment of talk, Rose first uses eye gaze to display her reciprocity to Arian’s talk, but as Arian continues to address Tee, Rose also verbalizes her attention to the talk. In lines 5 and 7, Rose displays knowledge of components of Arian’s talk with a recognition token and a continuer (both “hmm hmm’s”), constituting herself as a *knowing* recipient with these utterances, and thus a recipient who is entitled to speaker addressing. Following is a gesture transcript of lines 4 through 8 which demonstrates the relevance of Rose’s actions in the context of Arian’s continued addressing of Tee:

Example 3 [Game Night 3]

((moves gaze to T))

. . X _____

4-5 A: °ok° (.) This is a guy (.) who’s organizing query? which is a [new radio show
((station name))

((moves gaze to A))

((affirmative
nods))

T: (looking at pencil) . . X _____ [x x x

((moves gaze to A))

6 R: (picking up chip) . . X _____ [hmm hmm _____

((moves gaze from T back to the middle of the table))

7 A: on WORDS=

((affirmative head nods, continues to gaze at A?))

T: x x x

((continues to gaze at A))

R:

((continues to gaze at A))

8 R: hm[m hmm

((gazing at table))

9 A: [okay

Here, Arian again uses eye gaze and body positioning to designate Tee as her primary recipient as she begins an explanation of how she came to meet “another recovering MASN volunteer” (from line 1) with her utterance in line 4: “°ok° (.) This is a guy (.) who’s organizing queery?”. Arian redirects her eye gaze from the middle of the table back toward Tee (who along with Rose resumed gazing at Arian at the word “guy”) at the word “queery”, and produces the word with a rising, try-marked intonation. Arian then begins to explain what “queery” means, while gazing at Tee, (“which is a new radio show on WORDS”). It is Rose, however, who actively claims recognition of the item “queery” with “hmm hmm” in line 6, in overlap with Arian’s explanation, followed a moment later by small head nods from Tee. The “hmm hmm” that Rose produces here is notable: Rose produces “hmm hmm” before hearing the explanatory term “radio show” (visible in the transcript), in effect, claiming that she already knows what Arian is talking about. The utterance produced here is a recognition token made relevant by the questioning intonation Arian uses to produce the word “queery”, and Arian’s efforts to explicate the term. Arian, however, has produced the explication for Tee, a context established through her body behaviors as described above. After Arian concludes the explanation of “queery” in line 6, and reaches the possible completion of her turn, (at “on WORDS”), Rose issues another “hmm hmm” in line 8, this time as a continuer that claims understanding of the preceding explanation (warranted certainly by the early recognition she displays in line 6) and forgoes the opportunity to initiate repair.

Rose’s utterances in lines 6 and 8 appear to elicit a minimal response from Arian in the form of a hand gesture in line 10. As Arian continues her elaboration of “queery” in lines 9 and 10 with another relative clause explaining her relationship to what she has just explained is a “new radio show on WORDS”, Arian maintains her gaze to the center of the table, but opens her palm in a fleeting gesture toward Rose (figure 4):

Example 4

9 A: [okay

((gazing at table))

[((hand gesture)) ((hand gesture))

10 A:→ which [I have started sort of (.) [talking to them about.

((gazing at A, nodding head slightly))

T: _____x_____x_____x_____x_____x

((gazing at A))

R: _____

Rose's next recognitional actions display her to be a *knowing* and interested recipient of Arian's talk more strongly in lines 11 through 19. In lines 12 and 13, Arian's utterance of the name "Mary Ann Rodriguez" provides an occasion for Rose to display herself not only as someone who knows the person in question, but as someone who may be friends with her. In line 15, Rose produces the reference check, "M-A?":

Example 5

12 A: and one of them (.) somebody had brought up talking to

13 → Mary Ann Rodriguez apparently she's a very spiritual person with a lot of

14 spirituality and stuff like this .hh=

15 R: → =M-A?

The reference check that Rose performs here does more than just request confirmation of whom Arian is talking about. The action displays that Rose is possibly well-acquainted with a character in Arian's story, close enough to be on a nickname basis. As an initiating action, it has consequences for the talk that follows:

Example 6

12 and one of them (.) somebody had brought up talking to

13 Mary Ann Rodriguez apparently she's a very spiritual person with a lot of

14 spirituality and stuff like this .hh=

15 R: → =M-A?

16 A: → hhhmm?

17 T: mm:h[m:

18 R: → [Is that M-A?

19 A: → m:m.

First, Arian appears not to understand what Rose has said. Arian turns toward Rose in line 16, raises her eyebrows, and utters a questioning "hhhmm?" (figure 5).

In line 17, it is Tee who responds to Rose with “mh:hm”. In overlap with Tee’s confirmation, Rose recycles her question for Arian in line 18. She says, “Is that M-A?”, to which Arian responds with “m:m” in line 19.

Rose’s demonstrated acquaintanceship with a character of Arian’s telling, formulated as an initiating action, not only elicits the attention of the speaker, but also elicits the attention of her designated recipient, Tee. This display of knowledge, and the format it takes, reshapes the structure of the interaction over the next few turns (specifically lines 15 through 19): Arian stops talking and turns to attend to Rose’s inquiry, while Tee, who has been attending to Arian’s talk, responds to Rose. Although Arian’s response is minimal in line 19 (and she continues to address her talk to Tee in the lines that follow this segment), Rose’s reference check effectively alters the structure of the talk-in-progress to accommodate her as a recipient of that talk over the course of those turns. Rose’s displays of knowledge regarding Arian’s talk, formatted as a reference check, is thus a resource for altering the current participation framework or, to use Goffman’s term, the “footing” of the participants (Goffman, 1981).

CONCLUSION

In summary, Rose displays her reciprocity to Arian’s story-for-Tee through a series of upgraded responses to that story that range from gaze shift toward A, to displays of knowledge of particular components of Arian’s talk. Rose’s use of a recognition token and a continuer in lines 6 and 8 resulted in a minimal acknowledgment by Arian of Rose’s reciprocity in the form of a fleeting hand gesture. Rose’s display of knowledge via a reference check, however, elicited a more overt response from Arian. Rose’s display of knowledge, formatted as it was, effectively reshaped the interaction over the course of the next few turns to accommodate Rose as a recipient of the talk-in-progress. These examples serve to expand our notion of reciprocity to include a substantive dimension of *recipient proactivity*.

It is evident from the segment of talk presented here that not only do knowledge displays provide a resource for unaddressed participants to elicit speaker addressing, and warrant claims to ratified reciprocity, but also that recipient design is an accountable matter, one to which participants to talk-in-interaction visibly orient. That is to say, recipients hold speakers accountable for designing their talk to accommodate them as the type of recipients they are. In the segment of talk at issue here, Rose “knows” many of the things that Arian is talking about. Yet Arian designs her talk as if only Tee knows, using this imputed knowledge as a warrant for Tee’s attention to her talk. She orients to this interactional asymmetry by making claims on speaker attention, using her knowledge of components of Arian’s talk to formulate these claims. In other words, she holds Arian accountable for orienting to her as a *knowing* recipient, and thus a recipient for whom the current talk is relevant.



Figure 1

1 A: =did I...



Figure 2

1 A: ...tell you



Figure 3

Rose maintains her gaze on Arian and subordinates the activity of eating to the activity of gazing, comporting herself as an attentive recipient.



Figure 4

Arian makes a fleeting gesture toward Rose.



Figure 5

15 A: hmmm?

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