

Overlapping as final-item completion in Mandarin conversation

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This study locates as its focus the site for the final item in a sentence-in-progress as a late but systematic opportunity space for co-completing sentences by another speaker, and as a systematic site for brief overlaps. A second speaker may supply a version of the final item as projected by the grammatical structure of the sentence-so-far in given contexts to offer assistance for the searched-for final item upon the current speaker's displayed delivery trouble, or to show an early recognition of what the current turn is doing and what it takes for its completion in the absence of any display of delivery trouble. The overlap in the first case may be 'accidental' when the first speaker is able to produce his/her own final item a moment later, or it may be an 'achieved' early start in the second case. The same opportunity space may also be 'exploited'. Final items proposed by the second speaker may generate a local sequence where its acceptability becomes relevant. Post-overlap responses by the first speaker often show acceptance, sometimes with qualification. We argue that overlapping final-item completion is a result of speakers' active participation and high involvement, and is motivated by the fundamental baseline of cooperation and collaboration in human social interaction.

Keywords: overlap, collaborative sequences, Mandarin conversation, Interactional Linguistics

关键词: 交叠、合作共建、汉语会话、互动语言学

1. Introduction

While speaker change normally occurs at a turn's possible completion where turn transition becomes relevant (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), it is also observed that sometimes a current non-speaker may enter into a current speaker's

turn-in-progress, resulting in two speakers co-constructing one syntactically coherent sentence. Excerpt (a) below, taken from Lerner (2004, 231), provides illustration of such an instance in English.

Excerpt (a). (the participants are making a pillow.)

- Daughter: Oh here dad (0.2) a good way to get those corners out
(0.2)
→ Dad: is to stick yer fingers inside.
Daughter: well, that's one way.

Occasionally, the current non-speaker's entry into the current speaker's turn may start a bit "earlier" and overlap with the current speaker's ongoing turn, as illustrated in the excerpt below, also taken from Lerner (2004, 241).

Excerpt (b).

- J: Well it's a, it's mideastern yihknow it's- they make it in Greece,
Turke::y, [right around there.
→ B: [Armenia,
J: Yeah, Armenia

For the purpose of the study reported here, we are interested in cases like Excerpt (b) in daily conversation conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Our analysis focuses on instances of co-constructing sentences involving brief overlapping talk, such as the case in Excerpt (1).

Excerpt (1) "Evaluating a Course"

- 01 S: 对 我 来 说, 帮助 并 没有 那么 [的:]
dui wo lai shuo, bangzhu bing meiyong name de:
to me come say help at.all NEG so ATT
For me, the help is not so:
- 02 G: [大]
da
big
big
- 03 S: 我 想象 中 的 大。
wo xiangxiang zhong de da.
I imagined in NOM big
as big as I thought.

At L01, S is giving her comments on a course she has taken. The adverb *name* 'so', at the end of L02 strongly projects an adjective as the next item due which could bring the sentence (and the action it implements) to a close. It is at this point that G comes in with the adjective *da* 'big', which completes S's sentence. G's contribution overlaps with the structural particle *de* S is producing, but S is quick in abandoning her own almost-complete sentence and turns to accept G's version, but with a qualification.

Several observations can be made about Excerpt (1). First, the two speakers, S and G, co-complete a sentence started by S, and which, in its context, can be heard as giving comments on a course S has taken. By providing the key adjective,

G shows an understanding of the action S is implementing through the sentence. Second, this instance of co-completion is similar to what Hayashi (1999) calls “terminal item completion”, with G providing the terminal item of S’s sentence. Third, when the terminal item is produced by a second speaker while the first speaker is still speaking, the start of the overlap is similar to what Jefferson (1986) calls “last-item onset”. The difference is that, rather than starting a new turn slightly earlier, what G starts a bit earlier is a version of the projected last item in S’s ongoing turn just as it is due. Furthermore, the turn following G’s provision of the adjective is occupied by the first speaker’s response to that provision, generating a local sequence similar to Lerner’s (2004) description of a “collaborative turn sequence”. As instances like Excerpt (1) involve a second speaker producing, in overlap with a first speaker’s sentence-in-progress, a final item in co-completing that sentence, we call them “overlapping final-item completion”. The aim of our investigation is to (1) explore possible interactional functions of such co-completion and (2) examine post-overlap management of such overlaps. Since description of our cases involves both sentence co-completion and overlapping talk, we will first briefly review studies most relevant to these two issues before moving on to present our data analyses.

2. Overlapping and co-completion

Both overlapping and co-completion are issues relating, and posing challenges, to the turn-taking model proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (SSJ) in their 1974 seminal paper. “Overlap” is a descriptive term (in contrast to the interpretive term ‘interruption’) referring to two or more speakers speaking simultaneously, a phenomenon frequently observed in conversational interaction. SSJ point out that the occurrence of more than one speaker speaking at a time is common but brief. The issue is then whether instances of overlapping talk should be seen as providing counter evidence to the orderly management of turn-taking as specified in SSJ’s turn-taking model. Jefferson’s studies (1983, 1986) of the onset positions of overlap and Schegloff’s (2000) description of overlap resolution provide compelling evidence that overlapping is an orderly phenomenon which displays speakers’ orientation to the norm of “one speaker at a time” and to a turn’s possible completion as the place for speaker change in producing and managing overlapping talk. Specifically, Jefferson (1986) observed a series of overlap onset positions in the span of transition space. Among these, “last-item onset” refers to the situation in which an incoming speaker starts at a position where, as the current speaker’s turn is approaching its possible completion, the last one or two words can already be recognized. In other words, the incoming speaker’s turn starts a bit

'earlier' before the current turn's actual completion but still references that turn as a prior to the early-started turn.

Co-completing a sentence by two speakers also raises questions about the robustness of SSJ's turn-taking model. Since the model specifies "transition relevance place" (TRP) as the place for speaker change, the issue here is whether a second speaker's entry into and completion of a first speaker's turn-in-progress can still be accounted for by the turn-taking model. A classical study on co-completion, Lerner (1991) demonstrated that the syntactic and other structures of an ongoing sentence may have a two-part format in which the structure of the first part (i.e., "preliminary component" in Lerner's term) projects both its own possible completion as well as the kind of second part that follows (i.e., "final component") for the whole sentence to reach its completion. Furthermore, the possible completion of the first part also provides an "opportunity space" for another speaker to supply the second part, resulting in two speakers co-producing one syntactically coherent sentence. Two other studies relevant to the phenomenon examined in this study are Hayashi (1999) and Lerner (2004). With regard to co-completion in Japanese conversation, Hayashi (1999, 475) found that most instances in the author's collection do not have the "syntactically-defined two-part formats". What a second speaker supplies in most cases is often the last item of the first speaker's sentence-in-progress, hence the term "terminal item completion". With respect to how a second speaker's entry is dealt with, Lerner (2004) identified a locally generated "collaborative turn sequence", which is initiated by the second speaker's entry and which make acceptance or rejection of that entry relevant next. The author also points out that "Collaborative turn sequences constitute a systematic site for the occurrence of overlapping talk" (Lerner 2004, 241) when the first speaker continues talking past the opportunity space which is taken up by the second speaker who has also started talking.

As mentioned above, the focus of this study is on "overlapping final-item completion". Each instance involves an "early" start of a "final item" produced by another speaker in overlap with the current speaker's ongoing turn. Therefore each case is examined in terms of this particular practice for its possible interactional functions. The data used for this study are ten hours of audio- and video-recorded conversations conducted in Mandarin Chinese, including seven two-party conversations, two three-party conversations and one four-party conversation. The participants are (mostly) college students, teachers, and their family members. In the following, we first examine the interactional functions of overlapping final item completion as found in different contexts (Section 3). We then describe post-overlap management of the overlaps (Section 4). The last section concludes the paper and highlights what light the present study can shed on the nature of overlapping final-item completion.

3. Interactional functions of final-item completions produced in overlap

This section examines a number of interactional functions of overlapping final items as found in our data: offering assistance upon another speaker's displayed difficulty in producing the final item as the next item due (Section 3.1), displaying, through early start, an understanding of the syntax and action type of the current turn (Section 3.2), and how final-item co-completion may be 'exploited' (Section 3.3). These interactional functions may be seen as 'generic' in the sense that they are not action-type-specific but are found in a variety of sequences, and can surely be implemented through other practices. Nevertheless, each instance of overlapping final-item completion is examined for what it achieves for the participants involved in specific interactional contexts.

3.1 Supplying the final item when it is due but absent

Excerpts examined in this section illustrate that a site for a second speaker's supply of a final item is where the first speaker has momentary difficulty in producing it. The second speaker's entry, begun in this context, can be seen as offering assistance with the searched-for item with which to bring the current sentence to completion.

In Excerpt (2), H and C are discussing their travel plan for the weekend and decide to take a sightseeing cruise trip. As H searches on the mobile phone application to buy tickets, she checks with C whether the cruise is named Tianjin Haihe Cruise (Lo1).

Excerpt (2) "Travel in Tianjin"

- 01 H: 天津, 天津, 天津, 海河 游船?
 Tianjin Tianjin Tianjin Haihe youchuan?
 Tianjin Tianjin Tianjin Haihe cruise
 (Is the cruise named) 'Tianjin Haihe Cruise'?
- 02 C: 好像 叫: [我 也 忘 了.]
 haoxiang jiao: [wo ye wang le.]
 seem call I also forget PRT
 (It) seems to be call:ed.. I forgot (its name) too.
- ≈ 03 H: [海河 观光 游船?]
 [Haihe guanguang youchuan?]
 Haihe sightseeing cruise
 (Is it called) Haihe Sightseeing Cruise?
- 04 C: 对 对 对 对 对, 什么 海河 什么 类似 的.
 Dui dui dui dui dui, shenme Haihe shenme leisi de.
 Right right right right right what Haihe what similar ATT
 Yes yes yes yes yes, (it's called) something like Haihe something like that.

C, however, has difficulty giving H a straightforward answer. The turn-initial *haoxiang* 'seem' in Lo2 projects a less certain answer. When she comes to the verb

jiao ‘call’ she is obviously not ready to produce the next item due yet (i.e., the name of the cruise in this case) as evidenced by the stretch on the verb. It is at this very moment that H supplies a name of a cruise tentatively, *Haihe guanguang youchuan* (Haihe Sightseeing Cruise), apparently reading from what she is seeing on her mobile phone (Lo3). H’s term grammatically fits in the slot in C’s ongoing turn as the object of the verb; it is also the final item after which C’s turn can be heard to be complete as an answer to H’s inquiry. Although it is H who first makes the inquiry, when C runs into trouble in providing an answer, H is quick to make an attempt, resulting in a co-completed answer. As it turns out, H’s version of the final item overlaps with the rest of C’s turn where she explicitly abandons the search, and is enthusiastically confirmed by C with multiple sayings of *dui* ‘right’ in Lo4.

Excerpt (3) is another such case. A professor, T, is telling her two graduate students, C and Z, about another student’s recording of a classroom interaction.

Excerpt (3) “Doctoral dissertation”

01 T: 然后 她 的 博士 论文 就要 做 那个,
 ranhou ta de boshi lunwen jiu yao zuo na ge,
 then her ATT doctoral thesis just want do that CLF
Then for her doctoral thesis, (she’s) working on that,

02 课堂 话语 嘛,
 ketang huayu ma,
 class discourse PRT
classroom discourse.

03 C: 哦,
 O,
 Oh
 Oh.

04 T: [所以 她 就 是 录 的 是, 来 录像],
 [suoyi ta jiu shi lu de shi, lai luxiang],
 so she just COP record ATT COP come video-record
So she’s basically recording, (she) came to video-record.

05 Z: [哇:, 就 是 来 录 的 那 个 (0.2)]
 [wa:, jiu shi lai lu de na ge (0.2)]
 wow, just COP come record ATT that CLF
Wow, she’s the one who came to make the recording (0.2)

06 T: [[对 对 对 对, 她 录 的 是 谁 的 ?
 [[dui dui dui dui, ta lu de shi shei de?
 [right right right right she record ATT COP who ATT
 [Yes yes yes yes, whose (class) is she recording?

07 Z: [[谢老师。
 [[Xie laoshi.
 NAME.teacher
 Ms.Xie

→ 08 Z: 谢:, [谢 莹 艳。]
 Xie:, [Xie Yingyan.]
 NAME NAME
 Xie:, Xie Yingyan.

- ⇒ 09 T: [谢 莹艳.]
 [Xie Yingyan.]
 NAME
Xie Yingyan.
- 10 Z: 对 对 对 对.
 dui dui dui dui.
 right right right right
Yes yes yes yes.

Z's response at Lo5 shows that the teacher's "news" is not entirely new to her as she begins to identify the mentioned student by associating her with a recording event she already knew. While this is enthusiastically acknowledged by T with a series of *dui* 'right' (Lo6), Z further produces a reference to the teacher in question (Lo7). Probably because of the overlap, T has heard Z but not the exact reference term, or the mere mention of [surname + title] is not sufficient for her to identify the individual teacher, hence her inquiry in the second half of Lo6. In response, Z starts again but got stuck for a moment, as evidenced by the stretch on the teacher's surname (Lo8). Since Z has already mentioned the [surname + title] reference, producing the surname again is possibly the start of a different kind of reference term, e.g., [surname + given name]. In this regard, Z's stretch on the surname could be heard as searching for the given name, i.e., the final item for a full-name reference as an answer to T's inquiry. At this point, T produces the given name preceded by repeating the surname, and overlaps with Z who is now also producing the teacher's full name. Excerpt (4) below illustrates another case in which a knowledgeable participant joins in co-telling (Goodwin 1984; Mandelbaum 1987; Lerner 1992; Luke 2016) by supplying a final item which helps bring the first teller's sentence to completion upon seeing the first teller's effort in his word search. The conversation takes place between four family members. At Lo1–04, D asks his father-in-law, B, who is recovering from a hip replacement surgery, if there is any difference before and after the surgery since he had used and still is using crutches. B's answer at Lo5, starting with the time adverbial *yuanlai nahuir* 'originally at that time' could be heard as the start of a possible telling.

Excerpt (4) "After surgery"

- 01 D: 原来 没 做 这 个 手术
 yuanlai mei zuo zhe ge shoushu
 originally NEG do this CLF surgery
Before you had the surgery,
- 02 也 是 拄 着 这 个 走,
 ye shi zhu zhe zhe ge zou,
 also COP lean.on ASP this CLF walk
you also walked with these.
- 03 现在 做 了 再 拄 着 走,
 xianzai zuo le zai zhu zhe zou
 now did PRT again lean.on ASP walk
Now you've had the surgery and are still walking with these,

- 04 有 什么 区别 呗?
 you shenme qubie bei?
 have what difference SFP
is there any difference?
- 05 B: 原来 那会儿 走得 挺好,
 yuanlai nahuir zou de ting hao,
 originally then walk PRT pretty well
I walked quite well then.
- 06 就是 没 做 手术 以前 那会儿.
 jiushi mei zuo shoushu yiqian nahuir.
 that.is NEG do surgery before then
I mean before the operation.
- 07 M: 没 做 手术 以前, 那回, 走了,
 mei zuo shoushu yiqian, na hui, zou le,
 NEG do surgery before that CLF walk PRT
Before the operation, that time (he) walked,
- 08 从 这儿 走, 走了 [走 到底.]
 cong zher zou, zou le [zou dao di.]
 from here walk walk PRT walk to end
from here (he) walked, walked to the end (of the room).
- ⇒ 09 E: [走 四 个 来回.]
 [zou si ge laihui.]
 walk four CLF rounds
walked four rounds.

B's wife, M, then joins as a co-teller with her husband. In fact she takes over and begins to mention a specific occasion before B's surgery when he was able to walk from one end of the room to the other end (L07–08). Her sentence up to the main verb “walk” projects a post-verb complement, a final element that would complete the sentence as well as complete the telling about the said event. Upon M's several unsuccessful efforts in moving the sentence past the main verb, E joins in (L09) by first repeating the verb and then supplying the verb complement “walked four rounds”, thus co-completing the sentence begun by M. At the same time, M is finally able to produce her own version of the verb complement, only in overlap with that supplied by E. Both M and E who have been taking care of B are knowledgeable of this pre-surgery event, which enables E to supply a version of the final item at a point when the item is due but M is having difficulty in producing it.

3.2 Displaying understanding

In contrast to the excerpts examined above, in Excerpts (5) and (6) below, the final items are supplied by an incoming speaker at a place where the current turn is moving forward without a hitch. In such cases, the incoming speakers are more likely to show recognition of what they understand the current turn to be doing and what possible final item it takes to reach the turn's completion.

At the start of Excerpt (5), J and H are admiring furnishings in a hotel room. J notices the tea set on the table and draws H's attention to it (Lo1).

Excerpt (5) "tea set"

- 01 J: 这里 还 有 茶具。
 zheli hai you chaju.
 here also have tea.set
There's also a tea set here.
- 02 H: 嗯。
 en.
 INT
Mm.
- 03 J: 对:, 以后 我 就 想: 在 我 的 房 间 里
 dui:, yihou wo jiu xiang: zai wo de fangjian li
 right later I just want in my ATT room inside
Yes:, in future I want: for my room
- 04 买 个 这 种 (0.3) 简 单 的 [茶具.]
 mai ge zhe zhong (0.3) jiandan de [chaju.]
 buy CLF this CLF simple ATT tea.set
(I'd) buy this kind of (0.3) simple tea set.
- 05 H: [茶具.]
 [chaju.]
 tea.set
tea set
- 06 J: 我 现 在 也 发 现 我 喜 欢 喝 茶 了。
 wo xianzai ye faxian wo xihuan he cha le.
 I now also find I like drink tea PRT
Now I also find myself beginning to love tea.

While both of them are looking at the tea set, J starts to express her wish that she plans to buy "this kind of simple tea set" for her own room (Lo4). However, before she produces "tea set", their joint attention on the object and the deictic word "this kind" together project "tea set" as the word following the adjective "simple" and as the final item in the sentence which J is constructing to express her purchase plan. As it turns out, H comes in and says exactly "tea set", overlapping the same word produced by J, explicitly displaying his understanding of what J is going to say.

A similar case is seen in Excerpt (6). Here two college students living on campus are discussing where they can eat during holiday breaks. L informs Z that she usually does not go to campus canteens during holiday breaks (Lo1), to which Z enquires what she would eat instead (Lo2).

Excerpt (6) "Where to eat"

- 01 L: 我 一 到 放 假 基 本 都 不 去 食 堂 了。
 wo yi dao fangjia jiben dou bu qu shitang le.
 I whenever in holidays basically all NEG go canteen PRT
I seldom go to the canteen during holiday breaks.
- 02 Z: 真的? 那 你 吃 啥?
 zhende? na ni chi sha?
 really then you eat what
Really? Then what do you eat?

- 03 L: <@@>就 在 寝室 啊, 寝室 我 有 [燕麦片儿.]
 jiu zai qinshi a, qinshi wo you [yanmaipianr.]
 just in dorm SFP dorm I have oatmeal
 <@@> *Just in the dorm, in the dorm I have oatmeal.*
- = 04 Z: [储 的 有 食儿.]
 [chu de you shir.]
 stored ATT have food
 Have food stored there.
- 05 L: <@@> 对.
 dui.
 right
 <@@> *That's right.*

L's response (Lo3) starts with a bit of laughter followed by “just in the dorm”, which indicates where she would eat rather than what she would eat. Then, she goes on to say she has oatmeal in the dormitory. Since this needs to be understood in the context of the question, when her answer comes to “I have”, it projects the next item due in reference to some kind of food – a final item which would bring the sentence and the action implemented by the sentence to completion. Just as L goes on to produce that final item, Z comes in at the same time and produces in overlap a more ‘general’ version of that answer (Lo4). Rather than some specific food, her version of L having food stored in the dormitory shows Z understands that L must have some food stored there: a prerequisite for her not having to go to the canteen for meals throughout the whole holiday break, even though she has no prior knowledge of the exact type of food L has in the dormitory. Her understanding is exhibited in the design of the final item she offered, to co-complete L's answer to her own question.

3.3 Opportunistic final-item co-completion

In the excerpts examined below, when an assessment is projected in the local context but before the final key assessing term is produced, the incoming speaker can take advantage of the final item as the opportunity space furnished by co-completion to exploit the grammatical structure of the sentence-so-far and offer an alternative assessment (from one that is being projected).

Excerpt (7) provides such an interesting case. Here, on seeing L mistakenly adding chilli sauce to a potato dish which is already very spicy, N starts with “you really make me”, projecting a predicative final item, which is immediately materialized in an idiomatic expression for “speechless”.

Excerpt (7) “Speechless”

- 01 N: 你 真是 让 我 [哑口无言.]
 ni zhenshi rang wo [yakouwuyan.]
 you really make me speechless
 You really make me speechless.

- 02 L: [刮目相看.]
 [guamuxiangkan.]
 look.with.eyes.polished
Knock my socks off.
- 03 N: [@@]
 04 L: [@@]

By this final item, N's sentence is brought to completion and so does her poking fun of L's inadvertent mistake. At the same time "you really make me" is also available to L, who, being aware of her own mistake, opportunistically fills the slot with another idiomatic expression roughly equivalent to "knock one's socks off", which can be heard as pre-emptively defending herself in the face of a possible negative comment. While providing the same grammatical type of the final item possibly for a same type of action (giving comments in this case), L may be seen as producing the same action but with a different stance.

In Excerpt (8), three friends, H, C and Junior are playing poker. Junior is new to the game. At the end of one round, Junior is the one who has the most cards left in his hands which he now lays down on the table.

Excerpt (8) "Playing poker"

- 01 H: 啊, 学弟 的 牌 [还 可以,]
 a, xuedi de pai [hai keyi,]
 INT junior.schoolmate ATT poker.cards fairly okay
Ah, Junior's cards are not bad.
- 02 C: [还 可以 吧,]
 [hai keyi ba,]
 fairly okay SFP
Not bad.
- 03 H: 也 可以 啊.
 ye keyi a
 also okay SFP
Not bad.

While inspecting Junior's hand (of cards), H's utterance up to "Junior's cards" (Lo1) very likely projects an incipient comment on J's hand. The grammatical structure of H's sentence-so-far also projects an adjectival predicate as the final item with which the sentence and the commenting implemented through it can be brought to completion. Indeed, H's turn progresses without a hitch to the predicate part "fairly okay" while C, who can also see the cards and hear H's sentence-in-progress, simultaneously produces "fairly okay" with an utterance-final particle indicating a lesser degree of certainty. Similar to Excerpt (7), H's sentence-so-far up to the overlap provides C with an opportunity to come in with a final item which would co-complete H's sentence in terms of the same syntactic structure and the same action type (i.e. giving a comment), but implementing the action on her own terms (i.e., less certain as compared to that of H).

We take the second speaker's final item in the above two excerpts, although produced in a stance-display relevant environment, not as displaying affiliation due to the fact that the key stance-displaying word in the first speaker's turn is produced in overlap, i.e., the incoming speaker starts earlier than the current turn's stance is made clear. Therefore the incoming speaker's final item is less likely to be targeting the current turn's yet-to-be-displayed stance for purposes of affiliation. Rather, the opportunity space for co-completion is taken up by the second speaker for purposes other than offering assistance or displaying understanding as seen in Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

4. Post-overlap management in collaborative turn sequences

When the second speaker's proffer to co-complete the first speaker's sentence (with a final item) runs into overlap with the first speaker's continuation (with or without his/her own version of the final item), dealing with that overlap may become a relevant next. Here, by "dealing with the overlap" we do not mean how the overlap is resolved (c.f. Schegloff 2000) since the overlaps are usually brief. However, what the second speaker proffers in the overlap is a final item for completing the first speaker's sentence/turn; whether the first speaker accepts or rejects such proffers, they may become a relevant next. This is to say, the appropriateness of the second speaker's final item may be checked against the first speaker's own version in the ensuing turn and result in a kind of local sequence similar to the collaborative turn sequence described by Lerner (2004).

Our data show that very often, the second speaker's proffer is accepted by the first speaker by agreement tokens, (partial) repeats or a combination of both. A typical acceptance may consist of a single *dui* 'right' (e.g., Excerpt 5), or multiple tokens of *dui* 'right' (e.g., Excerpt 3). The first speaker's acceptance does not necessarily rely on the second speaker having produced an exact version as that of his/her own. For instance, in Excerpt 5, the proffered final item (having food stored in the dormitory) differs from the first speaker's own version (oatmeal), but can be interpreted as some kind of 'superordinate' category of the exemplar. In this case, it is still receipted with acceptance.

Another way of accepting the second speaker's proffer is through what is called reference recalibration (Yue 2017). Excerpt (9) illustrates this. Three friends are taking a walk in a park from which some nearby buildings are in sight. At one point, their topic turns to these buildings. At L01, A asks which building B and C are now talking about, a question expecting a reference term in the answer.

Excerpt (9) “Buildings”

- 01 A: 哪 个?
na ge?
which CLF
Which one?
- 02 B: 那 个 [七:]
na ge qi
that CLF seven
That seven:
- 03 A: [韩]国 七 星 酒 店.
hanguo qixing jiudian
Korean seven.stars hotel
That Korean seven-stars hotel
- 04 B: 曲 形 的 那 个
quxing de na ge
curved ATT that CLF
That curved building.
- 05 A: 对 呀, 酒 店,
dui ya, jiudian,
yes PRT hotel
Yes, hotel.

It is in this context that B’s answer (Lo2), beginning with the deictic pronoun “that” together with finger-pointing at the same time, is already sufficient for A to recognize the building in question (Lo3). After a brief overlap, A’s reference to the building is accepted and confirmed by B in such a way that it recalibrates the reference, narrowing it down to a specific architectural characteristic of the building which houses the said hotel (Lo4).

A proffered final item can also be ratified with qualification, such as the one seen in Excerpt (1), copied here for the reader’s convenient reference.

Excerpt (1) “Evaluating a course”

- 01 S: 对 我 来 说, 帮 助 并 没 有 那 么 [的:]
dui wo lai shuo, bangzhu bing meiyong name de:
to me come say help at.all NEG so ATT
For me, the help is not so:
- 02 G: [大]
da
big
big
- 03 S: 我 想 象 中 的 大.
wo xiangxiang zhong de da.
I imagined in NOM big
as big as I thought.

Even though S’s sentence at Lo1 up to the stretch on the linking particle projects a simple adjective as the final item for the comments she is making, when G proffers the adjective *da* ‘big’, it is not followed by a full acceptance. Instead, G’s “big” is incorporated into S’s relative clause by which S qualifies “big” as being not as

big as she thought, culminating in a more nuanced comment on the course she has taken (L03).

In some cases, the proffered final item may not be explicitly accepted or acknowledged. Recall Excerpt (5) where H's "tea set" (L05) is exactly the same as that produced by J herself (L04). However, there is no explicit acceptance from J as she shifts from telling H about wanting to buy a tea set to her recent self-discovery of loving tea. In such cases, no local sequence is generated by co-completion. Part of Excerpt (5) is copied here for easy reference.

Excerpt (5) "tea set"

- 04 买个这种 (0.3) 简单的 [茶具.]
 mai ge zhe zhong (0.3) jiandan de [chaju.]
 buy CLF this CLF simple ATT tea.set
(I'd) buy this kind of (0.3) simple tea set.
- 05 H: [茶具.]
 [chaju.]
 tea.set
tea set
- 06 J: 我现在也发现我喜欢喝茶了。
 wo xianzai ye faxian wo xihuan he cha le.
 I now also find I like drink tea PRT
Now I also find myself beginning to love tea.

5. Conclusions

This study locates as its focus the site for the final item in a sentence-in-progress as a late but systematic opportunity space for co-completing sentences by another speaker, and as a systematic site for brief overlaps. A second speaker may supply a version of the final-item as projected by the grammatical structure of the sentence-so-far in given contexts to offer assistance for the searched-for final item upon the current speaker's displayed delivery trouble, or to show an early recognition of what they understand the current turn to be doing and what it takes for its completion when no delivery trouble of the first speaker is in sight. The overlap in the first case may be 'accidental' when the original speaker is able to produce his/her own final item a moment later, or it may be an 'achieved' early start in the second case. The same opportunity space may also be 'exploited' when incoming speakers hinge their version of the final item onto the current sentence-so-far for a same type of action but with a different stance. Since what the second speaker supplies is a version of what they understood to be a possible final item of the current sentence, whether it is accepted or rejected may become relevant in the next turn and generate a local sequence dealing with its acceptability. In most cases, the proffered final item is accepted by the first speaker or with qualification in

some cases. There are also cases where no such local sequences are generated as no explicit acceptance or rejection is given.

It becomes clear from exploring possible interactional functions served by such final-item co-completion that the practice is not sequence-specific, i.e., it is not tied to specific sequence types, but is 'generic' to some degree. Since a trouble with delivering the next item due is a local contingency, speakers have ways to deal with it in its local context. Supplying a final item is provided for by the turn-taking system which allows for entering the current turn by another speaker as late as where the next item due is the final item for the sentence's completion. Because of this same contingency, brief overlapping can also be expected when the second speaker's proffered final item runs into that of the original speaker, whose delivery trouble is only momentary and who is obliged to bring one's own sentence to completion. Likewise, because of this contingency, it is possible for another speaker to start a bit earlier at a site which is systematically provided for by the turn-taking system from the perspectives of both co-completion and overlap.

We also argue that overlapping final-item completion demonstrates speakers' active participation and high involvement in the interaction they are engaged in, which is motivated by the fundamental principle of cooperation and collaboration in human communication (Tomasello 2008). Speakers' intention to cooperate and collaborate is firmly grounded and publically available for the other party (and therefore also the analyst) to see in the details of their interaction. Participants need to show whether they have each other's attention, whether the other party's utterances and actions implemented are being recognized and understood, and in what way they align and affiliate with the other party (Li and Shi 2020). Final-item completion is one of the many practices that participants can and do use at the site when such needs arise near sentence completion.

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Transcription conventions

Speech overlap []
Truncated word -
Final .
Continuing ,
Question ?

Exclamation !
Lengthening :
Pause (0.2s)
Laughter @

Gloss symbols are

ASP aspect
ATT attributive
CLF classifier
COP copula
INT interjection
NAME personal or place names
NEG negator
NOM nominalization
PRT particle

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