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Some interactional uses of syntactically incomplete turns in Mandarin conversation

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In everyday conversation, sometimes a speaker may not complete his/her turn, and the recipients do not treat it as problematic. This paper investigates this type of syntactically incomplete turns (henceforth, SITs) in Mandarin conversation. Specifically, this study examines how SITs are used and constructed through multimodal resources in Mandarin face-to-face conversation. Adopting the methodology of conversation analysis, interactional linguistics, and multimodal analysis, the present study examines 8 hours of everyday Mandarin face-to-face conversation. It shows that the SITs are situated in particular sequential environments and triggered by local contingencies. For example, they are used to accomplish socially and interactionally inappropriate actions and display sensitivity to the recipients' disengagement from the ongoing talk and the current participation framework. Also, despite the syntactic incompleteness of the SITs, the prosodic and bodily-visual features involved in their production usually indicate possible turn completion.

Keywords: syntactically incomplete turns (SITs), multimodal analysis, socially and interactionally inappropriate actions, disengagement

關鍵詞：句法不完整话轮，多模态分析，不合适行为，脱离（参与框架）

1. Introduction

In talk-in-interaction, overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time; and turn transitions are finely coordinated (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1974). Interlocutors use a variety of resources to project and predict the possible completion of an ongoing turn. The possible turn completion point is often the point of syntactic, prosodic, and pragmatic completion (Ford and Thompson 1996; Ford, Fox and Thompson 1996). But sometimes people stop talking before a possible turn completion. This

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paper is mainly concerned with the usage and multimodal construction of syntactically incomplete turns (SITs) in Mandarin face-to-face conversation. Excerpt (1) exemplifies such an SIT. In this sequence, Lei (male) bumps his knee on the bed frame next to him, and Ran (female) produces a SIT (line 05) as a response to that incident.

(1) LR_V01:09:06

01 Lei: 我 觉得 她 还 多才多艺.
wo juede ta hai duocaiduoyi.
I feel 3SG even versatile
'I feel she (a third party outside of the camera) is quite versatile.'

02 ((Lei bumps his knee on the bed next to him))

03 Lei: 诶呦;
eiyou;
eiyou
'Eiyou.'

04 Ran: <<breathy >欸>. he
<<breathy >*ei*>. he
ei
'Ei.'

05→Ran: <<laughing> 你 把 腿><<whisper>给>
<<laughing> *ni ba tui*><<whisper>*gei*>
you BA leg
'Your leg was [VERB]'

06 Lei: 刚才 想 说 什么 呀;
gangcai xiang shuo shenme ya;
just now want say what PRT
'What was I going to say just now?'

07 Lei: 说着 说着 让 你 一打 岔 给忘 了.
shuozhe shuozhe rang ni yidacha gei wang le.
say-PROG say-PROG PASS you distract forget CRS
'I was distracted by you and forgot what I was saying.'

08 Ton: 电影 节 看 电影.
dianying jie kan dianying.
movie festival watch movie
'The movie festival, watching the movie.'

Here, Ran does not complete her turn in line 05, and it is not collaboratively completed by Lei either. But instead of initiating a repair, Lei tries to return to his prior topic in line 06, which shows that he treats the action performed in Ran's prior turn as interactionally complete. In this study, I will investigate the usage of SITs like the one in line 05, and how SITs are produced through the deployment

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of multimodal resources in Mandarin face-to-face conversation. I will return to a fuller analysis of this excerpt in Section 4.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that I wish to exclude one type of SIT from the current discussion. That is, the speaker may abort the production of a TCU/turn before its possible completion as a way to resolve overlaps (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 2000). But this type of SIT appears in a different interactional and sequential environment from the one discussed here, so I consider it a different *type* of interactional phenomenon.

This paper provides an empirical account of how SITs are produced and used in everyday Mandarin face-to-face conversation. The main questions asked here are: how are SITs used and what motivates their use in Mandarin conversation? Further, what is the multimodal design (prosody, bodily-visual features, sequential position, social actions performed, etc.) of SITs that allows the recipients to treat them as unproblematic and transition relevant? In answering these two questions, I show that SITs in the data are often used as displays of sensitivity to local contingencies such as accomplishing socially and interactionally 'improper' actions and the recipients' disengagement from the current talk and participation. In spite of the syntactic incompleteness, they are usually designed to be, and oriented to as, interactionally complete.

2. Turn organization and syntactically incomplete turns

A substantial body of research has shown that lexico-syntax, prosody, pragmatics (such as social action), and bodily-visual behaviors are relevant to the projection and prediction of possible turn completion. That is, turn transition regularly occurs at possible turn completion points indicated by syntax (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1996; Auer 2005, 2009), prosody (Local, Wells and Sebba 1985; Local, Kelly and Wells 1986; Wells and Peppé 1996; Wells and Macfarlane 1998; Selting 1995, 1996; 2000), bodily conduct (Duncan 1972, 1974; Duncan and Niederehe 1974; Duncan and Fiske 1977; Streeck 1995, 2009a,b; Mondada 2007; Li 2013) gaze (Goodwin 1979, 1980; Kendon 1967), and recognizable social action or pragmatics (Ford and Thompson 1996; Chevalier and Clift 2008), among others. These resources may converge (Ford and Thompson 1996; Ford, Fox and Thompson 1996) or diverge in the projection of possible turn completion (Li 2013, 2014). One type of divergence is that the syntactic construction of a turn is incomplete while some combination of prosody, body movements, and action projects possible turn completion (Li 2014). The SITs discussed in this paper are instances of this type of divergence.

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In contrast to the abundant research on turn organization, syntactically incomplete turns have not been the focus of many studies. Lerner (1991, 1996b) describes that a turn can be collaboratively constructed by both the speaker and the recipient. That is, the speaker produces part of the syntactic construction (the 'preliminary component') and the recipient brings it to completion by producing the 'final component' of the construction. But the 'collaborative completion' documented (Lerner 1991, 1996b; Hayashi and Mori 1998; Hayashi 2003) is retrospectively different from the SITs discussed here in that the latter is not completed by the recipient. Chevalier (2008) and Chevalier and Clift (2008) systematically explore SITs (which they call 'unfinished turns') in French conversation. Chevalier (2008) shows that unfinished turns are used to accomplish a variety of interactional tasks fitted to the talk in progress, and they are to be understood by reference to their sequential position. Chevalier and Clift (2008) argue that syntactic projection and action projection (in particular sequential positions) are the major resources that enable the recipient to provide an appropriate response to the unfinished turns. Their research demonstrates the importance of sequential context and the action accomplished in the particular context to the understanding of and response to SITs. But the role of bodily-visual behavior is not addressed in their studies, as their data are French telephone conversation.

In second language teaching and interaction, SITs (or 'designedly incomplete utterances (DIUs)' in Koshik's (2002) terms) are argued to be a practice used by teachers in second language teaching to elicit self-correction of students' spoken language errors (Omaggio Hadley 1993) and written language errors (Koshik 2002). Also, in second language classroom interaction, Olsher (2004) documents a practice used by EFL speakers called 'embodied completion'. It refers to ceasing to talk in the middle of a turn and completing the 'partial turn' through gesture or embodied display. Mori and Hayashi (2006) report that 'embodied completion' is also a practice used by Japanese L1 speakers in their interaction with L2 speakers to achieve intersubjectivity. These studies of syntactically incomplete turns and their 'embodied completion' in second language interaction demonstrate the coordination of language and the body in the construction of turns and actions, as well as in achieving different interactional tasks triggered by local contingencies.

Although unfinished turns are not at the center of their research, Ford, Thompson and Drake (2012) and Keevallik (2013) have made insightful observations on the multimodal construction of interactional units and turn continuation through both vocal and bodily resources. Building on the notion of 'permeability' (Lerner 1991), Ford, Thompson and Drake (2012) report that the syntactic form of a turn may be incomplete after a 'preliminary component' and the speaker may use bodily-visual practices to 'gesture toward' the 'final component'. Keevallik (2013) examines the coordinated deployment of language and the body in dance

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classes and argues that an incomplete syntactic construction in a turn projects turn continuation which can be realized by embodied demonstration. Through her dance class data, she shows the importance and the necessity of incorporating bodily conduct (i.e. embodied demonstration) in clausal syntax. Their studies demonstrate the multimodal nature of turn construction and action formation in face-to-face interaction.

The current study builds on this line of research of taking into account both the vocal and visual aspects of the construction of turns and actions, and explores the usage and multimodal construction of SITs in Mandarin face-to-face conversation.

3. Data and method

The current study adopts the methodology of conversation analysis, interactional linguistics and multimodal analysis in the study of SITs in Mandarin face-to-face conversation. Conversation analysis is used to analyze the sequential position of a SIT and actions performed in and through it in courses of actions in talk (see Schegloff 1990, 2007; Drew 2004; among others). Interactional linguistics addresses the question of how linguistic structure and interaction mutually construct and influence each other (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2001). Thus, it is employed to explore how the participants use linguistic structure (e.g. lexico-syntax, prosody) as resources to achieve the interactional goal of signaling and predicting the possible completion of the SITs. Finally, multimodal analysis provides a new perspective to the study of face-to-face interaction, taking into account not only verbal but also nonverbal aspects without prioritizing any modalities (Goodwin 1981; Stivers and Sidnell 2005; Streeck, Goodwin and LeBaron 2011). I will thus examine not only the vocal (e.g. lexico-syntactic, prosodic, sequential) features of the SITs, but also the bodily-visual behaviors involved in their production.

This study is based on approximately 8 hours (493 minutes) of 8 natural everyday face-to-face conversations among native Mandarin speakers (each conversation ranging from 30 to 90 minutes). The conversations were recorded in Germany and Beijing, China in 2008–2010. In the data, 64 instances of SITs (excluding collaborative completions and overlap-resolving incomplete turns) were identified from all the conversations. That SITs occur in every conversation with different constellations of speakers shows that they are systematic phenomenon and not due to idiosyncrasies of particular speakers. The 64 instances of SITs were then analyzed in terms of their turn design (including lexico-syntax, prosody, bodily-visual behaviors), actions they implement, and their position in the local and larger sequences. The prosodic features were identified mainly through auditory

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analysis, assisted by acoustic analysis software program PRAAT (http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/). Bodily-visual behaviors were identified and analyzed using the video annotation software program ELAN (https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/). The transcription system used in this article is a modified version of GAT-2 (Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2, Selting et al. 2009, see Appendix A) for the representation of prosody in conversation.

The next section reports on the local contingencies that occasion the use of the SITs in Mandarin face-to-face interaction.

4. The use of syntactically incomplete turns in Mandarin conversation

There are two main types of SITs in the data. The first type of SIT is completed visually through bodily-visual behaviors such as iconic gestures and head shakes, which visibly demonstrate the verbally unproduced turn elements. This type of SIT resonates with the search for a precise formulation in turn production observed by Lerner (2013), and with Keevallik's (2013) finding that an interactional unit can be co-constructed by not only syntactic construction but also bodily-visual movements. The second type of SIT is syntactically and semantically incomplete and also not completed by bodily-visual behaviors. An examination of this type of SIT in the data shows that it often occurs when the action performed through it is socially and interactionally 'improper' or after recipients' displays of disengagement. Lerner (2013) also describes that a type of hesitation in turn production occurs prior to a projectably delicate term or delicate actions. These two types of SITs are motivated by, and produced to manage, different kinds of problems in interaction; however, they differ with regard to their semantic completeness. In this article, I will limit myself to the second type of SIT motivated by local contingencies in interaction, and address the first type of SITs elsewhere.

In the remainder of this section, I will discuss the speakers' use of SITs in displaying their sensitivity to local contingencies such as socially and interactionally 'improper' actions, and the disengaging recipiency of the recipients.

In everyday interaction, conversational exchanges between speakers and recipients may not always go smoothly. Sometimes, socially and interactionally 'improper' actions performed in talk may lead to awkward moments in interaction. Speakers display orientation and sensitivity to the impropriety of their actions through the way they design their turns at talk (see Lerner 2013). An examination of the data shows that leaving their turns syntactically incomplete is one of the techniques that speakers use to accomplish socially and interactionally 'improper' actions. The term 'improper' has been discussed in the contexts of self-talk (as situationally improper) (Goffman 1978) and social misbehaviors that deliberately

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breach the rules of social life (as situationally improper) (Garfinkel 1984 [1967]). The term 'improper talk' has been claimed to be an index of intimate interaction (Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff 1987). Based on the data in this study, socially and interactionally 'improper' actions refer to the interactional breaches that are frank, rude or selfish in specific social and interactional contexts. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, they are 'face-threatening acts'. For example, making a negative evaluation of a co-participant (Excerpt 2) and laughing at an awkward behavior of a co-participant (Excerpt 3) are rude; and making requests only concerned with oneself and potentially undermining other's interests (Excerpt 4) is regarded as selfish in Chinese culture. Speakers may use the syntactically incomplete turn as a method to perform these socially and interactionally 'improper' actions. In addition, speakers and recipients employ a variety of vocal and visual cues to project and predict the possible completion of the SIT in the moment-by-moment unfolding of the turn. The following three excerpts exemplify this use of SITs as well as their dynamic multimodal construction.

Excerpt (2) is taken from a conversation among four friends: Hai, Lei, Qin (males), and Yin (female). Jessica is their common acquaintance who is not present at the interaction. Jessica has made some comments on the appearance of the three male participants Hai, Lei, and Qin; namely, she does not like Hai's looks. Here, Hai, Lei, and Qin are jointly telling Yin (the unknowing participant) about how Jessica does not like Hai's appearance (lines 02–05 and 34–36), but finds Lei and Qin's appearances fine (lines 46–47). The SIT (line 51) appears in Lei's response to Yin's question of why Jessica did not criticize Lei and Qin's glasses (line 45).

(2) HLQY_mature men

01 Hai: 欸 我 觉得 Jessica 就 是 想 就 是 喜欢 成熟
ei wo juede Jessica jiu shi xiang jiu shi xihuan chengshu
PRT I feel (NAME) just be want just be like mature
男人;
nanren;
men
'Ei, I think Jessica likes mature men.'

02 Hai: 她 不 喜欢 我 这 一 型;
ta bu xihuan wo zhe yi xing;
3SG NEG like I this one type
'She doesn't like men of my type.'

03 Lei: 不 是.
bu shi.
NEG be
'No.'

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04 Lei: 她 觉得 可能 是 太 小孩儿 了.
ta juede keneng shi tai xiaohair le.
3SG feel likely be too childish PRT
'She might feel you are too much like a boy,'

05 Lei: 太 学生 了.
tai xuesheng le.
too student CRS
'too much like a student.'

(28 lines omitted regarding Hai's hairstyle and Jessica's comments on his hairstyle.)

34 Lei: 还有 你的 眼镜.
haiyou nide yanjing.
also your glasses
'Also, your (Hai's) glasses,'

35 Lei: 她 每 次 都 会 都 会.
ta mei ci dou hui dou hui.
3SG every time all will all will
'every time she will,'

36 Lei: 从 头 到 尾 给 你 批判 一遍.
cong tou dao wei gei ni pipan yibian.
from head to tail to you criticize once through
'criticize you (Hai) through and through.'

(8 lines omitted regarding Jessica's comments on Hai's appearance)

45 Yin: 她 为什么 不 批判 你 的 眼镜 呢.
ta weishenme bu pipan ni de yanjing ne.
3SG why NEG criticize your glasses PRT
'Why didn't she criticize your (Lei's) glasses?'

46 Lei: 她 说 我们 都 [(xxxx)
ta shuo women dou [(xxxx)
3SG say we all [(xxxx)
'She said we (Lei and Qin) are both…'

47 Qin: [她 认为 我们 都 很 好.
[*ta renwei women dou hen hao.*
[3SG think we all very good.
'She thinks we (Lei and Qin) are very good.'

48 Yin: ((laughter))

49 Lei: 我们 比较 成熟 显得.
women bijiao chengshu xiande.
we relatively mature seem
'We (Lei and Qin) seem relatively mature.'

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50 Qin: 对.
dui.
right
'Right.'

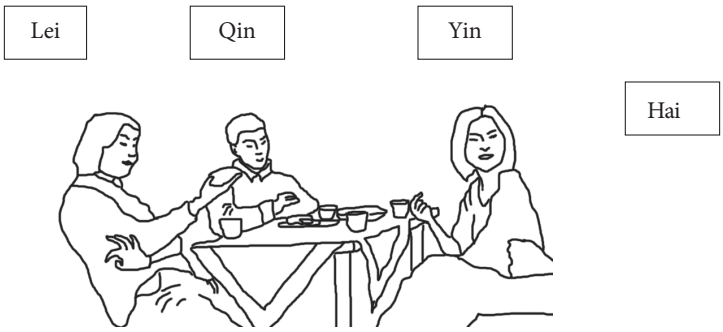

Figure 1. Lei's (left) gesture at *bijiao* in line 51

51→Lei: 他 显得 比<<creaky>较::>.
ta xiande bi<<creaky>jiao::>.
3SG seem relatively
'He (Hai) seems relatively [ADJ]'

Figure 2. Lei's facial expression during the lip smacking

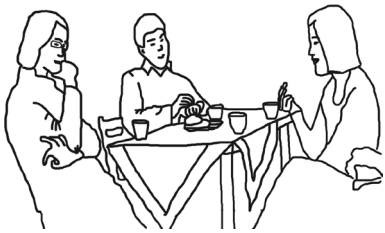

Figure 3. Lei's (left) body position after the lip smacking

52 Lei: (0.4)
53 Lei: ((lip smacking))
54 Qin: 对.
dui.
right
'Right.'
55 Hai: 我 显得 比较.
wo xiande bijiao.
I seem relatively
'I seem relatively'

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56 Hai: 我 写的 这 个 题目 就 是 这样 的.
wo xiede zhe ge timu jiu shi zheyang de.
I write this CL topic just be like this PRT
'The topic of my dissertation is like this too.'

In line 45, Yin inquires why Jessica has not criticized Lei and Qin's glasses. Lei and Qin respond with a report of Jessica's positive comments on their appearances (lines 46–47). Reporting another's words is documented to be a resource for performing tacit self-praise in Chinese conversation (Wu 2012). Yin's laughter displays her orientation to Qin's response as nonserious and laughable. After Qin's tacit self-praise is treated as nonserious, Lei produces an explicit positive assessment of Qin and himself *women bijiao chengshu xiande* 'we look relatively mature' (line 49), followed by an SIT contrasting Lei and Qin's 'mature' appearance to that of Hai (line 51). Lei's positive assessment of Qin and himself (line 49) and in particular its juxtaposition with his projectably negative comment on Hai (line 51) create a clear contrast of elevating of oneself (Lei and Qin) and denigrating of the other (Hai). Lei's self-elevating assessments juxtaposed with other-denigrating assessments violate the social norm of modesty and politeness, and are thus doubly problematic.

The SIT (line 51) is part of the contrast construction and is understood by reference to its sequential position and the interactional particulars. At the beginning of the sequence, Hai and Lei collaboratively establish the contrast between Jessica's preference of *chengshu nanren* 'mature men' and Hai's possibly being *tai xiaohair le* 'too childish' (lines 01–05). Lei's subsequent report on Jessica's criticism of Hai's glasses (lines 34–36) and Yin's inquiry (line 45) are organized around this contrast. Lei's positive self-assessment *women bijiao chengshu xiande* 'we seem relatively mature' (line 49) and negative assessment of Hai *ta xiande bijiao* [ADJ] 'he seems relatively [ADJ]' (line 51 also form the same contrast. This contrast is even constructed by the same lexico-syntactic structure [subject+seem+adjective] (lines 49 and 51). The contrastive format and the repeat of the lexico-syntactic structure provide the coparticipants with resources to anticipate not only the possible turn completion after the final contrastive component (see Lerner 1991 for other types of two-part formats and their sequential implicativeness), but also the turn elements (i.e., the adjective) that form the contrast in the final component. The non-initial position in the larger sequence and the two-part format in making the contrast serve as pragmatic resources enhancing the projectability of the missing final element in Lei's turn in line 51 (see Lerner 2002 for enhanced projectability of a TCU).

Lei uses other vocal and visual resources to project the possible completion of the SIT. The phonetic/prosodic design of line 51 indicates its possible completion

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at the end of *bijiao* 'relatively'. The first four syllables in line 51 are produced with faster tempo and higher pitch register, but the pitch of the last syllable of *bijiao* drops to near the bottom of Lei's pitch range (c.a. 50 Hz) followed by the creaky phonation.[1] It is also significantly lengthened and followed by a 200ms-pause (Figure 4). The low pitch register, creaky voice, and lengthening of *bijiao*, as well as the subsequent pause, indicate the possible turn completion.

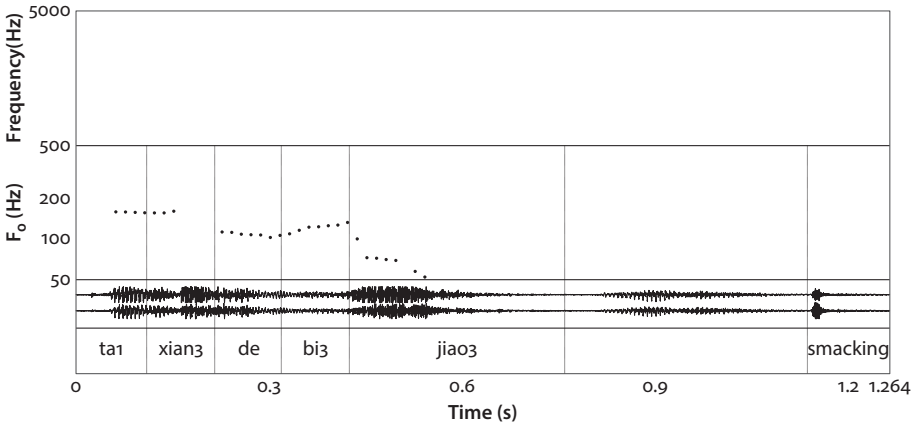

Figure 4. Pitch trace (dotted line), spectrogram and waveform of lines 51 to 53 in Excerpt (2)

Lei's bodily-visual behaviors also visibly display the possible completion of the turn at the end of the SIT. Lei starts to move his hand in the middle of his turn in line 51. The Palm Up Open Hand (PUOH) gesture reaches its stroke at the last word *bijiao* (Figure 1). After a temporary hold of the stroke during the production of the lip smacking (line 53), Lei retracts his hand to rest position (Figure 3). The PUOH gesture at the end of *bijiao* has been documented as a visual signal indicating "giving up" the turn (Müller 1998; Streeck 2009a). Concurrent with the lip smacking, Lei also tilts his head and produces a grimace towards Hai (Figure 2). The grimace towards Hai and the PUOH "hand over" gesture embody Lei's orientation to the turn as transition relevant. Qin's immediate agreement *dui* (line 54) demonstrates that he orients to Lei's turn as interactionally complete.

The syntactically incomplete turn is not only projected by multimodal resources, but is also itself used as a resource to manage local contingencies in interaction. In lines 49 and 51, Lei makes the contrast between Hai, on the one hand, and himself and Qin on the other. But the contrast involves the favorable assessment

1. The pitch trace of the syllable *jiao* is not complete in Figure 4 due to the final low-pitch creaky voice. See also Ogden (2001) on the relevance of creaky voice to possible turn completion in Finnish conversation.

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of themselves (line 49) and the negative assessment of Hai (line 51). Both components of the contrast (the first being self-elevating and the second being other-denigrating) can be considered impolite and socially censured actions. But doing other-denigrating action such as making a negative assessment of a present co-participant can have even more serious social consequences than self-elevating actions, such as making a favorable assessment of oneself. Lei displays sensitivity to the impropriety of the 'face-threatening' other-denigrating action in line 51 by leaving the negative assessment word unproduced. Thus, the syntactically incomplete turn is used as a resource to put the negative assessment on record without being held accountable for verbalizing it (see Chevalier and Clift 2008 and Ford, Thompson and Drake 2012 for a similar function of unfinished turns in French and English conversation).

This excerpt shows that the recipient draws upon the sequential placement of the turn in the larger sequence (after the contrast has been established) and the action it accomplishes (in establishing the contrast) to project what it may take for the turn to be syntactically and interactionally completed. Locally, the recipient monitors the lexcio-syntactic, phonetic/prosodic design of the turn-in-progress and the bodily-visual behaviors of the speaker in the moment-by-moment unfolding of interaction for predicting the possible completion of the turn and the start of their next turn. The syntactically incomplete turn is a display of the speaker's sensitivity to the social impropriety of the action accomplished through the turn-in-progress.

The use of SITs in accomplishing socially and interactionally improper action is also observable in Excerpt (3). In this interaction, an expanded version of (1), Lei (male), Ran (female), and Tong (female) are getting together for lunch at Tong's place. Tong is in the kitchen (off-camera) and preparing to serve lunch. At this time, Lei notices a guitar in the room; speaking to Ran, he compliments Tong for being versatile (line 01). Then he turns to Tong and asks her to play the guitar for Ran and himself (line 02). But Tong explains that the guitar is not hers but her boyfriend's (lines 05–07). After acknowledging his misunderstanding (line 08), Lei turns his body while sitting on a rotating chair and knocks his knee on the bed frame next to him.

(3) LR_V01:09:06
01 Lei: 肖 彤 姑娘 还 还 多才多艺.
xiao tong guniang hai hai duocaiduoyi.
(NAME) girl still still versatile
'Xiao Tong is quite versatile.'

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02 Lei: 给 我们 秀 一 段儿 吧.
gei women xiu yi duanr ba.
give us show one CL PRT
'Show us some (of your talent).'
03 Lei: 还 会 弹 吉他;
hai hui tan jita;
even can play guitar
'She can also play guitar.'
04 Ton: 什么 什么 会 弹 吉他;
shenme shenme hui tan jita;
what what can playguitar
'What guitar.'
05 Ton: 这 是 我 男朋友 的.
zhe shi wo nanpengyou de.
this be my boyfriend GEN
'It's my boyfriend's.'
06 Ton: 那个 在 这儿 的 时候 他 他 他 要;
neige zai zher de shihou ta ta ta yao;
that-CL in here ASSC time 3SG 3SG 3sg has to
'When he was here, he had to,'
07 Ton: [他 要 工作.
[*ta yao gongzuo.*
[3SG has to work
'he had to work.'
08 Lei: [我 觉得 她 还 多才多艺.
[*wo juede ta hai duocaiduoyi.*
[I feel 3SG even versatile
'I feel she is quite versatile.'
09 ((Lei bumps his knee on the bed next to him))
10 Lei: 诶呦;
eiyou;
eiyou
'Eiyou.'
11 Ran: <<breathy >欸>. he
<<breathy >*ei*>. he
ei
'Ei.'

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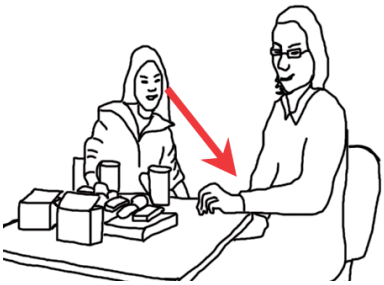

Figure 5. Ran's (left) gaze during *ni ba tui* in line 12

Figure 6. Ran's (left) body position at the end of line 12

12→Ran: <<laughing> 你 把 腿><<whisper>给>
<<laughing> *ni ba tui*><<whisper>*gei*>
you BA leg
'Your leg was [VERB]'

13 Lei: 刚才 想 说 什么 呀;
gangcai xiang shuo shenme ya;
just now want say what PRT
'What was I going to say just now?'

14 Lei: 说着 说着 让 你 一打岔 给 忘 了.
shuozhe shuozhe rang ni yidacha gei wang le.
say-PROG say-PROG PASS you distract forget CRS
'I was distracted by you and forgot what I was saying.'

15 Ton: 电影 节 看 电影.
dianying jie kan dianying.
movie festival watch movie
'The movie festival, watching the movie.'

Here, when bumping his knee onto the bed frame, Lei produces a response cry *eiyou* (line 10) (Goffman 1978). When someone reports or directly displays experience of pain (for example via a response cry), the co-participants are obliged to not only 'affirm the nature of the experience' and affiliate with the one who experienced the pain (Heritage 2011), but also to display empathy[2] or sympathy. But Ran displays sensitivity to the 'extra-linguistic local matter' (Bergmann 1990) by producing a surprise token *ei* (Chao 1968; Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006) infused with breathy laughter in line 11, and describing the incident with a laughing voice (line 12) (see Ford and Fox 2010 for multiple practices for constructing laughables). Ran's laughter (line 11) and laughing voice (line 12) suggest that she treats Lei's awkwardness of inadvertently bumping into the bed as nonserious

2. See also Lindström and Sorjonen (2013) for a call for a possible distinction between displays of affiliation and displays of empathy, and Kupertz (2014) for discussion of such a distinction.

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and laughable (see Sacks 1974). Ran's laughing at Lei's awkward experience (literally through reporting that experience with a laughing voice), especially when Lei may want to downplay and move away from it (as is shown by the topic shift initiated by Lei in line 13), is a social transgression and violates what Leech calls the Sympathy Maxim (Leech 1983). Also, the design of Ran's turn describing the incident in line 12 is hearable as interactionally inappropriate. The *ba…gei* construction in line 12 puts strong emphasis on the disposal of the direct object by the subject (Li and Thompson 1981: 482–483). It conveys Ran's subjective belief that the agent Lei is responsible for the disposal (bumping) of the direct object (his leg) (Shen 2002: 389–390), and thereby conveys a tone of accusation. Thus, Ran's reaction to Lei's inadvertent leg bumping incident is doubly problematic in that she not only "laughs at" Lei's awkward experience, but also implies her accusation of Lei as being solely responsible for it. Here again, Ran displays sensitivity to the social and interactional impropriety of her action by leaving the verb (i.e. how Lei's leg is "disposed of " or "handled") unproduced. But the unproduced verb can be directly retrieved from what happened to Lei's knee in the immediately preceding situational context. That Lei tries to tie the ensuing talk back to before his awkward accident shows that he orients to Ran's turn in line 12 as possibly complete.

A cluster of multimodal resources indicate that the syntactically incomplete turn is transition relevant. First, Ran is laughing while producing her turn in lines 11–12. The first three syllables in line 12 are produced with 'modal-voice laughs', whereas the last syllable *gei* is produced with 'breathy-voiced laughter'[3] (Esling 2014). The change of the phonation type from modal voice to the quieter breathy voice in line 12 indicates the possible completion of the turn at the end of *gei*. Line 12 is also produced with an overall pattern of pitch and loudness declination with the laughter. Second, Ran also performs a series of body movements that embody turn completion at the end of *gei*. Ran looks down at Lei's knee during her turn in lines 11 and 12. At the end of the last syllable in line 12 and the last breathy laugh pulse,[4] Ran leans backwards and to the right to rest position (Figure 6). Leaning back is a visual signal for the possible completion of a multi-unit turn (Li 2013) and a laughter-episode (Griffitt 2008). Concurrent with her leaning back, she also moves her gaze from Lei's knee (Figure 5) to at his face (Figure 6). Moving her gaze away from Lei visibly displays Ran's disengagement from the ongoing sequence (Goodwin 1979, 1980, 1981, 1986).

3. In breathy-voiced laughter, the glottis is wider open in the abduction phase with little longitudinal tension and for longer periods than in the modal-voice laughs (Esling 2014; see Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996 for the features of breathy voice).

4. Ran's laughter vocalization is composed of four laughter pulses (see Moore and von Leden 1958 for laughter pulse), which is typical for human laughter (Province and Yong 1991).

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While rubbing his knee with his right hand, Lei turns away from the bed and faces Ran sideways during her turn in line 12 (Figure 5). But Ran is still within his field of perception. Although Ran's faint bodily movements such as gaze shift may not be perceivable to Lei, her gross postural shift (i.e., leaning back) is arguably still visible to Lei. Ran's completion-implicative vocal and visual behaviors indicate the designed completion of her turn at the end of line 12, despite the incomplete syntactic structure. That Lei launches his next turn immediately after Ran's turn in line 12 with no gap or overlap provides evidence that he treats Ran's syntactically incomplete turn as complete in the interactional context.

The use of syntactically incomplete turns in performing socially and interactionally improper actions is also shown in Excerpt (4). In this interaction, three young women, Lon, Bin and Pei are having dinner at Lon's place. There are two serving spoons for one dish. During the dinner, Pei requests permission to take one of the serving spoons and use it as her own.

(4) BLP_Serving spoon_V49:14

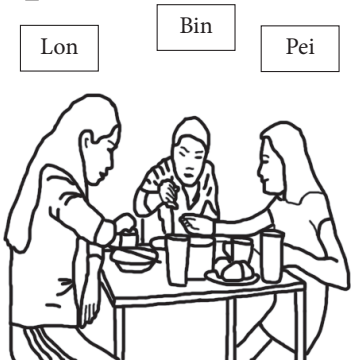

Figure 7. Pei's gesture in line 01

01 Pei: 这个 勺子 我 能 用 吗.
zheige shaozi wo neng yong ma.
this-CL spoon I can use PRT
'Can I use this spoon?'

02 Lon: 这 都 是 公用 勺子.
zhe dou shi GONGyong shaozi.
this all be shared spoon
'These are all serving spoons for our use.'

03 Lon: 对.
dui.
right
'Right.'

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04 Lon: 就是;
iiushi;
iust be
'(They're) just…'
05 Lon: 就 (X)
jiu (X)
just
'just'
06 Lon: [<<p> 就 是 一起 用 的.>
[<<p> *jiu shi yiqi yong de.*>
[just be together use PRT
'They're precisely for us to use together.'
07 Pei: [呕
[*ou.*
[oh
'Oh.'

Figure 8. Pei's gesture and gaze at the end of line 08

08→Pei: 没 (有) 我的 意思 是 说;
mei (you) wode yisi shi shuo;
NEG my meaning be say
'No, my meaning was [CLAUSE]'
09 Bin: 你 要 自己 拿 拿 [是 吧;
ni yao ziji na na [shi ba;
you want –self take take [be PRT
'You want to take it and use it for yourself, right?'
10 Lon: [<<all>你 (XX) 拿>拿 去 吃 吧.
[<<all>*ni* (XX) *na*>*na qu chi ba.*
[you take take go eat PRT
'Take it.'
11 Lon: [<<p>这 还 有 一个 呢.>
[<<p>*zhe hai you yige ne.*>
[here still have one-CL PRT
'There's another one.'

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12 Bin: [对 我 们 一个 勺子 够 了.
[*dui* *women* *yige* *shaozi* *gou* *le.*
[right we one-CL spoon enough PRT
'Right. One spoon is enough for us.'
13 Lon: [这 还 有 一个 呢.
[*zhe* *hai* *you* *yige* *ne.*
[here still have one-CL PRT
'There's another one here.'
14 Pei: [谢谢 谢谢.
[*xiexie* *xiexie.*
[thanks thanks
'Thanks, thanks.'

This sequence begins with Pei's request for permission to use one of the serving spoons (line 01, Figure 7). In this context, the utterance is ambiguous depending on how one interprets the verb *yong* 'use': namely, Pei may like to *use* the spoon just as a 'serving spoon' and put it back after serving the dish; or Pei is asking for permission to *use* it not a 'serving spoon' but as her own spoon. Here, the meaning intended by Pei differs from that interpreted by Lon. Lon demonstrates her understanding of Pei's turn as requesting to use the serving spoon as a 'serving spoon' in asserting *zhe dou shi gongyong shaozi* 'these are all serving spoons for our use' (line 02) and *jiu shi yiqi yong de* '(they are) precisely for us to use together' (line 06). To Lon, Pei's request for permission to use the serving spoon in the context where the permission is not needed is misleading (Clark and Haviland 1977: 2). The design of Lon's response displays her confusion towards Pei's prior turn. The extended turn (lines 02–06), the mid-turn self-confirming toke *dui* (line 03) (Kuo 1998) and the recycled pause filler *jiushi* (Fang 2000; Biq 2001) (lines 04–05) are features of a dispreferred response to a request, i.e., a rejection. But the accounts of the function of the spoon seem to indicate the preferred response, i.e., a granting of the request (Pomerantz 1984).

While Lon displays her treatment of Pei's turn as request to use the serving spoon as a 'serving spoon', Pei intends to request permission to use it as her own spoon. The divergence is shown in Pei's repair in line 08. Pei's third position repair shows that Lon's understanding of Pei's prior turn in line 01 is not right (Schegloff 1992). The turn-initial negative marker *meiyou* 'no' is often used to initiate repair in third position (Schegloff 1992), and indicates that Pei treats her prior turn differently from Lon. Pei goes on to produce a preface to the reformulation of her prior turn showing how it was to be understood (line 08). Interestingly, the reformulation of her intention here is left syntactically unfinished. I argue that this SIT is a display of Pei's orientation and sensitivity to the action accomplished through Pei's own turn as socially and interactionally improper. Requesting to take the

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serving spoon which is intended to be 'used together' (*yiqiyong* and *gongyongde*) by the three participants as one's own could be seen as egocentric behavior. It is considered socially improper especially in Chinese culture where collectivism is highly valued and individual wish is normatively supposed to yield to the collective interest. It becomes particularly delicate when Pei has to repeat her egocentric request in her repair of Lon's misunderstanding. By leaving her turn syntactically incomplete after the negative marker and reformulation marker (line 08), Pei displays sensitivity to the impropriety of this explicitly egocentric request. The SIT is a technique used by Pei to put something 'on the record' (i.e., accomplishing the action of request) without being responsible for verbalizing it.

Bin, the third woman at the table, now recognizes Pei's intended meaning with her SIT in line 08 and offers a candidate understanding *ni yao ziji na na shi ba* 'you want to take it and use it for yourself, right?' (line 09). Bin's reformulation of Pei's request clarifies Lon's previous misunderstanding. Lon therefore immediately produces a remedial action, i.e., an offer for Pei to take the spoon (line 10), followed by assurances that they have enough serving spoons (lines 11 and 13). Here, Lon's offer changes Pei's previous dispreferred action (request) into Lon's own preferred action (offer) (see Lerner 1996a),[5] and displays her recognition of Pei's face concerns (Lerner 1996a).

The phonetic/prosodic and visual features of Pei's SIT in line 08 also indicate that she is treating it as interactionally complete. First, the pitch movement and loudness of the turn form an overall declination pattern (Figure 9). The last syllable *shuo* 'say' is produced with significantly longer duration (270 ms) than preceding syllables and is followed by a pause (Figure 9). Also, there is no oral or glottal closure at the end of *shuo*. These phonetic/prosodic features foreshadow that Pei's turn in transition relevant. Second, Pei picks up and holds the spoon while making the initial request (line 01) (Figure 7), and starts to use the spoon to serve the dish into her plate at the beginning of line 08. She puts the spoon back onto her own plate and looks down at her plate at the end of line 08 (Figure 8). The gaze withdrawal and retraction of her hand holding the spoon at the lengthened syllable *shuo* visibly embody her treatment of the ongoing turn as possibly complete.

In sum, the previous excerpts show that the disruption to the syntactic progressivity of SITs is not random. They are regularly used to accomplish actions that are socially and interactionally improper such as making a negative evaluation of a co-participant and contrasting it with the praise of oneself (Excerpt (2)), laughing at the co-participant's awkward accident (Excerpt (3)), and making an egocentric

5. But the phenomenon under discussion here differs from that described in Lerner (1996a) in that Lon's turn (line 10) is not a collaborative completion of Pei's prior turn nor are they produced in overlap with one another.

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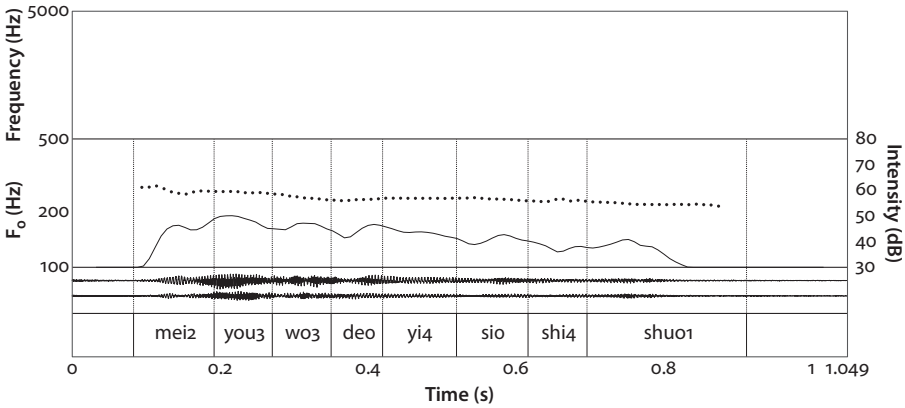

Figure 9. Pitch trace (dotted line), intensity trace (solid line), spectrogram and waveform of line 08 in Excerpt (4)

request (Excerpt (4)). That the speakers leave their turns syntactically unfinished displays their sensitivity to the social and interactional impropriety of the actions performed, and is a strategy to avoid overtly threatening co-participants' face while still putting the action 'on the record'.

In addition to displaying sensitivity to the inappropriate actions performed through their own SITs, speakers in the data also display sensitivity to their recipients through the use of SITs. That is, speakers may leave their turns syntactically incomplete with sensitivity to a particular display of recipiency, i.e., disengagement from the current participation framework by recipients. This process of designing talk attending to the particular recipiency of coparticipants is central to conversation (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Excerpt (5) is a case in point.

In this excerpt, Lei (male) and Ran (female), whom we saw before in Excerpt (3), are talking about the Chinese restaurants in Berlin, where they are studying. At the beginning of this sequence, Lei mentions a noodle restaurant (lines 01 and 02), and in line 10, he gives it a very positive assessment (line 10). The SIT is produced by Lei (line 22), after his elaborate accounts of the fried-sauce noodles in the noodle restaurant (lines 15–21).

(5) LR_Noodle restaurant _V00:10:20
01 Lei: 那个 叫 什么;
neige jiao shenme;
that-CL call what
'What's that called'
02 Lei: 兰州 拉面.
lanzhou lamian.
Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle
'Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles.'

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03 Lei: 就是 咱 们 上 次 吃 面 那个 对过.
jiu shi zanmen shangci chi mian neige duiguo.
just be we last time eat noodle that-CL opposite side
'It's one on the opposite side of the street from the restaurant where we had noodles last time.'

04 Ran: 欸 那块儿 那块儿 [有 好多 好多 中国 店.
ei neikuair neikuair [you haoduo haoduo zhongguo dian.
PRT that-CL that-CL [have many many Chinese restaurant.
'There are many Chinese restaurants there.'

05 Lei: [叫 第里格 还 是 什么.
[jiao dilige hai shi shenme.
[call (NAME) or be what
'(The street) is called Dilige or something.'

06 Ran: *Kant Strasse.*
(NAME) street
'Kant Street.'

07 Lei: 对 对 对 Kant Strasse.=
dui dui dui Kant Strasse.=
right right right (NAME)
'Right, right, right. Kant Street.'

08 Ran: =好多 好多 中国店.
=haoduo haoduo zhongguodian.
many many Chinese restaurants
'Many Chinese restaurants,'

09 Ran: 都 特别 好.
dou tebie hao.
all very good
'are all very good.'

10 Lei: 但是 那 那个 兰州 拉面 那个
danshi nei neige lanzhou lamian neige
but that that CL Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle that-CL
馆儿 确实 不错.
guanr queshi bucuo.
restaurant indeed not bad
'But the Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle restaurant is indeed not bad.'

11 Lei: 它 那 那个 面 还 [还 比 对面儿 还
ta nei neige mian hai [hai bi duimianr hai
3SG that that-CL noodle even [even compare opposite even
稍微 便宜 一点儿.
shaowei pianyi yidianr.
slightly cheap a little bit
'Their noodles are even slightly cheaper than the one across the road.'

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12 Ran: [<<p>啊::(XXX)>.
[<<p>*a*::(XXX)>.
[ah
'Ah.'

13 Ran: 呕::.
ou::.
oh
'Oh.'

14 Lei: 那个 炸酱面 巨 好吃 无比.
neige zhajiangmian JU haochi wubi.
that-CL fried sauce noodle enormously delicious incomparably
'The fried-sauce noodles are enormously and incomparably delicious.'

15 Lei: 然后 里边儿 料 特别 足;
ranhou libianr liao tebie zu;
then inside ingredients very enough
'Plus it has a lot of ingredients.'

Figure 10. Ran's (left) gaze and body position at the end of line 16

16 Lei: 跟 我 [ç]- 跟 我 想象 的 不 一样.
gen wo [ç]- gen wo xiangxiang de bu yiyang.
with me with me imagine NOM NEG same
'It's different from what I thought.'

17 Lei: 我 以为 就 一 碗 酱.
wo yiwei jiu yi wan jiang.
I think just one bowl sauce
'I thought there would just be a bowl of sauce.'

18 Lei: 然[后ʔ (--)
ran[*houʔ* (--)
th[en
'Then.'

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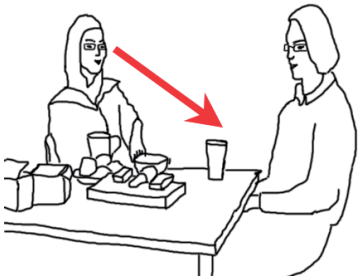

Figure 11. Ran's (left) gaze and body position at the end of line 19

Gaze at Lei……down
19 Ran: [嗯 嗯.
[*en en.*
[mm mm
'Mm, mm.'

Figure 12. Lei's (right) gesture at *qing qingcai* in line 20

Hand |~~~~~~~**********
20 Lei: 有 点儿 有 点儿 青 青菜.
you dianr you dianr qing qingcai.
have a bit have a bit vegetable
'(and) a little bit of vegetable.'
Hand _._._._._.|
21 Lei: 往 里 一倒 一ʔ (-) 一 搅 就 是 炸酱面.=
wang li yidao yiʔ (-) yi jiao jiu shi zhajiangmian.=
toward inside pour stir just be fried-sauce noodle
'Pouring (them (the sauce and the vegetable)) into (the noodles) and stirring (them) just makes the fried-sauce noodles.'

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Figure 13. Lei's (right) body at the beginning of line 22

Figure 14. Lei's (right) gesture at *chang* in line 22

22→Lei: =<<smiling>他们(-)> 他们 那个 弄的 反正 非常;
=<<smiling>*tamen*(-)> *tamen neige nongde fanzheng feichang*;
they they that-CL do anyway very
'Their noodles are all in all very [ADJ]'

Figure 15. Ran's (left) body at *mian* in line 23

23 Ran: 是 对 面;
shi duimian;
be opposite
'Is it opposite it?'
24 Lei: 嗯:: 斜 对面.
en:: xie duimian.
mm oblique opposite
'Mm, (it's) on the opposite side of the road to the side.'
25 Ran: 斜 对面.
xie duimian.
oblique opposite
'On the opposite side of the road to the side.'

Here, Lei is making positive assessments of the Lanzhou noodle restaurant (line 10) and their noodles (e.g., line 14), after Ran's initial expression of not finding this restaurant too special among many good Chinese restaurant in that neighborhood

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(lines 08–09). Lei's positive assessment of the noodles is marked with two superlative adverbs *ju* 'enormously' (produced with stress) and *wubi* 'incomparably' (line 14). Lei then proceeds to provide detailed accounts of the quality of the noodles (starting from line 15) which exceeded his expectation (line 16). Lei's turn here *gen wo xiangxiangde bu yiyang* 'It's different from what I thought' (line 16) projects his report on what he had originally thought about the noodle dish. The conjunction *ranhou* 'then' (line 18) projects the continuation of his turn (Fang 2000) and of his report.

But partially overlapping with Lei's turn-continuing *ranhou* 'then', Ran produces a multiple saying of *en* (i.e., *en en* 'mm, mm' in line 19). But Ran's multiple *en*s are designed and treated as disaligning with and disengaging from the current talk and activity-in-progress. By beginning in overlap with Lei's ongoing turn, Ran seems to be doing additional work to display her stance against Lei's perseverating course of action (i.e., the elaborate accounts of how unexpectedly delicious the noodles are) and her proposal that it be halted (Stivers 2004). Ran also leans back and shifts her gaze away from Lei and looks down while producing *en en* (see Figures 10 and 11). The vocal (multiple saying of *en*) and visual (leaning back, gaze away) design of Ran's turn (line 19) displays her orientation to Lei's extended detailing as overdone, and her disengagement from the current course of action (Stivers 2004; Griffitt 2008; Li 2013; Goodwin 1979, 1980, 1981, 1986).

Lei also demonstrates his orientation to Ran's turn as disaligning and disengaging in his subsequent talk (lines 20–22). After some overlap-oriented speech disfluencies (such as the glottal stop in producing (*ran*)*hou* 'then' and the pause in line 18) (Schegloff 2000), Lei continues with his projected turn-in-progress (through the incomplete syntax of *ranhou* 'then' + [CLAUSE]) in line 20. Lei's turn comes to a syntactically and prosodically possible completion point at the end of line 20. But he is gesticulating at that moment, and the last three syllables of line 20 co-occur with the stroke of his gesture (Figure 12). Further, the stroke of the iconic gesture depicts the pouring action (Figure 12), which not only projects turn continuation at the TRP, but also gives a preview of the turn elements in the ensuing talk (i.e., *dao* 'pour' in line 21) (Streeck and Hartge 1992; Schegloff 1984). After reporting what he had originally thought the noodles might be like at the end of line 21, Lei contrasts it with how delicious the noodles really are (line 22), which brings his turn and the ongoing course of action (i.e., evaluating the noodles and the restaurant) to a possible closure. Here, immediately after Lei finishes the projected turn-in-progress and makes the action performed through the TCU in line 22 recognizable, he halts his turn and leaves it syntactically incomplete. The SIT shows that Lei is sensitive to Ran's previously (vocally and visually) displayed disengagement from the ongoing talk and her stance that Lei's course of action be halted. That Ran initiates a topic shift (with noticeable leaning forward as is shown

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in Figure 15) from the 'impressively' tasty noodles to the location of the restaurant (line 23) immediately after Lei's SIT also provides evidence that she treats Lei's SIT as interactionally complete and retrospectively renders her disengagement (through an immediate re-engagement upon Lei's turn completion, as shown in the contrast between Figures 11 and 15) from Lei's prior talk.

The prosodic and bodily-visual features of Lei's SIT seem to indicate that the turn is possibly complete. The last syllable of Lei's turn *-chang* is produced with significantly longer duration than its preceding syllables (280 ms, Figure 16), with no sign of premature curtailment (i.e., oral or glottal closure). The pitch register of the last two syllables, *feichang* 'very' is in the pitch trajectory of the preceding talk (Figure 16). There is also a 416 ms-pause after the lengthened last syllable (Figure 16). Although the last two syllables are not produced with low pitch register, which may be relevant to possible turn completion in Mandarin conversation (Li 2014), the final lengthening of *-chang*, the absence of closure in the vocal tract at the end of this syllable, and the subsequent pause indicate that the turn is possibly complete.

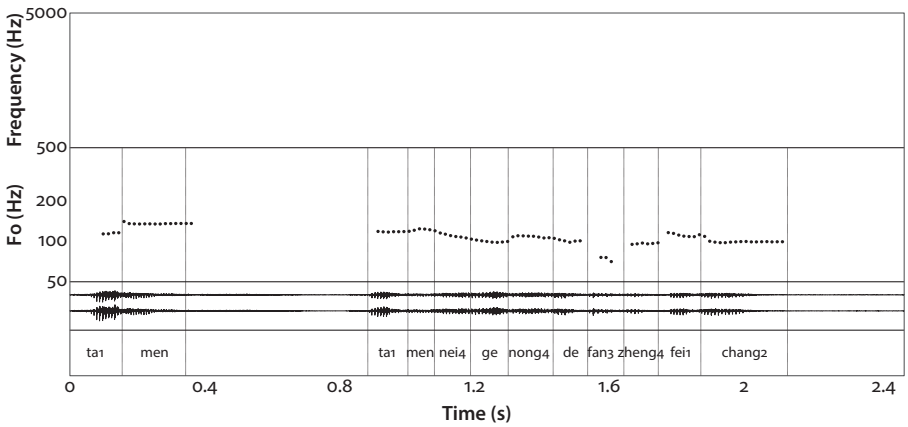

Figure 16. Pitch trace (dotted line), intensity trace (solid line), spectrogram and waveform of line 22 in Excerpt (5)

Lei's bodily-visual behavior also visibly and publicly displays that the turn is designed to be interactionally complete. Lei has been resting his right arm on his left hand at the beginning of line 22 (Figure 13). At the penultimate syllable in line 22 *fei-*, Lei starts to move his right hand and produces a PUOH gesture at *-chang* (Kendon 2004; Müller 1998) (Figure 14). The PUOH gesture has been documented to foreshadow turn yielding (Streeck 2009a; Müller 1998), and indeed, Lei seems to be visibly and *manually* giving up his turn through the PUOH gesture despite the incomplete syntactic form. Ran also seems to orient to Lei's gesture as completion-implicative. That is, she treats the retraction of Lei's gesture

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as implicative of the possible completion of the TCU and the turn by immediately initiating her next turn upon the retraction of Lei's gesture and before his hand returns to rest position, providing evidence that she orients to the retraction of Lei's hand as relevant to the possible completion of his current turn.

In this example, the incomplete syntactic structure of Lei's turn displays his sensitivity to the particular display of recipiency, i.e., Ran's disengagement from his ongoing talk and activity. Despite the syntactically incompleteness, the prosodic and bodily-visual production of the turn seems to indicate that the turn is possibly complete. The dynamic construction of Lei's SIT in this example resonates with Goodwin's (1979) illuminating study of how the incremental syntactic construction of a sentence is designed for and sensitive to different recipients and differential displays of recipiency in the participation framework.

In sum, the previous excerpts have shown that the speakers' use of SITs in the current data does not seem to be random. They are usually used to accomplish socially and interactionally inappropriate actions (Excerpts (1), (2), and (3)), and display sensitivity to the disaligning and disengaging recipiency from co-participants towards the ongoing talk and activity (Excerpt 4). Leaving one's turn syntactically incomplete while performing socially and interactionally inappropriate actions is used as a strategy to avoid overtly threatening co-participants' face while still putting the action 'on the record'. In addition, recipients' response to the speaker's ongoing talk has a significant impact on the progression of the talk and course of action. The SITs also reveal the sensitivity on the part of speakers to the contingent particulars of their recipients in the temporally unfolding interaction.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this article, I have explored SITs in Mandarin conversation. Specifically, I examined what SITs are used to accomplish and the sequential and interactional environments where syntactically incomplete turns occur, as well as the multimodal resources used in their production. The analyses of the data show that SITs are not used to accomplish a specific type of action. Instead, they are designed to address local contingencies in accomplishing socially and interactionally 'improper' actions, and to display speakers' sensitivity to recipients' disengaging response to their ongoing talk and course of action. In these contexts, they display the speaker's sensitivity to the social and interactional impropriety of the action performed and the particular recipiency from co-participants. SITs can only be understood with reference to their sequential placement and the sequential and situational contexts where they occur. For example, in Excerpt (2), the other-denigrating negative evaluation performed by the SIT is understandable as the final component of

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a two-part format contrast which has already been established in the beginning of the sequence. In Excerpt (4), the SIT is a reformulation of Pei's prior face-threatening 'off the record' request after Lon's misunderstanding.

Further, I showed that a constellation of vocal and visual resources are used to project and predict the possible completion of the syntactically incomplete turn. Despite its syntactically incomplete form, the turn is usually prosodically, visually, and pragmatically/interactionally complete and transition relevant. The analysis of the multimodal cues in SITs in the data demonstrates that the speaker exploits context-sensitive specificities in their vocal and visual behaviors to contextualize the possible completion of the otherwise (verbally) incomplete turn. For example, the gross lean backwards is used when the recipient is facing sideways (in Excerpt (3)), and completing the food-serving motion and putting the spoon onto one's plate as a visual signal for completion of the current turn at dinner table talk (Excerpt (4)).

The multimodal analysis of the syntactically incomplete turns in the data reveals that prosody, bodily-visual behavior, actions, and syntax may diverge in turn projection. For example, the non-syntactic resources may be oriented to by participants as more relevant to indicating and interpreting the possible turn completion than the syntactic ones. Further, this divergence can be exploited by speakers to achieve particular situated interactional purposes, such as performing face-threatening actions without putting them 'on the record'. In addition, how something is said is as important as (if not more than) what is said. That is, the prosodic and bodily-visual features involved in the production of a turn are part and parcel of the formation of the action accomplished in and through a turn. For example, the laughter and laughing voice in and during the production of Ran's turn in Excerpt (3) are essential in defining the action as teasing or laughing at Lei rather than commiserating with him. Her leaning back and gaze up embody her disengagement from the ongoing sequence and the possible completion of her (syntactically incomplete) talk. Thus, a "vocally" incomplete turn may actually be "visually" complete. The analysis of the multimodal resources in the production of SITs yields particularly fruitful insights into how people mobilize and orient to an ensemble of resources (without prioritizing any of them) in everyday face-to-face conversation.

This study has implications for the study of politeness in Chinese interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) establish the notion of 'face-threatening acts' as the key element of politeness. Leech (1983) and Gu (1990) emphasize the normative aspect of politeness and propose a set of maxims of politeness in Chinese society. The current study has shown that not completing a speaking turn can be a practice used by Mandarin speakers to implement socially and interactionally improper and 'face-threatening' actions. When used in this context, the SITs are always

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situated in particular sequential environments occupying particular sequential positions, and triggered by local contingencies. The fine-grained analysis of the *practice* that Mandarin speakers use to perform 'face-threatening' actions, and the sequential and situational environments in which it is situated de-constructs and de-mystifies the notion of 'politeness' in Chinese culture. In the end, this paper argues that what some have seen as 'politeness' is embodied and displayed in and through turn-by-turn talk in interaction.

This study also resonates with the discussion of the local sensitivity on the part of speakers to a particular recipiency they receive. Speakers deploy a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to construct their utterances with the sensitivity to their recipients. For example, Goodwin (1979) demonstrates that and how a single sentence can be contingently constructed in an incremental way, which reflects the speaker's sensitivity to the recipiency of different recipients. Couper-Kuhlen (1996) describes that speakers use pitch matching with their co-participants as a way to criticize the original version. Speakers may also start a new but related topic 'touched-off' by a current topic discussed by other co-participants (Jefferson 1984). In line with these studies, the current paper shows that the flow of everyday conversation is not fixed in advance, but collaboratively, interactively, and dynamically constructed by all participants. This study shows that speakers may design their turns to be syntactically incomplete with the sensitivity to recipients' disengaging response to their talk and course of action.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that SITs are often not errors or glitches in conversational interaction. They are collaboratively and interactively created, and used to accomplish particular interactional tasks. By focusing on the use and multimodal construction of SITs, this paper underlines the importance and necessity of studying linguistic structures in Mandarin face-to-face conversation from an interactional and multimodal perspective.

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Appendix A

The transcription conventions for vocal (GAT-2, Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2, Selting et. al., 2009, modified) and visual behaviors used in this article:

?	cut-off by glottal closure
(.)	micro-pause
(-), (--), (---)	short, middle or long pauses
(1.0)	measured pause of appr. 0.5 / 2.0 sec. duration
重音	accent (marked by underlining) in Chinese characters
ACcent	primary or main accent
::	prolongation or stretching of the sound just preceding them
<<coughing>>	accompanying paralinguistic and non-linguistic actions over a stretch of speech
<<creaky>>	changes in voice quality, glottalized
<<f>>	forte, loud
<<p>>	piano, soft
((head nods))	description of an action
,	rising to mid final pitch movement
–	level final pitch movement
;	falling to mid final pitch movement
.	falling to low final pitch movement
	for a TCU separated in two lines, the final pitch movement is not notated at the end of the first line.
=	latching (fast, immediate continuation with a new turn or segment)

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hehe	syllabic laughter
(*you*)	assumed wording
(XXX)	unintelligible syllables
~	preparation of gesticulation
*	stroke of gesticulation
-.	recovery of gesticulation
|	boundary of gesture unit
…	movement of gaze

Appendix B

ASSC	associative
BA	pretransitive marker
CL	classifier
CRS	currently relevant state
EXP	experiential marker
GEN	generative
INT	interjection
NEG	negatives
NOM	nominalizer
PASS	passive marker
PFV	perfective aspect
PROG	progressive aspect
PRT	particle
Q	question marker

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