Other-initiated repair and membership categorization—some conversational events that trigger linguistic and regional membership categorization

Maria Egbert[*]

IBKM, Universität Oldenburg, Ammerländer Heerstrasse 114-118, Postfach 2503, D 26111 Oldenburg, Germany

Abstract

In continuation of recent discussions in JoP and elsewhere concerning the aptness of conversation analysis (''CA'') as a research methodology for ''intercultural'' interaction, this CA-study shows some procedures by which interactants overtly or covertly orient to regional or linguistic category membership where apparent trouble in hearing or understanding the talk are addressed (''other-initiated repair'' [Language 54 (2) (1977) 361]). These practices of membership categorizing are inferred from different kinds of structural elaborateness beyond the basic two-part repair sequence. CA is shown to provide analytic tools which are highly suitable to detecting and describing practices of membership categorizing along regional or linguistic lines both in so-called ''native/native'' and ''native/nonnative'' interaction.
© 2004 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Conversation analysis; Intercultural communication; Membership categorization analysis; Repair; German

1. Introduction

In pragmatics and related fields, a recent controversial debate has focussed on whether CA can adequately handle ''foreign language interaction'', ''native/nonnative interaction'' or ''intercultural interaction'', and if so, how it might do so (Odense conference on

[*] Tel.: +49-441-798-2688; fax: +49-441-798-2189.
E-mail address: maria.egbert@uni-oldenburg.de (M. Egbert).

"Conversation Analysis of Foreign Language Data" 1996; Wagner, 1996; Moerman, 1996; Kasper, 1997; Liddicoat, 1997; Long, 1997; Firth and Wagner, 1997, 1998; Gass, 1998; Wagner, 1998; Seedhouse, 1998; Wong and Olsher's Interview with Schegloff, 2000a,b; Markee, 2000; Egbert, 2002; Golato, 2002; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002; see also collection in Gardner and Wagner, in press).[1] This question presupposes that the "foreignness" of one or more of the interactants is oriented to in the actual talk. Seedhouse thus suggests that

> for the purposes of CA analysis we do not initially take culture and cultural frames to be lurking somewhere 'out there' in the background, but to be evoked by the participants through the details of their interaction. Of course macro social structures such as 'culture' do exist independently of talk. However, . . . current CA has found it necessary to ground analysis, in the first instance, in the details of the talk. (1998: 88)

So the primary question to be posed first is whether "cultural" membership emerges in the interactants' behavior. In this vein, Moerman (1988) proposes:

> (c)ontexted conversation analysis is directed towards discovering which of the many culturally available distinctions are active and relevant to the situation, how these distinctions are brought to bear, and what they consist of. (1988: 70)

Schegloff and other CA researchers have emphasized on many occasions that, no matter what kind of talk-in-interaction is analyzed, any analytic category must first be shown to be relevant to the interactants. In a recent interview "Reflections on Conversation Analysis and Nonnative Speaker Talk" (Wong and Olsher, 2000) Schegloff reiterates that the same applies to the categorical membership of "nonnative speaker". In order to claim that the nonnativeness of a participant is relevant, he stresses that,

> . . . you have to be able to *show* that somehow, and that might involve showing how nonnative speakers are 'doing being' nonnative speakers, thereby making relevant their categorical membership. (ibid: 114)

Wagner argues very convincingly that much of second language acquisition ("SLA") research is misleading for analyses of linguistic membership because studies use elicited interaction as their data base.

> ". . . by designing elicitation tasks, SLA creates the artificial collectivity of non-accountable members, of guinea pigs, whose interaction is described". (1998: 109)

In the present paper, I will exemplify how these methodological desiderata can be addressed by building on Sacks' concept of the "MIR membership category device" (Sacks, 1964/1965, Lecture 6, 1967, 1972a,b), as a foundation. The "Membership Inference-Rich Representative" ("MIR") device is a "very central machinery of social

---

[1] I deliberately refrain from the terminological discussion around words like "intercultural, intracultural, transcultural, interethnic, bilingual, multilingual," etc., however, for a review, see Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff (1987), Redder and Rehbein (1987), Hinnenkamp (1994), and Luchtenberg (1999). For a discussion of different notions of "culture" in respect to language, see Duranti (1997). For the purpose of this paper, the focus is restricted to membership categories based on regional and linguistic criteria.

organization'' (Sacks, 1964/1965, Lecture 6: 40) by which interactants construct and locate membership categories. Since any characteristic of a person can be used as a basis for membership categorization, the analytic work to be done will have to focus on whether, and if so how, specific linguistic, regional or ethnic features of a person are used for membership categorization in talk-in-interaction.

In identifying, and especially categorizing a person, Sacks explained, a speaker can select from an unlimited number of features ranging from hair color, weight, religion, place of residence, marital status, etc. Sacks was interested in those interactional features that are made the basis of categories. He pointed out that being a member of a group does not necessarily mean that the group has a certain structure, like a political party or a volleyball team. Rather, in a particular context, any type of feature a person has may be used to form a group. In this respect, Schegloff (personal communication) emphasizes that a clear difference should be made between a ''group'' and a ''category''. In brief, a group is a social formation of members of a category who think of themselves as a group, and who often or sometimes act by reference to the fact that they are a group. Thus, in the US, "African American" is both a group and a category, whereas ''persons with black eyes'' is a category.

The "I" in "MIR" stands for "inference-rich" and indicates that a member of a category is subjected to the knowledge the larger society has about the respective category.

> . . . a great deal of the knowledge that members of a society have about the society is stored in terms of these categories. And by 'stored in terms of' I mean that much knowledge has some category term from this class as its subject. (Sacks, 1964/1965, Lecture 6: 40)

Depending on the context, one or more of the categories out of the unlimited number of categories available may be relevant. This led Sacks to the question of whether members use particular practices or procedures in order to select a category.

> And it is perfectly obvious that Members do use one set's categories for some statements and another set's categories for other statements. If we're going to describe Members' activities, and the way they produce activities and see activities and organize their knowledge about them, then we're going to have to find out how they go about choosing among the available sets of categories for grasping some event. (ibid: 41)

Since Sacks' groundbreaking work on membership categorization in the 1960s and 1970s, this field of inquiry has further developed the concept of membership categorization by examining category types, practices, contextual usages and interactional achievements in a large number of settings.[2] Hester and Eglin (1997: 2) note that from Sacks' work,

---

[2] The following list exemplifies the variety of settings: Adolescent-adult talk (Baker, 1982, 1984), gender-related talk (West, 1979; West and Zimmermann, 1983, 1987; Zimmerman and West, 1975), for a critical discussion, cf. Schegloff (2000a), meetings (Atkinson et al., 1978), courts (Drew, 1978; Maynard, 1984), doctor patient interaction (Frankel, 1990), classrooms (McHoul, 1978), police interrogations (Watson, 1983, 1990), a car factory (Nekvapil, 1997) and a travel agency (Mazeland et al., 1995). An analysis of the interface of several categories in the same interaction is offered by Günthner (1992) in her study of professors' office hours with female and male coparticipants in an intercultural setting. For a recent collection of studies, cf. Hester and Eglin (1997) and Antaki and Widdicombe (1998). For a summary of the development of MCA, see Hester and Eglin (1997).

conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis (MCI) "have developed to a large degree independently of each other, with differing attention on the part of each to the salience of the other ...". They propose that "both the sequential and categorizational aspects of social interaction inform each other" (ibid). The present study combines both strands of analysis.

This study will attempt part of an answer to the larger question Sacks posed by asking whether there are "procedures that Members have for selecting categories" (Sacks, 1964/1965: 42). In particular, I report on some practices and categories of regional and linguistic membership categorizing in one conversational activity—that of other-initiated repair. The analysis is based on authentic conversation held in German. In some interactions, "nonnative" speakers of German participate. While examining sequences in which trouble in hearing or understanding is repaired, I noticed that in some instances, the repair sequences appeared to implicate differential categorical memberships for the interactants, that is, membership emerged as a decisive factor in the trouble for the participants. It is this connection between repair and membership categorization which I will try to describe. The results demonstrate that in other-initiated repair, interactants may orient to regional origin, place of residence, and linguistic variety. They co-construct—i.e., display, assign, reject or confirm—membership categories for themselves and for their co-interactants by certain describable practices. These may involve the repair initiation, the repair operation, or post-resolution diagnoses, i.e., explicit commentary by the participants after the trouble is resolved.

Before turning to the analysis, I will first briefly explicate some of the basic structural properties of other-initiated repair (Schegloff et al., 1977, replicated for German by Selting, 1987a,b,c; Egbert, 1996, 2002) because with elaborations of the base structure, interactants may do particular work with respect to membership categorizing.

When a listener of a current turn notices problems in hearing or understanding in the talk, s/he usually takes the next turn to signal the trouble by means of a repair initiation (e.g., "huh?", "you're going where?"). The speaker of the trouble-source turn, in response, attempts to repair the trouble so that mutual understanding is restored and the conversation can continue. A case in point is the following spate of talk between two workers on an oil rig shortly before their daily morning meeting. Rob is at the far end of the room while Thom enters and walks to the desk with the newspapers next to the door. There is no talk prior to Thom's turn at line 1.[3]

```
(1) (''newspaper wet''; oil rig)
    01   Thom:  the newspapers are wet          Trouble-source
    02          (0.5)
    03   Rob:   sorry?                           Repair-initiation
    04   Thom:  the newspapers are wet          Repair operation
```

---

[3] The transcript is prepared according to conversation analytic standards developed by Jefferson, described in Sacks et al. (1974: 731–733) and in Atkinson and Heritage (1984: ix–xvi). Speaker names have been changed to ensure anonymity. For easier reading, in most data segments I selected names of trouble-source turn speakers to start with a "T", while names of repair-initiation turn speakers start with a "R".

```
05   Rob:   yeah, there was a:: hole in thee   Conversation continues

06          mail bag mine was soaked as well
```

While Rob's ''sorry?'' (line 3) pertains to Thom's preceding comment, it is not built to propel topical or sequential aspects of Thom's turn but rather halts the conversational flow by signaling that Rob has trouble in hearing or understanding Thom's utterance. In response, the speaker of the trouble-source turn helps to restore mutual understanding by repeating the problematic utterance (line 4). Depending on the kind of trouble indicated, repair operations may be done by reformulating, repeating and/or confirming the entire trouble-source turn or parts of it.

Trouble resolution may be displayed in different ways. In the prior data segment, for instance, Rob's next action after the repair sequence consists of a continuation of the sequence by responding to the comment in line 1; he provides a reason why the newspaper is wet and adds that his was ''soaked as well'' (line 6). Rob thus implicitly acknowledges that his trouble is repaired. In such cases, the repair sequence is brief in that it takes only two turns, one to indicate the trouble and a subsequent repair operation to restore intersubjectivity. Other sequences may involve a third turn with a success marker. When the response to the repair initiation does not suffice to resolve the trouble, the repair initiation turn speaker can launch a second attempt to which the trouble-source turn speaker responds to resolve the trouble. Such a succession of two adjacency pairs to fix a problem in hearing or understanding is called a ''multiple'' (Schegloff et al., 1977: 369, footnote 15). In very rare cases, more than two repair initiations are necessary to restore mutual understanding.

Sometimes, other-initiated repair is used not so much for handling trouble in hearing or understanding as for pre-disagreements or to mask other, more delicate or serious interactional issues (see, for example, Schegloff, 1987). A case in point is the data sample below from a coffee table conversation. The repair initiation (line 3) is Rita's response to her husband Rita's reproach (lines 1–2) in which he blames her for having bumped him.[4]

```
(2) (''staudn''; FAC, low German dialect; simplified)

01   Theo:   (häss) du  mi denn unbedingt   staudn
             (have) you me then absolutely bumped
             did you have to bump

             *Rita turns gaze to Theo
02           *(müssen)=
             *(must)=
              me=

03   Rita:   =wä
             =who
```

---

[4] Since the data base is German, a set of three lines is used, the first one for the original German, the middle one containing a word-by-word gloss and the bottom one with a more idiomatic English translation. The gloss may also contain the following abbreviations: PRT for modal particle, PRF for prefix of the main verb, RFL for a reflexive pronoun. An asterisk (*) in the line of talk indicates the beginning of a nonvocal action which is described in italics in the line above, also marked by an asterisk.

```
04    Theo:    (du)
               (you)

05    Rita:    ick häp  die nich stott.
               i   have you not  pushed.
               i didn´t push you.
```

The delicate issue here is both the action of reproaching and its harshness. Theo blames Rita unswervingly, implying that she would do such a thing intentionally; he is reproaching his wife in front of other family members around a coffee table, and he does this with an irritated tone of voice. In the repair initiation Rita deals with the complaint by questioning who the culprit was, thus implying that it wasn't her. There are, however, two indications that Rita has already identified herself as recipient: she has shifted her gaze towards Theo (line 2), and Theo and Rita are the only coparticipants in this gathering of family members who speak low German dialect. So it seems that the issue in initiating repair here is not so much to indicate trouble in hearing or understanding, but rather to give Theo a chance to lessen the severity of his reproach or to withdraw it. On this account, the repair initiation is also an attempt to cover the severity of the situation; however, Theo does not play along with Rita's maneuver. In response to Rita's repair initiation and blame refusal, Theo deals with Rita's denial by insisting that it was her "du" ("you", line 4) who bumped him, upon which Rita explicitly rejects Theo's reproach (line 5). This familiar action of using repair to mask a more precarious matter is taken up again towards the end of the main analysis in a less common context.

This description of other-initiated repair provides a background for the ensuing analysis, in which I will show how some particular properties can be used, among other things, for practices of membership categorization. These include different kinds of elaborateness involving the repair initiation, the repair operation, and diagnostic commenting after trouble resolution.

2. Practices of regional and linguistic membership categorizing in other-initiated repair

The practices of membership categorizing presented in this main analytic part of the paper share the feature that the repair initiation targets a lexical item in the trouble-source turn as problematic, either by way of pronunciation or by way of selecting a lexical item from a language variety not (easily) accessible to other coparticipants. I will next present four practices of regional or linguistic membership categorizing: (1) translation as repair operation, (2) post-trouble-resolution "diagnosis", (3) speakers' successive repair initiations forming an alliance along dialectal lines, and (4) structural elaborateness due to nonnative language deficiency. Since two such practices sometimes occur in the same stretch of talk, I have arranged them in such a way that each of the four analytic parts introduces a new practice; a previously discussed practice may also be involved. The four practices occur (1) in response to the repair initiation, (2) as explicit post-resolution commenting, (3) when several speakers successively initiate repair, and (4) in complex series of (up to seven) interrelated repair initiations.

2.1. Translation as repair operation

When a repair initiation targets a lexical item as repairable due to its linguistic particularity, the repair operation may bring this feature out in the open and thus engage in membership categorizing along linguistic lines. The practice to be exemplified by the following data segment consists of repairing the trouble by means of translation. The repair sequence stems from a conversation among seven native German speakers having dinner. Tina is telling a story about an event during her year at a US university. She uses the American descriptor "frat guys", which turns out to be problematic for Robi. To give English readers a better feel for the language switch, the English gloss and translation in the transcript feature the lexical item of interest in German. The trouble-source turn is at line 1, the repair initiation at line 6 and the repair operation at line 8.

```
(3) ("frat guys"; AIK, simplified)


    01   Tina:    das   warn eben auch son  paar
                  there were PRT  also such few
                  there were also some

    02                 frat guys,        .hh die
                  burschenschaftler, .hh they
                  burschenschaftler, .hh who

    03            hochgradig (              )
                  extremely  (              )
                  wanted to be extremely

                       *Robi moves torso
                        towards Tina
    04            sein *wollten=
                  be   *want
                  (                      )

    05   Tina:    [=die  warn total besoffen
                  [=they were total drunk
                  [they were totally drunk
                  [
    06   Robi:    [w- wie hießen die?
                  [h- how named  they?
                  [w- what were they called?

    07            (0.6)

    08   Tina:    burschenschaftler.
                  fraternity members.
                  fraternity guys.
```

```
                      *Robi moves torso back
                       to upright position and
                       continues gazing at Tina
   09                 *die  warn tota:l besoffen
                      *they were to:tal drunk
                      *they were to:tally drunk


   10                 un die frau  war
                      an the woman was
                      an the woman was


   06                 ((continues story telling))
```

Robi's repair initiation (line 6) singles out "frat guys" as the repairable in Tina's preceding turn. At this point it is not clear whether his trouble lies in hearing it properly (an acoustic problem) or in not understanding this English word (lack of culture- or language-specific knowledge). Tina's subsequent repair operation consists of translating the English word to German, thus displaying that she takes Robi's trouble to originate in a lack of culture- or language-specific knowledge of English. This is corroborated by Tina's insistence on having culture-specific knowledge and marking it as such by using the English in her original utterance even though there is a roughly adequate German term, as she shows in her repair operation. Since the term "frat guys" hardly belongs to the lexicon Germans learn when studying English at school, Tina implicitly assigns herself to a category of persons intimately familiar with university life in the US. The usage of "frat guys" introduces an issue of linguistic boundaries which, at its point of occurrence, is not (yet) connected to repair. Tina imposes a requirement on the recipients that they be able to join her in her knowledge of this English term. Put differently, Tina implicitly introduces the issue of linguistic membership categorization by using an English term, and explicitly by using a translation as repair operation. Whereas in her trouble-source turn she shows an orientation to the linguistic membership of her interlocutors as ones who would understand this English term, in the repair operation it becomes obvious that at least Robi, who initiated the repair, does not belong to that category. In this way, a dividing line on the basis of linguistic membership has emerged between the trouble-source turn speaker and the repair initiation turn speaker.

  Robi does not vocally display that his trouble is resolved; however, an analysis of his changes in posture provides some evidence that the repair is successful. Shortly before his repair initiation, he bends his torso from an upright position closer towards Tina. Immediately after Tina has finished the translation into German ("burschenschaftler", line 8), Robi moves his torso back to his upright position and sustains this posture along with steady eye gaze, thus signaling listenership (Goodwin, 1980). Tina picks up her story telling, thus also displaying that she takes the trouble to be resolved. Scheflen (1964) has demonstrated similar shifts in position as marking the beginning and ending points of conversational activities.

2.2. Post-trouble-resolution "diagnoses"

After trouble resolution there is a position where interactants can—instead of continuing the suspended focus—engage in talk about the nature and source of the trouble (Schegloff, 1990–1993, 1995).[5] These "diagnoses"—more informally referred to as "post mortems"—occur after trouble resolution and are used by participants to draw a connecting line between the trouble and some other feature involved in the interaction. This is sometimes used for membership categorization. I will first analyze one example of such a diagnosis to show the general practice, then several data segments follow in which this practice is used for membership categorizing.

In segment (4) below from a dinner conversation, the trouble-source turn speaker comments after the two-part repair sequence that his trouble is due to a hearing problem (line 12–13). Prior to the fragment represented in the transcript, the coparticipants had been talking about moths they had just noticed flying in the air. Readers of English are asked to also parse the German, since the repair revolves around the fact that the repair initiation "kamel würmer" ("camel worms", line 4) is phonetically almost identical with the trouble source "paar mehlwürmer" ("some meal worms", line 1). Meal worms ("mehlwürmer") are the larvae of beetles that may infest flour and other grain products.

```
(4) ("mehlwürmer"; AIK, simplified)
   01   Tina:      habt ihr      schon   n paar me:hlwürme
                   have you guys already a few  flou:r wor
                   have you guys already discovered a few

   02              entdeckt?   so kleine?
                   discovered? so little?
                   mea:l worms? such little ones?

   03              (0.5)

   04   Ronny:     kame:l[wü:rmer?
                   ca:mel[wo:rms?
                         [
   05   Tina:            [da-
                         [there-

   06   Tina:      [meh:lwürmer
                   [mea:l worms
                   [
   07   Stefan:    [he he he he he
```

```
                         *Ronny, Ina and Tina smile
     08                  *KAME::Lwürmer HÖ HÖ HÖ HÖ
                         *CA::MELworms  HE HE HE HE

     09    Stefan:    [((laughing))
                      [
     10    Kerstin:   [(                  )

     11    Kerstin:   [ey)
                      [
->   12    Ronny:     [nee das  is (mir)  (mal) n
                      [no  that is (to me)(PRT) a
                      [no (i made) a

->   13    Ronny:     hör  fehl[er  (            )
                      hear mist[ake (            )
                      hearing mist[ake  (            )
                               [
     14    Bärbel:             [HÄ!
```

The two-part repair sequence (initiation at line 4 and operation at line 6) exemplifies the prototypical format of other-initiated repair. Although as a next action the talk could continue, Ronny obviously finds it necessary to explain the nature of his trouble, almost certainly because his repair initiation has prompted laughter by Stefan and subsequently by some other participants. Stefan's turn ''he he he he he KAME::Lwürmer'' (''he he he he he CA::MEL worms'', line 7–8) is positioned directly after the repair initiation and draws attention to the humorous aspect of Ronny's erroneous hearing. Stefan's action not only potentially ridicules Ronny's trouble, but also minimizes Ronny's attempt to achieve trouble resolution by (a) the positioning of the laughter directly after the repair initiation and in overlap with Tina's repair operation, (b) by the loudness of the laughter, and (c) by the contagious nature of the laughter on the other participants. After some other listeners join in the laughter, Ronny explains the nature of his trouble. Thus, in this case, the diagnosis is prompted by the laughter. It connects the repair with the laughter in that it not only displays that his trouble is resolved but also—and maybe more importantly—orients to his humorous, self-mocking approach to repair initiation in order to set the record straight.

How can this structure be put to work for cultural membership categorizing? Two of the structural features contained in the repair instance above play a part, namely that in the repair sequence, some interactional activity in addition to repair occurs, and that this interactional activity is subject to diagnosis. In the following data segment of two native speakers of German, Tina is talking to Rita about an article which she found difficult to read. She describes the article metaphorically as ''zee'' (''tough'', literally meaning ''viscous''). After a brief silence, Rita initiates repair (line 3), upon which Tina rewords the trouble-source turn to resolve the trouble (line 4). Next, Rita responds with a success marker and a contrastive rendering of the repairable ''zee'' as ''zäh'' (line 5). This utterance prompts the ensuing diagnostic element (line 6) in which Tina engages in membership

categorization by indicating that her place of origin is relevant to this piece of the interaction.

```
(5)    (''zee''; recorded from memory shortly after its occurrence)

      01    Tina:    das  is voll  zee.
                     that is fully viscous.
                     it's very tough.

      02             ((brief silence))

      03    Rita:    was is das?
                     what is that?
                     it's what?

      04    Tina:    das  zieht sich   so hin
                     that drags itself so PRE
                     it's a drag to read

      05    Rita:    ach so:: zäh.
                     oh i see:: viscous.
                     oh i see:: tough.

                     *smiling
   -> 06    Tina:    *ja  ich komm aus  ostfriesland
                     *yes i   come from east frisia
```

Where exactly can we find the first traces of the full-fledged membership categorization in the diagnosis? Let us first examine the repair operation. Note that Tina responds to the repair initiation not by repeating the troublesome word targeted specifically by the repair initiation, but rather by paraphrasing the repairable. Although we do not have access to the reason why she does not repeat the troublesome lexical item or adjusts its pronunciation to a more standard variety, we can hypothesize that Tina possibly makes this choice because a repetition of "zee" ("viscous" or "tough") would not be a sufficient repair operation. This would be a similar repair operation as in the data segment "frat guys" (segment 3 above), where the trouble-source turn speaker translates the repairable from English to German in order to resolve the trouble. An alternative analysis is offered by Schegloff (p.c.) who proposes that Tina may have selected this particular repair operation because the repairable consists of a metaphorical construction which is a physical image for a cognitive activity. When prompted by the repair initiation, she may have realized that this metaphor was too abstract. Accordingly, Tina's repair operation fixes the metaphor and describes the problem in a much more literal way "das zieht sich so hin" ("it's a drag to read", line 4). Still, our analysis of the repair operation does not make it clear (or even likely) that the operation contains an implicit trace of what emerges soon after as an orientation to linguistic variety and place of origin.

A closer look at the diagnosis reveals that it is prompted by the prior turn, namely Rita's "ach so:: zäh." ("oh i see:: tough", line 5). Does this turn after the repair operation contain

any elements of membership categorization? It starts with a success marker "ach so::" ("oh i see::") by which she indicates a change of state (Heritage, 1984) from deficiency in understanding to understanding. She completes the turn by adding a kind-of-repetition of a lexical item from line 1 ("zee" repeated as "zäh"). This is where orientation to linguistic variety arises. The first difference between Tina's "zee" and Rita's repetition "zäh" lies in a closed versus open pronunciation of the vowel, i.e., a regional variation. The second difference is that in the repeated version, Rita marks the lexical item with contrastive stress. Rita thus indicates that her trouble expressed in line 3 by "was is das?" ("it's what?") originates not in an acoustic problem but rather in Tina's pronunciation. So we can conclude that membership categorization is implicitly present in this turn in that the repair initiation turn speaker marks a difference in linguistic variety in the area of pronunciation. This is the element that prompts the diagnosis in the next turn, in which the trouble-source turn speaker engages in membership categorizing by stating her place of origin "ja ich komm aus ostfriesland" ("yes i come from east frisia", line 6). Note that the turn-initial "ja" ("yes") establishes the connection to the prior turn even before producing the diagnosis. It registers the particular matter that is going to prompt the subsequent diagnosis.

The important point to be made about both diagnoses is, as Schegloff (p.c.) notes, that the diagnostic element is prompted by something other than the repair. In both data exemplars containing diagnoses (fragment (4) "kamelwürmer" and fragment (5) "zee"), someone has made 'a big deal' of the trouble, in "kamelwürmer" by laughing about the repair initiation and in "zee" by the contrastive stress "ach so:: zäh." ("oh i see:: tough.", line 5).

In sum, the diagnosis is positioned after trouble resolution. From a sequence structural perspective, the diagnosis occupies its own turn position. It is placed directly after the additional activity by which it is prompted and to which it is addressed. The diagnosis makes explicit some implicit aspect of an element in the prior talk to which it is related. In this way, it can be seen as a collaborative activity. Diagnostic elements can be used, among other things, for membership categorizing, as in (5) ("zee"), where the diagnosis connects the repair with the trouble-source turn speaker's regional origin, and the element which prompted the diagnosis orients to linguistic variety in the area of pronunciation. Diagnosis used for membership categorization also occurs in the extracts provided in the next section of this paper in combination with further practices of membership categorization.

2.3. *Several speakers' successive repair initiations form alliance along dialectal lines*

This section deals with sequence structural variations of other-initiated repair that are specifically designed to build alliances. I will first show how successive repair initiations by different speakers before the repair operation constitute a collaborative achievement through which the repair initiation speakers form an alliance and draw a line between themselves and the trouble-source turn speaker.[6] Against this background, the analysis will then focus on how interactants use such a practice of affiliation to establish, reject and negotiate category membership. In order to show the general structure and interactional

---

[6] See Goodwin and Goodwin (1990: 102), Lerner (1993) and Egbert (1997) for more detailed treatments of this practice.

achievement of this practice, I will first describe alliance building through successive repair initiations by analyzing a repair segment not involving membership categorizing.

For better orientation, some ethnographic background information for the following transcript may be in order. The coparticipants in this fragment are four sisters (Toni, Rita, Resi and Ruth). Prior to this excerpt, they have talked about a person called "Elisabeth", who is the sister-in-law of another sister Margreth—one not party to this interaction. All co-present sisters know Elisabeth from Margreth's wedding and similar family occasions. Toni has been telling a story about a trip to the Black Forest she took with her husband, where they happened to pass by the city where Elisabeth lives (Toni lives in northern Germany and the Black Forest is in southern Germany). As Toni reports, she and her husband debated dropping in on Elisabeth. At line 1, one of the sisters refers to the necessity of knowing Elisabeth's family name in order to find out her address.

```
(6) (''zahn''; CAE, low German)
                     *Resi gazes at Toni
    01   Resi:   *wees du   denn den husnomen?
                     *know you then the house name?
                     do you know the family name?

    02   Tina:   zahn.
                     ((last name literally meaning ''tooth''.))

    03   Toni:   zahn.

->  04   Resi:   zah:n [hätt die?
                     too:th [is called she?
                     zah:n is her name?
                           [
->  05   Rita:        [za:a[hn?
                               [
                               [*Toni points with left index finger to her teeth
    06   Toni:           [*ja hier zahn.
                               [*yes here tooth.

->  07   Rita:   dat  wüss ick auk nich
                     that knew i   also not
                     that i didn't know either

->  08   Resi:   wüss ick auk  nich
                     knew i    also not
                     i didn't know either

    09   Rita:   so eefach
                     so simple
                     as simple as that

    10   Toni:   ja
                     yes ((continues story))
```

Apparently, Resi and Rita's trouble with this name is due to the fact that "zahn" (meaning "tooth") is an unusual family name. This is implied in Toni's repair operation, in which she first delivers a confirmation token "ja" ("yes"), while simultaneously pointing to her teeth, a locational gesture of the type "directional" (Schegloff, 1984) whose affiliate in the talk "hier" ("here") follows immediately. The indexical "hier" ("here") is filled with meaning by the gesture and the ensuing word "zahn" ("tooth").

Like in the two previous repair instances, the interactants use the space after the repair proper to engage in talk about their pre-repair state of knowledge (lines 7 and 8). First, Rita comments that she did not know the name of the person being talked about, then Resi echoes this statement and tags on to Rita. This repetition along with her "auk" ("also") is a practice of affiliation, which serves to confirm the previous affiliative practice Rita performed by echoing Resi's repair initiation.[7]

The combination of successive repair initiations to build a coalition together with the post-resolution commenting can be used in the practice of linguistic and regional membership categorizing, as exemplified by the next repair segment. The alliance is built by three speakers' successive repair initiations, forming an alliance against the trouble-source turn speaker. The diagnosis involves several speakers who explicate, reject, and insist that the trouble source originates in dialectal speech and regional habitat. The repair emerges during an afternoon coffee conversation among the four sisters Tina, Resi, Rita and Ruth, and Tina's grown-up daughter Bärbel. Prior to the segment displayed below, Resi has been telling Bärbel about a wedding at which the dinner menu was placed on the table behind a mock menu in low German dialect. Among its choices, the mock menu included an item "muckefuck", a word for grain coffee in a particular low German dialect. At line 1, "die fa:lsche" ("the fa:lse one") refers to the mock menu. The three successive repair initiations are marked as "R1", "R2" and "R3", respectively in the left margin of the transcript; the diagnosis is marked as "D".

```
(7) (''pättkusener''; CAE)

01   Resi:     die fa:lsche. martin und susanne hatten das stehen
               the fa:lse.   martin and suanne   had   it stand
               the fa:lse one. martin and susanne had it
               standing

02             dann hatten se   den davorgestellt.
               then had    they it  before it put.
               then they had put it in front of it.

03   Bärbel:   muckefuck he::::::[ha ha::::::::
               ((word for coffee))
                                 [
                                  [*Tina gazes to Bärbel
```

---

[7] Note that this repetition is much more explicit than the collection of repetitions Schegloff (1996) identifies and analyzes as "confirming allusions".

```
        04    Tina:                          [*ja  das  sagt man wohl
                                             [*yes that says one PRT
                                             [*yes that's what one says


        05    Tina:    zu pättkusener          ne?
                       to ((word for coffee)) right?
                       For pättkusener          right?

                       *Rita and Ruth shift gaze to Tina
        06             *(1.0)

R1->    07    Rita:    [bi:tt[e::?
                       [pa:rd[o::n?
                       [     [
        08    Resi:    [he:::[
                             [
R2->    09    Ruth:        [bi[tte? he::=
                          [pa[rdon? he::=
                             [
R3->    10    Resi:          [wat is dat  denn
                             [what is that then
                             [so what is that

        11    Ruth:    =he [hi::::
                           [
        12    Rita         [ha
                           [
        13    Tina:        [dat is auk- dat  is'selbe   äs muckefuck.
                           [that is als- that is the same as muckefuck.
                           [
        14    Ruth:        [(tina)

D->     15    Resi:    pättkusener [kenn ich nich
                       pättkusener [know i not
                       i don't know pättkusener
                                   [
        16    Rita:             [pättkusener ( )

D->     17    Rita:    wo    sägget se   dat dann [in mittelstadt?
                       where say    they that then [in midtown?
                       so where  do they say  that [in midtown?
                                                   [
D->     18    Tina:                             [dat  weed ick nich!
                                                [that know i   not!
                                                [i don't know that!
```

```
D->  19    Ruth:    dat is mittelstadt
                    that is midtown

D->  20    Tina:    ja? weet ick nich
                    yes? know i not
                    really? i don't know that
```

Bärbel, a non-dialect speaker, shows amusement about the low German term "muckefuck" ("grain coffee", line 3). Her mother Tina reacts by providing a less common synonym "pättkusener" (lines 4 and 5). All three of Tina's sisters successively initiate repair on Tina's turn, claiming that they do not know this word. In this way, they build an alliance, drawing a line between themselves as the ones who don't know this word, and casting Tina on the other side of the dividing line as the one who does know it.

The ensuing diagnosis brings language variety to the surface as the basis for this division. The diagnosis is based on the fact that Tina moved away from their home village to a midsize town "Mittelstadt", where the low German dialect differs slightly. The dividing line of Mittelstadt dialect (Tina) versus non-Mittelstadt dialect (Ruth, Rita, Resi) is subject to the following negotiation. After Resi insists that she doesn't know this word (line 15), Rita inquires "wo sägget se dat dann" ("so where do they say that", line 17), thus insinuating that this word is not used in their shared place of heritage. In overlap, she continues her turn by adding a candidate answer to her question "in mittelstadt?" which is Tina's current place of residence. She thus suggests that the troublesome term "pättkusener" is indigenous to Mittelstadt. Tina can hear this last part only in overlap with her own response to the first part of Rita's question. She claims "dat weed ick nich!" ("i don't know that!", line 18) and in this way refuses to accept the basis of the linguistic dividing line having been drawn. The negotiation is continued in the next turn, in which Ruth confirms Rita's prior candidate answer with the repetition "dat is mittelstadt" ("that is midtown", line 19). Still, Tina does not accept this and expresses her doubts with a "ja?" ("yes?", line 20).

The examination of these two instances of repair (segment 5 "zee" and 7 "pättkusener") yields the description of two practices by which interactants establish and even negotiate membership from moment to moment. Diagnosis in general, and diagnosis as a practice used for membership categorizing, can be done either by the trouble-source turn speaker, as in (5) "zee", or by the trouble-source turn speaker(s), as in (7) "pättkusener". Thus it can vary which sort of participant brings it out into the open (Schegloff, p.c.).

Such endogenous definitions of categories and the allocation of members to the defined category very clearly demonstrate the power of Sacks' MIR membership category device. Even if from an exogenous perspective the researcher has access to potential criteria of category membership along linguistic and regional lines, such as in the "pättkusener"-segment (e.g., each participant's regional heritage and linguistic choice, their present habitat, their family relations are known), the participants show which of these features are relevant to them at a specific moment in the interaction. This analysis may serve to stress that a researcher can hardly predict which of the ethnographic features of a person will become relevant to the person or to his/her interactants at a given moment in the social encounter.

2.4. Structural elaborateness due to nonnative language deficiency

In the cases presented so far, the analysis has shown that interactants involved in other-initiated repair may deal with other interactional issues connected to the repair activity. The ones used for linguistic and regional membership categorizing all build upon greater structural complexity relative to the base sequence. The next instance of repair shares two characteristics with some of the cases already analyzed in that the trouble-source is subject to repair due to its pronunciation, and in that it contains a diagnostic element, though one that functions differently than the ones discussed so far. The new point to be presented is that membership categorization in this case is analytically based on structural arguments, i.e., there is no overt treatment of the categorization. I will argue that the structural elaborateness of the repair sequence is due to the low proficiency of the nonnative speaker, and thus, there is implicit orientation to his language performance as ''nonnative''.

This approach emulates CA studies of institutional interaction (see the collection edited by Drew and Heritage, 1992a) in which ''the basic forms of mundane talk constitute a kind of benchmark against which other more formal or 'institutional' types of interaction are recognized or experienced'' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b: 19). Such a comparative analysis

> ''may thus offer a principled approach to determining what is distinctive about interactions involving, for example, the specialisms of the school or the hospital or the asymmetries of status, gender, ethnicity, etc. A clear implication is that comparative analysis that treats institutional interaction in contrast to normal and/or normative procedures of interaction in ordinary conversation will present at least one important avenue of theoretical and empirical advance''. (ibid: 19)

I will propose that in interaction where one or more participants display a low proficiency in the language being used, this frequently materializes in structural elaborateness of the basic two-part repair sequence. These sequential expansions are collaboratively achieved and appear to be characteristic manifestations of the ''nonnativeness'' of a participant (for a different case, see Egbert et al., in press). Due to space restrictions, only one such example is presented here.

The analysis shows that a nonnative speaker's low level articulation and comprehension skills give rise to the repair initiation, necessitating a difficult and complex process to achieve mutual understanding. In three steps, the analysis first deals with the complexity of the first repair initiation (a ''triple'' with three turn-construction units). Second, the analysis turns to structural complexity, in that a set of seven repair initiations, with their own internal structure, is necessary to resolve the trouble. In the third step, the analysis focuses on a diagnostic element which sparks curiosity due to the repair initiation turn speaker's claiming that the nature of the problemg lies in a technical transfer problem, thus masking the issue of Caller's repair-engendering speech. The repair instance I am about to present takes up most of a two-minute telephone call placed to the telephone company's (''Telekom'') directory information. Prior to presenting the entire call itself, we will analyze the repair initiation turn.

2.5. Complex repair initiation turn

Typically, a repair initiation turn consists of a single, relatively short turn-constructional unit, i.e., a unit which could constitute a turn by itself. In rare cases, the repair initiation turn

features two turn-constructional units, i.e., a "double" ([Schegloff, 1990–1993, Lectures](#)), as exemplified in the next data sample, where Rita and Anna are talking about a little boy's unwillingness to join them at the table.

```
(8)    (''wer? der kleine?''; DAA1, simplified)
       01      Rita:    will er nich?
                        want  he not?
                        doesn't he want to?
       02      Anna:    nein

                        no
->     03      Ralf:    wer? der kleine?
                        who? the little?
                        who? the little one?
```

The repair initiation turn is composed of two turn-constructional units (line 3), the first one in form of a question word "wer?" ("who", line 3), followed by a more specific candidate understanding "der kleine?" ("the little one?"). Each of these turn-constructional units could serve as a proper repair initiation by itself.

In comparison, a repair initiation with three turn-constructional units seems exceptionally rare. At lines 10–11 below, a caller with a strong nonnative accent articulates his request for a telephone number to the telephone company's directory information service. In response, the Telekom operator initiates repair with three turn-constructional units, each of which could constitute a repair initiation by itself (marked as "1a", "1b", "1c" in the transcript).

```
(9) ("blemen meldeamt", after opening sequence)

    10  Caller:  ah: ich- ich müchte     ah::: m-
                 uh: i-  i   would like uh::: r-
                 uh: i- i would like uh::: r-

    11           meldeamt           blemen?
                 registration office blemen?
                 registration office blemen?

    12           (0.2)

    13  Caller:  telefonnummer    haben. .hh können sie
                 telephone number have.  .hh could  you
                 telephone number. .hh could you (ould)

    14           (ürden) mir   diese telefonnummer?
                 (ould)  to me thisv telephone number?
                 me this telephone number?
```

```
1a->  15   Telekom:   °.hh eh, ich versteh    sie kaum.°
                      °.hh uh, i   understand you hardly.°
                      °.hh uh, i hardly understand you.°

1b->  16             in welcher stadt jetzt?=
                     in which   city  now?=

1c->  17             in berlin?
```

The repair initiation is made even more complex in that the Telekom operator starts her turn with an audible inbreath ".hh" and the initiation of self repair "eh". As in doubles, in this "triple", the individual turn-constructional units are ordered in terms of increasing specificity (Schegloff, 1990–1993). The speaker first indicates generalized trouble (1a), then signals that she has trouble identifying the city (1b) and finally guesses the city name in form of a partial repeat with variation in pronunciation (1c). This elaborate turn structure may be taken as a sign of the magnitude of the speaker's problem in understanding Caller's request. Cases involving more complexities will be discussed next.

2.6. Repair activity

In the introductory section of this paper I showed that after the base repair sequence, the repair initiation turn speaker may launch a second repair initiation if his or her trouble is not resolved, resulting in a "multiple". Whereas after two rounds the repair operation is usually over, the following series of seven repair initiations by the same speaker, all yielding repair operations, sparks curiosity because this unusual complexity may already indicate that interactants are struggling heavily to restore mutual understanding.

I will now show that there is an internal order to these seven repair initiations (Schegloff, p.c.).[8] As displayed in the transcript below, the first repair initiation, examined above, targets the entire preceding turn as troublesome, after which the turn gradually moves to more specificity by zeroing in on the city name. The next six repair initiations are ordered as sets of two, i.e., three multiples, in that the two repair initiations in each multiple target a different aspect of the trouble-source turn: first the city name, then the name of an institution in that city, and finally the particular agency possibly referred to by the named institution.

The entire repair activity is framed by a preceding telephone opening sequence (identification and greeting sequences, lines 1–8) and a subsequent closing (thank you sequence, lines 77 and 78). The seven repair initiations in this two-minute long phone conversation are identified by numbered arrows in the left margin. Their internal structure is indicated in how the arrows are marked in the left margin of the transcript. Arrow 1 points to the first repair initiation targeting the entire trouble-source turn, arrows 2a/2b identify the multiple targeting the city name, arrows 3a/3b mark the multiple targeting the institution, and arrows 4a/4b the multiple targeting the agency. An arrow with a "D" marks the diagnostic element to be dealt with later.

---

[8] First I assumed that all seven repair initiations are ordered as one multiple with seven rounds. Then Schegloff (p.c.) proposed to me an alternative, which is now presented.

(10) ("blemen meldeamt", complete call)

```
01   Computer: deutsche telekom. willkommen bei der
               german   telekom. welcome    at   the
               german telephone company. welcome at

02             auskunft.    sie werden gleich
               information. you become soon
               directory information. you will

               bedient.
               served.
               soon be served.

03             ((17 seconds of music))

04   Computer: legen sie nicht auf
               hang  you not    up
               don´t hang up

05             ((2 seconds pause, beep tone))

06   Telekom:  tag.=gisela      weiß,=
               day.=((first name last name)),=
               hello.=gisela weiß,=

07             was  kann ich für sie tu:n?
               what can  i   for you do:?
               what can i do: for you?

08   Caller:   .hh hallo guten ta:g (0.2) hier ist hugan
               .hh hello good  da:y (0.2) here is ((last name))
               .hh hello good da:y (0.2) this is hugan

09             (0.7)

10   Caller:   ah: ich- ich müchte     ah::: m-
               uh: i-   i   would like uh::: r-
               uh: i- i would like uh::: r-

11             meldeamt           blemen?
               registration office blemen?
               registration office blemen?

12             (0.2)

13   Caller:   telefonnummer    haben. .hh können sie
               telephone number have.  .hh could  you
               telephone number. .hh could you (ould)

14             (ürden) mir   diese telefonnummer?
               (ould)  to me thisv telephone number?
               me this telephone number?
```

```
1->   15  Telekom:   °.hh eh, ich versteh    sie kaum.°
                     °.hh uh, i   understand you hardly.°
                     °.hh uh, i hardly understand you.°

1->   16             in welcher stadt jetzt?=
                     in which    city  now?=

1->   17             in berlin?

      18  Caller:    nein nein ich bin (in) blemen meldeamt.
                     no   no   i   am  (in) blemen registration office.

      19             (0.8)

      20  Caller:    ich müchte    eine telefonnummer    von blemen
                     i   would like a    telephone number of  blemen
                     i would like a telephone number of blemen

      21             meldeamt             haben.
                     registration office have.
                     registration office.

      22             (0.5)

      23  Telekom:   °tz°
                     °tch° ((smacks lips))

      24             (0.2)

      25  Caller:    verstehn   sie mich?
                     understand you me?
                     do you understand me?

      26             (0.8)

2a->  27  Telekom:   .hh von- nee- könn´n sie mal buchstabieRen?
                     .hh of- no-   could  you PRT spEll?
                     .hh of- no- could you spEll?

      28             (0.7)

2a->  29  Telekom:   .hh [eh- eh versuchen ob      das-
                     .hh [uh- uh try          whether that-
                     .hh [uh- uh try whether that-
                         [
      30  Caller:        [ble- blemen

      31  Telefon:   is das  jetz der ort
                     is that now  the place
                     is that now the place

2a->  32  Telekom:   der- was  sie mir   buchstabieren?
                     the- what you to me spell?
                     the- what you´re spelling for me?
```

```
      33                (0.8)

      34   Caller:      bremen meldeamt
                        bremen registration office

      35                (2.0)

2b-> 36   Telekom:      .hh hh blü men? ((hohe Stimmlage))
                        .hh hh blü men? ((high pitch))

      37   Caller:      ja  bremen.
                        yes bremen.

      38                (0.1)

      39   Caller:      stadt bremen.
                        city  bremen.
                        the city of bremen.

      40                (0.2)

      41   Telekom:     ach BRE:MEN.
                        oh  BRE:MEN.

      42   Caller:      ja
                        yes

D -> 43   Telekom:      °bre::men. oh das  kommt   aber schlecht an.°
                        °bre::men. oh that arrives but  bad      PRF.°
                        °bre::men. oh that gets here very badly.°

3a-> 44                .hh so:. und- und dort  bitte?
                       .hh so:. and- and there please?

      45                (0.7)

      46   Caller:      eh bremen melde        amt.
                        uh bremen registration office.

      47                (0.7)

3b-> 48   Telekom:     fern               melde        amt.
                        telecommunication registration office.

      49   Caller:      ja.
                        yes.

      50                (0.8)

      51   Telekom:     moment.
                        moment.
                        one moment.
```

```
     52                    (0.5)

     53  Caller:     eh [ich
                      uh [i
                         [
4a-> 54  Telekom:       [also telekom mein´n sie
                        [so   telekom mean    you
                        [so you mean telekom

     55  Caller:     nein nein [mel- melde        amt.
                     no   no   [reg- registration office.
                               [
     56  Telekom:              [(wie)
                               [(how)

     57  Caller:     ich möchte    um- umzugen
                     i would like mo- move

     58  Caller:     nach bremen
                     to   bremen

     59                    (0.2)

     60  Caller:     [(haben sie das)
                     [(have  you that)
                     [(do you have that)
                     [
4b-> 61  Telekom:    [also die stadtverwaltung
                     [so   the city administration

     62                    (0.2)

     63  Caller:     stadt[verwaltung
                     city [administration
                          [
     64  Telekom:         [die stadtverwaltung    in bremen=
                          [the city administration in bremen=
                          [the city administratin  in bremen=

     65  Telkom:     gut   kleinen moment.
                     good  little moment.
                     okay  just a moment.

     66  Caller:     ja:  warte.
                     yes: wait.
                     yes: i´ll wait.

     67                    ((3 seconds silence))
```

```
68  Telekom:    .hhh (0.5) hh so die vorwahl    bremen
                .hhh (0.5) hh so the city code bremen

69              null vier zwo eins,
                zero four two one,

70  Caller:     ja
                yes

71  Telekom:    die rufnummer   drei  sechs eins null.
                the call number three six   one  zero.
                the number three six one zero.

72              (0.2)

73  Caller:     ein´n augenblick bitte.
                one   moment      please.

74              (0.5)

75  Caller:     drei  sechs [eins null. ja.
                three six   [one zero.  yes.
                            [
76  Telekom:                [eins null. ja?
                            [one  zero. yes?

77  Caller:     ja  danke
                yes thanks

78  Telekom:    bitte:.
                you´re we:lcome.

                ((Both hang up.))
```

Both the repair-initiation turn speaker and the trouble-source turn speaker employ a variety of strategies towards trouble resolution. The repair-initiation turn speaker handles the trouble through dividing it up. She accomplishes this in a structural fashion by dealing with different parts of the trouble-source turn separately—first city, then institution, finally agency. This strategy of divide-and-conquer may be a manifestation of the institutional setting: the directory information agent typically needs the city name first to specify her search in the computer. However, this strategy alone is not successful. For each partial repairable, a multiple is necessary because Caller's repair operations provide only incremental help towards trouble resolution, which itself is achieved in the following way.

The first "triple"-unit repair initiation (lines 15–17) narrows the trouble down to the city. The ensuing repair operation consists of rejecting the proposed city (line 18) and then repeating essential elements of the trouble-source turn in different order (lines 20

and 21). This attempt fails. It is followed with a multiple, whose two repair initiations target the city element of the trouble-source turn (2a/2b at lines 27–32 and 36). The first repair initiation in this multiple, a request for spelling (2a), fails either because Caller does not understand the request or he does not know how to spell. The second initiation (2b) is successful, as Caller's repair operation includes a more native-like pronunciation "bremen" compared to the previous rendering as "blemen". The favorable completion of this repair attempt is marked by a success marker and Telekom's repetition of the repairable "ach BRE:MEN." ("oh BRE:MEN.") (line 41).

As the next repair activity, Telekom goes to work on the name of the particular institutional place being requested, thus zeroing in on a different part of the trouble-source turn. To resolve this repairable, another multiple with two repair initiations is necessary (3a/3b, lines 44 and 48). The first repair initiation in this multiple yields a general name of the institution "meldeamt" ("registration office", line 46); however, Telekom needs more specification, as displayed in her candidate understanding "fern-meldeamt" ("long distance information office", line 48). Caller confirms this and Telekom's subsequent "moment" (line 51) indicates success in that she now displays having been supplied with sufficient information to comply with the request. However, although both coparticipants claim trouble resolution, their impression turns out to be wrong.

It is unclear what prompts Telekom to offer a further and different candidate under-standing in line 54 "also telekom mein'n sie" ("so you mean telekom"); it might have been that Caller's brief hesitation at line 53 ("eh"), after the prior multiple was already successfully completed, was sufficient for Telekom to surmise that Caller might want to withdraw his prior confirmation. Telekom proposes a new agency by the name "telekom", thus replacing the prior "fernmeldeamt" ("long distance information office"). Apparently, Caller understands this name since at this time, he rejects Telekom's candidate under-standing and explains that he would like to move (line 57). This new piece of information helps Telekom, who now offers the name of a different agency "also die stadtverwaltung" ("so the city administration", line 61). Caller confirms this by repeating "stadtverwal-tung" (line 63). Telekom then marks successful trouble resolution by stating the entire request in its clarified version and by signaling that she can now move towards complying with the request: "die stadtverwaltung in bremen=gut kleinen moment" ("the city administration in bremen=okay just a moment", lines 64 and 65). The call then proceeds by Telekom executing the request, Caller accepting it, and a conjoined closing in form of a thank-you sequence.

In sum, the repair consists of a total of seven repair initiations which can be grouped into a single initiation targeting the entire trouble-source turn, and three multiples, each focusing on a different part of the trouble-source turn. In breaking down the trouble-source turn into three distinct repairables (first the city, followed by the institution within the city, and then the particular agency), the repair-initiation turn speaker follows a strategy of separating the trouble into partial repairables, an approach already set up as a matrix by the institutional provisions of the telephone directory service. Structurally, the repair initiations follow an internal order. In the triple, each individual repair initiation is more specific than the previous one, and according to the same principle, in

each of the three multiples, the two repair initiations are ordered in increasing specificity, and each respective second repair operation is marked as successful-so-far, although this was done incorrectly in one case. These properties indicate that the seven repair-initiation turns are not ordered in a gradual, successive seven-step development towards overall trouble resolution; rather, the repair initiation turn speaker resorts to a strategy of divide-and-conquer in three steps, which are structurally composed of one multiple each.

From the perspective of the purpose of the call, several aspects of this interaction indicate that the seven repair initiations are oriented to as one interconnected repair activity. The underlying framework is Caller's request for a telephone number, which turns out to become the trouble-source turn. The trouble-source turn ("T" in the transcript below), the first repair initiation ("I") and the response to the seventh and last repair operation ("R") build the following frame for the three multiples:

```
(11)    (''blemen meldeamt'', partial transcript; English
        translation only)

    T-> 10 Caller:   uh: i- i would like uh::: r-
    T-> 11           registration office blemen?

        12           (0.2)

    T-> 13 Caller:   telephone number. .hh could you (ould)
    T-> 14           me this telephone number?

    I-> 15 Telekom:  °.hh uh, i hardly understand you.°
    I-> 16           in which city  now?=
    I-> 17           in berlin?

                     ((47 lines left out))

    R-> 64 Telekom:  the city administratin  in bremen=
        65 Telkom:   okay just a moment.
```

As already spelled out, the same trouble-source turn is involved throughout, though it is divided up and dealt with portion by portion. The trouble source turn and the first repair initiation, specifically the first initiation of the triple, build the starting frame. The frame-internal structure is that of three multiples, each with its distinct trouble-source and success marker. The transition from indicating generalized trouble to targeting specific elements is already made in the first repair initiation, in which the succession of three turn-constructional units gradually moves from a generalized to a maximally specific candidate understanding. Once specificity is established, the repair initiation turn speaker focuses on individual elements of the trouble-source turn. After the response to the seventh initiation, the Telekom speaker widens the focus again in that she formulates Caller's entire request the way she now understands it before subsequently satisfying the request.

These repair initiations and operations have been analyzed in some detail to show that their internal structure is partially due to the particular institutional character of this interaction, but to a larger degree, to the limited command of German of one of the participants, which necessitates an elaborate set of actions to resolve trouble. Specifically, his low proficiency in pronunciation, speaking and comprehension result in a rather protracted and gradual path towards mutual understanding. In this endeavor, the institutional practice typical of a telephone directory service to divide a request into city and then into the place within the given city turns out to provide for a favorable scaffold.

These points have been offered in order to connect back to the central focus of this paper, namely membership categorization. Whereas in the previous cases, orientation to linguistic and regional characteristics was displayed in an overt fashion, in the data segment "blemen meldeamt" such orientation is displayed less overtly. The structural analysis provides arguments to support the hypothesis that the source of this repair lies in the Caller's nonnative language production (pronunciation) and that trouble resolution is difficult and complex due to Caller's low level comprehension and speaking skills. Thus, the structural features of this repair sequence are put forth as support for the argument that orientation to nonnativeness is done here in an implicit way. Like in the previous cases, this repair also features a diagnostic element; however, it functions in a different way.

2.7. Diagnosis

How can the claim that there is implicit membership categorization be sustained considering the following diagnosis by Telekom after the first multiple, i.e., after three repair initiations:

```
    41   Telekom:   ach BRE:MEN.
                    oh  BRE:MEN.

    42   Caller:    ja
                    yes

D -> 43   Telekom:  °bre::men. oh das  kommt   aber schlecht an.°
                    °bre::men. oh that arrives but  bad      PRF.°
                    °bre::men. oh that gets here very badly.°
```

This diagnosis by the repair-initiation turn speaker occurs after the trouble rooted in the city name has been resolved. Telekom attributes the source of the trouble to a technical transfer problem, despite the fact that the recording of this call is perfectly clear and without acoustic inference. This apparent contradiction, as Schegloff (p.c.) proposes, can be accounted for by considering that repair problems are often used to mask other emerging issues of disagreement, misalignment or dispreference. One such example was presented above (excerpt (2) "staudn"), displayed again below in its English translation only.

```
(2)      (''staudn''; FAC, simplified, English translation only)
         01      Theo:    did you have to bump me=
         02      Rita:    =who
         03      Theo:    (you)
         04      Rita:    i didn't push you.
```

In ''blemen meldeamt'', Telekom is doing a familiar thing in an unfamiliar environment, viz., labeling the understanding problem as a different kind of problem, i.e., a technical transfer problem. In this way, she is coming to terms with something which otherwise is more delicate. Whereas a repair can be used to mask misalignment in the substance of the talk, in this case Telekom's diagnosis masks the language problem of her coparticipant. This treatment of a pronunciation problem is very much the opposite of the treatment of a pronunciation issue by the repair initiation turn speaker in (5) ''zee''. In ''zee'', the speaker underscores the problem as a pronunciation problem, whereas in ''blemen'' she obscures the pronunciation problem. So, as Schegloff puts it, Telekom's masking action is something not at all uncommon, yet it is done in a not so common environment.

In ''blemen meldeamt'', a total of seven repair initiations make up the sequential complexity of the repair. The repair sequence from trouble-source turn to trouble resolution takes up 50 lines of transcript. Even more complex is the case of native/nonnative repair analyzed in Egbert et al., (in press), which takes up 145 lines of transcript. Such a degree of elaborateness and the frequency of such cases are unparalleled in other-initiated repair by interactants with native competency. The most complex instance in native interaction documented so far is Vöge (2000), where the elaborateness of the repair sequence (a four-round multiple) seems to be due to acoustic interference rooting in technical transfer problems and an uncommon telephone opening.

Wong (in Wong and Olsher, 2000) poses the question to Schegloff whether ''a generic component of conversation, namely, the organization of repair, might be differently constituted with respect to nonnative talk'' (ibid: 120). To this question, Schegloff responds, ''No, I don't think that they're differently constituted. I think that the product of the papers we are publishing together is, if anything, quite the contrary'' (ibid). In the same vein, the analysis of ''blemen meldeamt'' indicates that the repair mechanism is both flexible and robust. It is flexible in that the elaborateness of the structure can be analyzed as a stretching of the base structure to accommodate for the limited linguistic resources, and it is robust in that coparticipants apply it successfully even under very straining circumstances.

3. Concluding remarks

Using the conversation analytic method, this study has demonstrated different ways in which coparticipants engage in linguistic and regional membership categorizing in other-initiated repair sequences. In particular, Sacks' concept of the MIR membership

categorizing device has been shown to provide an apt analytic basis to discover where interactants engage in membership categorizing, and some ways in which membership categorizing is interactionally achieved. In addition, a comparative approach between everyday conversation and interaction in which one participant has limited mastery of the language is used to account for extensive structural elaborateness.

In terms of who engages in membership categorizing, it turns out that in the context of other-initiated repair, a coparticipant can assign membership to him/herself or to other coparticipants. At the same time, this is a collaborative process in which membership categorizing can be assigned, rejected and insisted upon.

As to research methodology, this CA analysis sheds light on the concept of "nativeness" used in the debate on how CA may be a research tool for native/nonnative speaker interaction or intercultural communication. It is the coparticipants who co-construct interculturality by making relevant linguistic and regional categories in their momentary activity. Even when from an exogenous perspective, the researcher has access to potential criteria of category membership along linguistic and regional lines (such as in the "pättkusener"-segment, where each participant's regional heritage and linguistic choice, their present habitat, and their family relations are known), the participants show which of these features are relevant to them at a specific moment in the interaction. This analysis may serve to stress that a researcher can rarely predict which of the ethnographic features of a person will become relevant to the person or to his/her interactants at a given moment in the social encounter.

The analysis supports Kasper's (1995) challenge of the dichotomy of "native" versus "nonnative" speakers by showing that even among "native" speakers, specifics of language usage and residence are taken as a basis of membership categorization. Assuming that the speakers in repair segments 1–7 were to be considered "native" speakers of German, the analysis clearly breaks down this preconceived notion of "nativeness" and shows that we need to first examine the members' categories before applying such categories from an endogeneous perspective. This calls for a research agenda where work in conversation analysis and second language acquisition needs to establish first how interactants themselves co-construct their linguistic, regional or ethnic membership.

The last conclusion to be drawn concerns the debate on CA's aptness in dealing with "intercultural" or "foreign" language data. The results in this paper indicate that our practices of analysis yield results on the micro level of even minute aspects of the talk which can be reliably related to the macro level of linguistic and regional categories.

Acknowledgements

References

Antaki, Charles, Widdicombe, Sue (Eds.), 1998. Identities in Talk. Sage, London.

Atkinson, J. Maxwell, Heritage, John (Eds.), 1984. Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Atkinson, M.A., Cuff, E.C., Lee, J.R.E., 1978. The re-commencement of a meeting as a members' achievement. In: Schenkein, J.N. (Ed.), Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction. Academic Press, New York.

Baker, Carolyn, 1984. The search for adultness: membership work in adolescent-adult talk. Human Studies 7, 301–323.

Baker, Carolyn, 1982. Adolescent-adult talks as a practical interpretive problem. In: Payne, G.C.F., Cuff, E.C. (Eds.), Doing Teaching: The Practical Management of Classrooms. Batsford, London, pp. 104–125.

Drew, Paul, 1978. Accusations: the occasioned use of members' knowledge of 'religious geography' in describing events. Sociology 12 (1), 1–22. (Revised as Chapter Four in Atkinson, J.M., Drew, Paul, 1979. Order in Court: the organisation of verbal interaction in judicial settings. Macmillan, London.)

Drew, Paul, Heritage, John, 1992a. Analyzing talk at work: an introduction. In: Drew, Paul, Heritage, John (Eds.), Talk at Work. Interactions in Institutional Settings. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3–65.

Drew, Paul, Heritage, John (Eds.), 1992b. Talk at Work. Interactions in Institutional Settings. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Duranti, Alessandro, 1997. Linguistic Anthropology. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Egbert, Maria, Niebecker, Lieselotte, Rezzara, Sabrine (in press). Inside nonnative/native trouble in understanding. In: Gardner, Rod, Wagner, Johannes (Eds.), Second Language Conversations, Continuum.

Egbert, Maria, 2002. Der Reparatur-Mechanismus in deutschen und interkulturellen Gesprächen. [The Repair Mechanism in German and Intercultural Conversation]. Habilitation, Universität Oldenburg.

Egbert, Maria, 1997. Some interactional achievements of other-initiated repair in multiperson conversation. Journal of Pragmatics 27, 611–634.

Egbert, Maria, 1996. Context-free and context-sensitive aspects of repair. The case of context-sensitivity to eye gaze of the German repair initiator *bitte*? (pardon?). Language in Society 25 (4), 587–612.

Firth, Alan, Wagner, Johannes, 1998. SLA property, no trespassing! A response. Modern Language Journal 82 (1), 91–94.

Firth, Alan, Wagner, Johannes, 1997. On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA. Modern Language Journal 81 (3), 285–300.

Frankel, Richard, 1990. Talking in interviews: a dispreference for patient-initiated questions in physician-patient encounter. In: Psathas, George (Ed.), Interaction Competence. International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis. University Press of America, Washington, DC.

Gardner, Rod, Wagner, Johannes (in press). Second Language Conversations, Continuum.

Gass, Sue M., 1998. Apples and oranges: or, why apples are not oranges and don't need to be. A response to Firth and Wagner. The Modern Language Journal 82, 83–90.

Golato, Andrea, 2002. German compliment responses. Journal of Pragmatics 34 (5), 547–571.

Goodwin, Charles, Goodwin, Marjorie Harness, 1990. Interstitial argument. In: Grimshaw, A.D. (Ed.), Conflict Talk. Socolinguistic Investigations of Arguments in Conversations. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 85–117.

Goodwin, Charles, 1980. Restarts, pauses, and the achievement of a state of mutual gaze at turn beginning. Sociological Inquiry 50 (3/4), 272–302.

Günthner, Susanne, 1992. Die interaktive Konstruktion von Geschlechterrollen, kulturellen Identitäten und institutioneller Dominanz. Sprechstundengespräche zwischen Deutschen und Chinesen/innen [The interactive construction of gender roles, cultural identies and institutional domincance. Office hour conversation between Germans and Chinese]. In: Günthner, Susanne, Kotthoff, Helga (Eds.), Die Geschlechter im Gespräch: Kommunikation in Institutionen. [Gender in Talk: Communication and Institution]. Metzler, Stuttgart, pp. 91–125.

Hester, Stephen, Eglin, Peter (Eds.), 1997. Culture in Action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis. University Press of America, Washington, DC.

Hinnenkamp, Volker, 1994. Interkulturelle kommunikation—strange attractions. Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik 93, 46–74.

Kasper, G., 1995. Wessen Pragmatik? Für eine Neubestimmung fremdsprachlicher Handlungskompetenz [Whose Pragmatics? Arguments for a new conceptualization of competence in foreign language activities.] Zietschrift für Fremdsprachenforschung 6 (1), 69–94.

Kasper, Gabriele, 1997. ''A'' stands for acquisition: a response to Firth and Wagner. The Modern Language Journal 81, 307–312.

Knapp, Karlfried, Knapp-Potthoff, Annelie, 1987. Instead of an introduction. In: Knapp, Karlfried, Enninger, Werner, Knapp-Potthoff, Annelie (Eds.), Analyzing Intercultural Communication. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 1–14.

Lerner, Gene H., 1993. Collectivities in action: establishing the relevance of conjoined participation in conversation. Text 13, 213–245.

Liddicoat, Anthony, 1997. Interaction, social structure, and second language use: a response to Firth and Wagner. The Modern Language Journal 82, 313–317.

Long, M.H., 1997. Construct validity in SLA research: a response to Firth and Wagner. The Modern Language Journal 81, 318–323.

Luchtenberg, Sigrid, 1999. Interkulturelle kommunikative Kompetenz. Kommunikationsfelder in Schule und Gesellschaft [Intercultural Communicative Competence. Communication Areas in School and Society]. Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen.

Markee, Numa, 2000. Conversation Analysis. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.

Maynard, D.W., 1984. Plea Bargaining: The Language of Negotiation. Plenum Press, New York.

Mazeland, Harrie, Marjolein, Huisman, Schasfoort, M., 1995. Negotiating categories in travel agency calls. In: Firth, A. (Ed.), The Discourse of Negotiation: Studies of Language in the Workplace. Pergamon, Oxford, pp. 271–297.

McHoul, Alec W., 1978. The organisation of turns at formal talk in the classroom. Language in Society 7, 183–213.

Moerman, Michael, 1996. The field of analyzing foreign language conversations. Journal of Pragmatics 26, 147–158.

Moerman, Michael, 1988. Talking Culture. Ethnography and Conversation Analysis. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Nekvapil, Jirí, 1997. Die kommunikatieve Überwindung der tschechisch-deutschen ethnischen Polarisation: Deutsche, deutsche Kollegen, Expatriates und andere soziale Kategorien im Automobilwerk Skoda' [The communicative overcoming of the Czech/German ethnic polarization: Germans, German colleagues, expatriates and other social categories in the Skoda car factory]. In: Höhne, S., Nekula, M. (Eds.), Sprache, Wirtschaft, Kultur: Deutsche und Tschechen in Interaktion. Iudicium, München, pp. 127–145.

Redder, Angelika, Rehbein, Jochen, 1987. Zum Begriff der Kultur [Concerning the notion of culture]. Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie 38, 7–21.

Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel, A. Schegloff, Gail, Jefferson, 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. Language 50 (4), 696–735.

Sacks, Harvey, 1972a. An initial investigation of the usability of conversational data for doing sociology. In: Sudnow, David N. (Ed.), Studies in Social Interaction. Free Press, pp. 31–74.

Sacks, Harvey, 1972b. On the analyzability of stories by children. In: John J., Gumperz, Dell Hymnes (Eds.), Directions in Sociolinguistics. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp. 216–232.

Sacks, Harvey, 1967. The search for help: no one to turn to. In: Shneidman, E.S. (Ed.), Essays in Self Destruction. Science House, New York, p. 20323

Sacks, Harvey, 1964/1965, Lecture 6. The MIR membership categorization device. In: Harvey Sacks Lectures on Conversation, vol. 1. Edited by Gail Jefferson with an introduction by Emanuel A. Schegloff, pp. 40–48.

Scheflen, Albert E., 1964. The significance of posture in communication system. Psychiatry 27 (4), 316–331.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 2000a. Accounts of Conduct in Interaction: Interruption, Overlap and Turn-Taking. Manuscript. University of California, Los Angeles.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 2000b. Overlapping talk and the organization of turn-taking for conversation. Language in Society 29, 1–63.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1996. Confirming allusions: toward an empirical account of action. AJX 102 (1), 161–216.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1995. Sequence Organization. Unpublished manuscript. University of California, Los Angeles.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1990–1993. Unpublished lectures and seminars on Conversational Structures and Repair. Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1987. Between micro and macro: contexts and other connections. In: Alexander, Jeffrey C., Giesen, Bernhard, Münch, Richard, Smelser, Neil J. (Eds.), The Micro–Macro Link. University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 207–233.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1984. On some gestures' relation to talk. In: Atkinson, Maxwell J., Heritage, John (Eds.), Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 266–296.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., Gail, Jefferson, Harvey, Sacks, 1977. The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. Language 54 (2), 361–382.

Seedhouse, Paul, 1998. CA and the analysis of foreign language interaction: a reply to Wagner. Journal of Pragmatics 30, 85–102.

Selting, Margret, 1987a. Fremdkorrekturen als Manifestationsformen von Verständigungsproblemen [Other-initiated repair as forms of manifestions of problems in understanding]. Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft 6 (1), 37–58.

Selting, Margret, 1987b. Verständigungsprobleme. Eine empirische Analyse am Beispiel der Bürger-Verwaltungs-Kommunikation [Understanding Problems. An Empirical Analysis of Citizen-Administration Communication as Example]. Niemeyer, Tübingen.

Selting, Margret, 1987c. Reparaturen und lokale Verstehensprobleme. Oder: Zur Binnenstruktur von Reparatursequenzen [Repair and local understanding problems. Or: concerning the inner structure of repair sequences]. Linguistische Berichte 108/9, 128–149.

Taleghani-Nikazm, Carmen, 2002. A conversation analytical study of telephone conversation openings between native and nonnative speakers. Journal of Pragmatics 34 (12), 1807–1832.

Vöge, Monika, 2000. Konversationsanalytische Untersuchung geschäftlicher Telefonate [A conversation analytic study of business telephone calls]. MA thesis, University of Oldenburg.

Wagner, Johannes, 1998. On doing being a guinea pig—a response to Seedhouse. Journal of Pragmatics 30, 103–113.

Wagner, Johannes, 1996. Foreign language acquisition through interaction: a critical review of research on conversational adjustments. Journal of Pragmatics 26, 215–235.

Watson, D.R., 1990. Some features of the elicitation of confessions in murder interrogations. In: Psathas, G. (Ed.), Interaction Competence: Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis. International Institute of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis and University Press of America, Washington, DC, pp. 263–295.

Watson, D.R., 1983. The presentation of victim and motive in discourse: the case of police interrogations and interviews. Victimology 8, 31–52 [reprinted in: Travers, M., Manzo, J.F. (Eds.), 1997 Law in Action: Ethnomethodological & Conversation Analytic Approaches to Law. Dartmouth Publishing Co., Aldershot, UK, pp. 77–97.

West, Candace, Zimmermann, Don H., 1987. Doing gender. Gender & Society 1, 125–151.

West, Candace, Zimmermann, Don H., 1983. Small insults. A study of interruptions in cross-sex conversation between unacquainted persons. In: Thorne, B., Kramarae, C., Henley, N. (Eds.), Language, Gender and Society. Newbury House, Rowley, MA, pp. 102–117.

West, Candace, 1979. Against our will: male interruptions of females in cross-sex conversation. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 327, 81–97.

Wong, Jean, Olsher, David, 2000. Reflections on conversation analysis and nonnative speaker talk: an interview with Emanuel A. Schegloff. Issues in Applied Linguistics 11, 1, June 2000. (Special Issue on Nonnative Discourse).

Zimmerman, Don H., West, Candace, 1975. Sex roles, interruptions and silences in converstion. In: Thorne, B., Henley, N. (Eds.), Language and Sex: Differences and Dominance. Newbury House, Rowley, MA, pp. 105–129.