# Unearthing spontaneous assessment events in a student-teacher conference

- Classroom-based assessment aims to gather evidence of learning to generate formative and summative information that provides insights on the next steps for a learner and what has been achieved to date, respectively (Purpura, 2004; Turner & Purpura, 2016). Used in particular contexts, the ensuing assessment events (Purpura, 2018) include formal/planned assessments as well as 'on-the-fly'/unplanned assessments (Purpura, 2004; Shavelson, 2008).
- While formal and planned assessments are well documented, accounts of on-the-fly assessment events, embedded in instruction, may be limited to those involving well-known correction techniques. If a wider range of assessment practices is used by teachers then those practices may be under-appreciated as valid assessment practices (Berry & Sheehan, 2017) or exist as unconscious behaviours by teachers, impacting their usage.
- To fully understand the range and qualities of spontaneous assessment events, embedded in instruction, we must have a system to identify and account for their occurrence. In doing so, we can unearth spontaneous assessment events which may otherwise go unnoticed and lay bare the mechanics of those events for future deployment.
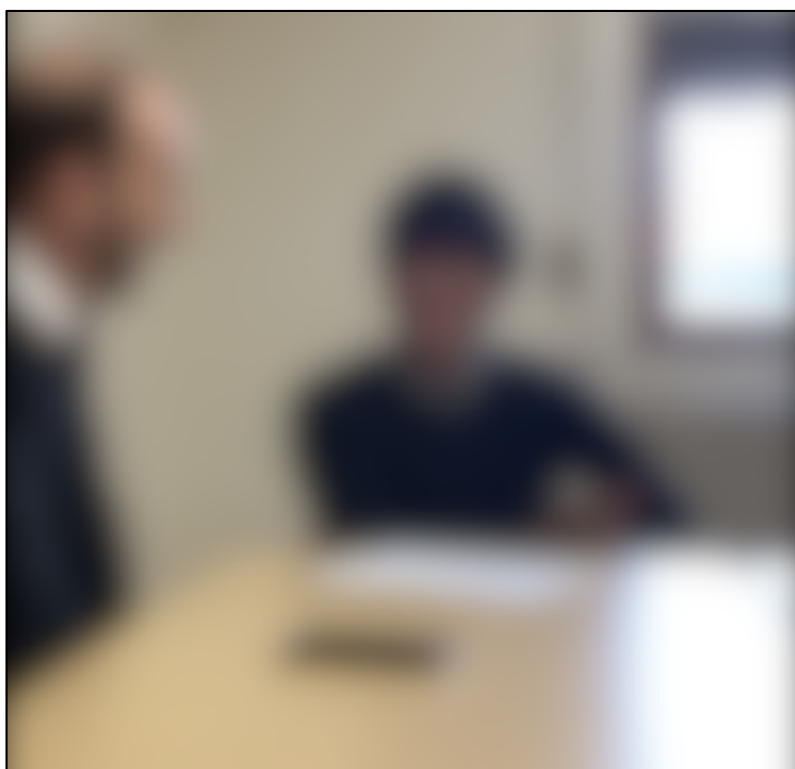
What is happening during the 'collaborative interactional frame' of a student-teacher conference?

- The fuzzy picture here shows a student and teacher taking part in a student teacher conference
- They are talking in order to resolve issues in a piece of writing that the student had done and the teacher corrected.
- But from an assessment perspective, what actually happens in such student-teacher conferences?
- I had never analysed my own student teacher conferences.
- I didn't know at a granular level what was happening.
- This paper presents how techniques from Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) and dimensions of Learning Oriented Assessment (Turner & Purpura, 2016) were used to identify and dissect what was happening in on-the-fly assessment events occurring in the 'collaborative interactional frame' (Poehner & van Compernolle, 2011) of a student-teacher conference.

What is happening during the 'collaborative interactional frame' of a student-teacher conference?

- Response tokens such as 'mm hmm', 'mm' as tools
- Sequences of actions and reactions
- CA and LOA as tools to investigate assessment practices

- In this report, I'll share what I have currently found as a result of going through the analysis process.
- Specifically, I'll focus on 2 identified spontaneous assessment events
- And use the two samples to illustrate features within these events, **such as**
- …response tokens and their potential 'super powers'
- …Sequences of actions and reaction which look like the IRF sequence
- I'll also go over the tools I used for uncovering what was happening in the spontaneous assessment events – namely CA and LOA
- As we go through the talk, I'll clarify some of the terms being used.
- First, what can I share with you about the context of the study.

The student-teacher conference

1. Written assignment is annotated and returned
2. Meeting to discuss the writing

   a) Greetings

   b) Co-constructing a goal

   'Collaborative Int. frame'* c) Resolving issues

   d) Considering future applications

   e) Closings

* Poehner & Van Compernolle (2011)

- The study took place within the community ESL programme offered at a university in North America.
- The student taking part was a Japanese male with English level around B2/C1.
- The student teacher conference was offered to all students as a way to follow up and address issues students wanted to discuss in relation to their ESL classes.
- They came of their own accord.
- The motivator for discussions in this study were written assignments that had been annotated and returned to the student (1)
- The structure of the student teacher conference was as follows: - 2 – 7
- The samples we'll look at in this study came from the section 'resolving issues'…
  I've borrowed the term collaborative interactional frame to refer to the section in the conference where I worked with the Student 'close the learning gap'

- 1st written assignment (an essay)
- 1st conferencing session (progressive aspect)

- 2nd written assignment (a description of life events)
- 2nd conferencing session (mixed conditionals)

- 42 minutes of recorded interaction
- 4 follow-up emails (tracking improvement)

- This slide shows the data sets collected.
- It's important to know that in the first conference progressive aspect was a topic of discussion AND…
- In the second, the use of progressive aspect in mixed conditionals was the chosen focus for the collaboration frame.
- So what was the first step in beginning to work with the data?
- The data was listened to so as to identify sections of spontaneous assessments… given the discourse-based context, clues to finding the spontaneous assessments were instances where spontaneous questions and feedback were used to help the student notice/ understand/ analyse/ internalize and use the target language (P&T 2016, p261).
- Once identified, the sections of talk were transcribed using conventions from Conversation analysis.
- Let's look at an example

```
073  S:           so if I use I would have not been
074               =[interested in foreign countries]
075  T:     →      [((raises hand and extends finger))]
076  S:     →     <ah sorry> I would ((looks up to right))I wouldn't,
078               I wouldn't [have been]interestedinforeigncountries.
079  T:     →                [((nods))]
080  S:           maybe it's not sure if I live in foreign countries
081               now
082  T:           correct.
```

- So here we have an excerpt of a spontaneous assessment in which the teacher initiates a self-correction.
- I call this excerpt 'The Magic Finger'
- So in line 73 the student begins his clarification question which actually is completed in lines 80 and 81
- In line 75 the teacher invades the student's turn by raising his hand and extending his finger
- This appears to be taken up by the student in line 76 as feedback on the quality of the utterance and is responded to with an apology **and** a self-corrected utterance.
- So what's interesting here is that we have non-verbal supports: hand gestures being used to initiate corrections (line 75), eye movements used to hold onto a turn (line 76), and head movements being used to confirm (line 79).
- In these early viewings, I became aware of the IRF sequence (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) being played out nonverbally, as we can see here where T initiates a correction in line 78 and confirms accuracy in line 80 with gestures and nods.
- Prior to analysis I was completely unaware of how little spoken language I was using to facilitate correction.
- However, I went back into the data to dig deeper. Within the IRF sequences and elsewhere, the use of response tokens such as mm, mm hhm, became noticeable in the events.

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Excerpt 2: The Collaboration Space
100  S:          so the mi↑stakes is::.
101              (2)
102  T:          it's around here.
103              [((points to mistake on piece of writing))]
104              =do you re↑member the discussion
105              that you and I ha:d. (.) a couple of weeks ago.
106              (1)
107  S:          be ing
108  T:          ((three quick nods))
109  S:          °be ing° (.) yeah
110              (2) ((marks out words with hand)) (4)
111              so in this ↑case. (I mean?) (.5) being studying.
112  T:    →     mm hmm?
113  S:          a:h <no no no>
114  T:    →     [↑mm hmm?]
115  S:          [I wouldn't] (.) even (2) be studying.
116  T:    →     ↑mm.
117  S:          ((nods))
118  T:          ((nods))(1)because for ↑you.(.)what'sthe situation.
119              (1)
120  S:          temporary situation
```

- Excerpt 2 shows three response tokens that are used while leading Masahiro to identify and self-correct errors in his writing. It is important to know that in previous discussions, Masahiro had mentioned that he had been sent by his company to New York for a six-month project. He viewed his time in the city as non-permanent. This discovery led into a discussion about time inherent in different types of verbs and how lexical aspect imparts different meanings when used with progressive aspect. In line 104, I draw Masahiro's attention back to that discussion as a way to guide him to self-correct (lines 100 – 103).
- In line 104, a question is asked with the aim of getting Masahiro to recall our previous discussion on lexical aspect. The closed-ended question in line 104 conditionally requires a yes/no response. Masahiro does not directly respond by saying 'yes' or 'no', but adheres to the conditional requirement by way of implication: in line 107, he provides the topic of the discussion 'be + ing' (progressive aspect) and affirms his idea with an utterance final 'yeah' (line 109). I nod three times to confirm Masahiro has identified the correct topic (line 108).
- Upon recalling the discussion about lexical aspect and progressive aspect, Masahiro holds his turn by marking out the sentence structure with his left hand (line 110). He then initiates a self-correction of the 'trouble source' (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) in his piece of writing. He begins a multi-unit turn in which he repairs trouble source. His attempt generates a further trouble source, 'being studying*' instead of 'be studying' (line 111). I respond

with a 'mm hmm' (line 112). This freestanding 'mm hmm' occurs at a completion point which is syntactically and intonationally complete. But given that the TCU in line 111 is erroneous and does not correct the error in the writing, the TCU is not pragmatically complete. As a result, the uttered 'mm hmm' continues to confirm that Masahiro has the correct grammatical topic. With rising intonation rather than falling, this bisyllabic continuer hands the floor back to Masahiro. The use of this 'mm hmm' as a continuer is followed by Masshiro hastily proclaiming 'ah no no no' (line 113), indicating he said something wrong.

- In response to Masahiro's proclamation, I deploy a second listener response token. This is similar to the one in line 112 in that this freestanding response token is bisyllabic, occurs after a PCP, and has a rising tone. However, it differs from the previous token: sensing that Masahiro might change tact and avoid using the progressive aspect altogether, I use a higher pitched rising 'mm hmm'. This upgraded version acknowledges Masahiro's proclamation of inaccuracy (line 113), confirms that he is thinking along the correct lines, and he should keep going with his line of thought. Masahiro's response bears fruit with the corrected utterance (and hence the corrected sentence), being revealed in line 115.

- In line 116, I acknowledge Masahiro's accuracy with a third response token. This 'mm' differs from the previous two in terms of its phonological make-up (monosyllabic, starting on a high pitch and falls) and also in terms of its environment. Masahiro's TCU in line 115 is syntactically, intonationally, and pragmatically complete and constitutes a TRP. The freestanding 'mm' begins to bring Masahiro's recast sequence to a close. Masahiro receives the token as indication of his utterance being 'problem free' (Gardner 1999, p.137). He responds with a nod (line 117) and I do likewise (line 118). These non-verbal actions form implicit positive assessments rather than explicit positive assessments (Waring, 2008).

- A close is brought to this correction phase when explicit verbal indication of the accuracy and rationale for the correction is provided. In line 118 I ask 'because for you, what's the situation?' which aims to make explicit the apparent implicit understanding of the rationale behind Masahiro's correction.

- The sequence of response tokens can be summarised as 1) a bisyllabic continuer with rising intonation so as to reconfirm the correctly identified grammatical topic 2) a bisyallabic continuer starting on a higher pitch and rising so as to reconfirm the grammatical topic but not the accuracy of the attempt uttered 3) a monosyllabic, high-fall token that is deployed to acknowledge accuracy of the previous utterance.

- Upon reflection, other responses tokens could have been used. Assessment tokens such as 'wrong' could have taken the place of the 'mm hmms' in lines 112 and 114. Explicit positive assessments 'Yes!', 'Great!' could have taken the place of 'mm' in line 116. Yet this didn't occur. The 'semantic emptiness' and 'virtual invisibility' (Gardner, 2001, p. 99) of the tokens used may have supported collaborative correction where I didn't have to say much.

Table 1: *Summary of non-lexical response tokens occurring in excerpts 2 – 4*

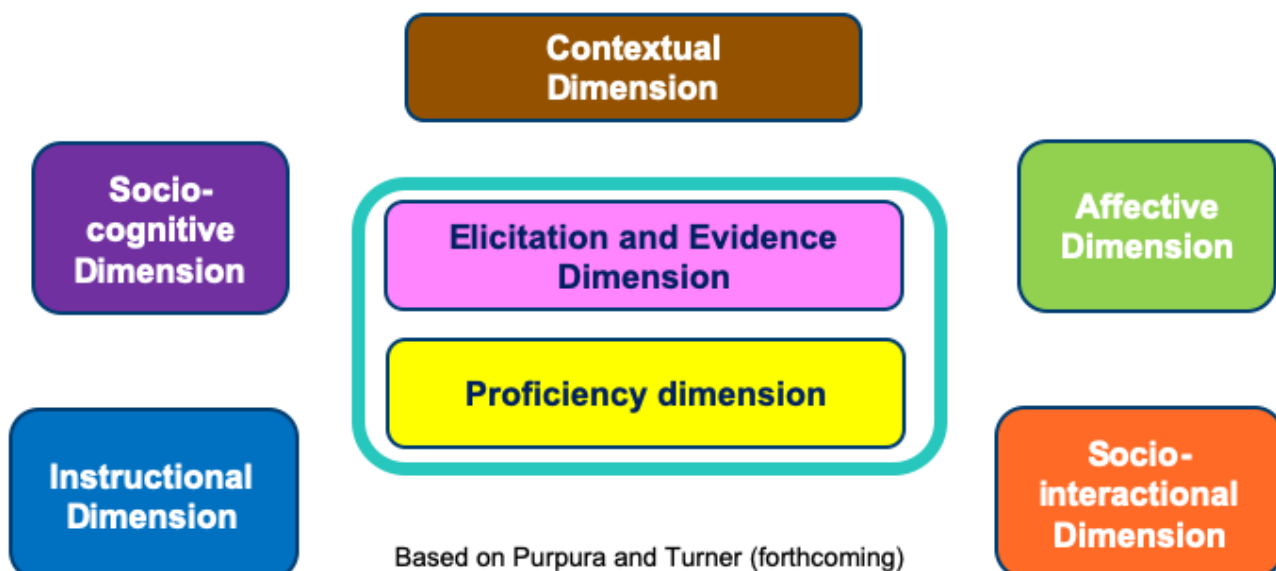| Token type	Excerpt	Prosodic features	SYN	INT	PRG	Function
	2	rise	✓	✓	-	Continuer/encourage
mm hmm	2	high pitch + rise	✓	✓	-	Continuer/encourage
	3	high fall	✓	✓	✓	Close/affirm
	2	high fall	?	✓	✓	Close /affirm
mm	3	high fall	✓	✓	-	Attempted close
	3	flat	✓	-	✓	Continuer
	4	low fall	-	✓	✓	Pre-correction

SYN = syntactically complete; INT = intonationally complete; PRG = pragmatically complete

● So as a quick summary, the table here overviews
*** the different response tokens
*** their prosodic features
*** their sequential environments
*** and their 'superpowers' or functions
● Happy to go into more detail after the session if you're interested (PAUSE)
● …….SO … while CA has helped unearth these….A problem with CA is that we are restricted by how much interpretation of the data we can make.
● So what can we do?

● The findings in this paper show that non-lexical response tokens were being used to support 'repair' (Schegloff et al., 1977) of previously 'exposed corrections' (Jefferson, 1987). Seven of the eight response tokens were 'free-standing' (Guthrie, 1997).
● Prosodically, tokens that had mid/high – falling intonation were primarily used when 1) orienting to a TCU which displayed a self-repair 2) the self-repair was accurate 3) the intention of the teacher was to confirm accuracy. This aligns with the findings of Gardner (1997) in which 'mm hmm' with falling intonation indicated 'problem free receipt' (p. 132). Tokens that had rising intonation were primarily used when the student was being 'encouraged' to continue with their line of thought and/or self-repair. Rather than drawing a close to the speaker's turn, use of the response token was seen as a 'continuer' and align

with the findings of Gardner (1997, 2001). While certain uses of tokens align with findings of others, there were instances of tokens manifesting or being used differently.

- With regard to 'mm', Gardner (2001) mentions that the monosyllabic response token 'often has a very flat, shallow, weak intonation contour' (p .99). Of the four monosyllabic response tokens appearing in the excerpts, only one fits this prosodic description. The remainder had either high-fall (two examples) or low fall intonation contours.
- With regard to 'mm hmm', Jefferson (1985) (Jefferson, 1985), talks of its deployment in terms of 'passive recipiency' and mentions that the 'user is proposing that his co-participant is still in the midst of some course of talk and shall go on talking' (p. 4). While this may hold in other talk-in-interaction contexts, in the repair contexts that Masahiro and I were co-participants (e.g. excerpt 2), I would not say that my uses of the tokens were passive. Rather, the uses were an active attempt to encourage attention leading to self-correction.
- With regard to the sequential environments of the response tokens, the tokens largely occurred after syntactically complete TCUs. Perhaps, given that Masahiro and I were coming together to discuss unresolved corrections, bisyllabic response tokens in excerpt 2 followed TCUs that we were syntactically and intonationally complete but not pragmatically complete.
- Table 1, below, summarises the tokens discussed in the previous sections.

FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING ORIENTED ASSESSMENT

Contextual Dimension

Socio-cognitive Dimension

Elicitation and Evidence Dimension

Proficiency dimension

Affective Dimension

Instructional Dimension

Socio-interactional Dimension

Based on Purpura and Turner (forthcoming)

- So given that CA encourages us to focus on what is said and in relation to its surrounding context. I decided to review assessment episodes using the LOA framework
- The LOA framework comprises seven interrelated dimensions.
- The **contextual** dimension (BROWN) relates to the real world socio-, politico-, technical, and educational aspects of environment encompassing the assessments. And in the classroom the **contextual** dimension relates to the choices the teacher has in co-constructing meaning and knowledge, and sharing feedback.
- The **elicitation (PINK)** dimension is concerned with methods for gathering evidence – it includes the range of formal and informal processes for gathering summative and formative information as well as spontaneous/ on the fly assessments under discussion in this paper… Key question is 'to what extent do these elicitations promote L2 processing and facilitate learning.
- The **proficiency** (YELLOW) dimension encompasses conceptions of language such as those defined in standards e.g. CEFR, and/or conceptualizations of language knowledge (e.g. Purpura, 2004).
- (PURPLE) The **socio-cognitive** dimension consists of the architecture (memory, etc.) and functionality (strategies).
- (BLUE) The organization and management of assessment practices, interpretation and follow-up on elicitations of performance, are captured under the **instructional** dimension, as is teacher's content knowledge and pedagogy

- The teacher's content knowledge and pedagocical content knowledge can also come under the prof dimension, but with the teacher as the agent, not the student.
- (ORANGE)The **socio-interactional** dimension considers the structure of planned and unplanned assessments and how topics, turns, repair, and feedback are managed.
- (GREEN) How assessments support, bolster or undermine dispositions such as motivation, engagement and effort, are accounted for within the **affective** dimension.

```
EXCERPT: Magic Finger
069   T:          because this is talking about a pa::st
070               situation and then we're talking about
071               the consequence of this past situation
072               in the ↑ present.
073   S:    →     so if I use I would have not been
074               =[interested in foreign countries]
075   T:    →     [((raises hand and extends finger))]
076   S:    →     <ah sorry> I would [((looks up to right))]
077                                   [(0.9)] I wouldn't
078         →     I wouldn't have been interested in foreign countries
079   T:          [((nods))]
080   S:    →     maybe it's not sure if I live in foreign countries now
081   T:          correct.
082   S:          ((nods))
084   T:          correct.
085               but we do know that you were interested in the past
```

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077                             [(0.9)] I wouldn't
078         →    I wouldn't have been interested in foreign countries
079   T:         [((nods))]
080   S:    →    maybe it's not sure if I live in foreign countries now
081   T:         correct.
082   S:         ((nods))
084   T:         correct.
085              but we do know that you were interested in the past
```

- So, going back to the Magic Finger excerpt, this time with slightly more context.
- In lines 69 – 71, there is a multi-unit turn that further explains a grammatical point that we had been discussing. With LOA we can consider the function of this and code it as tapping the INSTRUCTIONAL dimension (BLUE)
- Masahiro then initiates another clarification question (line 73 - 74)@2 which concludes in line 80 @3, which under CA we could say was the first pair part BUT
- Using the LOA we can make the interpretation that this demonstrates his PROFICIENCY knowledge, hence it being highlighted here in yellow.
- @4 In CA we could say the first pair part of a clarification question conditionally requires affirmation/denial hence the SPP in line 81
- But through the lens of LOA we can interpret this as confirming his accuracy and therefore being part of the INSTRUCTIONAL dimension.
- So what of the remainder of the stretch of talk?
- @5 Well, going back into in line 73 Masahiro places the negation particle 'not' after the auxiliary verb 'have' @5.
- @6 The position of the particle, I treat as a 'trouble source' and respond by raising my finger to initiate feedback (instructional dimension) @6.
- Using the LOA framework we can say that the decision to intervene was because the correction was deemed construct relevant (proficiency dimension).
- The non-verbal interruption makes Masahiro self-correct which under LOA we

can relate to the socio-cognitive dimension. This other initiated self-correction (lines 076 – 078) consists of 1) an apology, @7 2) a brief silence 3) production of the accurate form.

- @9 the silence is accompanied by Masahiro's eyes moving to the upper right. The eye-position is interpreted as Masahiro cognitively processing (socio-cognitive dimension),
- the silence is allowed to continue (instructional dimension), and the preferred grammatical form 'would + not + have + past participle' is uttered in line 78 (proficiency dimension)@10.
- In line 79, the correction ends with a second non-verbal response, a nod, @11 confirming his accuracy (instructional dimension).
- Which is responded to by acknowledgement @12
- A second 'correct' used to increase positivity and therefore relating to the AFFECTIVE dimension@13.
- And finally a clarifying statement which relates to the INSTRUCTIONAL dimension@14.

```
EXCERPT: I wouldn't being studying in New York
100   S:          so the mi↑st_akes i_s::.
101              (2)
102   T:          it's around here.
103              [((points to mistake on piece of writing))]
104              =do you re↑member the discussion
105              that you and I ha:d. (.) a couple of weeks ago.
106              (1)
107   S:          be ing
108   T:          ((three quick nods))
109   S:          °be ing° (.) yeah
110        →      (2) ((marks out words with hand)) (4)
111        →      so in this ↑c_ase. (I mean?) (.5) being studying.
112   T:          mm hmm?
113   S:          a:h <no no no>
114   T:          [↑mm hmm?]
115   S:    →     [I wouldn't] (.) even (2) be studying
116   T:          ↑ mm.
117   S:          ((nods))
118   T:          ((nods))(1)because for ↑you.(.)what'sthe situ_ation.
119              (1)
120   S:          temporary situation
121   T:          temporary situation therefo::re,
122   S:          (2) so: (the?) b_eing.
123   T:          °yeah yeah° (1.5) so here it's just an opportunity
124              to use th_at str_ucture (.) again
```

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100   S:        so the mi↑stakes is::.
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120   S:        temporary situation
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122   S:        (2) so: (the?) being.
123   T:        °yeah yeah° (1.5) so here it's just an opportunity
124            to use that structure (.) again
```

- The example that included the mms and mmhms can also be seen through the lens of LOA.
- In the interests of time, I'll just show the coding.
- Of course if you wish more detail I'll happily provide this after the presentation.
- Multiple codings possible BUT @1 = elicitation/ @2= contextual/ @3 = prof @4 = instructional @5 = prof….
- Essentially the LOA framework is helping us get much richer descriptions of data.
- Also bring to light possible sequences such as lines 116 – 118 and explore differences.
- So…by way of a conclusion so far…

- By way of additional background, in the previous session Masahiro and I discussed how lexical aspect of verbs (punctual/dynamic/stative) combines with progressive aspect to yield different meanings. Masahiro also mentioned he was only in the US temporarily.
- In excerpt 3, Masahiro continues to work with his text. The original sentence in his text reads *'Had it not been for the trip … I would not even study English in New York now'* and the underlined section is marked with WT (Wrong Tense).
- In Lines 104 – 105, as Masahiro cannot supply the correction, I decide to deploy a question**@1 (Elicitation)**, a first pair part, referring back to our previous weeks' discussion on progressive aspect (contextual dimension)**@2**.

- Masahiro's answer is the second pair part (line 107) demonstrating his knowledge (PROFICIENCY **@3**) to which my confirmation (line 108) can be seen as a sequence closing third and providing feedback (INSTRUCTIONAL) **@4**.
- **However**, the question in line 104-105 is also an instance of other initiated self-correction (instructional dimension) and following my confirmation of his response (instructional dimension), …
- Masahiro begins to self-correct (socio-cognitive dimension). **@6** In line 110, a two second gap occurs followed by his marking of the structure in the air with his hands and then another 4 seconds silence. The hand gestures in line 110 are interpreted as him cognitively processing the syntactic structure (socio-cognitive dimension) and so further space is given to Masahiro to consider his response.
- This is evidenced by the four second silence and my being available to help in his success (affective dimension).
- In line 111, Masahiro offers his first attempt at correcting the error in his paper (socio-cognitive dimension). Upon hearing the '*being studying' in line 111, I produce a non-lexical response token, 'mm hhm'. This token seems to be treated as feedback on the accuracy of the attempted correction and results in another round of other initiated self-correction starting in line 113. Eventually in line 115, Masahiro evidences his ability to produce the correct form and with the negative particle appended to the modal verb 'would' (proficiency dimension).
- While a third non-lexical response token (line 116) and a nonverbal response token in line 118 confirm Masahiro's response (instructional dimension), I follow up with a question (line 118) aimed at getting Masahiro to say why he used the progressive aspect (elicitation dimension). The meta-linguistic response (line 120) starts to close this sequence but not without getting Masahiro to restate the form that conveys that the situation is non-permanent in lines 121 (elicitation dimension) to which he happily responds with 'be ing'.
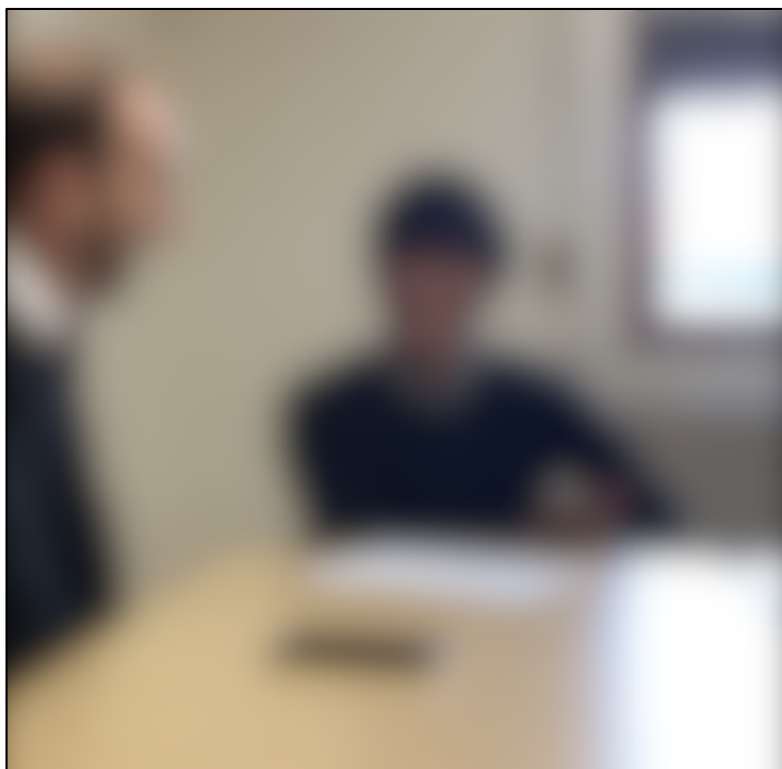
* Response tokens used systematically

* Sequences of actions and reactions

* CA and LOA supporting self-awareness

- So … what was actually happening in the collaborative interactional frame?
- Well response tokens were being used BUT
…a question is would they appear in other contexts? Would they be used by other teachers in similar ways?
…what's the effect?
- We began to notice sequences BUT…
…again, what is the effect? Is it really supporting learning?
…and would we see similar patterns being used in other contexts?
- To understand the range and qualities of spontaneous assessment events, embedded in instruction, we must have a system to identify, describe and account for their occurrence.
- In doing so, we can unearth spontaneous assessment events which may otherwise go unnoticed
- and hopefully we can lay bare the mechanics of those events for future deployment.
- While there are a lot of unanswered questions, at least the goings on in one collaborative interactional frame is LESS FUZZY {ANIM!!}

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Thank you

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