

# ***Developing 'Methods' for Interaction: A Cross-Sectional Study of Disagreement Sequences in French L2***

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## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Participants in talk-in-interaction use language and other semiotic resources to accomplish social actions and to coordinate these. This requires participants not only to format their utterances linguistically in a way that they can be understood by others, but also to use language (along with gesture, gaze, posture and the manipulation of objects) in order to deal with the contingencies of talk. Participants use language for establishing participation, for initiating or closing interactional encounters, for agreeing or disagreeing with others and so on. Seen in this light, language is a resource for action (Ochs *et al.*, 1996). Learning a second language (henceforward: L2) can therefore be understood as part of learning to act jointly with others within the social world. Such a view implies a focus on language and learning as inextricably embedded and configured within social practice.

The recognition of social interaction as the core site where language (as well as cognition) is shaped has triggered a major shift in the SLA scientific landscape within the last decade or two (see the discussions in Firth & Wagner, 1997, 2007; Pekarek Doehler, 2010; see also Block, 2003). Conversation analytic work on SLA (henceforward CA-SLA), in particular, views L2 learning as anchored in language use, that is, as embedded in the moment-to-moment unfolding of talk-in-interaction. Such an understanding critically challenges what can be taken as evidence for learning: documenting language learning, in this view, involves analyzing how speakers use language within social practices to accomplish (joint) actions.

Against this background, we argue that the development of L2 interactional competence can be usefully understood in terms of the development

of ‘methods’ – in the ethnomethodological sense of the term (i.e. members’ systematic procedures; see section Interactional Competence and the Notion of ‘Method’) – for dealing with the contingencies of talk-in-interaction (see Hellermann, 2008; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Pekarek Doehler, 2010). Such a notion, however, raises a critical question: How can learning be empirically documented in terms of the development, across time, of such socially situated methods of accomplishing social actions?

In this chapter, we propose one empirical solution to this question by focusing on a specific practice, namely doing disagreement. Excerpt 9.1 shows a disagreement sequence in an advanced French L2 classroom. While Tom has just brought up several arguments downgrading the importance of the Swiss army, Emilie insists on its strength.

### Excerpt 9.1 ‘l’armée Suisse’ (SPD-14)

- 01 TOM: l’armée de suisse est très petit.  
*the army of Switzerland is very small*
- 02 (1.8)
- 03 > EMI: oui elle est très petit mais nous avons un (.)  
*yes it is very small but we have a*
- 04 système (parfait) souterrain, (.) par exemple sous le gothard  
*(perfect) subterranean system for instance underneath the Gothard*
- 05 existe un (.) (xx) (.) et on ne peut pas nous conquérir.  
*there is a (xx) and they cannot conquer us*

The disagreeing turn shows several noteworthy features to which we will come back in section Methods for Doing Disagreement – II: Advanced Learners of this chapter: the turn starts off with an alignment ‘yes it is very small’; this alignment pushes the disagreement proper further back into the turn and hence carries a hedging effect; the disagreement is then introduced by means of the contrastive marker *mais* ‘but’, and it is followed by an exemplification by means of which Emilie backs up her position. In short, a range of means is deployed in order to both mitigate and back up the disagreement, and these means are distributed sequentially in a specific way. The basic sequential architecture of the disagreeing turn as illustrated in Excerpt 9.1 corresponds to what has been shown to be typical for conversations among L1 speakers (see section Disagreement in Talk-in-Interaction).

Now, how does an L2 speaker come to accomplish disagreement in this way? Can he or she simply transfer her ‘methods’ for doing so from his or her L1? Or is there some readaptation or reelaboration of his or her interactional competence involved? These are the issues that this chapter sets out to tackle by focusing on the specific case of L2 speakers’ doing disagreements.

In the first part of the chapter, we briefly outline our view of L2 interactional competence (see section A Situated View of Learning: Interactional Competence and the Notion of 'Method'; for a more detailed discussion see the introductory chapter to this volume, Hall & Pekarek Doehler) and we discuss previous research on disagreements (see section Disagreement in Talk-in-Interaction). In the second part of the chapter, we present an empirical study of disagreement sequences in French L2 classroom interaction, based on a cross-sectional research design that allows us to compare lower-intermediate and advanced learners (see sections Data and Methodology through Methods for Doing Disagreement II: Advanced Learners). In the last two sections, we reflect on the implications of our findings for SLA research as well as on the methodological challenges that arise when it comes to documenting the development of interactional competence across time.

## **A Situated View of Learning: Interactional Competence and the Notion of 'Method'**

### **Language learning as a situated practice**

CA-SLA proposes a 'socially situated' view of learning (see e.g. Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004). Learning is seen as embedded in the microdetails of locally accomplished and sequentially organized everyday practices. It is defined as 'learning-in-action' (Firth & Wagner, 2007: 801) – as learning that is inseparable from language use within social practices. This situated view of learning implies that neither the products nor the processes of learning can be fully understood when abstracted from their natural ecology, that is, the practices the learner engages in. The analytic focus thus is on how learners use language in naturally occurring talk-in-interaction to accomplish situated actions, such as opening a story, (dis)agreeing with others, or closing a conversation. Analyses are carried out on *language-in-action*: they are not concerned with linguistic structures alone, nor with the organization of actions alone, but with the intricate interrelation between the linguistic and other layers of the organization of second language talk (see Pekarek Doehler, 2010).

Here exactly lies the methodological challenge: how can we grasp language-in-action over time? While there is an increasing call for micro-analytic studies of learners' accomplishing situated actions across time (Hall, 2004; Kasper, 2004; Markee, 2008; Wagner, 2004), to this date there has been little empirical work done in this line (but for L2 see Cekaite, 2007; Hellermann, 2008 and this volume; Markee, 2008; Young & Miller, 2004; for L1 see Wootton, 1997). This may partly be explained by the relative lack of conceptual instruments to address issues of development over

time with a CA framework. Classic CA work, while it aims at discovering the 'methods' by which members organize their conduct in mutually recognizable ways, does not address the question of how members *develop* these methods (Kasper, 2009). There is a range of challenging issues to be addressed when it comes to documenting the development of interactional competence from a CA perspective.

### **Interactional competence and the notion of 'method'**

We understand the development of L2 interactional competence in terms of the development of speakers' 'methods' for accomplishing social actions in L2 talk. And we suggest that this development can best be documented by analyzing how the methods for accomplishing a specific micropractice (or 'actional microcosm', as we call it; see below) change across time.

The term 'method', as we use it here, has been forged by Harold Garfinkel (1967), the founder of ethnomethodology: Methods are systematic procedures (of turn-taking, repairing, opening or closing conversation etc.) by which members establish and maintain social order and intersubjectivity. These procedures are socially shared and mutually oriented to and they enable members to organize their behavior in mutually recognizable ways. Discovering the methods by which members organize talk-in-interaction is the basic aim of classic CA. We have suggested earlier (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004: 503; see also Pekarek Doehler, 2010) that these methods play a key role in situated learning. They are part of the competence that allows members to participate in social interactions (Garfinkel, 1967). In this sense, they are the very substance of interactional competence – be it in L1 or in L2.

When arguing that the development of L2 interactional competence can be understood in terms of the development of speakers' methods, we do not necessarily refer to the creation of new methods. Rather we see development in terms of the increased diversification and local efficacy (i.e. relevance for this specific action, for these interlocutors at this sequential moment; see Brouwer & Wagner, 2004) of such methods. Previous findings (e.g. Firth, 2009; Hellermann, 2008) suggest that the development of L2 interactional competence may include some sort of recalibration of participants' methods for dealing with talk-in-interaction. For instance, speakers do not learn totally anew how to open a conversation, but they readapt the ways they do so, including the linguistic and sequential resources they use.

Accordingly, observables such as turn-taking mechanisms, precision timing, the use of story-prefaces or more generally sequential organization can be used as indicators of L2 interactional development. There is some empirical evidence supporting the relevance of these analytic parameters

for tracking interactional development in an L2 (e.g. Cekaite, 2007; Markee, 2008; Young & Miller, 2004).

Possibly the most noteworthy study for our purpose here is presented by Hellermann (2008). Following the same dyads of adult English L2 learners in a classroom setting across several months, Hellermann analyses their practices of opening tasks, of telling stories and of disengaging from an activity to document how these practices change across time. He shows, for instance, that openings of teacher-assigned dyadic tasks at lower levels of proficiency are typically launched directly, with less or no prefatory talk, while at more advanced levels participants show increased use of prefatory talk before launching the task and a wider repertoire of verbal negotiations of the upcoming task. Hellermann's focus on a delimited set of micropractices allows him to provide evidence for interactional development as observable in changes in the way participants accomplish recurrent situated actions, in particular as regards the sequential organization of these.

In line with the preceding considerations, we will investigate in this chapter one recurrent interactional practice – or rather, as we put it, an 'actional microcosm', namely the management of disagreement. We use the term actional microcosm to refer to a practice such as disagreeing with someone else, opening a story or closing down a conversational sequence, that is typically accomplished by means of one or several adjacent action(s).<sup>2</sup> An actional microcosm may spread across adjacency pairs (for instance, a story opening prefaced by a presequence) or be accomplished by means of a single turn (for instance, the proffering of a disagreement). This analytic focus enables us to zoom in onto participants' methods for action within a delimited frame, where basic principles of interaction such as turn-taking, precision timing and preference organization can be investigated. This zooming in onto a micromoment of interactional practices is crucial, given CA's strict commitment to naturally occurring data, which renders problematic the control of variables. It allows us to trace the development of methods for action through systematic comparisons between two different moments in time while grounding the analysis on actions that are observably oriented to by participants (rather than being predefined by the analyst).

## **Disagreement in Talk-in-Interaction**

### **The preference for agreement**

Why focus our study on disagreements? First, disagreements are frequent in our data: disagreeing is a recurrent practice both in the classroom and beyond. Second, disagreements are interactionally dense moments: they open space for negotiation and controversy (Antaki, 1994; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990), hence bringing into play in a particularly critical way

participants' investment and their ability to maintain intersubjectivity. Third, disagreements have been shown by previous research to follow regular sequential patterns, both in everyday conversation (Pomerantz, 1984) and in institutional interactions (e.g. Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Greatbatch, 1992). Disagreements materialize recurrent methods for dealing with the sequential organization of talk, yet little is known about how precisely they are accomplished in L2 talk-in-interaction.

In conversation analytic research, agreeing and disagreeing have basically been discussed in terms of *preferred* and *dispreferred* actions. In his seminal paper on preference, Sacks observed participants' tendency toward what he calls a 'preference for agreement and contiguity' (Sacks, 1987 [1973]: 58). 'Agreement' here does not refer to the display of acceptance of personal ideas or opinions, but to a sequential property, namely the alignment of an action with regard to the preceding action. When producing a second-pair part (e.g. an answer), participants tend to provide an action that aligns with the course of action projected in a first-pair part (e.g. a question) ('preference for agreement'), and the delivery of this action is sequentially placed as soon as possible ('preference for contiguity') in the turn at hand. This is not an overall property of conversation, but a frequently encountered interactional fact relating to the formal infrastructure of sequential organization.

Preference for agreement is embodied in the very way a second speaker's turn is delivered as related to a first speaker's turn. In a much quoted study, Pomerantz (1984) discusses the specific case of agreeing and disagreeing with assessments. The author identifies a preferred-action turn shape characterized by immediate turn uptake and display of agreement, and a dispreferred-action turn shape characterized by delayed turn start, the use of mitigation techniques and display of disagreement. In particular, she shows that disagreement tends to be pushed further back into the turn, being preceded by some kind of agreement token, or a downgraded agreement, within a 'yes-but' type of turn architecture. Excerpt 9.1, quoted earlier, provided an illustration of this pattern.

The preference organization of talk-in-interaction, however, is highly context sensitive. Atkinson and Drew (1979), for instance, observed that participants in courtroom settings react systematically to accusations by means of unmitigated denials. Greatbatch (1992) documented that in broadcast interviews disagreement is preferred. And M.H. Goodwin (1983, 1990) showed the frequent use of aggravated disagreements in children's interactions when playing at hopscotch or jump rope.

The organization of disagreements also appears to depend on the position of the disagreeing turn within a sequence. Based on student-lecturer dyadic interactions, Kotthoff (1993) found a preference for disagreement once an argument has started, that is, after a first dissent-turn has already been displayed. In her data, the occurrence of a first disagreement implies

regularly the relevance for further disagreement, in that way flipping over the preference structure toward preference for disagreement.

While the cited studies identify recurrent sequential patterns and mitigation techniques for disagreements, they also point out their eminent context sensitivity, as regards both the larger interactional context in which they occur and their precise sequential location. Context sensitivity is a highly consequential issue when it comes to comparing practices across time. It is possibly one of the major challenges that longitudinal CA studies are currently facing (Pekarek Doehler & Wagner, 2010): when we look at learning across longer stretches of time, how can we differentiate, in the observable change between time  $X$  and time  $X + 1$ , what is due to development over time and what is due to a change in local context?

### **Disagreement in second language talk**

Disagreements along with oppositional talk more generally have been extensively studied in adult 'native' speaker interactions (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Mori, 1999; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987 [1973], *inter alia*) as well as in interactions involving children (Corsaro & Maynard, 1996; Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Goodwin, 1983, 1990; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Maynard, 1985, *inter alia*). By contrast, how L2 speakers deal with disagreements has remained largely unexplored. One noteworthy exception is Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury's (2004) investigation into the development of disagreeing practices in English L2 conversations. The study is based on a corpus of conversational interviews among adult native and non-native speakers, which have been recorded over the period of one term. The non-native speakers, with various L1 backgrounds, are enrolled in an intensive ESL course. Situated within the general framework of interlanguage pragmatics, and using conversation analytic concepts and methods, the study identifies four main developmental stages in the learners' management of disagreement (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004: 218):

- (1) Strong disagreements, characterized chiefly by the occurrence of 'no'.
- (2) Inclusion of agreement components with disagreement components.
- (3) The postponement of disagreement components within a turn.
- (4) The postponement of disagreement turns within a sequence of turns.

This ranking indicates a diversification of the speakers' means for expressing disagreements over time: starting with explicit and immediate disagreements at the beginning stage, speakers later mitigate their oppositional stances by means of the sequential placement of the disagreeing elements.

In a conversation analytic study on the use of unmitigated ‘no’ tokens by L2 learners within classroom interactions, Hellermann showed that such ‘direct formatting for disaffiliation’ (Hellermann, 2009: 120), which might be perceived as inappropriate as regards preference organization, is in fact treated by co-participants as appropriate for specific activities within the given community of practice, for instance, in the case of other-correction related to language-learning tasks. This result suggests that speakers’ use of simple ‘no’ tokens does not necessarily provide evidence of limited L2 competence, but is part of a contextually meaningful practice of disaffiliation.

While Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury’s study suggests that there is L2 development that can be seen in the sequential organization of disagreement practices, Hellermann’s study recalls that dispreferred activities are highly context sensitive. Taken together, these two observations have important implications for our understanding of disagreements in an L2: what is at stake for the L2 learner is not simply to develop mitigation techniques, but to diversify his or her methods for accomplishing disagreement in order to be able to respond to the local contingencies of talk-in-interaction in a context-sensitive way. In the remainder of this chapter, we will document how our students’ methods for doing disagreement change over time, how they become more diversified and more context sensitive.

## **Data and Methodology**

### **A cross-sectional study design**

This study is based on a data set<sup>3</sup> consisting of 40 hours audio/video-recorded French foreign language classroom interactions, collected in German-speaking Switzerland, where French (a national language that is spoken in another part of the country) is taught at school from the age of 10 on. The data have been collected according to a cross-sectional design focusing on two moments of school education, which are four years apart. The data include lower-intermediate learners<sup>4</sup> at lower-secondary school (20 hours of recordings) and advanced learners at upper-secondary school (20 hours). The lower-intermediate learners are 13–14 years old; being in 8th grade of secondary school, they are in their fourth year of French L2 classes (3–5 hours a week) at the moment of the recordings. The advanced learners are 17–18 years old and they are in their last year of high school; they have had eight years of L2 French classes (again 3–5 hours a week). Comparability between the two groups is enhanced by the fact that the advanced learners have previously gone through the very same educational system (lower secondary) as the less advanced learners were in at the time of the recordings, and that there were no major reforms implemented in

French L2 teaching in the time since the more advanced learners left lower-secondary school.

## Procedure

The data has been transcribed entirely according to the transcription conventions commonly used in CA. We have established extensive collections of disagreeing turns across the whole body of the data. Coincidentally, we have found the exact same number of disagreements proffered by students in each of the datasets ( $n = 60$ ) – at least as regards disagreements that are done in the L2. (There is however a large number of disagreements done in German L1 with the lower-intermediate learners, but less with the advanced learners.) While our collections contain disagreements between pairs as well as disagreements done by a student as regards a teacher's or teaching assistant's turn, for reasons of consistency the qualitative analysis presented here focuses only on student–student disagreements. Although we did analyze some of the nonverbal resources that accompany those disagreements that are expressed verbally (e.g. gesture and gaze), we did not include in our collections disagreements that are expressed merely nonverbally (e.g. by head shake or raising of eyebrows). We also did not include instances of linguistic repair, although some cases of repair (specifically other-initiations) may be treated as a speaker's display of disalignment as regards the linguistic shape of another speaker's utterance (see Hellermann, 2009).

Based on our collections, we have identified four major distinctive features of how students proffer a disagreement at the two levels of schooling/competence:

- *Turn architecture* concerns the sequential placement of the disagreeing element(s) within the turn: that is, turn-initial vs. nonturn-initial (in the latter case the disagreement is pushed further back into the turn by means of delaying devices and/or prefaces, see Pomerantz, 1984).
- *Articulation to source turn* relates to the question whether the disagreeing turn occurs in a turn that is adjacent to the source (target) of the disagreement or not: immediate vs. distal disagreement; this feature also refers to the specific means by which the relation of the disagreeing turn to a specific previous turn may be displayed, for example, the use of format tying techniques (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987).
- *Linguistic formatting* refers to the linguistic properties of the disagreement, among which we have chosen to focus on the use of hedges and some dimensions of the lexical and syntactic shaping of the disagreement segment (in particular clause-combining patterns, but also recyclings of lexical and syntactic patterns in format tying).

- *Discursive 'thickness'* relates to whether or not the display of a disagreement is followed by accounts, exemplifications (see Excerpt 9.1 quoted earlier), and other argumentative moves that strengthen or mitigate the oppositional stance (for accounts see e.g. Antaki, 1994; Heritage, 1988; Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 1996).

Across the whole data set, we have counted the occurrences of the two types of turn-constructural techniques used by the two groups of learners (turn-initial vs. nonturn-initial), as well as the placement of the disagreement in immediate or distal position. In what follows, we will first discuss these quantitative results (see section A General Picture of the Data...) and then present detailed qualitative analysis of selected data excerpts in order to illustrate the major differences between the lower-intermediate and the advanced L2 learners (see sections Methods for Doing Disagreement – I: Lower Intermediate Learners and II: Advanced Learners).

### **A General Picture of the Data: Some Quantitative Differences as Regards Turn Architecture and Sequential Placement**

When investigating participants' methods for accomplishing actions, CA research has worked to uncover recurrences of participants' procedures. Recurrence, of course, can best be brought to light by a large number of cases, and this is why we base our analyses on collections of cases. Recurrence may also usefully be backed up by means of quantification. When it comes to accounting for the details of human conduct, however, quantification is a tricky issue, most importantly because it raises the question as to whether the quantified occurrences are participant-relevant occurrences (Schegloff, 1993), that is, whether the actions or items quantified are oriented to as doing or being such and such a thing by the participants. As Schegloff puts it: 'What counts as an occurrence of whatever it is we think we are counting?' (Schegloff, 1993: 107). We wish at this point to show quantitative observations as regards the placement of disagreements within turns and sequences in order to give the reader a first idea of the extent of the differences we observe between the two proficiency groups in our data. The quantification is based on prior sequential analysis of the total number of disagreements found in the data. Table 9.1 shows a comparison between L2 lower-intermediate and advanced learners as to two factors: (1) immediate disagreement vs. distal disagreement (disagreement that occurs in a turn that is not adjacent to the source of the disagreement); (2) (for immediate disagreement) turn-initial vs. nonturn-initial position.

Table 9.1 Techniques for doing disagreements

	<i>Lower intermediate</i> L2 (n = 60)	<i>Advanced</i> L2 (n = 60)
<b>I. IMMEDIATE DISAGREEMENT (AS REGARDS SOURCE TURN)</b>	<b>100% (n = 60)</b>	<b>90% (n = 54)</b>
<b>I.1 turn-initial</b>	<b>98.3% (n = 59)</b>	<b>68.3% (n = 41)</b>
I.1.1 polarity markers <i>non</i> 'no/' <i>si</i> or <i>oui</i> 'yes'	75% (n = 45)	36.7% (n = 22)
I.1.2 <i>mais</i> 'but'-introduced counter-argument	10% (n = 6)	18.3% (n = 11)
I.1.3 counter-argument without <i>mais</i> 'but'	3.3% (n = 2)	3.3% (n = 2)
I.1.4 others: for example, 'that's wrong'	10% (n = 6)	10% (n = 6)
<b>I.2 non-turn initial: 'yes (x) but'</b> type of pattern (the 'but' may remain implicit)	<b>0% (n = 0)</b>	<b>16.7% (n = 10)</b>
<b>I.3 other techniques</b> (namely: rhetoric question)	<b>1.7% (n = 1)</b>	<b>5% (n = 3)</b>
<b>II. DISTAL DISAGREEMENT</b> (by means of quotations ['John said that X, but ...'], metacommunicative comments ['I think that John is not right...'] or format-tying)	<b>0%</b>	<b>10% (n = 6)</b>

Table 9.1 indicates that the lower-intermediate learners use a very restricted range of means for doing disagreements. They almost exclusively (98.3% – with one single exception) produce turn-initial disagreements, and these are predominantly (75%) accomplished by means of the polarity markers 'no'/'yes' (i.e. stand-alone *non* 'no'/contrastive *si* or *oui* 'yes', or *non/si/oui* + alternative suggestion, affirmation etc.). The advanced learners, by contrast, show a notable diversification of techniques for doing disagreement. While still privileging turn-initial disagreement (68.3%), advanced learners regularly produce 'yes-but' types of disagreements (where the disagreeing element is pushed further back in the turn, being preceded by a display of agreement: 16.7%). Also 10% of their disagreements are distal disagreements, that is, they tie back to some turn that is not immediately preceding. Table 9.1 also shows that, within the turn-initial disagreements, the proportion of disagreements accomplished by simple 'no' significantly decreases with the advanced learners (36.7% vs. 75%), while the proportion of 'but + counter-argument' types of disagreements increases (18.3% vs. 10%).

These first observations indicate not a replacement of methods but a diversification over time: the advanced learners still do use (though much less frequently) turn-initial disagreements, and they also do use (though much less frequently) the 'no' type of disagreement, but they also use many other resources. This diversification may be an indicator of more adaptative, context-sensitive conduct of the advanced learners, suggesting an increased interactional competence. In what follows, we will first look in detail at L2 speakers' methods for accomplishing disagreement by means of the qualitative analysis of representative data excerpts. We will then discuss in what regard the observed diversification with the advanced learners can be understood as an indicator of a more developed L2 interactional competence.

## Methods for Doing Disagreement – I: Lower Intermediate Learners

Table 9.1 indicates that at the lower-intermediate level, the practice of disagreement is highly uniform, both in terms of turn architecture and linguistic formatting, most typically accomplished by means of turn-initial polarity markers or 'but-X' formats.

### Turn-initial 'no' as the standard pattern

Excerpts 9.2 and 9.3, both taken from group work, provide an illustration of the most recurrent technique for doing disagreement found with the lower-intermediate learners, namely turn-initial disagreements initiated or accomplished by means of 'no'.

#### Excerpt 9.2 'hip hop' (Tschu-181105)

- 1 MIC: ehm (...) (x) (achète; apporte de) la musique et- (0.9)  
           *ehm (x) (buys; brings) the music and*
- 2 et [quelle <musique> ]?  
           *and which music*
- 3 LOR: [de la pop musique].  
           *DET pop music*
- 4 de la po[p musique].  
           *DET pop music*
- 5 > MIC: [non: ]c'est=  
           *no it's*
- 6 LOR: = hip hop =
- 7 OLI: = hip hop =

### Excerpt 9.3 'salut' (Tschu-181105)

- 1     **ANI:**   jetzt machen wir dialogo no?  
           now we do     +dialogue no ((in Spanish)) +
- 2     **NAT:**   ich sag (xx)  
           I say (xx)
- 3           (\*1.7)
- 4 >   **EBR:**   non: (.) mir säge ds (erschte ding) (.) salut:;  
           no we say the (first thing)     hello
- 5           (4.3)
- 6     **NAT:**   und wer seid das?  
           and who says that
- 7     **?:**     ich.  
           I

In Excerpt 9.2, Michelle rejects Lorena's suggestion to bring pop music to an imaginary party by means of a straightforward *non* 'no' (she then cuts off the further course of her turn). In Excerpt 9.3, which illustrates students' frequent use of L1 German (cf. dotted underlining in the translation) to manage the task (see also Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010), Ebru objects to the course of action initiated by her co-participants by means of a straight 'no' (in French), followed by an alternative suggestion. The two excerpts show typical features of disagreements found with the lower-intermediate learners. Disagreements are proffered by means of 'no' tokens placed in turn-initial position. The disagreeing turn may be delayed or not; delay can be a sign of an upcoming dispreferred response (Pomerantz, 1984), but may in our data also be due to students' searching for words or being involved in parallel activities, like taking notes (as in Excerpt 9.3). Disagreements typically show sound stretch on the polarity marker, highlighting the contrastive stance of the speaker. The 'no' (or the contrastive 'yes') may stand alone or may be followed by an alternative affirmation, candidate, course of action and so on. While in Excerpt 9.2 the alternative candidate is proposed in a third turn (line 6) by the first speaker as a reaction to a second speaker's disagreeing 'no', in Excerpt 9.3 it is provided by the second speaker in the disagreeing turn itself, subsequently to the turn-initial 'no' (line 4).

Such straightforward disagreements may trigger an exchange of 'no' and 'yes' tokens, a little verbal duel where polarity markers are fired until one of the participants gives in. An example is provided in Excerpt 9.4, where Peter, Thomas and Ugo are involved in a discussion with the teaching assistant (RES, who is also the researcher who video taped this piece of data) about a big stadium in their home city.

### Excerpt 9.4 'y a des matchs' (Tschu-210606)

- 1 RES: m- y a des matchs maintenant?  
m- are there games now
- 2 (0.3)
- 3 PET: eh: n[on  
eh no
- 4 THO: [oui = oui  
yes yes
- 5 > PET: \*non:  
no  
pet \*turns to THO
- 6 > THO: \*oui  
yes  
tho \*looks at PET
- 7 > PET: NON:  
no
- 8 > THO: QUI  
yes
- 9 UGO: \* (x[xx] )  
ugo \* looks at THO
- 10 PET: [eh- ah = jo:] \*ehm =  
eh oh yes ehm  
pet \*looks into the air
- 11 THO: = \*le f-c bâ::le contre le f-c zürich.  
the FC Basel against the FC Zürich  
tho \*looks at RES
- 12 RES: ah:? d'accord.  
oh alright

At the beginning of the excerpt, the teaching assistant's question (line 1) receives two contrasting and overlapping answers by Peter ('no', line 3) and Thomas ('yes', line 4), respectively. This leads into a sequence of multiple reassertions of each participant's affirmation (lines 5–8) by means of the stand-alone polarity markers 'yes' and 'no'. Whereas the initial, simultaneously produced 'yes' and 'no' (lines 3–4) merely provide the second pair parts to the first pair part launched by the researcher (a yes–no type of question), the subsequent series of 'yes' and 'no' tokens enact strong disagreements. Several features concur to demarcate the disagreement sequence from the preceding question–answer sequence. On the one hand, while the initial 'yes' and 'no' are produced with regular prosody, the subsequent 'yes' and 'no' polarity markers show sound stretches (lines 5 and 7), accentuation (lines 6 and 8) and then rise in volume (lines 7 and 8). Both participants hence use prosody as a resource to progressively

upgrade their disagreement: though they produce simple polarity markers, these are gradually made more prominent through lines 5–8. On the other hand, the onset of the disagreeing sequence is accompanied by a notable change in body posture: Peter turns physically toward Thomas (line 5) and Thomas returns his gaze to him (line 6). Thereby, they enact a change in participation framework, the two opponents starting to address each other rather than orienting toward the teaching assistant to whom their initial ‘no’ and ‘yes’, respectively, were addressed. This peer-to-peer participation framework is only abandoned when the disagreement sequence is closed with Peter’s change-of-state token *ah* ‘oh’ followed by an agreeing ‘yes’ (line 10) by means of which Peter displays alignment with Thomas’ position. This also provides for Thomas’ subsequent pursuit of his initial affirmation, offering details as to which teams are playing (line 11) while directing his gaze back to the researcher. What we see Thomas and Peter do in this sequence is reminiscent of Eisenberg and Garvey’s (1981) observation on children’s interactions: when one participant insists on his position after a disagreement has been displayed, the co-participant often responds by the same type of insistence as regards his own position. These disagreements in a series (see also Kotthoff, 1993) are enacted here as aggravated disagreements, highlighting the oppositional stances in a way that appears to be frequent among children (see Goodwin, 1983, 1990).

The three quoted excerpts illustrate the most recurrent disagreement pattern found with the lower-intermediate learners: the production of polarity markers ‘no’ or ‘yes’, either stand alone or followed by a counter suggestion. These provide the standard solution for refusing a suggestion (as in Excerpt 9.2) or a course of action (as in 9.3), for proffering a counter affirmation (as in 9.4), and much more. While both their sequential and linguistic formatting is uniform and no additional sequential or linguistic means are used for upgrading or downgrading disagreement, participants do show subtle uses of prosody as an alternative means for such up- or downgrading.

### Turn-initial ‘but-X’

The second technique deployed by the lower-intermediate learners for doing disagreements consists in the use of a but-initiated objection, placed again in turn-initial position in a turn that is adjacent to the source-turn. An example is provided in (9.5), where Michelle, Lorena and Olivia, still talking about the party, discuss what they will wear.

#### Excerpt 9.5 ‘pas la même couleur’ (Tschu-181105)

- 1 MIC: *j’habille comme toi.*  
*I dress like you*



(line 1). Runa, who is still busy writing something down on her paper, reacts in German L1 with her 'no wait a minute' (line 5), but does not seem to be oriented to by her co-participants. Rather, Nelly extends her first-pair part by adding 'and which [music]' (line 6) and then Marie comes in with a disagreement (line 8). She proffers a 'but'-initiated objection as to the well foundedness of Nelly's question: it is of no use to determine who brings what music, as 'everybody can bring a record'. Subsequently, Nelly does not react to that issue, but later she responds to Runa's question (line 9) as to who will bring the two creams they have been talking about earlier (line 10). The disagreement is thus passed over in silence (but will be relaunched by Marie in the further course of the interaction).

### **Sum: Lower-intermediate learners**

The lower-immediate students in our data show the exclusive use of turn-initial immediate disagreement accomplished by means of two recurrent linguistic formats (see Table 9.1): *non* 'no' / *oui* 'yes' polarity markers and *mais-X* 'but-X' formats. Also, the data do not show any occurrence of linguistic hedges with the lower-intermediate learners: no single 'I think', 'I mean', 'perhaps' or similar thing is used within disagreements, although these elements are regularly produced by the same learners in other sequential environments (e.g. 'I think' is often used as a response initiator after a question regarding a student's personal opinion or asking about a fact). By contrast, as shown most clearly in Excerpt 9.4 '*y a des matchs*', voice, posture and gesture provide rich resources for managing disagreement, for instance, by upgrading disagreement in the case of disagreements in a series. The absence of verbal hedges is a distinctive linguistic-pragmatic feature that characterizes disagreements at lower levels of competence in our data, in addition to the turn-initial sequential positioning and the uniform 'no'/'yes' or 'but-X' linguistic formatting outlined above.

A further noteworthy feature is the absence of sequential elaborations of disagreements with the lower-intermediate learners: their disagreements are not followed (nor preceded) by accounts, explanations, illustrations or other elements that could reinforce, moderate or justify the stance taken by the speaker. These, however, have been found to be a recurrent feature in the context of dispreferred actions (Heritage, 1988: 132).

The way these agreements are built (turn-initial positioning, minimal linguistic formatting and absence of postdisagreement elaborations) results in a strong tendency for aggravated disagreements (Goodwin, 1983) rather than mitigated ones. The total absence of other techniques, in particular disagreements that are pushed back in the turn, with the lower-intermediate learners (see Table 9.1) suggests that these learners do not simply orient to a preference for disagreement because the situation allows

them or asks them to do so, but that they lack other means that would allow them to manage disagreement in a way that respects the preference for contiguity and agreement. We will come back to these developmental issues in the discussion of the findings (see section Documenting Change across Time: A Critical Look at the Findings).

## Methods for Doing Disagreement – II: Advanced Learners

As we move to the more advanced students, we observe a significant diversification of disagreeing practices (see Table 9.1): they still do use (though much less frequently) turn-initial disagreements, and they also do use (again much less frequently) the ‘no’ type of disagreement, but they also use many other techniques. This suggests that their nonmitigated disagreements, including the ‘no’ type of disagreements, do not necessarily reflect a lack of interactional competence or linguistic means, but might be used in a way that is appropriate in specific sequential environments. This has been suggested by Hellermann (2009) in his longitudinal study of an adult learner of English’s use of ‘no’ tokens in disaffiliative responses. What is significant is that the advanced learners in our data use a wide range of other methods for accomplishing disagreement in addition to such rudimentary means as polarity markers: techniques for accomplishing a disagreement at a distance as well as agreement–disagreement turn-construction techniques for immediate, but mitigated, disagreement. The general tendency, therefore, is diversification of techniques for doing disagreement, as manifest most recognizably in their sequential placement.

### ‘Yes-but’ type of turn construction technique

In her seminal work on disagreeing with assessments, Pomerantz (1984) has documented a typical device for managing preference organization in ordinary conversation between native speakers: speakers tend to postpone disagreeing elements within a turn by having them preceded by some display of agreement that is typically downgraded, providing a ‘yes-but’ type of turn shape. Such delaying techniques are a more general feature of dispreferred response, as documented by Sacks (1987[1973]). In our data, this turn-construction pattern is regularly used by advanced learners, but was not found with the lower-intermediate learners.

Excerpt 9.7 is taken from a small-group debate about the Swiss government’s plan to buy new fighter airplanes, which has just been accepted by a popular vote. Pascal interprets the results of the vote as showing that the Swiss people want a strong army (lines 1–2), but Anita objects by reminding that it was only 30% of the population who went to vote (line 3). From here on, a sequence of disagreements emerges throughout several turns at talk.

### Excerpt 9.7 'une majorité' (SPD-14)

- 1 PAS: je crois: que le peuple suisse veut (,) une armée qui peut  
*I think that the Swiss population wants an army that is able*
- 2 résister, (,) qui est puissante.  
*to resist that is powerful*
- 3 ANI: mais tu parles du peuple suisse mais: euhm c'était: trente  
*but you speak of the Swiss population but ehm it was thirty*
- 4 pour cent, (,) [euh]  
*percent ehm*
- 5 > PAS: [oui mais] c'est^une- c'est^une majorité.  
*yes but it's a it's a majority*
- 6 > ANI: .h (0.3) oui: (,) mais: °pas une grande majorité°.  
*yes but not a big majority*
- 7 (3.5)
- 8 > ANI: pas si^une: grand majorité.  
*not such a big majority*
- 9 (9.0)
- 10 EMI: mais si tu peux imaginer quelqu'un nous attaquerait peut-être  
*but if you can imagine someone would attack us maybe*

While Anita's objection (line 3) is proffered by means of a turn-initial *mais* 'but' followed by a metadiscursive comment plus a counterargument, quite like the pattern found with the lower-intermediate learners, Pascal in turn reacts by means of a 'yes-but' initiated turn (line 5): 'yes but that's a majority'. Anita then counters using the same type of pattern, but with some prosodic modulation (line 6): we hear her breathe in, then pause, her 'yes but' shows sound stretches, and the counterargument ('not a big majority') is proffered in soft voice. These features have the effect of mitigating the disagreement. Subsequently, in response to the absence of a reaction on the part of Pascal (see the pause line 7), Anita recasts her disagreement (line 8), further downgrading it by means of the *si* 'such': 'not a big majority' becomes 'not such a big majority', after which the debate goes on. Anita hence deploys a range of sequential, linguistic and prosodic means for mitigating her disagreement. She displays orientation to the preference for agreement by using the 'yes-but' format, she shows subtle use of prosody, and then of the lexico-semantic shaping of her utterance to further mitigate her disagreement.

In many cases *oui mais* 'yes but' appears as a routinized disagreement initiating format. This is clearly shown in Excerpt 9.8, where the *oui mais* is followed by an objection produced in L1 Swiss German. The excerpt is taken from a small-group work where the students are invited to invent a story using some initial pieces of information about a duchess living in a castle. While negotiating where the duchess' castle is located, Silvia just suggested that it is in England, and accounts for that suggestion (line 1):

organization of talk and to nuance or reinforce his or her stance. Linguistic and prosodic resources, in particular, are used to subtly shape disagreement prefaces so as to manage the preference organization of talk by displaying agreement while at the same time projecting an upcoming disagreement. Hedges, format-tying techniques and clause-combining patterns such as subordination or bi-clausal formats emerge that further allow for mitigation or reinforcement of the disagreeing stance, for a more and more subtle management of intersubjectivity and for the mutual coordination of actions across longer stretches of talk.

These findings indicate a clear change, across the two groups of learners, in the methods for doing disagreement. But in how far can this change be taken as evidence for learning? Or is it a mere reflection of different communicative cultures at the two levels of schooling – and hence the trace of context-sensitive implementations of disagreements?

### **Evidence for learning?**

When it comes to interpreting change across time as to how participants accomplish a given practice, we are faced with the problem that social practices are both context free and context sensitive (cf. Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 699). This implies the need to differentiate, in the observable change of behavior, between what is evidence for development over time and what is evidence for context sensitivity, that is, variation due to local environment, co-participants and so on. If, for instance, we see learners in an initial stage of L2 learning manage disagreements with simple 'no' tokens, and at a latter stage with 'yes-but' turn formats, how can we exclude the possibility that the latter is simply due to different circumstances of interaction, calling for more mitigated disagreements, rather than reflecting interactional development?

This difficulty is critically highlighted in the case where socialization processes are likely to affect the way people deal with talk-in-interaction at time  $X + 1$  as opposed to time  $X$ . This is the case for our data. The communicative culture of the lower-secondary degree is not identical to that of the upper-secondary degree. Also, 13/14-year-olds tend to behave somewhat differently than 17/18-year-olds. For instance, in our data, we see the two groups talk about different things: football matches and clothing for the younger ones, the military and abortion for the older ones. From an etic (e.g. the researcher's) perspective, one might argue that these topics imply very different social issues and interactional involvements. From an emic (i.e. the participants') perspective, however, we see the lower-intermediate learners engage in talk about clothing or football no less intensely than we see the advanced learner engage in talk about abortion or the military. Excerpt 9.4, for instance, where Peter and Thomas were arguing about football matches, clearly showed strong



- 3 l'aiment pas, (.) > parce qu'ils eh: ils ont pas voulu un en-  
*don't love him because they didn't want a*
- 4 enfant,< euh  
*child*
- 5 (1.3\*)  
*jan \*looks into the air during the pause*
- 6 > JAN: °j- (.) m- ou:ai:s eh° (0.8) mais (.) je pense \*euhm (4.5)  
*yeah but I think ehm*
- jan \*looks down*  
*on the desk*  
*in front of her*
- 7 euhm (1.9) oui c'est: c'est dommage pour euh ((laughter))  
*ehm yes it's it's too bad for eh*
- 8 .h +pour le bébé, ((laughing))+ ((laughter)) mais- euhm  
*for the baby but ehm*
- 9 (0.6) \*je pense euh une personne peut euh (0.7) l- la femme  
*I think eh a person can eh th- the woman*
- jan \*looks at CAT*
- 10 peut (.) peut pen- euh (0.5) réfléchir (.) qu'est ce qu'elle  
*can can eh think about that what she*
- 11 veut fair- e- si (.) elle veut se protéger, et si elle  
*wants to do if she wants to protect herself and if she*
- 12 ne (fait-) pas euh je pense si elle est vraiment (.) euhm:: un  
*doesn't do eh I think if she is really ehm a*
- 13 peu intelligent (.) elle se protège si elle ne veut pas un- un  
*bit smart she protects herself if she doesn't want a- a*
- 14 enfant. (.) [et]  
*child and*
- 15 CAT: [il y a] toujours des accidents?  
*accidents happen*
- 16 (1.3)
- 17 JAN: oui mais alors euh (.) euh oui HEIN (...) HEIN (1.9) oui  
*yes but so eh eh yes huh huh yes*
- 18 (.) pas de chance. ((laughter))  
*bad luck*

Jana's reaction (lines 6–14) to Catherine's argument is accomplished by means of a complex agreement–disagreement turn-constructional format. Her turn comes in late, slowly and in soft voice: it is initiated by some prestart sounds, and a strongly hesitant agreement token *ouais* 'yeah' followed by a 0.8 second pause. In this sequential environment, and given its prosodic shape, *ouais* 'yeah' is a rather weak agreement token (*oui*, like English 'yes', would more straightforwardly express agreement). As a

consequence, the *ouais* 'yeah', together with the hesitations and the low voice, can be heard as premonitory of an upcoming disagreement. The subsequent *mais* 'but', however, does not introduce a disagreement, but is followed by some further hesitation marks and the display of alignment 'yes it's too bad for the baby' (lines 7/8). Although there is no audible cut-off, this may be a self-repair where Jana first starts producing a disagreement 'but I think ehm', but then offers instead a renewed display of agreement (see Schegloff, 1979, on hesitation markers and other disfluencies as prefaces to repair). Possibly, this whole start of the turn, with all the hesitations, the *ouais*, *mais*, *je pense ehm*, is also a means by which Jana claims speakership – a way of holding the floor, before wording out what she actually is about to say. The orientation of her gaze, withdrawing from Catherine's visual contact, looking into the air (line 5) and then toward the desk (line 6), corroborates this interpretation, suggesting that Jana is doing thinking (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986).

Also noteworthy is Jana's laughter occurring when formulating an alignment at line 7 as well as subsequently to it (line 8). The laughter embodies here a somewhat ironic, or even sarcastic stance: 'too bad for the baby', which again may be heard as premonitory of some upcoming disagreement. The actual disagreement is then introduced by means of the *mais* 'but' at line 8, which coincides with a change in tempo and gaze: from this point on, though still interspersed with some hesitations, Jana's talk becomes progressively more fluent and her gaze returns to Catherine (line 9).

The disagreement proper shows several noteworthy characteristics. First, it is accompanied by hedges ('I think', lines 9 and 12). Second, it shows a relatively rich linguistic formatting, and in particular complex clause-combining patterns (*je pense* + clause, lines 9 and 12; *la femme peut réfléchir* + subordinate clause, line 10; 'if ... then' bi-clausal patterns, lines 11–13). Third, the disagreement is deployed in two layers. Jana first states 'the woman can think about what she wants to do' (lines 9–11). By relegating in this way to the woman the responsibility of getting pregnant or not, she strongly opposes Catherine. Jana then backs her argument up by bringing up the case of women who do not desire to get pregnant: 'if she is really intelligent she can protect herself if she does not want a child' (lines 12–14). This argument, by which Jana implicitly blames the (nonintelligent) women who do get pregnant even if they do not want to, then triggers Catherine's objection 'accidents happen' (line 15). To this Jana reacts with a turn-initial *oui mais*, some suggestive sounds, and the ironic 'bad luck' (again mitigated by laughter), letting the argument fade out in this way. (The 'bad luck' here is reminiscent of the use of idiomatic or aphoristic formulations as closing devices in talk-in-interaction; Drew & Holt, 1998; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Throughout the excerpt, Jana displays orientation to the preference organization of talk, and she clearly mitigates her disagreement. However, in terms of the contents of her talk, as well as of some of her wordings, she presents a radical (politically not quite correct) stance. Significantly, she uses the formulaic expressions 'too bad for the baby' and 'bad luck', both in the opening and the closing down of her argument, to highlight her position, and her laughter possibly indicates Jana's embarrassment in the face of the sensitive nature of the topic.

The excerpts quoted in this section have illustrated one recurrent turn-construction format used for disagreements by the advanced learners in our data: the 'yes-but' type of pattern. While this sequential format sometimes occurs in its minimal form *oui mais* 'yes but', it also takes a variety of other shapes, both linguistically and prosodically. In particular, advanced learners use a range of delaying devices that push the disagreement further back in the turn (hesitation markers, agreement tokens and more generally prefatory talk that displays agreement), and they use hedges and rich linguistic resources, including complex clause-combining patterns) to fine-tune their positions. By these means, the advanced learners deploy subtle formatting of both the disagreement preface and the disagreement proper, which sometimes they back up by means of exemplifications, accounts or other arguments. They have at their disposal a variety of linguistic, prosodic and sequential techniques to manage the preference for agreement and to modulate their display of disagreement.

### **The use of format-tying techniques and the specific case of distal disagreement**

A last feature we wish to comment on, which we find with the advanced learners but not with the lower-intermediate learners, is the use of format-tying techniques. 24% of the advanced learners' disagreements involve the use of some kind of format-tying technique that is instrumental in doing the disagreement (both in immediate and in distal disagreements); by contrast, in the lower-intermediate learners data, we found only two occurrences of format-tying (3.3%, in immediate disagreements).

Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) have observed the frequent use of format-tying among children arguing (see also Corsaro & Maynard, 1996). Format-tying consists of recycling a lexico-syntactic pattern from a preceding turn. By means of format-tying the speaker may display that the current turn is related to a specific previous turn. Format-tying is part of a large set of tying techniques speakers use in talk-in-interaction to make recognizable their orientation to preceding pieces of talk (Sacks, 1992). However, the recycling of previous talk in format-tying does not simply reproduce a previous action, but accomplishes a new action, which may go

against a previous action. Format-tying may therefore function as a 'boomerang' where the words of a speaker are turned against him- or herself (Goodwin, 1990). An example of such a boomerang effect is provided in (9.12) (source and format-tying are indicated by an arrow):

### Excerpt 9.12 'beaucoup de défense' (SPD-14)

- 1 > **FRA:** oui mais: nous avons: beaucoup de défense.  
*yes but we have a lot of defense*
- 2  
 (.)
- 3 nous avons pas besoin (.) des: des neufs avions.  
*we do not need DET new airplanes*
- 4 > **PAS:** nous avons pas beaucoup de défense.  
*we do not have a lot of defense*
- 5  
 (.)
- 6 notre défense maintenant est trop vieux.  
*our defense today is too old*
- 7  
 (.)
- 8 et elle ne pe- ne peut pas résister.  
*and it is not capable of resistance*

Pascal here reuses his co-participant's words but turns them into the negative, thereby showing strong disagreement (line 4). It is noteworthy that he backs up his disagreement by providing an explanation that supports his stance (l. 6–8), and that his whole contribution is composed incrementally – layered, so to say, adding one turn-construction unit onto the other, each reaching a transition relevance place marked by final falling intonation. The excerpt hence provides a nice illustration of what we call 'discursive thickness', where a disagreement is elaborated on by additional arguments. The absence of François' reaction during the short pauses in between these layers (lines 5 and 7) – or of any attempt at turn-taking on his part at these transition relevance points – may indicate his expectation that the disagreement proper will be elaborated on by the current speaker.

Excerpt 9.12 illustrates the type of format-tying in disagreements discussed by M.H. Goodwin (1990): schematically, speaker A says [X] – and speaker B says [neg X]; the two X are not necessarily identical, but represent semantico-syntactic parallelisms. The format-tying functions here as an operator of disagreement (i.e. the [neg. X] pattern). This function, among others, has been found in a previous study (Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2010) where we explored 92 hours of video-recorded data from both French L2 (including the data used for the present study) and French L1 classroom interactions. This study showed a recurrent use of format-tying techniques in disagreements between teenagers (again aged 13/14 and 17/18): 40% of the disagreements in L1 and 15% in L2

involved format-tying techniques. We also documented that the use of format-tying as an operator of disagreement is only one out of three uses of format-tying techniques found in disagreement sequences. A second use can be schematized as follows: speaker A: [X] – speaker B [yes–X but ...]. In this case, the format-tying is not part of the disagreement proper, but functions as a disagreement preface, displaying alignment with the preceding speaker before the introduction of a disalignment. An example was provided in (9.1) and (9.9), out of which we quote a shorter sequence, reproduced here as (9.13):

### Excerpt 9.13 'l'armée Suisse' (SPD-14)

- 1 TOM: l'armée de suisse est très petit.  
*because the Swiss army is very small*  
 2 (1.8)  
 3 > EMI: oui elle est très petit mais nous avons un (.)  
*yes it is very small but we have a*

Here, the taking up of the stretch NP *est très petit* by Emilie serves as a disagreement preface, displaying first alignment with the preceding speaker, before she turns to proffering a disagreement. (Note that in her format-tying, Emilie copies the masculine form /pəti/ 'petit' from Tom, which, however, should run /pətit/ 'petite', to agree with the feminine NP 'l'armée'.) Often in our data, format-tyings used as disagreement prefaces provide downgraded agreements, which is however not the case for Excerpt 9.13.

A third use of format-tying is found in distal disagreements. In our data, 10% of the disagreements accomplished by the advanced learners are done at a distance, that is, they occur in a turn that is not adjacent to the source of the disagreement. The late placement of a disagreement within a sequence implies for the current speaker the need to clearly display to what earlier turn he is tying back to in order to warrant recognizability of the object of his or her disagreement. Advanced learners regularly use the technique of format-tying for doing exactly this. This is shown in Excerpt 9.14, taken from a discussion about the freedom of speech. While Mélanie posits that saying something is not as dangerous as actually doing it (lines 4–6), Nadine disagrees (lines 13–15).

### Excerpt 9.14<sup>5</sup> 'parle de quelque chose' (DK-B-4)

- 1 T: ou alors- ou alors chacun (..) ou alors chacun a le droit  
*or else or else everyone or else everyone has the right*  
 2 de dire ce qu'il véut, (.) c'est une liberté.  
*to say what he wants it's a freedom*

- 3 (1.9)  
 4 > MEL: euh ouais je pense que (...) ehm quand on seulement parle (.)  
*eh yeah I think that ehm when one only talks*  
 5 et dit (.) quelque chose c'est pas (.) non c'est (...) pas  
*and says something it's not no it's not*  
 6 si: (.) dangereux que quand on fait quelque chose ou (.) °oui°  
*as dangerous as when one does something or yes*  
 7 (3.7)  
 8 T: ouais tu penses que juste parler euh (.) c'est pas si grave,  
*yeah you think that simply talking that's not as bad*  
 9 l'essentiel c'est qu'il n'y ait pas  
*the main thing is that there is no*  
 10 d'action euh (.) euh dangereuse ?  
*dangerous action*  
 11 MEL: pas toujours mais ((laughter))  
*not always but*  
 12 (2.1)  
 13 > NAD: °ehm° mais quand- quand quelqu'un parle de quelque chose (.) on  
*but when when someone talks about something you*  
 14 ne sait (.) jamais (.) si il (...) °va° faire (..) ehm  
*never know whether he will do ehm*  
 15 °ce qu'il dit°.  
*what he says*  
 16 (1.1)

Nadine's disagreement (line 13) does not occur in the turn following the 'source-turn' (lines 4–6), but later on in the sequence, after the teacher's ratifying and summarizing move (lines 8–10) and after Mélanie's subsequent attempt to develop another argument (line 11). Nadine's turn is both syntactically and lexically mapped onto Mélanie's initial statement: she reuses a 'when X – (then) Y' pattern, and recycles the same lexicosemantic entities ('to talk about', 'to say', 'to do something'). She even repeats the same prosodic accents on the verbs *parler* and *faire*. What is common to the two turns is the following lexico-syntactic Gestalt:

quand <i>when</i>	on <i>one</i>	parle X <i>says X</i>	[≠]	on <i>one</i>	fait X <i>does X</i>
quand <i>when</i>	quelqu'un <i>someone</i>	parle X <i>says X</i>	[?]	Il <i>he</i>	va faire X <i>will do X</i>

This Gestalt, however, is filled in with substantially different elements in the disagreeing turn as opposed to the source turn. While in the source turn, Mélanie does not treat 'saying something' as equivalent [≠] to 'doing it' ('it is not as dangerous as when one does', line 6), Nadine questions [?] the argument, expressing the possibility that it might in fact be the same ('one never knows if he will do', line 14).

By means of her format-tying the speaker accomplishes two things at once: (1) she displays that the ongoing turn and action tie back to a specific previous turn and action and (2) she accomplishes a disagreement by producing a variation on the original pattern that has a strong contrastive effect. This is similar to the [neg. X] pattern illustrated initially in Excerpt 9.12 '*beaucoup de defense*,' though here the tying effect is decisive, because adjacency positioning of disagreement and source is not given.

The three uses of format-tying in disagreement sequences that we have documented in this section are interesting not merely because they represent one of the features of diversification found with advanced learners, as opposed to lower-intermediate learners. They also tell us something about the learners' competences. For one thing, the use of format-tying techniques presupposes on the part of the speaker a close monitoring both of the contents of a prior turn and of its lexico-syntactic patterning. The varied and sometimes subtle format-tying techniques observed with the more advanced learners suggest that these speakers do a particularly good job in such monitoring, which in turn allows them to coordinate their actions with others in specific ways, so that, for instance, they can recognizably tie back to a previous turn while at the same time displaying disagreement with that turn. For another thing, the format-tyings that we have documented bear witness to the fact that the advanced learners are able to reuse in creative ways the linguistic resources deployed by their co-participants: they can do something else out of the talk of others. Finally, the format tying observed in distal disagreements, in particular, suggests that the advanced learners orient to and are able to navigate through larger stretches of discourse, larger interactional projects, beyond sequentially adjacent actions and turns at talk. Through all these properties, the way L2 learners orient to and use *linguistic* resources opens a window onto their *interactional* competence, way beyond issues of mere linguistic competence.

### **Sum: Advanced learners**

The findings regarding the advanced learners show a diversified set of techniques for doing disagreement. Advanced learners produce both turn-initial and nonturn-initial disagreements and these are immediate as well as distal with regard to the source of the disagreement. Also, advanced learners show the use of various types of hedges and their disagreements are syntactically mapped in ways that allows them to develop 'discursively thick' arguments, for instance by means of [if ... then ...] formats and other types of clause-combining patterns. Their disagreeing turns comprise prefaces of various types and are regularly backed up by means of accounts, exemplifications or other arguments. Also, advanced learners use format-tying techniques for articulating the disagreement turn to the source of the disagreement, be it in an immediately adjacent turn or at a

distance. Through all these means, advanced learners demonstrate a capacity to accomplish aggravated disagreements as well as mitigated disagreements. In their interactions we observe an orientation toward the joint construction of knowledge or the resolution of an argument, which in many cases includes the nuancing of the oppositional stance and contrasts with the binary logic found with the lower-intermediate learners.

## Documenting Change Across Time: A Critical Look at the Findings

### Summary of results

In the preceding two sections, we analyzed selected excerpts documenting the techniques used by lower-intermediate and advanced learners, respectively, for accomplishing disagreements. Results show clear differences between the two groups, as well as a tight interrelation between linguistic and sequential means for organizing disagreement. The findings are summarized in Table 9.2.

The advanced learners show a diversification of means for doing disagreement. The turn-initial 'no'/'yes' and 'but-X' types of disagreements that lower-intermediate learners use can still be found in the advanced learners data, but these are complemented by a range of other techniques. Most notably, disagreement prefaces and postdisagreement elaborations emerge. These are central to the speakers' ability to manage the preference

**Table 9.2** Summary of techniques for doing disagreements: lower-intermediate vs. advanced learners

	<i>Lower-intermediate learners</i>	<i>Advanced learners</i>
<i>Turn architecture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn-initial positioning only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn-initial + nonturn-initial</li> <li>• Use of disagreement prefaces</li> </ul>
<i>Linguistic formatting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either 'no'/'yes' polarity markers or 'but-X' formats</li> <li>• No hedges, simple syntactic formats, but prosodic and postural embodiment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversified disagreement marking devices</li> <li>• Regular use of hedges</li> <li>• Increased syntactic complexity</li> </ul>
<i>Discursive thickness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of elaborations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discursive elaborations: accounts, exemplifications, explanations</li> </ul>
<i>Articulation to source-turn</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate</li> <li>• No special tying techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate + distal</li> <li>• Use of format-tying as a privileged tying technique</li> </ul>

organization of talk and to nuance or reinforce his or her stance. Linguistic and prosodic resources, in particular, are used to subtly shape disagreement prefaces so as to manage the preference organization of talk by displaying agreement while at the same time projecting an upcoming disagreement. Hedges, format-tying techniques and clause-combining patterns such as subordination or bi-clausal formats emerge that further allow for mitigation or reinforcement of the disagreeing stance, for a more and more subtle management of intersubjectivity and for the mutual coordination of actions across longer stretches of talk.

These findings indicate a clear change, across the two groups of learners, in the methods for doing disagreement. But in how far can this change be taken as evidence for learning? Or is it a mere reflection of different communicative cultures at the two levels of schooling – and hence the trace of context-sensitive implementations of disagreements?

### **Evidence for learning?**

When it comes to interpreting change across time as to how participants accomplish a given practice, we are faced with the problem that social practices are both context free and context sensitive (cf. Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 699). This implies the need to differentiate, in the observable change of behavior, between what is evidence for development over time and what is evidence for context sensitivity, that is, variation due to local environment, co-participants and so on. If, for instance, we see learners in an initial stage of L2 learning manage disagreements with simple 'no' tokens, and at a latter stage with 'yes-but' turn formats, how can we exclude the possibility that the latter is simply due to different circumstances of interaction, calling for more mitigated disagreements, rather than reflecting interactional development?

This difficulty is critically highlighted in the case where socialization processes are likely to affect the way people deal with talk-in-interaction at time  $X + 1$  as opposed to time  $X$ . This is the case for our data. The communicative culture of the lower-secondary degree is not identical to that of the upper-secondary degree. Also, 13/14-year-olds tend to behave somewhat differently than 17/18-year-olds. For instance, in our data, we see the two groups talk about different things: football matches and clothing for the younger ones, the military and abortion for the older ones. From an etic (e.g. the researcher's) perspective, one might argue that these topics imply very different social issues and interactional involvements. From an emic (i.e. the participants') perspective, however, we see the lower-intermediate learners engage in talk about clothing or football no less intensely than we see the advanced learner engage in talk about abortion or the military. Excerpt 9.4, for instance, where Peter and Thomas were arguing about football matches, clearly showed strong

involvement by the less advanced learners, but this involvement, rather than being expressed by linguistic means, was embodied in the use of prosody and gaze.

In order to empirically demonstrate that the data unmistakably provide evidence for the development of L2 interactional competence, we have undertaken a comparison with French L1 classroom data as to two factors: turn-construction format (turn-initial vs. nonturn-initial) and sequential location of the disagreement (immediate vs. distal). The French L1 data are taken from classroom interactions involving speakers of the same age as our lower-intermediate L2 learners, within the same context of lower-secondary education. Given this convergence in age and in institutional setting, the L1 data provide a reference against which the impact of L2 development vs. communicative culture or age can solidly be measured. As shown in Table 9.3, results clearly indicate that the change we observe actually does reflect interactional development. The lower-intermediate L2 learners' behavior in disagreements clearly differs from the L1 speaker's of the same age/context. By contrast, the general picture for L2 advanced learners is much closer to the L1 students, both showing a diversified range of turn-constructional techniques as well as the use of both immediate and distal disagreement. The general tendency shown in Table 9.3 for our L2 speakers is congruent with earlier findings by Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) who, in a longitudinal study of adult ESL learners (see section Disagreement in talk-in-interaction), showed a developmental sequence leading from strong disagreements mainly expressed by means of 'no' toward the postponement of disagreement components within a turn (i.e. what we call 'yes-but' pattern), and even within a sequence of turns (see our notion of distal disagreement).

**Table 9.3** Sequential positioning of the disagreement component: L2 and L1

	<i>L2 lower intermediate (lower secondary)</i>	<i>L2 advanced (upper secondary)</i>	<i>L1 (lower secondary)</i>
(a) Immediate	100%	90%	95.8%
(i) Turn-initial	98.3%	68.3%	73.6%
(ii) Nonturn-initial	0%	16.7%	16.7%
(iii) Others*	1.7%	5%	5.5%
(b) Distal	0%	10%	4.2%
Total	100% ( <i>n</i> = 60)	100% ( <i>n</i> = 60)	100% ( <i>n</i> = 72)

\*The category 'others' comprises cases which, in terms of the action they accomplish, can be read as disagreements, and are oriented to by co-participants as such, but are very indirect. These are mostly made up of rhetorical questions that express an oppositional stance (e.g. 'don't you think our army becomes ridiculous if we don't buy those airplanes?', as one of our students puts it).

Based on the quoted findings, we conclude that our comparison between less advanced and more advanced L2 speakers provides evidence for L2 interactional development in terms of a diversification of participant's methods, and of an approximation to how L1 speakers tend to accomplish disagreements in many contexts. While this development may partially reflect a process of socialization that cannot be reduced to language learning, it includes language learning as one of its central components (cf. Hall, 1993; Kramsch, 2002; Pallotti, 1996; Wootton, 1997). The striking uniformity of the L2 techniques for doing disagreement at the lower-intermediate level, as opposed both to advanced L2 and to L1, is sign of a less advanced interactional competence, while the diversification of methods observed with the advanced learners is sign of a more elaborated competence. In sum, we draw three main conclusions from our findings as regards the change in how disagreements are accomplished:

- The advanced learners' use of 'yes-but' types of turn-construction formats bears testimony to their *increased sensitivity for the preference organization of talk* as described by Pomerantz (1984) for L1 speakers. The advanced learners show an ability to manipulate the sequential positioning of the disagreement component that has been documented in earlier research also for adult L2 learners (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004).
- Their use of post-disagreement accounts and explanations concurs with findings on L1 oppositional talk (Heritage, 1988: 132), showing their *increased ability to scaffold their disagreements*.
- Their use of format-tying techniques both in immediate and in distal disagreements indicates the advanced learners' *growing capacity to monitor the linguistic details of co-participants' talk*, and their ability to create something new on the basis of other participants' words.

The diversification of both sequential and linguistic means for accomplishing disagreements provides evidence for L2 development (or: learning) in terms of developing methods for participating in social action, based on a complex interplay between linguistic resources, sequential placement and turn-constructural techniques. The diversification of these methods is a central component of a growing interactional competence, as it provides for the speakers the possibility to adapt to the local circumstances of talk.

## **Beyond Disagreement: Implications for Our Understanding of L2 Interactional Competence and its Development**

In this chapter, we have set out to document some aspects of the development of interactional competence in an L2. We have focused our study on a single actional microcosm, namely the accomplishment of

disagreements. This analytic focus has allowed us to zoom in onto participants' methods for action (including such resources as linguistic forms, sequential organization, turn-constructive formats) within a well-delimited frame and to trace the development of these methods through systematic comparisons between these microcosms at two different moments in development. This provides one methodological solution to the problem of tracking the development of interactional competence across time.

We would like to conclude by bringing up what we see as three major implications of the findings reported in this chapter for understanding L2 interactional competence.

First, the findings show that learners do not simply transfer their interactional competence from one language to the other, merely developing the linguistic forms needed to accomplish specific interactional tasks. Rather, when learning an L2, *learners recalibrate their 'methods' for accomplishing actions* – including the linguistic means to do so. This provides one possible answer to the question, what is evidence for L2 learning? Learning (broached here in terms of products of learning; we have not looked at learning processes as they are inscribed in the moment-to-moment deployment of talk-in-interaction), as we have shown, can be evidenced in systematic changes in participants' interactional methods for accomplishing recurrent and situated social actions. Accordingly, the development of interactional competence can be understood in terms of a *diversification of methods for accomplishing talk-in-interaction*, which is a crucial condition for the speaker's capacity to deal with the local contingencies of talk.

Second, progression in interactional competence centrally implies the *increased capacity for context sensitive conduct*, that is, the ability to adapt one's methods for action to the local contingencies of talk. The diversification of participants' methods that we have observed between two levels of proficiency is instrumental for the participants' ability to respond in more and more context-sensitive ways to the ever-changing contingencies of talk-in-interaction. The new methods that emerge therefore also embody a change in the participants' way of dealing with the preference organization of talk-in-interaction.

Third, the development of interactional competence involves the increased capacity to use the L2 in order to deal with projections. The advanced learners have developed various kinds of disagreement prefaces by means of which they project upcoming disagreements. This is convergent with Hellermann's (2008) findings on the emergence of story prefaces and other prefatory talk with more advanced learners. We consider that the *growing ability to project upcoming actions* is a central component of interactional competence. These projections are tools by which speakers contribute to the mutual coordination of talk-in-interaction (cf. Goodwin, 2002; Sacks *et al.*, 1974), warranting the recognizability, by co-participants, of

what they are about to do next. The ability to foreshadow what comes next by means of projections is part of the L2 speaker's increased capacity to participate in L2 talk-in-interaction.

These elements provide the grounds for understanding the development of L2 interactional competence in terms of the increased diversification and local efficacy of speakers' methods for dealing with L2 talk-in-interaction. But what about the details of language? L2 interactional competence involves not only the use of the L2 as a resource for coordinating actions and for dealing with the local contingencies of talk-in-interaction. It also – and centrally – involves the *capacity to monitor the linguistic details of co-participant's talk*. Learners, just like native speakers, need to monitor not only the contents of other speakers' talk but also the actions accomplished by that talk. They orient to the detailed lexical, syntactic and prosodic features of co-participants' talk as a basis for turn-taking (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), for tying parts of talk to other parts of talk (Sacks, 1992) or for projecting relevant next actions (Auer, 2005). This orientation is the *sine qua non* for their participation in social interaction. It is by closely monitoring the linguistic shaping of each other's turns at talk that speakers are able to coordinate their actions with others, and to make the relation of their actions to others' actions recognizable. This has been evidenced in our data in the advanced learners' use of format-tying techniques, which provides just one point in case for a substantial fact: The details of language (as much as the details of gesture, posture, gaze and the cross-cutting dimensions of sequential organization of actions or precision timing) are integral parts of the methods members use to get their interactional work done. As such, they are also an integral part of interactional competence. Learning the details of the L2 can hence be seen as a central part of L2 interactional development, understood as the elaboration of contextually sensitive methods of 'doing things'.

### Symbols used in transcripts

[ ]	onset, and, if relevant, end of overlap
=	intra- and inter-turn latching
&	turn continuation after overlap
(.) (.) (...)	unmeasured (micro-)pauses up to ca. 1s
(1.5)	measured pause, in seconds
et-	cut-off
si:	lengthening of preceding sound
quelle?	rising intonation
vieux.	falling intonation
enfant,	continuing intonation
parle	accentuation
NON	increase in volume

.h	in-breath
°la musique°	soft voice
>et ça <	faster
<tout ça coûte>	slower
(non)	uncertain hearing
(xxx)	unintelligible stretch of talk
((laughing))	transcriber's comment on a stretch of talk
+	marks the onset of the stretch of talk to which a transcriber's comment refers
*	indicates the moment of onset of non-verbal actions (gaze, body movement and gesture) that are noted on a separate line

*in the translation line:*

<u>he did</u>	dotted underlining indicates stretches of talk that are produced in L1 Swiss German
DET	determiner
NEG	negation particle
INF	infinitive (verb-form)
2SG	second person singular (verb-form)

## Notes

1. The analyses presented in this chapter have greatly benefited from three data sessions with colleagues, held in Neuchâtel and Luxembourg. We thank the participants to these sessions for their inspiring input. We are grateful to Joan Kelly Hall and John Hellermann for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this chapter. Most importantly, we thank Virginie Fasel Lauzon and Fee Steinbach Kohler for many critical discussions on the data, for help with the data collection, the transcriptions and the establishment of collections of disagreement sequences across the database. This study is part of a larger research project ('TRIC-L2: Tracking interactional competence in a second language'), subsidized by the Swiss National Science Foundation for the period 2010–2012 (subsidy no. 100012\_126860/1).
2. The term 'actional microcosm' allows us to avoid the notoriously underdetermined notion of 'practice', which is commonly used to refer to speakers' doings at very different levels of granularity, ranging from the opening of tasks or of stories (e.g. Hellermann, 2008), to the participation in revision talk (e.g. Young & Miller, 2004), through practices of turn-taking or repair.
3. The data have been collected within the framework of the research project 'Discourse-organizational competence in L1 and L2: learning, teaching, evaluating' that has been generously subsidized by the Swiss National Science Foundation for the period 2006–2009 (subsidy no. 405640-108663/1).
4. Characterizing L2 speakers as learners is problematic, as L2 speakers do not necessarily (always) behave as learners (for a critique of so-called 'etic', a-priorist characterizations of participants in L2 interaction, see Firth & Wagner, 1997). For the sake of clarity, we nevertheless speak of 'lower inter-mediated learners' and 'advanced learners' each time we refer to one of these

two (institutionally anchored) groups as a whole ('advanced speakers' would sound odd). In the data analysis we designate the L2 speakers as 'participants', 'speakers' or simply by their names (pseudonyms).

5. We have presented a more detailed discussion of this excerpt in Pekarek Doehler and Pochon-Berger (2010: 129–130).

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