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**Assessing interactional competence:
The case of school-based speaking assessment in Hong Kong**

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Abstract

In recent decades, the field of assessing speaking has seen an increasing emphasis on ‘interaction’. In defining the construct of interactional competence (IC), both the theoretical formulation and empirical evidence suggest that the competence is co-constructed and context-specific. This poses a multitude of conundrums for language testing practitioners and researchers, one of which is the extent to which we can extrapolate candidates’ performance in the target non-testing context from their performance in a test. This thesis considers these questions in the case of the Group Interaction (GI) task in the School-based Assessment (SBA) for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE).

Validation studies on the SBA Group Interaction task to date have generated somewhat contradictory results as to whether the task elicits authentic oral language use. Moreover, studies to date have not compared students’ interactions under different task implementation conditions (such as the amount of preparation time), or have investigated in detail what exactly students do during preparation time and how that might impact on their subsequent assessed interaction.

This study explores what kinds of interactional features constitute interactional competence; how IC is co-constructed in discourse, and what complexities there might be in assessing the competence through a group interaction task. It also investigates whether the SBA GI task elicits authentic oral language use, and how the task implementation condition of preparation time might influence the validity of the task.

Video-recordings of the assessed group interactions were obtained from two schools, with students given extended preparation time in one school but not the other. The assessed group interactions are analyzed using a Conversation Analytic approach, supplemented by data from mock assessments and stimulated recall interviews with student-candidates and teacher-raters.

This study contributes to the construct definition of interactional competence – its components and the specific ways they are performed in discourse. Drawing on findings about students’ overhearer-oriented talk, it also problematizes the assumption that a group interaction task is necessarily eliciting and assessing candidates’ competence for interacting in a peer group only. More specifically to the SBA GI task, this study has produced evidence that group interactions with and without extended preparation time are qualitatively different, and has identified some of the ways in which extended preparation time might compromise the task’s validity in assessing interactional competence.

Lay summary

In recent decades, the field of assessing speaking in a second or foreign language has seen an increasing emphasis on test-takers' ability to interact with others (rather than simply speaking fluently on their own). In addressing the question 'What is *interactional competence*?', both theory and research suggest that an individual's ability to interact would be seen as better or worse depending on the other people also in the same interaction, and the skills required would vary across different contexts (e.g. group discussion in a university tutorial vs. chatting in a café). Such nature of interactional competence poses a number of difficult questions for language testing practitioners and researchers, one of which is the extent to which we can take an individual's test performance to be a truthful reflection of their real-life performance. This thesis considers these questions in the case of the Group Interaction (GI) task in the English Language School-based Assessment (SBA) for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE).

Specifically, this study explores what features students (whose mother tongue is Cantonese) and their teachers consider to be part of interactional competence, how students display their ability in interacting with others in English, and what complexities there might be in assessing this ability through the group discussion task. It also investigates whether this assessment task elicits authentic spoken language use, and how the amount of preparation time made available to students might affect the nature of students' talk with one another in the assessed group discussion, and therefore the validity of the task.

For these purposes, video-recordings of the assessed group interactions were obtained from one school where students were given a few hours of preparation time, and another school where students only had ten minutes to prepare. The assessed group interactions are examined in detail through the methods of Conversation Analysis, supplemented by data from mock assessments and interviews with students and their teachers.

This study has identified some component features of interactional competence and the specific ways they are performed in talk exchange. It has also found evidence that, like actors performing a dialogue with each other for an audience, students design their talk for the 'overhearing' teacher's benefit (i.e. their audience). It thus problematizes the assumption that a group discussion task is necessarily assessing the test-takers' ability to interact in a peer group only. More specifically to the SBA GI task, this study has produced evidence that the group interactions with and without extended preparation time are different in nature, and has identified some of the ways in which extended preparation time might compromise the task's validity in assessing interactional competence.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for the award of any other degree. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Ming Kei Lam
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Contents

Abstract and lay summary.....	i
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures	x
List of Abbreviations.....	xi
Transcription conventions.....	xii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Developments and conundrums in assessing speaking.....	2
1.2 Public English examinations in Hong Kong: Developments in assessing speaking....	4
1.3 Introduction of School-based Assessment (SBA).....	6
1.3.1 Assessment policy and task implementation	8
1.3.2 Research on SBA in Hong Kong: A brief overview	9
1.4 Research questions	11
1.5 Structure of the thesis.....	11
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1 Testing second language speaking	14
2.1.1 Evolution of second language speaking tests	14
2.1.2 Validation research on speaking tests.....	20
2.1.2.1 Quantitative validation research.....	20
2.1.2.2 Discourse approaches to speaking test development and validation.....	21
2.1.2.3 Discourse and interaction in speaking tests: Key findings and issues	23
2.1.2.4 The importance of examining task implementation	32

2.1.2.5 Pre-task planning time (preparation time) as a task implementation condition	34
2.2 Interactional Competence.....	36
2.2.1 Theoretical development	36
2.2.1.1 Competence as individual ability: earlier theoretical formulations.....	36
2.2.1.2 The ‘social’ turn of ‘competence’ and ‘interaction’ in second language assessment	39
2.2.1.3 Competence as situated joint achievement: the theory of Interactional Competence	41
2.2.1.4 Application of the theory in language testing research and validation ...	46
2.2.2 Interactional competence in second language learning	49
2.2.3 Interactional competence in language testing.....	51
2.2.4 Defining the construct: Component features of interactional competence	54
2.3 Identity and interactional competence	60
2.3.1 Footing – Goffman (1981).....	60
2.3.2 A sociocultural linguistic approach to identity	62
2.3.3 Identity in discursive psychology	64
2.3.4 Interactional competence: An identity perspective	68
2.4 Recipient design and participation framework	70
2.4.1 Recipient design	70
2.4.2 Participation framework	71
2.4.3 Talk oriented to overhearing audiences.....	73
2.4.4 Formulations in talk.....	75
2.5 Summary	80
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY	83
3.1 Research questions and research design	83
3.2 Data collection	84
3.2.1 Gaining access to the researched community.....	84
3.2.2 Video-recordings of assessed interactions.....	87
3.2.3 Retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall	90
3.2.4 Mock assessments	94
3.2.5 Additional materials collected.....	97
3.2.6 Ethical considerations.....	98
3.3 Data processing and transcription	99

3.4 Data analysis	102
3.4.1 Conversation Analysis as methodological approach.....	102
3.4.2 CA analytic procedure.....	109
3.4.3 Coding and quantification	115
3.4.4 Using stimulated recall and mock assessment as supplementary data	120
3.5 Summary	123

CHAPTER 4 - PATTERNS OF DISCOURSE AND INTERACTIONAL ORGANIZATION IN SBA GROUP INTERACTIONS.....124

4.1 Turn-taking organization.....	125
4.1.1 Orientation to a ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking order	125
4.1.2 Orientation to even distribution of speaking opportunities	133
4.1.3 Gaps, overlaps, and Latching	137
4.1.4 Handing over the floor and selecting next speaker.....	154
4.1.5 Taking over the floor as next speaker.....	168
4.2 Preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses.....	179
4.2.1 Disagreeing responses: types and general patterns in turn design	183
4.2.2 Agreeing responses: Types and general patterns in turn design.....	188
4.2.3 Structural preference vs. assessment-related preference	195
4.2.4 The diverse uses of ‘I agree with you’ and its variants	206
4.2.5 The emergence of a local interactional norm	218
4.3 Chapter summary	223

CHAPTER 5 - CO-CONSTRUCTION OF INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE IN SBA GROUP INTERACTION228

5.1 Doing interacting: The discursive construction of ‘interaction’ and ‘interactional competence’	229
5.1.1 Pre-scripting and acting out interactive sequences.....	229
5.1.2 Contriving disagreement	236
5.1.3 Foregrounding the contingency of current speaker response on previous speaker contribution.....	246
5.2 The interactional architecture of SBA Group Interaction: participation framework, identities, and complexities	264
5.2.1 Talk designed for the overhearing teacher-rater.....	264

5.2.1.1 Teacher-rater as ratified overhearer: two preliminary recipient design features.....	264
5.2.1.2 Formulations of talk oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater	268
5.2.2 Negotiating identities as competent speakers and competent test-takers	279
5.3 Chapter summary	289

CHAPTER 6 - ASSESSING INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE: TASK IMPLEMENTATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND VALIDITY294

6.1 Task implementation, task engagement, and talk elicited.....	295
6.1.1 Influence of task implementation and task engagement on discourse in assessed performance	295
6.1.2 Pre-task planning activities: insights from mock assessments and student interviews	304
6.1.3 Case study: PB14Mock with 10 minutes preparation time	314
6.2 Interactional competence revisited.....	321
6.2.1 Interactional competence: Features salient in the SBA Group Interaction task	321
6.2.2 Complexities in assessing interactional competence: Context, participant framework, interactional norms	323
6.3 Validity of the SBA Group Interaction task for assessing interactional competence	330
6.4 Summary	337

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION.....338

7.1 Summary of findings.....	338
7.2 Contributions of this study	345
7.3 Looking back, and looking ahead	350
7.4 Closing remarks	355
References.....	358

Appendix A – Samples of SBA Group Interaction tasks.....	371
Appendix B – Sample of interview questions.....	372
Appendix C – Group Interaction tasks for mock assessment	374
Appendix D – Chinese-English bilingual informed consent forms for participants.....	375
Appendix E – Transcript of a sample group interaction (MF_GI) – video clip published on the HKEAA website	379
Appendix F – Analysis of the HKEAA sample group interaction.....	385
Appendix T – Transcripts of some group interactions in School P and School L.....	392
T1 – PA05.....	392
T2 – PA08.....	396
T3 – PA09.....	399
T4 – PA11.....	402
T5 – PA13.....	406
T6 – PB06.....	410
T7 – PB10.....	414
T8 – PB11.....	420
T9 – PB11Mock	425
T10 – PB14.....	430
T11 – PB14Mock	434
T12 – LA03	439
T13 – LA06	443
T14 – LA07	447
T15 – LB00.....	451
T16 – LB05.....	456
T17 – LB06.....	460

List of Tables

*Table 1.1 Assessing speaking in public English examinations in Hong Kong:
Summary of developments*

Table 3.1 Types of data available for each group interaction

List of Figures

Figure 6.1 Students' pre-task planning activities before the assessed interaction

Figure 6.2 Student R's note card for PB11Mock (p.1)

Figure 6.3 Student R's note card for PB11Mock (p.2)

Figure 6.4 Student Y's note card for PB14Mock (p.1)

Figure 6.5 Student L's note card for PB14Mock

Figure 6.6 Student S's note card for PB14Mock

List of Abbreviations

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
ASTP	Army Specialized Training Program
BAAL	British Association of Applied Linguistics
BMI	Body Mass Index
CA	Conversation Analysis
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CET-SET	College English Test – Spoken English Test
CLA	Communicative Language Ability
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EMI	English as the Medium of Instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FCE	First Certificate in English
FPP	First Pair Part
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GI	Group Interaction
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
IC	Interactional Competence
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILF	Interactional Language Function
ILR	Interagency Language Roundtable
IP	Individual Presentation
MTR	Mass Transit Railway
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
RDA	Resources Development Administration
SBA	School-based Assessment
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPP	Second Pair Part
TBLT	Task-based Language Teaching
TCU	Turn Construction Unit
TR	Teacher-rater
TRP	Transition Relevance Place
TV	Television
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate
UE	Use of English
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VIP	Very Important Person

Transcription conventions

Based on Jefferson (2004)

,	A continuing fall-rise or weak rising intonation
?	A rising, question intonation, irrespective of grammar
.	A falling, stopping intonation, irrespective of grammar
-	A cut-off of the preceding sound
[word	Onset of overlapping speech
= =	Latching of successive talk, of one or more speakers, with no interval
(0.4)	Timed pause (in seconds)
(.)	An untimed short pause. Number of dots indicates relative length of the pause.
(word)	Transcriber's best guess of the word(s) uttered
((comment))	Transcriber's comments, e.g. about features of context or delivery, or non-verbal actions.
<u>Underline</u>	Indicates emphasis of individual syllables or words
WORD	Parts of talk that is louder than the surrounding talk
°word°	Parts of talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk
↑↓	Shifts into higher/lower pitch
hhh	Out-breaths, length proportional to number of 'h's
.hhh	In-breaths, length proportional to number of 'h's
>word<	Parts of talk that is faster than the surrounding talk
<word>	Parts of talk that is slower than the surrounding talk
heh heh	Laughter
wo(h)rd	Laughter within speech

Additional symbols

\\word \\((action))	Beginning of non-verbal action simultaneous with speech
wurd{word}	Spelling indicative of the way the word is pronounced. The word within the curly brackets is transcriber's guess of the word uttered.
word[s] word[t]	Extraneous sound segment at the end of a word or unconventional realization of the final sound segment
.....	The rest of the turn omitted
<u>first letter</u>	Sequence of words each uttered with hearable effort or emphasis
TSK	A Clicking sound, often indicating that one is thinking or is annoyed
<@ @>	Stretch of utterance produced while laughing
[gloss]	In translated transcripts (interviews and preparation time discussions): Researcher's gloss for rendering the original meaning in cases of ellipsis

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What does it mean to be able to interact with others, and what counts as the ability to interact in a group in a speaking assessment? Consider the following dialogue among a group of students simulating a marketing team meeting in an assessment:

PB11: 41-49

1 S: So, let's move on to discuss the: price. Mm:: I think: 110
2 is the most suitable price for (.) our lotion.
3 Y: Mm::: (.) but I think that uh:: the customer will be:
4 affected by the illusion that 109 dollars is a lot cheaper
5 than 1010 dollars. Maybe: we can sell it at (.) uh 1009
6 dollars.
7 (1.5) ((S nods while turning away from Y))
8 S: \\Mm! It is an (..) best choice for our pri\\ce,
9 \\((K nods firmly several times)) \\((Y nods))
10 because this illusion has been proved by our past
11 experience.

On one level, this looks like some 'good' interaction. The students seem engaged in each other's talk: they comment on each other's ideas, giving reasons for agreeing/disagreeing, and collaborate with one another to move the topic along. They also seem supportive of each other. After Y has proposed a revised set price for their product, S expresses strong agreement by saying it's the 'best choice', and Y non-verbally displays her endorsement of the proposal by nodding firmly several times simultaneously as S begins to speak.

However, it will not have escaped the reader's eyes that there is an error that remains untreated in the interaction. In proposing a revision of the set price suggested by S, Y has made a mistake, making the new price ten times more expensive than the original. Interestingly, no one seems to have detected the error, as none of the other students corrects Y immediately or subsequently. In the retrospective interview with the students, no one noticed the error during the video playback until the researcher brought it up. Were the students actually engaged in the discussion, paying attention to what each other was saying then?

To what extent is the students' interaction successful in terms of communication and exchange of meanings? The argument for a slight adjustment of the price based on a 'price illusion' has got across to group members, but not the revised price itself. Perhaps it does not matter in a speaking assessment, although it is difficult to imagine that, in the corresponding real-life context, the huge difference in the set price of the product would not be heeded by the participants. The stakes, of course, are different. However, it prompts us to also consider the questions: Are the abilities to interact with peers in testing and non-testing contexts the same or different? Are there complexities in trying to extrapolate individuals' ability to interact in an assessment context?

1.1 Developments and conundrums in assessing speaking

These questions, and others, have become issues of interest and concern to language testers and researchers, as the field of assessing speaking evolved in such ways that there is increasing attention to and emphasis on 'interaction'. This is evident in developments in the construct definition of speaking, in test formats, and in test validation. The conceptualization of the construct of speaking has been changing, as seen in shifts in assessment criteria from an exclusive focus on formal linguistic aspects to the inclusion of communicative or interactional components. The format of speaking tests has evolved from predominantly monologic tasks and examiner-candidate dialogue to interactive formats among the candidates themselves (the paired and the group formats). Test validation work has begun to discover the nature of interaction in

speaking tests or assessments¹ and the extent to which various test formats are adequate representation of real-life interaction, as well as develop empirically-based assessment criteria and rating scales related to the ability to interact. Chapter 2 will provide a more comprehensive overview of these developments.

The ability to interact with others has then been theorized as *interactional competence* in the second language learning and testing literature (Hall, Hellermann, & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Young, 2000, 2008, 2011). The matter complicates, however, as interactional competence is both posited in theory and attested in empirical studies to be co-constructed among all participants involved, and is context-specific and varies with different participant configurations (see Chapter 2). This poses a multitude of conundrums for language testing practitioners and researchers, with questions such as:

- Do candidates with different characteristics such as personality types (Nakatsuhara, 2011; Gan, 2011) or language proficiency (Davies, 2009) influence each other's performance?
- What patterns of interaction should be awarded higher/lower scores (Galaczi, 2008; May, 2009)?
- Should shared scores be awarded to pairs and groups of candidates if interactional patterns and achievements are co-constructed, with distributed responsibilities and shared merits among participants involved (May, 2009, 2011)?
- Are candidates genuinely engaged in interacting with one another as they would be in everyday interactional contexts, or are they staging a performance of competence (He & Dai, 2006; Luk, 2010)? Does the mere presence of an 'overhearing' assessor change the nature of interaction among the candidates (this study)?
- To what extent do patterns and norms of interaction in speaking assessments resemble those in the target real-life interactional contexts (Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; this study)?

¹ According to the *Dictionary of Language Testing* (Davies *et al.*, 1999), 'assessment' is a term 'often used interchangeably with testing' (p.11), although it can be also used in a broader sense encompassing the evaluation of language ability or language teaching operations, and in a narrower sense denoting evaluative procedures not involving tests (*ibid.*). In this thesis, the terms 'test' and 'assessment' are generally to be understood as synonymous.

- Do patterns of the assessed interaction change when candidates are given pre-task planning time (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014), and are allowed to prepare together (this study)?

Chapter 2 will review the various studies in the language testing literature, the findings of which either address or raise these questions. This present study will examine some of these issues in the context of a school-based group speaking assessment in Hong Kong.

Since the introduction of the first speaking test in 1950, assessing speaking in Hong Kong public English examinations has undergone considerable changes and developments, giving rise to some of the issues above. The following section provides a brief account of such developments.

1.2 Public English examinations in Hong Kong: Developments in assessing speaking

Before 2012, there were two territory-wide public examinations taken by secondary school students in Hong Kong. The first one was the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), taken at the end of Secondary 5 (S5). The second one was the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), taken at the end of Secondary 7 (S7). As a result of a major curriculum reform² (see Choi & Lee, 2010), a new secondary school exit examination, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE), taken at the end of Secondary 6 (S6), was introduced in 2012 in place of the former HKCEE and HKALE. Choi and Lee (2010) of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) provide a comprehensive overview of the developments in the English language assessment in the Hong Kong public examination system. I summarize the developments in the assessment of speaking below.

The first territory-wide English speaking test in Hong Kong was introduced in 1950 as part of the English Language examination in the Hong Kong School Certificate

² Students now receive a 6-year secondary education and a 4-year university education, rather than a 7-year secondary education and a 3-year university education before the curriculum reform.

Examination. This English exam was primarily taken by students in Anglo-Chinese schools, and became Syllabus B in the HKCEE from 1974 onwards (Choi & Lee, 2010). In the early years, this speaking test took the format of a monologic task (picture description) plus a simple dialogue with the examiner. Subsequently, the test format was modified to ‘reading aloud a prose passage or a short dialogue, followed by a short conversation with one or both of the examiners based on a picture’ (p.71). In 1986, a speaking test was introduced into Syllabus A of the HKCEE (for Chinese schools), with a similar format but less demanding.

As for the Use of English (UE) examination in the HKALE for university matriculation, the Examinations Authority began to plan for adding a speaking component in the early 1990s. The rationale was threefold. First, there was pressure from local tertiary institutions requiring information on the spoken English communication skills of candidates seeking admission into universities (Qian, 2008). Second, this was aimed at improving validity by addressing the ‘construct-under-representation deficiency’ of the UE exam (Choi & Lee, 2010, p.72). The third reason for introducing a speaking component was to bring about positive washback effects on the secondary school English curriculum. According to Choi and Lee (2010), classroom teaching at the time ‘had virtually ignored the training of speaking skills’ (p.72). The speaking test was introduced in the hope that teachers and students would become more aware of the importance of spoken communication skills in real-world contexts (Qian, 2008), and dedicate more time and effort to the learning and practice of speaking skills (Andrews & Fullilove, 1994). In 1994, a speaking test with a group discussion format was introduced into the HKALE Use of English examination.

Shortly following the introduction of the group discussion task in the A-level exam, in 1996, the speaking test in the HKCEE English Language exam also underwent a major change in assessment format. The monologic task and picture-based examiner-candidate dialogue were replaced with a role-play task with the examiner plus a group discussion task among four candidates (Choi & Lee, 2010). Notably, then, the new speaking test format elicited not only examiner-candidate interaction, but also peer-to-peer interaction among candidates (see Chapter 2 for its significance), assessing their

‘conversational strategies, overall fluency, [and] contribution to the interaction, with emphasis on effective communication’ (p.71). Table 1.1 below summarizes the major developments and the changes in speaking test formats.

Year	Development	Test format
1950	First speaking test	Picture description / reading aloud + examiner-candidate dialogue
1986	Introduction of a speaking test in HKCEE (Syllabus A)	
1994	Introduction of a speaking test in HKALE Use of English	Group discussion
1996	Major change in assessment format in HKCEE (Syllabuses A and B)	Role-play with examiner + group discussion
2007	Introduction of SBA in HKCEE	Individual presentation + group interaction
2012	SBA fully integrated into HKDSE	

Table 1.1 Assessing speaking in public English examinations in Hong Kong: Summary of developments

1.3 Introduction of School-based Assessment (SBA)

In 2007, a School-based Assessment (SBA) component combining the assessment of speaking with an extensive reading/viewing program was introduced into the HKCEE. Having operated on a trial basis for several years, SBA is now fully integrated in the new secondary school exit examination, HKDSE, since 2012.

The SBA component accounts for 15% of the total subject mark for HKDSE English Language, and consists of two parts. Part A is made up of two assessments, one

individual presentation and one *group interaction*³, with one assessment carried out in Secondary 5 and the other in Secondary 6. The speaking tasks are based on an extensive reading/viewing program. Therefore, students engage in either an individual presentation or a group discussion on the books they have read or movies they have viewed. Part B consists of one assessment in either the group interaction or individual presentation format, based on the Elective Modules (e.g. social issues, workplace communication) taught in the upper secondary curriculum. This is to be carried out either in the second term of S5 or anytime during S6. Thus, a total of three marks⁴ (each weighing 5%) are to be submitted by the teacher. Further details of the SBA assessment tasks can be found in the Teachers' Handbook (HKEAA, 2009) available online.

The present study focuses on the *Group Interaction* task, whereby students in groups of three to five (mostly four) carry out a discussion of around eight minutes. While the peer group interaction format has been used in the public exam for many years, the SBA task differs from its public exam counterpart in that students are interacting with their classmates rather than unacquainted candidates, and are assessed by their own English teacher instead of unfamiliar external examiners. Moreover, one of the discussion tasks is based on a book or movie that students have experienced as part of the extensive reading/viewing program. On the basis that students interact with and are assessed by familiar people, in low-stress conditions, and across multiple assessment occasions, the SBA has been claimed to offer a more *valid* and *reliable* assessment of speaking than the one-off public oral examination (Choi & Lee, 2010; Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; HKEAA, 2009).

The objectives of the SBA initiative are to elicit and assess 'natural and authentic spoken language' (HKEAA, 2009, p.7), providing an assessment context 'more closely approximating real-life and low-stress conditions' (p.3), and for students to 'interact in

³ This is commonly known as the 'group discussion' task. The term 'group interaction', however, is used in official documents of SBA published by the HKEAA. The two terms are used synonymously in this thesis.

⁴ These Assessment Requirements applied to the HKDSE 2012 student cohort in this study, but have recently changed. According to the Teacher's Handbook for the HKDSE 2015 cohort (HKEAA, 2013), Part A now consists of only *one* assessment instead of two. Teachers are to submit *two* marks (one for Part A, one for Part B) instead of three. The weighting of SBA remains 15% of the subject mark.

English on real material’ (Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008, p.320). Thus, the assumption is that *authentic spoken language use* constitutes the basis of the validity of the assessment task, as has been reiterated in the published guidelines (HKEAA, 2009) and in validation studies (Gan *et al.*, 2008; Gan, 2010).

1.3.1 Assessment policy and task implementation

As an assessment-*for*-learning initiative, the assessment policy for SBA places considerable emphasis on flexibility and sensitivity to students’ needs in the design and implementation of the assessment tasks, a marked departure from the public exam where assessment tasks, conditions, and practices are standardized to ensure reliability and fairness. As stated in the Teachers’ Handbook,

the SBA process, to be effective, has to be highly contextualised, dialogic and sensitive to student needs (i.e. the SBA component is not and cannot be treated as identical to an external exam in which texts, tasks and task conditions are totally standardised and all contextual variables controlled; to attempt to do so would be to negate the very rationale for SBA, hence schools and teachers must be granted a certain degree of trust and autonomy in the design, implementation and specific timing of the assessment tasks).

(HKEAA, 2009, p.4)

The recommended practice is for teachers to give students the ‘general assessment task’ to prepare a few days in advance, and to release the ‘exact assessment task’ shortly before the assessment to avoid students memorizing and rehearsing the interaction (*ibid.*, p.37).

Although some recommendations for task implementation are included in the Teachers’ Handbook and in teacher training seminars, the emphasis on flexibility in the assessment policy has translated into diverse assessment practices (see discussion in Fok, 2012). There is considerable variation in when the discussion task with question prompts is released to students, in other words, in the length of preparation or pre-task planning

time⁵ during which students have the opportunity to talk to group members about the upcoming assessed interaction. Varied practices in task implementation are evident, both in previous studies and my own:

Gan *et al.* (2008) and Gan (2012) reported that the specific assessment task was made known to students about 10 minutes beforehand. In the school that Luk (2010) investigated, students received the discussion prompt one day before the assessment, which was also when they were told who their group members are. Of the eight schools whose teachers Fok (2012) interviewed, four gave students the actual discussion questions one day or more before the assessment, three gave students similar sample questions a few days before but the actual questions only minutes before the assessment, and one allowed no preparation at home but gave students the actual questions shortly prior to the assessed interaction. As for the two schools in the present study, one (School L) released the discussion prompt to students 10 minutes before the assessment, and group members were not allowed to talk to each other during preparation time. The other school (School P) released the discussion prompt to students a few hours before the assessment, and students who formed their own group could plan their interaction together. One objective of this thesis is to explore what students do during the preparation time and how it affects their exchange in the assessed interaction; and examine whether the task, in the way it is implemented, elicits authentic spoken language use.

1.3.2 Research on SBA in Hong Kong: A brief overview

Since its introduction in 2007, there has been a growing body of research that examines different facets of SBA. Extensive research has been conducted on various stake-holders' perceptions towards SBA. These studies investigated teachers' and students' initial responses to its introduction (Davison, 2007); students' and parents' views (Cheng, Andrews, & Yu, 2011); and teachers' perceptions of the initiative as well

⁵ The term *preparation time* is used in official documents published by HKEAA, whereas *pre-task planning time* is used extensively in the SLA and language testing literature. The two terms are used synonymously in this thesis.

as their readiness of implementing it at the frontline (Fok, 2012; Qian, 2014). Another strand of research focuses on the assessed performance. Some studies engaged in micro-analysis of the students' discourse and interaction (Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; Gan, 2010; Luk, 2010). Others compared the discourse output elicited by the two task types (Gan, 2012), and examined the extent to which students' personality (extroversion/introversion) influences their discourse and test scores (Gan, 2011). At a more theoretical level, Hamp-Lyons (2009) outlined a framework of principles guiding the design and implementation of large-scale classroom-based language assessment, drawing on the case of SBA in Hong Kong.

On the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task, the abovementioned studies available to date (Gan *et al.*, 2008; Gan, 2010; Luk, 2010) have yielded mixed results regarding whether the task has achieved its aim of eliciting students' authentic oral language use. The first two studies argued for the task's validity in terms of similarities between the students' discourse and everyday conversation in topic negotiation and development (Gan *et al.*, 2008) and how the students' discourse displayed evidence of genuine communication (Gan, 2010). In contrast, Luk (2010) found features of ritualized and institutionalized talk rather than those of everyday conversation in students' discourse, and contended that students were engaged in impression management for assessment purposes rather than in authentic communication. Chapter 2 will review these studies in greater detail.

The conflicting findings are, I would argue, partly attributable to differences in how the assessment task was implemented – students having 10 minutes to prepare in Gan *et al.* (2008) and Gan (2010) but one day in Luk (2010). Nevertheless, none of the three studies investigated in detail what students actually did during preparation time, or established any links between the observed interactional patterns and the pre-task planning activities. Thus, a notable gap in SBA validation research, given the known flexibility in assessment policy and diverse implementation practices, is the absence of studies which compare students' interactions under different conditions of task implementation.

1.4 Research questions

Based on the current issues in research on assessing speaking, introduction of the school-based speaking assessment in Hong Kong, and the available studies on SBA described above, the present study examines the Group Interaction task in the SBA component of the HKDSE in terms of the following research questions:

1. *What patterns of discourse organization and interactional organization characterize the SBA group interactions?*
2. *How is interactional competence co-constructed in the SBA group interactions, and what features are constructed and recognized as components of interactional competence in this assessment context? What complexities are there in assessing interactional competence through the SBA Group Interaction task?*
3. *Does the SBA Group Interaction task elicit and assess students' authentic oral language use, and how do aspects of task implementation influence the validity of the task?*

In Chapter 2, I will review in greater detail the literature on speaking assessments, the theory of interactional competence, and previous studies on the SBA Group Interaction task leading to the formulation of these research questions.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This chapter has outlined the background of this study, including the developments in assessing speaking in the Hong Kong public English examinations, the introduction of the SBA component, and the research on SBA to date. Chapter 2 describes the evolution of different speaking test formats, reviews the literature on speaking test validation, and identifies the research gaps which motivate the present study. It also reviews the theory and empirical research on interactional competence, and discusses the relevance of an identity perspective to examining some of the complexities in assessing interactional competence. Chapter 3 provides an account of this study's methodology. It first details the data collection procedure, and explains the rationale for particular steps and

decisions, taking into consideration the practical constraints and limitations. Following a description on data processing and transcription, the chapter then introduces Conversation Analysis (CA) as the main methodological approach adopted in this study. It discusses the basic principles of CA and its analytic procedure, how these have been applied and adapted in the data analysis, and some methodological decisions made in relation to the purpose of this study.

The next three chapters present the analysis and discuss the findings of this study. Chapter 4 examines the discourse and interactional organization of the SBA group interactions in two respects: (1) turn-taking and speaker transition, (2) preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses. Chapter 5 explores students' discursive co-construction of interactional competence, and identifies a component of interactional competence oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters⁶ as being at the heart of the competence. The second part uncovers some complexities in the SBA group interactions in terms of participation framework and negotiation of conflicting identities. Chapter 6 investigates how extended preparation time might impact on the task's ability to elicit authentic interaction among students, bringing into analysis students' pre-task planning activities before the assessed interaction. The chapter then relates the findings of this study to previous research and the theory of interactional competence, highlighting the complexities in extrapolating candidates' performance from testing to non-testing contexts, as well as the validity issues in implementing the SBA Group Interaction task with extended preparation time.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the findings of this study and discusses its contribution to knowledge and research on assessing speaking. On noting the limitations of this study, it also proposes some avenues for future research.

⁶ In this thesis, the individuals whose performance is being assessed are sometimes referred to as 'student-candidates', and the assessor of the speaking performance as 'teacher-rater'. This is to highlight the double roles of the participants in this classroom-based assessment. For brevity, they are also sometimes referred to as 'students' and 'teachers' respectively.

Chapter 2

Literature review

What we test in second language speaking as well as *how* we test it have undergone considerable changes over the last century since the introduction of speaking tests. In this chapter, I begin by presenting a brief overview of the evolution of speaking test formats, from monologic tasks to examiner-candidate dialogue, and from that to peer interaction tasks (the paired and the group formats). I then review different lines of speaking test validation research, in particular the discourse analytic validation studies of different test formats (the SBA Group Interaction task included), and identify the research space in which the present study is situated.

In the second part of this chapter, I consider the construct of interactional competence, including its theoretical development, its nature as posited in theory and the challenges it poses to research and practice in language testing and assessment. I also review the research on interactional competence in second language learning and testing contexts, and discuss two features of particular relevance to the present study. Following that, I discuss a parallel development in the theoretical conceptualization of identity in social interaction, and the relevance of an identity perspective to the investigation of the construction and assessment of interactional competence. I also review theoretical and empirical work on recipient design and participation framework relevant to the analysis of students' talk in the SBA group interactions. Finally, I summarize the key findings and issues emerging from the literature review that have informed the present study's focus and formulation of the research questions.

2.1 Testing second language speaking

2.1.1 Evolution of second language speaking tests

Speaking tests: Early developments

Testing second language speaking, according to Fulcher (2003), is the youngest sub-field within language testing in terms of both theory and practice.

In the UK, the first speaking test was implemented in the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) examination introduced in 1913, administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES). The CPE examination was targeted at ‘foreign students who sought proof of their practical knowledge of the language with a view to teaching it in foreign schools’ (Roach, 1945, p.34). The test included an oral component, comprised of a half-hour Dictation section plus a half-hour Reading aloud and Conversation section (Weir, 2003). Spolsky (1995) notes that the CPE reflected the growing interest in direct method teaching, in which a good command of the language for classroom use (rather than the ‘academic or descriptive ability’) was required of the language teacher (p.63), while Weir (2003) comments that it was remarkable that an oral component was present in ‘an international EFL test at such an early stage alongside the grammar and translation-based activities in vogue at the time’ (p.2). A speaking test was also included in the Lower Certificate (now termed the First Certificate in English, or FCE) introduced in 1939 (Fulcher, 2003).

In the US, the term ‘oral test’ was used before the first direct speaking test (where candidates’ speech was elicited) was introduced. An indirect, pen-and-paper Aural and Oral Test for French, German, and Spanish as a foreign language, was proposed by ‘[a] committee appointed by the Association of Modern Language Teachers of the Middle States [and] Maryland’ (Spolsky, 1995, p.35). The test, proposed in 1914, consisted of a ten-minute dictation – written reproduction of a prose passage and written answers to questions read aloud by the examiner (*ibid.*). A direct test of speaking was considered but subsequently abandoned out of concerns about infeasibility and unreliability (Fulcher, 2003; Spolsky, 1995).

The first direct speaking test used in the US was the English Competence examination introduced in 1930 by the College Entrance Examination Board (Spolsky, 1995). The test was intended to ‘plug a loophole’ in the 1924 Immigration

Act which ‘allowed for visas outside the quotas for foreign students’ (Spolsky, 1993, p.3) and resulted in ‘the number of foreign applications seeking admission to US institutions [growing] rapidly’ (Spolsky, 1995, p.55). A commission appointed by the College Board then designed an examination assessing candidates’ English ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the college context. The speaking test required the candidate to have ten topics prepared for the examiner (*ibid.*). The examiner was to rate the candidate’s performance using a three-point scale ‘proficient’, ‘satisfactory’, or ‘unsatisfactory’ on each of the linguistic criteria of ‘fluency, responsiveness, rapidity, articulation, enunciation, command of construction, of connectives, usable vocabulary and the use of idiom’, and to report whether the candidate appeared ‘diffident or shy’ (Spolsky, 1995, p.57).

The development of speaking tests also arose from military language needs. The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was established in 1942 in the US, a language instruction program created specifically to address the problem that many of the American soldiers did not have the requisite spoken language skills in foreign languages (e.g. Spanish) to carry out their duties (Fulcher, 2003). The speaking test developed by Queen’s College, New York, in relation to the ASTP included a picture description task, delivering a short talk without preparation, and ‘directed conversation’ in the target foreign language, prompted by a phonograph rather than a live interlocutor. The measure of success for the first and the third task was ‘communicative ability’, whereas the second task was assessed by linguistic criteria (*ibid.*).

In the 1950s, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) developed an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), and in 1958, the FSI testing unit added a checklist of five factors for raters on a six-point scale: accent, comprehension, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary (Adams, 1980). Notably, one limitation of the test was that it did not measure communicative ability (Sollenberger, 1978). Assessment criteria going beyond language as a formal system were only introduced into rating scales later, for example, appropriateness in relation to context and formality in the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) rating scale in 1968 (Fulcher, 2003, p.14), and ‘discourse’, ‘interactive’ or ‘communicative’ strategies in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) rating scale in the 1980s (p.16).

The changes and developments in the use of different speaking test tasks and different assessment criteria reflect how the philosophies of language testing and language teaching developed in tandem, as several authors have noted (e.g. Fulcher, 2003; Luoma, 2004; Weir, 2005). Weir (2005) states that ‘[I]anguage tests from the distant past to the present [...] help inform us about attitudes to language, language testing and language teaching’ (p.5). For instance, the Cambridge CPE first offered in 1913 included a test of English phonetics and a test of translation, reflecting a concern with pronunciation and translation (*ibid.*). Tests of phonetics and grammar translation survived until the 1960s and 1970s in the UK (Weir, 2005), while in 1975, substantial revisions were made to the listening, reading and speaking tests of CPE. According to Weir (2003), this ‘echoed the burgeoning interest in communicative language teaching in the 1970s; an increasing concern with language in use as against language as a system for study’ (p.24). Similarly, Fulcher (2003) reports that the late 1970s saw a growing interest in teaching English following the notional/functional approach, and it was perceived that ‘the direct speaking test was a natural testing adjunct of new teaching methods’ (p.10). More recently, the growing use of the paired format also shows such an intimate relationship between language testing and language teaching. Luoma (2004) writes that one of the arguments for the use of paired test tasks has to do with ‘the relationship between testing and teaching, either in the sense of wishing to influence teaching so as to encourage more pair work in classes, or in the sense of repeating in testing what is happening in teaching already’ (p.36).

From Oral Proficiency Interview to paired/group formats

The change from the predominant use of examiner-candidate formats (including monologic tasks such as picture description, and examiner-candidate dialogue) to the growing adoption of peer-to-peer interactive formats (paired or group interaction tasks) has often been considered a significant development in the history of testing speaking.

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) was the prevailing, standard way of testing speaking from the 1950s to the 1980s (Luoma, 2004), and was widely adopted in large-scale proficiency testing in the United States, Britain, and Australia

(van Lier, 1989). For quite a long time, the OPI was assumed to be measuring speaking ability through conversation, and its validity had remained broadly accepted (He & Young, 1998; Luoma, 2004; van Lier, 1989).

Van Lier (1989) was one of the first scholars to challenge the validity of the Oral Proficiency Interview, questioning the assumption that the OPI *is* conversation. Van Lier argued that the interactional relationship between the interviewer/examiner and the interviewee/candidate is asymmetrical, manifested in the fact that the interviewer maintains control over the interaction by asking questions and evaluating the answers, and is seen as the person who is solely responsible for initiating and concluding the interaction or a particular topic (van Lier, 1989). Everyday conversation, on the contrary, is typically unplanned, with locally determined structure and roles, and more or less equal distribution of rights and obligations in structuring talk (*ibid.*). According to van Lier (1989), a further issue that arises out of this asymmetry is that pragmatic failure or misunderstanding, for which either the controlling party or both parties should be held accountable, has often been attributed to the candidate's fault and taken as an indicator of the candidate's inadequate proficiency (a similar argument was made by McNamara (1997)).

Following van Lier (1989), the last two decades has seen an expanding body of theoretical discussions and empirical studies which contested the validity claim of OPI. Based on evidence from discourse analytic studies, these writings further challenged the earlier assumption that OPI is conversation, pointing out the lack of resemblance between the two (e.g. the collection of studies published in Young & He, 1998; Lazaraton, 1992; McNamara, Hill & May, 2002; Young, 2002). For instance, the OPI has an overwhelming tendency to take the form of a series of question-and-answer sequences (Moder & Halleck, 1998). This allows little opportunity for candidates to initiate questions and to demonstrate other interactional abilities, such as those of gaining and maintaining the floor in conversation.

A number of other researchers have also problematized the OPI in terms of the asymmetric power relation between the interviewer and the candidate (Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; Lazaraton, 1996; Ross & Berwick, 1992; Young & Milanovic, 1992). Other than the issue of who bears the responsibility for misunderstanding and communication breakdown and its consequences on rating decisions, as raised by

van Lier (1989) and McNamara (1997), this asymmetry again has ramifications for the kinds of discourse elicited, for example, providing little opportunity for the candidate to disagree with or challenge their interlocutor (May, 2011). Consequently, the OPI only taps into a narrow range of interactional abilities, as Luoma (2004) rightly puts it:

In other types of interactions, such as discussions and conversations, the rights and responsibilities of the participants to take the initiative are more balanced, and interviews do not give direct evidence of the examinee's ability to deal with these demands. (p.35)

The last two decades also saw the increasing adoption of paired and group formats where candidates interact with their peers instead of the examiner. According to Taylor and Wigglesworth (2009), the growing popularity of the paired format is due to an increased awareness of the problems associated with OPI, the attempt to mirror the Communicative Language Teaching movement, as well as the format being a time-efficient option for testing large numbers of learners.

The paired/group oral format is welcomed by many testing researchers, as it rectifies some of the validity problems associated with the examiner-candidate format. An often cited advantage of the paired/group format is the broader range of language functions it can elicit from learners (Galaczi, 2008; Lazaraton & Davis, 2008; Skehan, 2001; Taylor, 2000), who are freed from the limited type of question-answer series characterizing the OPI (Gan et al., 2008). This relates to the more symmetrical nature of peer-to-peer interaction compared to the examiner-candidate format (Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010; Iwashita, 1996; Lazaraton, 2002; Lazaraton & Davis, 2008; Taylor, 2001). In paired/group oral, no member of the pair/group has inherent control over the direction of the talk (Gan et al., 2008). Instead, all participants have by default the same rights and responsibilities in managing talk. This enables the task to elicit a wider range of interactional features, including 'conversation management, asking for opinion and clarification, challenging or disagreeing with a partner, and being able to deal with being challenged or disagreed with' (May, 2011, p.140), which 'may mean an enhancement of the validity of the score-based inferences' (Bonk & Ockey, 2003, p.90).

Some studies have offered evidence of test-takers' support for the paired/group format as well. For example, Fulcher (1996), Whiteson (1977, cited in Bonk &

Ockey, 2003) and van Moere (2006) found that the paired/group format was welcomed by test-takers, therefore having face validity. More specifically, Folland and Robertson (1976) and Fulcher (1996) reported that some test-takers felt more comfortable and confident speaking to one another than to an examiner.

An empirical study particularly worth mentioning is Brooks (2009), which compared examiner-candidate and paired interaction of adult ESOL test takers. Combining quantitative analysis of test scores and qualitative analysis of test discourse, Brooks found that the paired format generally yielded higher scores and more complex interaction among participants. Candidates' interactions in the paired format exhibited features of co-construction and collaborative dialogue, such as 'prompting elaboration, finishing sentences, referring to a partner's ideas, and paraphrasing', which were less frequent or not at all present in the individual format (p.353). In contrast, the individual format was found to be characterized by asymmetrical patterns of interaction, in which the examiner often dominated the talk by asking most of the questions and the candidate responded minimally. In another extreme case, the candidate kept talking without giving the floor over, while the examiner's participation was restricted to minimal acknowledgement tokens such as 'uh huh'.

As illustrated, the paired/group formats exhibit several advantages over the examiner-candidate format and rectify some of its shortcomings. Peer interaction as used in assessing speaking ability, however, is by no means without problems. The recent testing literature has raised two important issues: the 'interlocutor effect' of pairing/grouping of test-takers with different characteristics, and the 'co-constructed' nature of interaction, both having implications for construct definition, reliability and fairness (e.g. Chalhoub-Deville, 2003; McNamara, 1997; Swain, 2001; Weir, 2005). We will come back to these issues in the following sections.

To briefly summarize, we have seen the early development in testing speaking from its non-existence to the introduction of direct speaking tests in large-scale language proficiency assessments; and changes in the assessment criteria from an exclusive focus on formal linguistic aspects to the inclusion of communicative/interactional components, reflecting a growing understanding of the construct of speaking. Moreover, the test format has also evolved, from the use of

individual and monologic tasks to examiner-candidate dialogue in the OPI, and more recently the adoption of peer interactive tasks (the paired/group formats). As seen in Chapter 1, the assessment of speaking in the public examinations in Hong Kong has undergone a similar development (see Choi & Lee, 2010): A speaking test was first implemented in 1950 with the monologic task of picture description or reading aloud, along with a short examiner-candidate dialogue; in the 1990s the group discussion task was introduced first in the HKALE then the HKCEE English examination; and in 2007 the School-based Assessment comprising both Individual Presentation and Group Interaction was introduced.

2.1.2 Validation research on speaking tests

2.1.2.1 Quantitative validation research

With the growing adoption of the paired or group format, and a concern for the fairness of pairing/grouping a candidate with other test-taker(s) of different characteristics, there has been a myriad of quantitative studies that examine the influence of test-takers' various characteristics (as well as those of their partner or group members) on their performance in paired/group speaking test tasks. The test-taker characteristics often investigated include gender (O'Loughlin, 2002; and in an Oral Proficiency Interview, O'Sullivan, 2000a), language proficiency (Davies, 2009; Norton, 2005), and learner acquaintanceship (Norton, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2002).

Personality, particularly in terms of extroversion/introversion, has also received considerable empirical attention. For example, the influence of the extroversion level of candidates' interlocutors on the candidates' test scores has been studied in paired tests (Berry, 1993, 1997) and group tests (Berry, 2004; Ockey, 2006), and the interesting findings are that extroverts tend to score higher in paired tests when placed with another extrovert, but tend to score higher in group tests when placed with introverts. According to Ockey (2006), candidates' extroversion level also positively correlates with their own performance. However, a more recent study by Gan (2011) found no significant correlations between test-takers' extroversion level and test scores or discourse measures of accuracy, fluency, and complexity, although

some difference was noted in the qualitative analysis of the interactional behavior of an extroverted student and an introverted student.

There are also a number of studies which examine the interaction between different factors. For instance, O'Sullivan (2000b) looked at the interaction between the influences of the candidate's gender, the partner's personality, and their acquaintanceship. Bonk and Van Moere (2004) investigated the combined influence of personality, interlocutors' proficiency level, and gender on individuals' scores. Nakatsuhara (2011) examined the interaction between the test-taker characteristics of extroverted/introverted personality and proficiency level on the one hand, and group size on the other, in a group oral test. She found extroversion to be a more important factor in groups of four than in groups of three, while the effect of proficiency level was higher in groups of three than in groups of four.

2.1.2.2 Discourse approaches to speaking test development and validation

Discourse analytic approaches, in particular conversation analysis (CA), have gained currency over the past two decades in testing research related to speaking test development and validation. This is in part a response to the call for obtaining an insider's view of speaking assessments (van Lier, 1989), for which conversation analysis, with its tenet of taking the participant's (emic) perspective, offers a particularly relevant methodological approach. Galaczi (2008), who adopted a mixed-methods approach, argued that the qualitative, microanalytic focus of CA complements quantitative methodologies, allowing researchers to go beyond examining test scores and extend the analytical focus to the test discourse itself. This also enables scrutiny of whether there is a good match between the scores and the candidates' discourse, providing validity evidence for the scores (*ibid.*).

Discourse analytic studies of speaking assessments emerged in the early 1990s and the body of research has expanded rapidly since then. There has been a growing number of discourse analytic studies on the nature of test discourse in different speaking test formats (e.g. Brown, 2006; Egbert, 1998; Gan, Davison & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; He & Dai, 2006; Kormos, 1999; Lazaraton, 1991, 1992, 1997, 2002; Young, 1995; Young & Milanovic, 1992); studies on the impact of the interlocutor's interactional conduct on the candidate's discourse (e.g. Brown, 2003, 2005;

Lazaraton, 1996); as well as the relationship between test discourse and the scores awarded (e.g. May, 2009; Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010; Ross & prBerwick, 1992).

Discourse-based studies have made remarkable contributions to speaking test development and validation. Firstly, as mentioned above, these studies problematized the validity claims of the Oral Proficiency Interview (McNamara, Hill & May, 2002). With the emergence of studies which analyzed the discourse of OPI and compared it with everyday conversation (e.g. Egbert, 1998; Kormos, 1999; Johnson & Tyler, 1998; Lazaraton, 1991, 1992, 1997), the validity issues with the OPI became more transparent, and growing popularity of the paired and group formats ensued.

Discourse analysis has also proved a useful instrument in developing empirically-based assessment criteria and rating scales (McNamara, Hill & May, 2002). The importance of this lies in the fact that rating scales and criteria, as well as their interpretation by raters, serve as *de facto* test constructs in speaking assessments (*ibid.*). The study by Galaczi (2008) offers one such example. She conducted a conversation analysis of the test discourse in the validation of the FCE rating scale, and found agreement between the candidates' interactional patterns and the scores for the assessment criterion 'Interactive Communication (IC)'. Galaczi (2008) concludes that the ability to link the score descriptors to the discourse in actual test performance provides an empirical basis of the marking scheme.

On the same principle, analysis of candidate discourse can also uncover potential problems with existing rating scales and assessment criteria. For example, the qualitative analysis in Brooks' (2009) study comparing candidates' performance in the paired format and the individual interview format showed that the difference in candidates' performance was more pronounced than the scores suggested. The paired format generated a much more complex interaction exhibiting a wider variety of interactional features than the individual format, but the existing rating scale failed to tap into them. Brooks therefore proposed modifying the rating scale incorporating these features.

Apart from the above contributions, findings of discourse-based studies of speaking assessments can also raise test developers' and raters' awareness of the issue concerning unbalanced participation and asymmetric interactions in certain

pairs or groups (Galaczi, 2008), as well as provide feedback on the teaching and learning of speaking skills and identify problematic areas (Gan et al., 2008).

2.1.2.3 Discourse and interaction in speaking tests: Key findings and issues

In this section I review some representative studies of the discourse in different speaking test formats, and outline the key findings and issues.

Oral Proficiency Interview

As mentioned, discourse analytic studies of the OPI have challenged its validity claims, revealing the differences between the interactional organization of OPI and that of everyday conversation, the relatively narrow range of interactional functions OPI elicits from candidates, and the asymmetrical power relations between the interviewer and the candidate. The first study reviewed below (Brown, 2003) offers further insights on how the interviewer might affect the candidate's performance. The second and third, Kormos (1999) and Okada (2010), present evidence and arguments that, contrary to studies cited above, support the validity of the OPI.

Brown's (2003) study specifically targeted the variation in the interactional behavior of interviewers and its impact on candidates' performance and raters' perception of candidates' ability. She compared two interviews in the IELTS speaking test involving the same candidate but two different interviewers. The analysis showed that one interviewer provided demonstration of understanding (e.g. formulations, assessments) and expression of interest, and used closed questions to establish topics while using open questions to elicit extended responses. In contrast, the other interviewer's discourse was characterized by infrequent positive feedback and little explicit statement of interest. Moreover, he used closed questions to elicit extended responses, which was misinterpreted by the candidate. The raters' verbal reports attested to the effect of the interviewers' disparate interactional behavior on the raters' impressions of the candidate's interactional ability. Accordingly, Brown (2003) called for more interviewer training to narrow the diversity of interviewer styles that present different levels of challenges to candidates.

Kormos (1999) compared the non-scripted interview phase and the role-play phase in 30 OPIs for an English language examination in Hungary, combining conversation analysis and quantitative analysis. Findings about the non-scripted interviews corroborated earlier critiques of the OPI: candidate-initiated topics were often rejected while examiner-initiated topics were mostly ratified, and examiners frequently interrupted candidates' talk, attesting to the asymmetrical power relation between the two parties. In the role-play phase, however, candidates were shown to have more opportunities (to a statistically significant degree) to initiate new topics and have their topics ratified. The interactions displayed the characteristics of ordinary conversations in that they were 'reactively contingent, and powers and duties are equally distributed among the participants' (p.180). Kormos (1999) concluded that while some components of conversation management (e.g. to reject new topics; to initiate opening/closing of the conversation) were not assessed in the non-scripted interview, the role-play format successfully elicited a wider range of conversational abilities in candidates.

Okada (2010), while questioning Kormos's (1999) quantification of interruptions and dismissal of their sequential environment and participants' orientation, takes a similar position towards the validity of the OPI. He points out the issue that previous studies typically focused on the interview sequence, while other assessment tasks were (e.g. role-play) often left unexamined, resulting in insufficient validation (Okada, 2010, p.1648). Accordingly, Okada's study set out to investigate the construct validity of the role-play, and that of the OPI as a combination of the interviewer-led sequence and the role-play. Based on the conversation analysis of 71 role-played interactions, Okada (2010) argues that while the interactional structure of the OPI might be distinct from ordinary conversation, the interactional competencies displayed by the candidates performing in the role-play are the same as those competencies required in conversation. These interactional competencies include turn-taking, repair, designing a turn for a particular action, and understanding a projected action, based on the components in Kasper's (2006) definition. A (stronger) argument for construct validity of the OPI can thus be established by taking account of the full range of tasks it includes (Okada, 2010).

Paired format

Studies of the paired format have mainly found its advantage over the examiner-candidate format in eliciting interaction that is more symmetrical in power (however, see ‘asymmetric pattern’ in Galaczi (2008) below), and a broader range of candidates’ abilities related to managing interaction. A key issue, on the other hand, is the co-constructed nature of interactional patterns and achievements, and its relation to rating decisions.

Brooks (2009) compared candidates’ performance in the ‘individual’ (examiner-candidate) format and the ‘paired’ (candidate-candidate) format. She found candidates’ scores to be generally higher in the paired format and more similar to each other. The analysis identified features in candidates’ discourse such as prompting elaboration, finishing sentences, referring to partner’s ideas, and paraphrasing. These features, related to intersubjectivity and understanding each other’s utterances, were less frequent or absent in the individual format. The analysis therefore yielded evidence that the paired format elicits a wider range of interactional features.

Galaczi (2008) examined peer interaction in the paired task component of the Cambridge FCE speaking test. Drawing on the criteria *mutuality* (i.e. ‘creation of shared meaning from one turn to the next’), *equality* (i.e. ‘work distribution among the participants’) (p.97), and *conversational dominance* (Itakura, 2001), Galaczi (2008) delineated four patterns of interaction in the paired task: *collaborative*, *parallel*, *asymmetric*, and a *blend* of two patterns. The *collaborative* pattern was characterized by high levels of mutuality and equality, where candidates developed topics initiated by oneself as well as those by the partner, related to partner’s talk before introducing something new. It also featured frequent follow-up questions, and overlaps and latches. The interaction was analyzed as following a *parallel* pattern when candidates engaged little with each other’s ideas but focused on developing their own contributions, exhibiting high equality but low mutuality. Turn-taking would be characterized by lengthy gaps in some cases or competition for the floor in others. The interaction was *asymmetric* when there was moderate mutuality and low equality, with unbalanced quantity of talk and infrequent expansion of other-initiated topics. The dominating candidate could either be ‘domineering’, appropriating the

floor with competitive overlaps and interruptions; or ‘facilitative’, having to prompt their partner to talk by asking questions as a result of partner’s passiveness (Galaczi, 2008, p.110). This taxonomy has been used in a number of subsequent studies (e.g. May, 2009; Nakatsuhara, 2011; Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014) in describing interactional patterns in paired/group speaking tests.

May (2009), one of the pioneering rater studies on paired speaking tests, focused on dyads with the *asymmetric* interactional pattern, and investigated whether raters compensate for or penalize candidates for their roles in co-constructing such unbalanced participation patterns. The raters’ perspectives were gained through analyzing candidate discourse in conjunction with raters’ notes, stimulated recall, and rater discussion. Importantly, features such as mutual comprehensibility, authenticity, and quality of interaction, were found to be aspects that raters considered mutual achievement. This also affects raters’ judgment or interpretation of individual candidates’ ability, as seen in the same candidate being awarded different scores in an ‘asymmetric’ dyad and a ‘collaborative’ dyad. In a follow-up study, May (2011) again identified several features which were considered mutual achievements by raters, attesting to the co-constructed nature of interaction. She concluded by proposing shared scores to be awarded for interactional effectiveness in low-stakes classroom assessments.

A comprehensive overview of research on paired speaking tests is given by Taylor and Wigglesworth (2009), the editorial introduction for a special issue of *Language Testing*, where they outline the issues surrounding the practice of and research on paired speaking tests.

Group format

For group speaking tests, quite a number of quantitative studies are available (e.g. Bonk & Ockey, 2003; Bonk & Van Moere, 2004; Kobayashi & Van Moere, 2004; O’Sullivan & Nakatsuhara, 2011; Van Moere, 2006). Qualitative validation studies, however, are relatively few. Among those available and to be reviewed below, two supplemented their quantitative results with qualitative analysis (He & Dai, 2006; Nakatsuhara, 2011), and three qualitative studies examined candidates’

discourse in the SBA Group Interaction task in Hong Kong (Gan, 2010; Gan et al., 2008; Luk, 2010).

Nakatsuhara (2011) began with a quantitative analysis of the effects of personality and language proficiency on the quantity of talk and topic initiation moves in groups of four and groups of three. The second part of the paper reported findings about interactional patterns in the two group sizes from the conversation analysis. The main findings were collaborative atmosphere in groups of three, but avoidance behavior and mechanical turn-taking in groups of four.

As evidence of collaboration in groups of three, Nakatsuhara (2011) identified instances of joint completion of utterances, especially when a member was having difficulty in formulating an idea; as well as ‘interactional scaffolding’, inviting reticent group members to participate through devices such as sequence openers and supportive response tokens (p.495-496). In contrast, the quieter members tended to remain silent even when invited to participate in groups of four. A more striking feature in the interactions among groups of four was unnatural, mechanical turn-taking. Some groups followed a pre-determined turn-taking order, and candidates were seen to give non-verbal cues to the next speaker (either in the pre-determined order, or according to seating configuration) to talk. Candidates frequently presented their own opinion without ratifying or commenting on others’ ideas, and their discourse featured mechanical use of ‘how about you?’ or ‘what do you think?’ as a device to hand over the floor, ‘as if it had signaled the end of their responsibility in talking’ (p.502).

He and Dai (2006) examined the degree of interactive exchange in the group discussion section of the College English Test – Spoken English Test (CET-SET) in China, specifically the extent to which the task elicits eight interactional language functions (ILFs) as intended by the test developers: (1) (dis)agreeing, (2) asking for opinions and information, (3) challenging, (4) supporting, (5) modifying, (6) persuading, (7) developing, and (8) negotiating meaning. The authors coded the candidate discourse from 48 group discussions according to the eight ILF categories and counted the frequency of each category. They found that the most frequently elicited ILFs were (1) and (2), accounting for 49.5% and 24% respectively. The other six, which He and Dai (2006) argued are important indicators of candidates’

engagement in communicative interaction, had low frequencies, with each accounting for less than 10%.

The qualitative analysis explained the six low frequencies in terms of candidates' orientation to the group discussion as an assessment event rather than a genuine communicative situation. The authors noted that candidates, with their concerns for accuracy and fluency, might have taken advantage of the time while other candidates are speaking to plan their own next turn, and concentrated on expressing their own ideas rather than responding actively and relevantly to others.

Based on the low frequency counts of six ILF categories, the authors concluded that the group discussions demonstrate low degrees of interaction. While this might be true of the groups under investigation, some questions about the findings on which the conclusion was based remain: How are the frequency figures to be interpreted? What frequency should count as sufficiently high for each interactional language function? Are 'supporting' and 'challenging' (coded as giving reasons or evidence for agreeing and disagreeing respectively) expected to be as frequent as agreeing/disagreeing? Do the six low-frequency ILFs occur in much higher frequency in ordinary conversation? Importantly, analysis by means of coding and counting ignores the quality of a response (see Okada, 2010), for instance its sequential appropriateness to the previous turn.

He and Dai (2006) also cautioned that 'the inadequate elicitation of ILFs from the candidates may well pose a problem for measuring their speaking ability in terms of the ability to engage in communicative interaction' (p.393). However, it remains unclear whether this is a task-inherent deficiency (a validity problem) or a reflection of different candidates' distinct levels of interactional competence. Additional evidence, perhaps from comparing higher- and lower-scoring candidates, might prove useful.

Group format: The SBA Group Interaction

In Chapter 1 it was noted that the objectives of the SBA initiative, as stated in the Teachers' Handbook published by the Examination Authority, are to elicit and assess 'natural and authentic spoken language' (HKEAA, 2009, p.7), providing an assessment context that is 'more closely approximating real-life and low-stress

conditions' (p.3). Validation studies of the SBA Group Interaction task to date have yielded mixed results regarding whether the task has achieved its aim of eliciting students' authentic oral language use.

Gan, Davison, and Hamp-Lyons (2008) presented a detailed conversation analysis of one group interaction from a databank of 500, focusing on topic organization and development. They identified two types of topic shifts (see Sacks, 1992) in the data: 'marked' topic shifts, where the speaker used particular turn design features to signal the introduction of a new topic; and 'stepwise' topic transition. This latter kind of topic transition was achieved by the speaker referring to the content in the previous turn and introducing new elements as something relevant, which Gan et al. (2008) argued constitutes 'an important aspect of collaboration and negotiation in the construction and development of an emergent topic' (p.330). The authors concluded that the topic organization in the group interaction exhibited features 'both similar to and different from those typical of everyday conversation or other institutional discourse' (p.329), although no discussion of the differences was given in the analysis. While acknowledging that their findings are based on only one interaction, Gan et al. (2008) maintained that the similarities in topic negotiation and development shared between the group interaction and everyday conversation offer evidence for authenticity of the assessment task.

In another study, Gan (2010) compared the students' discourse in a higher-scoring group and a lower-scoring group from the same databank of 500. He found that, in the higher-scoring group, participants responded contingently to each other's contributions. By fitting their comments closely to the previous speakers' talk, these participants displayed their comprehension of the prior discourse and contributed to the development of mutual understanding, or 'intersubjectivity' (Heritage, 1997). In contrast, participants in the lower-scoring group often reacted minimally to previous speaker's talk using tokens such as 'yeah', 'ah ha', or 'okay' (Gan, 2010, p.11). Their discourse was more rigidly structured and reliant on the question prompts, but there was also some negotiation of form and meaning, where students helped one another search for the right forms to express meaning. In alignment with Gan et al. (2008), Gan (2010) concluded that the discourse exhibited characteristics of an authentic task that 'emphasize[s] genuine communication and real-world connection'

and ‘authentically reflects candidates’ interactional skills’ (p.599). Another significant aspect of Gan’s (2010) study is his finding that the (in)ability to engage in on-line interaction and produce contingent responses seemed to be linked to different levels of speaking proficiency as reflected in the scores.

The study by Luk (2010) painted a considerably different picture. She found that the overall structural and turn-taking organization of the SBA group interactions exhibited ‘features of ritualized and institutionalized talk rather than those of ordinary conversation’ (p.47). In her discourse analysis of 11 group interactions involving 43 female students in a secondary school, participants were seen to engage in orderly turn-taking practices with turns passed on in an (anti-)clockwise direction, corroborating Nakatsuhara’s (2011) findings about groups of four candidates. Along with the mechanical turn-taking, students tended to front those speaking turns in which each member delivered extended, pre-planned speech in the first round of turns, before the whole group started giving responses.

There was little evidence of spontaneous interaction in real time and contingent responses to previous speaker talk among student groups, but frequent use of formulaic agreement (e.g. ‘I agree with you’) that came without further elaboration, therefore appearing superficial and perfunctory (Luk, 2010). Indeed, as one student shrewdly commented in the interview, ‘I agree with you’ was often deployed as a turn-gaining strategy, or sometimes a gap-filling strategy where no one ventured a response to the previous speaker. Students were also seen to deploy ‘avoidance of negotiation’ (p.39) as an impression management strategy. They avoided seeking clarifications from each other but instead concealed problems, in contrast with the lower-scoring group in Gan (2010).

Data from student and teacher interviews in Luk’s (2010) study shed further light on inauthentic aspects of the SBA group interactions. Some students admitted having written a script, and were delivering it mechanically with very little exchange. Others reported pre-planning the assessed interaction, assigning particular group members to start or conclude the discussion, making the interaction look very much like acting. In the teacher interview, the teacher-rater lamented how the students focused on delivering their own prepared speech or ideas and were concerned with reading their own notes while others were talking, making little effort to genuinely

listen and then respond. This echoed the tendencies identified in the studies of group oral tests by He and Dai (2006) and Nakatsuhara (2011). Based on the findings, Luk (2010) concluded that students were engaged in ‘maintaining an impression of being effective interlocutors *for scoring purposes rather than for authentic communication*’ [my emphasis] (p.25).

Implications for the present study

As seen above, the different research efforts have generated somewhat mixed results concerning the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task. The main issues where conflicting evidence and arguments exist are: the extent to which the SBA group interactions resemble everyday conversation; the degree of spontaneous, on-line interaction with contingent responses to each other among participants; and, ultimately, whether the task elicits authentic oral language use.

The mixed results can perhaps be partly explained by differences in how the task was implemented. Indeed, it is not difficult to note a marked difference in the amount of preparation time between the first two studies and Luk’s (2010) study: students received the discussion questions 10 minutes before the assessment in Gan et al. (2008) and Gan (2010), but one day ahead in Luk (2010). However, with the exception of some students’ interview reports in Luk (2010), none of the studies investigated in detail what students actually did during preparation time, or established links between the observed interactional patterns and the pre-task planning activities. Where such differences exist, it is crucial for validation research to address these potential vulnerabilities in task implementation that allow students to approach the task with collusive behavior and contrived interaction such as those revealed in Luk (2010).

Also of significance is how the lack of on-line interaction and contingent responses to previous speakers’ talk was reported in both Gan’s (2010) and Luk’s (2010) studies, which raises the important question of whether this is discourse evidence of some students’ lower levels of interactional competence, a consequence of extensive pre-task planning, or both. In other words, we need to ask whether it is possible that this aspect of task implementation and engagement has ‘masked’ or ‘bleached’ the differences between students with higher and lower levels of

interactional competence, i.e. students who are able to produce spontaneous responses the content of which is contingent on previous speakers' talk, and those unable to do so.

For issues about SBA Group Interaction's validity as an assessment, continued research effort is needed in the close examination of the nature of interaction in the test discourse, particularly the extent to which the assessment task generates authentic or contrived interaction, with spontaneous, contingent responses or ones that pretend they are, as well as how teachers recognize these aspects in rating. These are some of the issues investigated in the present study.

2.1.2.4 The importance of examining task implementation

In light of the mixed results about the authenticity of discourse elicited in the SBA Group Interaction task in previous studies, the importance of investigating task implementation and engagement is apparent. The term *task implementation conditions*, referring to aspects such as time limit, pre-task planning time, number of participants, comes from Skehan (1998), who distinguishes these aspects from *task qualities* (e.g. task types). In the language testing literature, several authors have emphasized the need to investigate task implementation in speaking tests. In concluding her study on the effect of planning time on subsequent speaking task performance, Wigglesworth (1997) recommended looking into what candidates actually do during pre-task planning time in future studies. Building on earlier arguments by Messick (1994), McNamara (1997) asserted that validity cannot be achieved through test design alone, but needs to be established with empirical evidence from actual test performance 'under operational conditions' (p.456). Applied to the case of SBA Group Interaction, this means including an examination of students' activities during the preparation time, which is a non-assessed yet integral part of the assessment task. More recently, Nakatsuhara (2011) also remarked that 'task implementation conditions in group oral testing have as yet been under-researched' (p.485).

The argument for examining task implementation and authenticity of engagement is most fully elaborated by Spence-Brown (2001), based on empirical evidence from her study of an assessment task given to students in a Japanese course

at an Australian university. The students were told to conduct a tape-recorded interview with a Japanese native speaker they had not previously met. Retrospective interviews which incorporated stimulated recall revealed several aspects of students' task engagement which threw into question the authenticity and validity of the task. These included selecting a known informant and pretending otherwise; rehearsing and re-taping the interview; as well as preparing questions, predicting informants' answers and planning the appropriate responses to them. One student even had the informant prepare her answers and explain them to him before the taped interview. While predicting answers and preparing responses to them is an authentic strategy for 'real-life' interviews, this in effect created a scripted interview which enabled students to appear to be engaging in authentic interaction without actually taking the risk of doing so (Spence-Brown, 2001).

An exemplar of contrived interaction involved a student, Kim, who in a question-and-answer sequence asked his informant if she had ever felt lonely since she came to Australia. The informant answered that she had experienced loneliness, particularly at times when she was ill. Kim responded by saying that he was also an overseas student and therefore understood how she felt, showing empathy to his informant. As Spence-Brown (2001) noted, the surface discourse ostensibly suggested successful interaction, with the student interviewer responding appropriately to the informant's answer. However, the stimulated recall revealed that Kim did not actually understand the word 'ill' in the informant's answer, but drew on a pre-scripted response based on the prediction that he should display empathy to his informant. This contrived nature of Kim's response might well elude a teacher-rater.

Based on such findings, Spence-Brown (2001) challenged the validity of the task: while the task is designed to engage students' use of 'on-line' linguistic competence, it in fact does not. She cautioned that the nature of task engagement is not always transparent in the task performance (the taped interview in this case), and recommended assessment research to examine authenticity from the view of task implementation rather than task design alone.

2.1.2.5 Pre-task planning time (preparation time) as a task implementation condition

As mentioned above, the authenticity of students' talk exchange in the SBA Group Interaction task might be affected by the task implementation condition of extensive preparation time and the pre-task planning activities students engage in. In the SLA and testing literature on the question of whether pre-task planning time benefits subsequent task performance, the two strands of studies – in testing and non-testing contexts, respectively – have also produced different results.

As reviewed in Nitta and Nakatsuhara (2014), previous research on task-based language teaching (TBLT) has found planning time beneficial from a cognitive perspective, having a positive effect on task performance most notably in fluency, and to a lesser extent in terms of accuracy and complexity. Ellis (2009) provides a comprehensive overview of these studies. However, as pointed out by Nitta and Nakatsuhara, the studies focused primarily on the cognitive complexity and linguistic demands of the task, and did not investigate the interactional aspects of the task performance.

According to Wigglesworth and Elder (2010), the benefit of pre-task planning time on subsequent task performance in language testing contexts is less clear. While a few studies have attested to a positive impact on accuracy (Wigglesworth, 1997), complexity (Xi, 2005), or both, along with 'breakdown' fluency (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005), others have found little or no benefits for test scores or the discourse output (Wigglesworth, 2000; Iwashita, McNamara, & Elder, 2001; Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010). Similar to the TBLT studies, the overwhelming majority of these testing studies have focused on proficiency measures – accuracy, fluency, and complexity – of the discourse output, as the studies have been focusing exclusively on monologic rather than interactive tasks (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014).

Nitta and Nakatsuhara's (2014) pioneering study of the impact of planning time on performance in a paired speaking test revealed a potentially detrimental effect on the quality of interaction. Analysis of the candidates' discourse showed that the interactions *without* the three-minute planning time were characterized by collaborative dialogues, where candidates engaged with each other's ideas and incorporated their partners' ideas into their own utterances. In contrast, the planned

interactions consisted of more extended monologic turns where candidates only superficially responded to their partner's talk and concentrated on delivering what they prepared. The significance of the study is that, while the quantitative analysis found slight benefits of planning time for candidates' test scores, the qualitative analysis of interactional patterns indicated that planning time might inhibit the task from tapping into what it is meant to measure: the ability to interact collaboratively.

Two important points emerge from the above review. The first is that existing studies of how pre-task planning affects assessed performance have mostly focused on proficiency measures in the discourse output. The second is that, in testing studies, there is a gap when it comes to looking at pre-task planning effects on candidates' performance in interactive (paired or group) task formats. Further, there seems to be a general lack of studies which investigate what candidates actually do during the pre-task planning time (Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010), let alone drawing links between the planning activities and the extent of candidates' authentic engagement in the subsequent dialogic task. This is perhaps because in most high-stakes assessment contexts, candidates are not given extended preparation time or the opportunity to talk to fellow candidates in the same pair/group before the assessment. The present study fills these gaps, by examining classroom-based assessment situated within a high-stakes examination, with the assessment task implemented in conditions that follow from a flexible assessment policy and engender particular kinds of pre-task planning activities and strategies.

The importance for validation research to investigate the task implementation conditions and the authenticity of engagement by students was set out by Gan et al. (2008), who maintained that the SBA Group Interaction task provides opportunities for students to display their linguistic and interactional abilities in conducting talk exchange with one another, 'provided *authentic conditions for communication* are established' (p.331, my emphasis). The importance of studying the task implementation conditions under which students' talk exchange is elicited is also closely related to the constitutive features of interactional competence, which will be explored in the next section.

2.2 Interactional Competence

What is *interactional competence* (IC)? How does it differ from communicative competence, and what are its component features? Since its formulation in the applied linguistic and language testing literature, it has remained a rather elusive construct. As Young (2011) remarks, ‘The term has been used by different scholars with different shades of meaning in several different areas of second language learning, teaching, and testing’ (p.426). Similarly, Walsh (2012) notes that ‘Since Kramsch’s 1986 paper, many researchers have struggled with the notion of interactional competence without really coming to a convincing and workable definition’ (p.3).

This section begins with an overview of the theoretical development of IC, its nature, and its implications and challenges for language testing and assessment. The section then reviews some of the research on IC in second language learning and language testing. Finally, some component features of IC identified in the literature will be discussed, with particular reference to two features that are relevant to the present study.

2.2.1 Theoretical development

2.2.1.1 Competence as individual ability: earlier theoretical formulations

Theoretical discussion of ‘competence’ in (applied) linguistics is generally taken to begin with the notion of *linguistic competence* in Chomsky’s (1965) theory of generative grammar. In this theory, linguistic competence refers to an ‘underlying system of rules that has been mastered by the speaker-hearer’ (Chomsky 1965, p.4), or as Hymes (1972) puts it, ‘the tacit knowledge of language structure [...with which] one can produce and understand an infinite set of sentences’ (p.271). The object of the theory is to provide a description of this underlying system of rules. At the outset of his discussion, Chomsky (1965) establishes the premise that ‘Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly [...]’ (p.3). He thus posits ‘a fundamental distinction between *competence* (the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language) and *performance* (the actual use of language in concrete situations)’ (p.4,

original emphasis). He goes on to remark that performance is ‘a direct reflection of competence’ only under ‘the idealization set forth’ (in the quote above), and that in reality, performance ‘obviously could not directly reflect competence’ (*ibid.*). As Canale and Swain (1980) rightly point out, therefore, Chomsky’s (1965) theory of competence is in essence ‘equivalent to a theory of grammar and is concerned with the linguistic rules that can generate and describe the grammatical (as opposed to ungrammatical sentences of a language’ (p.3). Hymes (1972) acknowledged that the theoretical perspective underlying modern linguistics at the time (including Chomsky’s theory) was ‘relevant in ways that it is important always to have in mind’, but contends that such a theory is inadequate, in that ‘there is a body of linguistic data and problems that would be left without theoretical insight’ (p.270).

Several criticisms have been leveled at Chomsky’s theoretical formulation of linguistic competence and performance. Firstly, such a conceptualization of linguistic competence ‘posits ideal objects in abstraction’ and ignores the sociolinguistic variation in language use and the sociocultural features in language acquisition (Hymes, 1972, p.271). Secondly, Chomsky’s theory presents a limited view of ‘performance’, according it the inferior status of ‘a residual category for the theory’ with the connotation that it is the ‘imperfect manifestation of the underlying system’ (Hymes, 1972, p.272), and ‘mainly concerns the psychological factors that are involved in the perception and production of speech’ (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.3). Relatedly, language competence within Chomsky’s theory does not account for language in its communicative use. Hymes (1972) puts it bluntly: ‘Such a model implies naming to be the sole use of speech’ (p.278), and Canale and Swain (1980) remark that the theory ‘provides no place for consideration of the appropriateness of sociocultural significance of an utterance in the situational and verbal context in which it is used’ (p.4).

Hymes (1972) advances the notion of *communicative competence*, a broader theory that goes ‘beyond the [Chomskyan] notion of ideal fluency in a homogeneous community’ (p.287) and accounts for ‘differential competence within a heterogeneous speech community’ (p.274) in terms of sociocultural features, to be ‘[applied] to work with disadvantaged children and with children whose primary language or language variety is different from that of their school [...]’ (p.287).

Hymes's (1972) concept of communicative competence expands on Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence to include aspects of language use. He proposes four parameters on which judgments of communicative conduct are to be based, namely whether (and to what degree) something is (1) 'formally *possible*', (2) '*feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available', (3) '*appropriate* [...] in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated', and (4) 'in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails' (p.281). In Canale and Swain's (1980) characterization, these four parameters correspond to the grammatical, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, and probabilistic systems of competence respectively.

Following Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980) developed an applied linguistic theory of communicative competence. The purpose of the theoretical framework, as they explain it, is to 'serve as a set of guidelines in terms of which communicative approaches to second language teaching methodologies and assessment instruments may be organized and developed' (p.1). It addressed a gap they perceived in the literature: 'little serious attention has been devoted to criteria for evaluation and levels of achievement/proficiency with respect to a given theory of communicative competence' (p.25). Canale and Swain's (1980) framework of communicative competence has three components: (1) *grammatical competence* – 'knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology' (p.29); (2) *sociolinguistic competence* – including 'sociocultural rules of use' which 'specify the ways in which utterances are produced and understood appropriately', and 'rules of discourse' in terms of cohesion and coherence (p.30); and (3) *strategic competence* – compensatory 'verbal and nonverbal communication strategies' used in communication breakdowns (p.30). Canale and Swain (1980) maintain a theoretical distinction between communicative competence and communicative performance, in that the realization of competence 'in the actual production and comprehension of utterances' is subjected to 'general psychological constraints that are unique to performance' (p.6). Emphasizing that 'one cannot directly measure competence' but only indirectly through observable performance, they argue that 'assessment instruments must be designed so as to address not only communicative competence but also communicative performance,

i.e. the actual demonstration of this knowledge in *real* second language situations and for *authentic* communication purposes' (*ibid.*, original emphasis).

Building on Canale and Swain's (1980) framework, Bachman (1990) developed the theoretical framework of *communicative language ability* (CLA) for language testing, defined as 'consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing it, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use' (p.84). Bachman's taxonomy of CLA's components incorporates grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence from Canale and Swain's framework, subsumed under the category of *language competence*. A second component of CLA is *strategic competence*, which carries a considerably different sense from Canale and Swain's use of the term (McNamara, 1997; Young, 2008). This refers to the ability to set goals, assess the communicative resources available to oneself and one's interlocutors, and plan the use of these resources. CLA also includes *psychophysiological mechanisms* underlying 'the psychological and physical production and interpretation of language' (Young, 2008, p.98).

2.2.1.2 The 'social' turn of 'competence' and 'interaction' in second language assessment

As seen in the above review, the different conceptualization of language competence in each theory relates to the goal of the theory. Chomsky's (1965) concept of linguistic competence in an ideal speaker-hearer is part of a theory of grammar that describes the underlying system of rules which can generate an infinite set of sentences. Hymes's (1972) notion of communication competence is aimed at a theory that accounts for the contextual variation in language use and the sociocultural variation in language acquisition. The theoretical frameworks of Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990) were developed with a view to describing and measuring competence in second language teaching and assessment.

The different aims notwithstanding, common to these theoretical formulations of 'competence' discussed above is the overarching focus on the individual. Some applied linguistic scholars began to question such over-emphasis on the individual's

ability, and called for a shift from a predominantly psychological orientation in second language teaching, learning, and assessment to (also considering) the social dimension (e.g. He & Young, 1998; Kramsch, 1986; McNamara, 1997). He and Young (1998), and Young in his subsequent formulations of the theory of Interactional Competence (2000, 2008, 2011), view competence (as assessed in Oral Proficiency Interviews) as neither simply the knowledge nor performance of an individual, but something jointly constructed and achieved in interaction. He and Young (1998) note that ‘interaction’ in Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) formulation is based on a psychological model, referring not to interaction between participants in the speaking test, but to the degree to which the test-taker simultaneously draws on different kinds of knowledge in doing the test (e.g. strategic competence, metacognitive strategies, affective schemata). In other words, ‘interaction’ remains internal to the individual, between various kinds of knowledge. He and Young (1998) criticize this model for ‘neglect[ing] the social, dialogic dimension of cognition and emotion [...] embedded in distributed systems and are shaped and accomplished interactionally’, and maintain that ‘... even the display of what is in an individual’s head is mediated by moment-by-moment interactional contingencies’ (p.3).

In an influential paper, McNamara (1997) also calls for language testing research ‘to broaden our view of performance in second language performance assessment to permit a renewed focus on the social dimension of interaction’ (p.459). He writes that while the psychological orientation in L2 performance assessments is understandable as partly aiming to ‘model the nature of communicative ability within the individual... the intrinsically social nature of performance needs to be recognized’ (McNamara, 1997, p.446). Using a compelling example where a candidate in the Occupational English Test becomes ‘handicapped’ when the interlocutor is sarcastic, interrupts, or is too passive, he highlights the social and co-constructed nature of performance in L2 speaking assessments.

McNamara goes on to present a comprehensive account and critique of Bachman’s (1990) model of communicative language ability, and comments that under this psychological model of an individual’s ability, ‘the socially interactive role of the candidate, and the interactive nature of both the target language use situation and the test language use situation, are understood as cognitive issues’

(McNamara, 1997, p.450-451). As McNamara points out, there are two problematic aspects to this. First, the dynamic aspects of social interaction are seen as ‘a source of unwanted variance in test scores’ rather than part of what is being assessed (p.451). Second, an exclusively psychometric orientation oversimplifies the relation between observed performance and the candidate’s ability:

The focus on the ability of the candidate in conventional approaches within second language assessment views the candidate in a strangely isolated light, it is he or she who is held to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the performance, in this sense the inevitable gap between a test and real life appears unusually stark. A danger of too exclusive a focus on defining the nature of candidate ability in cognitive terms is that the performance is seen as in some way *a simple projection of the candidate’s ability*.

(McNamara, 1997, p.452-453, my emphasis)

Accordingly, McNamara proposed alternative views – with a social orientation – on interaction in L2 speaking assessments, drawing on three theoretical perspectives: Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, Halliday, and work on co-construction. He stresses the importance of taking into account the social nature of interaction in speaking assessments:

We must correct our view of the candidate as an isolated figure, who bears the entire brunt of the performance, this abstraction from reality conceals a potentially Kafkaesque world of others whose behaviour and interpretation shape the perceived significance of the candidate’s efforts but are themselves removed from focus. (p.459)

2.2.1.3 Competence as situated joint achievement: the theory of Interactional Competence

One of the landmarks in the social turn of viewing ‘interaction’ in L2 speaking assessments is Young’s formulation of the theory of Interactional Competence (He & Young, 1998; Young, 2000, 2008, 2011). This is a radical departure from previous theoretical formulations of competence, which had a predominantly psychological orientation. As Young (2011) himself puts it, ‘IC builds on the theories of competence that preceded it, but it is a very different notion from communicative competence and communicative language ability’ (p.429). He contests Canale and Swain’s (1980) theory of communicative competence on the grounds that, although

their framework situates an individual's language use in social contexts, and helps us understand what he or she needs to know or do in communication,

Such exclusive focus on a single individual's contribution to communication should [...] be problematized in view of current research that has advanced the position that abilities, actions, and activities do not belong to the individual but are jointly constructed by all participants (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995).

(Young, 2000, p.5)

In positioning his theory in relation to earlier versions of communicative competence, Young (2000) characterizes IC as 'a further elaboration of L2 knowledge', adding at least six interactional resources to discourse, pragmatic, and strategic competence, but also 'fundamentally different' in two respects (p.9). Firstly, he posits that IC is not a trait in an individual that can be assessed, but is co-constructed by and distributed among all participants. He attributes this argument to Kramsch (1986), which he considers the precursor for 'contemporary understandings of the competence that is created by all participants in social interaction' (Young, 2011, p.427-428). Secondly, participants' IC is 'local' (i.e. context-specific): the relevant skills 'apply to a given discursive practice and either do not apply or apply in a different configuration to different practices' (Young, 2000, p.10). Thus, Young holds that the theory of IC is a theory of practice rather than a theory of individual cognition (*ibid.*).

From the way Young distinguishes IC from its predecessors, we see two aspects of IC which are fundamental to its nature:

1. IC is co-constructed
2. IC is context-specific or context-sensitive

The co-constructed nature of IC

Throughout his writings on IC (2000, 2008, 2011), Young emphasizes that IC is a joint achievement rather than an individual's property or trait, representing a profoundly different conception of 'competence' from previous theoretical formulations.

The 'weak' version of his argument is that 'an individual's knowledge and employment of these [identity, linguistic, and interactional] resources is *contingent on what other participants do*' (Young, 2011, p.430, my emphasis). That is, the manifestation in discourse of how interactionally competent an individual is, or what

kinds of IC an individual has, depends on what the co-participants in the same interaction do. This aligns with the general view that researchers of paired/group speaking tests have taken in recent works (see discussion below).

However, as reiterated in several publications (2000, 2008, 2011), Young goes beyond this and argues that IC is ‘not the ability of an individual to employ these [linguistic and interactional] resources in any and every social interaction’, but ‘how the resources are employed mutually and reciprocally by all participants in a particular discursive practice’ (Young, 2008, p.101). It is ‘not the knowledge or the possession of an individual person, but it is co-constructed by all participants in a discursive practice’ (*ibid.*). And, it is ‘not what a person *knows*, but what a person *does* together with others’ [original emphasis] (p.106). Young’s formulation of IC therefore completely discards the individual, cognitive element of competence. This ‘strong’ version of the theory of IC, in its early formulation in He and Young (1998), even goes to the extreme of claiming that ‘Interactional competence is not an attribute of an individual participant, and thus we cannot say that an individual is interactionally competent’ (p.7). The problems with this strong version of the theory, as well as the conundrums it presents to language testing, will be discussed later in this section.

The view that interactional patterns and achievements are co-constructed was put forward in the seminal paper by Jacoby and Ochs (1995), an introduction to a special issue of *Research on Language and Social Interaction* dedicated to the theme. In their introduction the authors describe *co-construction* as ‘the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality’, which covers ‘a range of interactional processes, including collaboration, cooperation, and coordination’ (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995, p.171). Of particular relevance to the present discussion is the authors’ argument that:

One of the important implications for taking the position that everything is co-constructed through interaction is that it follows that there is a *distributed responsibility* among interlocutors for the creation of sequential coherence, identities, meaning, and events. This means that language, discourse and their effects *cannot be considered deterministically preordained by assumed constructs of individual competence*. (p.177, my emphasis)

This stands in stark contrast with the assumption of linguistic performance as a simple projection of an individual's ability (see McNamara's (1997) comment above). The co-constructed nature of interactional achievements, recognizable by outside observers of an interaction, is illustrated by McNamara (1997). He cites an example from Goodwin (1995), where a stroke left a man, Rob, aphasic, with a linguistic repertoire of 3 words ('yes', 'no', 'and'); but Rob and his caregiver manage to co-construct communication of a range of intentions and reactions as an interactional achievement. Although many researchers do not seem to go as far as Young in dismissing any individual contribution in the conception of interactional competence, the co-constructed nature of interactional patterns, achievements, and by extension, interpretations about individual ability, is now widely recognized in the research literature on speaking assessments from OPI to paired and group formats (e.g. Brooks, 2009; Galaczi, 2008; Gan et al. 2008; Gan 2010; Lazaraton 2002; May 2009, 2011; Nakatsuhara, 2009).

The context-specific/sensitive nature of IC

From the above descriptions, we can see how Young also argues for the context-specific or context-sensitive nature of IC. Young (2011) defines IC as including 'the pragmatic relationship between participants' employment of linguistic and interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed' (p.428). He outlines seven resources (see Section 2.2.4) that participants bring to an interaction, put under three headings: identity resources, linguistic resources, and interactional resources (Young, 2008, 2011).

The social/interactional context of which the talk exchange is a part is embodied in the notion of *discursive practice*, similar to the notions of *interactive practice* proposed by Hall (1995) and *speech event* by Hymes (1974). A discursive practice is defined as 'recurring episodes of social interaction in context, episodes that are of social and cultural significance to a community of speakers' (Young, 2011, p.427). Some examples of discursive practices include an academic lecture, a court trial, a job interview, and a family dinner at home. Importantly, as Young (2011) points out, 'participants have expectations about what happens in a practice and what linguistic and nonverbal resources people employ in constructing the practice'

(p.427). He refers to this as the *interactional architecture*, or configuration of interactional resources, of a discursive practice (Young, 2000, 2008). Thus, interactional competence ‘involves participants recognizing and responding to expectations of what to say and how to say it.’ (Young, 2011, p.427)

As Walsh (2012) notes, the context-specific/sensitive nature of IC is also advanced by a number of other researchers. This is manifest in the definitions of IC in both theoretical and empirical works of IC. The following presents a few examples of these definitions:

IC, that is the *context-specific* constellations of expectations and dispositions about our social worlds that we draw on to navigate our interactions with others, implies the ability to mutually coordinate our actions. It includes knowledge of *social-context-specific* communicative events or activity types, their typical goals and trajectories of actions by which the goals are realized and the conventional behaviors by which participant roles and role relationships are accomplished. Also included is the ability to deploy and to recognize *context-specific* patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organized and practices are ordered. And it includes the prosodic, linguistic, sequential and nonverbal resources conventionally used for producing and interpreting turns and actions [...].

(Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011, p.1-2, my emphasis)

[Interactional competence is] the capacity for using language appropriately, *for particular routines in particular contexts* which might then be relevant for interaction in other equivalent contexts.

(Hellermann, 2008, p.5, my emphasis)

In this study it is defined as participants’ knowledge of *the interactional architecture of a specific discursive practice*, including knowing how to configure a range of resources through which this practice is created [...].

(Cekaite, 2007, p.45, my emphasis)

In other words, to these authors, IC concerns the knowledge of and ability to produce language and interactional behavior appropriate for the particular context within which the talk exchange takes place. However, some authors (e.g. Hellermann, 2008; Young, 2000) note that parts of this knowledge and capacity relevant to one context (or ‘discursive practice’) are transferable to another, where the resources for constructing the discursive practices are shared.

Interactional competence and communicative competence

A note about the relationship between interactional competence and communicative competence is to be made here. As will be seen in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, many empirical studies on IC have focused on aspects of talk exchange (e.g. turn-taking, topic initiation and development). However, in Young's model (2000, 2008, 2011) of Interactional Competence and in several other authors' descriptions (e.g. Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2008), IC is considered to be encompassing as well as going beyond the formal systems of language, and aspects of grammar, vocabulary, and phonology are evaluated in terms of the appropriateness of their use in the interactional context (see discussion in Section 2.2.4). In other words, IC is seen as a new, alternative theoretical conceptualization of the ability of language use, rather than being a subordinate component of communicative competence. The main difference between the theories of interactional competence and communicative competence, as pointed out earlier, lies in the view of competence as residing in the individual or as jointly constructed by participants in performance.

2.2.1.4 Application of the theory in language testing research and validation

How does the theory of Interactional Competence apply to research (in particular, validation research) on speaking tests in interactive formats? In general terms, Young's theory of IC 'seeks to explain the variation in an individual speaker's performance from one discursive practice to another' (Young, 2000, p.4). Although, as discussed above, IC is argued to be context-specific in nature, Young does claim some degree of transferability of IC across contexts:

[T]he investigation of a given discursive practice consists, first, in identifying the particular configuration of resources that form an interactional architecture of that practice and, then, comparing the architecture of that practice with others in order to discover what resources are local to that practice and to what extent the practice shares a configuration of resources with other practices.
(Young, 2000, p.5)

This is in line with the principle of one kind of test validation research, which investigates the extent to which the test-taker's performance in the testing situation is generalizable to the target, non-testing context. Indeed, the inception of Young's

theory of IC (He & Young, 1998; Young, 2000) was closely related to language testing, dealing in particular with Oral Proficiency Interviews. Young (2000) holds that the interface between language testing and applied linguistics is the definition and validation of constructs: with new understandings of language in use, tests that embody such new understandings can be developed.

According to Young (2000), the theory of Interactional Competence ‘invites us to view a performance assessment as a discursive practice’, and the theory provides us with ‘a principled way of generalizing from performance in the discursive practice of a performance assessment to performance in other non-test contexts’ (p.11). In practical terms, the empirical validation work needed is ‘a close analysis [...] of the identity, linguistic, and interactional resources employed by participants in an assessment practice. This interactional architecture of the test may then be compared with discursive practices outside the testing room in which the learner wishes to participate’ (Young, 2011, p.440). He cites the collection of studies on OPIs in Young and He (1998), where systematic comparison of the discourse patterns in OPIs with those in everyday conversation found that OPIs are not authentic tests of conversation as previously assumed, which meant that the extrapolation of test-takers’ performance in the OPIs to non-testing contexts had to be problematized.

The present study also lays its theoretical foundation on this principle. The validity of the SBA Group Interaction task as an assessment of interactional competence is established or challenged through an investigation of the interactional architecture of the GI task, that is, the configuration of identity, linguistic, and interactional resources that participants draw on, the norms of interactional conduct, and the extent to which these are similar to or different from the target real-life discursive practices, such as everyday conversation among peer groups. From this we can make a case about the transferability or generalizability of the assessed performance in the GI task.

However, the application of the theory of Interactional Competence, as it is formulated by Young, is not without problems. Both the co-constructed and context-specific nature of IC present challenges to language testing research and validation. Recall that Young (2008) contends that IC is ‘not the ability [...], the knowledge or the possession of an individual’, but is about ‘how the resources are employed

mutually and reciprocally by all participants in a particular discursive practice' (p.101). In the early formulation of IC, He and Young (1998) even make the rather extreme claim that 'we cannot say that an individual is interactionally competent' (p.7). If interactional competence is *only* a co-constructed achievement, then what do we call an individual's ability to interact, that knowledge and ability to employ the identity, linguistic, and interactional resources appropriate to the specific context of the interaction? It would be counter-intuitive to think that an individual does not possess any kind of ability to interact with others. According to McNamara (1997), this poses a fundamental theoretical challenge:

If we are to take the point that everything is co-constructed in interaction, then it seems that we may only have performances, in Hymes's sense of 'instances of use', not performance in the sense of underlying potential for performance, ability for use. (p.457)

Although Young argues that IC is not something that an individual possesses, he does refer to 'linguistic and interactional resources' that 'participants bring to an interaction' (Young, 2011, p.429) as their individual contributions to it. As such, it seems sensible and more compatible with the psychometric orientation of language testing to take the position that IC is 'an individual's knowledge and employment of these resources [but] is contingent on what other participants do' (Young, 2011, p.430). This 'weak' view of IC,⁷ I would argue, allows some reconciliation between the co-constructed nature of IC and the psychometric orientation to individual competence prevalent in language testing. It also admits the intuitive concept that an individual has some sort of knowledge and ability of how to interact with others, implied in several authors' definitions of IC (e.g. Cekaite, 2007; Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Hellermann, 2008; Kasper, 2006).

The other challenge concerns the context-specific nature of IC, and by extension, the transferability of the interactional architecture and interactional competence between testing and non-testing discursive practices. If empirical evidence demonstrates that an assessment task such as the SBA Group Interaction task is a distinct discursive practice, with its own configuration of identity, linguistic, and interactional resources, then how can we make an argument for the generalizability of assessed performance to non-testing contexts? As we will see in

⁷ Here, Young (2011) does in fact acknowledge an element of IC that is individual contribution.

Chapters 5 and 6, the present study approaches this problem at two levels: (1) the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task under investigation, and (2) transferability/generalizability of performance in speaking assessments to non-testing contexts in general.

In the following, I give a brief overview of research on interactional competence in second language learning and language testing, and see what these two strands of research have to say about the nature of IC. I will end the section by noting some component features of IC as identified in the literature, and discuss two that are particularly relevant to the present study.

2.2.2 Interactional competence in second language learning

One strand of research on interactional competence focuses on the development of different aspects of IC in second language learning contexts. Within this body of research, one group of studies has examined L2 learners' development of interactional competence in the language classroom. Ohta (2001), one of the first studies using conversation analysis to look at the development of IC in L2, examined changes over a year in the use of alignment expressions by two learners of Japanese in a university Japanese language course. Young and Miller (2004) reported an ESL learner's development over four weeks from minimal and peripheral participation in 'writing conferences' with his American tutor to taking the initiative in identifying problems and suggesting revisions. Cekaite (2007) observed the development of IC in a 7-year-old immigrant in a Swedish immersion classroom over the course of one school year. The young learner developed from her marginal and predominantly non-verbal participation in classroom activities at the initial stage, through a phase of verbal yet inappropriate contributions, to eventually more competent participation in spontaneous whole-group conversations, along with a larger repertoire of verbal contributions in Swedish.

Hellermann (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011) wrote a series of studies reporting ESL learners' changing classroom participation in terms of managing task opening and closing, self-initiated repairs and other-initiated repairs, over various periods of time up to 27 months. In a recent study, Waring (2013) tracked learners' development in managing appropriate responses to routine enquires such as 'how

was your weekend?’ over a semester-long adult ESL class in the US. There is also work that addresses the teacher’s role in developing learners’ interactional competence, for example, Hall’s (1995) critique of the Initiation-Response-Evaluation pattern that prevailed in a Spanish speaking practice class; and Walsh’s (2012) formulation of ‘Classroom Interactional Competence’, describing teachers’ language and interactional strategies that can scaffold learners’ contributions and create interactional space for learning.

Some studies also track the longitudinal development of learners’ interactional competence, but in contexts outside the language classroom. For instance, Ishida (2009) and Masuda (2011) examined how L2 learners of Japanese in study-abroad contexts developed competence in using the particle *ne* to both display and pursue alignment with interlocutors in social interactions. Achiba (2012) looked at the development of IC in an 8-year-old Japanese learner of English by comparing the interactions between her and native English speakers in Australia in three cooking lessons. The author noted changes in the learner’s participation in the cooking talk initially unfamiliar to her, and development in terms of turn length, initiating interaction, and giving directions, changing from taking a supporting role to more of an initiating or independent role. Nguyen (2006) looked at the development of IC in a professional context, reporting a student pharmacist’s gradual transformation from a ‘novice expert’ to an ‘experienced expert’ in managing consultations with patients. At the initial stage, in presenting information about the medication, the student pharmacist displayed professional expertise by using technical vocabulary, yet disregarded the patient’s lack of interest. Later, the student pharmacist was able to both discursively construct his expertise while also maintaining alignment with the patient’s stance.

It is worth pointing out that, in many of the studies reviewed above, the development of interactional competence in L2 learners is discussed and evidenced in terms of the learners’ changing *participation* in the respective interactional contexts and activities (what Young (2008) calls ‘discursive practice’ or what Hall (1995) calls ‘interactive practice’) that they engage in, for example, in the classroom, in cooking lessons, or in patient consultations in a pharmacy. This is in line with Hall’s (1995) assertion that interactional competence is required for ‘competent

participation in a community's significant practices' (p.39). It also attests to the context-sensitive nature of IC, and perhaps provides an answer as to why IC seems to be an elusive construct, with considerable variation in defining what constitutes it.

2.2.3 Interactional competence in language testing

Interactional competence has also been gaining attention in language testing research, paralleled by a growing number of test tasks designed to elicit aspects of IC in candidates' performance, as well as rating scales which incorporate components of IC in both high-stakes and low-stakes language assessments (May, 2011). There are studies on how interactive tasks (especially the paired format) can elicit various aspects of IC such as managing topic initiation and closing, asking for clarification, and challenging a co-participant (e.g. Brooks, 2009; Nakatsuhara, 2004; Taylor, 2001). There are also a number of studies which explore the rater's perspective – looking at features that are salient to raters in their judgment of candidates' interactional effectiveness (e.g. Ducasse & Brown, 2009; May, 2009, 2011; Orr, 2002). Recently, Galaczi (2014), using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, identified the key distinguishing interactional features among candidates in a paired speaking test across different proficiency levels (B1 to C2) in the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR). The study contributed empirically to the construct definition of IC (in paired speaking tests) as encompassing not only topic development, but also listener support strategies and turn-taking management.

Studies of speaking tests are increasingly recognizing the co-constructed nature of interactional competence (e.g. Brooks, 2009; Chalhoub-Deville, 2003; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 2006; Galaczi, 2008). The two rater studies by May (2009, 2011), for example, provide compelling evidence for this nature of IC. May (2009) set out to address the question of whether an individual candidate's contribution and performance is separable in a paired assessment task, and examined a paired speaking test in an EAP course at an Australian university involving 12 adult learners from China and 4 experienced EAP teachers as raters. Evidence for interactional competence being co-constructed was found in the case where one candidate was given the rating of 2/6 for (interactional) effectiveness in an 'asymmetric' interaction (where his partner was dominating), while being awarded 4/6 by the same rater in

another interaction characterized by a ‘collaborative’ pattern (see Galaczi, 2008, for a classification of different interactional patterns in a paired speaking test). Therefore, the rater’s verdict of the same candidate’s ability to interact was different when the candidate was interacting with different partners. On the grounds that features such as mutual comprehensibility, authenticity, and quality of interaction were considered by the raters as aspects of mutual achievement, May (2009) proposed awarding a shared score for interactional effectiveness and separate scores for accuracy, fluency, and range, thereby acknowledging the co-constructed nature of interactional competence.

As a follow-up study, May (2011) extended the investigation to interactional features in candidates’ performance which are salient to raters. The following features were found to be valued by raters:

- responding appropriately and supportively to the partner
- developing one’s own and the partner’s ideas, keeping them relevant to the task
- using non-verbal features (e.g. eye contact, facial expressions, gestures) that display genuine interest and desire to communicate
- managing interaction (e.g. leading the discussion; moving the discussion along; keeping it relevant)
- contributing to the authenticity of discussion

(May, 2011, p.136)

Notably, the last feature, ‘authenticity’, was not a term used in the rating scales, but was oriented to and commented on by raters, who also use synonyms such as ‘natural’ or ‘genuine’ to communicate this quality. According to the raters, an authentic interaction would be a flowing discussion where partners are cooperative with and inclusive of each other. In contrast, an inauthentic discussion would be stilted, with candidates ‘talking *at* rather than *to* each other’ (May, 2011, p.137), producing lengthy monologues rather than genuine responses to what a partner has previously said; or in one rater’s words, ‘more giving a speech than interacting’ (p.133). Thus, at issue here is the candidates’ *authenticity of engagement* (Spence-Brown, 2001) in interacting with one another.

In line with the findings of her earlier study, May (2011) identified features of mutual achievements from the analysis of raters’ comments. Therefore, while acknowledging that it might be difficult to award shared scores for IC in high-stakes

tests – as it is essential for a score to be ‘easily processed and interpreted as a manifestation of individual competence’ (p.140) – May argued that giving shared scores for IC is useful and feasible in low-stakes classroom assessment contexts, especially for formative assessment purposes.

The raters in both May (2009) and May (2011), when commenting on candidates’ performances, noted many aspects (e.g. authenticity) which were not explicitly stated in the descriptors of the rating scales. As May (2011) remarked, ‘raters experienced a dissonance between the features of the performance the rating scales were directing them to attend [*sic*] and what they valued.’ (p.134) Thus, there is evidence for what McNamara, Hill and May (2002) called a *de facto* construct of interactional competence: raters’ own interpretation of what constitutes IC in the assessment of candidates’ speaking performance. This has informed the methodological decision in the present study to draw on a combination of students’ discourse, teacher-raters’ comments, and examiners’ comments published in Examination Reports in analyzing what components of IC are being assessed in the SBA Group Interaction task.

As mentioned earlier, within the language testing literature, many authors have pointed out the challenges posed for test developers, testers and researchers alike by the increasingly established consensus that interactional competence is co-constructed in nature. As Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2005) write:

Evaluating test-takers’ performance according to this model offers a conundrum [...]. If we view language as co-constructed, how can we disentangle an individual’s contribution to a communicative exchange in order to provide a score or assess a candidate’s merit for a potential position? (p.826)

This remark points directly to the dilemma between the nature of interactional competence and the nature of assessment, or more precisely, the complex relationship among the co-constructed nature of IC, the psychometric orientation of speaking tests, and the institutional consequences of language assessments. As McNamara and Roever (2006) aptly put it:

Institutional needs are in line with the psychometric orientation to individual cognitive ability: what is required is not a faithful account of the interaction but a score about individual candidates that can then be fed into the institutional decision-making procedures. (p.51)

There is as yet no consensus among testing researchers on this matter. Some suggest evaluating the joint performance and awarding shared scores in recognition of the nature of the IC construct (e.g. Swain, in an interview with Fox, 2005; May, 2009, 2011). Others are more oriented towards the psychometric purpose of language testing. This is, for example, reflected in Fulcher's (2010) comment that if the position of IC being co-constructed is maintained, there is 'little that language testers can do with the construct' (p.112). Accordingly, Fulcher argued for an alternative approach that views IC as 'a set of abilities that an individual brings to the temporally bound interaction set within a specific social context and discursive practice' (*ibid.*).

2.2.4 Defining the construct: Component features of interactional competence

After reviewing the two strands of research on IC within the fields of second language learning and language testing, we come back to the fundamental question: 'what is interactional competence?', or more specifically, what features constitute interactional competence? In the following, I give an overview of the components of IC based on some of the definitions and research findings in the literature, highlight some of the key points and implications for this study, and describe two constitutive features of particular relevance to the present study.

In Young's (2000, 2008, 2011) theoretical model and in several authors' work, Interactional Competence is defined as encompassing as well as going beyond the formal aspects of language (e.g. Barraja-Rohan, 2011, Cekaite, 2007; Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2008). As Markee (2008) argues, 'developing interactional competence in a second language includes but goes beyond learning language as a formal system' (p.406). His conceptualization of IC also includes 'semiotic systems' in aspects such as 'turn taking, repair, and sequence organizations that underlie all talk-in-interaction', as well as non-verbal cues as intersubjective resources, such as the 'co-occurrent organization of eye gaze and embodied actions' (*ibid.*).

Young (2008) defines interactional competence as 'a relationship between participants' employment of linguistic and interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed' (p.100). Accordingly, he outlines seven resources that

participants bring to interaction in a specific context which he calls *discursive practice*:

- Identity resources
 - *Participation framework*: the identities of all participants in an interaction, present or not, official or unofficial, ratified or unratified, and their footing or identities in the interaction
- Linguistic resources
 - *Register*: the features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar that typify a practice
 - *Modes of meaning*: the ways in which participants construct interpersonal, experiential, and textual meanings in a practice
- Interactional resources
 - *Speech acts*: the selection of acts in a practice and their sequential organization
 - *Turn-taking*: how participants select the next speaker and how participants know when to end one turn and when to begin the next
 - *Repair*: the ways in which participants respond to interactional trouble in a given practice
 - *Boundaries*: the opening and closing acts of a practice that serve to distinguish a given practice from adjacent talk

(reproduced from Young, 2008, p.71)

The configuration of these seven resources in a particular discursive practice is referred to as the *interactional architecture* of that discursive practice (*ibid.*). Thus, interactional competence in an academic lecture, for example, can be conceived as the lecturer and students' understanding of the interactional architecture of a lecture, including their reciprocal roles and the commensurate interactional conduct; how their talk incorporates register-specific vocabulary; and how both parties co-construct and ratify specific turn-taking patterns, with the lecturer producing extended monologic turns while students' occasionally self-select to take a turn by raising their hands, for instance. As seen in the above taxonomy, 'linguistic resources' include aspects of language as a formal system, but now with an emphasis on phonological, lexical, and grammatical features in contextualized use, aligning with the context-specific nature of IC.

Tangential to this point, yet also worth mentioning, is how Young (2008) describes the 'identity resources' that participants draw on as taking into account 'the identities of *all participants* [...] official or unofficial, ratified or unratified, and their footing or identities in the interaction' (p.71, my emphasis). This will become

relevant in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), with regard to the position of the teacher-rater as the ‘ratified overhearer’, and again in Chapter 6 when its implications for the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task are discussed.

Components of IC described in the literature often include terms and concepts from conversation analysis, as a number of published works on IC use CA-based definitions (e.g. Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p.481-482; Kasper, 2006, p.86; Walsh, 2012, p.12; Young, 2008, p.71). Components of IC common to these definitions include knowledge of and ability in turn-taking, sequential (and preference) organization, repair, turn design and action formation. Notably, the ability of initiating and developing topics is also recurrently referenced in studies of IC (e.g. Cekaite, 2007; Hall, 1995; Masuda, 2011), including in testing contexts, whether or not the term ‘interactional competence’ is used (e.g. Galaczi, 2014, Gan, 2010; Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008). As reviewed by May (2011), the construct of IC is described in studies of speaking tests as including aspects of conversational management such as initiating and closing topics, asking for clarification, and challenging an interlocutor (Brooks, 2009; Nakatsuhara, 2004; Taylor, 2001). Component features of IC salient to raters were found to be, in Orr (2002), helping co-participants, initiating and building on topics, and body language; and in Ducasse and Brown (2009), body language, interactive listening, and interactional management. Therefore, in considering whether the participants in these studies were ‘interactionally competent’, the focus was more on their interactional conduct and capacity in managing and sustaining a talk exchange, than on their command of the formal aspects of language.

IC as producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution

Finally, I wish to discuss two constitutive features of interactional competence of particular relevance to the present study. The first of these is what I call *contingency of a response on previous speaker contribution*, where ‘previous speaker contribution’ refers to any prior utterance(s) produced by any of the co-participants in the immediately preceding turn or earlier in the interaction. Young and Milanovic (1992) were perhaps the first to use the term *contingency* to describe a local property of adjacent turns in a speaking test context, drawing on Jones and Gerard (1967) (also cited in van Lier, 1989) whose model of *interactional contingency* describes the

overall pattern characterizing a dyadic interaction. In Young and Milanovic's (1992) formulation, *contingency* takes the sense of 'dependence' on a previous turn: 'In our version of the model, a contingent utterance is one in which the content and often the form of the utterance depend in some way on a previous utterance' (p.404). Defined with reference to topic, contingency is 'a property of adjacent turns in dialogue in which the topic of the preceding turn is coreferential with the topic of the following turn' (*ibid.*). In more general terms, this relates to how participants 'react to each other' and 'create shared meanings' in an exchange (*ibid.*).

In practice, this translates into what is generally judged by raters as whether the candidate is 'responding to' the previous speaker or not. In May (2009, 2011), IC was operationalized in the rating scale for the paired speaking test under the heading 'effectiveness', with three components, 'the extent to which the interlocutor's message was understood, the ability to respond to an interlocutor, and the use of communication strategies' (May, 2009, p.404). With reference to the second component, the raters valued candidates developing an idea or argument introduced by their partner, while negatively evaluating those who 'responded minimally to their partner, or responded in a way that seemed irrelevant to the point that had been made' (May, 2011, p.135). In other words, part of the basis on which candidates' IC was evaluated was the extent to which a candidate's talk is *contingent on*, topicalizes, or incorporates their partner's contribution in the previous turn. This is also taken as evidence of whether the candidate has understood the previous speaker's talk (the first component of 'effectiveness'):

Ascertaining the extent to which a candidate understood his or her partner cannot be done simply through observation, so the response of the partner to what had been said was often seen as evidence of understanding.

(May, 2011, p.134)

As mentioned earlier, this also relates to how much the raters perceive the exchange as 'authentic interaction': whether the candidates demonstrate inclusion of their partner and the partner's ideas in their talk, or engage in long monologues delivering their own ideas (May, 2011). This aspect has also been noted in several other studies (e.g. Gan, 2010, He & Dai, 2006; Luk, 2010; Nakatsuhara, 2011), as discussed in Section 2.1 above.

Research on IC in non-testing contexts also makes reference to this feature. Hall and Pekarek Doehler (2011) ascribe crucial importance to responding to co-participants' previous contributions as part of IC:

Central to competent engagement in our interactions is our ability to accomplish meaningful social actions, *to respond to co-participants' previous actions* and to make recognizable for others what our actions are and how these relate to their own actions. (p.1, my emphasis)

Similarly, Barraja-Rohan (2011) asserts that IC includes 'an understanding and demonstration of how turns are designed and responding to turns in a coherent and sequential manner, displaying common understanding and repairing any threat to or breakdown in communication' (p.482). Therefore, it is evident that the ability to build our own actions in a current turn upon co-participants' previous contributions is a central component feature of IC. Chapter 5 will consider how this component of IC is oriented to by both the student-candidates and the teacher-raters in the SBA group interactions, and the means through which it is discursively constructed.

IC is spontaneously executed

Another constitutive feature of IC, applicable to a broad range of interactional contexts where the talk exchange unfolds on a turn-by-turn basis,⁸ is the spontaneous execution of the various component abilities of IC, such as those of turn-taking, sequential organization, topic initiation and development, on the spot and in reaction to a preceding action. Some authors highlight this in their description of IC. For example, Hall and Pekarek Doehler (2011) write:

And it includes the prosodic, linguistic, sequential and nonverbal resources conventionally used for producing and interpreting turns and actions [...] and we draw on them as we monitor ours and each other's moment-to-moment involvement in the interactions. *At each interactional moment we attend to each other's actions*, build interpretations as to what these actions are about and where they are heading, *and formulate our own contributions* based on our interpretations that move the interaction along, either toward or away from the anticipated outcomes of each preceding move. (p.2, my emphasis)

⁸ Except, for example, staged performances of scripted dialogues.

Similarly, this element of spontaneous execution is implicit in Barraja-Rohan's (2011) argument that 'Interactional competence involves, among other skills, precision timing and a quick analysis of speakers' turns' (p.481).

This relates to the nature of (spontaneous rather than scripted) interaction, characterized by contingencies and uncertainties, as explicated in Kramsch's (1986) paper, the precursor of subsequent theoretical formulations of Interactional Competence. Kramsch did not explicitly define IC or systematically delimit its component features. However, in problematizing the accuracy-focused proficiency movement in the US and proposing a more interactionally-oriented curriculum, she discussed at length the nature of real-life interaction and the entailed competencies required of its participants (hence also relevant to learners). Kramsch (1986) holds that successful interaction is predicated on:

the construction of a shared internal context or "sphere of inter-subjectivity" that is built through the collaborative efforts of the interactional partners. These efforts aim at reducing the uncertainty that each speaker has about the other's intentions, perceptions, and expectations. (p.367)

She goes on to argue:

Thus, interaction always entails negotiating intended meanings, i.e., adjusting one's speech to the effect one intends to have on the listener. It entails anticipating the listener's response and possible misunderstandings, clarifying one's own and the other's intentions and arriving at the closed [*sic*] possible match between intended, perceived, and anticipated meanings. (*ibid.*)

In other words, interaction would begin with participants' uncertainty of each other's intentions, perceptions, and expectations; and the process of interaction involves participants' moment-by-moment monitoring of each other's speech and responding accordingly, negotiating intended meanings until they arrive at some shared understanding, the 'sphere of inter-subjectivity'. The nature of interaction as characterized by 'relativity' and 'unpredictability' between participants' views and understandings (Kramsch, 1986, p.368), as well as the spontaneous execution of IC in response to the moment-to-moment contingencies in the talk exchange, has important implications for the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task under the task implementation condition of extensive preparation time.

2.3 Identity and interactional competence

In the last section, we have seen how the theory of Interactional Competence reflects increasing attention to the social dimension of second language speaking assessments. We have also seen how the construct of interactional competence is posited as (1) co-constructed by all participants in an interaction, and (2) varies depending on the specific interactional context. Interestingly, there has been a parallel development in how *identity* is conceptualized in theories and research on identity in social interaction, a shift from a psychological approach to a social, discursive approach. This line of research looks at how identity becomes emergent, relevant, and oriented to by participants in social interactions. Identity, rather than being conceived as a fixed psychological entity and the source of displayed linguistic and non-verbal behavior, is construed as discursively and intersubjectively constructed and negotiated.

In the following, I review three theoretical formulations of identity in interaction, namely Goffman's (1981) notion of *footing*, Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic approach to identity, and identity in discursive psychology (in the collection of work in Antaki and Widdicombe (1998)). The discussion will highlight their shared views and principles, similarities to interactional competence as conceptualized in Young's theory, and the relevance and usefulness of the identity perspective to the present study in looking at the construction and assessment of interactional competence.

2.3.1 Footing – Goffman (1981)

In Goffman's work, identity in social interaction is represented in his influential notion of *footing* (Goffman, 1981), defined as a participant's 'alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self' (p.128). It can be shifted from one to another in the course of an interaction, or with one embedded or enclosed in another, as indexed by code-switching or other sound markers such as pitch, volume, and tonal quality (*ibid.*). The key characteristics of footing as highlighted by Goffman (1981) are its fluid and intersubjective nature, and its indexicality by linguistic behavior:

A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance [...] participants over the course of their speaking constantly change their footing, these changes being a persistent feature of natural talk. (p.128)

These features are later on abstracted as the principles of *relationality*, *indexicality*, and *positionality* in Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework, which will be discussed below.

An important contribution of Goffman's work is in how he problematizes the traditional dichotomy of 'speaker' and 'hearer' and proposes the more refined notions of *participation framework* and *production format*, making finer distinctions between different 'hearer' roles and 'speaker' roles respectively. These distinctions enable the analyst to capture more intricate participant configurations and footings than the notions of speaker/hearer can. Participation framework decomposes the 'hearer' role, and distinguishes between 'ratified participant' (who might not be listening although normatively expected to) and 'unratified participant' (who might be 'eavesdropping' or 'overhearing' while not expected to listen), 'addressed/unaddressed recipients', and 'intended/unintended overhearers'. The notions of 'intended overhearer' and 'unaddressed recipients' are of particular relevance to the SBA group interactions discussed in Chapter 5. Goffman (1981) also breaks down the 'speaker' role into the 'animator', the person serving as the 'talking machine' and taking 'the role of utterance production'; the 'author', who has 'selected the sentiments' expressed and the 'words' encoding the message; and the 'principal', whose 'position' and 'beliefs' are being expressed by the words (p.144).

Another important aspect of footing and participation framework that Goffman (1981) posits is how they can be transformed and embedded in one another. He notes that 'we quite routinely ritualize participation frameworks; that is, we self-consciously transplant the participation arrangement that is natural in one social situation into an interactional environment in which it isn't' (p.153).

Overall, we can see that, according to Goffman (1981), the footing of participants in a social interaction is positioned in relation to others. It is fluid, and can change over the course of the interaction or be embedded/layered; and it is indexed by (para)linguistic signs.

2.3.2 A sociocultural linguistic approach to identity

Drawing on identity research in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology, and social psychology, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) devised a theoretical framework of five principles that summarize and abstract the conceptualizations of identity in these disciplines. The authors argue that there is analytic value in approaching identity as a socio-cultural rather than psychological phenomenon. Taking this theoretical perspective, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) maintain that identity ‘emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories’ (p.585-586); it is something that is ‘intersubjectively rather than individually produced’; and ‘interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion’ (p.587). The five principles characterizing identity advanced by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) are *emergence*, *positionality*, *indexicality*, *relationality*, and *partiality*, which ‘represent the varied ways in which different kinds of scholars currently approach the question of identity’ (p.607).

The principle of *emergence* represents the theoretical position that identity is the *product* rather than the *source* of linguistic behavior, and underlines the view of identity as a social and cultural rather than a psychological phenomenon. This aligns with the conversation analytic view of identity as an interactional accomplishment (see Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). The traditional view of identity as ‘housed primarily within an individual mind [...] reflect[ing] an individual’s internal mental state’ fails to take account of ‘the social ground on which identity is built, maintained, and altered’ (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p.587). The *emergence* principle does not contradict the fact that identity can be a durative property of an individual (see Joseph, 2013), however, and the authors postulate the relationship between an identity’s (e.g. gender) emergence in interaction and its establishment as a durative individual property as follows: ‘It is the constant reiteration of such practices that cumulatively produce not only each individual’s gender identity, but gender itself as a socially meaningful system’ (p.590). The authors hold that even ‘the most predictable and non-innovative identities’ such as gender, often taken as durative individual properties, are ‘only constituted as socially real through discourse, and especially interaction (p.591).

This relates to the second principle, *positionality*, the view that identity is not reducible to a collection of broad social categories as found in the quantitative social sciences, ‘which correlate social behavior with macro identity categories such as age, gender, class’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.591). Rather, the authors hold that ‘Identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants [...T]he interactional positions that social actors briefly occupy and then abandon as they respond to the contingencies of unfolding discourse may accumulate ideological associations with both large-scale and local categories of identity’ (p.591).

Following the above two principles which delineate the ontological status of identity, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) proposes the third principle of *indexicality*: the mechanism by which identity is discursively constructed. The authors outline several types of indexical processes: ‘(a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one’s own or others’ identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups’ (p.594). An important aspect of indexicality, also pointed out by Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), is that identity category labels carry different meanings and associated features across different interactions.

The principle of *relationality* highlights the view that a participant’s identity never exists in isolation but is constructed and positioned vis-à-vis the identities of others. Individuals’ identities ‘always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.598). However, as the authors emphasize, participants’ identity relations do not simply revolve around the axis of sameness and differences, but are intersubjectively constituted through ‘several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy’ (p.598).

Finally, *partialness* refers to the analytical view that acknowledges the multiple dimensions in the construction of identity, which may be in part intentional, but also in part ‘habitual and hence often less than fully conscious’ (p. 606). Part of it can be discursively negotiated, while another part may be based on others’ perceptions and representations. Taking this position, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue, ‘helps to

resolve a central and longstanding issue regarding identity research: the extent to which it is understood as relying on agency' (p.606). This principle allows for social actions to be taken into account as constituting identity construction regardless of intentionality. This in turn motivates research to consider multiple dimensions of identity in a single analysis, or bring together complementary analyses and accounts (*ibid.*).

2.3.3 Identity in discursive psychology

The third approach to identity in interaction is from discursive psychology, represented in the collection of work in Antaki and Widdicombe (1998). This series of work takes an ethnomethodological and conversation analytic perspective, which is also the primary methodological approach that the present study is taking (see Chapter 3). In line with the fundamental principles of ethnomethodology and CA, this approach views that 'the identity category, the characteristics it affords, and what consequences follow, are all knowable to the analyst only through the understandings displayed by the interactants themselves' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p.2). Moreover, similar to the *emergence* principle in Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework, identity is seen as the product rather than source of discursive behavior: 'not that people passively or latently have this or that identity which then causes feelings and actions, but that they work up and work to this or that identity [...] either as an end in itself or towards some other end' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p.2). Again, five principles about the nature of identity in interaction are delineated: (1) categories with associated characteristics or features; (2) indexicality and occasionedness; (3) making relevant and oriented to; (4) procedural consequentiality; and (5) conversational structures.

The first principle states that having an identity means being cast into a *category* that carries with it a range of associated *features*. Therefore, an individual can be a member of infinite identity categories, and each category is 'inference-rich' (Sacks, 1992), meaning that a range of characteristics are associated with the category (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

The second principle is that identity categorization is *indexical* and *occasioned*. Being *indexical* refers to the fact that identity displays 'mean different things at

different times and places' (p.8), and the concept has been borrowed from the linguistic fact that indexical expressions such as 'I', 'there', 'that' mean different things in different places and times. Similarly, *being* occasioned has to do with contextual meaning: the meaning of an utterance, and the identity displayed by or ascribed to a person, is 'to be found in the occasion of its production – in the local state of affairs that was operative at the exact moment of interactional time' (p.4).

The third principle, which perhaps carries the heaviest methodological spirit of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, is that identity categories are *made relevant* and *oriented to* by participants. This underscores the primacy of the participant's emic perspective in analyses taking this approach, acknowledging that 'identity work is in the hands of the participants, not us [analysts]' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p.4). However, this does not mean interviewing the participants and see what they have to say about their own or others' identities. The participant's perspective is gained through a close look at their talk within the interaction: participants display their orientation to something as 'live or operative' by means of design features of their talk or how they respond to some previous talk, 'without necessarily naming it out loud' (p.5). For example, if A is complaining to her female friend, B, that her boyfriend dries his hands on his shirt after washing his hands, to which B responds with 'Well, typical of them!', B, in proffering this assessment (or evaluation), is *making relevant* the boyfriend's gender identity, and is *orienting to* that behavior as a feature of the identity category 'men'.

The fourth principle of *procedural consequentiality* is the recommendation for including identities for analysis only when they are seen to have some effect on how the interaction develops, which means 'holding off from saying that such and such a person is doing whatever it is he or she is doing because he or she is this or that supposed identity [...] unless such an identity is visibly consequential in what happens' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p.5). Such avoidance of explaining interactional behavior in terms of pre-existing identity categories is, again, reminiscent of Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) *emergence* and *positionality* principles. Using the above example of A and B's talk, this would mean for the analyst to stay away from claiming that commenting on boyfriend's hygiene is typical of talk between female friends.

The fifth and final principle maintains that identity work is visible in participants' exploitation of the structural organization of conversation. As Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) put it, 'Every turn at talk is part of some structure, plays against some sort of expectation, and in its turn will set up something for the next speaker to be alive to' (p.6). Thus, participants are seen to engage in identity work through exploiting the regularities and normative expectations in conversational sequences, such as whether, when, and how to answer a question. The argument for connections between identity work and conversational structures is most elaborately developed in Zimmerman's (1998) and Wooffitt and Clark's (1998) subsequent chapters on *discourse identities* and *situated/social identities*, to which we now turn.

Zimmerman (1998) posits that *discourse identities* 'emerge as a feature of the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction, orientating participants to the type of activity underway and their respective roles within it' (p.92). Similarly, in Wooffitt and Clark's (1998) words, discourse identities characterize 'participants' status in relation to the ongoing production of talk, and which arise from the trajectory and organization of the talk' (p.110). Thus, participants take on different discourse identities in different segments within an interaction as they engage in the specific sequentially organized activities, for example, 'speaker/hearer', 'story teller/recipient', 'questioner/answerer', and 'inviter/invitee' (Zimmerman, 1998, p.92). As seen, discourse identities often exist in pairs. Zimmerman (1998) holds that in initiating an action, a participant takes on a specific identity related to that action, and 'projects a reciprocal identity for co-participant(s)' (p.90), which is then subject to the co-participants' ratification or revision (cf. *relationality* in Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework). Moreover, as the participants move from one sequential activity to another within an interaction, for instance, a question-and-answer 'how was your weekend' leading to the answerer's telling of an event, the participants' discourse identities also change. As such, discourse identities are, as Zimmerman (1998, p.91) puts it, 'interactionally contingent rather than determined' (cf. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) *positionality* principle).

The local categories of discourse identities characterize what participants are doing interactionally in a particular segment of talk, and these can be linked to the analysis of larger social identity categories. As Wooffitt and Clark (1998) argue, 'the

relevance of a particular discourse identity may in turn occasion the relevance of a wider social identity' (p.111), the kind of 'vernacular, or "common-sense" social categorization' (p.108) such as a 'caller', 'chairperson', or 'doctor'. Using the example of a married couple's conversation with their group of friends over dinner in Goodwin's (1987) study, Wooffitt and Clark argue that, the husband, by asking his wife the name of a television show host that he momentarily failed to recall, invoked the wife's discourse identity as a 'knowing recipient', which in turn occasioned 'the relevance of [... her] social identity as his spouse' (p.111).

From the above discussion, we begin to see that researchers taking a CA approach, in advocating the analytical principle of 'oriented-to identities', do not in fact dismiss the potential relevance of macro social categories traditionally used in quantitative social sciences. Zimmerman (1998) terms these categories *transportable identities* (e.g. age and gender), which are 'assignable or claimable on the basis of physical and culturally based insignia which furnish the intersubjective basis for categorization' (p.91), and are 'latent identities that "tag along" with individuals [...] across situations and potentially relevant in and for any situation [...] or] any spate of interaction' (p.90). In keeping with the principle of analyzing identities oriented to by participants themselves (rather than categories imposed on them in explaining their behavior), Zimmerman (1998) distinguishes between visible indicators of identity and oriented-to identity, such that 'a participant may be *aware* of the fact that a co-interactant is classifiable as a young person or a male without orienting to these identities as being relevant to the instant interaction' (p.91).

The significance of 'oriented-to' identity, and its relevance to the analysis in Chapter 5, lies in the argument that participants' oriented-to identities are part and parcel of the features constituting a given interactional activity or context:

Activities in a given setting achieve their distinctive shape through an articulation of discourse and situated identities for each participant and an alignment of these identities across participants [...].

(Zimmerman, 1998, p.88)

Zimmerman (1998) proposes the notion of *identity-as-context*, which refers to 'the way in which the articulation/alignment of discourse and situated identities furnishes for the participants a *continuously evolving framework* within which their actions,

vocal or otherwise, assume a particular meaning, import and interactional consequentiality' (p.88, my emphasis).

2.3.4 Interactional competence: An identity perspective

From the above discussion of the three approaches to identity in interaction, it is not difficult to see aspects common to these theoretical formulations, as well as similar to the conceptualization of interactional competence in Young's theory. First of all, identity is posited as a social rather than psychological construct, and the product of discursive construction rather than the source of discursive behavior – this position is expressly formulated in Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Secondly, identity is viewed as interactionally emergent and intersubjectively produced. Specifically, we can see correspondence between the *oriented to* principle in Antaki and Widdicombe's (1998) and the *emergence* principle in Bucholtz and Hall (2005), in that identity is viewed as made relevant by participants in and for the interaction, hence emergent from discourse and interaction rather than pre-existing categories. Moreover, the view that one's identity is intersubjectively positioned in relation to others is seen in the *relationality* principle (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), in the definition of *footing* as 'alignment we take up to ourselves and others present' (Goffman, 1981, p.128), and the notion of reciprocal discourse identities such as 'story teller/recipient' (Zimmerman, 1998). This conception of identity is manifestly in line with the co-constructed nature of interactional competence as proposed by Young and agreed among many testing researchers (see Section 2.2). Finally, the context-specific/sensitive nature of interactional competence is paralleled by the principles of *positionality* (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and *indexicality* and *occasionedness* (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) in the identity theories.

Insofar as the two notions are conceptualized in the ways outlined in this chapter, interactional competence as measured in speaking assessments is, like identity, a constructed reality mediated through discourse and interaction. The relevance of an identity perspective to analyzing the construction and assessment of interactional competence is in that – it provides us with a window on the social dimension of the construct, recognizing how it is intersubjectively constructed in and

through interaction. Moreover, it will allow us to tease out the different aspects of interactional competence which students project and articulate both within and outside the assessed interaction, and the ways in which they negotiate and perhaps make compromises in performing themselves as interactionally competent.

In the present study, the analysis of the construction and negotiation of identity (and how participants demonstrate knowledge of different kinds of interactional competence in different contexts) will focus on participants' *oriented-to identities*, as displayed in their interactional conduct in the assessed group interactions and in their meta-discursive comments on these interactions during the interviews. The analysis of *oriented-to* identities is explained by Wooffitt and Clark (1998) as follows:

Therefore, to ascribe the relevance of a discourse identity to a spate of interaction, the analyst needs to demonstrate that the behavior of the participants themselves displays their orientation to the relevance of that identity, at the moment. (p.110)

For instance, if in the course of telling a story, the speaker at one point says 'Wait, I'm not done yet!', an argument can then be made that the speaker displays an orientation (for co-participants) that he or she is still occupying the discourse identity of 'story-teller', with which an extended speaking turn is ratified. As Wooffitt and Clark (1998) note:

The emphasis on participants' orientations to features of the interactional situations (such as discourse and situated identities) does not presuppose that they possess 'theories' of discourse or of society, but rather they can manage their local affairs in systematic ways that have consequences. (p.105)

Thus, the principle of *oriented-to* identities (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998), along with that of *indexicality* (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Goffman, 1981) and *partialness* – that identity construction does not require intentionality (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) – allows the analyst to draw on aspects of participants' linguistic and interactional conduct as evidence of identities they orient themselves to, rather than interviewing the participants and relying on them to talk about themselves having such and such identities (most of whom would not).

A final remark: the analysis in the present study does not rigidly adhere to any single theoretical framework of identity reviewed above or use the principles in a 'checklist' manner – not all of them are immediately relevant to the thrust of the analysis. A more appropriate way of situating the present study within these theories

of identity is to say that the analysis and discussion of students' construction and negotiation of identities in the SBA group interactions is predicated on the key principles and assumptions about identity in interaction shared among these theoretical formulations outlined above.

2.4 Recipient design and participation framework

In this section, I briefly review the theoretical and empirical work on recipient design and participation framework. Particular attention will be paid to studies examining talk oriented to overhearing audiences. I also review the literature on formulations in talk, and provide a discussion on the interactional functions and the sequential implicativeness of formulations. All these will become relevant in the discussion in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), as we examine the participation configuration of the SBA group interactions and the recipient design of students' talk.

2.4.1 Recipient design

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) define *recipient design* in one of the seminal papers in conversation analysis as

[the] multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants. (p.727)

In other words, it is the different ways in which we format our talk to carry out the same conversational action, say, making a request, depending on whom we are speaking to, say, a close friend as opposed to a stranger. The authors add that 'recipient design is a major basis for that variability of actual conversations glossed by the notion "context-sensitive" (*ibid.*). According to Drew (2013), *recipient design* is 'subsumed within *turn design*' (p.148). The latter encompasses three major principles in the design of a turn-at-talk: '*where* in the sequence a turn is being taken', '*what* is being done in that turn', and '*to whom* the turn is addressed' (p.145). The significance of recipient design therefore lies in the fact that, while how a turn is constructed varies depending on whether it is, for instance, extending or accepting an invitation, there are also notable nuances in 'how a speaker designs the "same"

action... made to different recipients' (p.148), say, extending a party invitation to a classmate or to a professor.

2.4.2 Participation framework

Another influential theoretical notion that informs the present analysis is Ervin Goffman's *participation framework* (Goffman, 1981). Of particular theoretical significance is his problematization of the traditional dichotomy of 'speaker' and 'hearer', as he contends that the paired notions are only apt in their own interactional 'habitat' (my own words) of a dyadic interaction. Goffman (1981) cites Hymes's (1974) earlier remark, which plainly and aptly puts it, '[t]he common dyadic model of speaker-hearer specifies sometimes too many, sometimes too few, sometimes the wrong participants' (p.54, cited in Goffman, 1981, p.144). This has important implications for the analysis of talk in the SBA group interactions, in that a sheer focus on how students respond to one another as 'speakers' and 'hearers' will mask important aspects of interaction between the student-candidates and the teacher-rater.

In response to the inadequacy of the speaker-hearer model, Goffman (1981) has sought to establish a theoretical framework that provides a more nuanced description of the roles of participants (and non-participants) in different 'interactional arrangements' (p.129). He posits that 'one can get at the structural basis of footing by breaking up the primitive notions of hearer and speaker into more differentiated parts, namely, participation framework and production format' (p.153).

Accordingly, Goffman (1981) proposes the notion of *participation framework*, which decomposes the discourse role of 'hearer' and offers a more fine-grained classification. Under this framework, individuals at the 'hearer' end occupy different kinds of *participation status*, such as 'ratified recipient', 'addressed recipient', 'eavesdropper', 'overhearer', and 'intended overhearer', although this initial taxonomy is not entirely systematic, without an exhaustive list and mutually exclusive categories of participation status.

An important differentiation is made between 'ratified hearer' and 'unratified hearer', the former being 'ratified' according to the 'normative expectation of the speaker' (Goffman, 1981, p.131). The unratified hearer is someone who is not an

official participant but following the talk, and Goffman further distinguishes between ‘eavesdropper’, who is ‘purposely engineered’ to follow the talk closely; and ‘overhearer’, who follows the talk closely ‘when the opportunity has unintentionally and inadvertently come about’ (*ibid.*). The significance of the notions is reflected in the fact that ‘a ratified participant may not be listening, and someone listening may not be a ratified participant’ (*ibid.*).

Among the official, ratified hearers, it is also possible to distinguish the ‘addressed recipient’ from the ‘unaddressed recipient(s)’, particularly relevant in a multi-party setup. Here, the addressed recipient would be ‘the one whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over the speaking role’ (Goffman, 1981, p.132-133). Unaddressed recipients would be, for example, the live and home audience of a TV talk show, or members of the jury before which a lawyer examines a witness in a court trial. Applying such a classification of participant status in the context of an SBA group interaction, the teacher-rater can be considered a ‘ratified overhearer’ or an ‘unaddressed recipient’.

One important point to note is that, in Goffman’s (1981) theoretical formulation, ‘overhearers’ are classified as those who ‘temporarily follow the talk, or catch bits and pieces of it, all without much effort or intent’ (p.132). In other words, they occupy the participation status of ‘bystanders’ or ‘unratified participants’ (*ibid.*). However, in the conversation analytic literature (e.g. studies reviewed later in this section), the terms ‘overhearers’ and ‘overhearing audience’ are generally used to refer to individuals (or masses of individuals) who are normatively expected by the ‘speakers’ to be ‘hearers’ following the talk. In other words, they are more like ‘unaddressed recipients’, but not ‘unratified hearers’. Some examples of such ‘overhearing audience’ are the listeners to a call-in radio program and the jury of a court trial. It is the latter sense of ‘overhearer’ that is used in the present discussion.

Goffman (1981) has also proposed the notion of *production format*, which decomposes the ‘speaker’ role into ‘animator’, ‘author’, and ‘principal’. However, as they are not immediately relevant to the present study, they will not be discussed here.

2.4.3 Talk oriented to overhearing audiences

Following Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) seminal work on recipient design and Goffman's (1981) on footing and participation framework, an array of studies dealing with issues around the complex relationships among speakers, hearers, and overhearing audiences have emerged. As reviewed in Hutchby (1995), Tannen and Wallat (1983, 1987) examined a pediatrician's shift between footings when addressing the child, the mother, and the video camera that records the consultation for a non-present audience of medical students. Atkinson and Drew (1979) and Drew (1992) analyzed the interactional organization between lawyers and witnesses in courtrooms that is designed in such ways to secure the attention of the judge and members of the jury – the overhearing audiences. Hutchby (1995) reviewed several studies on broadcast talk and its audience-oriented design, and cited Heritage's (1985) remark that such talk is characterized by particular institutional footings 'which permit... overhearers to view themselves as the primary, if unaddressed, recipients of the talk that emerges' (p.100). In the following, I review in more detail three studies with findings of particular relevance to the present study.

In one of the pioneering studies on audience-oriented broadcast talk, Heritage (1985) identified a discourse pattern in news interviews whereby, contrary to question-and-answer sequences in everyday conversations, the answer SPP is not followed by a third-turn receipt by the questioner with objects such as 'oh' receipt, assessment 'Good', or newsmark 'really?'. By systematically avoiding the production of third-turn receipts, Heritage (1985) argues, the news interviewer declines the role of 'report recipient' but maintains the role of 'report elicitor'. Such a footing allows overhearers to view themselves as the primary recipients of the talk.

Heritage (1985) found, instead, that the use of formulations by the news interviewer in the third-turn position following the informant's answer is common. These formulations involve 'summarizing, glossing, or developing the gist of an informant's earlier statements' (p.100). He argues that, 'through the *recycling or elaboration of talk* that was *already adequately intelligible*, the interviewer preserves an overall, if tacit, orientation to the overhearing news audience' (p.114, my emphasis).

Hutchby (1995) examined expert advice-giving talk on call-in radio, the communicative framework of which comprises four parties: the caller (advice-seeker), the expert (advice-giver), the studio host, and the overhearing audience (listeners of the radio). Hutchby looked at aspects of recipient design in the talk by the expert and the host, and found that such talk exhibits a ‘generalizing orientation’ (p.221), whereby the expert uses a caller’s specific concern as the basis for producing advice designed to target a wider audience, constructing the advice-giving talk as relevant both to the caller and to the overhearing audience.

One aspect of recipient design reflecting such an orientation is in the expert’s response ‘answering more than the question’ (p.225). The response appears in a two-part format: the first part conveys ‘cautionary and prescriptive advice to the caller’, whilst the second part delivers auxiliary information that ‘generalizes the relevance of that advice’ to the overhearing audience (*ibid.*). Another manifestation of audience-oriented design is seen in the host topicalizing parts of the expert’s response, generating further advice from the expert that is not immediately relevant to the caller but may be relevant to members of the overhearing audience (p.229). Hutchby (1995) argues that, in so doing, the expert and the host jointly effect ‘a shift in the participation status of the caller from that of principal recipient of sought advice to that of corecipient (along with the audience) of auxiliary information’, and the status of the audience ‘from that of “overhearer” to that of “co-addressee” (p.230), thereby modulating the participation framework of the call.

Finally, closely relevant to the present analysis is Stokoe’s (2013) study of police officer trainees’ assessor-oriented interactional conduct in simulated suspect interviews. She compared such role-played police investigative interviews, which form part of the training and assessment for police officers, with actual suspect interviews. Of particular relevance to the present discussion is how she found the same conversational actions being formatted differently in the role-played and the actual interviews, with respect to design and organization. Notably, Stokoe (2013) found that, in simulations, ‘actions are more elaborate and exaggerated’, and ‘made interactionally visible and “assessable” (p.165).

A prime example is from the police officers’ rapport-building practice of asking the suspect’s permission for the two parties to address each other on a first-

name basis. In a role-played sequence where the two police officer trainees identify themselves to the suspect, a trainee not only invites the suspect to call her by her first name, but prefaces this with a formulation of prior talk: ‘as we’ve already discussed please call me Linda’ (p.174). In doing so, she makes relevant the fact that she has already done some rapport building work before the taped interview. By re-invoking the prior talk, she can then ensure that this rapport-building work, which is a skill being assessed in the role-played interview, is now visible to the overhearing assessors. In a more extreme case, the invitation to use first names was even dislocated from the police officer’s announcement of his name, coming several turns after it. Stokoe (2013) interpreted such dislocation and repair of the invitation as further evidence of police officer trainees’ ‘attentiveness to the assessability of their actions’ (p.177), and their ‘orientations to the relevance of such invitations to the overhearing examiner’ (p.183). Such practices are in stark contrast with those in the actual interviews, where police officers do not make reference to rapport building work (asking permission to use first names) done prior to the tape-recording, and the author ascribes this to the absence of the ‘overhearing assessor’ (p.175).

Stokoe (2013) concluded that ‘officers in simulations displayed, in various ways, orientations to the fact that their actions were being assessed and that rapport-building features must be present and would be assessed positively’ (p.182). She observed that the actions accomplished in real and simulated interactions were largely the same, but in simulations the actions were often ‘unpacked more elaborately, exaggeratedly, or explicitly’, with an aim to make them ‘interactionally visible’ (p.183).

2.4.4 Formulations in talk

Two oft-cited seminal papers on *formulating* or *formulations* are Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) and Heritage and Watson (1979), which, as Deppermann (2011) remarks, describe different but related kinds of formulations. According to Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), *formulating* (in) a conversation is a phenomenon whereby:

[a] member may treat some part of the conversation as an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, or characterize it, or explicate, or translate, or

summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules. (p.350)

They also describe *formulating* as ‘conversationalists’ practices of “saying-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing”, along with whatever else may be happening in the conversation’ (*ibid.*, p.351). Therefore, Garfinkel and Sacks’ definition encompasses both kinds of formulations illustrated in the earlier examples: (1) to summarize or provide the gist, retrospectively, of prior talk; and (2) to characterize or explicate, progressively, the upcoming talk or conversational action. An example of (2) is ‘Now let me ask you this’ (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970, p.350), just before the speaker asks a question.

As said, Heritage and Watson (1979) define formulations differently than Garfinkel and Sacks (1970). More precisely, Heritage and Watson focus on the type of formulations that are retrospective re-presentations of preceding talk, and more specifically, ones produced by the recipient of some previous speaker’s talk. According to Heritage and Watson (1979), this kind of formulation is ‘a transformation or paraphrase of some prior utterance’ (p.129) that preserves certain details while omitting others, as well as ‘recasting’ or ‘re-describing’ the information delivered by the previous speaker ‘in other words’ (p.129-130). The authors recognize the differences between their characterization of formulations and that of Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), stating that what Garfinkel and Sacks describe are formulations produced by ‘news deliverers’ as part of their delivery of news, therefore not ‘repeat utterances’ or ‘paraphrases’ (p.125). What Heritage and Watson are dealing with in their paper, however, are ‘(re-)formulations’ by news recipients ‘which characterize states of affairs already described or negotiated (in whole or in part) in the preceding talk’ (p.126). The two different kinds of formulations described by Heritage and Watson (1979) and by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) are, respectively, the two kinds of formulations that we will examine in the following two sub-sections.

A recent paper by Deppermann (2011) outlines a typology of formulations, based on producer: same-speaker formulations vs. other-speaker formulations; sequential position: same turn, recipient’s second-turn, and third-turn formulations; and the displayed presumption of intersubjectivity of meaning or the lack of such

presumption (p.122). Of particular relevance to the following analysis is his idea of *notionalization*, a kind of semantic work that other-speaker formulations do, ‘which turn (sometimes lengthy) descriptions into condensed, abstract, timeless, and often agentless categorizations expressed by a nouns [*sic*] or phrases’ (p.123). This, as we will see, is a common type of formulating previous speaker’s talk in the SBA group interactions.

As for the linguistic shape of formulations, previous studies have found that recipient (other-speaker) formulations are often *so*-prefaced, for example, ‘so what that means is...’ or ‘so what you’re saying is...’ (Hutchby, 2005, p.310), which furnishes the upshot of a co-participant’s talk in the prior turn (Bolden, 2010). Bolden (2010), in her study, also found *and*-prefaced recipient formulations to be common in everyday talk, articulating what the recipient has taken the previous speaker to have meant but remains unsaid. Citing previous studies, Bolden also identified a type of formulation which is framed with an explicit reference to the previous speaker’s words, as in ‘what you’re saying is’ or ‘you say X’ (p.8).

Some authors regard formulations as a characteristic feature of institutional talk. Heritage (1985) notes that (recipient) formulations are ‘rare in conversation’, while ‘common institutionalized, audience-directed interaction’ (p.100). Barnes (2007) makes a similar remark that formulations are not usually found in everyday talk, but ‘more the preserve of institutional interactions’ (p.278). She accounts for such a distribution in terms of the ‘goal-directedness’ of institutional interactions, where ‘the achievement of activities, or agreement on certain points, may need to be *explicitly marked for the record*’ (p.278, my emphasis). She also relates the use of formulations to participants occupying specific institutional roles, such as the chairperson of a meeting. Indeed, the majority of recipient formulations in the existing literature are found in institutional settings: meetings talk in Barnes (2007), news interviews in Heritage (1985), and child counseling in Hutchby (2005), to name a few. A notable exception is Bolden (2010), who identified a common use of *and*-prefaced formulations among her data from everyday conversations between friends and family members. In the seminal work by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), the authors also consider formulating⁹ a somewhat mundane feature of conversation ‘not

⁹ Not restricted to recipient formulation of previous speaker talk

restricted to special circumstances, but occurs routinely, and on a massive scale’ (p.353).

Some interactional functions of formulations

Previous studies, in particular those in institutional settings, have identified an array of interactional functions accomplished by formulations related to their unique institutional-interactional agenda. The following discusses some of these functions relevant to the present analysis.

As a public display of understanding

Heritage and Watson (1979) hold that (recipient) formulations demonstrate a participant’s understanding of the talk hitherto through providing ‘some “candidate reading” for a preceding stretch of talk whose adequacy or preferredness may subsequently be decided upon’ (p.138). The authors contrast gist formulations with verbatim repeat utterances, arguing that repeat utterances are ‘equivocal as demonstrations of understanding’, whereas formulations, through the transformation and paraphrasing of the prior talk, are ‘unequivocal displays of understanding’ (p.129). Similarly, Hutchby (2005) asserts that a formulation ‘reveals its producer not as a neutral conduit but an active interpreter of the preceding talk’ (p.310). As we will see in the analysis below, this constitutes a key function of the students formulating previous speakers’ talk, who also demonstrably orient such a display of understanding prior talk to the overhearing teacher-rater rather than the previous speaker whose talk is being formulated.

Display of active reciprocity or active listening

Closely related is the function of formulations as displays of active reciprocity or active listening. Bolden (2010) maintains that formulating prior talk is ‘a method for showing active reciprocity via which interlocutors demonstrate their understanding of the other’s course of action, [and] their interest in the addressee’ (p.27). Hutchby (2005) relates formulations to the notion of *active listening* in counselling psychology, which involves techniques of ‘reflecting’ and ‘summarizing’ – picking out and re-expressing important details delivered by the client and drawing

the main points and feelings expressed together respectively (*ibid.*). Hutchby's (2005) analysis then demonstrates how formulations constitute a concrete interactional means of doing the work of 'reflecting' and summarizing', in other words, doing 'active listening'.

Topicalization

Another important function of formulations is to topicalize some part of the prior speaker's talk. According to Heritage (1985), this is accomplished by picking out and re-referencing certain elements in the prior turn, drawing particular things to a focus, or 'make something more of them than originally presented' (p.101). In the context of a news interview, such formulations maintain the respondent's reported information as a topic for further talk, stretching the current topic rather than moving on to a next topic with a new question. In the child counselling setting, Hutchby (2005) also notes the function of formulations in topicalizing an issue with particular salience, 'foreground[ing] specific aspects of the child-client's responses to the counsellor's questions' (p.316). Specifically, formulations as 'candidate representations' are selective and can therefore 'focus on a particular element of the prior talk and preserve that element as the topic for further talk' (p.310).

Sequential implicativeness of formulations

Heritage and Watson (1979) argue that, as formulations deliver the speakers' candidate readings of the preceding talk, they are 'deeply implicative of subsequent talk' (p.142). Formulations occasion receptions as response, and the character of the receptions 'is sharply constrained to confirmations and disconfirmations' by the prior speaker whose talk is being formulated (p.141). Heritage and Watson (1979) therefore posit the *formulation-decision* adjacency pair, based on such sequential implicativeness of formulations. Bolden (2010) holds a similar view:

In most general terms, they offer a candidate understanding of the addressee's preceding informing turn, and thus make confirmation or disconfirmation from the addressee conditionally relevant.' (p.26)

Such sequential implicativeness plays out in her data of *and*-prefaced formulations that they 'are used to perform a repair operation, specifically a *request for confirmation*' [original emphasis] (*ibid.*).

2.5 Summary

In this final section, I conclude the literature review by highlighting the key issues and challenges surrounding the assessment of interactional competence and the space for research. Notably, the first issue concerns the co-constructed and the context-specific nature of interactional competence as posited in Young's theory, both presenting considerable challenges to speaking assessment research and practice.

As reviewed in Section 2.2, theoretical discussion and empirical research are in agreement that interactional competence in speaking assessments, like identity in interaction (see Section 2.3), is a product of co-construction, with shared merit and accountability among all participants. The challenge, then, is how to assess and make inferences about an individual candidate's interactional ability if performance is jointly constructed. Awarding shared scores for the interactional criteria in paired tasks has been proposed, but several problems arise. In previous studies (e.g. May, 2009), candidates producing a 'collaborative' pattern (Galaczi, 2008) would be awarded the highest scores. However, questions remain whether this is always valid as the 'gold standard' considering the target language use situations such as in university contexts (May, 2009), and whether this would encourage candidates to stage a colluded performance of collaborative interaction (see Luk, 2010). There are also issues with fairness and reliability when the same candidate in different pairings receives different scores (May, 2009; see also Brown, 2003). This also has complexities in operationalization, for awarding shared scores for interactional criteria alongside assigning individual scores for other criteria is likely to prove difficult for raters handling all these in real time (Taylor & Wigglesworth, 2009). Finally, the primarily psychometric purpose of language assessments and institutional needs both demand individual scores rather than a truthful account of the co-constructed nature of interaction (McNamara & Roever, 2006).

We have also seen how interactional competence has been argued in theory and attested empirically (for example, see the various studies of IC in language learning contexts in Section 2.2.3) to vary depending on the context. Then, an important question concerns the extent to which the interactional configuration (and therefore the relevant IC in navigating through such a configuration) in one context is transferable or generalizable to another. Drawing on Goffman's (1981) *participation*

framework and the perspective of identity-in-interaction (Section 2.3), as well as conversation analytic work that examined talk recipient-designed for overhearing audiences (Section 2.4), the present study explores some of the complexities in the interactional architecture of the SBA group interactions. It also explores the implications of these complexities for the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task, and for extrapolating assessed speaking performance to non-testing contexts in general.

The second issue emerging from the review of speaking test research concerns the dearth of discourse-based studies and the approach adopted by existing studies. Several authors in the past ten years (He & Dai, 2006; Galaczi, 2008; Gan et al., 2008) have highlighted the fact that there is still a need for more studies on paired/group speaking assessments and space for more discourse-based validation research. Moreover, in reviewing the studies on candidate discourse to date, it has been noted that a considerable number of them have focused on scoring validity and taken a ‘top-down’ approach: analyzing the candidate discourse in order to verify or explain the scores awarded by the rater (e.g. Brooks, 2009; Galaczi, 2008; Lazaraton & Davies, 2008), or to explain the results of statistical analyses (e.g. He & Dai, 2006; Nakatsuhara, 2011). It is believed that there is also value in examining candidate discourse in its own right, and a need for research to uncover the nature of discourse and interactional patterns elicited in the assessment task or by particular task conditions, and this is the analytic approach that the present study takes.

More closely related to the context of the present study is the third issue, where the review of available studies on the SBA Group Interaction task (Section 2.1.2.3) showed inconsistent results and conclusions regarding the validity of the task in eliciting students’ authentic oral language use. One particular issue worth further investigation concerns the lack of contingent responses to co-participants’ prior talk – whether this seeming indicator of lower levels of interactional competence (Gan, 2010) might be ‘bleached’ among students of higher and lower levels of IC under the condition of extensive pre-task planning.

This underlines the final point – the importance of investigating task implementation and candidates’ authenticity of engagement. As noted in Section 2.1.2.5, there is a general lack of studies that scrutinize candidates’ pre-task planning

activities and their effect on the discourse and interactional patterns in their subsequent performance in interactive test tasks (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014). The studies by Spence-Brown (2001) and Luk (2010) have brought attention to possible collusion among participants, such that what appears to be authentic, on-line interaction might in fact be contrived, pre-planned, or even pre-scripted. This poses considerable threat to the validity of the assessment task that is meant to tap into candidates' interactional competence of engaging in spontaneous interaction.

In the next chapter, I begin by stating the research questions of this study formulated on the basis of the issues identified in this literature review. I then present details of data collection and analytical procedures, and discuss the methodological approach adopted in the present study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodology of the present study. I begin by stating the research questions formulated based on the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, and outlining the research design that involves the collection, analysis, and synthesis of three main types of data (3.1). I then detail the data collection procedure and discuss the rationale behind particular steps and decisions, noting some practical constraints and limitations (3.2). In the section that follows (3.3), I describe how the data were processed and transcribed. In Section 3.4, I introduce Conversation Analysis (CA) as the main methodological approach adopted in this study. I first discuss some of its basic principles, followed by the analytic procedure recommended in the CA methodology literature and how it was applied in the data analysis. I also give an account of the methodological decisions made in relation to the purpose of this study, outlining both sides of the argument surrounding the decisions.

3.1 Research questions and research design

On the basis of the issues identified in the literature review (see the summary in Section 2.4), the present study sets out to investigate the following research questions:

1. What patterns of discourse organization and interactional organization characterize the SBA group interactions?
2. How is interactional competence co-constructed in the SBA group interactions, and what features are constructed and recognized as components of interactional competence in this assessment context? What

complexities are there in assessing interactional competence through the SBA Group Interaction task?

3. Does the SBA Group Interaction task elicit and assess students' authentic oral language use, and how do aspects of task implementation influence the validity of the task?

Research Question 1 addresses the issue that existing discourse analytic studies on speaking test tasks tend to focus on matching performance with test scores, while few tend to describe the talk elicited by the test task in its own right. Research Question 2 seeks to explore the issues related to the context-specific nature of interactional competence. Research Question 3 is formulated in light of the gap in existing validation research of the SBA Group Interaction task and studies which have highlighted the importance of investigation task implementation and task engagement.

To address these questions, the research design involves collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing three main types of data. These include video-recordings of the assessed group interactions, retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall (with student-candidates and with teacher-raters), and mock assessments. In the course of describing the details of data collection and data analysis below, I will discuss how Conversation Analysis is a useful methodological approach in addressing Research Questions 1 and 2, and how the effect of task implementation on talk elicited (Research Question 3) is investigated through conducting mock assessments a) with the preparation time video-recorded and b) with the amount of preparation time altered in one group. The analyses related to research questions 1, 2, and 3 are primarily presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively. However, it should be noted that the three research questions, as well as the relevant analyses, are inter-related.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Gaining access to the researched community

Initial contact

The first stage of the data collection process involved gaining access to the community in which data was to be collected. A letter was sent by email to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in December 2010, outlining my intention to conduct empirical research on the SBA component of the HKDSE English Language examination. Written approval to proceed with the study was obtained from the subject manager in the same month, on the condition that approval was also given by the relevant school principals and consent was obtained from the student participants and their parents.

At around the same time, initial contact was made with two secondary schools in Hong Kong (School L and School P) through what is termed in the sociolinguistics literature the ‘friend of a friend’ access strategy (Milroy, 1987). For School L, which was my alma mater, I sent an email message to one of my English teachers about my intention to conduct research in the school. She then passed the message on to the English subject panel head, Miss Chau.¹⁰ Miss Chau was teaching an S.5 class (the first student cohort taking the HKDSE) at the time, and eventually became the teacher-rater I interviewed. It was also her class from which I obtained video-recordings of the assessed interactions and student interview data. For School P, initial contact was made through a friend from university (Miss Tsui) teaching English in School P at the time, who helped me get in contact with two English teachers of S.5, Miss Cheung and Miss Tong. The student participants in this study were from the classes taught by Miss Cheung and Miss Tong, and these two teachers were also the teacher-raters I interviewed for this study.

Following the initial contact and prior to the first phase of data collection, a letter to the principals of School L and School P was sent in April 2011, explaining the purpose of the study, means of data collection, and the approval obtained from the Examination Authority. A copy of the informed consent form for student participants and their parents was sent along with the letter. The principals of both schools issued their approval for me to proceed with data collection via the teachers (Miss Chau in School L and Miss Tsui in School P).

¹⁰ All names of the teachers in this thesis are pseudonyms.

The two schools

School L and School P in this study are both coeducational public secondary schools in Hong Kong. Both schools use English as the medium of instruction (EMI)¹¹. As only 112 secondary schools (approximately 25% among all) were allowed to maintain EMI following the implementation of the mother-tongue education policy in 1998 (and before the medium-of-instruction policy was fine-tuned in 2010), students admitted to EMI schools are generally understood as the highest attainment group in general academic performance among all secondary school entrants in Hong Kong (Fok, 2012; Luk, 2010). Relatedly, primary school graduates are streamed into bands 1 to 3 (band 1 being the highest) according to their moderated internal school results in Chinese, English, and mathematics, and ‘band 1’ students are given priority in secondary school places allocation (Fok, 2012). As such, while there is no officially published banding of the schools by the Education Bureau, secondary schools in Hong Kong are typically labeled by the general public as ‘band 1’, ‘band 2’, or ‘band 3’ schools. School L and School P in this study are both known to the public as ‘band 1’ schools. All these factors taken together, the two schools can be considered broadly comparable.

It should also be pointed out that, at the initial stage, the two schools were not selected for this study based on known differences in how they implement the assessment task. However, the interview data from the first phase of data collection revealed that the task implementation conditions of the SBA Group Interaction task were considerably different in the two schools. This enabled comparisons of student discourse data from the two schools to be made, and reinforced the importance of investigating aspects of task implementation and task engagement. This in turn informed the formulation of Research Question 3 and the decision to carry out a mock assessment with the preparation time video-recorded in Phase 2 of data collection.

¹¹ Both schools are included on the member list of The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools (Website: http://www.emi.edu.hk/eng-ver/mem_list.php).

Two phases of data collection

Data collection was carried out in two phases. Phase 1 took place in June 2011, during which I collected data related to Part A of the SBA component – group interactions based on books/movies that students had read/viewed. Phase 2 of data collection took place in Jan 2012, in which data related to Part B of the SBA component – group interactions based on topics taught in the Elective Modules – was obtained. The decision to collect data for the present study in two phases was grounded in two considerations. Firstly, as the discussion tasks for Part A and Part B of the SBA (in terms of topics and stimuli) are fairly different, the collection of data from assessed interactions in both Part A and Part B would allow comparison, where deemed relevant, between the student interactions elicited by the two types of discussion tasks. Secondly, the first phase served as a kind of pilot study which could inform the second phase in terms of techniques and procedure of the stimulated recall and formulation of interview questions. As noted, the introduction of the mock assessment in Phase 2 also emerged out of initial analysis of data obtained in Phase 1.

The rest of this section provides details of the three main types of data collected for this study: (1) video-recordings of the assessed interactions, (2) retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall with a) student-candidates and with b) teacher-raters, and (3) mock assessments.

3.2.2 Video-recordings of assessed interactions

In total, video-recordings of the Group Interaction task completed by 42 groups in the two schools were obtained. Among them, 23 group interactions were from Part A of the SBA obtained in Phase 1, and 19 were from Part B obtained in Phase 2. Students in the Part B group interactions were from the same classes as the Part A group interactions, either in the same or different grouping based on their own decision.

Discussion tasks

For Part A, School P gave students a discussion task based on the movie *Freaky Friday* that students had viewed. The discussion questions were about the misunderstanding that exists between the two main characters, Mrs. Coleman and Anna; and what would happen if the two characters, after exchanging their bodies, had to stay in each other's bodies for the rest of their lives. The same discussion task based on the same movie was given to all student groups. In School L, the discussion tasks were based on different movies that different student groups had watched. Although the discussion prompts were not available, based on the video-recordings obtained, the movies included *My Sister's Keeper*, *Toy Story 3*, and *Avatar*; and the discussion questions include giving a summary of the story, favorite character, music or special effects in the movie, and possible changes to the movie.

For Part B, the discussion task in School P was again uniform across student groups, and was based on the Elective Module of Workplace communication. Students were required to assume the roles of marketing team members, and the task was to choose a product to promote and discuss details of the promotion. Specific topics in the discussion task included the target group(s), special features of the product, and promotional strategies. As for School L, the discussion tasks were different across student groups, and were based on the Elective Module of either Social Issues or Popular Culture. One discussion task that appears in the analysis concerns promoting better relationships in the family, with the specific topics of causes of conflicts in the family, consequences of the conflicts, and possible solutions to address the problems. Another discussion task we will look at is for students to design a reality TV show, within which they have to negotiate the type of challenge or contest, decide who to invite as contestants and judges, and the place and setting for the reality show. Samples of the Group Interaction tasks are shown in Appendix A.

Task implementation conditions

With reference to task implementation conditions, the assessments in School L and School P differed mainly in the amount of preparation time, and whether students were

allowed to prepare the assessed interactions together. School L allowed students 10 minutes of preparation time, and students in the same group had to prepare individually rather than being able to talk about what they would do or say in the assessed interaction. School P gave students a few hours of preparation time (2-6 hours) – the discussion questions were released in the morning on the day of the assessment, and the exact amount of preparation time depended on the time of assessment for a specific group. Students in the same group were allowed to get together to prepare for the assessed interaction.

Nature of the video-recordings

In every school, video-recordings of the SBA group interactions were made for standardization purposes (both within and across schools) in accordance with the Examination Authority's requirement (HKEAA, 2009). Therefore, the video-recordings of assessed interactions used in this study were obtained from the teacher-raters retrospectively rather than made specifically for the purpose of research. This perhaps alleviates the issue of 'observer's paradox' (Labov, 1972), whereby we cannot observe participants without changing their behavior, which is usually overcome if participants eventually forget or do not feel that they are being recorded/observed. In the present study, the students had not been aware of this study at the time the video-recordings were made (i.e. the time the assessed interactions took place). Therefore, while the presence of recording equipment might have had some effect on students' interactional behavior – for example, some students occasionally glanced at the video camera – this did not arise out of being observed for research purposes.

Video-recordings as interactional data have several advantages over audio-recordings. They allow the analysis to take into account, where relevant, non-verbal details such as gaze, facial expressions, gestures, and body orientation of the participants. Non-verbal details noted from the video-recordings proved to be particularly useful and relevant to the present study, as we explore various features of group interactions with extended preparation time (in School P) in Chapters 4 and 6, including aspects such as

non-verbal cues students use to pass or take over the floor, non-verbal interaction in silences, changes in reciprocity display, and some students' reliance on their note card.

3.2.3 Retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall

The second type of data collected for this study was retrospective interviews with student-candidates and with teacher-raters.

Interviews with student-candidates

Retrospective interviews were conducted with selected groups of students in both phases of data collection, in June 2011 and January 2012 respectively. The objectives of these interviews were to solicit students' meta-discursive comments on their own performance, and to clarify and provide additional perspectives on what happened in certain episodes within the assessed interaction (e.g. long gaps of silence, laughter displaying embarrassment). Moreover, the interviews were aimed at gathering students' views on the aspects they considered important as part of interactional competence, and their general opinion on SBA. The use of stimulated recall (details provided below) served to refresh student participants' memory of their assessed interaction.

Selection of student groups to interview

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to interview all student groups in the video database of assessed interactions. Therefore, a selection of student groups were invited to attend an interview following my initial viewing of the video-recordings obtained from the teacher-raters. As one objective of this study is to investigate how students construct themselves as interactionally competent, and what they consider to be part of the competence, students from group interactions in which there appeared to be good quality interaction and exchange of ideas were selected for the interview.

In Phase 2 of data collection, an additional methodological decision was made such that, whenever possible, the same students (in the same or different grouping) who were interviewed in Phase 1 would be interviewed again, and their assessed interactions

in both Part A and Part B analyzed. The rationale behind this was to gain a richer picture of the relevant students' performance in place of obtaining a larger, more randomized sample. Tracking the same students' performance enables the analysis to, where relevant, note the consistency or changes in the students' performance across assessment events, and any difference in their performance in the assessment tasks for Part A and Part B. This was possible with three student groups in School P, who opted to be assessed in the Group Interaction format in both assessment events,¹² with either no change or slight changes in group membership. However, students from School L interviewed in Phase 1 and Phase 2 were different, as the students in the video-recordings from Phase 1 did not appear in the video-recordings from Phase 2 – they might have opted for the Individual Presentation task rather than the Group Interaction task.

Participants' availability and number of groups interviewed

Participants' availability was also an issue, as interviews were conducted after school, on Saturdays, or on days following the school's examination period. Some students who were invited had other commitments such as attending tutorial schools or lived too far away to come all the way back to the school for the interview. As such, the interview for one group in School L (LB05) was cancelled, and for a number of groups, not all four students attended the interview. In total, 14 groups were interviewed: 8 from Part A (Phase 1), and 6 from Part B (Phase 2). Among the 14 groups, 9 were from School P, and 5 were from School L.

The stimulated recall procedure

During the interviews, the video-recordings of the assessed interactions were played and paused at intervals for the students/teachers to give their comments. Rather than pausing at regular time intervals (e.g. every 1 or 2 minutes), the pausing was more aligned with the unfolding of the assessed interaction, hence mostly when the discussion of a sub-topic had come to an end. I also paused at places where something seemed to

¹² Students participate in three graded assessments in total (two for Part A and one for Part B). For Part A, one mark needs to be submitted for Group Interaction, and one for Individual Presentation. For part B, students have the choice to be assessed in either the GI or IP format (HKEAA, 2009, p.6).

have gone ‘wrong’, when the students laughed, or had long gaps of silence in the video-recording. Additional questions were asked about particular parts of the interactions (e.g. episodes in which there seemed to be good quality interaction). Following the video playback, students were asked a few general questions about their views on their own performance and on the assessment format. Thus, there were questions specific to each particular group as well as general questions for all groups. A sample of interview questions is shown in Appendix B.

Other details of the student interviews

In order to prevent student participants from bias towards certain answers to interview questions and avoidance of others, they were explicitly informed that the focus of the research is not to evaluate how well or poorly they had performed in the assessment but how effective the Group Interaction task is as a speaking assessment. At the beginning of the interviews, I also reiterated that this research would not have any influence on the outcome of the assessment – the score they received from their teacher-rater and their grade for the whole English Language subject in the HKDSE.

All interviews with the students were conducted in their first language, Cantonese, in order for them to feel more at ease in expressing their views. The interview extracts shown in this thesis were translated from Cantonese to English, with words originally spoken in English during the interviews italicized. On completion of the interview, all student participants were given 20 Hong Kong Dollars as a token of thanks for their time and participation.

Interviews with teacher-raters

Interviews were conducted with Miss Chau in School L, and Miss Cheung and Miss Tong in School P, the teacher-raters assessing the performance of the group interactions examined in this study. In Phase 1 of the data collection, the interviews with teacher-raters did not incorporate stimulated recall of specific group interactions. Instead, the interviews focused on gathering information about how the GI task was implemented in their classes, and soliciting teacher-raters’ general views on what they value in

students' performance in the GI task, and their attitudes towards the SBA component in comparison with the public examination.

In Phase 2, the interviews with teacher-raters in both schools included stimulated recall for selected group interactions (see Table 3.1 below). The stimulated recall followed a procedure similar to student interviews described above, and the teacher-raters were encouraged to pause the video playback and comment on any features salient to them. Additional questions about particular episodes in the interaction or aspects of individual students' performance based on my initial viewing of the video-recordings were also asked. Apart from the stimulated recall for selected group interactions, information about how the Part B assessment was administered was also solicited. This was to check whether reports from student-candidates and teacher-raters about aspects of task implementation were consistent.

Regarding the language of the interviews, the interviews with Miss Chau from School L and Miss Tong from School P were conducted in Cantonese, with their interview extracts translated into English in this thesis. The interviews with Miss Cheung (School P) in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 were conducted in English, in accordance with her preference. All three teachers said that they were happy to contribute to this study without receiving an honorarium.

Some limitations

Due to time constraints and limited availability of both the participants and the researcher, it was only possible to interview the students and teachers within one or two weeks after I had obtained the video-recordings of the assessed interactions. This meant that the interview questions were devised only after a few initial viewings of the video-recordings, and students' meta-discursive comments on some issues and points of interest that later emerged out of close analysis of the data transcripts could not be solicited. However, such interview arrangements also meant that students were interviewed shortly after the assessed interactions (mostly within one month)¹³ while

¹³ Except for the Part B assessed interactions in School P, with an approximately two-month gap between the assessment and the interviews.

their memories were still relatively fresh. Students' responses in the stimulated recall interviews proved to be useful in supplementing the conversation analysis of the assessed interactions. Specifically, they revealed that certain ostensibly spontaneous episodes of talk exchange were in fact pre-scripted, and provided important insights about the pre-task planning activities they engage in, as well as their negotiation between different identities and interactional norms.

Another issue concerns the nature and reliability of some of the interview responses. Some of the student participants, as well as one teacher-rater, were rather reticent. To keep the dialogue going, it was necessary for me, the interviewer, to resort to some close-ended questions as prompts, but which embodied my own observations about aspects of students' performance. Some of their responses, in turn, were merely agreeing responses to what might be considered 'leading questions' from the researcher. During the analysis, the selection and use of interview responses took into account the nature of interview responses as a product of social interaction (see Rapley & Antaki, 1998, or Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006, for discussions on how the interviewer's talk might shape the interviewee's responses). Bearing in mind the limited reliability of agreeing responses to closed questions as truthful reflections of respondents' opinion, such interview responses were not used as evidence. Participants' unprompted, self-initiated comments were given more weight as supplementary evidence to the test discourse data.

3.2.4 Mock assessments

The third type of data was a mock assessment conducted with two student groups in School P in January 2012 (Phase 2), where the whole assessment process from preparation time to the assessed interaction, as well as the post-interview immediately afterwards, was video-recorded. The decision to conduct a mock assessment was informed by preliminary findings from data collected in Phase 1, and in response to calls for investigation on task implementation conditions (Nakatsuhara, 2011) and what test-takers actually do during pre-task planning time (Wigglesworth, 1997; Wigglesworth &

Elder, 2010) in the speaking test literature. The recording of the preparation time, in particular, was aimed at capturing the fine-grained details of students' pre-task planning activities. This allowed for close examination of such activities in subsequent data analysis, supplementing and crosschecking with students' self-reports of their pre-task planning activities from the interviews.

Discussion tasks

The discussion tasks used in the mock assessment were adapted from the task in the Part B assessment (see above) which took place in November 2011, approximately two months before Phase 2 of the data collection. They were modified in a way such that they were similar enough to the November assessment, but with the type of product and company changed and one sub-topic replaced with another so that the students could not simply replicate all the ideas or the same dialogues from the November assessment. The discussion task for each of the two groups is shown in Appendix C.

Task implementation

Two groups in School P (PB11 and PB14) were invited to participate in the mock assessment (their mock assessed interactions labelled PB11Mock and PB14Mock respectively). The two groups were selected from the 15 Part B group interactions collected from School P in Phase 2, in which episodes of ostensibly authentic exchange were found in the initial viewing of the video-recordings. The mock assessments for the two groups were administered on two different days, and slightly different discussion tasks (different company and product) were given to the two groups (see Appendix C).

The two groups were subjected to different task implementation conditions, corresponding to two different objectives of the investigation. PB11 was given approximately one hour of preparation time. This enabled simulation of the actual task implementation condition as closely as possible,¹⁴ while also taking into consideration the student participants' limited availability after school.¹⁵ PB14 was given

¹⁴ Students had 2-6 hours in the November assessment.

¹⁵ Some of them had to attend tutorial school lessons following the mock assessment.

approximately 10 minutes of preparation time.¹⁶ Such treatment involving a drastically different task implementation condition from previous assessment events was to examine whether and how the amount of preparation time impacts on the quality and authenticity of students' interaction in the subsequent task performance.

To improve the authenticity of the mock assessment, I arranged for a teacher-rater, Miss Tsui, to be there to assess the two group interactions and give the students feedback on their performance. Regarding the issue of students being video-recorded during preparation time and the assessed interaction and post-interview that followed, the problem of 'observer's paradox' seemed to be minimal. Students were more or less used to being video-recorded in the SBA assessments. They hardly looked at the video camera during the preparation time and assessed interaction, and there was no indication that their interactional behavior was considerably different from their previous assessed interactions.

Besides the video-recordings, the note cards that students used in the mock assessment and the scores the teacher-rater awarded to individual students were collected. As we will see in Chapter 6, students' note cards provided useful supplementary evidence of their varying degrees of pre-planning and pre-scripting during the preparation time.

Limitations

Due to constraints on participants' availability as mentioned, it was only possible to carry out the mock assessment with two groups, and with reduced preparation time. The limited sample of student groups meant that the investigation of students' pre-task planning activities and their impact on the subsequent assessed interaction was essentially exploratory. The limitation of reduced preparation time captured on video (for PB11) was partly offset by asking students, in the post-interview, to compare their experience in the mock and the actual assessment, in particular what kinds of preparation work they did before the actual assessment but were unable to do before the

¹⁶ Similar to School L, but students here are allowed to do the preparation together.

mock assessment. Their responses were taken as complementary evidence to the video-recording of the preparation time.

3.2.5 Additional materials collected

Besides the three main types of data described above, score data for the assessed group interactions, including the score breakdown for each student according to the four assessment criteria was obtained from the teacher-raters.¹⁷ This data is not reported in this thesis, as the focus of the present study is on the nature of student interaction elicited by the Group Interaction task rather than scoring validity.

In a similar vein, although the rating scales for the GI task with score descriptors (HKEAA, 2010) were obtained, the analysis did not approach the data by matching instances of students' discourse with the descriptor of a particular score band (cf. Galaczi, 2008; Lazaraton & Davies, 2008). Previous studies have provided empirical evidence that rating scales and their score descriptors are not necessarily robust enough to cover all aspects of interactional competence co-constructed by candidates and recognized by raters. For example, Brooks (2009) found features differentiating between candidates' performance that were not tapped into by the assessment criteria, and May (2011) noted that raters commented on aspects of candidates' performance which were not explicitly stated in the score descriptors. The present study focuses on features of interactional competence oriented to by participants (students and teachers), rather than the (mis)match between students' performance and features in the score descriptors.

Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the types of data available for each assessed group interaction that has some form of supplementary data (stimulated recall with students and/or teachers, and mock assessment).

¹⁷ Except for groups in School P for Part A.

Group interaction	Detailed Transcription	Stimulated recall (teacher)	Stimulated recall (student)	Mock assessment	Score breakdown
PA05	✓		✓		
PA08	✓	Interview with teachers without stimulated recall	✓		Overall score available
PA09	✓		✓		
PA11	✓		✓		
PA13	✓		✓		
LA03	✓		✓		✓
LA06	✓		✓		✓
LA07	✓		✓		✓
PB06	✓	x	✓		✓
PB10	✓	x	✓		✓
PB11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PB14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LB00	✓	✓	✓		✓
LB05	✓	✓	x		✓
LB06	✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 3.1 Types of data available for each group interaction

3.2.6 Ethical considerations

As mentioned above, prior to data collection in School L and School P, approval from the Examination Authority and the principals of both schools had been obtained. At both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of data collection, Chinese-English bilingual informed consent forms were distributed to the students (see Appendix D), and signed by the students and their parents prior to their participation in this study. Importantly, it was emphasized to the students that participation in the study was voluntary and could be

withdrawn at any stage, and that (non-)participation would have no effect on the assessment outcome.

In accordance with the ‘Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics’ published by the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL, 2006), measures have been taken to ensure anonymity of the participants and their data. In this thesis and all research publications stemming from it, the identities of participants are not disclosed. Data transcripts only show single-letter initials of the students ‘known-as’ names (mostly common English names), but not their Chinese names in official documents or student records either in initials or in full. The note cards collected after the mock assessment were also anonymized in the same manner. Teacher-raters are identified in this thesis using pseudonyms.

3.3 Data processing and transcription

This section describes how the three main types of data collected in this study (as described in 3.2) are processed and transcribed.

Conversation Analysis (CA) is the main methodological approach adopted in the analysis of the assessed group interactions (see Section 3.4), and the practice of transcription, according to Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008), is ‘a fundamental part of doing CA’ (p.69) and ‘an integral part of analysis’ (p.71). The process of transcribing recordings of the interactions under examination ‘make *what* was said and *how* it was said available for analytic consideration’ (ten Have, 2007, p.32). Meanwhile, it allows the analyst to get deeply acquainted with the interactional data itself. In listening or viewing the recording repeatedly, the analyst begins to ‘hear and focus on phenomena that may subsequently form part of an analytic account’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.71). The use of the recording (the original data) and that of the transcript (a ‘representation’ of the data (*ibid.*)) in data analysis are seen as complementary, and as Psathas (1995) notes, the very process of transcription ‘often reveals interactional phenomena that had been hitherto unnoticed’ (p.46).

The process began with initial viewings of all the video-recordings obtained from both schools, gauging the adequacy of sound quality of the recordings, and identifying

phenomena of potential analytic interest. Eventually, a decision was made to fully transcribe all group interactions with stimulated recall data (either with students, with teachers, or both). This enabled me to approach the selected group interactions from multiple, complementary perspectives, and get a fuller picture of the interactions.

In total, full CA transcription was carried out for 15 assessed group interactions and two from the mock assessment (see Table 3.1 in Section 3.2 above), following Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions (see Transcription Conventions for additional transcription symbols used). This was done by repeated listening to the audio files converted from the video-recordings using the software GoldWave as well as viewing of the original video-recordings. The first stage involved transcribing the words as spoken, and at later stages, different types and levels of paralinguistic details were added. These details include those concerning the dynamics of turn-taking, such as gaps, overlaps, and latching; and those of speech delivery within each turn, such as stress, lengthening or truncation of words or syllables, hesitations, and pauses. More fine-grained details about participants' non-verbal actions such as gaze and gestures and the stretch of talk they accompany, where relevant for analysis of a particular phenomenon, were transcribed in extracts presented in the subsequent chapters (but may not appear in the full transcripts in the Appendix).

It should be noted that the transcripts in this study, as with CA transcripts in general, are 'unavoidably incomplete, selective renderings of the recordings' (ten Have, 2007, p.31), and therefore do not exhaust all observable features of the talk. In a similar vein, Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) note that there are innumerable features in a fragment of talk which could be transcribed, and that no transcription system is capable of capturing all features of talk, or is entirely neutral and can fit all kinds of investigation. Therefore, whenever possible, the transcripts are not used in isolation, but in conjunction with the recordings of the interactions during data analysis.

Retrospective interviews with student-candidates and teacher-raters, as they were intended to serve as supplementary data and not subjected to conversation analysis, were transcribed using standard orthography, with some relevant details of non-verbal actions provided. The interview extracts shown in this thesis were translated into English from

Cantonese, with the exception of interview extracts with Miss Cheung from School P, whose interview was conducted in English in accordance with her preference. For the translated interview extracts, words originally spoken in English during the interview are italicized.

The present study takes a broadly semantic approach in translating the interview data. ‘Semantic translation’ attempts to ‘render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original’ (Newmark, 1981, p.39), so that ‘the message in the receptor language [would] match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language’ (Nida, 1964, p.159). It differs from literal, word-for-word translation on the one hand, and ‘communicative translation’ on the other, where there is an overriding ‘loyalty’ to target language norms and a transfer of foreign elements (from the original language) into the target language culture (Munday, 2001). In translating the interview extracts in Cantonese into English, an effort was made to select words as close to the original as possible, and to preserve the utterance structure in Cantonese. For example, the ellipsis of sentence subjects and content ideas understood in the local interactional context is preserved in the translation. Where the information is essential for readers’ understanding, it is recovered in the translated transcripts by glosses within square brackets. In addition, some relevant non-verbal details (e.g. deictic gestures, co-participants’ laughter accompanying an utterance) are also included in the translated transcripts. The overarching aim is to reproduce or approximate ‘the spirit and manner’ (Nida, 1964, p.164) in which the original Cantonese utterances were produced by the participants as episodes of spoken interaction.

As for the video-recorded pre-task planning discussions among the students during the preparation time in the mock assessment, they were coded for actions related to different types of preparation work that, together with students’ self-reports in the stimulated recall interviews, formed the basis of the schematic representation of the pre-task planning activities at different stages of the preparation time before the assessed interaction (see Figure 6.1 in Chapter 6). Similar to the treatment of interview extracts, extracts of students’ discussion during preparation time presented in Chapter 6 were transcribed and then translated into English, in standard orthography along with some

relevant details of non-verbal actions. Although these extracts were not transcribed in the full detail typical of CA transcripts, they were analyzed as interactional data using CA techniques, attending to aspects such as participants' displayed orientations, turn design, and sequences of actions. As will be shown in Chapter 6, this has generated interesting findings and important insights when viewed in connection with the same students' talk exchange in the subsequent assessed interaction.

3.4 Data analysis

The present study adopts Conversation Analysis (CA) as the main methodological approach. In this section, I will outline some of the principles of Conversation Analysis which have guided the analysis of data in this study, and describe the analytic procedure recommended in the CA literature and how it has been applied in the data analysis. I will also provide an account of the rationale, where particular methodological decisions diverge from mainstream CA principles, in relation to the purpose of this study.

3.4.1 Conversation Analysis as methodological approach

Conversation Analysis is broadly defined as the study of 'talk-in-interaction' (Liddicoat, 2011; Psathas, 1995, Schegloff, 2007). As Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) note, despite the name 'conversation analysis', practitioners in the field do not only study 'ordinary conversation', but a far broader range of different forms of talk exchange or interaction in both everyday and institutional settings.

Conversation Analysis, particularly in its early development in Harvey Sacks's work, has close links to ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), and is 'grounded in a descriptive phenomenology of the mundane world' (Psathas, 1995, p.7). Despite its subsequent development into a more 'empiricist' tradition (Lynch, 2000), some of CA's fundamental principles retain an ethnomethodological character (Lynch, 2000; Psathas, 1995). CA views talk as social action, which in turn encompasses various 'social activities' such as 'requests, proposals, accusations, complaints' (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.12). One basic assumption of CA is that social actions are *orderly* and have a

natural organization. This natural organization is viewed as a practical and situated accomplishment, ‘a practical logic, an achieved organization, locally produced, in situ, in the “there and then” and the “here and now” (Psathas, 1995, p.3), and this order is oriented to by participants of the interaction themselves in both ‘the *production and interpretation* of talk-in-interaction’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.13, my emphasis).

The object of Conversation Analysis is to uncover and explicate such order in talk. Its interest is in ‘finding the *machinery*, the *rules*, the *structures* that produce and constitute that orderliness’ (Psathas, 1995, p.2), In other words, CA aims to ‘discover how participants understand and respond to each other in their turns at talk [...] in organized sequences of interaction’, while such reasoning procedures are ‘often tacit’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.12). This makes CA a particularly relevant approach for the present study, as the investigation is focused on the interactional organization of students’ talk in the Group Interaction task, and how they discursively construct the ability to interact with one another. The following outlines some analytic principles of CA.

1) Naturally-occurring interaction as object of study

A core principle of CA is to work with data consisting of naturally-occurring interaction, rather than types of interactions that have been set up in laboratories or experimentally designed (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008), or interactions that are ‘co-produced with or provoked by the researcher’ (ten Have, 2007, p.68). Put in another way, CA studies interactional phenomena that are *not* produced especially for the purpose of a study, and ‘would have occurred regardless of whether the researcher had come upon the scene’ (Psathas, 1995, p.45).

A CA study usually involves the collection, transcription, and repeated listening/viewing of audio or video-recordings of naturally-occurring interactions. The general recommendation for collecting data of talk exchange is that the recordings ‘should catch “natural interaction” as fully and faithfully as is practically possible (ten Have, 2007, p.68), although it is difficult to ascertain whether the interaction thus captured is taking place as if there has been no research observation (cf. Labov’s

‘Observer’s Paradox’). In practice, researchers are advised to take measures to make the recording activities ‘as unobtrusive as possible’ (ten Have, 2007, p.69).

As described in Section 3.2, the present study is based on video-recordings of assessed student interactions in the SBA Group Interaction task. Whether the recording activity was ‘unobtrusive’ and the video-recordings captured students’ ‘natural interaction’ as if they had been interacting with each other without being observed by anyone is disputable – in fact, this thesis argues that their interactions were far from ‘natural’ in this sense (see Chapters 5 and 6). Nonetheless, it should be noted that the assessed group interactions were recorded as part of a standard procedure of the assessment (HKEAA, 2009), not specially for the purpose of the present study. The assessed interactions obtained can thus be considered ‘naturally-occurring contrived interactions’, and they are, as I will argue in the following chapters, contrived for the very purpose of the assessment, rather than due to being part of this study.

On the other hand, the use of data collected from retrospective interviews with students and teachers incorporating stimulated recall and from the mock assessment in the analysis does not fit as closely with the criterion of ‘naturally-occurring interaction’ in CA. According to ten Have (2007), ‘The verbal accounts participants might produce regarding their own conduct are rejected [...] at least as primary data on the interactions accounted for’ (p.31). He adds that such explanations could be analyzed in their own right as ‘accounting practices’, but are ‘not accorded any privileged status in the analysis of the original interaction’ (*ibid.*). Research interview data, as with other types of data including field notes from observations, invented examples, or controlled experiments, are generally not used in CA studies, or at least not used as ‘core data’ (ten Have, 2007, p.73). Citing Heritage and Atkinson’s (1984) argument, ten Have (2007) explains that these types of data, as with verbal accounts from stimulated recall, are seen as ‘too much of a product of the researcher’s or informant’s manipulation, selection, or reconstruction’, and could be biased by ‘preconceived notions of what is probable or important’ (p.73). The present study does use students’ and teachers’ verbal accounts in stimulated recall as data to supplement or consolidate the CA findings of the assessed group interactions, and it analyzes student interaction from the mock assessment, an

arguably ‘non-naturally occurring’ interaction. I will discuss in more detail the rationale for this methodological decision in Section 3.4.4.

2) Participants’ perspective

Another distinctive characteristic of CA is that the analysis seeks to approach the data through the *participants’ perspective* internal to the talk-in-interaction, rather than impose the *analyst’s perspective* on the data as an external observer of the interaction. The role of conversation analysts, Schegloff (1997) maintains, is to demonstrate ‘the orientations, meanings, interpretations, understandings etc., of the participants’ (p.166). One thing that this participants’ perspective entails is that CA is a ‘data-driven’ approach, in which, as Markee (2008) puts it, ‘the theory-first, empirical analysis-second approach to knowledge construction is reversed’ (p.405). CA studies generally avoid applying ‘preformulated theoretical or conceptual categories’ to data (Psathas, 1995, p.2), or code phenomena into ‘categories with [*a priori*] explicit criteria developed in order to account for data for a particular analytic purpose’ (Liddicoat, 2011, p.72). No assumptions are made about the participants’ psychological states such as moods or emotions, or their motivations and intentions, nor is their interactional behavior explained by reference to macro social categories such as age, gender, or socioeconomic status, unless ‘these can demonstrably be shown to be matters that participants themselves are noticing, attending to, or orienting to in the course of their interaction’ (Psathas, 1995, p.47).

This does not mean that CA is downright ‘a-theoretical’, but it deals with theory differently from other social sciences (ten Have, 2007). Markee (2008) argues that the kind of theory in CA ‘emerges as a by-product of empirical analysis’, and is ‘qualitatively different from etic theories’ (p.405). In the case of CA, Markee (2008) asserts that:

Instead of trying to make large scale generalizations about phenomenon X [...], CA’s emic theory is interested in] how participants analyze each other’s real time conversational practices to achieve particular social actions [...] that occur naturally during talk-in-interaction. (p.405)

Thus, CA studies develop their own data-driven ‘theories’ about participants’ interactional practices (rather than use pre-established theories to explain them). In ten

Have's (2007) words, CA tries to discover and 'explicate the inherent theories-in-use of members' practices as lived orders, rather than trying to order the world externally by applying a set of traditionally available concepts' (p.31). Some CA researchers do admit existing theories (e.g. Goffman's concept of participation framework in Goodwin, 1981; and Heath, 1986, 1988) or social categories (e.g. sexual identity in Liddicoat, 2011) in their analyses, but again, only insofar as these can be empirically shown to be oriented to or made relevant by participants in their talk (Liddicoat, 2011).

At this point, it needs to be noted that the participant's perspective in CA is not gathered through retrospectively interviewing the participants about the interaction under examination (Okada, 2010; ten Have, 2007) – see discussion above and in Section 3.4.4. It also does not necessarily mean employing labels (of categories) verbally produced by participants themselves (Goodwin, 1984). The participant's emic perspective in CA is to be understood as recovering the methods and procedures through which participants conduct and organize their talk moment-by-moment as the interaction unfolds, rather than reporting what they say (in an interview) about their talk. Put simply, it is 'the perspective of how the participants display for one another their understanding of "what's going on" during, not after, the interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.13). In a similar vein, Okada (2010) explicates how the participant's perspective is taken in analysis in terms of how 'the meaning of a turn (or turns) is emically determined in relation to surrounding turns in a sequence and publicly displayed in interaction' (p.1654).

As mentioned, CA aims to discover the rules and practices that participants themselves deploy to achieve that natural orderliness in talk. A formative aspect of the participant's perspective, as Liddicoat (2011) argues, is that 'CA sees *participants themselves as analysts* and the outcome of their analysis is revealed in the ways in which the interaction is designed at each moment' (p.72). In elaborating this, he states that 'Participants, when they speak, display their understanding of what was previously said and so each turn at talk represents a form of analysis of the talk' (p.73). Similarly, Lynch (2000) writes that in CA, participants in interactions are viewed as 'practical analysts'

(p.524), and stresses the importance of aligning the professional analyst's perspective with that of the participants, on the grounds that:

an adequate understanding of the subjective orientation of an individual action is both a methodological requirement for a social analyst *and* a practical requirement for others who would hope to interact appropriately with the agent in question.

(Lynch, 2000, p.524)

Basing the analysis on participants' demonstrated understanding of each other's talk, therefore, becomes 'a unique, humanistic criterion for assuring that analytic findings correspond to intrinsic features of the data' (p.524).

According to Lynch (2000), this also addresses the often mentioned problem that there are always possible 'alternative characterizations' of the same utterance or action (p.524). A 'technological solution' for the analyst, as Lynch suggests, involves examining how the participants in the ongoing sequence of talk (of which the utterance/action is a part) 'respond to and make use of prior utterances' (*ibid.*). He contends that 'For professional analysts and participants alike the sense and pragmatic implications of an utterance are made evident by the way they are *treated* by participants in the unfolding conversation' (p.524-525). Crucially, the professional conversation analyst's responsibility is to formulate how the participants' moment-to-moment practical analysis of each other's talk is 'achieved in and as a methodic procedure', rather than to 'override, undermine, or discount the endogenous analysis' (p.525).

3) Sequential analysis and the 'next-turn proof procedure'

In discussing the importance of aligning the analysis of talk with the participants' perspective above, we have already touched on the means to achieve this – by examining a turn in relation to the preceding and the following turns, as each turn is produced on the basis of (and therefore displays) the participant's understanding of the what the previous speaker has just said. In Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) seminal paper, the authors describe CA's principle of grounding analysis in the participants' perspective through the sequential analysis of turns-at-talk as follows:

[W]hile understandings of other turns' talk are displayed to co-participants, they are available as well to professional analysts [...] The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns [therefore] affords both a resource for [participants'] analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analysis of prior turns – resources intrinsic to the data themselves. (p.729)

Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) term this the *next-turn proof procedure*, and argue, in a similar vein to Lynch (2000), that it is 'the most basic tool used in CA to ensure the analyses explicate the orderly properties of talk as oriented to accomplishments of participants, rather than being based merely on the assumptions of the analyst' (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p.13). Such a procedure also enables the analysis to recover the process in which participants negotiate meaning and work towards mutual, intersubjective understanding. As the authors put it, any next turn in a sequence displays a participant's understanding of the previous turn, and if that happens to be an incorrect understanding (i.e. not what the prior speaker has intended), that in itself 'can be displayed in the following turn in the sequence' (p.14).

The authors cite an example of a conversational sequence between Russ and his mother about an upcoming Parent-Teachers' Association meeting from Schegloff (1988, p.57-58). I reproduce and discuss the example here:

(1) [KR: 2]

1 Mother: Do you know who's going to that meeting?

If we look at this first utterance by Mother in isolation, it is somewhat ambiguous as to what action the utterance is performing: It could be a genuine question seeking information from Russ (i.e. Mother does not know who is going). Alternatively, it could be a 'pre-announcement', after which Mother would announce to Russ who is going to the meeting (i.e. Mother knows who is going). The following shows the entire sequence as it unfolds:

(2) [KR:2]

1 Mother: Do you know who's going to that meeting?

2 Russ: Who?
 3 Mother: I don't know!
 4 Russ: Ouh:: prob'ly: Mr Murphy an' Dad said prob'ly Mrs
 5 Timppte en some a' the teachers.

Russ's response 'Who?' in line 2 displays his understanding of Mother's utterance in line 1 as a pre-announcement, and in asking 'Who?', Russ is giving Mother the 'go-ahead' to proceed with the announcement. Mother's following turn (line 3), however, reveals that she in fact does not know who is going, thus also displaying that Russ's understanding of her utterance in line 1 is incorrect – it has been a genuine information-seeking question rather than a pre-announcement in the form of a question. In line 4, Russ provides the information he has about the people going to the meeting. In providing an answer, Russ displays his renewed understanding of Mother's utterance as a question.

This example therefore illustrates how conversation analysts, through the 'next-turn proof procedure', can analyze individual turns and the actions they accomplish, or conversely, how actions can be performed in different turn designs, following closely how participants understand each other's talk as the interaction unfolds. As Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) remark on the strength of sequential analysis taking the participants' perspective:

An account of the ways in which a particular conversational device is used to accomplish specific interactional business will be strengthened if we can show that the recipients display an orientation to those properties of the device which the analytic account emphasizes. (p.98-99)

3.4.2 CA analytic procedure

After discussing some general principles related to CA's methodological perspective, I will now turn to the analytic procedure recommended for studies adopting the CA approach, and describe how this procedure has been applied in the present study. Authors generally delimit three stages of the analytic process in CA, with some variation in what each stage comprises. The following describes the three stages as (1) identifying phenomena, (2) building a collection, and (3) making comparisons and refining the analysis, synthesizing ideas from four CA introductory texts (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Liddicoat, 2011; Psathas, 1995; ten Have, 2007).

(1) Identifying phenomena

The first stage of the analytic process involves identifying phenomena of potential analytic interest through repeated listening to and/or viewing of the recording, in conjunction with reading the transcript. In this study, such repeated encounters with the data, both at the initial and subsequent stages, enabled me to identify phenomena or features that had not hitherto been discovered. This process has been referred to as ‘unmotivated looking’ in CA texts, although some authors problematize the use of the term ‘unmotivated’ as potentially misleading (e.g. Psathas, 1995; ten Have, 2007). Psathas (1995) remarks that this does not mean literally purposeless reviewing of the data, but emphasizes an openness to interesting phenomena and patterns that emerge from the data, as opposed to having pre-existing theories, categories, or hypotheses in mind and looking for matching instances in the data. Sacks (1984b) argues that such a data-driven (rather than theory-driven) approach enables the analyst to notice features or phenomena salient in and local to the data that might otherwise have been obscured by a predetermined analytic direction.

The data is therefore initially examined through noticing what conversational actions are being performed and how they are performed; or alternatively, through noticing particular features of talk and what actions they accomplish (Schegloff, 1996). Ten Have (2007) recommends, for this initial stage of ‘data exploration’, working through the data transcript in terms of four broad areas: turn-taking, sequence organization, repair, and turn design (Lazaraton, 2002, also suggests similar areas in using CA for the qualitative validation of speaking tests). The analyst can make remarks of observations in the margins or in a separate column of the printed transcript, and formulate some preliminary statements or rules that tentatively account for the observations (ten Have, 2007). When a particular phenomenon has emerged as interesting, the analyst can then focus on it (*ibid.*).

Following the above recommendations, I began analyzing the data in this study by going through all the data transcripts in conjunction with the video-recordings, and made notes of preliminary observations for each of the assessed group interactions. On the basis of this data exploration process, several phenomena were identified for subsequent analysis. Features pertaining to the general discourse and interactional organization in

the SBA group interactions (analyzed in Chapter 4) include, first of all, those related to turn-taking: gaps, overlaps and latching; and verbal and non-verbal devices in handing over and taking over the floor. Moreover, it was found that students' response turns are overwhelmingly characterized by agreeing/disagreeing actions. This informed the decision to focus on the preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses, and features of their turn design. Also emerging as salient phenomena in the data exploration process were the various means that students use to highlight their responses as contingent on previous speaker contribution, and features of students' talk which seem to orient more to the overhearing teacher-rater than to each other (analyzed in Chapter 5). Aligning with the CA principles and analytic procedure outlined above, the research questions formulated for this study have been deliberately general and open-ended, and have been refined as the analysis evolved.

(2) Building a collection

Psathas (1995) makes the following recommendation for the second stage of analysis: 'Once a particular phenomenon is discovered, identified, and analyzed, it may be relevant to examine [...] further instances and to accumulate a collection' (p.52). Liddicoat (2011) suggests working through the entire corpus of collected data to locate all instances of the phenomenon. The selection should aim to be 'as comprehensive as possible rather than a limited or subjective selection of instances of the phenomenon' (p.74), and he stresses that the variation among instances of the phenomenon is 'an important analytic tool' in itself (*ibid.*). The importance of such variation (as will become more apparent in the third stage) in the collection of cases is in how it expands the 'coverage' of the analysis, in other words, how it enhances the robustness of the analytic descriptions and rules formulated about the phenomenon. As Psathas (1995) remarks,

Collection may result in rich discoveries, which reveal that the original phenomenon is more complex than first noted, or that a second instance is found to be not an instance like the first, but rather a different phenomenon in itself. (p.52)

Based on the recommendations, the second stage of analysis in the present study involved locating instances of the phenomena identified during the first stage in the transcripts of different assessed interactions, and building a collection of data extracts along with the preliminary analytic notes for each phenomenon (e.g. a collection of data

extracts for gaps, and a collection for agreeing responses). As Liddicoat (2011) stresses, the act of building collections of phenomena is not primarily a coding endeavor – ‘creating categorizations of activities according to established criteria’ (p.71). Rather, the assembling of cases allows the analyst to subsequently make comparisons among cases that either confirms the initial analysis or necessitates its refinement, which is the third stage of analysis.

(3) Making comparisons and refining the analysis

According to Liddicoat (2011), many CA findings are concerned with patterns of interaction based on collections of comparable data. Drawing on Sacks’s (1984a) lectures, both Liddicoat (2011) and ten Have (2007) recommend the following procedure for developing the analysis: Start with a small data set and construct an initial analysis, or in ten Have’s (2007) words, generate a ‘provisional analytic scheme’ (p.148). Then, further develop and refine the analysis ‘as more data is brought to bear on the analysis’ (Liddicoat, 2011, p.74). Some instances will support the initial analysis, while others will reveal the need to adjust or reformulate it. The process continues until it reaches the state of ‘saturation’, where similar instances are found over and over again, and no additional data are found to necessitate further refinement of the analysis (ten Have, 2007). In other words, the analytic description can now account for all the instances of the phenomenon in the collection. Ten Have (2007) likens this process to ‘theoretical sampling’ in the qualitative research methodology literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and characterizes this as an *inductive* approach that aims at ‘the construction of a “theory” that is to “emerge from the data”, especially through the comparison of instances’ (ten Have, 2007, p.174).

From the above description of the analytic procedure in CA, it will have become apparent that it is beyond the aims of CA to achieve ‘empirical generalization’ in quantitative terms (ten Have, 2007). The procedure outlined above aims to generate an analytic description that accounts for, qualitatively, the range of types of possibilities for a given phenomenon pertaining to the norms and principles of interaction, rather than deal with issues such as how frequent each type of possibility is, or how generalizable a pattern is from the sample to the population. Ten Have (2007), citing Yin (1994), describes this as the distinction between ‘analytic generalization’ and ‘statistical

generalization'. Accordingly, questions about “relations between variables”, “representative samples”, or “patterns of conditions and consequences” are not part of the CA inquiry (ten Have, 2007, p.150).

This also relates to the use of examples (data extracts) in the presentation of data analysis, both in CA research papers and in this thesis. In his discussion of selecting and employing further data instances in elaborating an analysis, ten Have (2007) states that ‘It only makes sense to take more and more instances into consideration if they provide additional information, stimulate new ideas, or serve a purpose in proving generality’ (p.147). On the same principle, in presenting the analyses of various phenomena in the forthcoming chapters, more cases will be brought to the discussion not to illustrate that the same phenomenon recurs, or that the same device is used frequently, but when the additional cases are relevant to the elaboration and refinement of the analysis.

Deviant case analysis

This brings us to the type of analysis termed ‘deviant case analysis’. Ten Have (2007) defines it as ‘the detailed analysis of any case that seems to depart from a previously formulated rule or pattern’ (p.151), and maintains that it is an essential part of ‘analytic induction’, the importance of which is stressed in ‘most published treatments of CA methodology’ (*ibid.*).

Clayman and Maynard (1995) delineate three types of deviant case analysis. First, some instances of a phenomenon, which at first glance appear to be deviant from the norm or pattern established, can be shown in close analysis to be actually produced with the participants orienting to the same norm or pattern as the regular cases. Such an orientation may be displayed, for example, by the producer of the instance providing an account for the departure from the norm, or by the recipient’s reproach of such behavior. The power of these ‘exceptions’, as Liddicoat (2011) explicates, is in that

If a participant demonstrates that a departure from a norm has been noticed, then this noticing shows that they are orienting to an expectation that the norm should apply. Deviant cases therefore serve to show that the orderliness that has been detected has a normative character. (p.75)

Thus, this type of deviant case in effect amounts to evidence that reinforces the original analysis.

The second approach to deviant case analysis is by reformulating the initial analysis, such that the refined description or account will encompass both the regular and the ‘deviant’ cases. The oft-cited classic example of deviant case analysis is Schegloff’s (1968) analysis of telephone openings, where he found that 1 out of 500 cases in his collection of telephone openings did not conform to the distribution rule of ‘answerer speaks first’ established in the initial analysis – the caller spoke first following a one-second silence. Subsequently, he reformulated the analysis in terms of a ‘summons-answer’ adjacency pair, with the telephone ringing being the ‘summons’ and whatever the person picking up the phone says being the ‘answer’. The caller speaking first can then be seen as a response orienting to the lack of ‘answer’ that was expected to follow the ‘summons’.

Finally, according to Clayman and Maynard (1995), the third approach is to develop a separate analysis for the deviant case, identifying the local reasons for its departure from the ‘norm’. Sometimes, it may turn out that the deviant case in the collection belongs to a different phenomenon altogether (Psathas, 1995). As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, this is the case with a student seemingly making explicit reference to the immediately preceding speaker’s talk as a means of foregrounding her response’s contingency on previous speaker contribution, which was otherwise not found among any students engaging in (pre-scripted) interactions with extended preparation time in School P. Chapter 4 will show a deviant case of the first type, where participants seemingly depart from the ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking pattern that characterizes the initial phase of other group interactions, but closer analysis reveals that they orient to the same norm.

Single case analysis

As mentioned, CA’s analytic procedure often includes building a collection and generating an analysis that accounts for the general pattern observed about a phenomenon among the instances in the collection. However, the importance of analyzing singular instances is also widely acknowledged in CA texts (e.g. Lynch, 2000; Sacks, 1984a; Schegloff, 1987; ten Have, 2007). Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) note that while collection studies aim to ‘produce formal descriptions [...] which can account for the whole set of examples which the researcher has collected’, the analysis of singular,

extended sequences is a widely used technique and ‘a no less significant aspect of CA’ (p.90).

Schegloff (1987) illustrates the significance of analyzing single cases with the example of lectures. He argues that while there are forms of organization and practices which are familiar to participants and which recur regularly, if on one occasion a lecturer exhibits ‘bizarre behavior’, ‘it is unlikely that those present would find it sufficient to set this aside as just a statistical anomaly’ (p.102). He goes on to argue that participants would try to make sense of the lecturer’s unusual behavior and find ways to conduct themselves accordingly and appropriately. It is equally important, then, for the conversation analyst who takes a participants’ perspective to recover the methods and procedures that produce that local order.

As Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) aptly conclude, ‘although conversation analysts are interested in the patterned nature of talk-in-interaction, it is recognized that the locus of that order is always the single case’ (p.115). In the subsequent chapters (especially Chapter 5), part of the analysis will engage in the scrutiny of single cases leading to analytic accounts of students co-constructing ‘natural’ and ‘authentic’ interaction; contriving disagreement for extending the talk; and negotiating between different identities and interactional norms.

3.4.3 Coding and quantification

From the above discussion of methodological principles (e.g. participants’ perspective) and analytic procedure (e.g. analytic induction, single case analysis), one can see that the analytic tradition of CA is primarily qualitative. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008), ‘For the most part, conversation analysts have a reluctance to treat quantification as the ultimate aim, or even a preliminary stage, of analysis’ (p.109). Several reasons have been put forward for not submitting interactional data to statistical analysis in CA.

Different objects of inquiry

One reason why CA studies do not tend to quantify the occurrences of conversational phenomena as statistical variables (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008) is related to its nature of inquiry. In general, the object of inquiry in CA is not the distribution of a

phenomenon or device with respect to social and psychological categories (Psathas, 1995) such as gender, race, class, or personality type – questions often asked in quantitative social sciences. Rather, as mentioned before, a main goal of CA is to recover the methods and procedures that participants use to accomplish different actions in talk. Citing Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), Psathas (1995) asserts that analysis in CA is not aimed at achieving ‘empirical generalizations’, but ‘unique adequacy’, that is, to produce ‘formal descriptions of social actions [that] capture and display the features of the machinery that was sufficient to produce the interactional phenomenon, in this case, in its details, in just the way it occurred’ (p.50). Psathas (1995) illustrates this with the analogy of the ‘rules of chess’. The object of analysis would be to identify the rules underlying the organization of chess that make it a game of chess rather than some other game, and the rules (as well as the analysis that recover them) are not dependent on ‘the frequency with which persons engage particular rules in their play’ (p.51).

Quantification of discourse being reductionist

The second reason relates to an often cited limitation of quantifying conversational phenomena and devices, acknowledged even by some researchers engaging in statistical analysis (e.g. Galaczi, 2008; 2014), that it forms a reductionist account of the conversational phenomena and devices. Psathas (1995) notes how quantitative analyses based on coding the discourse data with category systems tend to limit the phenomena to a finite set of notated features. He further criticizes how, in this type of analysis, phenomena are quantitative-biased and organized for frequency counts, at the expense of a careful consideration of the local context in the production and interpretation of the phenomena, and understanding the locally produced meanings. Consequently, such analyses risk overlooking or oversimplifying some of the complexities in the interactional data. On similar grounds, Schegloff (1993) argues that quantification is no substitute for in-depth, sequential analysis of conversational phenomena.

The reductionist character of quantitative studies based on coding schemes is manifested in He and Dai’s (2006) study of the group discussion speaking test task in China, in which the authors coded the candidates’ discourse based on eight Interactional Language Functions (ILFs) in the test syllabus. The analysis based on coding candidates’ discourse into pre-formulated categories with pre-established criteria can be problematic:

it neglects the actual turn-by-turn development of the interaction, and seems to presuppose ‘the more frequent the ILFs, the merrier’, paying little attention to the sequential appropriateness of each instance of a particular ILF. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the authors’ conclusion that the group discussion task elicits low degrees of interaction based on the low frequency count of 6 of the 8 ILF categories raises several questions. These include whether some instances should have been coded into their particular categories at all; whether the reportedly low frequency categories should be ‘normatively’ expected to have as high frequencies as the other categories; and consequently, the extent to which the interpretation of the frequency figures was valid.

The risk of premature categorization

This brings us to the third and the most important caveat of coding and quantifying large amounts of conversational data – the risk of prematurely categorizing interactional phenomena or devices. As Psathas (1995) cautions, category systems used for coding and quantification are pre-formulated ‘in advance of actual observation’, and studies using such coding systems may ‘produce results that were consistent only with their formulations, thereby obscuring or distorting features of interactional phenomena’ (p.8).

Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) cite the example of ‘interruption’, which may be coded by pre-established criteria such as simultaneous speech and the onset of a next turn being midway through the prior speaker’s utterance. However, what looks like an ‘interruption’ based on these criteria may in fact occur in legitimate environments of speaker change, or may be a case of ‘recognitional onset’ (Jefferson, 1986) demonstrating a participant’s recognition of the gist and engagement in the prior speaker’s talk, not oriented to by the prior speaker as interruptive. As such, the overarching focus on coding and counting of instances may ‘lead the analyst away’ from closely examining the sequential environment of and participants’ orientation to the instance, and ‘counting as “interruptions” things that may not be that at all’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt, p.112).

Indeed, one such example of ‘premature’ categorization and quantification of interactional phenomena in speaking test validation research was identified by Okada (2010). In his discussion of previous research on the role-play task in the OPI, Okada

(2010) re-analyzed using CA a segment which Kormos (1999) coded as an instance of ‘interruption’. Based on the lower ratio of examiner’s interruptions to candidate’s interruptions in the role-play phase compared to the unstructured interview phase, and other findings, Kormos (1999) concluded that the role-play task provides more opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their conversational competence. Nevertheless, on examining the sequential context and participants’ orientation, Okada (2010) found that the example cited in Kormos (1999) was not an instance of interruption at all. This example, therefore, illustrates the potential pitfall of overgeneralizing when coding interactional phenomena (especially in large amounts) for quantitative analysis.

Schegloff (1993), in an oft-cited paper on quantification of conversational data, holds that ‘We need to know what the phenomena are, how they are organized, and how they are related to each other as a *precondition* for cogently bringing methods of quantitative analysis to bear on them’ (p.114). In other words, an adequate understanding of a phenomenon, gained through close analysis of singular instances, is prerequisite to subjecting aggregates of the phenomenon to quantitative analysis. Considering Schegloff’s argument, ten Have (2007) writes that if we were to claim that something happens ‘*x* out of *y* times’ (p.159), we first need to know whether an action (*x*) is ‘relevantly present or absent’ in its ‘environments of possible occurrence’ (*y*) (p.160), for example, consider the response ‘uh huh’ when someone is midway telling a story, and when someone asks ‘how are you?’. We also need to understand what an object is doing in relation to its occurring environment, for instance, how ‘uh huh’ functions as a continuer in story-telling, but as a negative reaction of not laughing following the punch-line of a joke (*ibid.*). All these necessitate single case sequential analysis.

Support for quantification or mixing methods

Some CA researchers see quantification of interactional data in a more positive light (see examples of quantitative CA studies in Heritage, 1999). Ten Have (2007) contends that CA aims to generate findings about the methods, procedures, and devices that produce order in interaction which are replicable. Many CA studies do engage in systematic analysis of large collections of instances, although frequencies of occurrences are often expressed in vague terms such as ‘routinely’, ‘regularly’, ‘recurrent’ and the

like. Heritage (1995) proposes some avenues that can make use of statistics in CA, such as isolating interesting phenomena, confirming the existence of a practice with a large number of cases, and when making claims that tie the use or outcome of a specific interactional practice to specific social or psychological categories.

In speaking test validation studies, some researchers adopt a mixed-methods approach combining statistical analysis and CA. Galaczi (2014), for example, while acknowledging that ‘quantification should not be treated as a substitute for an in-depth qualitative interactional analysis’, views statistical analysis as a useful, ‘auxiliary tool in “applied CA” research’ (p.559). In an earlier study, Galaczi (2008) performed (and recommended) CA before coding and quantification: using CA in initial data exploration, identifying patterns that form the basis of coding categories for statistical analysis. She argues that ‘Quantification that follows careful analysis of individual cases and uses meaningful categories emerging out of the CA analysis is [...] warranted and highly valuable’ (Galaczi, 2008, p.95), and addresses the problems of generalizability and representativeness, of which qualitative studies are often susceptible to criticisms. Like Galaczi (2008, 2014), Nakatsuhara (2011) acknowledges that CA is generally against coding and quantification, but views the two approaches as complementary, with ‘CA providing insights that help to explain the statistical results’ (p.492). Notably, Nakatsuhara (2011) mixed the two methods in an order different from Galaczi’s study, with the CA following the quantitative analysis and used to account for some of the statistical findings.

The present study

In the present study, the decision was to focus on the qualitative analysis of the SBA group interactions. This is, first and foremost, related to the nature of inquiry. As discussed in Chapter 2, the focus of this study is not on scoring validity – how good a match there is between students’ discourse and the score descriptors of each particular band, nor on the relationships between different social/psychological variables and students’ performance in the assessment task. Rather, the primary objectives of this study are to examine the interactional organization of the students’ discourse as elicited in the Group Interaction task; the nature of interactional competence as oriented to by the student-candidates (and teacher-raters); and how the competence is discursively co-

constructed. In-depth, qualitative analysis following a CA approach (along with the supplementary data outlined in 3.2) of the nature of interactional practices and participants' orientations is deemed more relevant than quantifying the frequencies of the interactional practices and devices.

In light of the potential pitfalls of coding and quantifying interactional phenomena discussed above, the decision to focus on qualitative analysis of a relatively small data set was made also to avoid premature categorization or producing a reductionist representation of the interactional phenomena when large amounts of data were to be coded for statistical operations. Relatedly, then, the third reason for opting out of quantitative analysis in this study was the relatively small data set, for which statistical analysis would have limited usefulness (a limitation that Galaczi, 2014 also acknowledged for her data set). However, it is anticipated that the findings from the present study will provide some basis for quantitative studies in the future, which may in turn strengthen such findings in terms of empirical generalization. I will discuss this in more detail in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7).

3.4.4 Using stimulated recall and mock assessment as supplementary data

Finally, I present an account of the methodological decision to use data from stimulated recall and mock assessment (the respective procedures discussed in Section 3.2) to complement the conversation analysis of the assessed SBA group interactions.

Retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall elicit participants' meta-discursive comments on a prior interactional event while viewing a recording of it. These are also termed 'member checks' (ten Have, 2007), 'video stimulated comments' (Pomerantz, 2005), or in sociolinguistic research, 'playback interviews' (Gumperz, 1982). As mentioned in Section 3.4.1, the data obtained through this process is considered researcher-provoked rather than 'naturally-occurring', and therefore not of the sort generally used in CA studies, at least not as core data.

According to ten Have (2007), whether recordings of naturally-occurring interactions should be the sole source of data, or whether other kinds of additional data are admissible to analysis, is 'an issue that has been, and continues to be, widely and hotly debated, between CA and its critics, as well as within the CA community' (p.73).

Ten Have (2007) himself has reservations about retrospectively interviewing participants¹⁸. He explains that it may be difficult for participants to reconstitute the moment-by-moment co-construction of meaning in the original interaction, and may interpret the same actions differently in a different context. Moreover, participants may produce partial accounts that put their actions ‘in a favourable light’ (p.75). While not being entirely dismissive of using additional sources of information (e.g. from interviews, field notes from observations), ten Have (2007) advises that these types of data should not be used to ‘prejudge the detailed analysis of the interactional data themselves, and should not be considered more valuable than those data on *a priori* grounds’ (p.75). Pomerantz (2005) presents a more open view towards the use of stimulated recall data. She argues that the use of this data in conjunction with CA of the original interaction can strengthen one’s analytic claims, open up ‘avenues for investigation that otherwise might go unnoticed’, as well as ‘clarify or illuminate aspects of practices that otherwise may have been described more tentatively or conjecturally’ (p.93-94). As Chapters 5 and 6 will show, this was the case with student groups which pre-plan and pre-script their assessed interactions.

The decision to incorporate stimulated recall interviews in this study was also informed by previous research in the testing literature. Stimulated recall has been used in a number of rater studies of speaking tests and assessments (e.g. Ducasse & Brown, 2009; May, 2009, 2011; Orr, 2002), and in second language research in general (see Gass & Mackey, 2000). In the studies by May (2009, 2011) examining how raters evaluated paired candidates’ interactional effectiveness, the stimulated recall data, along with other data, revealed considerable complexities in raters’ decision-making processes that the quantitative score data (especially in the cases of similar scores) did not reflect. May (2009) suggests that stimulated recall with candidates could also offer an enriching perspective. This was the approach taken in Spence-Brown’s (2001) study, in which students’ own accounts of their engagement in the tape-interview assessment task were elicited. Such data yielded valuable information regarding how the assessment task was implemented and was approached by the students, and crucially, revealed how some ostensibly authentic, spontaneous interaction in the recording of the assessment was in fact contrived and pre-planned between the student and the native-speaker interviewee.

¹⁸ Not specifically retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall (playback of recordings)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the stimulated recall procedure would be useful in examining aspects of task implementation and engagement in the SBA Group Interaction task, but this technique has not been used in previous validation research on SBA. Luk (2010) conducted retrospective interviews with students and the teacher-rater, but without incorporating stimulated recall.

In the present study, stimulated recall data is used as additional data that complements the conversation analysis of students' discourse in the assessed group interactions. As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, stimulated recall with students revealed the contrived and pre-scripted nature of the assessed interactions in School P (cf. Spence-Brown, 2001). The students' own accounts were able to confirm the findings from the CA of the relevant segments, where students' practice of pre-scripting could otherwise only be inferred 'tentatively or conjecturally' (Pomerantz, 2005) from some of their verbal and non-verbal actions in the assessed interactions. The use of data from stimulated recall with teacher-raters, where available, is also deemed relevant and aligning with participants' orientation – in Chapter 5, we will see features of students' talk recipient-designed to the teacher-rater as a 'ratified overhearer'. As the teacher-rater does not typically participate verbally in the assessed interaction, the only way to gain insights into how the teacher-rater interprets the students' talk in the assessed interaction is through stimulated recall, as in May's (2009, 2011) rater studies.

Experimentally set up and researcher-provoked interactions, as mentioned in 3.4.1, are also not generally accepted as data in CA studies (ten Have, 2007). The mock assessments with two groups in School P, with a quasi-experimental setup and researcher-controlled conditions, were such interactions. However, it was practically the best possible way to capture students' pre-task planning activities during the preparation time, and is likely to be less intrusive than making additional recordings during the preparation time for the actual assessment. The video-recorded preparation time for the mock assessment is the closest to 'naturally-occurring' pre-task student interaction, and the use of this data can improve reliability of the claims made about students' pre-task planning activities, compared to relying solely on students' retrospective self-reports. As for the mock assessment with the group PB14Mock, the controlled condition of 10-minute preparation time enabled comparison of the *same* students' performance under

two different task implementation conditions to be made, where no ‘naturally-occurring’ alternative was available.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have detailed the procedures followed at the various stages of data collection, data processing and transcription, and data analysis in this study. After outlining how the study incorporates three main types of data in addressing the research questions (3.1), I have described and accounted for the various steps taken in data collection (3.2). These ranged from initial access to the schools and obtaining the video-recordings of the assessed group interactions to interviewing the participants with the stimulated recall procedure and conducting mock assessments. I have also acknowledged the practical constraints and limitations related to the data collection process as well as the data obtained, and described the measures taken in consideration of research ethics.

In the rest of the chapter, I first provided details of how the data was processed and transcribed (3.3). Then, in Section 3.4, I introduced the main methodological approach taken in this study – Conversation Analysis (CA). Specifically, I discussed some principles that underlie CA’s methodological perspective, and the analytic methods and procedures related to the nature of inquiry in CA research, situated among some other methodological alternatives. On reporting how the CA analytic procedure was applied in the present analysis, I went on to discuss the issues surrounding two methodological decisions – the issues of quantification and of using stimulated recall and mock assessments as supplementary data. Justification for the decisions was made by reference to the specific objectives of this study. These issues will be revisited in Chapter 7.

The following chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 6) present the analysis and discuss the findings of the study. This begins with Chapter 4, in which we consider the discourse and interactional organization of the SBA group interactions in two respects: turn-taking and agreeing/disagreeing responses.

CHAPTER 4

Patterns of discourse and interactional organization in SBA group interactions

This chapter presents an analysis of the discourse and interactional organization of the SBA group interactions. The discussion will focus on two particular aspects: (1) turn-taking features and speaker transition devices, and (2) preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses. During the initial stage of analysis involving ‘unmotivated looking’ (see Chapter 3), both of these aspects had interesting patterns emerging that warranted analysis in greater depth. Moreover, both aspects are important considerations in gauging the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task in the way it is implemented, and form the basis of the discussion on the construction and assessment of interactional competence in the following two chapters.

Section 4.1 examines the turn-taking organization of the SBA group interactions. It begins with a discussion of participants’ orientation to a round-the-table turn-taking order and even distribution of speaking opportunities, followed by an examination of the turn-taking phenomena of gaps, overlaps, and latching. Subsequent discussion will focus on the various verbal and non-verbal cues with which participants accomplish speaker transition. As the analysis will demonstrate, there are both similarities and differences in the features of turn-taking between the group interactions in School L and School P. These differences reflect the diverging ways in which the Group Interaction task has been implemented in the two schools, and have implications for the validity of the assessment task.

Section 4.2 examines the preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the group interactions. The section begins with a description of the general patterns characterizing the structure of agreeing and disagreeing responses. The analysis goes on to show that the observed turn shapes cannot be solely explained in terms of the

structural preference for agreement. An assessment-related preference is proposed to be in concurrent operation with the structural preference, and the two preferences together shape the construction of agreeing and disagreeing responses. The development of the assessment-related preference is then discussed with reference to a particular phenomenon endemic in the group speaking assessment: student-candidates' over-use of 'I agree with you' and similar formulaic agreement expressions. The section concludes by noting the emergence of a local interactional norm that guides student-candidates' production as well as teacher-raters' interpretation of agreeing responses.

4.1 Turn-taking organization

4.1.1 Orientation to a 'round-the-table' turn-taking order

In examining the turn-taking organization of the SBA group interactions, a pattern emerged soon in the analytic process (see Section 3.4.2). Overwhelmingly, the first four speaking turns in an assessed interaction are taken by each of the four members of the group in a somewhat round-the-table manner. In practice, this does not necessarily translate into a strictly clockwise or anti-clockwise order according to seating arrangements. However, each participant would take a turn to speak one after another, and in most cases, any participant who has already taken a 'substantial turn' to speak would not take a second one within the first 'round' of four turns. As a working definition for this study, a 'substantial turn' refers to a speaking turn that consists of two or more turn construction units (TCU) and typically involves the delivery of some content ideas. Thus, a turn that consists of backchannels such as *mm hmm* or *yeah* does not count as a substantial turn. Brief responses such as *Yes. I agree.* or *No. I don't think so.*, despite being composed of two units that are syntactically, intonationally, or pragmatically complete, are also not considered substantial turns. An example of a group interaction that begins with four substantial turns in a round-the-table turn-taking order is shown below.

(4.1) PB06: 1-24

1 ((Timer beeps))
2 D: Good afternoon everyone ((looks towards the camera)). We're
3 here today to discuss about ((looks at Y)) how to promote
4 our existing ((looks at camera)) product[k] (.) uh the
5 tablet computer. Uh why don't we start by talking about the
6 target groups of our product? And I think the young
7 professionals or teenagers can be one of our target groups.
8 Uh it's because I thin:k (.) uh it's common- among the
9 teenagers, and, it's not difficult for us to see the
10 teenagers holding high-tech products in the MTR.
11 A: I agree with you.=Teenagers love (.) convenience and 3D-
12 products. ((gaze turns from D to Y))
13 Y: Mm. I::: also agree with you because teenagers love
14 electro:nic: (.) products. And:: also I think mainland
15 visitors can also be:: our target group. Becau::se in
16 mainland there:: are lots of fake products. (.) I think
17 they::: deserve >they may deserve to< buy::: (.) genuine
18 products.
19 R: Yes. I agree with you. As uh:: mainland (.) people are very
20 rich ((looking down)), uh: they always: (.) come to Hong
21 Kong and buy some new products. Uh especially the new: (.)
22 uh:: the electronics products.

This corroborates the findings in Luk's (2010) study of SBA group interactions in which a 'neat and orderly turn-taking mechanism' was noted and speaking turns were often passed over from one participant to another 'in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction' (p.37), although the same pattern has not been reported in the two other studies (Gan, 2010; Gan, Davision, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008) of SBA group interactions. Notably, this pattern emerges in the assessed interactions in both School P and School L, notwithstanding their considerable differences in other aspects of turn-taking organization. Also worth noting is the fact that this pattern of the speaking floor going 'around the table' within the first round of four turns even applies to some groups in

which there are more competitive members and competition for floor in the course of the interaction (e.g. LB00).

Participants' orientation to this round-the-table turn-taking order at the beginning of the group interaction is displayed in their interactional practices in selecting the next speaker and in taking a second turn within the first round of turns. Consider the following example:

(4.2) PA11: 21-31

1 W: Can't agree more. Apart from the communi- the lack of
2 communication, there's the generation gap. Generation gap
3 appears (..) because of the age differen.=It is (invaluated)
4 but it is the reason for the existen of (.)
5 misunderstanding.
6 (.) ((R turns to D))
7 D: So, there is one point I would like to add (.) over this
8 view. Mm, do you guys remember: (.) after eating the (.)
9 lucky c-cookies, Anna turns (.) into her mom, and the first
10 thing she do is (...) go shopping (..) and (.) have a
11 haircut. I think it is the best (.) proof (.) of the:: (.)
12 ↓theory (.) generation gap.
13

At the beginning of this interaction (PA11), the four participants, namely R, N, W, D, each takes a substantial turn delivering content ideas. In line 6 of the excerpt shown above, upon the completion of the third speaker's (W) turn and during the brief gap, the first speaker, R, turns her head from W to D, the only participant who has not taken a turn at that point. In line 7, D takes his turn as the fourth and last speaker of this 'roundtable', after which the floor reverts to the first speaker, R.

Overwhelmingly, participants who have taken a substantial turn do not take a second one until all four group members have had a first turn to speak. This norm is oriented to in most of the group interactions analyzed in this study, and is manifest in a second observation: that any disruption to the round-the-table order is minimized and efforts are quickly made to restore the order. Where a participant who has already taken a first substantial turn does take another one before the other three participants have had

one, this participant's second turn will be brief and typically no more than two TCUs, as seen in the following examples.

(4.3) LB05: 30-38

1 C:
2 but uhm I think it's in other words, it's kind of (.) uhm
3 misunderstanding. Right.
4 S: → Yes.
5 (1.7) ((L and C turn to look at R))
6 R: Ye::s ((smiling embarrassingly)) uhm I think so.
7 ((looks down at note card))
8 Uhm but I think uhm the conflict that happens because (.)
9 the parents need to:: (.) s- uh spend many times to: (.)
10 work outside,
11

In line 4, S (the first speaker in the interaction), gives a minimal response 'yes' to C (the third speaker) yet does not continue. This is followed by a 1.7-second lapse, in which both the second and the third speakers (L and C) turn to look at R, the only participant who has not taken a turn to speak thus far. Recognizing the co-participants' non-verbal cue to take her first turn, R does so following the gap. Here, R is seen to take her turn notwithstanding her apparent unpreparedness to start speaking, displayed through her smiling embarrassingly, looking down at her note card, and giving a superficial agreeing response 'I think so' which is somewhat incoherent with her stance as expressed in the rest of her turn.

The next example shows a case where a participant takes a second turn out of the round-the-table order in an act of collaborative construction of a turn, helping a co-participant who is having difficulties formulating her ideas by completing her turn.

(4.4) LA06: 44-60

1 W: >I also think that he's very brave.=Uhm because< uh
2 (.) uh:: (.) uh when he know that uh his friends uh may
3 face uh danger in the S- uh Sunnyside Daycare, uhm (.) he::
4 get back to: the: uh Sunnyside Daycare to save them uhm and
5 escape from Lotso, and at the end of the movie, uhm when

6 Lotso was trapped in the rubbish and (.) maybe: (.) \\dying
7 uhm: uhm: (.) uhm::
8 \\((looks at O then the ceiling))
9 \\Woody: [(uhm)]
10 \\((looks at O again))
11 O: [Yes.] And [Woody=
12 W: [(Woo)
13 O: =helps him and, Lotso is alive at the end of the movie.
14 W: ((turns from O to K)) Yes. ((T and O also turn to K))
15 K: In the movie, I'd like to choo:se (.) Barbie and Ken uh
16 this ciu{cou}- this funny (ciuple{couple}) to be my uh
17 favorite[s] (.) characters.

Prior to this excerpt, W in the same turn has been talking about her favorite character in the movie Toy Story 3 and giving reasons for her choice. In lines 1-11, W, explaining why she thinks Woody was brave, recounts a scene from the movie. She starts having difficulty formulating her account of the movie scene in line 7, as is evident from her hesitating and looking up at the ceiling. She also looks at O, which can be read as a call for help. That O recognizes it as such is indicated by her coming in at lines 11-13 to complete the account. Note however that O does not hold the floor any further to deliver her own ideas or move on to another topic. Interestingly, in line 14, as W is uttering a brief yet emphatic 'yes' recognizing O's collaborative effort in completing her account, she re-orientes herself from O to K, the only participant who has not taken a turn at this point. Almost simultaneously, O and another participant, T, also look towards K. In effect, all three participants who have taken their first turn are issuing a non-verbal cue to K, prompting her to take her turn and complete the first round, which she does in line 15. A similar case of a participant taking a second turn in the first round, offering help to a group member, is found in one of the sample SBA group interactions published on the HKEAA website (see Appendices E and F). This second turn is brief, consisting of only one TCU correcting a problematic word choice in the previous speaker's talk.

Therefore, participants' orientation to a round-the-table turn-taking order in the first round of speaking turns is exhibited, firstly, in their selection of the fourth group member as the next speaker after three have taken their first turns; and secondly, in the

general tendency for a participant who has already spoken to keep any second turns brief. The two practices often operate in tandem.

In the majority of group interactions examined in this study, participants' orientation to this round-the-table turn-taking order is most salient in the first round of speaking turns, as seen in the above examples. Further into the interaction, upon completion of the first round, any ensuing sequence of turns does not necessarily involve all four participants in the group. However, an extreme manifestation of this round-the-table turn-taking order is seen in Group PA09 (see Appendix T for transcript). This 8-minute interaction consists of only 8 turns¹⁹, with each participant taking two extended turns, one on each sub-topic outlined on the discussion prompt, which gives the impression of each participant delivering two monologues in turn. Task management talk (introduction, topic transition, and conclusion) is also embedded in the content delivery turns, with E doing the introductory talk, and R doing both the initiation of topic, transition halfway into the interaction, and summary of ideas towards the end of the interaction.

Three group interactions carried out by two groups of students, one from School P and one from School L, appear to be 'deviant cases' to this pattern of round-the-table turn-taking order in the first round. In School P, two group interactions (PA05 and PB14) carried out by the same four students (K, L, S, T) on two assessment occasions (Part A and Part B of SBA) do not follow a round-the-table turn-taking order at the beginning of the interaction. Specifically, the order of speakers in the first few turns in each of the two interactions is:

PA05: S → K → S → K → T → L

PB14: L → S → L → K → T

Clearly, some participants take more than one turn within the first four turns in each interaction, while some participants do not have their first turn to speak until the fifth or the sixth turn. However, as the students reported in the interviews themselves, a notable feature of both interactions is that they have been pre-scripted, with a pre-determined order of turns and speakers. In the stimulated recall for PB14, the students in this group

¹⁹ Excluding the last, ninth turn by E announcing the end of the group interaction.

reported that the opening sequence was deliberately composed to involve the telling of a made-up news event as a lead-in to the discussion proper. According to the students, this was designed with the intent to make the opening sequence stand out (from those by other student groups) and sound less routine or boring. Given that both PA05 and PB14 were pre-scripted interactions, there is reason to believe that the students had deliberately ‘randomized’ their turn-taking order to create the impression that they were not doing ‘mechanical’ or round-the-table turn-taking. Notably, the same group of students *did* follow the round-the-table turn-taking order in their mock SBA interaction when they were only given 10 minutes of preparation time, which proved far from sufficient for pre-scripting and pre-allocating speaking turns. Thus, the seemingly deviant cases of PA05 and PB14 can be accounted for and do not constitute a direct contradiction to the general tendency outlined thus far.

In School L, the group interaction that does not conform to the pattern (LA07) involves competitive participants, and competition for the floor is frequent. The order of speaking turns at the beginning of the interaction is as follows:

LA07: H → J → I → J → H → S

Consider the following excerpt, which shows the fourth and fifth substantial turns (by J and H respectively) in this interaction.

(4.5) LA07: 40-49

1 J: mature, and:: uhm (I would feel some ↑ dizzy:) when
2 we’re watching the (3D movie °using the°) 3D glasses or (.)
3 uh watching through the 3D ↑TV,
4 and I think (° privacy.°)
5 S: [°Uhm°
6 H: [Yeah \\I heard that (.) I heard that
7 \\((gesturing to J twice and looks at J))
8 \\((S turns away, smiles helplessly, and rubs his
9 forehead))
10 uh news uh (uh- uh-) too. ((turns to look at note card))
11 Uhm::, actually I think that the:: (.) the me:ssage of the
12 film is (.) uhm i- is need- to be criticized as
13 (),

Lines 5 and 6 would have been the fifth turn since the beginning of the interaction. At this point, all participants but S have taken a first turn. In line 5, S's turn-beginning overlaps with H's. S drops out of the overlap while H continues. Consequently, S fails to secure the floor to take his first turn, and he shows his helplessness and disappointment in his facial expressions. Later on, however, as H finishes his turn, he gestures to S and selects S as the next speaker, as shown in the excerpt below (line 3).

(4.6) LA07: 51-57

1 H: And: this uh- they think that this can:: uh replace
2 the (religion) and, this should not be: uh (.) uh (respect).
3 ((gestures to S))
4 S: Uhm: actually I think that (.) the: 3D effect of the: film
5 is the main selling point, yeah. About the:: the theme of
6 the film, uhm: I have ano- I have another idea which is (.)
7 uh the cooperation is important.

Thus, the case of LA07 is, at first glance, somewhat equivocal as evidence to the general pattern of a round-the-table turn-taking order at the beginning of the group interaction. Nevertheless, while the actual ordering of the first four turns does not 'go around the table' and affords each of the four participants a privileged first opportunity to speak, the participants' reactions to the deviation from the pattern attest to their orientation to round-the-table turn-taking as the expected norm at this stage of the interaction. For instance, we have seen how S displays helplessness in failing to secure a first turn, and how H subsequently selects S as the next speaker via non-verbal cues. This example, together with the above discussion, also brings to light that participants orient to having and affording each other equal speaking opportunities in an assessed interaction, as we explore in the next section.

4.1.2 Orientation to even distribution of speaking opportunities

Based on the group interactions in the data, students in School P generally display an orientation to an even distribution of speaking opportunities. Students in School L also generally display such an orientation, although to a lesser extent in some groups. Evidence for such an orientation is located in participants' interactional conduct in the assessed interactions, and in the students' comments in the stimulated recall interviews.

In a group interaction for the mock assessment (PB14Mock), one of the students, T, had only managed to take two substantial turns throughout the interaction, compared to other students in the group each of whom having taken five to six substantial turns, and was noted by the teacher-rater Miss Tsui as being a bit quiet. Despite the apparent uneven distribution of speaking turns, the participants' orientation to equal speaking opportunities is evident in their interactional conduct in the following excerpt.

(4.7) PB14Mock: 64-74

1 K: [°Mm.° =↑Maybe we should
2 also put some vi↑deos, or X some uhm special features that
3 our product have, to uhm in a:: very (.) uh funny way to
4 show uh the public. ((L nods))
5 T?: °Mm:..°
6 -> (3.4) ((T and L look at each other; T then looks down at
7 -> note card and smiles; L's gaze stays on T))
8 L: Uhm yeah as we all know that because (.) there're million
9 of teenagers are using Internet and like Facebook every day,
10 and, I believe that this will be a:: very: successful way
11 to promote our products.

Prior to the 3.4-second silence in line 6 is an extended exchange consisted of four turns, with L and K each taking two. After K suggested putting up some videos illustrating their product's features on Facebook (lines 1-4), T might have quietly responded to K with the acknowledgement token 'mm' (line 5). This is followed by a lapse of 3.4 seconds before L takes the next turn responding to K's suggestion. During this rather prolonged silence, however, there is a notable 'off-stage' non-verbal

exchange here (lines 6-7). Shortly following T's possible utterance of 'mm', T and L exchange looks with each other. T then looks down at her note card and smiles, with what appears to be unease. L's gaze stays on T during this time, and in line 8 she takes the next turn offering an affiliative response to K (see Section 4.2 for the terms 'affiliative response' and 'agreeing response'), providing a supportive argument for K's proposal. Taking into consideration both the observable non-verbal exchange during the silence and the fact that affiliative responses typically take preferred turn shapes and are proffered without delay, there is good reason to postulate that L self-selects (again) to take the next turn *only* on registering T's lack of readiness to do so. Therefore, L displays an orientation to equal speaking opportunities, giving a noticeably more reticent participant 'priority access' to the speaking floor.

Evidence that group members display concern for each other's having adequate opportunities to produce discourse for the purpose of the assessment is also found in interviews with the student-candidates. In the interview with Group PB06, I asked if the students felt that the SBA group interaction is similar to everyday conversations. After a chorus of response that they are not similar, in the answer to a follow-up question probing for specific differences, student D said the following:

(4.8) PB06 Student Interview

D: Not so much a round-the-table turn-taking [in everyday conversations]. In this discussion we need to script it in a way such that everyone is 'even'. Normally we wouldn't make it so 'even'.

Here, D has effectively revealed that their group interaction was pre-scripted, with specific turns pre-allocated to each participant, and that deliberate effort was made to ensure that speaking turns are distributed evenly among all group members. In another interview, student L reported that they would allocate the task management talk, such as introduction, topic transition, and conclusion, to group members who have less to talk about in terms of content ideas:

(4.9) PA05 Student Interview

Res: So, what I wanted to ask is, actually how did you decide who to perform these roles? I mean, taking the roles to do the introduction, conclusion, or transition?
((silence))

L: Actually, sometimes it's like, we'll see who has more [content ideas] to talk about. If one of us has less to talk about, then we'll let her do it [introduction/conclusion].

Given her hesitation before the answer, it remains dubious whether the students, during the preparation stage, actually assigned this kind of task management talk to particular group members according to their perception of who had more ideas to talk about and who did not have as many. Nonetheless, L's answer does constitute evidence for an orientation towards allocating to each group member a more or less even amount of talk or speaking turns, insofar as they are afforded the time and opportunities to pre-plan the assessed interaction.

In School L, there is similar discourse evidence of participants' orientation to even speaking opportunities, as in the following two examples from LB06.

(4.10) LB06: 97-105

1 C: And: for: a: uh- uh identity swap ((smiles)) idea
2 that you've mentioned maybe we can .h uh invite a
3 ps:ychologist to the show so we can: like track the (.) uh
4 mental changes of the person who have like (.)°changed
5 their jobs.°
6 (2.7) ((T looks at E; the two smile to each other))
7 T: Uhm (.) so uhm (.) I think uhm (..) uh the ideas of uh (.)
8 how to: uh invite judges is (.) uh also important (.)
9 besides the (.) uh competitors.

(4.11) LB06: 119-124

1 W: So, it just depends on what we're °going to do.°
2 (2.2) ((T looks at E; E turns from W to her own note card))
3 E: Uhm:: Ye(h)s heh heh and I also think that uhm actually a
4 place other than Hong Kong can uh:: bring surprise to the
5 audience,

Consider the non-verbal exchanges during the silences (line 6 in Extract 4.10 and line 2 in Extract 4.11), in both instances T seems to be cueing E to speak by exchanging eye contact. E does not take up the next turn in the first instance but only later in the

second instance. The two consecutive instances where T non-verbally cues E to speak during an inter-turn silence provide corroborating evidence for her orientation to E as the expected next speaker at that stage of the interaction. At the gap in the first example (line 6), two turns by other participants (W and C) have passed since the last time E takes a turn. Note how T and E negotiate which of the two of them should be the next speaker through exchanging eye contact, and the fact that T eventually self-selects to take the next turn. These actions constitute evidence of the two participants' expectation of having the rights and obligations to take the next turn themselves, and to a certain extent, an orientation to a round-the-table turn-taking order. In the second example, four turns by W, C, T, and W again respectively have passed before the silence in line 2, so E is again 'expectable' as the next speaker, as demonstrated by T cueing E to take the next turn through gaze and E eventually self-selecting as the next speaker (line 3). The fact that E takes over the floor at this point, despite her unease and lack of readiness as displayed through browsing her note card (line 2) and the hesitation and laughter at the beginning of her turn (line 3), further reinforces the interpretation that she also orients herself to being the expected next speaker at this point, where she has not offered any talk for quite some time and the prescribed end of the interaction is imminent.

Evidence of participants orienting to equal speaking opportunities is mixed in the two all-male groups in School L, groups LA07 and LB00. Notably, these two group interactions are characterized by competition for the floor to varying degrees, and the transition space often features latching and overlap of speakers' turns rather than gaps (analyzed in Section 4.1.3). Competition for the floor is keen in LA07, and turns are unevenly distributed, with H and J dominating the floor by taking the most speaking turns (five to six turns each), while I and S managing to take only two turns each. Recall the examples (Extracts 4.5 and 4.6) in the previous section. S's display of disappointment after failing to secure the floor after the first round of four turns, as well as H's subsequent selection of S as the next speaker through gesturing, suggest that these two participants orient to equal speaking opportunities to some extent. Nevertheless, the keen competition for the floor and the overall uneven distribution of turns, as well as the very fact that S is disappointed as a consequence, are sufficient evidence that such an

interactional norm is not being oriented to by all participants, or has been temporarily suspended and overridden by other concerns.

From the discussion above, we can tentatively conclude that participants in School P display a general orientation to evenly distributed speaking opportunities, while such an orientation varies among participants in School L. It is noteworthy that such an orientation is displayed both in interactions with extended preparation time, in which turns are often pre-ordered and pre-allocated to participants, and in interactions that have been subjected to less pre-planning and without pre-allocation of turns. We have examined evidence from the discourse of the assessed interactions and from the interviews with student-candidates. The use of non-verbal cues prompting a more reticent co-participant to speak (as seen in the examples above) have also been found in the sample group interaction (MF_GI) published on the HKEAA website (see Appendix E for transcript and Appendix F for analysis). This is in line with the test discourse data from School P and School L examined above, and constitutes additional evidence of participants' orientation to equal speaking opportunities.

4.1.3 Gaps, overlaps, and Latching

Gaps, overlaps, and latching are conversational phenomena that occur at the transition space between turns-at-talk, and are typically related to a turn-taking system that is locally managed by the participants of the conversation. Gaps, overlaps, and latching are sometimes taken as markers of natural conversation, such that the institutionalized character of some interactions can be revealed partly through looking at whether, where, and how these phenomena occur in these interactions.

When examining the data transcripts, it is not difficult to notice that these conversational phenomena are less prevalent in the SBA group interactions than one might expect in casual conversations, particularly among those interactions in School P. Furthermore, while the same three conversational phenomena exist in the group interactions in both School P and School L, they sometimes occur in different environments and have different interactional import. This section provides a description

of these phenomena and the environments in which they occur, and examines how they relate to the character of the group interactions, either as more spontaneous interactions with a locally managed turn-taking organization, or as pre-planned interactions with pre-allocated turns and pre-determined turn-taking order.

4.1.3.1 Gaps

First of all, let us examine the gaps in the group interactions – silences where none of the participants speaks. In School L, these are typically *inter*-turn gaps – occurring between two speakers' turns, after one speaker has finished his or her turn and before the next speaker begins a new turn, except in LB06: 1-5 below where the silence occurs right at the beginning of the interaction. Consider the following example:

(4.12) LB05: 68-74

1 S: So .h maybe a: (.) uh: short conversation but with
2 uhm mutual respect is more:: (.) uh: workable: in our Hong
3 Kong society. So maybe (.) is there (any other s-)
4 ((slurred)) other solutions? ((tilts her head forward and
5 smiles))
6 → (1.2)
7 C: Mm to be more concrete, maybe (.) uhm I would say uh: we
8 have to: express our (own) feelings more (at-) the: dinner
9 time,

In lines 3-5, S asks a question towards the end of her turn, and in doing so, she makes speaker change relevant. However, she does not select a particular group member as next speaker. Following the 1.2-second gap, C self-selects and begins a new turn.

(4.13) LB06: 1-5

1 ((Timer beeps))
2 → (2.3)
3 T: Today we discuss about uh the details of uh holding the
4 reality TV show. Uh so first of all I think uhm our reality
5 TV show should be attractive and unique.

In this second example, T self-selects to deliver the opening talk for the interaction after a 2.3-second lapse since the beginning of the interaction. Similar to the case where two speakers' beginning of their first turn overlaps at the opening of the interaction (see LB05: 1-6 below), this shows that the selection for the opening speaker is locally managed rather than pre-determined.

The next example shows a case where a gap is followed by an overlap.

(4.14) LB05: 41-47

1 R: And so, I think this is (..) (°probably the c-
2 cause°)
3 ((R and L turn to look at S))
4 (1.0)
5 S: So[::
6 C: [Maybe to(h) t(h)o concl(h)ude ((R and L look at C and
7 giggle)), uhm we can find out the main reason behind these
8 conflicts.

On completion of R's turn (lines 1-2), R and L turns to S, thereby non-verbally cueing S to be the next speaker. S's uptake of R and L's non-verbal signals is seen when, following a 1.0-second gap, she begins to talk as the selected next speaker (line 5). Almost simultaneously, C self-selects to take a turn (line 6), resulting in an overlap. The overlap is resolved by S dropping out while C continues her talk, in which she attempts to summarize the points discussed so far.

These examples together demonstrate how turn-taking is locally managed by participants in real time within the assessed interactions in School L, rather than pre-planned with some pre-determined order. The example (Extract 4.14) we have looked at just now illustrates the simultaneous operation of the two turn-taking rules (Liddicoat, 2007) *current speaker selects next* (R selects S) and *next speaker self-selects* (C self-selects), although in this case it is the current speaker together with another co-participant (L) who tentatively select S as the next speaker through non-verbal cues. In any case, it is evident that the next speaker following R's turn is locally negotiated rather than pre-determined. This is what would be expected in natural conversation.

Interestingly, however, the participants' laughter (lines 6-7) seems to indicate that something other than normal has happened. This in turn tentatively suggests that the participants orient to the institutional character of this interaction, where one taking a turn after another is normative interactional conduct, while two speakers talking at the same time is not.

We now turn to the gaps among School P's assessed interactions. A notable pattern is that *inter*-turn gaps lasting longer than 1 second do not feature frequently in the assessed group interactions. On the other hand, the mock assessment (PB14Mock) with only 10 minutes preparation time shows a strikingly different pattern, featuring 7 gaps that are longer than 1 second, 3 of which last longer than 2 seconds. A second observation is that the assessed interactions in School P feature *intra*-turn gaps, which are often positioned between content delivery turn components and sometimes last longer than 1 second.

Let us come back to the extreme case of round-the-table turn-taking, PA09. Intra-turn gaps are common here, which contributes to the participants' extended monologic turns that characterize this interaction. Consider the following example.

(4.15) PA09: 77-81

1 Y: and:: they may also: lose their friend easily, since
2 their: (.) their appearance is >changed a lot<. And it's (.)
3 un:acceptable.
4 (1.6)
5 And to tackle these problems, I think they should use their
6 own status to:: (.) explain with their friends.

In lines 1-3 and what comes before in this extended turn, Y is describing the problems that she thinks the characters in the movie will face. After a noticeable gap in line 4, Y moves on to suggest possible solutions to these problems. Remarkably, no one comes in during this gap of considerable length to take a turn and respond to Y, either commenting on these problems or proposing solutions, as Y eventually does herself. As it turns out, a more macroscopic examination looking at all four participants' second turn in PA09 reveals that they are all constructed with a very similar rhetorical structure:

(1) describing the problems the movie characters will face, (2) proposing solutions to the problems. This gives rise to their extended monologic turns, creating the impression that they are delivering individual mini-presentations answering the questions on the discussion prompt one by one. The fact that the turns by all participants in this interaction are designed with the same structure, and that there are intra-turn gaps indexical of co-participants' collaborative effort to maintain that structure in the current speaker's turn, reflects the participants' orientation to answering the discussion task questions more than responding to each other. The following example from the same interaction further illustrates how participants are reluctant to interfere with each other's delivery of pre-scripted talk.

(4.16) PA09: 18-23

1 A: [I see your point ((smiling)). I think: the:: differences
2 of habit (.) is also the: (.) mm misunderstanding between
3 them. The habit of Anna and <Mrs Coleman> is: (.) mm
4 totally differen[s]. Ehm:: the habit of An:na, mm: Anna::
5 → interest in playing:: (.) in:: (0.9) eh: (1.2) electro-(of)
6 guitar and love to listen rock music.

In line 5, A is having difficulty in coming up with the words 'electric guitar', displayed through the lengthened preceding words 'playing::' and 'in::' and the pauses that follow. However, none of the co-participants comes in to help her by supplying candidate word items. Ironically, given the pre-scripting in the preparation stage before the assessed interaction, the group members would have known what the word item should be. This seems to suggest a rigid turn-taking order in operation as a product of pre-planning and pre-scripting the interaction.

As shown in the above two examples, the participants appear to orient to a tacit norm whereby participants should not speak unless they have the pre-allocated next turn, and only after the previous speaker has completed his or her turn. Similar cases of participants opting out of helping each other with difficulties in the production of talk can be found in PB14. This stands in stark contrast with School L, where instances of 'collaborative turn construction' have been noted in different groups (e.g. LA06: 44-57,

LB05: 45-54), with participants helping each other in word search or even completing a segment of talk. The analysis here preliminarily suggests that the intra-turn gaps in School P, resulting from students opting out of collaborative turn construction, can be partially accounted for by a rigid turn-taking order pre-determined before the assessed interaction.

Inter-turn gaps do occur in School P's group interactions, often as a result of a pre-allocated next speaker not taking up his or her turn, as in this example below.

(4.17) PB11: 34-40

1 K: Yes! I do think so, uhm:: (.) I think we can: (.) choose uh
2 (.) <passion fruit> to be our flavor of lotion, because a
3 fresh- flavor can always at-tract office lady to support us.
4 (2.4) ((All turn to look at R; R smiles embarrassingly))
5 K: M[m!
6 R: [Yes. I think it's good idea.
7 (1.9)

Following the completion of K's turn, there is a 2.4-second gap (line 4) where all participants look at R. R smiles embarrassingly, displaying a lack of readiness to take the next turn which has been pre-allocated to her. As R herself commented while watching the video clip during the interview, she has forgotten her lines in this upcoming turn. No other participants self-select to take a turn in place of R's pre-allocated turn, and the previous speaker, K, simply gives R a prompt with 'Mm!' (line 5). This can be seen as a consequence of K's assessment of the situation being that R has forgotten whether she is supposed to take the next turn or not, whereas in fact, it is the content of the turn that R has forgotten. R eventually takes her turn in line 6, giving a brief agreeing response without accounting for her agreement or delivering a new idea. R's brief response is followed by another 1.9-second gap before S takes over the floor and proposes a new topic.

As seen in the above analysis, the gaps that occur in the assessed interactions in School P, when examined in light of their occurring environments and the accompanying non-verbal actions, constitute evidence for a pre-determined turn-taking

order, as opposed to a locally managed turn-taking order in School L's interactions. Through examining the examples from both schools, we begin to see how pre-scripting the group interaction constrains participants from reacting to the contingency of the unfolding interaction.

4.1.3.2 Overlaps

We now turn to an examination of overlaps in the SBA group interactions. Overlaps are the product of participants' moment-by-moment monitoring of each other's talk and their projection of turn boundaries and transition relevance places (TRPs) in real time, and are therefore indicative of a locally managed turn-taking mechanism. The general scarcity of overlaps among the assessed group interactions in School P, therefore, is a manifestation of the pre-scripted character of the interactions, with turn boundaries and order of turn-taking more or less pre-determined. The few instances of overlaps are usually group members' choral productions of acknowledgement/agreement tokens (e.g. PB11: 26-27) or thanks-giving (e.g. PB11: 194-198). In contrast, group interactions in School L, where the task implementation conditions do not allow for pre-scripting turns and pre-planning turn-taking order, feature overlaps similar to ones found in everyday conversation.

One type of overlap occurs as a result of a next speaker projecting the completion of the current speaker's turn and beginning the next turn accordingly, as in the following example:

(4.18) LB06: 108-113

1 T: maybe t- uhm (.) uh have different location in Hong
2 Kong maybe (.) uh in (.) different district so I think (.)
3 uh the audience will feel (.)
4 more famili[ar].
5 W: [I think about the venue is depends on (.) what
6 topic about the reality show,

Here, W's beginning of the next turn overlaps with the last part of the final word in T's TCU, which at this point is hearable as intonationally, grammatically, and pragmatically complete. Consider another example:

(4.19) LB00: 101-106

1 L: and, they will badly influence the psycholo-
2 psychological °quality of the children (.)
3 so, ((turns to A)) [()°
4 A: [Yeah I agree that uhm this kind of
5 problem will cause a huge damage uhm on the individuals and
6 also the families.

A's beginning of the next turn is overlapped with a portion of L's talk which is indecipherable in the recording. Just prior to the overlap, L's turn can be projected as coming to an imminent completion as signaled by the diminished volume in lines 2-3. Simultaneously, L selects A as next speaker via non-verbal cues. These are registered by A, who is now also likely to be ready and keen to take a next turn given that more than half the allotted time for the group interaction has passed and he has only taken one turn at the beginning.

Next, we look at an instance of overlap which is the result of two participants' simultaneous self-selection as the next speaker.

(4.20) LB05: 1-6

1 S: [Hi everyone,=
2 L: [So:: huh ((smiles))
3 S: =Uh today our job is to promote better family relationship.
4 So::, the main:: uh so the first step we have to XX for the
5 mental problems which is (.) we should uh identify::
6 conflicts between parents and teens.

Here, two speakers S and L self-select to open the discussion and start talking simultaneously. However, the overlap is quickly resolved, as L registers the overlap (evidenced by her smiling) and drops out, while S continues and announces the task

agenda of their group interaction (line 3). A similar overlap is found further into the interaction (LB05: 100-109), where the same two speakers simultaneously self-select to answer the question issued by the previous speaker, C.

Gaps and overlaps occurring at the opening of the interaction, as illustrated in Extracts 4.13 and 4.20 respectively, serve as evidence that the opening speaker (who sometimes takes a ‘chairperson’ role and does most of the task management talk) is generally ‘self-elected’ on the spot as the interaction begins and not pre-assigned in the preparation stage. These examples constitute important evidence of a locally managed turn-taking order that is not pre-determined prior to the assessed interaction.

It is worth noting that overlaps also feature in PB14Mock, before which students had only 10 minutes of preparation time. The occurrence of overlaps provides clear evidence of participants’ moment-by-moment monitoring of each other’s talk and a locally managed turn-taking order (rather than pre-scripted or pre-allocated turns), as illustrated by the following examples.

(4.21) PB14Mock: 60-67

1 L: and >therefore they can know more about our
 2 products<, like uh ho- how they can use our products, uh
 3 what benefits they can get from using our products,
 4 >and this is< this he::lp to promote our products,
 5 [I- I believe. =
 6 K: [°Mm.° =↑Maybe we should also put some vi↑deos,
 7 or X some uhm special features that our product have, to
 8 uhm in a:: very (.) uh funny way to show uh the public. ((L
 9 nods))

After L explains how her proposal of setting up a Facebook page would benefit the promotion of their product, K utters ‘Mm.’ (line 6) as an acknowledgement token at her projected completion point of L’s turn. This becomes overlapped with the beginning of ‘I believe’, an increment produced by L. K’s display of speakership incipiency at this point – her signal of readiness to take over the floor as the next speaker, seems to be quickly picked up by L, as she cuts off her ongoing production of the increment for a brief moment (line 5), before restarting and completing the production of ‘I believe’. K also orients to L’s ‘I believe’ as an increment, which once again projects imminent turn completion. This is manifested in the beginning of K’s full turn following ‘mm’ being

latched onto the end of L's increment. Therefore, we see an example of how participants monitor each other's talk and negotiate turn-endings and turn-beginnings moment by moment: how the next speaker projects current speaker's completion point or TRP on the one hand, and how the current speaker recognizes the incipency of the next speaker's new turn, on the other. Consider another example:

(4.22) PB14Mock: 109-118

1 L: apart from promoting our products, we can also (.)
2 help the students to know more: (.) the importance (.) to
3 uhm: to have a: (.) good BM<(h)I(h)> level
4 and index.=[Uh (.)
5 [(K opens her lips and inhales))
6 [Mm. ((nods firmly once))
7 K: [°Mm, ° \\uhm: I: agree with you but I have one concern
8 \\((straightens her back))
9 that will it (.) uhm the cost will be really high 'cause
10 uhm disi- distributing free gift to them.

Lines 1-4 are part of L's turn in which she offers an additional argument supporting the proposal of distributing samples of their health product to schools as a promotional strategy. In line 4, L's hesitation token 'Uh' is latched onto her previous TCU, which suggests the incipient continuation of her ongoing turn, or, in other words, that a new TCU is forthcoming. At this very instant, K opens her lips and inhales (line 5), a display of speakership incipency indicating that she is ready to take a next turn to respond. Following a brief pause, in line 6, L utters 'mm' with a clear falling intonation contour and nods firmly once. This *mm* token in its specific production format, together with the firm and one-off nodding, its occurrence at the turn-final position, and the fact that L eventually abandons the continuation of her turn, all point to L's readiness to hand over the floor to K. In line 7, K utters 'mm' with a continuing intonation and lowered volume, which can be seen as displaying speakership incipency. This is overlapped with L's floor-passing 'mm' in line 6. On registering L's signal of handing over the floor to her, K now continues her turn with a marked upward volume shift. Her accompanying non-verbal action of straightening her back (line 8) further displays involvement in her

incipient speakership. With this example and the last, we see how speaker transition is managed and negotiated locally by the participants as the talk unfolds, yielding discourse evidence of the spontaneity of the interaction in the mock assessment.

We now turn to overlaps related to competition for the floor. No competitive overlaps have been identified in School P's group interactions. Such overlaps are not prevalent in School L's group interactions either, but a few instances have been found in LA07. The characteristics of the overlaps as well as their resolution remain largely the same as those in the above examples, and do not amount to 'interruption', which typically involves competitive overlaps in the middle of TCUs (rather than near TRPs) as well as participants breaking each other's trajectories of talk and being oriented to by participants as such (Liddicoat, 2007). However, these instances give some indication of participants' competition for the floor, as illustrated below.

(4.23) LA07: 60-67

1 S:
 2 I think it is the: (.) the: successful case of
 3 cooperation.=
 4 H: =[However= ((gesturing to S))
 5 J: [(I would say-)
 6 H: =I disagree with (.)°your: opinion° as (.) uh because in
 7 the \\ending, the: Na↑vi (.) uh relied on the (.) on the
 8 \\((S smiles embarrassingly))
 9 help of the nature.
 10((about 3 lines omitted)).....
 11 Uh I don't think cooperation is that °necessary°.=
 12 J: =Another reason is (I think that it's hard to uhm (.)

This example shows a case of two participants simultaneously self-selecting as the next speaker. Both H and J seem ready to critically respond to the opinion S has just expressed (lines 1-3), and start their turn at the same time. J drops out after what is heard in the recording as 'I would say' (line 5) and H continues (line 6), but J seizes the next available opportunity and quickly comes in again with his opinion right after H has finished talking, resulting in the latching of their two turns (lines 11-12).

An example of overlap in which competition for the floor is evident can be found towards the end of the interaction.

(4.24) LA07: 124-138

1 H: uhm I want to ask (.) uh what if (.) he: uhm imagine
2 \\the: Pandora would be in (.) in a few years
3 \\((I and H look at each other))
4 later because \\(.) uh the US they (.) they (.) uh unite
5 \\((J is looking down at his note card))
6 all the troops to (.) invent{invade} Pandora.
7 J: [(And I- I would XX)= ((keeps looking at his note card))
8 I: [X (I would) ((looks at H and gestures))
9 S: [(uh- uhm:) ((looks up, and then lays his head on his palm
10 showing disappointment))
11 J: =\\Uhm we see a very immediate (small-scale)
12 \\((still looking at note card))
13 trend of (his valu-)
14 \\personal (.) uhm attitude to the United States army
15 \\((looks up and gestures in an explanatory manner))
16 and the uhm Pandora (.) the people in Pan- uhm
17 Pandora

Following the completion of H's turn (lines 1-6), all three other participants self-select to take the next turn (lines 7-10). Student I utters a few words probably in response to H's ideas (evidenced by his non-verbal actions in line 8), but drops out soon after. J displays little regard for the overlap or other participants but focuses on what he has to say (manifested in his gaze staying on the note card until line 14), and eventually becomes the speaker who gets to continue and deliver a full substantial turn. S, beginning his turn with much hesitation, is unable to secure the floor. As he drops out of the overlap, he lays his head on his palm briefly showing disappointment (lines 9-10).

Participants' keen self-selection as next speaker resulting in multiple instances of turn-initial overlap presents solid evidence for competition for the floor in this group. Accordingly, participants exhibit the use of various strategies in order to gain and hold the floor. One such strategy is the latching of turns or TCUs, as we will examine below.

4.1.3.3 Latching

Latching occurs both in between turns by different speakers (*inter-turn latching*) and between TCUs within a single turn (*intra-turn latching*) by the same speaker. Both types of latching are prevalent in the interactions among the all-male student groups in School L (LA07 and LB00), and are used as one of the strategies to secure a next speaking turn, and to maintain the floor after gaining a turn. Below are two examples from LA07.

(4.25) LA07: 28-38

1 I: =And then, uh:: about the:: (.) meaning of the:: (.)
2 movie is that (.) uh: (.) it must take the: (.) environment
3 (.) that we:: (.) uh haven't (.) destroyed before.=
4 J: =(uh oh >yes conveying) the message that< we have to strike
5 the: right balance between the environment protection and
6 the uhm: uhm: economic or::erm human develops- the
7 development of man↓kind.

On I's completion of his turn saying what he thinks is the meaning of the movie, J comes in immediately in line 4 proffering an aligning response that paraphrases and elaborates on I's idea, with his turn-beginning latched onto I's turn completion point and produced in a faster pace. This effectively breaks the 'round-the-table' turn-taking order at the beginning of the SBA group interactions that participants generally orient to as a tacit norm (see Section 4.1.1). Instead, through latching onto the previous speaker's talk, J secures a second turn to speak within the first round of four turns in the interaction.

(4.26) LA07: 85-91

1 H: And in this film I felt s::o amazing that the facial
2 expression of the Na'vi are so real. .hh They are just-
3 animation (I (.) I'm feel amazing).=
4 S: =Uhm:: although although- the film has used lot of (.) lot
5 of computer effect=however I think the: (.) the facial (.)
6 facial of: the:: (.) of the: of the::: actr- actor (and)
7 actress is the most important.

We have noted earlier how S has been the disadvantaged participant in the competition for the floor in the group, and how two of his attempts to gain a speaking turn have failed (Extracts 4.5 and 4.24). This example above shows how S manages to gain a second turn to speak, which also turned out to be the last turn he was able to take in the interaction. Here, after H has given his positive evaluation on the computer effects on the characters' facial expressions (lines 1-3), S quickly comes in with a diverging opinion that the actors' and actresses' facial expressions are still the most important (lines 4-7), latching onto the end of H's turn. Note that S's turn-beginning is characterized by hesitation (prolonged 'Uhm::') and false start ('although although-'). This somewhat reflects his resolution to gain and then hold the floor despite his apparent lack of readiness in relating his own opinion contingently to H's prior contribution. However, being able to latch these components onto the last speaker's turn has gained him an opportunity to participate in the ongoing interaction and perform his interactional competence for the assessment.

We have seen in the above examples how participants latch their turn onto the previous one in order to gain and secure the floor to speak. We now turn to latching between TCUs within a single turn (*intra*-turn latching). This is notably used as a means to hold the floor, maintaining the participant's right as the current speaker and preventing speaker change at TRPs. The following example shows part of an extended turn by T in the other all-male group LB00.

(4.27) LB00: 43-55

1 T: [OK let's come back to the question.=The question is about
2 (.) h:ow the conflicts occurs in the family affects the
3 individual: or the family and even the society. From my
4 point of view I think that (..) the conflict between the-
5 parents and their childrens are- (..) critical problem for
6 the family.=First of all, if uhm we always (..) if we argue
7 in our home it will definitely harm the harmon- har-
8 harmony of the family. But most importantly, the teenager-
9 s- children are in a very special uhm period of their life.
10 Uhm they- don't like to obey:: and the- don't like

11 following rules.=If the (.) uhm parents (.) push them to
12 (the) extreme it will cause very (.) uh disastrous
13 consequence.=They will like (.) start smoking, drug abuse,
14 (to less the) pressure.

In this excerpt, there are several instances of intra-turn latching (lines 1, 6, 11, and 13). In all cases, the new TCU is latched onto a prior TCU which can be heard as intonationally, grammatically, and pragmatically complete. The point just preceding the new TCU constitutes a TRP at which speaker change can be expected. Notably, T is able to maintain the floor as the current speaker and extend his turn considerably through latching two successive TCUs several times. This strategy is used in attempts to carry out a new action in the new TCU, such as elaborating on or exemplifying a point (lines 6 and 13), and moving from one proposition to another in a step-wise formulation of an argument (line 11), while the turn could still be heard as complete without the new TCU. It is also worth pointing out that the latching of TCUs within a single turn is often followed by the speaker pausing at incomplete positions of the next TCU (lines 2, 6, 11, 13) in terms of intonation, syntax, and pragmatic action.

Latching (both inter- and intra-turn) is a salient feature most noted in the two all-male groups LA07 and LB00 in School L. This pattern, as we have seen, has some connections with the competition for the floor in these two interactions. Accordingly, as one might expect, inter-turn latching does occur, although less frequently, among other groups in School L where there is no apparent competition for the floor.

In School P, inter-turn latching is generally rare, and is only found to occur once or twice in some of the interactions. This might again be accounted for by (or alternatively, serve as evidence of) the pre-planned and pre-scripted nature of the interactions. Pre-allocation of turns following a pre-determined order will mean that participants, to a large extent, know 'who speaks what after whom'. More importantly, the number of turns as well as the amount of talk in each turn will be more or less evenly distributed among the four participants. This obviates, in most instances, the necessity to compete for the floor during the interaction. A notable exception is PA05: 1-36, in which a series of inter-turn latching occurs during the first two minutes of the interaction.

The analysis of this segment is tangential to the present discussion and therefore not shown here. However, it suggests that the latching of turns within participants' collaborative construction of a narrative account of the movie scenes functions to facilitate a smooth flow of the account by tightening the gaps between speaker turns. Coincidentally, inter-turn latching disappears following the completion of this account in the rest of the interaction.

It should be noted that another type of latching is common among group interactions in both schools. It involves the latching of turn components within a single turn (i.e. *intra*-turn latching). However, instead of being used (solely) as a strategy to hold the floor, it seems to be related to participants' orientation to particular turn designs and structures. This will be discussed in Section 4.2 and Section 5.2.

4.1.4 Handing over the floor and selecting next speaker

In the last section, we have examined the conversational phenomena of gaps, overlaps, and latching in the SBA group interactions. We have looked at how their occurrence or non-occurrence in the transition space might indicate the extent to which the turn-taking order in the interactions is locally managed or pre-determined. This section further explores turn-taking and speaker selection around the transition space, and examines two different means – non-verbal cues and turn-final ‘generic’ questions – by which the current speaker hands over the floor and, sometimes together with other participants, selects the next speaker. Again, we will see how the use of these two floor-passing devices differs between those group interactions with extended preparation time and those without.

4.1.4.1 The use of non-verbal cues

The use of non-verbal cues to select next speaker in the group interactions mainly involves gaze, and sometimes, nodding. These cues, being used in particular positions around the transition space by particular participants, are at times giveaways of pre-scripted interactions with pre-determined turn-taking order. We start by looking at two instances of the current speaker turning to look at the next speaker.

(4.28) PA08: 19-30

1 J: S::she's preformance{performance} is not that bad,
2 however, she- her English teacher (.) always gives (.)
3 her a very low mark.
4 So I think it is not Anna's \\fault.
5 \\((turns to look at R))
6 R: Mm. I see your poi:nt, uh- (.) uhm maybe Mrs Coolm-
7 Coleman uh may think that Anna perform: badly at school
8 or at- (.) uh at home. And, on the other hand, I think:
9 (.) uhm Mrs Coleman may (.) uh:: think: (.) >A- Anna may
10 think< (.) that Mrs Coleman's jobs or lives are ve- are
11 perfect; (.)
12 \\But in fact, it's not true in reality.
13 \\((looks at Y))

14 Y: ↑Hm↓m:↑ I agree with you.=I think Anna thinks Mrs Coleman
 15 (.) just focus on her job and her: (.) husband

In lines 4-5, the current speaker J turns to look at R as he utters the last word of his final TCU, seemingly cueing R to be the next speaker. Indeed, R in line 6 takes over the floor and starts a new turn. Similarly, in lines 11-12, R looks at Y as she produces the last TCU of her turn, and Y takes up speakership accordingly in line 13. While in the verbal interaction itself there is no clear indication of a pre-determined turn-taking order, what we can see from this example is the current speaker signalling to a specific co-participant the imminent completion of the turn (hence the relevance of speaker change) through a non-verbal cue. Correspondingly, the recipient of the current speaker's gaze taking the following turn is a display of their recognition that the current speaker has selected them as the next speaker through gaze.

Gaze can sometimes be used by both the current speaker and other co-participants to select a specific group member as the next speaker. This is demonstrated by the next example, in which we also see the use of a stronger non-verbal cue involving a combination of gaze and nodding.

(4.29) PA11: 78-84

1 N: And: maybe she:: (.) will become (.) the: >a rock
 2 star< in the: future,=and: (.) it will (.) uh affect her:
 3 uh future: uh career.
 4 **((N turns to D and nods slightly; R also looks at D and nods once))**
 5 D: Yes. I think Mrs Colema{Coleman} work cannot be carried
 6 on later. And: it is because as you all (.) know (.)
 7 from the movie, mm Anna rui:ns everything.

In lines 4-5, upon the completion of her turn, N, the current speaker, turns to D and nods slightly. Meanwhile, another participant, R, also looks at D and gives him a single nod. Accordingly, D takes the next turn in line 5. This can be taken as a display of D registering the non-verbal cues used by N and R to select him as the next speaker. Note how the use of non-verbal cues involved not only gaze but also

nodding,²⁰ and the same non-verbal cues are given by both the current speaker and another participant almost simultaneously to one particular group member (D). This suggests that the cues are issued, not so much to spontaneously *select* D as next speaker, but as a ‘reminder’ to D that he has the pre-allocated next turn and is therefore the expected next speaker.

Non-verbal cues become the most apparent as a giveaway of pre-determined turn-taking order when a non-speaking participant shifts their reciprocity display from the current speaker to a next speaker, even before the next speaker commences his or her turn. The following excerpt shows two such instances:

²⁰ Notably, what R does here is one firm nod rather than several nods, and while nodding she is looking at D rather than N. Therefore, R’s nodding here is unlikely to be a reciprocity display oriented towards N’s just completed talk, but a cue which is addressed to D.

(4.30) PB11: 15-31

- 1 K: so I suggest that uh we should create (.) lotion
2 which can moisten our skin, uh one of the function is to
3 prevent (.) pimples caused by dry skin. Uhm:: do you
4 think:: >do you agree<? ((turns to S))
- 5 S: Mm. I can't agree more. **((K now turns to R))**
- 6 R: Mm. It sounds great. Uhm from our: past experience, we
7 apply: (.) uh the marketing four Ps (.) strategy, uh
8 which contain four elements, uh namely product, price,
9 uh place, and promotion.=Uh shall we start by discussing
10 one of the elements, product?
- 11 K: [Mm! ((nods))
- 12 Y: [Mm. Yes, of course. Uh as usual, our company's target
13 group is office ladies.
14 Uh: shall we \\change?
15 \\ **((K turns from Y to S))**
- 16 S: No. I think we should not change our target group,

In lines 3-4, K issues a (repaired) question 'do you agree?' addressed to S, as manifested in K's non-verbal action of turning to S and S registering herself as the recipient of the question by providing the answer (line 5). Immediately after S's agreeing response to her question, however, K turns her head, re-orienting herself to R just before R begins to take the next turn, as if she already knows S's response would be as brief as it turns out to be. In the rest of the excerpt, K is a non-speaking participant, yet she constructs herself as an engaged listener through active displays of reciprocity. For instance, she produces the acknowledgement token *mm* with an animated intonation (line 11) coupled with nodding, and looks at and orients to both Y and S in their respective turns (lines 12-16). However, it is precisely K's action of shifting targets of her reciprocity display and in its particular timing that gives away the pre-determined turn-taking order of the interaction. Remarkably, K starts turning her head away from the current speaker Y to the next speaker S as Y utters the last word of her turn (lines 14-15). In other words, K withdraws her reciprocity display from the current speaker Y even before Y has finished the current turn, and displays

recipency to S even before S has self-selected to take the next turn, as if she already knows that S would become the next speaker.

Gaze as a non-verbal cue issued by the current speaker or other co-participants to select a specific group member as next speaker does occur in interactions with a locally managed rather than pre-determined turn-taking order (in School L and PB14Mock). Yet, as will be illustrated by the analysis below, rather than being a ‘reminder’ of a pre-allocated next turn, gaze in these more spontaneous interactions by and large acts as an off-the-record ‘prompt’ that *tentatively select* a specific participant as next speaker.

The tentativeness of gaze as a non-verbal means of selecting next speaker is evidenced by the fact that the cued (‘looked at’) participant does not always display uptake of the selection. This often results in an expanded transition space (longer gaps), followed by a participant other than the one being cued self-selecting as next speaker. We have already seen an example of this in Section 4.1.2, where, during the 3.4-second gap in Extract 4.7, L is seen to give T the priority to take a next turn by non-verbally cueing her to speak. However, T displays non-uptake of this cue, as she withdraws her gaze from L, looks down and smiles. On registering T’s non-uptake as next speaker, L self-selects and takes the next turn. The following shows another example from a group interaction in School L:

(4.31) LB06: 97-106

1 C: And: for: a: uh- uh identity swap ((smiles)) idea
2 that you’ve mentioned maybe we can .h uh invite a
3 ps:ychologist to the show so we can: like track the (.)
4 uh mental changes of the person who have like
5 (.)°changed their jobs.°
6 (2.7) **((T looks at E; the two smile to each other))**
7 T: Uhm (.) so uhm (.) I think uhm (..) uh the ideas of uh
8 (.) how to: uh invite judges is (.) uh also important (.)
9 besides the (.) uh competitors. So I think uhm (.) we
10 should discuss on (.) uh:: the venue, or the time that
11 the show (.) can take place.

Towards the end of her turn, C neither verbally nor non-verbally selects a next speaker. Therefore, on completion of her turn, another participant’s self-selection as

next speaker becomes the relevant next action. During the 2.7-second silence (line 6), T looks at E, seemingly cueing her to speak. However, E simply smiles and does not take over as the next speaker. Registering E's smile as a display of non-uptake of the cue and possibly a lack of readiness to take a turn, T self-selects and takes the next turn (lines 7-11).

The tentativeness of T's non-verbal cue in line 6, thus, is manifested in E's non-uptake of this cue and not taking over as the next speaker. In other words, selecting a specific participant as next speaker through the non-verbal cue of gaze can only be accomplished when the recipient of the cue self-selects as the next speaker. In the case of non-uptake of speakership by the cued participant, a co-participant (T in this case) would respond to such contingency by self-selecting as the next speaker. Therefore, the use of non-verbal cues for next-speaker selection constitutes evidence of participants' sensitivity to each other's readiness or willingness to take a turn to speak at particular junctures of the interaction.

The above examples demonstrate that in interactions where turn-taking is locally managed, gaze functions as a non-verbal 'prompt' that allows a current speaker or other co-participants to select a specific group member as the next speaker. Such selection is tentative, as manifested in cases where the selected participant does not eventually take up speakership. The tentativeness probably relates to the nature of the cue as non-verbal and 'off-the-record', especially when used in isolation. This can be compared to the case where the current speaker selects a specific participant through a question combined with gaze, gesture, or an address term. The selected participant would then be sequentially constrained to provide an answer SPP, and its absence would be accountable.

Thus, we see how gaze as a non-verbal cue serves related yet somewhat different functions in the more spontaneous interactions and the pre-scripted interactions, as a 'prompt' that tentatively selects a specific next speaker and as a subtle 'reminder' to a pre-allocated next speaker respectively. In pre-scripted interactions, these subtle reminders seem particularly important in instances where a participant is oblivious of having a pre-allocated next turn, causing disruption to the flow of the ongoing interaction, resulting in prolonged silences (e.g. Extract 4.17). The use of such 'off-the-record' cues for next speaker selection is part of the student-

candidates' attempt to make their interaction as 'natural' as possible. However, in many cases such as the examples shown earlier, it is precisely the mismatch between the supposed tentativeness of the non-verbal cue and the overwhelmingly 'successful' outcome of the speaker selection that constitutes a 'leak' of the pre-determined turn-taking order in these group interactions.

4.1.4.2 The use of 'generic' turn-final questions

Another device that students use in handing over the floor to a next speaker is a type of turn-final question. By turn-final questions, I refer to questions appearing at the end of a multi-TCU turn, excluding stand-alone questions which form a turn on their own. The turn-final questions students use are typically 'generic' opinion-seeking questions. Some examples include:

- (1) *Does anyone have any ideas?*
- (2) *Do you have any idea?*
- (3) *What do you think?*
- (4) *Do you agree?*

These questions do not encode specific content ideas relevant to the ongoing topic in their form, compared to, for example:

(4.32) PB10: 36-40

K: Uhm, apart from advertising through the Internet and the- television, uh wha- where else can we promote from{for} the (.) from{for} our: smartphones.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these 'generic' questions such as (1) to (4) are found to be utilized by participants more as a turn-taking device to hand over the floor to a next speaker than to perform the opinion-seeking action encoded in the form of the questions.

In using these questions as a floor-passing device, the current speaker does not necessarily select a specific next speaker. However, by virtue of asking a question that sequentially provides for an answer SPP, the current speaker does signal the imminent completion of the current turn, and make the beginning of a next speaker's turn a relevant next action. Liddicoat (2007) sums up the turn-taking function of questions in group interactions well:

Questions, however, do not inherently select a next speaker. A question for example may be addressed to a group, any one of whom could be an appropriate next speaker. Nonetheless, questions do make speaker change a highly relevant next action and at the same time constrain what can be considered appropriate talk from the new speaker. (p.63)

Occasionally, the selection of a specific participant as next speaker is accomplished through a combination of the turn-final question and a non-verbal cue, which is often a gaze directed towards the selected next speaker (see Extract 4.34 below).

The evidence that these ‘generic’ turn-final questions are used and oriented to as a floor-passing device by students in the SBA group interactions is found mainly in their manner of production and the sequential environment in which they occur.

Manner of production

(4.33) PB10: 92-96

1 H: I'm sure: w- uhm office worker are interested in
2 getting to know high-tech technology at the same time,
3 in the fairs.
4 ((looking at V)) How- °do you think°;
5 V: I see what you mean[t]. Uhm I think it's a good- way to
6 promote our smartphones.=

(4.34) PB14Mock: 85-92

1 T: °Uhm::° (.) ((looks down at note card)) I think sell::
2 our product to school by free gift is (to me) is a good
3 idea also. .hh Because can let students to try our
4 products, and:: (.) and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.)
5 our: fo- our features of our products. ((turns from note
6 card to K)) °What do you think?°
7 S: ((Looks across the group)) You guy got a- (you) got a
8 good poi:nt. And I think uh:: we can-

In each of the two examples, the current speaker (H and T) issues an opinion-seeking question at the end of their respective turns, namely ‘how do you think?’ (line 4, first example) and ‘what do you think?’ (line 6, second example). Notably, however, the question is produced with a marked shift from normal to lowered volume indicating turn ending. Such a downward volume shift away from normal

volume seems to downplay the question's own pragmatic action of seeking opinion while foregrounding speaker change as the relevant next action. In both instances, the turn-final question is coupled with the current speaker directing her gaze towards a specific group member, selecting that member as the next speaker. In the first example, V starts her turn accordingly as the selected next speaker (line 5), while in the second example, another participant, S, self-selects to take the next turn (line 7). Regardless of whether the non-verbally cued participant takes over the floor, the turn-final question produced in a downward volume shift has effected speaker change in both cases.

Sequential environment

As noted earlier, questions such as 'what do you think' or 'do you agree' typically occur at turn-final position of a multi-TCU turn, signaling imminent completion of the current speaker's turn. The following shows two examples of such questions occurring in what are conceivably post-completion positions, further supporting the questions being used primarily for the purpose of handing over the floor to a next speaker.

(4.35) PB14Mock: 42-50

1 K: 'cause uhm we can (.) just put (out) our products,
 2 uhm the information of our product on our websites, and
 3 then (.) to let the customers and more- people know
 4 that .h uhm our- products' special features, and then
 5 uhm the:: maybe the uhm: uh significant of our products.
 6 (.)
 7 So, what do you think?
 8 S: Yes I agree with you.=Uhm because nowadays uhm: (.) uhm
 9 social network- social networking website like YouTubes
 10 or:: (.) Facebook are very popular among
 11 teenagers.

In line 5, K completes her talk about how setting up a website can help promote their product, with a falling intonation at the end of the TCU ending with the words 'our products'. However, a short pause follows (line 6) where no one self-

selects as the next speaker. As K continues as current speaker after the pause, she issues the question ‘what do you think?’ (line 7). This makes an answer SPP the relevant next action, and is therefore hearable as a signal reinforcing K’s completion of her talk, and her readiness to hand over the floor. In line 8, S takes over as the next speaker giving an agreeing response to K. The second example below shows a similar case where the current speaker issues a question following a first completion which does not seem to effect a speaker change.

(4.36) LB05: 51-60

- 1 C: uhm maybe we have different altitude (.) attitude
2 (.) uhm: til- towards (.) computer or Internet. Uhm I
3 think it’s (.) kind of uhm: generation gap maybe.
4 L: (Ye[s]::: ((nods and smiles))
5 C: [Don’t you think so?=
6 S: =Yes. Because uh we’re living and brought up in
7 different environment, we have different backgrounds and
8 history so .h our values towards uh:: maybe- (.) towards
9 the same thing:: uh will be very different.

Here, following C’s first completion of her turn in line 3 is an agreeing response by L comprised of a prolonged agreement token ‘yes’ along with nodding and smiling (line 4). This seems to be heard by C as a minimal response which would not effect speaker change whereby another participant takes a substantial turn as next speaker. She then produces the question ‘don’t you think so?’ (line 5) which is in partial overlap with L’s ‘yes’. S then takes over the floor and produces an extended response that includes accounting for her agreement with C, with the turn-initial agreement token latched onto the end of C’s question (line 6).

Therefore, as the above two examples show, questions are sometimes used by participants as part of an ‘upgraded’ attempt to hand over the floor when next speaker’s self-selection does not ensue upon the completion of their turn in the first instance. Consider one more example of a participant’s ‘upgraded’ attempt at passing over the floor when both her first question-intoned turn completion and her subsequent non-verbal cues have failed to bring about speaker change.

(4.37) PB11Mock: 78-87

1 Y: Mm. This- that's good. Uhm: and most middle and high-
2 income group (.) uh see the doctor in: clinic also, and
3 they are more affor- affordable than low-income group.
4 But, giving out free sample is not attractive
5 enough.=Maybe:: (.) uhm maybe we have adverti-
6 advertising?
7 (1.6) ((Y turns her head to S and then to K;
8 S and K nod))
9 Y: \\Do you think so?
10 \\((orients to and looks at K))
11 K: ↑Mm hmm, and then:: we can: (.) I think we should find a
12 spokesperson{spokesperson} to represent (.) our product.=
13

After Y's self-projected final TCU of her turn in the form of a question-intoned proposal (lines 5-6), a 1.6-second silence ensues. During this gap, Y non-verbally solicits co-participants' responses by turning to look at S and then K (line 7). S and K nod, thereby giving a non-verbal response to Y which effectively amounts to an SPP accepting Y's proposal. Nonetheless, this also completes the sequence without effecting speaker change. Registering that no one self-selects as next speaker, Y makes a second bid for speaker change with the question 'do you think so?' (line 9). Note that the form of the question itself projects a yes-no answer, which can again be accomplished through a non-verbal response such as nodding or shaking one's head. However, in the sequential context of this question being initiated just after the co-participants have offered a non-verbal SPP accepting the prior proposal, the apparent redundancy would suggest that Y orients to the turn-taking relevance of speaker transition projected by the question, more than to the pragmatic action of seeking acceptance of the proposal which the form of the question embodies. Taking into account that Y has issued a non-verbal cue to S and K just prior to this question (line 7), the question can be seen as an upgraded attempt on Y's part to hand over the floor to a next speaker. Its seeming redundancy and sequential placement immediately following co-participants' non-verbal response suggests a strong call on Y's part for a verbal response effecting speaker change. This is eventually accomplished by K, who takes over as the next speaker in line 11 and delivers a full substantial turn.

A final observation is that these turn-final (or post-completion) ‘generic’ questions are in near ‘complementary distribution’ with overlaps and inter-turn latching across the group interactions in both School L and School P. In other words, these questions do not generally occur if the final TCU in declarative sentence form by the current speaker is overlapped or latched onto by a next speaker’s turn beginning, and mostly do not appear in interactions where there is competition for the floor (only once at the end of the first turn in LA07, none in LB00). These questions tend to be used when the current speaker registers that no co-participant has displayed an incipient self-selection as the next speaker at the completion point of the current turn. This lends further support to the questions being deployed by the students as a floor-passing device, with the opinion-seeking action inherent in their form being downplayed at the same time.

Distribution among group interactions with different turn-taking mechanisms

In the above discussion, I presented two different kinds of evidence that students use ‘generic’ opinion-seeking questions as a floor-passing device in the SBA group interactions. It is also worth pointing out that there is a discernible difference in the distribution of turn-final questions used as a floor-passing device between the interactions with the two different types of turn-taking mechanism, locally managed or with a pre-determined order. A general observation is that such questions are more often used in the more ‘spontaneous’ interactions (School L and PB14Mock) and less often in pre-scripted interactions, with the exception of Group PB11. A useful comparison can be made by examining three interactions conducted by the same group of four students: PB14Mock, in which students had 10 minutes of preparation time; and PB14 and PA05, where students had extended preparation time and reported to have pre-scripted the interactions.

The use of turn-final questions in PB14Mock is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from their use by the same participants in the other two interactions, PA05 and PB14. Notably, in PB14Mock, these questions are addressed to the whole group and not a specific group member, and are used by three of the four participants (S, K, and T). These questions take a ‘generic’ form, and appear to be used by participants to signal imminent completion of the current speaker’s turn

and to make the speaker change the relevant next action (see, for example, Extracts 4.34 and 4.35 above). In contrast, the turn-final questions in PB14 are overwhelmingly initiated by L, who takes on a ‘chairperson’ and ‘team-leader’ role in the interaction. The most striking observation is that, in PB14, L is the only participant who has issued ‘generic’ questions such as ‘does anyone have any ideas?’ to fellow group members, whereas in the mock assessment PB14Mock, L is the only participant who has *not* used any of these questions. As for PA05, a pre-scripted interaction, no instances of turn-final ‘generic’ questions such as the ones discussed above have been found. Only two questions were identified in this interaction, one asking if participants remember watching the movie they are about to discuss, the other a copy of a question on the discussion prompt initiating a new topic.

Based on this comparison and the general observation about the different distribution of turn-final questions in group interactions with and without extended preparation time, an argument can be made about the use of turn-final ‘generic’ questions as a floor-passing device in relation to the (un)predictability and local management of the interaction’s turn-taking organization. Among interactions with extended preparation time, the knowledge of who takes the next turn as a consequence of pre-planning and pre-allocation of turns prior to the assessed interaction obviates the need for explicit, verbal actions to be carried out for next-speaker selection. These interactions exhibit a preference (a tendency) for next-speaker self-selection. Non-verbal cues are used by participants as ‘behind-the-scene reminders’ to the ‘expected next speaker’ (see Section 4.1.4.1), particularly when the necessity surfaces in inter-turn silences. This is compatible with the finding that, among the interactions without extended preparation time (hence locally managed turn-taking), the turn-final questions are deployed when the current speaker registers no displays of imminent next-speaker self-selection. The observed low usage of turn-final ‘generic’ questions in pre-scripted interactions can also be accounted for by the fact that, if one of the main functions of such questions is to mark the end of the current speaker’s turn, they also become less necessary in a pre-scripted interaction where participants know more or less what each member is going to say in each turn. Therefore, the use of turn-final questions as a floor-passing device seems to be one

indicator of a spontaneously and locally managed turn-taking system in a given group interaction.

4.1.5 Taking over the floor as next speaker

4.1.5.1 Non-verbal signals in next speaker's takeover mechanism

In 4.1.4.1, we looked at how participants make use of non-verbal cues in selecting a next speaker. In this section, we consider how participants deploy non-verbal signals in taking over the floor as next speaker. On close examination of the test discourse data, a recurrent pattern is observed regarding a next speaker's non-verbal interactional behavior around the transition space, i.e. from the last TCU of the previous speaker's turn (or its last part) to the beginning of the next speaker's own turn, among the assessed group interactions in School P. Typically, as we will see in the following examples, the next speaker's takeover mechanism involves:

- (1) Displaying (heightened) reciprocity towards the previous speaker through gaze near the completion of his or her ongoing turn
- (2) Displaying acknowledgement through vocalization *mm* and/or nodding
- (3) Withdrawing gaze or turning away from the previous speaker, generally at the beginning of the next speaker's own turn

(2) and (3) can take place simultaneously, and sometimes in reverse order. Consider a first example below (Note: As the focus of this example is on L's non-verbal actions around speaker transition, details of L's gaze during the first 5 lines in S's turn are omitted).

(4.38) PB14: 6-16

```
1  S:      Mm. I've heard the ↑news ↓too. Teenagers nowadays (.) are
2          ↑always focusing on their appearance. Some of them may
3          even spend a large amount of money, on buying (.) uhm
4          pretty cares (k-) products, or pay for some facial
5          treat\\ments. (.)
6          \\((L looks at S))
7          It \\↑seems that there's a grea:t
8          \\((L's gaze turns away from S and into the air))
9          commercial opportunity \\on it!
10         \\((L turns to S))
11  L:      \\Mm. Yes,
12         \\((turns away from S and looks in the air again))
13         our company has just released (.) our beauty products
14         in- eh- uhm the teenagers. ....
```

Prior to this excerpt, L delivers the opening talk for this interaction. During this next turn by S (lines 1-5), L displays reciprocity towards S by looking at her from time to time while she talks. In line 5, L turns to look at S once at a possible completion of S's turn – at the end of the word 'treatments', but she turns away again as S continues to start producing another TCU 'It seems that...' (lines 6-7). Note, then, how L turns to look at S briefly again towards the end of her final TCU (lines 8-9). Thus, we see how L makes a noticeably heightened reciprocity display towards S near the two projected completion points of S's turn. However, as soon as L takes over as the next speaker, beginning her turn with the acknowledgement tokens *mm* and *yes*, she turns away from S and looks into space again (lines 10-11).

The following example shows a similar takeover mechanism by a next speaker but in a slightly different order, with an even earlier withdrawal of non-verbal alignment with the previous speaker.

(4.39) PB11: 69-77

1 S: Mm. (.) Besides, we can- maybe- maybe we can: (.) uh: in:
 2 (.) impose a policy buy two get one free. Uh as this may
 3 attract \\more consumer to- buy: our product, it is also
 4 \\((K looks in S's direction without making eye contact))
 5 \\a kind of illusion.
 6 \\((K turns away from S))
 7 K: Mm! When uh: (.) they have we have the promotion that
 8 they can buy two: (.) get one free, they will think that
 9 the price is a lot (.) uhm belower so they will uh buy
 10 more.

In this example, the next speaker K following S's turn begins orienting to S well before the actual completion of S's turn (lines 3-4). Notably, K only looks in S's direction without exchanging eye contact with S. Just as S's turn comes to its completion after the last word 'illusion', K turns away from S (line 6). This is immediately followed by K beginning her turn as the next speaker with the acknowledgement token *mm* and then providing an account for agreeing with S's proposal. In this case, the order of next speaker displaying acknowledgement and turning away from the previous speaker is reversed compared to the last example,

and the next speaker's takeover mechanism as a whole seems to have shifted earlier. What is more curious, perhaps, is how K's gaze and body alignment is withdrawn from S in her next turn, even when her response is clearly affiliative with S's stance in terms of content (an account of the reason for agreement) and production format (an animated *mm*).

Analysis of the above examples suggests that the next speaker's display of (heightened) reciprocity towards the previous speaker, in the particular position where it occurs, is turn-taking or speaker-transition-relevant. This final example below, together with students' interview comments, offers further evidence.

(4.40) PB06: 92-101

1 Y: Uhm apart from that, I think \\we can promote our
2 \\((R looks at Y))
3 product through (.) mobile phone. Uhm we can:: t-
4 promote it by calling- (.) customers, or messaging them.
5 R: \\Mm.
6 \\((turns away from Y and looks down at note card))
7 I don't think I agree with you? Phone-calling ((looks
8 down at note card again)) and message is too annoying.
9 People will feel- (.) detest, and, they're not- they
10 will be not willing to buy our: product.

Prior to this excerpt, R, who is the next speaker following Y's turn, has been browsing his note card during the first part of Y's turn. As Y moves to the second part of her turn delivering her own idea of cold-calling customers as a promotion strategy (lines 1-4), R turns to look at Y, and his display of reciprocity is sustained throughout the rest of Y's turn until its completion in line 4. Yet, just as R takes over as the next speaker in line 5 beginning with the acknowledgement token *mm*, he turns away from Y and looks down at his note card. Notably, throughout the rest of his turn, R alternatively looks in the air towards the camera and at his note card, without looking at Y again. This is somewhat striking considering R's turn being designed as a disagreeing response to Y's proposal in the previous turn. Therefore, while R's turn is primarily connected to Y's immediately prior talk, and his talk is sequentially expected to be addressed (at least in part) to Y, R's non-verbal actions do not line up with this, and suggest limited engagement on his part in responding to Y's prior talk.

Therefore, in this example, we see how gaze accompanies speaker transition in the course of a participant taking over as a next speaker, yet does not accompany the participant's talk addressing the previous speaker's ideas. In other words, the non-verbal signal of gaze functions as more of a turn-taking device than indicating participants' genuine engagement with each other's talk.

In the interview with this group of students from PB06, when asked whether the students think the SBA group interaction is similar to everyday conversation, the group members reply in chorus 'not similar' and shake their heads. Afterwards, student A offers the following elaborate comment, accounting for the dissimilarity in terms of whether participants engage in listening to each other's talk:

(4.41) PB06 Student Interview

A: One of the things is when I'm talking [in SBA], the other three won't listen. The other three would be thinking when it is going to be their own turn, or what they need to say in the next turn. In 90% of the time, we wouldn't listen to what others are saying. So take myself as an example, if the previous speaker is finishing and I just realize 'Oh! I'm up next', then I'd just take my turn and start talking immediately, and after I'm done with my turn I'd be daydreaming again.

Evidently then, insofar as A's account represents her own and her group members' interactional conduct, the participants engage minimally with each other's talk during the assessed group interaction, and only actively listen for possible completion points where speaker transition is relevant. This is correspondingly manifested in participants' display of reciprocity towards the current speaker near the projected turn completion, and the concomitant withdrawal of gaze as soon as they take over as the next speaker.

Overall, among the assessed interactions in School P, participants' non-verbal display of engagement such as eye contact often seems to be juxtaposed with speaker change around the transition space. Specifically, a next speaker's display of engagement with the immediately previous speaker appears to increase and peak near the completion of the previous speaker's turn, but is quickly withdrawn as soon as he or she takes over the floor as the next speaker. Rather strikingly, the next speaker withdraws his or her gaze from the previous speaker even when the talk is designed as addressing the previous speaker's contribution, as in the last two examples. This suggests participants' limited engagement with each other's talk during the assessed

group interaction, and students' own meta-discursive comments in the interviews provide corroborating evidence. A final remark is that this pattern of participants' non-verbal behaviour in taking over as next speaker is not noted in the mock SBA group interactions in School P or among the group interactions in School L. Therefore, this is primarily a feature of the assessed interactions in School P (with extended preparation time), and again seems to be associated with the type of interactions which have pre-determined turn-taking order and pre-scripted talk in each turn.

4.1.5.2 The use of acknowledgement token *mm*

In this final section, we examine the role of the acknowledgement token *mm* as a device used by participants in taking over the floor as the next speaker.

Nature and distribution

According to Gardner (1997, 1998), *mm*, together with *mm hm*, *uh huh*, and *yeah*, form a class of conversational objects known as *acknowledgement tokens* in telling sequences (e.g. of events or stories). They are produced by the recipient of a telling and serve a general function of providing listener support to the teller. *Mm* can be produced in a range of prosodic shapes, which carry different interactional import and can be regarded as different tokens. Gardner (1997) delimits three main types of *mm* that carry acknowledging force:

1. Falling intonation (hereafter *mm1*): as a weak acknowledgement token
2. Rising intonation (hereafter *mm2*): as a continuer
3. Fall-rise intonation (hereafter *mm3*), as an acknowledgement token with heightened involvement

The majority of *mm* tokens at turn-initial position identified in the SBA group interaction data are short and produced with a falling terminal pitch direction (i.e. *mm1*), transcribed with a period as 'Mm.'. *Mm3*, with a notable greater downward pitch movement, are also quite common, transcribed with an exclamation mark as 'Mm!'. There are also instances where the turn-initial *mm* is prolonged and with a continuing intonation ('Mm::'), and hearable as a hesitation token. The focus of the present discussion is *mm1* (and sometimes, *mm3*).

Mm1 and *mm3* are observed to be differentially distributed among group interactions with pre-determined turn-taking order and those with a more locally managed turn-taking organization. Turn-initial *mm* produced with a falling terminal pitch direction followed by further talk is prevalent in the assessed SBA group interactions in School P. For instance, over half of the substantial turns (15 out of 27) in PB14 begin with either *mm1* or *mm3*, 9 of which are short falling *mm1* (see full transcript in Appendix T). The ubiquity of turn-initial *mm* can also be seen in PA13, where *mm1* occurs in five consecutive turns, as highlighted in the following extract.

(4.42) PA13: 59-77

- B: °**Mm.**° Just now, we have talked about: (.) uh:: (.) several:: misunderstanding between Mrs Coleman and Anna.
 ((4 lines omitted))
 let's move on to the:: uh feelings on their (..) on the rest of their life if they: (...) if they: have to stay: >in each other's bodies<.
- L: **Mm.** For Mrs Coleman, I think: she may feel delighted since (.) sh- she is so- she have the young- (..) appearance.=But- with- full of (.) knowledge, she can easy overcome the (.) tasks come:: (.) in the rest of her life, such as her school exam and test.
- K: **Mm.** I see your point. But I think that Miss: <Mrs Cole°man°> may be depress[ed] and di- disappointed. Since she ((3 lines omitted))
 (..)
- B: **Mm.** For Anna, she'll be sad, as: she: lost her high school life. Therefore, she will have less time: to (.) explore the world and experience her life.=
- D: =**Mm.** I also- uh understand what you mean.=But uh (.) I think that Anna may feel relaxed in another way.

Interestingly, turn-initial *mm* followed by further talk has only 5 occurrences in PB14Mock where students were not given an extended preparation time sufficient for pre-scripting, and its occurrence is scarce among the group interactions in School L. Thus, an interesting contrast is seen in how beginning a next turn with the acknowledgement token *mm* appears a feature of the pre-scripted interactions, but not a feature of interactions with a more locally managed turn-taking order.

According to Gardner (1997), *mm1* functions as a weak acknowledgement token registering minimal and unproblematic receipt of talk. This relates to its semantic emptiness, unspecified positive-negative polarity, and the physically minimal properties of its production, while the falling terminal pitch direction gives it an acknowledging force (*ibid.*). In Gardner (1997), *mm1* features in telling sequences. However, in the SBA group interactions, *mm1* is observed to be distributed in a wider variety of sequential contexts, including after a previous speaker making a suggestion, proposing a new topic, and perhaps more surprisingly, after open questions.

As a marker of speakership incipency

‘Speakership incipency’, as the term is originally used in the CA literature of acknowledgement tokens, is described by Drummond & Hopper (1993) as the ‘probability that its speaker is moving out of a recipient role and projecting further speaking’ in telling sequences (p.159), or ‘how much does each token indicate its speaker’s orientation toward taking the floor’ (p.163). In the context of SBA group interactions, speakership incipency is related to whether or not the *mm* speaker produces further talk in the same turn after uttering *mm*.

An interesting difference between the *mm* tokens found in the present study and those among the Australian English conversations in Gardner’s (1997) study concerns their speakership incipency. It is observed that the turn-initial *mm* exhibits a high degree of speakership incipency in School P’s group interactions such that, overwhelmingly, *mm* is followed by same speaker further talk whereby the utterer of *mm* develops a full substantial turn. In PB14, for example, all 15 instances of turn-initial *mm1* and *mm3* are followed by further talk by the same speaker, exhibiting a categorical speakership incipency. Stand-alone *mm*, where its utterer does not produce further talk resulting in the floor going back to the previous speaker or to another participant, is not common. The only notable exceptions are in PB10 and PB14Mock, where two participants (E in PB10 and K in PB14Mock), use stand-alone *mm* (as well as the continuer *mm hm*) to display reciprocity and offer listener support to a current speaker. This pattern of high speakership incipency stands

somewhat in contrast with Gardner's (1997) study, in which *mm* was found to be followed by same speaker talk only about a quarter of the time.

Furthermore, sequential analysis of the test discourse also reveals how *mm* is used by speakers oriented to by co-participants as a marker of speakership incipency – taking over the floor and projecting more talk as forthcoming. The following example shows how a next speaker's turn-initial *mm* is followed by a sizeable gap before the same speaker produces further talk.

(4.43) PB11: 127-131

1 K: So I think it may be uhm suitable for- to choose
2 her, because we can also promote our product (.) to uh
3 other places. Uhm:: so it is great right? So::: let's
4 choose Angela Baby.
5 S: → °Mm°.
6 (1.5)
7 S: So, uhm maybe: (.) maybe we can add (.) a point that we
8 can promote a V- VIP: policy for our customers.

Here, S utters 'mm' at a lowered volume, following K's extended turn in which she makes a case supporting a previous speaker's suggestion of the spokesperson for their health product. However, a 1.5-second silence ensues, during which no other participant comes in to talk. This seems to suggest that co-participants register S's claim for the speaking floor at this point through her production of *mm*. S then continues with a topic shift to a VIP policy as a promotional strategy. Notably, this is done with an amplitude shift resuming normal volume, in line with Gardner's (1997) finding that *mm* followed by an amplitude shift is often coupled with some topically disjunctive talk.

Participants' orientation to *mm* as marking incipient speakership in the group interactions is also seen in a case of overlap resolution.

(4.44) PB14Mock: 62-65

1 L: >and this is< this he::lp to promote our products,
2 [I- I believe.=
3 K: [°Mm.° =↑Maybe we should also put some
4 vi↑deos,

Recall this example from Section 4.1.3 on overlaps. Following L's turn talking about how a Facebook fan page would benefit the promotion of their health product, K produces the acknowledgement token *mm*. This becomes overlapped with the beginning of an increment 'I believe' produced by L. K's speakership incipency is evident in her eventual takeover of the floor and developing a full turn that is latched onto the end of L's increment, and her display of speakership incipency through *mm* is registered by L, who cuts off her ongoing production of the increment for a brief moment before completing it.

Next, we examine a case where *mm* is placed in a rather sequentially odd position: following an open-ended question issued by the last speaker.

(4.45) PA08: 63-69

1 S: Yeah. We have see a lot of feelings that they: felt
 2 about.=So, uhm: WHAT problem will they face if: they:
 3 exchange their body \\in the rest of their lives.
 4 \\((turns to R))
 5 (..) ((R nods slightly))
 6 R: Mm:. Uh from the viewpoint of Mrs Coleman, uh: Mrs
 7 Coleman[s] may- (.) lose- her job because Anna (.) lacks
 8 uh the communi- cating: (.) know-how,

In lines 1-3, S proposes a new topic for the ensuing discussion in the form of an open-ended question. In line 4, S is seen to non-verbally select R as the next speaker, and R takes over the floor accordingly in lines 5-6, nodding slightly and beginning her turn with *mm*. What is remarkable here is the placement of the acknowledgement token *mm* following S's open-ended question. *Mm* does not typically occur as an answer SPP after open-ended questions, and in the sequential context of following an opinion-seeking question, *mm* cannot be acknowledging receipt of information as it normally does in telling sequences. Provided that it still carries its acknowledging force as indexed by its falling terminal pitch direction, it is reasonable to posit that *mm* here acknowledges the prior speaker's (S) talk as having come to completion, and the relevance for the next speaker (R herself) to take over the floor and start a new turn. This is corroborated by R's nod (line 5) just prior to her utterance of *mm*, registering S's non-verbal cue (line 4) for her to take over as next speaker.

From the above examples, we can see how *mm* is used by participants to display speakership incipency, projecting more talk in the same turn as forthcoming, and therefore plays a part in taking over the floor from the last speaker. This relates to the attested function of *mm* as a (weak) acknowledgement token marking unproblematic receipt of talk (Gardner, 1997), indicating the *mm* speaker's orientation to the previous speaker's talk as complete. The difference that somewhat sets it apart from the *mm* in telling sequences reported in Gardner (1997) is its function of making further talk relevant in the same turn in the SBA group interaction context. *Mm* therefore serves a double function that is both backward- and forward-looking: acknowledging the previous speaker's talk and its completion on the one hand, and signalling an incipient speakership with more talk forthcoming.

Closely related to the use of *mm* in taking over the floor and displaying speakership incipency is its function as a turn-initial component (or one of several) that allows participants to hold the floor, buying time to formulate the upcoming talk in the same turn. This is seen in instances where participants begin a next turn with a series of acknowledgement and agreement tokens, before moving on to content delivery components such as elaboration and exemplification of ideas, or proposing new ideas. Consider the following example:

(4.46) PB14: 139-146

1 K: So when the film is released, uhm millions of
2 audience, and they can see our products in the films. So,
3 our: products can be successfully promoted. Besides,
4 teenagers may <also want to follow their:> (.) idols;
5 and so they may consider to buy and try our products.
6 S: \\Mm. Y:es!
7 \\((looks down briefly as in thinking))
8 Uhm:: (.) I:: I thi- I believe you guys must hur- must
9 have heard (.) a very famous film called
10 Tran↑sfor↓mers.

Prior to this excerpt and in lines 1-5, K is proposing the idea of using product displacement in movies to promote their health product. This is followed by an agreeing response by S (lines 6-10) in which she gives an example of its use by a clothing company in the movie *Transformers*. Here, S takes over as the next speaker

and begins her turn with the acknowledgement token *mm*, followed by the agreement token *yes* uttered with an emphatic intonation. Her simultaneous non-verbal action of looking down briefly suggests that she is taking this time to formulate her upcoming talk introducing the example of *Transformers*. Further evidence is seen in her apparent unpreparedness for this content delivery component, displayed through her staggered production, with hesitations (prolonged ‘uhm::’ and ‘I::’) and a repair (‘I thi- I believe’). The turn-initial *mm*, therefore, enables S to take over as the next speaker and give some form of response to the previous speaker in a timely fashion, while buying her some time to organize the delivery of her prepared example in the rest of her turn. A similar function is found in the use of formulaic agreement expressions such as ‘I agree with you’, which will be examined in detail in Section 4.2.

Therefore, we have seen how participants use *mm* to take over the floor as next speaker, accomplished through acknowledging receipt of the previous speaker’s talk and displaying speakership incipiency. The display of speakership incipiency, be it followed by a sizeable gap (e.g. Extract 4.43) or hesitation (e.g. Extract 4.46), allows the participant to claim the right to (hold) the floor while buying time to formulate further talk in the same turn, typically characterized by the delivery of prepared content ideas. The falling terminal pitch direction of *mm* makes it hearable as an acknowledgement of prior talk, enabling the participant to buy time to think without appearing to be hesitant or unready. This also ensures that a next speaker’s response comes in a timely manner following the completion of the previous speaker’s turn, and forms part of the participants’ active effort in minimizing gaps (termed ‘dead air’ by the students) between speaker turns.

With this I conclude the discussion on the turn-taking organization in the SBA group interactions. We have examined patterns of turn distribution and allocation oriented to by participants; the turn-taking phenomena of gaps, overlaps, and latching; and devices that participants use to hand over and take over the floor in speaker transition. In the next section, we look at patterns of discourse in SBA group interactions, focusing on the preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses.

4.2 Preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses

Response turns in the SBA group interactions are overwhelmingly constructed in such ways that participants respond to a previous speaker's talk by means of agreeing or disagreeing with him/her. These agreeing/disagreeing responses begin with a turn-initial component consisting of some agreement/disagreement tokens or expressions, followed by further talk in the same turn that refers back to the previous speaker's ideas or delivers the current speaker's own ideas, or does both.

Section 4.2 explores the structure of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions, and discusses their turn design in relation to the preference organization of agreement and disagreement in everyday conversation. I argue that the particular turn shapes characterizing the agreeing/disagreeing responses in the group interactions are the result of the concurrent operation of two sets of preferences, structural and assessment-related. The development of the assessment-related preference is then discussed with reference to student-candidates' various uses of the formulaic expression *I agree with you* and its variants. The section concludes by postulating the emergence of a locally relevant interactional norm that is oriented to in both student-candidates' production of agreeing responses as well as teacher-raters' perception of these response turns as evidence of students' interactional competence.

Preference

Preference organization in Conversation Analysis is built on the concept of *adjacency pairs* (conversational actions occurring in pairs), and describes how different courses of actions are routinely implemented in different ways. Take the conversational action of request as an example. A request projects two possible responses, namely, granting the request or rejecting it. The paired actions of request and granting/rejecting constitute an adjacency pair, of which the request is the first-pair-part (FPP), while granting and rejecting are the alternative second-pair-parts (SPP). Preference organization, then, deals with how differently the actions of granting and rejecting a request are routinely performed in conversation.

Since the early days in the development of CA, researchers had found that the different SPP responses to an FPP action (e.g. accepting/declining an invitation; granting/rejecting a request) are not ‘symmetrical alternatives’ (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p.314). The choices between courses of action are ‘routinely implemented in ways that reflect an institutionalized ranking of alternatives’ (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984, p.53). Accordingly, these alternatives are categorized as preferred actions and dispreferred actions.

The type of preference in CA is termed *structural preference* by Sidnell (2010). This relates to its nature of dealing with the organization of talk-in-interaction, and is ‘quite independent of the individual, psychological preferences of the participants’ (p.77). He cites the example of being invited to a party by a host that you dislike, under which situation you are likely to personally prefer declining the invitation. However, note that the action of declining an invitation would routinely involve a more extended and complex response in which you give an explanation or make up an excuse. Features such as these are generalized as characteristic of ‘dispreferred’ actions. Conversely, the alternative of accepting the invitation would usually constitute a shorter, simpler response, exhibiting features of ‘preferred’ actions, even though in this context you would psychologically ‘disprefer’ accepting the invitation. Schegloff (2007) describes two ways in which preference is manifested in the organization of talk. The first one is related to the nature of the course of action, such that a preferred response is one that promotes the successful outcome of the FPP action. The second manifestation of preference is in the design or construction of a turn, such that there are identifiable turn design features of preferred/dispreferred actions.

Regarding the turn shapes of preferred and dispreferred responses relevant to the present analysis, one difference between the two is in the brevity and directness of the response. Preferred SPP actions are typically brief, performed directly and immediately, and ‘whose immediate production is unremarkable’ (Liddicoat, 2007, p.111). In contrast, dispreferred SPP actions are routinely ‘avoided, or delayed in their production’ (*ibid.*). Another notable feature that characterizes dispreferred but not preferred actions is the inclusion of an *account*, providing explanations or justifications for the action. This gives evidence that the speaker ‘is aware of the

dispreferred status of his contribution and is orientating to the accountability of dispreferred responses' (p.115). Finally, Schegloff (2007) argues that preferred SPPs are sequence-closure-relevant, whereas dispreferred SPPs are sequence-expansion-relevant. He notes that 'Post-expansion is one place where the consequences of dispreferred second pair parts get played out.' (p.152)

In certain contexts, there might be co-occurring and conflicting preferences, whereby two sets of preferences are relevant to the construction of responses but may not be compatible with one another. Two such examples of such SPP responses are agreeing with a self-deprecating assessment FPP (e.g. 'Yeah well, you're perhaps not the best in sports.') and accepting a compliment (e.g. 'Thank you, it was just pure luck.'). which display features of dispreferred actions. In her analysis of conflicting preferences in compliment sequences, Pomerantz (1978) remarks that 'instances of actual compliment responses display a sensitivity to these potentially incompatible sets of constraints' (p.92). The concurrent operation of two sets of preferences is also found in the construction of agreeing and disagreeing responses in SBA group interactions. This issue will be explored in detail below (Section 4.2.3).

A note on terminology: *agreement/disagreement* and *affiliation/disaffiliation*

Before we embark on the examination of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions, a note on the descriptive terminology used in the present analysis, namely *agreement/disagreement* and *affiliation/disaffiliation*, should be taken. In Conversation Analysis, *agreement/disagreement*, *alignment/disalignment*; and *affiliation/disaffiliation* are related notions used to describe conversational actions that have both similarities and differences. These sets of terms are at times used interchangeably in the research literature. In introducing a collection of articles in a special issue of the journal *Discourse Studies*, Steensig & Drew (2008) note that '[i]n most of the articles, these terms [affiliation and disaffiliation] are used more or less synonymously with terms like "(dis)alignment", "(dis)agreement" and even "(dis)preference" (p.9). Sometimes, however, fine-grained distinctions between the notions can be made, and may prove to be relevant in the analysis of particular conversational phenomena.

A notable distinction is drawn by Stivers (2008) between *alignment* and *affiliation* in storytelling sequences, now generally adopted and cited in works on affiliation (e.g. Lindstrom & Sorjonen, 2013; Steensig & Drew, 2008). According to Stivers (2008), *alignment* is structural: where the recipient ‘support[s] the progress of telling’, while *affiliation* is social: where the recipient ‘endorse[s] the teller’s perspective’ (p.32). Extending the distinction to other types of conversational actions or activities, in displaying alignment, the participant ratifies the trajectory of the action or activity underway; whereas in displaying affiliation, the participant shows support to the co-participant’s stance or point of view. Stivers (2008) offered an example where distinguishing between alignment and affiliation is analytically useful: a case where an affiliative response is not necessarily aligning. She found that, in mid-telling position, assessments provided by recipients (e.g. ‘That’s awesome!’) that are normally considered *affiliative* may be oriented to by the teller as *disaligning* with the telling-in-progress, because in doing so, the recipient is ‘treating the telling as complete when it was not’ (p.36).

According to the definitions by Steensig & Drew (2008) and Stivers (2008), *affiliation* refers to a participant’s display of a stance, a point of view or position, which converges with that of the previous speaker. Conversely, *disaffiliation* refers to a participant’s display of a stance which diverges from that of the previous speaker. Such displays of a current speaker’s stance relative to that of the previous speaker, however, were termed in Pomerantz’s (1984) seminal paper as *agreement/disagreement* in her discussion of second assessments (responses to first assessments).

In the present analysis, the two sets of terms *agreement/disagreement* and *affiliation/disaffiliation* will be used more or less synonymously. For instance, *agreement* and *affiliation* will both be taken to mean a participant’s display of taking the same stance as the previous speaker towards a given opinion or suggestion. At times, in describing a turn component where the participant’s stance is explicitly verbalized, *agreement/disagreement* may be reserved for referring to the display of converging/diverging stances using the words ‘I agree’ or ‘I disagree’. Where *affiliation/disaffiliation* is used in place of *agreement/disagreement*, it is to include other forms or expressions (e.g. assessments such as ‘That’s a great idea!’) that

indicates converging/diverging stances. Therefore, in the following excerpt, both responses by S and R will be categorized as ‘agreeing responses’. However, the second TCU of S’s turn (line 5) will be called an ‘agreement expression’, while that of R’s turn (line 6) will be termed an ‘affiliative assessment’.

(4.47) PB11: 15-22

1 K: uhm so I suggest that uh we should create (.)
 2 lotion which can moisten our skin, uh one of the
 3 function is to prevent (.) pimples caused by dry skin.
 4 Uhm:: do you think:: >do you agree<? ((turns to S))
 5 S: Mm. I can’t agree more. ((K now turns to R))
 6 R: Mm. It sounds great.

The exploration of preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses will begin with an examination of the structural patterns which characterize disagreeing responses (Section 4.2.1), before moving on to those of agreeing responses (Section 4.2.2). The reason for structuring the analysis this way relates to the findings about the turn shapes of agreeing/disagreeing responses (in particular the further talk components), which will become clear as the analysis proceeds.

4.2.1 Disagreeing responses: types and general patterns in turn design

This section provides a description of the general patterns in the structure of disagreeing response turns as occurring in the SBA group interactions. Among the group interactions in the dataset for this study, the following types of structure with respect to turn components comprising the disagreeing response can be found:

- (1) *Hesitation token*²¹ + *disaffiliative component* + *account* (+ *new idea*)
- (2) *Hesitation token* + *but...account* (for *new idea*) + *new idea*
- (3) *Affiliative component* + *but...disaffiliative component* + *account* (+ *new idea*)

The overwhelming majority of disagreeing response turns in the dataset fall into one of these patterns, with only a few exceptions where the turn structure is more complex or the sequencing of turn components is different (Note: Due to the limited

²¹ The hesitation token can be considered part of the disaffiliative component. It is separated out here to highlight its use as a turn-initial delaying device, similar to the affiliative component in pattern (3) respectively.

scope of this section, the analysis of these few exceptions is excluded). In the rest of this section, each of the three general patterns will be exemplified. Some general features in the turn design of disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions will then be noted.

(1) Hesitation token + disaffiliative component + account

The first common pattern involves disagreeing responses beginning with a hesitation token *mm* or *uhm*, typically prolonged in its production, although some pattern (1) disagreeing turns go without hesitation as a turn-initial delaying device. Immediately following the hesitation token (where present) or also turn-initial is a clausal, on-the-record disaffiliative component, such as ‘I don’t agree with you’ or ‘I don’t think so’, often mitigated with an apology. An account for disagreeing with the previous speaker is then given in the next turn component. Consider two examples of this pattern in the following excerpt:

(4.48) PB06: 36-45

- 1 R: Mm, I suggest that we should include children as our
2 target group. Because uh children love playing computer
3 games, an::d, >right<, they have large incentive to buy
4 the (.) tablet computer as (.) they can (.) when they
5 buy the- tablet computer, they can play computer games:
6 (.) uh everywhere.
7 Y: Uhm: I’m sorry. I don’t (.) agree with you, because I
8 think that (.) children might not have purchasing power.
9 I think they (.) cannot afford to buy: anything.
10 A: I think it is not a good idea because (.) tablet
11 computers’ main function is not playing games.

In lines 7-9, Y expresses disagreement with R, who in the prior turn proposes to include children as one of the target groups in the company’s promotion of the tablet computer. Y opens her turn with the hesitation token ‘uhm’ and an apology in the first TCU, prefacing the explicit disagreement expression ‘I don’t agree with you’ in the next TCU. She then accounts for her disagreement in terms of children’s lack of purchasing power. The next turn by A (lines 10-11) also constitutes a disagreeing response to R, consisting of a disaffiliative assessment ‘I think it is not a good idea’

and an account for disagreement constructed within the same TCU. It does not commence with hesitation as a delaying device, possibly because her own disagreeing response is already delayed by a turn following R's original proposal, and that her turn aligns with the immediately previous speaker, Y.

Disagreeing responses taking this structure but without any form of mitigation (e.g. hesitation, apology) are rare. Such cases have been identified in only one group interaction in the dataset. An example can be found in LA07: 64-70 (see Appendix T).

Sometimes, the speaker producing the disagreeing response also offers a new idea as an alternative after accounting for the disagreement.

(4.49) PB11: 9-17

- 1 Y: Mm. I think::: maybe we can:: (.) uh: choose tea trees
2 oil, uh because having pimple is: the main concern of
3 woman{women}, and:: it is common for pe- uh woman{women}
4 to use the: tea trees oil. Do you think that it is a
5 good idea?
6 K: Uhm: I don't think so, even though:: (.) tea tree oil
7 can treat pimples, uhm but it can only treat the- the
8 symptoms, but not the root case, uhm so I suggest that
9 uh we should create (.) lotion which can moisten our
10 skin, uh one of the function is to prevent (.) pimples
11 caused by dry skin.
12

In the extract above, after the turn-initial hesitation 'Uhm', a disaffiliative expression 'I don't think so', and an account for disagreeing with Y (lines 6-8), K proposes creating a moisturizing lotion product as an alternative to tea tree oil suggested by Y.

(2) Hesitation token + but...account (for new idea) + new idea

(4.50) PB11: 41-46

- 1 S: So, let's move on to discuss the: price. Mm:: I think:
2 one hundred and ten is the most suitable price for (.)
3 our lotion.
4 Y: Mm::: (.) but I think that uh:: the customer will be:
5 affected by the illusion that one hundred and nine
6 dollars is a lot cheaper than one thousand and ten

7 dollars. Maybe: we can sell it at (.) uh one thousand
8 and nine dollars.

Pattern (2) shares some similarity with pattern (1) in that it consists of the components of turn-initial hesitation, an account, and a new idea as an alternative proposal. However, as the above example shows, two important differences in turn shape exist. First, unlike the examples in pattern (1), an overt disaffiliative expression is absent. Second, the account (lines 4-7) is oriented towards the alternative proposal that follows (lines 7-8) rather than being constructed as an explanation for disagreeing with the previous speaker's proposal. Therefore, disagreeing responses like this constitute a separate type, in which explicit disagreement with the previous speaker is not only mitigated, but avoided altogether.

(3) *Affiliative component + but...disaffiliative component + account (+ new idea)*

Pattern (3) is often called *agreement-prefaced disagreement* (Pomerantz, 1984) taking the 'yes, but...' structure. Such response turns typically begin with a component that displays affiliation with the previous speaker's stance while followed by a disaffiliative component. The following are two examples.

(4.51) LB06: 1-21 (see Appendix T for the turns in full)

1 T: Today we discuss about uh the details of uh holding the
2 reality TV show. Uh so first of all I think uhm our
3 reality TV show should be attractive and unique. So I
4 think uh (.) uh::: (.) the reality TV show should mm (.)
5 be uhm (.) identity swap so,
6 ((several lines omitted))
7 °Do you have any idea?°
8 E: Uh yeah I agree that the genre should be uh more
9 different and should be special, but I don't think your
10 idea is really uhm (..) uh really practical because uh
11 like (.) if uh- the example is the principal °become a
12 nurse and the nurse become a principal°, uh their job is
13 totally different and I don't think that is working
14 because they really have to work (.) uh every day::
15 and,

E begins her response with an affiliative component (lines 8-9), displaying partial agreement by formulating bits of T's talk (lines 2-3) that she concurs. This is followed by a disaffiliative assessment (lines 9-10) prefaced with 'but', and an elaborate account in lines 10-14 incorporating the same example that T has used. Again, in some cases, the disagreeing participant also offers a new idea as an alternative proposal (e.g. PB10: 178-190).

Sometimes, the disagreeing response is prefaced with a weak affiliative component, consisting of an acknowledgement (e.g. 'I see what you mean'). With acknowledgement tokens or expressions, the participant claims only receipt and understanding of the prior talk, displaying even weaker affiliation with the previous speaker than when using agreement tokens and expressions as prefaces to disagreement (e.g. PA13: 73-79).

Turn design features of disagreeing responses

On examining the various types of structures characterizing disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions, some general patterns in their turn design can be identified. Overall, disagreeing responses in the group interactions tend to take dispreferred turn shapes. Three features are noteworthy. Firstly, disagreement is overwhelmingly delayed and mitigated (except in LA07). Disagreeing turns often begin with hesitation tokens and are sometimes prefaced by affiliative or acknowledging components. The production of overt disaffiliative components, if present, are therefore delayed until further into the turn. Secondly, they are often mitigated through hedging or apologies. A third notable feature, which will form a crucial part of the discussion in the rest of this chapter and the next, is that disagreeing responses almost invariably come with an account. This is where the participant incorporates and topicalizes aspects of the previous speaker's idea in their own turn, explaining the grounds for disagreeing. Its placement in the same TCU as the disaffiliative expression in some cases also reflects the participants' orientation to the account component as an integral part of the disagreeing response. Lastly, the disagreeing speaker's own new idea is often proffered as an alternative proposal, although they are always constructed in a separate TCU, and are sometimes absent in the turn.

4.2.2 Agreeing responses: Types and general patterns in turn design

Next, we turn to the structure of agreeing responses in the SBA group interactions. The following types of structure in terms of turn components comprising the agreeing responses have been identified in the analysis:

- (1) *Affiliative component*
- (2) *Affiliative component + new idea / new topic*
- (3) *Affiliative component + partial repetition / formulation + new idea*
- (4) *Affiliative component + elaboration*
- (5) *Affiliative component + account (+ new idea)*

Typically, agreeing responses in the group interactions have a turn-initial affiliative component, which can be an agreement token (e.g. *mm, yes/yeah*), a clausal agreement expression (e.g. ‘I agree (with you)’), an affiliative assessment (e.g. ‘It sounds great’), or a combination of two or more of these items. Overwhelmingly, the affiliative component is followed by further talk in the same turn. The agreeing responses are classified into different types according to the nature of the further talk that follows the affiliative component, in particular whether and how (much) the current speaker refers back to the previous speaker’s idea before moving on to deliver their own or to change topics. In line with disagreeing responses, most of the agreeing responses found in the data conform to one of the above six patterns, with a few exceptions where the response turns take more complex structures and the turn components are sequenced differently. The present analysis will not discuss these cases individually due to the limited scope of this section. Each of the six general patterns will now be exemplified.

(1) *Affiliative component*

(4.52) PB11: 15-19

- 1 K: uhm so I suggest that uh we should create (.)
2 lotion which can moisten our skin, uh one of the
3 function is to prevent (.) pimples caused by dry skin.
4 Uhm:: do you think:: >do you agree<? ((turns to S))
5 S: Mm. I can’t agree more. ((K now turns to R))

As the above example shows, an agreeing response can minimally consist of an affiliative component alone, in this case an acknowledgement token ‘mm’ and the clausal agreement expression ‘I can’t agree more’. This is produced by S as the answer SPP to K’s reformulated question FPP ‘do you agree?’ (line 4) that was addressed to her. However, it should be noted that response turns ending with a clausal affiliative expression without any further talk are rare in the data. Brief agreeing responses do occur occasionally, mostly involving monosyllabic agreement tokens (e.g. *yes/yeah*) or emphatic acknowledgement tokens (e.g. *mm!*). These are characteristic of choral concurring responses by two or more participants (e.g. PB11, lines 57-58).

(2) Affiliative component + new idea / new topic

Agreeing responses taking this second pattern begin with an affiliative component, followed by the participant delivering a new idea on the same topic as the previous speaker’s talk or initiating a new topic in the rest of the turn.

(4.53) PA05: 58-64

- 1 S: It’s hard for Anna to- and Miss Colen{Coleman} to
 2 (.) adapt themself into a new environment and (.) into a
 3 new commuty{community}.
- 4 K: Yes. You are right. I think: the: other problems they
 5 may have to face is the working difficulties.

Lines 1-3 is part of a turn by S in which she describes one of the problems the two main characters of the movie would have to face after exchanging their bodies. K’s response turn begins with the affiliative component ‘Yes. You are right.’ (line 4). She then moves on to deliver a new idea on the same topic – ‘other problems’ facing the two characters related to their job or studies (lines 4-5). An example of a topic shift in the further talk following the affiliative component is found in PB11: 19-29.

(3) Affiliative component + partial repetition / formulation + new idea

For agreeing responses taking pattern (3), the same-turn further talk following the affiliative component includes a partial repetition or formulation of the previous speaker’s talk. The partial repetition of previous speaker talk is typically embedded

in the first clause of a complex sentence, constructed as GIVEN information, while the current speaker's own idea is delivered in the second clause as NEW information. Consider the following example:

(4.54) PA08: 51-57

1 S: And also, uhm <Mrs> Coleman and Anna will face (.)
2 will feel embarrassed as they have to: (.) kiss or hug
3 another man that (.) not their lover. It is quite
4 embarrassed. Right?
5 R: Ye:s. Apart from: feeling embarrassed, uh- .h I think::
6 they may: (.) uh feel desperate (..) uh as they cannot
7 chan- exchange into the right body f:orever.

In line 5, R begins her response turn with the slightly prolonged agreement token 'yes', produced as the SPP to S's turn-final question 'Right?'. The rest of the turn is a complex sentence beginning with the connective 'apart from', where she incorporates the previous speaker's words 'feel[ing] embarrassed' in the first clause (line 5), before introducing her own idea of the movie characters 'feeling desperate' in the second clause (lines 5-6).

The current speaker might also formulate the previous speaker's idea, giving a recap of the gist of the previous speaker's talk 'in other words' (see Section 5.2 for a detailed discussion of formulations of prior speaker talk). This is usually done after an initial affiliative display and before moving on to deliver the current speaker's own idea. For example:

(4.55) PA08: 45-51

1 Y: >And also I think< Anna will feel upset, and (.)
2 it is becaus:::e (.) uh::: (.) she change[d] from a
3 younger girl- to: a: into a old woman, uh: when: she
4 look at the mirror, she will find that her face is so
5 old.
6 S: Yeah. It is unacceptable for a young girl to change to
7 an old woman at a sudden; And also,

Following the agreement token 'yes', S reformulates Y's explanation (lines 2-5) of why Anna would feel upset using the assessment 'It is unacceptable for a young girl to change to an old woman at a sudden' (line 6).

(4) Affiliative component + elaboration

Agreeing responses in pattern (4), like those in pattern (3), refer back to the previous speaker's idea following the turn-initial affiliative component. But instead of partially repeating the previous speaker's ideas or formulating them 'in other words', the participant develops on the same idea by means of giving additional arguments or examples, or expanding the idea with more details. For example:

(4.56) LB05: 86-94

1 L: So I think writing a letter to each other is more:
2 effective way to (..) to know each other more: and, they
3 can share their own thought, and::, they can:: (..) know
4 each other ((looks towards R and S)) more deeply.
5 R: I think writing a- letter to: each other is a quite-
6 good- method. And I think uhm parents can: talk abou-
7 can write something about uhm (.) the: (1.8) nowadays
8 the singers, talk something .h uhm their children maybe
9 is- uh: related, just like (.) uh talking (...) Twins,
10 just like that, yes.

Following an affiliative assessment (lines 5-6), R expands on previous speaker L's idea of writing letters to improve communication between family members by suggesting topics to write about (lines 6-10), rather than introduce a brand new idea or suggestion (see PB11: 131-142 for another example).

(5) Affiliative component + account (+ new idea)

Finally, we turn to a type of agreeing response frequently found in the data. This type of agreeing response consists of an affiliative component followed by an account, where the participant explains their reasons for agreeing with the previous speaker. Consider a first example:

(4.57) PB10: 12-19

1 H: Uhm:: I think the most efficient way is to:
2 advertise, maybe through different kinds of uhm (.)
3 medias, and what do you think? ((turns to V))

4 V: Mm: (.) I think: advertisement is great, because the
5 covera-ge of the advertisements is extensive, as we can
6 see advertisements through: (.) television,=
7 E: Mm. ((nods))
8 V: =the Internet, and: in the magazines.

V's response in lines 4-8 constitutes the SPP answer to H's question (line 3) seeking her opinion, and displays affiliation with H through a positive assessment (line 4). The account that follows (lines 4-8) orients to the assessment 'advertisement is great' that expresses her affiliative stance towards H's proposal, and further develop the idea of advertising through 'different kinds of media' (lines 2-3) by providing examples of such media (lines 6 and 8).

In terms of structural preference in everyday conversation (to be discussed in greater detail in 4.2.3), accounts are typically a turn design feature of dispreferred actions (disagreement in this case) rather than preferred actions (agreement in this case). Here, V's affiliative response that includes an account can be justified in part by H's question in the prior turn, which sequentially projects an answer that explicates the recipient's view. However, participants at times orient to the account as a necessary component in the construction of their agreeing responses, regardless of whether the previous speaker has solicited explication of their opinion explicitly through a question.

(4.58) PB06: 6-12

1 D: And I think the young professionals or teenagers
2 can be one of our target groups. Uh it's because I
3 thin:k (.) uh it's common- among the teenagers, and,
4 it's not difficult for us to see the teenagers holding
5 high-tech products in the MTR.
6 A: I agree with you.=Teenagers love (.) convenience and 3D-
7 products. ((gaze turns from D to Y))

In this example, student A's agreeing response is not sequentially an answer SPP but follows the previous speaker's own account (lines 2-5) for his proposal to target the tablet computer product to teenagers. The account is not explicitly marked as such with a connective (e.g. 'because'). However, in latching the account onto the

first TCU that houses the turn-initial agreement expression ‘I agree with you’, student A projects further talk explaining her agreement as forthcoming. She therefore displays an orientation towards the account being a necessary turn component.

Interestingly, in the data, latching only seems to occur between ‘I agree with you’ and the account that follows. It does not seem to occur between turn-initial affiliative components and other types of further talk in patterns (2) – (4), or with agreement tokens and other affiliative expressions other than ‘I agree with you’. A more detailed discussion on this phenomenon, with reference to an assessment-related preference and the emergence of a local interactional norm governing the use of ‘I agree with you’ in group speaking examinations in Hong Kong, will be provided in Sections 4.2.3-4.2.5.

Similar to pattern (4), in agreeing responses with an account component, a considerable proportion of the response turn is contingent on and oriented towards the previous speaker’s contribution. Occasionally, the participant will introduce a new idea or suggestion of their own following the account for agreement (e.g. PB06: 82-95).

Turn design features of agreeing responses

On examining the structure of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions, a somewhat curious pattern emerges. While disagreeing responses almost invariably assume the turn shapes of dispreferred actions, some agreeing responses take the turn shapes of preferred actions while others exhibit features of dispreferred actions. Here, I briefly outline some turn design features that characterize agreeing responses in the data.

Firstly, many agreeing responses are characterized by same-turn further talk following the turn-initial affiliative component. Notable exceptions are pattern (1) responses and choral concurring responses by two or more participants.

Secondly, some agreeing responses expand the ongoing sequence with more talk on the previous speaker’s idea in the same turn. Using this as a criterion for classification, patterns (1) to (5) can be grouped under two categories:

(I) Agreement without further talk referring back to previous speaker's contribution

(1) – Affiliative component

(2) – Affiliative component + new idea / new topic

(II) Agreement with further talk referring back to previous speaker's contribution

(3) – Affiliative component + partial repetition / formulation + new idea

(4) – Affiliative component + elaboration

(5) – Affiliative component + account (+ new idea)

For patterns (1) and (2), there is no further talk on the previous speaker's idea following the affiliative component. For agreeing responses in pattern (2), a new sequence or even a new topic is initiated in the same turn. However, for patterns (3) – (5), the response turn is expanded with further topical talk referring back to the previous speaker's idea. A new sequence or topic may be initiated within the same turn as the participant moves on to deliver their own idea, but this is deferred to later in the turn. Insofar as preferred responses are typically brief, the extended response is likely to be attributable to factors or operations other than structural preferences with regard to agreeing/disagreeing responses.

Finally, perhaps the most curious feature observed is that agreeing responses in pattern (5) come with an account in which the participant provides an explanation for agreeing with the previous speaker. More striking is the fact that, in some cases, the account is latched onto the affiliative component, suggesting the participant's orientation to a pressing necessity for explaining why they agree. Agreeing responses are typically preferred actions except in self-deprecation and compliment sequences (Pomerantz, 1978, 1984), while accounts are typically a feature of dispreferred actions, serving as a delaying device and reflecting participants' orientation to such actions as accountable. Their invocation in agreeing responses, as well as some participants' displayed orientation to their necessity in these typically preferred actions, seems to suggest another set of preferences in operation. This is the topic for discussion in the next section.

4.2.3 Structural preference vs. assessment-related preference

In 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, we had an overview of the structure of disagreeing and agreeing responses in SBA group interactions, with particular reference to the various types of turn components making up the response turns. We have also begun to look at the preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses in terms of their turn shapes. It was noted that disagreeing responses, not surprisingly, generally take dispreferred turn shapes. They are typically delayed, mitigated, and include an account for disagreeing. However, the patterns of agreeing responses display more diversity, with some taking the turn shapes of preferred actions while others exhibit features of dispreferreds. In particular, the analysis found that some agreeing responses, like disagreeing responses, have an account component following the agreement token or expression. Moreover, in certain productions, the participant latches the account onto the affiliative component, displaying an orientation towards the necessity of the account as part of the response turn.

The importance that participants accord to the account as a component of agreeing responses is even more manifest in the following two cases, in which the sequential placement or relevance of the account appears anomalous.

(4.59) PB06: 1-24

1 ((Timer beeps))
2 D: Good afternoon everyone ((looks towards the camera)).
3 We're here today to discuss about ((looks at Y)) how to
4 promote our existing ((looks at camera)) product[k] (.)
5 uh the tablet computer. Uh why don't we start by talking
6 about the target groups of our product? And I think the
7 young professionals or teenagers can be one of our
8 target groups. Uh it's because I thin:k (.) uh it's
9 common- among the teenagers, and, it's not difficult for
10 us to see the teenagers holding high-tech products in
11 the MTR.
12 A: I agree with you.=Teenagers love (.) convenience and 3D-
13 products. ((gaze turns from D to Y))
14 Y: Mm. I::: also agree with you because teenagers love
15 electro:nic: (.) products. And:: also I think mainland
16 visitors can also be:: our target group.

17 Becau::se in mainland there:: are lots of fake products.
 18 (.) I think they::: deserve >they may deserve to< buy:::
 19 (.) genuine products.
 20 R: Yes. I agree with you. As uh:: mainland (.) people are
 21 very rich ((looking down)), uh: they always: (.) come to
 22 Hong Kong and buy some new products. Uh especially the
 23 new: (.) uh:: the electronics products.

This is an extended excerpt of one of the examples for pattern (6) in 4.2.2, where the participants discuss the first topic, the target group of their product promotion. It is not difficult to note that all three response turns following D's opening turn by A, Y, R respectively are agreeing responses that include an account (lines 12-13, 14-15, 20-23).

If we consider together the turn shapes and the sequential placement of A and Y's responses, the fact that that both A and Y give an account for agreeing with D seems odd in terms of structural preference. Neither of the two responses is an SPP answer to an opinion-seeking question such as 'What do you think?' (cf. examples in 4.2.2), which may otherwise project and warrant an extended response explicating why one agrees/disagrees. Particularly striking is that, following A expressing agreement with D and explaining for her agreement, Y gives another account following her agreement expression, as if her also agreeing with D's proposal requires justification. Ironically, Y's account 'teenagers love electronic products' (lines 14-15) appears somewhat superfluous, contributing little to the argument for having teenagers as the target group for their product promotion: D has already mentioned that electronic products are commonly owned among teenagers (lines 9-11), and A in the immediately prior turn asserts that teenagers 'love' such products (lines 12-13). On the other hand, in both agreeing responses, the account is produced in the same TCU as the agreement component (in Y's turn) or latched onto it (in A's turn). This seems to indicate that the participants treat the account as a crucial component in the construction of their agreeing responses. Consider another example:

(4.60) PB10: 11-29

1 H: [Mm:: (.) maybe let's come up with the promotion:
 2 strategies. Uhm:: I think the most efficient way is to:

3 advertise, maybe through different kinds of uhm (.)
4 medias, and what do you think? ((turns to V))
5 V: Mm: (.) I think: advertisement is great, because the
6 covera-ge of the advertisements is extensive, as we can
7 see advertisements through: (.) television,=
8 E: Mm. ((nods))
9 V: =the Internet, and: in the magazines.
10 E: Yeah. I agree. Uhm:: and:: (.) advertisements related to
11 electronic products, such as uh our ce- smart phones can
12 definitely attracts the office workers, because uh (.)
13 they need something special to help them to uh (.) to
14 assist their work, their office work and, uh like (.) we
15 have offered the (..) we can: let them to use the cell
16 phones to make their own schedules, to make alterations
17 on their files and different other things. So it will be
18 very convenient for them to: (.) Yah. To (.) to assist
19 their work. And we c- should include these (.) special
20 features in: the advertisements.

Similar to the above example, in this interaction, a participant's (H) proposal is followed by two co-participants' (V and E) affiliative responses, both including an account component. Note that E's talk in lines 12-19 (prefaced by 'because') follows and explains her claim 'advertisements related to electronic products... can definitely attracts [*sic*] the office workers' (lines 10-12), and can therefore also be heard as an account for her agreement with H (and V). However, it does not constitute a relevant or valid explanation. E's talk in lines 12-19 explicates several ways in which their smartphone product is important or beneficial to office workers, and is therefore more oriented to her assertion in the final TCU: *what* should be advertised as the special features of their cell phone product. It does little as an account for *why* advertising would be an effective promotional strategy for their product. In other words, this stretch of talk by E does not align closely with the trajectory of the previous speakers' (H and V) talk, but delivers her own ideas on another topic: 'special features of the product'. It is nonetheless framed as an account for her affiliative stance with the previous speakers that advertising is an effective promotional strategy. From the way in which E frames her 'off-topic' talk, we once

again see evidence of participants' orientation to the account being a necessary component of an agreeing response.

From the turn design features generalized in Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 and the above examples, it is increasingly apparent that something other than structural preference is also guiding student-candidates' construction of their agreeing/disagreeing responses.

Assessment-related preference

I propose that there is another set of preference in concurrent operation with the structural preferences governing agreeing and disagreeing responses, which I call *assessment-related preference*. It is a preference for constructing a response as contingent on previous speaker contribution. In other words, there is a preference for a response to contain further talk that incorporates the previous speaker's contribution (e.g. formulation, elaboration, account) following the turn-initial affiliative/disaffiliative components. Note that this preference, as will be explicated shortly, is socially and institutionally constituted, and is related to the normative interactional conduct in this specific assessment context. Therefore, like structural preferences, the assessment-related preference described here is not referring to a psychological phenomenon concerning personal desires. Such assessment-related preference is manifest in students' discourse in the assessed interactions (shown above). The following provides further evidence of this preference from participants' meta-discursive comments in the stimulated recall interviews.

Students' perspectives

In the two interview excerpts below, the students reported a kind of assessment-preferred turn design:

(4.61) PB14 Student Interview

S: We talked about this when designing each of our turns. **We would first link to what the previous speaker has said before going on to propose our own idea**, so that there is a stronger link between the content ideas across the two turns.

(4.62) LB00 Student Interview

Res: Do you think you are being yourself in SBA Group Interaction?

Y: I think it's very different. First of all, I don't feel comfortable talking in English. It's just painful. And then, **normally when I talk to others, I wouldn't adhere so strictly to the particular organization of first responding to others before going on to talk about one's own ideas.**

In both excerpts, the students reported that they would format their response turns in such a way that they would first make reference to the previous speaker's idea, then introduce their own. Note that the assessed interactions in School P are typically pre-scripted, whereas those in School L are not. However, the second excerpt yields evidence that even in non-pre-scripted interactions where response turns are spontaneously constructed in real time, some students still design their turns in particular ways so as to foreground their current talk's contingency on previous speaker contribution. Interestingly, Y's comment also shows his awareness of such turn design being divergent from what he perceives as normative interactional conduct in everyday conversation.

In the following episode of stimulated recall, the students mentioned a similar turn design, and again displayed an orientation towards foregrounding their responses' contingency on previous speaker contribution. The response turn that the group was laughing at and commenting on is first shown below:

(4.63) PB10: 51-52

V: This is great. Uhm but, I think we should add something more.....

(4.64) PB10 Student Interview

- 1 Res: Why are you guys laughing here?
- 2 ((Students laugh))
- 3 H: Because it appears natural, like "this is great!" ((imitating native speaker)).
- 4 This was deliberately added into the turn.
- 5 Res: Right, okay. And why was this added?
- 6 H: **Because [V] somehow needs to agree with her** [the previous speaker]
- 7 E: **Otherwise, it would sound like you didn't do much *interpretation*** [of the
- 8 previous speaker's talk]
- 9 V: **It would sound like I didn't respond to her, so I need to respond a little bit.**
- 10 Res: But according to the script, you were supposed to talk about the next *point*?
- 11 V: Yes.

As seen in the interview excerpt, the students were explaining why they pre-scripted V's response turn with an *Agree...but + addition* structure (see Section 4.2.1), with the turn-initial affiliative component 'this is great!' being 'deliberately added into the

turn' (line 4) before V makes an additional suggestion further into the turn. All three students (H, E, and V) made either explicit or implicit reference to some expected interactional conduct of 'agreeing' with (H, line 6) or 'responding' to (V, line 8) the previous speaker, or 'interpreting' (E, line 7) their talk. In other words, the students' perceived importance of linking their own talk to the previous speaker's contribution is manifest.

Teachers' perspectives

Not surprisingly, the ways in which students design their response turns as reported in the interviews align with their teacher-raters' expectations. As the following teacher interview excerpts show, a response turn's contingency on previous speaker contribution is considered an important criterion in rating the quality of the response. In the excerpt below, when asked during the stimulated recall to comment on a particular segment in the interaction LB00, Miss Chau contrasted the agreeing responses produced by two students, L and A:

(4.65) LB00 Teacher Interview

L is weaker [than another group member, T], but would *try to, like, somehow, come up with* things like "your views are similar" or "I agree with you both". I would say the *impression* he gives you is *positive*. Although he's *struggling*, you can see that he **makes an effort to summarize what he has heard from others, to do a little bit of conclusion before moving on.**

A is more fluent than him [L], but A is like "oh, I think you both are right, but actually I think...". **So he doesn't really respond to them, and moves on to talk about his own ideas.**

Evident in the comment is the teacher-rater's noticing about the students' differential performance in different assessment criteria. On the one hand, L is considered weaker in terms of the 'mechanical aspects' of English proficiency such as fluency. On the other hand, his turn design of summarizing the previous speakers' ideas before delivering his own ideas is positively evaluated by the teacher-rater. Miss Chau's comment on A suggests that a response that makes minimal reference to the previous speaker's ideas but focuses on the participant's own ideas would be perceived as a mediocre response. It is worth pointing out that this was a free, unprompted comment offered by Miss Chau after watching a segment of the

interaction, not elicited by a researcher's question on specific aspects of the interaction. The very fact that the teacher-rater picked up on the responses' contingency on previous speaker contribution suggests that this is a salient feature (see May, 2011) to her in the rating process. Consider another teacher-rater's comment:

(4.66) School P, Part B, TR-C Teacher Interview

Because in a lot of group *discussion* [assessments] like this, there's very often what I call '*turn-taking*'. It doesn't mean just going *one two three four* [around the table], but **the fact that very often they wait till the other has delivered a whole lot of *information* before responding to that, and only very briefly, and then they would *jump* to another point.**

Notice how 'turn-taking', a term that refers to the basic interactional mechanism of speaker change in Conversation Analysis, takes on a pejorative sense in the meta-discourse on SBA group interactions between the teacher-raters and the students (in School P at least). A response turn that makes little reference to previous speaker contribution and focuses on the participant's own ideas is perceived as part of what constitutes 'mechanical turn-taking', where participants have little mutual engagement with each other's contribution in the talk exchange. Thus, we see a kind of negative evidence that whether a student makes substantial reference to the previous speaker's ideas before going on to deliver their own is considered an important criterion by teacher-raters.

From the above interview comments, it is evident that the teacher-raters seek evidence in the further talk following the turn-initial (dis)agreement component whether a student has understood what the previous speakers have said and is genuinely agreeing/disagreeing with them. Agreeing/disagreeing expressions alone, on the other hand, do not amount to adequate evidence of the student's understanding of the prior talk.

Concurrent preferences and their ranking

The analysis of the test discourse, together with participants' meta-discursive comments from stimulated recall interviews, suggests the simultaneous operation of two sets of preferences in the construction of agreeing/disagreeing responses. First, there is a structural preference for agreement (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987) such

that agreeing responses typically take preferred turn shapes whilst disagreeing responses take dispreferred turn shapes. Second, there is an assessment-related preference for foregrounding a response turn's contingency on previous speaker contribution. The present analysis preliminarily suggests that the assessment-related preference outranks the structural preference in the group interactions.

The concurrent operation of the two sets of preferences, as well as their ranking relative to one another, is manifested in the turn shapes of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the SBA group interactions. As outlined earlier in this section, disagreeing responses typically include an account, mostly oriented to and following the disaffiliative component (see patterns (1) – (3) in Section 4.2.1). Disagreeing turns constructed without an account were very rare in the data. Other turn design features of dispreferred actions include mitigation and delaying devices such as hesitation tokens, apologies, and agreement prefaces.

Agreeing responses in everyday conversation would not typically include an account, in line with the structural preference for agreement, but in many cases among the SBA group interactions, they do. In addition, they are occasionally formatted in ways that reflect the participants' orientation to their necessity in the agreeing responses. I argue that this is the consequence of a locally relevant assessment-related preference outranking the structural preference. Apart from participants' meta-discursive comments examined earlier, agreeing responses that include formulation or elaboration of the previous speaker's talk (patterns (4) and (5) in 4.2.2) lend further support to the assessment-related preference that privileges responses which highlight their contingency on previous speaker contribution.

Therefore, the overall pattern is that disagreeing responses satisfy both sets of preferences, whereas agreeing responses satisfy the assessment-related preference at the expense of not always satisfying the structural preference for agreement. The following segment and its corresponding stimulated recall data will illustrate how the two sets of preferences play out in a group interaction. Note that this was a part of the assessed interaction that was carried out 'spontaneously' with turn-taking being locally managed, since the students did not have enough time to pre-script this part of the interaction, as they reported in the interview.

(4.67) PB11: 147-163

1 S: Mm! That's a great price, suitable price for us. And
2 also maybe we can post our advertisement
3 \\on the magazine, right?
4 \\((looks at Y))
5 Y: ↑Ye:s ((nodding))
6 (..) ((K turns to look at Y))
7 Y: Uhuh huh ((bursts into laughter))
8 R: [Yes. .hh
9 K: [Mm::! Because uh: (.) uhm: manie:s{many} office lady
10 have the habit (.) that to read:: some: (.) fashion:
11 magazines uhm (.) f- uh every week, so: they will: uh:
12 (.) they can:: expose >we can expose< our products to
13 them (.) by: uh: (.) posting our advert- advertisement
14 on some magazines.
15 \\>Do you agree<?
16 \\((turns to Y and smiles))
17 (..)
18 Y: ((nodding)) Ye::s. Uh:: (.) maybe we can mos- move on to
19 the: phase that we can sell the product.

In lines 2-4, S makes a proposal of advertising their product in magazines. Towards the end of her turn, she looks at Y and then issues an opinion-seeking question 'right?'. Y answers with an emphatic 'yes' (line 5) accompanied with nodding, displaying strong agreement with S's proposal. However, a silence ensues (line 6), during which K turns to look at Y, and Y bursts into laughter in line 7. In terms of structural preference, Y's simple 'yes' is an unremarkable preferred response to the previous speaker's (S) question, 'right?', an FPP designed to prefer an agreeing SPP. Ancillary evidence to how this is considered a perfectly 'natural' and sensible response by the participant herself is found in Y's meta-discursive comment during stimulated recall. Consider lines 5-6 and line 9 of the interview extract below:

(4.68) PB11 Student Interview

1 ((after Y's single word response 'yes'))
2 Res: Why laugh?
3 Y: I answered with 'yes' and they were then laughing.
4 Res: But you didn't say anything else after the 'yes'?

- 5 Y: She ((referring to S)) only asked me [signaled to me] to say yes and nod!
6 So I did and went 'yeeeeees', like this.
7 Res: So it wasn't planned that you had something else to say following that 'yes'.
8 S: It was made-up [on the spot].
9 Y: She looked at me as she asked the question, so I said yes.
10 Res: ((to K)) And then when it's your turn, the response was just created on the
11 spot?
12 K: Yes.

As Y's comment shows, she treats S's 'right?' along with the gaze as an invitation for an agreeing response from her, and *accordingly* produces such a response ('so I said yes', line 9). Both Y's discourse (up to this point) and meta-discursive comment suggest that her agreeing response is produced in a 'routine' manner and unremarkable, in line with the preference organization in everyday conversation. Nevertheless, in the context of the interaction being an assessment, such a brief response might constitute a problematic turn.

Indeed, Y's agreeing response (line 5) is oriented to by co-participants as incomplete and its brevity as problematic. In line 6, a gap follows Y's brief 'yes' where no other participant takes over. K looks at Y, seemingly anticipating her to continue with further talk in her turn. It is only later, on registering that Y is not continuing, that K takes over (line 9). Possibly recognizing the co-participant's treatment of her turn as incomplete, Y bursts into laughter herself (line 7), thus also orienting to her brief agreeing response as problematic. Y's laughter, then, might constitute a display of embarrassment on her part for taking over the floor while producing a turn with an agreement token only and no further talk. Again, corroborating evidence to participants' orientation to Y's brief 'yes' response as problematic is available in the stimulated recall, where the group watching the video recording burst into laughter at the point when Y produces the single-word agreeing response. Therefore, we can see how the structural preference for agreement is not the only guiding principle for the interactive performance of 'doing agreeing' here.

Continuing with the episode, the other two participants, R and K, then both come in with an affiliative response in overlap with one another (lines 8-9). After R drops out, K in the rest of her turn provides an account for agreeing with S, citing how this strategy of advertising on magazines is relevant to their target group (lines 9-11) and how it could benefit their product promotion (lines 11-14). That K

provides an account for agreeing with S here is remarkable, considering its sequential placement now ‘delayed’ a few turns following S’s FPP, and the available alternative of also providing a brief agreeing response and moving on to another idea. Her choice of giving an account, as well as dedicating most of her turn to it, seems to reflect her orientation to its necessity at this juncture in the interaction.

The necessity for such an account might have arisen from the fact that no other participant has produced a response that addresses S’s proposal in any detail and depth. However, with the brief agreeing responses (Y’s in line 5 and perhaps R in line 8) constructed in preferred turn shapes, the talk seems to be taking a sequence-closing trajectory. K’s turn then serves to extend the otherwise closing sequence (which might also render S’s proposal of advertising in magazines an insufficiently discussed topic) by offering also a preferred, agreeing response but one with an account, as an expansion. Meanwhile, she is able to highlight her response’s contingency on the contribution by the previous speaker, S.

(4.69) PB11: 147-163 (partially reproduced)

12 K: ((3 lines omitted))
 13 >we can expose< our products to them (.) by: uh: (.)
 14 posting our advert- advertisement on some magazines.
 15 \\>Do you agree<?
 16 \\((turns to Y and smiles))
 17 (...)
 18 Y: ((nodding)) Ye::s. Uh:: (.) maybe we can mos- move on to
 19 the: phase that we can sell the product.

A final noteworthy point concerns Y’s response in lines 18-19. After K has delivered her account for agreeing with S and supporting the use of magazine advertisements in their promotion, she issues a question ‘do you agree’ (line 15), again selecting Y as the recipient (therefore the next speaker) via non-verbal cues. K might have done this in order to give another opportunity for Y to take a substantial turn to speak. Indeed, Y does so from line 18 onwards. However, her response takes pattern (2) of agreeing responses (see 4.2.2), with a turn-initial affiliative ‘yes’ (line 18) followed by a shift in topic in the talk that follows (lines 18-19). Notably, her agreeing response takes a preferred turn shape – brief, and without an account.

Such a response with only a brief component referring to previous speaker talk, reminiscent of her last agreeing response (line 5), is sequentially justified. For one thing, K's question FPP (line 15), like the one by S (line 3), is designed to prefer an agreeing SPP. For another, K in the last turn has just provided an account warranting S's proposal. If Y's response had also been oriented to S's proposal, it would have been sequentially odd for Y's agreeing response to include another account. In terms of structural preference, therefore, Y is providing an unremarkable, brief, and direct preferred response. Her topic shift in the further talk also aligns with the sequence-closing nature of preferred responses. What remains curious, however, is how Y's interactional competence would be interpreted by the teacher-rater, on giving two agreeing responses in a row that do not make elaborate reference to the previous speaker's ideas. We have noted how teacher-raters evaluate students' responses in terms of their displayed contingency on previous speaker contribution, so Y's responses in this segment, constructed in line with the structural preference, could be interpreted (and rated) to her disadvantage. This, however, remains conjectural, as the teacher-rater did not comment on the interactional aspects of this segment in the stimulated recall.

With this final example, we can see how the structural preference for agreement in everyday conversation and the assessment-related preference for foregrounding a response's contingency on previous speaker contribution are in concurrent operation in the SBA group interactions. Evidently, they occasionally come into conflict with one another, most manifested in the construction of agreeing responses. From the turn shapes of agreeing and disagreeing responses we have examined thus far, we can see how the assessment-related preference sometimes outranks the structural preference, and participants orient to satisfying the assessment-related preference at the expense of not satisfying the structural preference.

4.2.4 The diverse uses of 'I agree with you' and its variants

How did the expectation of having to account for one's agreement with the previous speaker, otherwise incongruent with the structural preference for agreement in ordinary conversation, come into being? In this section, we explore how student-

candidates in the SBA group interactions use ‘I agree with you’ and similar formulaic expressions to accomplish a range of interactional functions. I argue that it is the diversity of their uses enacted by participants that has bleached these expressions’ primary affiliative import, which has in turn contributed to the emergence of a local interactional norm where agreeing with an account is preferred.

‘I agree with you’ is notoriously known as an overused formulaic expression epidemic among student-candidates in group speaking examinations in Hong Kong. Its perfunctory and inappropriate use has been recurrently lamented in examination reports (e.g. HKEAA, 2013b), noted in published research articles (e.g. Luk, 2010), and even reported in the news media (“Overuse of I agree with you”, 2012). Not surprisingly, teacher-raters interviewed in this study also displayed a critical stance towards its use by student-candidates (see Section 4.2.5). In the following, we will examine several uses of ‘I agree with you’ and similar formulaic agreement expressions (e.g. ‘I totally agree with you’, ‘I can’t agree more’) or assessments (e.g. ‘That’s a good idea’, ‘It sounds great’) in the turn-initial affiliative component, as identified in the test discourse and stimulated recall data.

As a marker of (genuine) agreement

The primary interactional function of ‘I agree with you’, as the form itself suggests, is to display affiliation with a previous speaker, indicating that the current speaker is taking the same stance as the previous speaker on some issue. Consider the following example:

(4.70) LA06: 130-140

((K in the immediately previous turn talks about the part of the movie she would like to change))

- 1 W: Uh yes I agree with you.=Uhm: .h I also think that
- 2 ((looks down at note card or question paper)) I uhm if
- 3 I’m uh go- I- if I’m going to change one part of the
- 4 movie ((looks at K)), I would change it- (.) this part.
- 5 Uh because (.) uh if I were: Andy, I would not uh:: give
- 6 all my toys to:: a girl that I don’t know. Uh because
- 7 uh:: the toys are:: (.) very uh important to me, and,
- 8 and to Andy. And, I think Andy will miss ((turns to O))
- 9 the toys very much=

10 O: =[Ye:s d-
 11 W: [so I think uh:: (that uh Andy should) keep all his toy
 12 (.) to °the college.°

In this turn (lines 1-9), W displays agreement with the previous speaker, K, with respect to the part of the movie they would like to change. Evidence for W genuinely agreeing with K is three-fold: Following initial display of agreement with ‘yes I agree with you’ (line 1) in the first TCU, W immediately reiterates her converging stance with K in an explicit formulation ‘I also think that... this part’ (lines 1-4). Simultaneously, she looks at K and orients her body to K (line 4), making a non-verbal display of affiliation with her. Further into the turn, W provides an account for choosing the same part of the movie to change as K. Therefore, throughout the entire turn, of which ‘I agree with you’ is a part, W displays both verbally and non-verbally her agreement with K’s opinion expressed in the previous turn.

However, among response turns commencing with ‘I agree with you’ or its variants, it is not uncommon that the authenticity of the participant’s agreement with the previous speaker is questionable. Conflicting evidence, for instance, comes from the intensity of agreement that the form of the expression encodes and the manner in which the expression is produced.

(4.71) LB05:13-18

((S in the previous turn talks about attitudes towards Internet being the reason for conflicts))

1 L: \\Yes. I agree w- with you very much.
 2 **\\((turns from S to her own note card))**
 3 An:d (.) I think because (the belief that) uh: Hong Kong
 4 is a materialist((slurred)) UHM- society, and (...)
 5 parents want their children to become uhm (.) learn more
 6 and (.) to:: earn more money (.)

If looking at and orienting one’s body position to the previous speaker is non-verbal evidence that the current speaker takes a genuine affiliative stance towards the previous speaker, then the verbal and non-verbal actions of L in this turn perhaps

yield conflicting evidence of the authenticity of her agreement with the previous speaker, S. The expression 'I agree with you very much' (line 1) indicates strong agreement. However, L turns away from S and browses her note card simultaneously as she produces the agreement component, displaying limited engagement with S, and by extension, affiliation with her.

L then moves on to deliver her own opinion on the topic (lines 3-6), arguing that parents' high expectations on their children put a lot of pressure on them and is the reason for conflicts in the family. This could mean that L treats S's idea as unproblematic and genuinely agrees with her, and is therefore closing the prior sequence with 'I agree with you very much' and initiates a new one with her own idea. Nonetheless, it could also mean that L is not engaging with S's idea (as suggested by her non-verbal actions) but is focusing on delivering her own. With limited and somewhat conflicting evidence, it is difficult (for both the analyst and the teacher-rater) to ascertain which is the case.

In the next example, the issue of authenticity of agreement arises from both the inconsistency between the agreement expression's form and manner of production, and a questionable sequential context for an agreeing response.

(4.72) PA08: 7-19

- 1 S: So:, uhm:: (.) in the movie, Mrs Colen{Coleman}
2 misunderstand that Anna was a- (.) naughty girl in the
3 school, as she always had to: (.) attend to a detention
4 class, and get a fail: (.) in the exams or even
5 homework; But actually, Mrs. Colen{Coleman} (.) doesn't
6 know that (.) Anna was- being picked on by (.) his- (.)
7 by her English teacher, so: she cannot- get a: pa:ss
8 even in the homework.
9 (...)) ((R coughs))
10 J: Mm.((nods))=I can't agree more. (..) Anna wants to
11 behave well in:: (.) the school. However, one of: her:
12 classmates (.) always (.) make- (.) tricks on: (.) her.
13 So:: she cannot concentrate on: her schoolwork, and she
14 also receives (.) the unfair treatment: (.) by her:
15 English teacher. S::she's preformance{performance} is
16 not that bad, however, she- her English teacher (.)

17 always gives (..) her a very low mark. So I think it is
18 not Anna's fault.

Here, the agreement expression 'I can't agree more' (line 10) takes an exaggerated form and suggests very strong agreement. However, its manner of production again makes it dubious as expressing genuine agreement. The production of the phrase is delayed after a sizeable gap (line 9), and it is uttered with a monotonous prosody that seems to indicate disengagement or non-commitment on J's part.

Consider also the sequential context in which J's 'I can't agree more' occurs. The previous turn by S (lines 1-8) is designed in a way that it largely consists of narrative components without an overt display of the speaker's stance, and is therefore not sequentially implicative of (dis)agreement in the following turn (compare, for instance, 'So I think it is not Anna's fault' (lines 17-18) at the end of J's turn). The rather odd sequential placement of a strong agreement, together with the incongruence between the form of the expression and its manner of production, therefore raises questions of whether J genuinely agrees with S to such extreme, or is merely picking the expression out of a pool of agreement 'stock phrases'.

As a turn-taking device

The above examples have revealed that 'I agree with you' and its variants may not always be used by students to express genuine agreement. Close analysis of these formulaic agreement expressions found that they are often used as a turn-taking device for taking over and holding the floor, and as a token response to the previous speaker's talk.

(a) Self-selecting and holding the floor as next speaker

The turn-taking function of 'I agree with you' and other formulaic agreement expressions as a marker of speakership incipency is manifest in cases where another turn component is latched onto the agreement expression.

(4.73) PA08: 29-30

Y: ↑Hm↓m:↑ I agree with you.=I think Anna thinks Mrs Coleman (.)
 just focus on her job and her: (.) husband,

(4.74) PA09: 75-76

Y: Mm.=I agree with you.=I- also think <they will feel> (.)
un:bearable,

In each example, the participant displays speakership incipency first with the acknowledgement token *mm* (see 4.1.5). By producing a clausal TCU ('I agree with you') without pausing, the participant is able to issue some form of confirmatory signal to other group members that s/he is taking over the floor from the previous speaker. The latching of the next TCU then projects further talk as forthcoming. Therefore, 'I agree with you' and its variants serve as one of the means (often together with the initial acknowledgement *mm* or *yes*) through which the participant self-selects as the next speaker and displays speakership incipency – that s/he is going to hold the floor.

This function of marking speakership incipency is particularly relevant in group interactions where a more spontaneously and locally managed turn-taking mechanism operates, as this means that the floor is open to any participant in the group and speaker change is relevant at any TRP – the end of a current speaker's each TCU. Consider the following two examples:

(4.75) LA06: 39-45

1 W: [(°Yes°)
2 ((turns from looking at T and looks down at note card))
3 Uhm yes I agree with you.=I also think that uh Woody is
4 my favorite (.) uh character in this film. Uh other than
5 (.) uh: loyal, uh he- he's l(h)oyal t(h)o his owner and
6 he's a (.) uhm (.) a- very:: (.) good leader, >I also
7 think that he's very brave.=Uhm because< uh (.)

(4.76) LA06: 85-90

1 O: Yes! I agree with you=I think Bar- uh I really
2 appreciate Barbie uhm because >she's very brave and
3 she's very clever to trick Ken in order to save her
4 friends<. And, uh ac↑cording to the Ken's fashion show
5 this part, uh I'm really like the background music of
6 this part yes, and I really think the soundtrack
7 contributed to the- (.) to the: movie.

Worth attention in both examples is how the participants' affiliative stance with the previous speakers is, in addition to the turn-initial agreement token 'yes', displayed two more times in elaborate, clausal components (lines 3-4 in Extract 4.75; lines 1-2 in Extract 4.76). Following the agreement token 'yes' is the formulaic 'I agree with you', and a further clausal affiliative component specifying with what the participant is agreeing. In latching this further affiliative component onto 'I agree with you', the participants seem to treat the use of 'I agree with you' (and the preceding 'yes') as incomplete or inadequate in displaying their affiliative stance. Such an orientation, in turn, suggests that the formulaic 'I agree with you' might serve a function other than expressing agreement, one of which being a turn-gaining and floor-holding device.

(b) Buying time for formulating upcoming talk

In pre-scripted interactions where speaker change is not relevant at the end of each TCU and competition for the floor is less of an issue, the turn-initial 'I agree with you' and similar formulaic expressions can serve as a turn-taking device in another way: they allow the participant to give a timely response to the previous speaker while buying time to formulate the talk in the remainder of their own turn, in particular the content delivery components where they present their own ideas on the topic.

One kind of evidence for this function of buying time is found in the students' non-verbal action of browsing their note cards during their production of the affiliative component. We have already seen one example above (Extract 4.71) where a participant shifts her gaze from the previous speaker to her own note card as she utters 'I agree with you very much'. Consider the example below where K exhibits similar non-verbal behavior:

(4.77) PB10: 119-126

((E in the previous turn proposes the promotional strategy of product placement - sponsoring their cell phones in TV dramas))

- 1 K: \\Yah! I agree \\with you.
- 2 \\((looks up)) \\((looks down at note card again))
- 3 \\I agree that this is a good way

4 \\((looks up))
5 to promote \\our smartphone. And because our smartphone
6 \\((looks down at note card))
7 can definitely facilitate (.) uhm the: communication in
8 the office, uh also it can enhances the efficiency in-
9 their work.
10 ((H starts browsing her note card from time to time))
11 Uhm: I think the- uh office- workers will be interested
12 in choosing our smartphone, an- as an useful tool to h-
13 help with their work.

As shown in lines 1-6, K alternates between looking up, orienting to co-participants, and looking down, browsing her note card. K's non-verbal actions accompanying the first few TCUs of her turn therefore illustrate how 'I agree with you', or turn-initial affiliative components in general, fulfills the dual function of giving a timely response to the previous speaker while buying the current speaker time to formulate their further talk. Here, in lines 1-2, K browses her note card while uttering 'I agree with you'. She then adds a more elaborate affiliative comment 'I agree that this is a good way to promote our smartphone' (lines 3-6), where she glances at the note card again towards the end. Like the two examples from LA06 above, the second affiliative comment appears somewhat superfluous with 'I agree with you' uttered just before. The redundancy of two affiliative components, together with K's simultaneous action of browsing her note card, lends support to her use of these components to buy time formulating her upcoming content delivery talk. Not surprisingly, K goes on to deliver her own ideas about the advantages of their smartphone product (lines 5-13), with tenuous links to E's suggestion of sponsoring smartphones in TV dramas in the prior turn.

With this example and the previously mentioned one (Extract 4.71), we can see that the first one or two TCUs in a response turn is often the site where the participant gives some form of feedback to the previous speaker while they formulate or prepare for their upcoming content delivery components. Stock phrases such as 'I agree with you', which require little processing effort in formulation and production, seem to serve such a dual purpose well. In the following, we look at a related

function of ‘I agree with you’ and other affiliative expressions as a token response to the previous speaker’s talk.

As a token response to the previous speaker’s talk

Besides their turn-taking functions of claiming and holding the floor, ‘I agree with you’ and other formulaic affiliative expressions placed in the turn-initial position also serve as ‘token responses’. They make some link to the prior turn (although deemed superficial) and mark the current talk as contingent on previous speaker contribution. Such a link is perhaps established by the fact that, through displaying an affiliative evaluative stance using ‘I agree with you’, ‘that’s a good idea’ and the like, the participant is also claiming ‘epistemic access’ to the previous speaker’s stance (Lindstrom & Sorjonen, 2013). Therefore, in saying ‘I agree’ or ‘that’s great’, the current speaker claims the ‘knowledge of that which he or she is assessing’ (Pomerantz, 1984, p.57), or in other words, having understood the previous speaker’s talk as well as the viewpoints conveyed.

Students’ perception of the necessity to highlight their responses as in some way contingent on previous speaker contribution, and their perceived potency of ‘I agree with you’ and other affiliative expressions in serving this purpose, are reflected in the stimulated recall. We have already seen an example in Section 4.2.3 where three of the four students in group PB10 meta-discursively commented that the affiliative assessment ‘this is great’ was written into the pre-scripted dialogue to give the impression that V has responded to H’s idea before delivering her own. The following interview extract also shows a candid report of students’ use of ‘I agree with you’ as a token response, forging a link between the current turn and previous speaker contribution.

(4.78) PA09 Student Interview

- 1 Res: Would you worry that, for whatever reasons, the previous speaker isn’t saying
- 2 something according to the script or what’s planned, but say something that is
- 3 improvised on the spot, would you be worried that you won’t be able to
- 4 respond accordingly, as the next speaker?
- 5 Y: No, I won’t. I’ll just talk about my own stuff [what is on the script]. ((laughs))
- 6 A: If you see her stop talking, it means her turn is over and it’s my turn now.
- 7 Res: But would you worry that what you say doesn’t seem to be responding to what
- 8 she said?

9 E: ((starts before Res finishes)) **It doesn't matter. Just add...just add an "I agree**
 10 **with you", then it's fine.**
 11 A: ((in overlap with E, laughing)) **"I agree with you"**
 12 E: **And then you link that to your own point. So there'll be a little bit of**
 13 **connection.**

In this interview segment, I asked the students about the risk of pre-scripting the assessed interaction. For instance, if one participant says something not on the script and another participant continues the next turn with the scripted lines, the response will show little relevance to the previous speaker's talk. Student E quickly offered the solution of prefacing the response turn with 'I agree with you' (lines 9-10), and claimed that it will establish some connection between the current talk and the previous speaker's contribution (lines 12-13).

As we will see from the comments by teacher-raters interviewed in this study and in the examination reports (Section 4.2.5), these efforts in using 'I agree with you' to forge a link between the current turn and previous speaker talk are futile. Nevertheless, it is precisely its use by some students and its futility that afford it the status of a *token response*, with which a participant claims to have understood and engaged in the prior talk (when s/he has not) through displaying affiliation with the previous speaker's stance.

The following example summarizes the two related functions of a turn-initial affiliative expression as a token response to the previous speaker's talk and a device for buying time to formulate one's own talk in the rest of the turn.

(4.79) PB11Mock: 6-16

1 R: Mm! ((looks down))
 2 Uh shall we: uh still continue using our: marketing
 3 strategy? Namely price, product,
 4 uh promotion and \\place;
 5 \\((R and Y look down))
 6 (...) ((R turns to Y; K looks at Y; and Y glances at
 7 them and starts talking))
 8 Y: \\It's a good idea.
 9 **\\((gaze shifts from R to note card))**
 10 Uhm maybe we'll begin with the product. Uhm:: but I
 11 think it is difficult to promote this new product. Uh

12 there are many existing: uh healthy products
13 nowadays.

In lines 2-4, R issues a yes-no question that solicits co-participants' opinion on whether to continue using their usual marketing strategy. This makes agreement/disagreement a sequentially relevant next action. After a silence (line 6) where group members negotiate through non-verbal means who the next speaker should be, Y registers R and K's eye contact signal of selecting her as next speaker, and provides a response (lines 8-13).

Sequentially, Y is still in the position to provide an answer SPP to R's question, displaying agreement/disagreement with her proposal. Meanwhile, her shift of gaze from the previous speaker R to her note card (line 9) as well as the rest of her turn (lines 10-13) suggests that she has her own ideas to deliver. Here, Y's turn-initial affiliative assessment 'It's a good idea' (line 8) allows her to accomplish both aspects of her interactional 'agenda'. On the one hand, the affiliative assessment fulfills the sequentially projected requirement (as well as the assessment-related one) of responding to R's opinion-seeking question. On the other hand, such a form of token response does not involve formulating the previous speaker's talk, and imposes less cognitive demand on the current speaker. Therefore, the production of this token response provides a space for the speaker to simultaneously prepare for the further talk in which she delivers her own ideas. Y's utilization of this space to buy time for preparing her forthcoming content delivery components is evidenced by her shift of gaze from the previous speaker to her note card, more or less synchronized with the production of her turn-initial assessment 'It's a good idea'.

The demise of 'I agree with you' as an expression of genuine agreement

As shown in the above discussion, 'I agree with you' and similar formulaic affiliative expressions have evolved to be 'interactionally versatile' in this group speaking assessment context, where student-candidates deploy them to accomplish a range of different functions. We have seen how they function as a turn-taking device with which participants gain and hold the floor, especially in interactions where speakership in the next turn is locally managed rather than pre-allocated. As token responses, 'I agree with you' and its variants enable participants to give a timely

response to the previous speaker without leaving a gap. Through displaying affiliation with previous speaker, they also establish some superficial link between the talk in the current and the prior turn. Furthermore, as evidenced by the simultaneous production of these expressions and browsing of note cards, student-candidates are seen to often utilize this space to prepare for the forthcoming content delivery components of their turn. Known as ‘formulaic expressions’ or ‘stock phrases’ by teachers and students, affiliative expressions such as ‘I agree with you’ or ‘that’s a good idea’ do not themselves involve formulating previous speaker’s talk, and therefore demand relatively little processing effort. This seems to afford student-candidates the capacity to handle both the tasks of responding to the previous speaker and preparing to deliver their own ideas. These various functions, although discussed in separate sub-sections using different examples, are evidently not mutually exclusive. Student-candidates’ deployment of these expressions at the turn-initial position, as some of the above examples have shown, often fulfills more than one of the above functions or purposes.

However, it is precisely due to their ubiquitous use by student-candidates to serve a diverse range of turn-taking and turn construction functions that their primary interactional force of expressing agreement seems to have become bleached. While ‘I agree with you’ and similar affiliative expressions will initially orient listeners to the turn being an agreeing response, there are numerous cases where participants no longer refer to the previous speaker’s idea in the rest of their turn, or in other cases refute the previous speaker’s ideas. These do happen in everyday conversations, as cases of preferred responses and agreement-prefaced disagreements respectively. Nonetheless, within the assessment context, where a response turn commences with ‘I agree with you’, it might remain ambiguous to the overhearing teacher-rater whether it is expressing genuine agreement or being used merely as a turn-gaining and floor-holding device, buying time for the participant to deliver their own ideas. For agreeing responses without an account or other types of further talk that substantially incorporate previous speaker contribution, they are likely to be considered by the teacher-rater as lacking evidence of the participant’s comprehension of and engagement in the previous speaker’s talk.

4.2.5 The emergence of a local interactional norm

In Section 4.2.4 above, we have seen how ‘I agree with you’ and similar affiliative expressions can perform a range of turn-taking and responding functions, while their primary interactional force of expressing agreement with the previous speaker has been bleached. This seems to have contributed to the emergence of a local norm related to the production of agreeing responses by student-candidates and their interpretation by teacher-raters, discussed in terms of ‘assessment-related preferences’ in Section 4.2.3:

Talk in the SBA Group Interaction task (1) prefers agreeing responses with an account, and (2) disprefers the use of the formulaic expression ‘I agree with you’.

To sum up the discussion in Section 4.2, I present three kinds of evidence for such a norm: (1) manifestation in the test discourse, (2) teacher-raters’ interview comments, and (3) examination report.

1. Manifestation in the test discourse

In students’ discourse among the assessed interactions, there seems to be an emerging ‘dispreference’ towards the use of ‘I agree with you’. At one extreme, some student-candidates avoid using ‘I agree with you’ altogether. This is noted in the assessed interaction of group PB11, in which no single instance of ‘I agree with you’ has been found. Participants opt for other variants of agreement expressions, for example, ‘I can’t agree more’, ‘it sounds great’, and ‘yes, I do think so’. Considering the fact that the linguistic form of these agreement expressions encodes varying degrees of strength of the agreement, some of them seem to be at times misplaced at sequentially odd positions (e.g. ‘can’t agree more’ after a previous speaker’s narration of events), or produced with an intonation that is not commensurate with the degree of agreement encoded by the form. For instance, student S utters ‘Mm. I can’t agree more.’ in line 19 (see Appendix T8). However, she produces this otherwise strong agreement expression in a monotonous manner that can be heard as non-committing (commented as such by the teacher-rater, Miss Cheung, in the stimulated recall). Moreover, she places this after *mm*, which, in native varieties of English, is used as a weak acknowledgement token that usually signals a speaker’s

non-commitment to affiliating with the previous speaker (Gardner, 1997). This very ‘mismatch’ gives some evidence that students are actively avoiding the use of ‘I agree with you’. A similar avoidance is also noted in another group interaction, PB14, in which ‘I agree with you’ has only been used once (line 71).

A preference for agreeing responses with an account, and a ‘dispreference’ against ‘I agree with you’, is also manifested in cases where some students latch a following TCU onto the affiliative component. As noted before, this kind of latching almost invariably occurs in cases where ‘I agree with you’ is used. The participants uttering ‘I agree with you’ would immediately produce another turn component, an account of the reasons for agreement (e.g. PB06, lines 11-12; 13-14), or another affiliative component specifying what the participant agrees with the previous speaker (e.g. LA06, lines 41-42), or both (e.g. LA06, lines 85-86; 130-133). In formatting their agreeing responses in such elaborate fashion, these participants seem to be treating the use of ‘I agree with you’ as if it were a form of ‘accountable action’ (such as declining a request), orienting to the necessity of providing an explanation or elaboration, in order to justify their use of the expression: that they are using the expression not merely to secure and hold the floor, but also to display genuine agreement. Such an orientation may in part explain how some agreeing responses, in particular those beginning with ‘I agree with you’, have come to take the dispreferred turn shape of including an account. Student-candidates’ differential orientation to this interactional norm relevant to the construction of agreeing responses, in turn, might have a bearing on their interactional competence as perceived and rated by teacher-raters (see also Section 5.2.2 in Chapter 5).

2. Teacher-raters’ comments in stimulated recall interviews

In the following interview extract, when asked to comment on the quality of students’ interaction in terms of verbal exchange, the teacher-rater in School L, Miss Chau, brought up the issue of how students’ responses often do not develop on the previous speaker’s talk.

(4.80) LA-TR Teacher Interview

Res: Other than eye contact and their body orientation, how about other aspects of interaction, for example, in terms of verbal exchange, do you think there is enough interaction?

TR: There isn't enough. For example, when they hear something they don't really agree, they don't know how to refute. **Perhaps they don't even understand what the previous speaker has said, but they always start [their response] by saying 'I agree'. Or they simply ignore [the previous speaker's contribution altogether], and move directly onto their own point.** So, not all of them are able to do some *responding*, like, your *point* has some problems, or I would like to *extend on your point*. They are not able to link [their own response to the previous speaker's talk]. They can't establish that linkage.

It is evident in this interview extract that the teacher-rater notices an overuse of formulaic agreement expressions such as 'I agree (with you)'. She critically evaluates responses that begin with 'I agree' and move straight onto the participant's own ideas. This echoes a teacher's comment in Luk's (2010) study, that students 'habitually said *yes, I agree* without any justification' even when they did not understand each other's talk (p.45). In these cases, the teacher-rater becomes skeptical of whether the student-candidate has understood the previous speaker's talk and is responding contingently, due to a lack of publicly available evidence of these abilities from such responses. Consider another teacher-rater's comment:

(4.81) PA-TR-B Interview

((The researcher has been asking if there were any particular language or interactional aspects that the teacher would emphasize in class))

Res: Would you emphasize a lot, don't use the stock phrases, don't always say 'I agree with you'...

TR: ((in overlap)) 'I agree'. **Yes, I hate that. I tell them that if you wanna say 'I agree', that is fine, but can you please tell me why you agree to something?** And don't just stop after that. Maybe you should move on to something else or add some of your own opinions and ideas.

Res: So that's something you do tell them in class a lot?

TR: I do tell them, yes, yes.

Similar to Miss Chau (School L) in the last extract, Miss Cheung (School P) also holds a disapproving view towards the (over-)use of 'I agree (with you)'. Her comment reflects her expectation for student-candidates to provide an account explaining their reasons for agreement. As an additional note, while this remains speculative, the teacher-rater's use of 'can you please tell me...' might indicate an expectation that the students' discourse should orient not only to co-participants, but

also the teacher-rater as overhearing audience, and to the interactional context of a speaking assessment.

3. Examination report

The teacher-raters' opinions expressed in the interviews are in line with the collective views of examiners for the external speaking examination component of HKDSE English Language (which also has a Group Interaction task), as conveyed in the Examination Report. In the following three extracts, the overuse of formulaic agreement expressions such as 'I agree with you' is again at issue:

2013 HKDSE English Language Examination Report (HKEAA, 2013b)

(1) While it is true that the majority of candidates showed some ability to interact, too often they used phrases such as **"I agree", "Your idea is great" or "I get your point" without providing further elaboration**. Many use these phrases as a prop rather than a turn taking signal. (p.181)

(2) Despite this error, other candidates readily concurred, knowingly or unknowingly, by saying **"I agree with you"**. (p.181)

Note: This comment refers to cases where student-candidates used formulaic agreement expressions to collude successful communication even though some group members misinterpreted the meaning of some words in the discussion prompt.

(3) Candidates were **keen to put forward their own arguments** but had a tendency to **ignore others opinions**. They would say, **'I agree with you'** but continued with a statement that refuted the previous speaker. (p.182)

As extract (1) shows, the use of formulaic agreement expressions without providing elaboration were criticized by examiners. In other words, affiliative responses without further talk that refers back to previous speaker contribution were deemed incomplete or inadequate. This, again, points to an assessment-related preference that outranks the structural preference in everyday conversation, whereby an agreeing response (as a preferred response) would be brief and constructed without an account (see Section 4.2.3).

The examiners' view that 'Many use these phrases as a prop rather than a turn-taking signal' (HKEAA, 2013b, p.181) diverges from my analysis in Section 4.2.4, where I have argued that 'I agree with you' and similar expressions are sometimes used (merely) as a turn-taking device. On the other hand, the criticism that such stock phrases are being deployed 'as a prop' can perhaps be understood in terms of their

usage described in extracts (2) and (3): they are uttered as token responses regardless of their sequential appropriateness. In line with my earlier argument in 4.2.4, then, the examiners observe that these expressions are often not being used to perform their primary function of displaying agreement. Also noteworthy is that extract (3) reflects a view similar to the teacher-rater in School L cited above: student-candidates have a tendency not to develop on previous speaker contribution but focus on delivering their own ideas in a response turn. The use of ‘I agree with you’ followed by ‘a statement that refuted the previous speaker’ (HKEAA, 2013b, p.182), unless it can be clearly heard as an agreement-prefaced disagreement mitigating its dispreferred status, would be a good indication that the phrase is being used as a ‘prop’ and does not convey its primary affiliative force.

As seen in the above three extracts, examiners disapprove of student-candidates’ use of agreement expressions without developing on the previous speaker’s ideas, or using them in contexts where the authenticity of agreement is questionable from the surrounding discourse. The heart of the problem seems to be that, due to the ubiquitous use and diverse functions of ‘I agree with you’ and its variants in the assessed group interactions, the use of such formulaic agreement expressions without also providing an account does not offer adequate and publicly available evidence of the participant’s (1) genuine unproblematic receipt and understanding of the prior talk and (2) genuine affiliation with the previous speaker’s stance.

With the test discourse, teacher-raters’ interview comments, and the examination report extracts above, we have accrued good evidence for the emergence of a local norm related to the construction of agreeing responses in the SBA group interactions. As argued in 4.2.4 and this section, its development is partially attributable to student-candidates’ (over-)use of ‘I agree with you’ and similar formulaic agreement expressions in performing a range of turn-taking and turn construction functions, bleaching their primary interactional function of displaying agreement. This norm, oriented to by both teacher-raters and student-candidates, operates within the context of the group speaking assessment such that agreeing responses with an account that explains the reasons for agreeing (a feature

more typical of dispreferred responses) are preferred. Meanwhile, the use of one particular agreement expression, 'I agree with you', is dispreferred. It is often negatively evaluated by teacher-raters and external examiners, actively avoided by some student-candidates, and oriented to by others as an 'accountable action', the use of which as a display of genuine agreement requires further explanation or justification in the same turn.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the discourse and interactional organization of the SBA Group Interaction in two respects: (1) turn-taking and speaker transition, and (2) preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses.

Section 4.1 discussed various aspects of turn-taking organization of the group interactions in School P and School L. Common to group interactions in both schools are participants' orientation to a 'round-the-table' turn-taking order, and relatedly, a general orientation to an even distribution of speaking opportunities. This has been shown in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 to be characteristic of almost all group interactions examined in this study, and to a lesser extent for group LA07 in which there is competition for the floor. There are, however, marked differences in features related to turn-taking and speaker transition between the group interactions in School P and School L, and between the assessed interaction (PB14) and the mock assessment (PB14Mock) of one group in School P. These differences, in turn, have been shown to be a manifestation of two different types of turn-taking organization, namely, a pre-determined turn-taking order, and a more spontaneous, locally managed turn-taking mechanism.

Section 4.1.3 examined the turn-taking phenomena of gaps, overlaps, and latching. For gaps of silence, sizeable intra-turn gaps are found in some of the assessed interactions in School P. Participants are seen to withhold self-selecting as the next speaker before a current speaker has finished delivering all their pre-scripted talk, and do not come in to help even when the current speaker has difficulties in word search or formulation of ideas (cf. School L). An effort is therefore seen in maintaining and minimizing disruptions to the pre-determined turn-taking order.

Overlaps are found mainly in interactions in School L and in PB14Mock, and their occurrence is a reliable marker of a locally managed turn-taking mechanism. Instances of overlaps in the data were shown to be the consequence of a next speaker's projected completion of the previous speaker's turn; the simultaneous operation of the turn-taking rules 'current-speaker-select-next' and 'next-speaker self-select'; or two participants self-selecting as next speaker simultaneously. The resolution of overlaps reflects participants' moment-by-moment monitoring of each other's talk. Overlaps are rare in the assessed interactions in School P, except for some choral converging responses.

A related phenomenon is competition for the floor, which is manifested in competitive overlaps and participants' use of various floor-gaining and floor-holding techniques. These techniques include inter-turn latching, and intra-turn latching between TCUs while pausing at non-completion points. Competition for the floor is most salient in the two all-male groups in School L, and was not noted in any of the groups in School P. A plausible explanation is that the pre-allocation of turns and pre-determined turn-taking order obviate the need to compete for speaking opportunities.

After a discussion on gaps, overlaps, and latching, Section 4.1.4 examined the cues used by a current speaker in handing over the floor to the next speaker. Gaze was found to be an often used non-verbal cue that tentatively selects the next speaker, or as a reminder of the pre-determined next speaker. Two features related to group interactions with the two different types of turn-taking organization are noteworthy. First, there are occasions when a co-participant shifts the target of their reciprocity display (gaze) from the current speaker to the next speaker even before the next speaker begins to talk. This amounts to a giveaway of the pre-determined turn-taking order in a pre-scripted interaction. The second feature is the use of turn-final 'generic' questions as a floor-passing device. This was found to be more of a salient feature in interactions with a locally managed turn-taking order. In pre-scripted interactions, participants tend to resort to the more subtle non-verbal cue such as gaze and nodding. This is perhaps because a pre-determined turn-taking order with a known/expected next speaker at any given transition point obviates the necessity for explicit verbal cueing. Also, with each speaker's turns pre-scripted and rehearsed

beforehand, a current turn's completion point is more or less predictable by a next speaker.

For devices participants use in taking over the floor (Section 4.1.5), there are again two notable features related to interactions with pre-determined turn-taking order. First, among these interactions in School P, it is not difficult to find cases where a next speaker makes displays of reciprocity towards the current speaker near the completion point of their turn, but then withdraws eye contact very soon after taking over the floor. Remarkably, such a display of engagement is withdrawn by the participant taking over sometimes even when their ensuing talk is constructed as contingent on and addressed to the previous speaker. Therefore, the participant taking over is seen to engage more in the turn-taking matters than in the content of the previous speaker's talk.

The second feature is the use of the acknowledgement token *mm*, ubiquitous at the turn-beginnings in School P's group interactions. As proposed in 4.1.5, a participant uttering *mm* at turn-initial position simultaneously acknowledges receipt of the prior talk and displays the incipiency of the new turn with more talk forthcoming, not unlike a runner in a relay race taking over the baton from the last runner. While classed as a weak acknowledgement token (Gardner, 1997), in the data it is occasionally placed in sequentially odd positions, such as in the SPP slot following a *wh*-question, or preceding turn components displaying stronger affiliation with the previous speaker. Its oddity as an answer SPP or affiliative response lends further support to it being used as a turn-taking device in the group interactions. In his work on the use of various acknowledgement tokens in telling sequences, Gardner (1998) provides an analysis of how recipients of the telling can display their orientation to the telling being midway or nearing the end with different acknowledgement tokens. In relation to this, he argues that:

recipients monitor the talk they are hearing not only for their emerging meanings but also for possible points at which speakership transfer can legitimately occur, i.e. points at which a current speaker can become a listener, and a current listener can become a speaker.

(Gardner, 1998, p.209)

Based on the two observations about participants' display of subsiding engagement towards a previous speaker and the sometimes odd sequential placement of *mm*, it seems that participants of the pre-scripted interactions not only do attend to points for

speaker transition, they also orient to aspects of turn-taking more than the content meaning of each other's talk.

Evidently, then, SBA group interactions with extended preparation time (School P) and those without (School L and PB14Mock) show marked differences in features of turn-taking and speaker transition. Respectively, they exhibit features of a more spontaneously managed turn-taking order and a pre-determined turn-taking order. The implications for validity will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In Section 4.2, we looked at the structure and turn design of the most ubiquitous response turns in the SBA group interactions: agreeing and disagreeing. Disagreeing responses almost categorically take dispreferred turn shapes, such that a participant's disagreement with a previous speaker is mostly delayed, mitigated, and accounted for. Insofar as most participants orient to the activity underway being a discussion, not an argument in which disagreements might take preferred turn shapes (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998), this is unsurprising. However, agreeing responses display more variability in their turn shape, and some appear to also exhibit a feature of dispreferreds – an account of the reasons for agreeing. It is not uncommon to see a turn-initial affiliative component to be followed by an account for agreeing, and on some occasions, participants even latch the account onto the agreement expression 'I agree with you', or construct the two components within the same TCU. As such, it seems that the turn design of agreeing and disagreeing responses in the SBA interactions cannot be explained solely with reference to the structural preference for agreement in everyday conversation.

In Section 4.2.3, I proposed that another set of preference – assessment-related preference – is in concurrent operation with the structural preference. Drawing on evidence from the test discourse and stimulated recall comments by student-candidates and teacher-raters, I argued that there is a preference for constructing a response turn that is contingent on (or, incorporates) previous speaker contribution. Patterns of turn shapes characterizing agreeing and disagreeing responses were shown to be a manifestation of the concurrent operation of both the structural preference and the assessment-related preference, with the latter outranking the former in the construction of agreeing responses with an account.

Section 4.2.4 explored an issue closely related to the development of such an assessment-related preference – students’ overuse of ‘I agree with you’ and its variants. Through examining aspects of their production and sequential placement, with the students’ own meta-discursive comments as supplementary evidence, these formulaic agreement expressions were shown to be exploited as a turn-gaining and floor-holding device, as well as a token response that claims some superficial link between the current turn and the previous one. The primary interactional function of these expressions to display agreement is bleached in this assessment context as a consequence.

Combining evidence from test discourse, comments from teacher-raters interviewed in this study, and extracts of examination reports, I argued in Section 4.2.5 that there is an emerging local interactional norm that prefers agreeing responses accompanied by an explanation, and disprefers the use of the formulaic expression ‘I agree with you’. Its notoriety is not only apparent from teacher-raters’ and examiners’ overtly negative evaluations, but also manifested in the test discourse where its production is avoided by some students, and oriented to by others as an ‘accountable’ action necessitating justification as displaying genuine agreement.

The description of discourse and interactional organization of the group speaking assessment in this chapter is far from exhaustive. However, findings regarding both the selected features of turn-taking organization and the preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses have important implications for the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task as an assessment of interactional competence, which will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 6. In the next chapter, we will examine the various ways in which student-candidates discursively construct themselves as interactionally competent. We will once again see the relevance of the assessment-related preference, as well as how students exploit the structural ‘dispreference’ for disagreeing responses in their construction of interactional competence.

CHAPTER 5

Co-construction of interactional competence in SBA Group Interaction

In Chapter 4, we began to explore the nature of students' interaction in the SBA Group Interaction task. Specifically, we looked at aspects of turn-taking organization and how patterns of speaker transition vary in relation to whether the interaction is pre-scripted or more spontaneous. We also examined the discourse patterns and preference organization of agreeing and disagreeing responses, and noted in particular an emergent local interactional norm relevant to the production of agreeing responses. This, in turn, relates to the extent to which the responses are considered contingent on previous speaker contribution by the teacher-rater, as evidence of students' interactional competence.

Following from this, the present chapter explores in greater detail and depth students' discursive co-construction of interactional competence, the nature of interactional competence assessed, as well as some aspects of the 'interactional architecture' (Young, 2011) of the Group Interaction task and the complexities these aspects pose for its use as an assessment of interactional competence.

We will begin by looking at some of the ways in which students in School P engage in staged performances of 'doing interacting' through designing and acting out interactive sequences such as question-and-answer and disagreeing with one another. On registering one of the major interactional achievements accomplished through these episodes as foregrounding one's response as contingent on previous speaker contribution, we will examine evidence of both students and teacher-raters' orientation to this as a crucial component of interactional competence, as well as the various means of achieving this in the construction of response turns.

The second part of this chapter takes a closer look at the interactional architecture of the SBA group interactions and notes some of its complexities in terms of participation framework and identity negotiation. We will examine some

features of students' talk found to be more oriented to the teacher-rater as a ratified overhearer than to co-participants as addressed recipients. This is followed by a consideration of the conflicting identities students having to negotiate in the interaction. Both of these aspects problematize the assumption that the SBA Group Interaction task is eliciting and assessing simply and only interaction among peers in the group.

5.1 Doing interacting: The discursive construction of 'interaction' and 'interactional competence'

5.1.1 Pre-scripting and acting out interactive sequences

In School P, where pre-scripting the assessed interaction is a common practice, one way of students doing being interactive is through scripting and acting out interactive sequences such as recall, question-and-answer (Q&A), and disagreement sequences. This section will examine the first two types, and the next section will look at disagreement. The first extract below shows a recall sequence.

(5.1) PA05: 1-7

1 ((Timer beeps))
2 S: Good afternoon everyone. We have watched a movie called
3 Freaky Friday last week. Did you guys remember?
4 T: [Mm! ((nods emphatically))
5 K: [Sure! In the movie, there are some misunderstandings
6 between Miss Coleman and her daughter. Let us start (.)
7 by (.) uh discussing °it°.

This is the opening of a group interaction, in which the whole discussion itself and the first topic – misunderstanding between the two main characters in the movie, *Freaky Friday* – are initiated through a recall question.

In lines 2-3, after greeting her group members, S asks whether they remember watching the movie, *Freaky Friday*. Given that the assessment task is based on the movie itself, this is evidently not a 'genuine question' predicated on a difference in epistemic status between the questioner and the addressees. Presumably, all participants remember watching the movie, and the questioner (S) knows the answer to her own question. Despite the apparent redundancy of the question, this is met

with enthusiastic affirming responses from T and K. The overlap of the two responses, the animated intonation, and the emphatic nodding that accompanies T's response, all constitute overt, indeed dramatic, displays of engagement. Thus, a sense of motivation to continue the discussion (perhaps both for the co-participants and the overhearing teacher-rater) is co-constructed through this brief recall sequence.

Note that the recall question by S also takes the shape and sequential position of a pre-telling, with which S checks the requisite condition for some forthcoming telling, and it projects further talk on her part if the condition is met. In the context of an everyday conversation, it is very likely that S will have something more about the movie to say if she gets a yes-like answer from the co-participants. Here, both T's 'Mm!' and K's 'Sure!' amount to a 'go-ahead' for S. Interestingly, however, it is not S who proceeds with the talk towards which the recall question has been building. Instead, K takes over and initiates the first topic of discussion (lines 5-7), finishing the work that could have been done by S. Thus, rather than the same one participant doing both the opening talk and initiating the first topic, this has now become a 'joint enterprise' that is collaboratively and interactionally accomplished by three participants.

As it turned out, this was part of a 'polished' version of the script born out of three rehearsals before the assessed interaction, as students reported in the stimulated recall interview. The following extract shows the students' own account of the sequence.

(5.2) PA05 Student Interview

- Res: Why did you add this?
S: To give it a smoother flow, so that it sounds like we're having a normal conversation.
Res: But would you worry that the teacher would think it's 'fake'?
S: I feel it's so 'fake' myself ((all burst into laughter)), but that would give it the feeling of chatting.

As reflected in the response by S, the recall question was incorporated into the opening of the interaction with a view to approximate 'normal conversation'. However, the students were well aware of its contrived nature.

Next, we will examine another recall pre-sequence in more detail. Prior to the extract below, the group has been talking about the various aspects of misunderstanding between the mother, Mrs. Coleman, and the daughter, Anna, in

Freaky Friday. This extract shows a sequence in which the participants discuss another aspect of misunderstanding.

(5.3) PA11: 48-60

- 1 W: Do you remember there is a scene showing that the door
2 of Anna's- (...) bedroom had been removed by Mrs Coleman;
3 ((R nods and turns her head to N just before N begins
4 her turn))
5 N: Yeah. I can even \\remember the phrase on her room's
6 \\((R looks briefly at W))
7 door. Parental advisory, uh keep out of my room. So::,
8 what you're trying to say i::s
9 W: >What I'm trying to< say is privacy. ((R turns to D))
10 D: I see what you mean. I think: (.) privacy is::- should
11 be: (.) important to anyone. Uhm just like me, if my
12 right (.) if my right to play computer game is being
13 >exploited by my mom<, I think I will get mad on her.=So,
14 I think: lack of (.) privacy is the main cause.

In lines 1-2, W asks the co-participants if they recall a particular scene from the movie. This takes the shape of a pre-telling, whereby W checks the requisite condition for a forthcoming telling. The next speaker, N, offers an affirmative 'yes', and provides further recalled details showing the condition has been met (lines 5-7). Similar to the above example, however, the sequence does not immediately proceed to W's telling. In lines 7-8, N issues a clarification request in the 'fill-in-the-blank' format ('what you're trying to say is...'). This displays her orientation to W's prior turn as projecting more talk – the thrust of the telling sequence for which W's recall question has been laying the groundwork. Interestingly, on the one hand, N's clarification request displays her alignment with the trajectory of a telling W has been setting up, amounting to a 'go-ahead' for W to make her point. On the other hand, N modifies this trajectory by opening up another sequence, of which the clarification request is the FPP.

Note how W's following response (line 9) displays sensitivity to the contingency of the unfolding sequence. Rather than staying on her own course and designing her turn like the FPP of the main telling sequence following the pre-telling, W aligns with the new trajectory of talk set up by N through formatting her turn as

the answer SPP to N's question, with the preface 'what I'm trying to say is' mirroring the shape of N's question FPP. Throughout these three turns (lines 1-9), then, both participants construct their responses in ways which are sensitive to and contingent on the previous speaker's talk. In other words, they seem to engage in each other's talk and build on each other's contribution.

Rather strikingly, however, the main telling towards which all the prior interactional work seems to have been building ends up with one word, 'privacy' (line 9). This main telling sequence anticipated to be making the point about privacy issues as a cause of misunderstanding, yet blatantly underdeveloped in W's turn, is then expanded in D's response (lines 10-14). Here, he acknowledges receipt and claims understanding of W's telling, provides an affiliative assessment of the point about privacy, offers an example from his personal experience, and finally formulates the upshot of the whole sequence ('lack of privacy is the main cause'). Remarkably, then, W is seen to leave it for D to spell out the thrust of the sequence.

Thus, we see a rather odd sequential development in which W seems to have relinquished the rights to making her point, following all the preliminary interactional work that has built towards it and would have sequentially ratified an extended telling turn on her part for such purpose. The task of bringing home the point about privacy as a main cause of misunderstanding is conveniently re-allocated to another participant, D. This raises questions as to whether this has truly been how the interaction has unfolded, or something pre-planned prior to the assessment.

Indeed, close examination of co-participants' non-verbal behavior yields evidence that this interactive sequence has been pre-scripted. In lines 3-4, towards the end of W's question, R nods and turns her head to N just before N commences her turn. Meanwhile, despite generally being the most active participant, R does not even offer a minimal verbal response such as 'mm' or 'yes' here, let alone elect herself to answer W's question. As N begins answering W's question, R glances at W again (line 6) instead of focusing her gaze on N to display listenership. Finally, in line 9, R turns to D right at the end of W's turn and just before D's, as if she has already known that D would be the next speaker. During stimulated recall, students confirmed that this episode (and the whole interaction) was pre-scripted, and R

explained that the episode was designed to create an opportunity for a group member, who wouldn't have spoken for a while, to take a turn.

A noteworthy aspect of sequential development common to both examples, therefore, is how the conversational work (1. initiating a topic; 2. making a point) accomplished through the use of a recall pre-sequence has become a 'joint enterprise' among three participants. This could have involved only two participants, with the same speaker asking the preliminary recall question and doing the work in the main sequence, and one other speaker providing a minimal 'go-ahead' response in between. Notably, however, the preliminary and the main conversational work in these two examples are now interactionally re-distributed, or more precisely, *pre*-distributed among three participants.

We now turn to an example in which doing being interactive is accomplished through placing the delivery of two separate ideas on the same topic in a question-and-answer sequence. In the extract below, K talks about advertising on the Internet and on television (lines 1-7), and H proposes inviting celebrity spokespeople (lines 8-14). However, instead of each participant presenting their own idea on promotional strategies one after another, this is done in a question-and-answer sequence.

(5.4) PB10: 35-46

1 K: =↑and they (.) all these should be included in
2 the advertisements. Uhm, apart from advertising through
3 the Internet and the- television,
4 \\uh wha- where else can we promote from{for} the
5 \\((looks at E))
6 (.) \\from{for} our: smartphones.
7 \\((turns to V))
8 H: Uhm: Ah! I've got an idea. Why don't we invite uhm
9 celebrities to \\help us to promote our smartphones?
10 \\((looks towards E))
11 E: °Mm.° ((nods))
12 H: Uhm: maybe:: for example we can invite uhm Andy Lau or
13 Kelly Chen to help introduce our smartphone to the
14 public.

In lines 2-6, after talking about what product features to include in the advertisements, K asks a question about other ways or places for promoting their

smartphones. Here, with a question that expressly solicits another idea, the delivery of a new idea by the next speaker is then sequentially ratified as a relevant SPP response rather than being heard as topically disjunctive talk.

Lines 8-9 present an interesting answer by H, formatted in such ways that give the appearance of a ‘spontaneous’ response. Here, H prefaces her answer with ‘Uhm: Ah! I’ve got an idea.’. The slightly prolonged ‘uhm’ displays a thinking moment. Then comes ‘Ah!’, which is reminiscent of *oh* as a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984), and hearable as indicating a change in epistemic status from ‘not knowing’ to ‘knowing’ something. The ensuing announcement reinforces this reading: H has just come up with a new idea. Taking these features together, the design of the preface therefore orients (and indeed, foregrounds) the answer as following spontaneously from K’s question. Being sequentially placed in the answer SPP position, H’s idea of inviting celebrity spokespeople is also framed as *a consequence* of K asking the question in lines 4-6.

Stimulated recall with the students revealed that this question-and-answer sequence had been scripted into the interaction, and the students’ own account of the sequence offers corroborating evidence that the question-and-answer exchange was designed for the very purpose of appearing ‘spontaneous’ (see lines 10-12 below).

(5.5) PB10 Student Interview

- 1 Res: So, for the question that K asked, was it also fixed during preparation time
2 that you would ask that question?
3 K: Yeah. I think it was, right? ((turns to E))
4 H: Yeah, yeah.
5 E: What question did you ask?
6 K: ‘What else’ blah blah blah
7 Res: ‘Where else can we promote the smartphone’
8 H: Actually, we have every line written on the *script*, and we just read out
9 *exactly* what’s written on it.
10 E: **It would sound very unnatural if you just recite the script, so we added**
11 **these kinds of questions to sound like we’re very spontaneous.**
12 Res: So adding them to make it sound more natural?
13 E: Yeah, yeah.

Further contrivance of the exchange as a spontaneous question-and-answer sequence is seen in the selection of next speaker, where the questioner K looks at V towards the end of the question (line 7, Extract 5.4), but it is H who eventually

answers the question. This was revealed in the stimulated recall to be another form of contrived interactional behavior, fabricated to ‘mislead’ the overhearing teacher-rater:

(5.6) PB10 Student Interview

- 1 Res: Okay. But see, just now I saw that K was looking at V when asking that
2 question.
3 ((all burst into laughter))
4 So in fact, was it already decided that the question was for H to answer?
5 K: **Yes ((laughs)) But I don't want it to look so obvious, because it's so**
6 **deliberate, so I pretended.**
7 Res: So the question was addressed to the whole group, but secretly it was set
8 for H to answer?
9 K: Yes, yes, that's right.
10 Res: Okay. Well, it fooled me!
11 ((all laugh))
12 H: Wow did we look that natural?

As seen in the students' responses, H was the pre-allocated next speaker and answerer of K's question. However, K pretended to be addressing the question to others by looking at V so that the interaction would look less obviously pre-scripted and contrived.

Therefore, notwithstanding the question-and-answer sequence being in fact contrived and pre-scripted, the participants, through formatting and sequentially placing their turns in specific ways, were able to discursively co-construct the appearance of a ‘spontaneous’ interaction. They were also able to turn two speakers' delivery of two separate ideas into a paired sequence, packaging the second idea as a response highly contingent on the previous speaker's contribution.

From the above extracts of assessed interactions as well as participants' meta-discursive accounts, it is evident that students build particular sequences of exchange into their interactions with an aim for giving the impression of ‘naturalness’ and ‘spontaneity’, in other words, a likeness to everyday conversation or informal chatting. Similar notions of ‘natural’ and ‘authentic’ interactions are, correspondingly, salient and favored features to teacher-raters. Evidence can be found, for instance, in the stimulated recall with the teacher-rater, Miss Cheung, for the interactions PB14 and PB11, in which she commented seven times either positively or negatively about the groups' performance in terms of ‘authentic’ interaction.

Remarkably (or perhaps not), participants at both ends of the assessment seem aware of the essentially contrived character of such ‘naturalness’, ‘spontaneity’, or ‘authenticity’. We have seen how student S in the first example (Extract 5.1) admitted ‘I feel it’s so “fake” myself’ writing a question of much interactional redundancy into the script. The irony, then, lies in the very purpose of designing these sequences to discursively construct the appearance of a spontaneous interaction. A similar irony is manifest in how teacher-raters evaluate such ‘contrived naturalness’ in students’ interaction:

(5.7) PB-TR-C Teacher Interview

TR: Well, in this case, it will depend on their [student candidates’] ‘*naturalness*’ in their expression. I mean, if you... this is obviously *prepared*, and each student has their own *notes*, and I believe no school would put a ban on *conferencing* altogether, right? So if all students do it like this, and some of them manage to design the talk in ways that gives the impression of a natural interaction, then I think this is totally acceptable. As I always say, to a large extent we are here to *assess their production of the language*, so that’s the way we would see it.

It seems, therefore, while cognizant of students pre-scripting the assessed interactions, Miss Tong would still give credit to such contrived ‘spontaneous’ exchanges, treating them as displayed evidence of students’ interactional competence. A similar attitude was displayed by Miss Cheung in the interview.

5.1.2 Contriving disagreement

We have seen how students design and act out recall and question-and-answer sequences as part of doing being interactive. Next, we consider how students contrive disagreeing with one another in order to create interactive exchanges, or the appearance of them. The following first example illustrates the contrived nature of some of these disagreement episodes. Here, one participant’s proposed solution to a problem is challenged by another participant as an already attempted and futile solution.

(5.8) PA11: 106-116

- 1 D: So:, how can we tackle the problem <if they cannot> fix
- 2 it.
- 3 W: I think they can try to go to the restaurant to find the
- 4 woman who give them the: lucky cookie to seek help.

5 R: †Uhm: (.) I †understand why you say †so, but, if you
6 remember, uh- the characters already go to the
7 restaurant to seek help from the woman, but (.) they
8 cannot- they come back in vain. So- †maybe- (.) a
9 †better solution maybe: (.) is: to try to learn (.) more
10 about each other or to respect more about each other,
11 <as they need (.) self(.)less (.) lo:ve> to change back.
12 So maybe they can (.) say: spend- spending more time
13 with each other (.) by: traveling with each other?

The group has been discussing the various problems the two main characters in *Freaky Friday* would face if they had to stay in each other's bodies forever after the exchange. In lines 1-2, D initiates a new yet related topic of how to solve the problems, to which W offers a candidate solution (lines 3-4). However, this is then met with a disagreeing response from R, who points out the solution proposed by W being a failed attempt (lines 5-8), and proffers a 'better' alternative (lines 8-13).

The contrived character of this disagreement episode becomes apparent as R starts accounting for her objection to W's proposed solution. Part of R's utterance, 'but, if you remember' (lines 5-6), effectively exposes W's candidate solution as what the two characters had already done in the movie, and was proven to be a failed attempt (lines 7-8). The way in which R challenges W's proposed solution is as if W is altogether oblivious of the relevant scene, or has forgotten about it. There is little reason to believe that W was indeed oblivious of the scene, which was also proven otherwise in the stimulated recall (see below). On the other hand, the blatant vulnerability of W's proposal would cast her in an inferior epistemic status that would potentially disadvantage her in the assessment. This raises the question of whether W's proposal was designed to be challenged.

The students' responses in the stimulated recall revealed that this sequence, as was the rest of the interaction, was pre-planned and pre-scripted. In fact, at one point, W asked me, the researcher, 'did you not realize that this was pre-planned?'. She reported not feeling anxious or worried being challenged, as this was pre-planned and therefore anticipated. She added that, in a more spontaneous interaction such as in the oral exam, she would feel more worried when being challenged, as she might not be able to defend her idea, and it might give the impression of a bad idea raised

and would have a negative impact on her score. R's retrospective account of the motivation behind creating this interactive episode further attests to the contrived nature of the disagreement:

(5.9) PA11 Student Interview

R: Actually this was my idea, because I felt that, if we all agree with each other, I say "I agree with you", then she says "I agree with you", it would be boring..... I want to make it more *special*, not everyone saying "I agree with you".

Thus, insofar as R's account being a faithful representation of her considerations while planning for the assessed interaction, this episode of contesting a co-participant's idea was (1) indeed pre-scripted and acted out, and (2) for the very purpose of creating the appearance of discord at certain moments of the interaction.

Purpose of contriving disagreement

On examining the students' disagreement episodes and their own meta-discursive accounts on these episodes during stimulated recall, two assessment-oriented interactional functions of forging disagreements with one another have been identified. We will consider each of these two functions in the following.

Highlighting one's response as contingent on previous speaker contribution

One of the things students try to accomplish through contriving disagreement with one another is to foreground the contingency of their talk on previous speaker contribution, or put simply, to highlight that they do respond to the previous speaker's talk rather than delivering their own ideas only. The following example illustrates how disagreeing achieves this through topicalizing the previous speaker's idea.

(5.10) PB14: 10-25

1 L: Mm. Yes, our company has just released (.) our beauty
2 products in- eh- uhm the teenagers. Mm:: (.) mm:: (1.9)
3 uhm: so: are you guys clear about the special features
4 of the product?
5 K: °Mm.° I've heard that the new products .h are composed
6 of a traditional Chinese medicine. That is quite special.
7 (..)

8 T: Uhm:: but, do you think that the traditional Chinese
9 medicine .h have strong and strange smell? Many people
10 may refuse to use our ↑pro↓duct.
11 S: Hey. You've missed out a ↑po↓int. That is our product
12 also includes (.) natural ingredients (.) li:ke lavender
13 (.) which is successfully cover (.) the:: ↑smell brought
14 by the traditional Chinese medicine.
15 L: Mm::.. (.) It's one of the fo- ma- m- main focus, that uh
16 to promote our product. .h Uhm, it is not smelly even if
17 we have added the traditional Chinese medicine into
18 it.

In this interaction, the group simulates a marketing team meeting for the promotion of a new skincare product. Upon the initiation of the first topic 'special features of the product' by L (lines 3-4), K introduces the first feature of traditional Chinese medicine as a product ingredient, then adds a positive assessment (lines 5-6). This is, however, met with a disagreeing response from T. Her response begins with prolonged hesitation 'uhm', followed by a negative assessment of the Chinese medicine framed as a question (lines 8-9). Neither K nor T orients to the question as projecting an answer, as T continues to offer a further account for disagreement based on potential negative consumer reactions (lines 9-10).

The turn shape of T's disagreeing response in itself is noteworthy, indeed striking. It differs markedly from formulaic disagreeing responses (e.g. 'I'm sorry I can't agree with you') that feature an explicit disagreeing component, and which frequently occur in other group interactions in the data. Note also that, through her negative evaluative comment and the further account for disagreement, T topicalizes the previous speaker's contribution (Chinese medicine as a special feature) rather than deliver a new idea of her own.

Interestingly, T's talk is also followed by a disagreeing response (lines 11-14). S counters T's disagreement by commenting that T has 'missed out a point', which she then immediately reveals to be a compensatory feature of their product (line 11). Notably, such a sequential development, where a disagreeing response is followed by another one countering the first, is rarely observed in the data. More importantly, S is able to conveniently introduce this neglected feature both as a counter argument and

as a new idea that she contributes on the topic, as she elaborates on how other natural ingredients such as lavender can solve the problem of the smell brought by Chinese medicine (lines 12-14). Such a turn design enables S to seamlessly shift to her delivery of a new idea (other ingredients), while highlighting her talk as being contingent on both previous speakers' contribution by further developing the topic of Chinese medicine as a special feature of the product.

Such an interactional achievement by this group of students was recognized by the teacher-rater, Miss Cheung, who paused the video and commended the students in this episode of talk exchange during stimulated recall:

(5.11) PB14 Teacher Interview (TR-B, English original)

((TR pauses the video after line 10))

TR: Uh I like it how she **responded to something that K said**. So **rather than say something else..... she asked about it**.

Miss Cheung positively remarked that T raised a question about K's idea in her response, topicalizing the previous speaker's contribution rather than focusing on delivering her own idea. Subsequently, Miss Cheung also gave a favorable evaluation of S's response on how she further topicalized the feature of Chinese medicine and elaborated on how the problem with its smell can be solved. Throughout the stimulated recall, Miss Cheung commented several times that this group's interaction was 'authentic'.

Nevertheless, some aspects of the discourse in the assessed interaction give clues to the contrived character of this exchange. Students' intonation and the strangely 'neat' speaker transition with only one gap and no overlaps might have been a giveaway. More importantly, the students' unique ways of doing disagreement (cf. using formulaic expressions), which ostensibly suggested authentic interaction, was precisely one of the clues to a pre-planned, contrived interaction. Though performed in a playful tone here, the kind of unmitigated negative comment directed at a co-participant (line 11) rarely occurs in spontaneous assessed interactions, as it would probably constitute a direct face threat to a co-participant.

Indeed, the stimulated recall with students confirmed that the entire interaction was pre-scripted and rehearsed. Further into the interview with the teacher-rater in the above extract, her responses also demonstrated an awareness of the students pre-

planning and pre-scripting the assessed interaction. The teacher-rater's comments shown above, therefore, can perhaps be taken as her appreciation of the students' efforts and their competence in creating the appearance of an authentic interaction.

The issue of authenticity aside, this interactive episode shows how students, through contriving disagreement with one another's ideas, accomplish foregrounding their responses' contingency on previous speaker contribution, and how this is recognized by the teacher-rater as evidence of interactional competence. Other means through which students foreground the contingency of their responses on previous speaker contribution, and how this property of response turns constitute a crucial component of interactional competence as perceived by both students and teachers, will be discussed in Section 5.1.3.

Extending topic life

Another notable interactional function that students accomplish through contriving disagreement with one another is extending topic life – creating longer turns and sequences on a given topic. In doing so, the students are seen to exploit the sequence-expansion-relevant (Schegloff, 2007; Liddicoat, 2007) property of dispreferred responses (cf. preferred responses as sequence-closure-relevant). Consider the following example, in which students assuming the roles of marketing team members are deciding what type of shops to place their skincare product in:

(5.12) PB11: 162-188

- 1 Y: ((nodding)) Ye::s. Uh:: (.) maybe we can mos- move on to
2 the: place that we can sell the product. Do you think
3 that ma- supermarket is a:: best choice?=I think it is
4 convenient for the: office lady to buy our product.
5 (2.1)
6 K: Mm. Uh::m ((turns to S))
7 S: Mm: I hope I can not agree with you because (.)
8 supermarket are- more f- st- o- housewife is more:: (.)
9 s- often to go to supermarket, but our target group is
10 office lady, and there is a lot of <health and beauty (.)
11 care (.) stores> in Central. I think maybe we can put
12 our products (.) uh: uh- on the:: (.) on there.
13 R: Mm. I think uh health and- uh beauty care center is uh
14 quite suitable, for example, Watson's and, uh: uh these-

15 stores as uh (.) the office ladies always- always go::
16 (.) uh the: uh- these stores to buy their necessities
17 so:: they can t- uh notice our new products more uh
18 easily.
19 K: Mm. And also I think supermarket give a (.) uh im- an
20 impressions that uhm: it is for: to- for buying some: uh
21 food, and or some daily- (.) uh or some daily: uh
22 necessity, but not uhm some (.) skin:care: (.) product.
23 So I- but uhm: (.) some health and beauty store is more
24 suitable, uh as we have some- we have put our: products-
25 there for a long time, and, we have- we have a: (.)
26 quite good result, so I think I- we've- we should kept-
27 keep on that. And: we should not change a lot.

The segment begins with Y initiating the topic of 'place' and proposing the first idea of placing their product in supermarkets (lines 1-4). Following K's prolonged hesitation (line 6), which might be indicative of an incipient disagreeing response, S takes over the floor and gives a full-fledged disagreeing response. Note how after S begins with a hedged yet explicit disagreement component (line 7), she topicalizes the 'supermarket' proposal made by Y through providing an account for disagreeing – how supermarkets fit less well with their target customers (lines 7-10). She then goes on to propose the alternative of health and beauty care stores, citing their wide availability in the Central district where many of their target customers (i.e. 'office ladies') work (lines 10-12). In the following turn, R affiliates with S, adding the point that their target customers frequent these stores to get their 'necessities' (lines 13-18). K then comes in and further develops both ideas. She also displays disaffiliation with Y's 'supermarket' proposal, but she opts out of using an overt disagreement expression, offering instead an additional account for disagreeing (lines 19-22). Afterwards, K cites a previous experience (lines 24-26) in support of the 'health and beauty care store' alternative.

Therefore, we see how all four participants develop the same topic of 'place', evaluating the two alternatives through agreeing *and* disagreeing with one another, with substantive elaboration in their accounts for agreement/disagreement. Had only one proposal been made, and everyone agreed with it, there is reason to believe that the sequence as a whole, as well as each individual turn (a preferred response),

would be much shorter. We have already seen in Section 4.2.3 (Extract 4.67) how further agreeing responses (following the initial proposal and a first agreeing response) are sequentially justified to be brief, and does not come with an account for agreement or further elaboration. It would otherwise appear anomalous and superfluous for a proposed idea to engender several agreeing responses each with an account.

As this example shows, it is this sequence-expanding property of disagreeing responses that students sometimes exploit in contriving disagreement with one another. In some cases, they make use of this property through pre-scripting (during preparation time) the initiation and rejection of alternative ideas and proposals in the upcoming assessed interaction. This is what the students themselves refer to as ‘banning ideas’.

‘Banning ideas’ as a strategy

The discussion above, based on the analysis of students’ discourse in assessed interactions and their meta-discursive comments during stimulated recall, has explored the phenomenon whereby students contrive interactive exchanges involving disagreeing with each other. This is done primarily to accomplish two assessment-oriented interactional aims: to highlight the contingency of one’s response on previous speaker contribution, and to extend topic life by creating more talk. Further examination of this data along with students’ pre-task planning discussion before the mock assessment has identified a related, intriguing phenomenon of ‘banning ideas’. It is interesting partly because it is overtly talked about and applied in the strategic pre-planning and design of particular interactive episodes, as we will see from an extract of the pre-task planning discussion before a mock assessment. Another intriguing aspect is that it does not necessarily involve or result in disagreement – the pre-planned episode of ‘banning’ an idea may be played out in the assessed interaction in such a way that the students do not actually *disagree* with *co-participants*, but simply *contest* or *reject* a candidate *idea* or *suggestion*.

The extract below is from the pre-task planning discussion before a mock assessment, from which the contrived and pre-planned nature of ‘banning ideas’ in the assessed interaction is more or less self-evident.

(5.13) PB11MockPrep

- 1 K: Shall we do this silly old (「無聊」) thing again, *ban* something for a little bit?
2 S: Again we need to *ban* something? Are we going to talk about Mimi Chu again
3 [a proposal for spokesperson to be rejected]?
4 R: Huh? So we only consider one person and that's it [for the spokesperson
5 topic]? So we only get one *spokesperson*?
6 S: Yes
7 K: ((points to R)) You say let's have three [spokespeople].
8 Y: ((points to S)) No. Let's have one of you suggest three [spokespeople], but
9 then another disagree, saying the *cost* is too high this way. If all three are
10 *artists*, the cost will be very high.
11 S: ((writing down)) So that means we first *ban* [the idea of] three
12 [spokespeople], then suggest having one only. And then who are we gonna
13 get? Let's go with *Jacky Chan*.

Notice how, in beginning to pre-plan the exchange on the topic of spokesperson (lines 1-2), K proposes to 'ban' an idea just for the sake of doing it, without having considered the available alternatives and weighed their relative merits and drawbacks. It is seemingly on the premise of a tacitly agreed plan of 'banning' an idea that the group start to come up with alternatives and evaluate them, in terms of who to hire as spokesperson(s) and how many they should get (lines 3-6). K and Y then respectively make specific suggestions on the flow of exchanges on the topic (lines 8-11), including which group member to make an initial proposal and who follows up with a disagreeing response. S then confirms the sequence of turns and flow of ideas, and writes them down on her note card (lines 12-14). Evidently, then, we see how the exchange involving disagreement is pre-scripted into the assessed interaction rather than arising naturally from a genuine difference of opinion expressed during the interaction.

Next, consider the following two examples from the same mock assessment in which students are rejecting ideas without disagreeing with each other.

(5.14) PB11Mock: 50-67

- 1 S: So let's set our price now, right? (.) [°Yah.°
2 Y: [Uh do you
3 think::: uh two hundred for a bottle
4 -> is that \\too costly?
5 \\((glances briefly at S then turns to K))
6 K: -> \\I think so. It's \\not suitable. Uhm:: but I think uhm

7 \\((points to Y)) \\((gesturing for a no-like answer))
8 we should (.) our revenue should cover our cost, so I
9 think two hundred is reasonable.=But,
10 ((10 lines omitted))

Here, the opinion-seeking question FPP (lines 2-4) is formatted in such a way that it projects an answer SPP that rejects the proposed idea. Y asks if the marked price of \$200 per bottle of their vitamin pills product is ‘too costly’. It therefore sets up a sequential context in which a ‘yes-like’ answer (i.e. ‘it is too costly’) would be a design-based preferred SPP (Sidnell, 2010), while being an answer that in effect rejects the proposal of \$200 as the price. The alternative ‘no-like’ answer (i.e. ‘it is not too costly’) which supports the proposal, on the other hand, would be a dispreferred answer in relation to the design of the question FPP.

Indeed, as the sequence unfolds, we see how K’s response, which amounts to a rejection of Y’s proposal, exhibits some features of a preferred SPP. The initial components ‘I think so. It’s not suitable.’ (line 6) are produced immediately following Y’s question, without hesitation or delay. Moreover, these components are unmitigated, with K pointing to Y and gesturing for a ‘no-like’ answer (line 7). Further into the turn, K concedes her position, saying \$200 is ‘reasonable’, but goes on to propose the alternative of \$199 with an elaborate explanation about the illusion of a lower price it creates.

A similar example is found later in the same interaction (PB11Mock: 94-108, see Appendix T), in which the turn design of K’s question FPP ‘but, is this too costly to do so?’ is seen to invert the trajectory of pursuing agreement to the proposal being set up earlier in the turn, and project an answer SPP that rejects the proposal. The ensuing answer SPP from S takes the turn shape of both preferred (without delay or apologies) and dispreferred responses (hedged, with an account), displaying an orientation to her answer being simultaneously a ‘design-based’ preferred response that aligns with the design of the question FPP, and an ‘action-based’ dispreferred response (Sidnell, 2010) that disaligns with the trajectory of pursuing consensus.

5.1.3 Foregrounding the contingency of current speaker response on previous speaker contribution

In the previous two sections, we have looked at how students in School P design and pre-script various kinds of interactive episodes into their assessed interactions, such as sequences involving recall questions, question-and-answer, or disagreement. It has been shown that through such design and sequential positioning, the introduction of a new idea by a next speaker can be framed as part of a response that is contingent on the previous speaker's contribution, rather than forming a stretch of disjunctive talk in an adjacent turn.

This section will examine in greater detail and depth the nature of this interactional achievement that is at the heart of teacher-raters' evaluation and student-candidates' discursive (co-)construction of interactional competence in the SBA Group Interaction task. The discussion will draw on teacher-raters' interview responses, examiners' comments in the subject's Examination Report, and of course, students' discourse in the assessed interactions. It is envisaged that the synthesis of these data sources will help us arrive at a better understanding of this component of interactional competence, in particular, what constitutes a response that is *contingent* on previous speaker contribution, and the means to achieve and display this in interaction.

Teacher-raters' comments

The contingency of a response on previous speaker contribution is one of the interactional features most salient to teacher-raters in this study. This is evidenced by the fact that whenever asked to evaluate students' performance in terms of 'interaction', the teacher-raters almost invariably comment on this aspect of students' responses. For instance, in the stimulated recall for the group interaction LB06, the teacher-rater, Miss Chau, evaluated a student's performance in terms of how much of her talk developed on the previous speaker's idea as opposed to delivering her own idea:

(5.15) LB06 Teacher Interview

She [C] was able to *develop* her *arguments*. She didn't manage to do much interaction though. Well, maybe a little. She responded a little to W's idea about [a reality show on] *saving money*, but she didn't *elaborate* on it, and went on to talk about her own idea. That is, **she mostly focused on her own idea, and you see there's less interaction.....**

She held the floor for almost *30 seconds*... which I think is *okay*, since she managed to *develop* [her ideas]. **But since she went on for almost 30 seconds, mostly on her own points, then in terms of Communication Strategies, I can't give her a high rating at this moment.**

Miss Chau regarded C's response as displaying 'less interaction' with the previous speaker, W, as she did not 'elaborate on' the idea W proposed in the previous turn but mostly 'focused on her own idea'. This response, according to Miss Chau, would not earn C a high rating in the domain of Communication Strategies.

In an earlier interview without incorporating stimulated recall, the same teacher-rater offered an elaborate account of her general impression on the students' performance in Part A of SBA with respect to 'interaction':

(5.16) LA Teacher Interview

- 1 Res: Other than eye contact and their body orientation, how about other aspects of
2 interaction, for example, in terms of verbal exchange? Do you think there is
3 enough interaction?
4
5 TR: There isn't enough. For example, when they hear something they don't really
6 agree, they don't know how to refute. **Perhaps they don't even understand**
7 **what the previous speaker has said, but they always start** [their response] **by**
8 **saying 'I agree'. Or they simply ignore** [the previous speaker's contribution
9 altogether], **and move directly onto their own point.** So, not all of them are
10 able to do some *responding*, like, your *point* has some problems, or I would like
11 to *extend on your point*. They are not able to link [their own talk to that of the
12 previous speaker]. They can't establish that linkage.

Here, when asked about the quality of students' interaction in terms of verbal exchange, the teacher-rater lamented a general weakness among students in 'responding' to each other's prior talk. Examples of what is considered by the teacher-rater as *linking* one's talk to that of the previous speaker, or *responding*, include commenting on the problems with the previous speaker's ideas, or extending or developing their contribution (lines 10-11). Nevertheless, students were often observed to make minimal or no reference to the previous speakers' contribution before delivering their own ideas in their turns (lines 8-10). At issue here, as

reflected in the teacher-rater's comment, is that a response with minimal reference to previous speaker contribution yields little evidence of the current speaker's understanding of the prior talk (lines 6-8). The display of understanding prior talk, as it would seem, is a salient feature as well as crucial element of *interaction* to the teacher-rater.

A similar view was expressed by another teacher-rater, Miss Tong, in School P, who identified the same general weakness in the students' group interactions:

(5.17) PB Teacher Interview (TR-C)

Because in a lot of group *discussion* [assessments] like this, there's very often what I call 'turn-taking'. It doesn't mean just going *one two three four* [around the table], but **the fact that very often they wait till the other has delivered a whole lot of *information* before responding to that, and only very briefly, and then they would *jump* to another point.**

Miss Tong here referred to a response pattern very similar to what was identified by Miss Chau in School L: students provide only very brief comments on previous speakers' ideas before moving on to deliver their own. Their talk in the current turn, therefore, displays little evidence of being contingent on the previous speaker's contribution. Note how the teacher-rater attributed a pejorative sense to the term 'turn-taking', which aptly describes how students *take turns* to present their own ideas one after another as though it were a series of mini individual presentations, rather than engaging in interacting with one another. Also evident in both teacher-raters' comments is that brief displays of affiliative stance (e.g. 'I agree') are not considered adequate responses, and do not constitute sufficient evidence of the participant having understood the prior talk. Correspondingly, Miss Tong in School P describes a strong candidate as someone who:

(5.18) PA Teacher Interview (TR-C)

1. listens carefully,
2. can give an appropriate response, and
3. can initiate and further develop ideas.

Comments in Examination Reports

The above two teacher-raters' views on students' performance in terms of the quality of interaction are highly consistent with those of examiners in the external speaking examination, the first part of which is also a Group Interaction task. The

following are extracts of examiners' collective opinion presented in the Examination Reports for HKDSE English Language – Paper 4 Speaking in 2012 and 2013. The first two extracts below show aspects of candidates' performance that examiners complimented on within the rating domains of (II) Communication strategies and (IV) Ideas and organization²²:

Communication strategies

Examiners commented that better candidates..... showed an ability to **follow up what was said by the previous speaker**..... (HKEAA, 2013b, p.181)

Ideas and organization

Such candidates [those awarded top marks] also tended to be those who **actively engaged in listening** to others [sic] contributions **to adapt and modify what they had planned to say** in order to attempt to produce a coherent discussion. (HKEAA, 2012, p.181)

In contrast, examiners showed disapproval of some candidates' dependence on prepared notes or pre-scripted speech, remarking on how they inhibit 'genuine interaction':

[M]any candidates had made **copious notes** on their notecards, some having even written **whole speeches**... it led candidates to treat the group interaction as an opportunity to **present a pre-prepared speech** or series of speeches from their notecard **rather than genuinely interacting** with other candidates. (HKEAA, 2012, p.180)

Consequently, according to the examiners, even candidates strong in the two language criteria (Pronunciation and Delivery; Vocabulary and Language Patterns) scored less well in Communication strategies, 'as the amount of actual interaction with other candidates was severely limited by such a strategy' (*ibid.*). This also has a negative impact on the other rating domain related to the quality of interaction:

Such candidates also scored less in Ideas and organization than they may have if they had tried to **build on the ideas presented by their fellow group members**. (*ibid.*)

In the 'General recommendations' section of the Examination Report in both 2012 and 2013, examiners reiterated the importance of listening to co-participants'

²² Parts of the text in bold are my emphasis.

talk and responding to what they have said rather than concentrating on delivering the candidates' own prepared ideas:

Candidates are advised **to listen attentively** to the contributions by other candidates and provide appropriate responses to each other **rather than just focusing on their own prepared contributions**. (HKEAA, 2013b, p.182)

[The Group Interaction task]... requires willingness... to genuinely enter into real interactions and communication with their fellow candidates and examiners. Unfortunately, a number of candidates treated Part A as an individual performance which they prepared in the preparation time..... Their main focus should always be on **listening** to others and **genuinely reacting and elaborating on what others have just said**. (HKEAA, 2012, p.181)

Interactional competence as providing a contingent response

Recurrent in the extracts of teacher-raters' interview responses and Examination Reports shown above are remarks about (1) listening to and understanding co-participants' talk and (2) linking one's own talk to previous speaker contribution. These are therefore emergent characterizations of some important components of interactional competence being assessed in the Group Interaction task. One immediate question, however, is what constitutes evidence for such kinds of competence in the students. Needless to say, in the context of a speaking assessment, we need verbal (and non-verbal) displays which constitute publicly available evidence of competence, 'visible' to and assessable by the teacher-raters. Taking into account the fact that such kinds of evidence are indispensably discursive constructions, the abovementioned two aspects of interactional competence, as they are actually assessed, can be reformulated as follows:

- (1) verbal (and non-verbal) displays of having listened to and understood the talk by previous speaker(s)*
- (2) production of talk in a current turn that is contingent on previous speaker contribution*

These two aspects of interactional competence are inextricably related, in that the production of a response that is contingent on previous speaker contribution depends, in most cases, on the current speaker having listened to and understood the talk in the prior turn. Precisely due to this dependence, the production of talk in a

current turn that is contingent on previous speaker contribution can be taken as evidence of the current speaker's comprehension of the prior talk. In other words, the two aspects (1) and (2) are often evaluated together, with (2) taken as the evidence of (1). On the other hand, acknowledgement tokens (e.g. *mm*), agreement tokens (e.g. *yes*), and formulaic agreement expressions (e.g. 'I agree with you'), although ubiquitously used in displaying receipt and claiming understanding of prior talk in everyday conversation (in particular the first two kinds), are treated as insufficient responses and evidence of understanding within this assessment context. This is manifested in both teacher-raters' comments and the design of some students' response turns, as we have seen in Sections 4.2.3-4.2.5. More overt and elaborate forms of displaying the current speaker talk's contingency on previous speaker contribution seem to be required in the assessed interactions. Such a requirement is also evident in the examiners' comments shown above, such as to 'follow up', 'build on', 'provide appropriate responses to', and 'elaborating on' what the previous speaker has said. The following section describes several means of fulfilling this requirement in the assessed interactions.

Means of foregrounding a response's contingency on previous speaker contribution

Analysis of students' discourse in the assessed interactions has identified several means through which students foreground the contingency of their talk on previous speaker contribution. Each of them will now be exemplified.

1. Accounting for agreement/disagreement with the previous speaker

In Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, we have seen how some students, in the production of their agreeing responses, treat their turn-initial agreeing component (e.g. 'I agree with you') as incomplete and have an account for agreement latched onto this component. Such a turn design seems to be at odds with the structural preference for agreement in everyday conversation, whereby preferred responses are generally brief. We have also noted, in Section 5.1.2, how some students design and pre-script disagreeing responses with an account into their assessed interactions. In both cases, the relevant discussions have established how these responses incorporating an account for agreement or disagreement serve to highlight the contingency of the

current turn-at-talk on the previous speaker's contribution. In the following, we consider one more segment, in which there is a series of agreeing/disagreeing responses available for comparison. None of the responses has developed the previous speaker's idea in an elaborate manner, but the disagreeing response with an account seems to be the only one which has explicitly referred to content elements in the prior turn.

In this extract, the group is talking about the 'special features' of their tablet computer product that they are promoting. Each of the four participants delivers one idea on 'special features' in their turn, either with or without (dis)agreeing with the previous speaker's idea.

(5.19) PB06: 56-74

- 1 Y: Mm! Apart from: special order, we ha::ve special shape.
2 (.) Uhm such a::s: heart, star, or diamond. It's special.
3 A: Yes.=I think the tablet computer (.) mm have 3D
4 projection function. It can project 3D image, so that we
5 can: watch 3D movies.
6 D: Oh, it's (.) very great. But how about convenience?=I
7 think uh the tablet computer can be carried (.) to:
8 everywhere and it's
9 ((Y looking down at her note card))
10 very convenient.
11 ((Y turns her head up and looks at D))
12 Y: Uhm: I'm sorry I'm afraid I don't agree with you,
13 because most of the tablet computers are convenient.
14 However, I thin:k (.) thin can be one of our: special
15 features, because it is only zero <point three::> M M.
16 (1.4)
17 R: °Mm.° Beside, this- tablet computer is waterproof. Uh:
18 (.) if we- if you (.) overturn a cup of water (.) on
19 the- this (.) tablet computer, it still work. Uh I think
20 it's really important for some careless users.

Consider first the disagreeing turn produced by Y (lines 12-15) in response to the idea proposed by D in the immediately prior turn. Note how the structure of Y's disagreeing response is typical among the group interactions in the data. It begins with a hesitation token 'uhm', then a formulaic disagreement expression prefaced

with an apology (line 12), followed by an account that the property of ‘convenience’ is not unique to the tablet computer produced by their company. She then suggests the alternative that their tablet computer is very ‘thin’ (lines 14-15). Thus, we see how Y formats her response such that the first part of her turn ‘talks about’ the previous speaker’s idea, picking out snippets (or indeed, the gist) of D’s talk in the prior turn and developing it, as she accounts for her disagreement with D. In other words, Y is topicalizing, albeit only briefly, the previous speaker’s idea of ‘convenience’ in her current turn. Her own idea is then presented in a later part of the turn (lines 14-15), linked to the first part of her turn as well as D’s prior turn as an alternative proposal.

The next turn by R (lines 17-20) comes in sharp contrast with Y’s turn. Notably, beginning with an acknowledgement token ‘mm’ uttered in low volume, R’s response has no overt display of agreement or disagreement. Nor is there any component further into the turn that pursues Y’s idea of ‘thickness’, commenting on or developing it, making it all the more ambiguous as to whether R holds an affiliative or disaffiliative stance towards Y’s idea. R goes on to proffer his own idea that the tablet computer is waterproof, elaborates on this feature (lines 18-19) and adds a positive assessment (line 20).

It can be argued that R has given a *relevant* response, as he delivers an idea on the ongoing topic of ‘special features’. In fact, it is probably constructed as such, evidenced by R prefacing his new idea with ‘beside’ (line 17) following his acknowledgement of Y’s prior talk. However, it is likely that R’s talk in this turn would not be considered *contingent* on previous speaker Y’s contribution. It could be interpreted by the teacher-rater that R is simply presenting his own ideas rather than responding to the previous speaker, as he has not even displayed agreement or disagreement with Y. This would seem to be the kind of a response Miss Chau (School L) refers to in the above comment – that students sometimes simply ignore the previous speaker’s contribution and go directly to delivering their own idea.

Further comparison can be made between Y’s disagreeing turn and the earlier turns produced by A (lines 3-5) and D (lines 6-8), the latter two both containing some agreement component. In lines 3-5, A begins her response to Y’s idea of their tablet computer having special shapes (lines 1-2) with an agreement token ‘yes’.

However, this is latched onto the next component in which A moves on to deliver her own idea of the '3D projection function'. The status of 'yes' therefore remains somewhat ambiguous as a token that displays agreement or one that simply acknowledges the completion of the prior turn and the relevance of speaker change. D's following turn opens with a more overt display of affiliation, a positive assessment 'oh, it's very great' (line 6). However, he then moves on to propose his own idea of 'convenience', prefaced with 'but how about...'. This again invites questions of whether he genuinely agrees with A's proposal, or it is an agreement-prefaced disagreement taking the shape of 'yes, but...'. Assuming both A and D's responses are indeed agreeing responses, their lack of an account for agreement is not surprising as preferred responses. Nonetheless, in the assessment context, as we have seen in previous discussions, this is often treated by teacher-raters as providing inadequate evidence for the participant having understood and genuinely agreeing with the previous speaker.

Although there is no stimulated recall data with teacher-raters for this particular segment, one teacher-rater (TR-C) in School P made the following comment on another group's performance, endorsing disagreeing responses that include an account as evidence of understanding the prior speaker's talk:

(5.20) PB11 Teacher Interview (TR-C)

Res: Right, I noticed something that is quite special about this group, that they have more instances of *disagreement*. Very often one of them would *propose* an idea, and then some other would say 'it's not very good though', and then gives an *alternative proposal* or something. Will this give the *examiner* a better impression?

TR: It will. If this is in a *speaking exam* where the four *candidates* do not know each other, **and during the discussion you can give a counter argument, that means you have understood what the other speaker wishes to express**, and then you offer a *choice* that in your opinion is more *sensible*, that I think should be given credit in the criteria *Ideas* [and organization] or *Communication strategies*.

The first part of the teacher-rater's answer suggests her awareness of the disagreements in the SBA group interactions often being contrived and pre-scripted. Regardless, her response does indicate that an account for disagreement (or, in her words, 'a counter argument') can serve as evidence of understanding the previous speaker's talk, and would be given credit in the rating process. She also stated, in another interview response, that if all students are pre-planning and pre-scripting

their interactions, then those who make an effort to simulate authentic aspects of interaction (and do so effectively) should be given credit.

On comparing different responses in the above segment, it has been shown that providing an account for (dis)agreement is one of the means to foreground the current turn's contingency on previous speaker contribution. Moreover, taking into account the preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses, the above example illustrates how it is more likely for a disagreeing response (than an agreeing response) to topicalize the idea in the previous speaker's turn with some degree of elaboration. This is because disagreements are typically dispreferred actions which project an account from the disagreeing speaker.

2. Making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk

Participants are seen to sometimes, during their own turn, make explicit references to previous speakers and their talk. This is often accomplished through a combination of verbal and non-verbal actions, such as using the appositional phrase 'as you mentioned before' and gesturing to the previous speaker. These actions signal unambiguously to co-participants as well as the teacher-rater that the forthcoming talk in the current turn is contingent on the talk done by the previous speaker being referred to.

The first example below shows a case where the current speaker refers to an idea proposed by a previous speaker several turns before. Here, the group's task is to come up with a reality TV show, and the discussion has been on whether to invite celebrities or everyday people as participants of the show.

(5.21) LB06: 83-91

1 W: -> And also I think, just like you suggested ((points to
2 C)), uh sh- short film director, maybe some artists they
3 are interest in this film but maybe: he or she is a
4 singer so no one (is trying to XXX) talents o- in this
5 film or those X- those professionals. So I think this (.)
6 show if we can invite some celebrities to get in (.) the
7 show and then try to (.) show their talents about (.)
8 directing a short film, it will be attracting to:
9 audience and the audience can (.) know that oh! this
10 celebrity is- know some skills (.)°about (.) this film.°

In this turn, W refers to the proposal made by a previous speaker, C, for a show where contestants act as short film directors, and uses this to make a case for inviting celebrities to participate in the show. Reference to C's prior talk is prefaced by the oppositional phrase 'just like you suggested' and a simultaneous non-verbal signal of gesturing to C. It is perhaps not surprising that W makes explicit reference to C here, as she is re-introducing an idea that C proposed four turns before the current one, with the talk in the immediately previous turn not specifically about the 'short film director' show. Here, making explicit reference to C and her idea for the show can be seen as a springboard for W to (re-)topicalize this idea, making a suggestion on participants of the show based on this theme of the show (lines 2-10).

The following second extract shows an example of the current speaker making explicit reference to the talk by the *immediately* previous speaker. Such a design is part of a more notable attempt in foregrounding the contingency of the current speaker's talk on previous speaker contribution. Here, the group is discussing a controversial part of the plot in the movie, *My Sister's Keeper*, where one of the characters, Anna, sued her parents for forcing her to donate one of her kidneys to her sister, Kate. We will see how one participant, S, develops the previous speaker's idea and discursively highlights that she is doing so.

(5.22) LA03: 23-49

1 H: ((6 lines omitted)) and because her mother is
2 really you know overprotective to her daughter. And uh
3 She'll always be very angry and, you know she's very
4 angry when she know that (uh when) she received the
5 court letter, and also she's very angry about uh Kate's
6 decision, she's so furious and (give up)
7 so it's right to go to the court, yeah.
8 S: -> \\Uh as- you mentioned before
9 \\((Gaze alternates between H and note card, gestures
10 twice towards H))
11 that the mother is angry with her daughter and uh I
12 think Sara uh the mother in this movie is totally get
13 lost in this situation. And sh- she loves her daughter
14 very much and (.) she's not willing (.) her daughter to
15 die, and (..) I think she's too focused on her daughter
16 who's sick, and I think uh send to the court is the only

17 way that to let someone not involved in this uhm this uh
18 uh situation to tell the mother (what) is wrong or right.
19 So I think (°Anna did the right thing too°)

Here, S makes overt reference to the idea that she extracts from H's prior talk in formulating an affiliative response to H's preceding turn. She does so by prefacing the idea with 'as you mentioned before' (lines 8-10), using the second person pronoun in conjunction with the non-verbal cues of gaze and gesticulation in addressing the previous speaker, H. By virtue of making this explicit reference, S accomplishes two things. First, she draws co-participants' focus to the idea which she extracts from the prior discourse and subsequently topicalizes in her own talk. Second, she highlights the fact that she is incorporating the previous speaker's idea into her talk.

Notice how S alternates the direction of her gaze between H and her own note card (lines 9-10) as she utters 'as you mentioned before'. It is not unreasonable to postulate that part of S's subsequent talk further in her turn is from her own prepared ideas. Nonetheless, in drawing explicit reference to H's prior turn and looking at her, S makes it interactionally 'visible' that her talk is at least in part developing, or in other words, contingent on H's prior talk.

Thus, we see how participants sometimes underline the contingency of their talk in the current turn on previous speaker contribution through making explicit anaphoric reference to it (e.g. 'as you mentioned before'). Specifically, in doing so, the current speaker (1) marks the forthcoming stretch of talk as based on previous speaker contribution, and (2) highlights their very action of incorporating previous speaker contribution in their talk.

3. Formulating or partially repeating the previous speaker's idea(s)

Next, we consider how a current speaker constructs their turn as contingent on co-participants' prior discourse through formulating or partially repeating the ideas put forward by the previous speaker(s). The example below illustrates this:

(5.23) LA06: 39-45

1 W: [(°Yes°)
2 ((turns from looking at T and looks down at note card))

3 Uhm yes I agree with you.=I also think that uh Woody is
 4 my favorite (.) uh character in this film.
 5 \\Uh other than (.) uh: \\loyal,
 6 **\\((looks up))** **\\((looks at T))**
 7 \\uh he- he's l(h)oyal t(h)o his owner \\and he's a (.)
 8 **\\((continue orienting to T))** **\\((turns to O))**
 9 \\uhm (.) \\a- very:: (.) good leader, >I also think
 10 **\\((makes an illustrative hand gesture))**
 11 **\\((looks up, and O nods))**
 12 that he's very brave.=Uhm because< uh (.) uh:: (.)

The topic under discussion is to choose a favorite character from the movie, *Toy Story 3*. W's turn presented here follows those of O and T (see LA06: 9-38 in Appendix T), both of whom have also chosen Woody as their favorite character. Notably, W formats her turn in such a way to first 'repeat' the previous speakers' reasons for choosing Woody (lines 5-9), before adding another positive attribute of the character as her own contribution (lines 9-12). She does so by attempting a complex construction 'other than... also...', formulating T and O's ideas ('loyal', 'a very good leader' respectively) in the first clause as GIVEN information, and introducing her own idea ('very brave') in the second clause as NEW information. Apart from using the same or very similar wording as T and O's original formulations, W also marks the ideas as previous speakers' contributions by making eye contact with the respective speakers when referring to their ideas (lines 6 and 8).

Also worth noticing is W's express effort in constructing her talk as contingent on the previous speakers' talk, made particularly manifest through her difficulties in the production of this first part of her turn referring to the previous speakers' ideas (lines 5-12). One difficulty faced by W is seen in her attempt to incorporate the adjective 'loyal' in the complex construction starting with 'other than...'. Here, she initiates a self-repair (line 7) after her first production (line 5). The repairable 'other than uh loyal' is ungrammatical, as 'other than' needs to be followed by a noun or noun phrase, not an adjective. In the course of her second production, which has also failed to be grammatical, W laughs as she utters 'loyal to his owner' (line 7). When formulating O's idea that Woody is a very good leader, W is again evidently having

difficulties, evident in her staggered production with hesitations and pauses. As soon as she gets to deliver her own idea, her talk becomes faster and more fluent (lines 9 and 12). Other non-verbal actions, such as looking upwards (lines 6, 11) and making an illustrative hand gesture (line 10), are also indicative of W's effort in recalling and formulating the previous speakers' ideas. The very fact that W attempts to formulate the previous speakers' ideas, notwithstanding her difficulties, underlines her endeavor in linking her talk to the previous speakers' contributions. We will look at formulating previous speakers' talk again in Section 5.2, with more examples and in more detail.

4. Elaborating on the previous speaker's idea(s)

Finally, we look at how a current speaker elaborates on or further develops a previous speaker's idea as a means of highlighting the contingency of their talk on the prior discourse. We have already seen an example of this (Extract 4.56) in Section 4.2.2. The following extract shows an example of a participant developing previously introduced ideas further away from the current turn.

In this interaction of LB06, the group's task is to come up with a reality TV show and discuss arrangements for the show such as participants and place. Three kinds of reality TV show have been proposed. The 'identity swap show' proposed by T has been challenged by E and W (LB06: 14-26) and subsequently dropped in T's own interim summary of the discussion (LB06: 61-65). The other two proposals, namely W's 'money saving challenge' and C's 'short film director contest', have received affiliative responses from group members. Prior to the extract below, the group has been discussing what people to invite as participants of the show.

(5.24) LB06: 92-101

1 C: Yeah. And I think uh:: I can also invite some directors
2 to be the judges of the show. .hh Uh but talking about
3 your:: idea of reality s- show of saving money maybe .h
4 we can invite some professionals like uh financial
5 consultant to be .h one of the .h uh judges in uh: (.)
6 the competition to increase the uhm (.) reliability of
7 the show. .h And: for: a: uh- uh identity swap ((smiles))
8 idea that you've mentioned maybe we can .h uh invite a
9 ps:ychologist to the show so we can: like track the (.)

10 uh mental changes of the person who have like
11 (.)°changed their jobs.°

In this response turn by C, she first follows up on W's idea of inviting celebrities to be contestants of the short film director contest, adding that she could invite some directors to be the 'judges' (lines 1-2). C then makes explicit anaphoric references to the shows two previous speakers (W and T) have proposed (lines 2-3; 7-8), and makes further suggestions on possible 'judges' for these shows (lines 4-7; 8-11). In effect, then, what C does is elaborate on the show proposals made by the previous speakers.

Particularly interesting in this example is how C, in incorporating previous speakers' ideas in her own contribution, even 'recycled' rejected proposals. Specifically, in lines 7-11, C makes the suggestion of inviting psychologists based on T's idea of an 'identity swap show', which has been challenged earlier and dropped. The 'recycling' of this rejected proposal as if it were still being considered by the group is slightly odd in terms of topic development. However, it is precisely this ostensibly 'indiscriminate' use of an overturned proposal that lends support to C's endeavor in constructing her talk as building on previous speakers' contributions, rather than simply delivering her own ideas. Notably, this was recognized by the teacher-rater with a positive remark, as she gave a comparative account of the quality of W and C's turns as responses to prior speakers.

(5.25) LB06 Teacher Interview

Res: So, for the responses of the two [W and C] just now

TR: It's quite *natural*. She [W] is *feeding* on the previous speaker's ideas and add something else. *Not exactly* responding to the two previous speakers, as she jumped to the idea of 'director'. C does this better. She expresses agreement on one idea, then add another idea, and does this *naturally*. **[What she says] is not exactly what's written on the note card**, so like we can invite some *artists* to be the judges, or *psychologists* to do some *mental description*, *observe* their *mental change*, and so on.

The teacher-rater noted how C's talk is not based on prepared ideas. As students in School L had only 10 minutes to prepare the assessed interaction individually, it was very unlikely that C had already known the kinds of reality TV shows co-participants were going to propose. Her suggestions on judges which were

tailored for the shows proposed by previous speakers, therefore, constitute compelling evidence of C having listened to and understood co-participants' prior talk, as well as her ability to produce a contingent response, displaying interactional competence.

Summary and distributional patterns across group interactions

In summary, four major ways in which students foreground the contingency of their own talk on previous speaker contribution have been identified:

- (1) Accounting for agreement/disagreement with the previous speaker: providing reasons for either supporting or contesting/rejecting ideas proposed by a previous speaker.
- (2) Making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk: overtly attributing an idea to a previous speaker, i.e. discursively marking an idea as a previous speaker's contribution.
- (3) Formulating or partially repeating the previous speaker's idea(s): mentioning the previous speaker's idea(s) in the current speaker's own words or in similar wording to the previous speaker's.
- (4) Elaborating on the previous speaker's idea(s): developing the previous speaker's idea(s) through giving additional arguments or details, providing specific examples, or making further suggestions.

An important point to note is that a *contingent* response in this assessment context is *not* equivalent to a *relevant* response, in which the current speaker might offer a related yet separate idea on the ongoing topic (see lines 17-20, Extract 5.19 above). By (1) and (4), the current speaker constructs a contingent response by topicalizing a previous speaker's idea: picking out some content elements from a prior speaker's turn, and commenting on or developing it. As for (2) and (3), the current speaker 'repeats' some element(s) of a previous speaker's talk, and verbally or non-verbally marks their undertaking of this action.

Another remarkable aspect about the means of foregrounding contingency is the differential patterns of their use among the group interactions with and without extended preparation time. For instance, accounting for agreement/disagreement commonly feature in the pre-scripted interactions in School P (with extended

preparation time). However, the most striking pattern is that (2) making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk using appositional phrases such as ‘as you mentioned before’ is notably absent in all the pre-scripted interactions in School P, but characteristic of the more spontaneous group interactions in School L. It is perhaps no accident that this means of foregrounding contingency was also used by one group (PB14) in School P in their mock assessment, when the students were given only 10 minutes preparation time.

(5.26) PB14Mock: 85-99

1 T: °Uhm::° (.) ((looks down at note card)) I think sell::
 2 our product to school by free gift is (to me) is a good
 3 idea also. .hh Because can let students to try our
 4 products, and:: (.) and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.)
 5 our: fo- our features of our products. ((turns from note
 6 card to K)) °What do you think?°
 7 S: \\You guy got a- (you) got a good poi:nt.
 8 \\((glances across the group))
 9 And I think uh:: we can-
 10 -> or- \\>just similar to< what XX((name of T)) uh said,
 11 \\((gestures to T))
 12 uhm we can: give some fr- free goods to schools and
 13 cooperate with them, and promote our product to- the
 14 student who:: got an: who have obesity p- the problem of
 15 (.) obesity. So uh we can take reference for their BMI
 16 to promote our products and, .h (on one side) we can
 17 help (.) uh better (health){help}, on their health.

In this segment and its several preceding turns, the group is discussing various promotional strategies for their slimming product. Two aspects of the way in which S constructs her talk as contingent on previous speakers’ contribution are worth noting.

First, S begins her turn with the affiliative assessment ‘you guy[s] got a good point’ (lines 7-8). The collective address ‘you guy[s]’ and the accompanying non-verbal action of looking across the group signal the comment’s inclusivity of all three group members who have contributed to the discussion of promotional strategies rather than just the immediately preceding speaker, T. This can be seen as an attempt by S to economically acknowledge receipt and claim understanding of all the ideas

proposed thus far, given that five substantial turns (PB14Mock: 55-90) have passed since her last turn. She then responds to the talk by the immediately prior speaker T in more detail through elaborating on her idea and making further suggestions (lines 9-17).

The second noteworthy aspect is in how S prefaces her elaboration with ‘just similar to what XX((name of T)) uh said’, simultaneously gesturing to T (lines 10-11). Therefore, S foregrounds the contingency of her talk on the previous speaker’s contribution via explicit anaphoric reference to T’s prior talk, which, as mentioned, is not observed in other group interactions in School P. Here, by attributing to T the idea she is elaborating on in the forthcoming talk, S displays understanding of T’s talk in the prior turn. Meanwhile, this preface also functions as an overt marker that the ensuing talk is developing from (‘similar to’) T’s idea introduced in the last turn. Note also how this is a repaired construction following the abandonment of ‘And I think we can’ (line 9), which re-orientes the forthcoming talk as concerning the previous speaker T’s idea rather than her own. This provides further evidence for the discursive foregrounding of the current talk’s contingency on previous speaker contribution on the part of S.

In the above discussion, we have seen the different ways in which students highlight their talk in a current turn as contingent on the previous speaker’s contribution. These actions amount to the participants’ displays of having listened to and understood the previous speakers’ discourse. Correspondingly, we have also seen how raters recognize this aspect of students’ performance as evidence of their interactional competence (or lack thereof). Also noted was how one of the means to foreground contingency – making explicit verbal and non-verbal reference to previous speakers and their talk – is characteristic of the interactions without extended preparation time but largely absent in those interactions with extended preparation time. This might have implications for the validity of the two types of group interactions, which we will come back to in Chapter 6. In the next section, we look at some other aspects in students’ construction of interactional competence, with particular reference to features of their talk that seem to be designed for the teacher-rater as the overhearing audience.

5.2 The interactional architecture of SBA Group Interaction: participation framework, identities, and complexities

In this section, we look at some aspects of the ‘interactional architecture’ (Young, 2011) of the SBA Group Interaction task. Who is speaking to whom? What roles or identities participants orient themselves to in interacting with one another? As discussed in Chapter 2, the growing adoption of the paired or group oral assessment formats is in part due to the consideration that test-takers are likely to find it less intimidating to interact with peers rather than an examiner. In adopting or analyzing peer group interaction as a speaking assessment task, it is tempting to take for granted that the test-takers are necessarily interacting with one another, with their talk addressed to each other. In designing and implementing the task in a school-based assessment context, perhaps equally tempting for us is to assume that, since the students are interacting with their own classmates, it must be like friends speaking with one another in everyday, low-stress conditions.

Scrutiny of students’ discourse in the assessed interactions reveals that the interactional architecture of the Group Interaction task is more complex than we might have imagined. The teacher-rater, although not participating in the talk exchange itself, is still an integral part of the group interaction’s participation framework: there are substantive elements of the students’ talk which are demonstrably oriented to the teacher-rater as a ratified yet unaddressed recipient, rather than to fellow participants. Moreover, although students in the same group are classmates and perhaps close friends with one another, they do not seem to orient to such identities and relationships in the group interactions. All these aspects have implications for the nature of interactional competence being assessed, and the validity of the task in assessing such competence.

5.2.1 Talk designed for the overhearing teacher-rater

5.2.1.1 Teacher-rater as ratified overhearer: two preliminary recipient design features

Non-verbal signals of engaging the overhearing audience

Students' non-verbal signals of engaging an overhearing audience in their group interaction, displayed particularly at the beginning of the interaction, offer preliminary evidence for the ratification of the teacher-rater as an 'intended overhearer' or 'unaddressed recipient'.

(5.27) PB11: 1-7

```
1 ((Timer beeps))
2 S:    \\Hello: my teammates, I have received a: task from our
3       \\((looking in the camera's direction; head oriented to microphone))
4       boss that we have to create a new beauty care product
5       for our (.) ↓new seasons. And, maybe we can start by
6       discussing how to create it. ((turns her head to Y and
7       then to K))
8       (...)
```

At line 2, S commences the discussion by greeting her group members, addressing them as 'my teammates'. Remarkably, however, as she utters 'hello my teammates', S is looking in the camera's direction (also where the teacher-rater sits) and her head is oriented to the microphone. In other words, the gaze direction (and body orientation) of S is not in alignment with her verbal address to her co-participants. In everyday interactions, verbally addressing a small group of three or four members while not looking at any of them is likely to be treated as accountable (possibly rude) behavior. The fact that S does exactly that to her classmates here, while no co-participant treats this as problematic, constitutes evidence that the group orients to their collective talk exchange as being addressed to an overhearing audience – the teacher-rater, and an imagined audience watching the video-recording. Similar overhearer-oriented non-verbal behavior is seen in the opening talk of another group interaction, as in the extract below:

(5.28) PB06: 1-10

```
1 ((Timer beeps))
2 D:    Good afternoon \\everyone.
3       \\((looks towards the camera))
4       \\We're here today to discuss about how to promote our
5       \\((turns to Y; Y turns away and look at camera))
```


6 exis\\ting product[k] (.) uh the tablet computer.
 7 \\((glances at camera, then orients to group members again))
 8 Uh why don't we start by talking about the target groups
 9 of our product? And I think the young professionals or
 10 teenagers can be one of our target groups.

Reformulations in self-repairs using more complex language

Another aspect of overhearer-oriented design is seen in some of the students' self-repairs, in which they restart and reformulate part of their turn using more complex language than the original version. Consider the following two examples:

(5.29) LA06: 85-87

1 O: Yes! I agree with you=I think Bar- uh I really
 2 appreciate Barbie uhm because >she's very brave and
 3 she's very clever to trick Ken in order to save her
 4 friends<.

(5.30) PA11: 106-116

1 D: So:, how can we tackle the problem <if they cannot> fix
 2 it.
 3 W: I think they can try to go to the restaurant to find the
 4 woman who give them the: lucky cookie to seek help.
 5 R: ↑Uhm: (.) I ↑understand why you say ↓so, but, if you
 6 remember, uh- the characters already go to the
 7 restaurant to seek help from the woman, but (.) they
 8 cannot- they come back in vain.

In the first example, O cuts off the ongoing construction of her second TCU 'I think Bar-' (line 1). Immediately then, she restarts the construction, reformulating it into 'I really appreciate [admire] Barbie' (lines 1-2), using a more difficult (albeit semantically anomalous²³) vocabulary item 'appreciate' over 'think' in the original construction. In the second example, in challenging W's suggestion by reminding her of the futility of that solution in the movie, R initiates a self-repair in lines 7-8. She cuts off the TCU midway ('they cannot-'), and reformulates it as 'they come back in vain'. R might have been on her way to spelling out the outcome in concrete terms –

²³ *Appreciate* requires an inanimate object complement as a selectional restriction of the verb.

‘they cannot change back into their own bodies’. Instead, she opts for the reformulated version with the phrase ‘in vain’. Not only is this a more abstract characterization of the outcome, the level of difficulty for ‘in vain’ as a vocabulary item is also likely to be higher than any of the words in ‘change back into their own bodies’. Consider one more example, in which the linguistic complexity of the reformulated version is apparent in the student’s production itself.

(5.31) PA05: 78-80

1 S: For example, =Miss Colen{Coleman} (.) uh[r] have
2 to- her o↑riginal i- uh[r] responsibility is to: (.) uh
3 sup↑port and take care the family.

Here, S aborts the first version of her TCU midway at ‘have to-’, replacing it with a new formulation ‘her original responsibility’. The second formulation is more complex at different linguistic levels. ‘Original responsibility’ is more complex than ‘have to’ lexically, phonetically (with 10 syllables instead of two), and syntactically (involving nominalization of the verbal predicate into the subject noun phrase of the clause). The linguistic complexity and difficulty of this formulation to S herself is evident in her staggered production and hesitation (line 2).

A point worth noticing is that, in the first two cases, the repairable (the talk being reformulated) does not appear inherently problematic, containing no language error. As for the third example, the repair does not seem to target the subject-verb agreement error (*Miss Coleman...have to’). The students’ reformulation of their ongoing talk into more complex versions, therefore, is reasonably seen as reflecting their orientation to the ‘assessability’ of their talk (Stokoe, 2013), with elements of their talk thus recipient-designed to the overhearing teacher-rater.

The teacher-rater is thus somewhat ambivalently oriented to as an ‘addressed’ or ‘unaddressed recipient’: ‘addressed’ in the sense that the students’ visual attention is sometimes directed to her, and ‘unaddressed’ in the sense that students do not typically address the teacher-rater verbally with the pronoun *you* or elicit talk from her within the assessed interaction. However, of most significance is the fact that the teacher *is* oriented to as some kind of a recipient, and students’ talk is *recipient-designed* to the teacher-rater. This is preliminarily evidenced by how students’ reformulations with more complex language seem to be done for the teacher-rater’s

benefit. More substantive evidence is found in students' formulations of previous speakers' and their own talk, which we will examine below. The classification of the teacher-rater as an 'intended overhearer' or 'ratified overhearer' is therefore apt: 'overhearer' captures the fact that the teacher-rater by and large does not verbally participate in the group interaction; however, the collective talk exchange carried out among the student participants is 'intended' for the teacher-rater to consume as a 'ratified recipient'.

5.2.1.2 Formulations of talk oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater

We now turn to another set of features in students' talk collectively characterized as *formulations*, which I argue to be, again, oriented more to the overhearing teacher-rater than to co-participants in the interactions. The following are two examples of such formulations.

(5.32) LA07: 28-39

1 I: And then, uh:: about the:: (.) meaning of the::
 2 (.) movie is that (.) uh: (.) it must take the: (.)
 3 environment (.) that we:: (.) uh haven't (.) destroyed
 4 before.=
 5 J: -> =(uh oh >yes conveying) the message that< we have to
 6 -> strike the: right balance between the environment
 7 -> protection and the uhm: uhm: economic or::erm human
 8 -> develops- the development of man↓kind.=And, aBOUT the:
 9 uhm (.) the >f- three dimension effect.....

(5.33) PA11: 21-31

1 W: Can't agree more. Apart from the communi- the lack of
 2 communication, there's the generation gap. Generation
 3 gap appears (..) because of the age differen.=It is
 4 (invaluated) but it is the reason for the existen of (.)
 5 misunderstanding.
 6 (.) ((R turns to D))
 7 D: -> So, there is one point I would like to add (.) over this
 8 -> view. Mm, do you guys remember: (.) after eating the (.)
 9 lucky c-cookies, Anna turns (.) into her mom, and the
 10 first thing she do is (...) go shopping (..) and (.)

11 have a haircut. I think it is the best (.) proof (.) of
12 the:: (.) ↓theory (.) generation gap.

In the first example, J is producing some sort of a paraphrase of previous speaker I's talk (lines 5-8), *re-presenting* 'in other words' what student I has said about the message of the movie *Avatar* in the preceding turn. In the second example, D's formulation 'there is one point I would like to add over this view' (lines 7-8) provides a gloss for his own upcoming conversational action – saying what he is just about to say or do in the rest of the turn, namely, adding a point to W's idea of generation gap.

Evidently, then, the above examples illustrate two different kinds of formulations. These are still different from the sense of 'formulation' I have used in the above section about self-repairs invoking more complex language – as 'a way of putting an idea into words'. It is the first two kinds of formulations as conversational objects (illustrated in the two extracts above) which form the focus of this section.

In the following analysis, we will see how formulations in the SBA group interactions accomplish some of the interactional functions (e.g. displaying understanding and active reciprocity) while not exhibiting the properties of sequential implicativeness and topicalization (reviewed in Chapter 2). On these grounds, I argue that the formulations are more recipient-designed to the overhearing teacher-rater than oriented to co-participants.

1. Formulating previous speaker's ideas before delivering one's own

This sub-section discusses formulations in Heritage and Watson's (1979) sense, i.e. formulations by news recipients, or what Deppermann (2011) calls 'other-speaker formulations'. As reviewed in Section 2.4.4, formulations can serve as a device to generate publicly available records for certain ideas or actions, and are often oriented to the overhearing audience (e.g. the home audience of TV news interviews in Heritage (1985); the assessor of the role-played suspect interview in Stokoe (2013)). In the following, we examine the ways in which students in the group interactions use formulations as a means to display their understanding of previous speakers' talk and highlight their action of 'doing responding' for the overhearing teacher-rater. We will see that these formulations often constitute the first of a two-part response turn,

which consists of a ‘response’ component and a ‘content delivery’ component, as the student makes an overt display of having understood and responded to the previous speaker before moving on to deliver their own ideas.

One common way in which students formulate previous speakers’ ideas is through ‘notionalization’ (Deppermann, 2011), whereby they condense other speakers’ ideas expressed in the prior turns into nouns or phrases. The following first example illustrates this.

(5.34) LA06: 18-28

- 1 O: ((17 lines omitted))
2 And- (.) when in the great escape, uh: (.) Woody
3 shows that he:: knows (the wel-) teammates well by: uhm
4 (.) he uses (.) the- persona↑lities and the character-
5 istics of his members well to make the great escape more
6 efficiently. .h Uh for example uh .h Mr Potato Head is
7 very grumpy and his (.) arms and legs can move: uh
8 without linking to >his body and Woody use that< uh to
9 (.) make- the- grea- (.) great e- escape a succes-
10 succeeds, so, I really love Woody.
11 T: -> Uhm I agree with you.=I’d- I think apart from (.)
12 -> Woody’s good at decision-making, I think (.) uh he’s
13 loyal to his friends and honest. Uh for example uh

In this extract, T’s response turn follows a very lengthy opening turn by O, who provides a detailed account for choosing Woody as her favorite character in the movie *Toy Story 3* because of his leadership, citing two scenes from the movie as examples. At line 11, T then takes over speakership and produces an extended turn herself, arguing for her same choice of Woody as favorite character with two positive attributes (loyalty and being a good friend). Observe, however, although in much of her turn, T is delivering her own ideas and arguments, she does first respond to O with the agreement expression ‘I agree with you’ (line 11) and a formulation of O’s ideas expressed in the preceding turn (lines 11-12), embedded in a complex construction that frames her own idea as an addition to O’s idea. Note, then, how T’s formulation ‘apart from Woody’s good at decision-making’ notionalizes and sums up in a phrase (albeit ungrammatical) O’s extended depiction of how Woody made good

use of other characters' individual strengths in helping all of them escape from danger.

Bolden (2010) argues that formulating the prior speaker's talk is 'a method for showing *active reciprocity* via which interlocutors demonstrate their understanding of the other's course of action', and 'their interest in the addressee' (p.27, my emphasis). It has been established in Chapter 4 that the turn-initial formulaic agreement expression 'I agree with you' (line 10) is neither treated by teacher-raters nor some of the student-candidates as an adequate response and sufficient evidence of understanding the previous speaker's talk. Here, through formulating O's idea in her own words, T is then able to offer another, stronger piece of evidence that she has listened to and understood O's talk in the prior turn.

Note further that T's formulation has transformed O's depiction of Woody into a different, yet sensible and coherent interpretation. O's original depiction is how Woody is 'a great leader' and 'knows his teammates well'. T's formulation in lines 10-11 neither repeats nor paraphrases these words. Yet, her attribution of Woody as being 'good at decision-making' is consistent with O's ascription of Woody as a good leader and her subsequent narrative of the relevant scene. As formulations can be *transformative* (Heritage & Watson, 1979; Deppermann, 2011), and are 'candidate *re-presentations* of what an interlocutor can be taken as having said or meant', their use can position the formulating speaker 'not as a neutral conduit but an active interpreter of the preceding talk' (Hutchby, 2005, p.310). T's formulation thus demonstrates her comprehension as well as active interpretation of O's prior talk.

Other instances of a participant formulating previous speakers' talk by notionalization can be found, for example, in PA11: 82-99 (see Appendix T), and in Extract 5.23 discussed in Section 5.1.3.

Evidence of overhearer orientation

An important aspect concerning the sequential properties of recipient formulations is that they typically project confirmation or disconfirmation in the next turn (Bolden, 2010; Heritage & Watson, 1979). By formulating the previous speaker's talk, the current speaker offers a candidate understanding of the preceding turn. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.4), Heritage and Watson (1979) argue

that such candidate readings of the prior talk are ‘deeply implicative for subsequent talk’, and ‘[i]t is this sequential implicativeness which, in turn requires the adjacency format’ (p.142). Accordingly, they posit a *formulation-decision* adjacency pair, holding that a confirmation or disconfirmation from the previous speaker is conditionally relevant as an SPP in the next turn.

It is rather striking, then, to observe that formulations of previous speakers’ talk in the SBA group interactions are overwhelmingly *not* followed by the previous speakers’ (dis)confirmation. Even when there is confirmation from the previous speakers (in LA06: 18-28, 39-48), it is ‘demoted’ to a non-verbal response, a nod, without even a minimal verbal component such as ‘mm’ or ‘yes’. This shows that the previous speakers do not orient to the formulations as candidate representations of their prior talk intended for them to confirm/disconfirm. Correspondingly, neither do the formulating speakers seem to design the formulations as FPPs that project (dis)confirmation SPPs from the prior speakers. Rather, the formulations are overwhelmingly designed and positioned as the first part of the speaker’s multi-TCU turn, followed by a second part where they deliver their own ideas. The two examples below provide corroborating evidence:

(5.35) LA07: 28-39 [reproduced]

1 I: And then, uh:: about the:: (.) meaning of the::
 2 (.) movie is that (.) uh: (.) it must take the: (.)
 3 environment (.) that we:: (.) uh haven’t (.) destroyed
 4 before.=

5 J: **((looks into the air; orients to H and S and away from I throughout lines 7-10))**
 6 =(uh oh >yes \\conveying) the message that< we have to
 7 **\\((I turns away and looks at his notes))**
 8 strike the: right balance between the environment
 9 protection and the uhm: uhm: economic or::erm human
 10 develops- the development of man↓kind.=And,
 11 aBOUT the: uhm (.) the >f- three dimension effect.....

Recall this example from the introduction earlier, where J re-formulates in more complex language previous speaker I’s assertion that the movie conveys a message about environmental protection. Noteworthy here is the fact that J’s gaze and body orientation do not align with I as he produces the formulation in lines 7-11.

Also, the formulation does not exhibit any turn design features that projects a confirmation SPP from I (e.g. question intonation, pausing after the formulation). On the contrary, J immediately moves on to the next point on ‘three dimension effect’, latching the new TCU onto the end of the formulation (line 11). Neither does previous speaker I give J any verbal or non-verbal form of confirmation here, and he does not even look at J (line 8) as J is formulating his idea in the preceding turn.

(5.36) PA11:82-99

1 R: -> \\In ↑terms of their careers, and their- companion,
 2 \\((both D and W look at R))
 3 -> I think it will be adversely (.) \\affected.
 4 \\((D and W's gaze stays on R,
 5 **but no discernable verbal/non-verbal responses**)
 6 TSK Uhm but I- I concern more about Jake, who- is not
 7 sure whether (.) .hh who is not sure whether he like(h)s
 8 (.) Anna or her mother.

Similar to the previous example, R’s formulation of D and W’s ideas delivered in the preceding two turns receives neither verbal nor non-verbal confirmatory responses from the respective previous speakers. The design of R’s formulation also does not seem to project confirmation or disconfirmation from the previous speakers. For one thing, the format of R’s comment ‘*I think* it will be adversely affected’ (line 3) looks almost as though she is appropriating the previous speakers’ ideas as her own. For another, the following component (lines 6-8) beginning with ‘but I concern more about Jake’ reveals how the formulation of previous speakers’ ideas rhetorically prepares for the subsequent delivery of her own idea, therefore not sequentially implicative of a (dis)confirmation SPP.

Taking these examples together, the fact that neither the formulating speaker nor the prior speaker (whose talk is being formulated) orients to a confirmation/disconfirmation SPP as being necessary has two implications. First, it lends further support to the local interactional norm for speakers to have the rights to extended, multi-TCU turns one after another, which in turn reflects the participants’ overall orientation to the interactional event as an assessment. Second, and more importantly, the formulation of previous speaker talk is more oriented to the

overhearing teacher-rater as the ratified but unaddressed recipient of the talk exchange, rather than to the co-participants. It constitutes a public display of understanding and responding to prior speakers' talk, on which the current speaker's relevant aspects of interactional competence can be assessed.

Evidence of overhearer orientation can also be found if we consider the interactional import of formulations related to topic development. As Hutchby (2005) remarks, formulations are 'candidate *re-presentations* of what an interlocutor can be taken as having said or meant... [and] are selective in that they focus on a particular element of the prior talk and preserve that element as the topic for further talk' (p.310). Indeed, in some institutional contexts such as counselling (Hutchby, 2005) and news interviews (Heritage, 1985), formulations are used as a device to topicalize particular elements of the prior speaker's talk for further pursuit in the subsequent turns.

However, among the instances of other-speaker formulations in the data, the formulating speaker almost categorically changes topic immediately after the formulations, shifting from the previous speaker's ideas to their own. Adding to participants' non-orientation to a sequentially projected confirmation/disconfirmation SPP, it constitutes further evidence that the formulation of the previous speaker's talk is done for the sake of doing it – producing a public display of having understood the previous speaker's talk. More likely than not, it is oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater rather than co-participants, forging an assessable display that 'I have responded to the previous speaker before delivering my own ideas'.

2. Formulating a speaker's own upcoming conversational actions

We now move on to look at a second kind of formulation – prefatory self-formulations of a speaker's own upcoming talk in the same turn. This is more in Garfinkel and Sacks' (1970) sense of formulating, with speakers 'saying-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing' (p.351). With this kind of self-formulation, speakers describe, characterize, and explicate their own conversational actions imminent in the same turn, which mirror writers' meta-discursive signposting in expository or argumentative writing, such as 'In the following, I will discuss...', or the first sentence of this paragraph. As with formulations of previous speaker talk, I argue

that such prefatory self-formulations of imminent talk are used by student participants as a device to make certain conversational actions ‘interactionally visible’ – or in other words, assessable displays (see Stokoe, 2013), and is oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater. The extract below is an extended version of Extract 5.33 shown at the beginning of Section 5.2.1.2.

(5.37) PA11: 21-42

1 D: -> So, there is one point I would like to add (.) over this
2 -> view. Mm, do you guys remember: (.) after eating the (.)
3 lucky c-cookies, Anna turns (.) into her mom, and the
4 first thing she do is (...) go shopping (..) and (.)
5 have a haircut. I think it is the best (.) proof (.) of
6 the:: (.) ↓theory (.) generation gap. Mm:: Anna (.)
7 doesn- not- doesn understand why her mother dress up
8 like this, and Mrs Coleman don't want to be trendy.
9 R: Uhm, that's exactly what I want to point out. Uhm young
10 people always try to be:: (.) fashionable whereas (.)
11 adults always want something simple. Maybe that's- what-
12 you guys call the generation gap, and- thi- that i- this
13 -> is where: the (.) uhm (.) misunderstanding exist. ↑What
14 -> I want to t- what I want to add is, maybe the
15 existency{existence} of uh (.) Jake (.) is also one of
16 the causes of: the: (.) misunderstanding that they had
17 had (.) they have had.

We have already seen how D formulates his own upcoming action in the turn: ‘there is one point I would like to add over this view’ (lines 1-2), and in so doing, highlights that he is adding onto a previous speaker’s argument (not delivering a separate point or developing a new argument), hence *doing responding* to the previous speaker. In the ensuing turn, R begins with the formulation ‘that’s exactly what I want to point out’ (line 9), which can be viewed as a second assessment, the SPP to D’s first assessment ‘I think it’s the best proof of... generation gap’ (lines 5-6). Here, R also reiterates D’s idea by furnishing a recipient formulation ‘young people... whereas adults always want something simple’ (lines 9-11), generalizing from D’s example (lines 2-5) and his formulation about the generation gap between the two characters (lines 6-8) to the collective categories of ‘young people’ and ‘adults’.

After making some kind of a concluding remark registering generation gap as a cause of misunderstanding (lines 11-13), R makes a transition to a new idea of her own ‘the existence of Jake is also one of the causes of misunderstanding’ (lines 13-17)²⁴. Note how she prefaces this with the formulation ‘what I want to add is’, which, in the same way as D’s formulation in the preceding turn, characterizes and highlights her upcoming action as making an *additional* point about causes of misunderstanding, thus linked to previous speakers’ contributions.

It is perhaps no accident that the progressive formulation of the current speaker’s own upcoming talk often follows the retrospective formulation of the previous speaker’s talk. R’s use of both kinds of formulations here, then, works to underline the structure of her turn as first responding to previous speakers (‘what you guys call...’), before delivering her own idea (‘what I want to add is...’).

Another turn by R later in the interaction again involves a similar sequence of prior talk formulation followed by prefatory formulation of her upcoming talk, where R has notably persisted in completing the self-formulation ‘what I want to try to say is’ with several repairs/restarts, despite her apparent difficulty in production. I will not discuss the example in detail here, and interested readers can refer to the transcript in Appendix T (PA11: 96-104).

Consider the next example from an interaction in School L:

²⁴ This is yet another example that lends support to the observed pattern that recipient formulations of the previous speaker’s talk do not typically engender further topicalization of the prior speaker’s contribution, but are followed by a shift to the delivery of the current speaker’s own ideas.

(5.38) LB00: 104-117

1 A: [Yeah I agree that uhm this kind of
2 problem will cause a huge damage uhm on the individuals
3 and also the families.
4 L: Mm=
5 A: -> =And, I agree that, and I want to: explain more that (.)
6 -> there are some damages on society.=For examples, uhm (.)
7 some (.) conflict between parents and student may
8 develop into (.) violence, which means uh physical
9 damage and, this really uhm (.) uhm cause (.) uhm bad
10 effects on the society b'cos (.) the society:: uh will
11 have to: have more social workers or (.) more planning
12 to (.) uhm solve this kind of problem. And:,
13 -> also uhm (.) I'll- I would like to uhm elaborate more on
14 -> uhm:(.) uhm: on the family's influence. Uhm: because (.)
15 as we know family is about relationships.

Once again, we have an example of recipient formulation of previous speaker's talk followed by prefatory formulation of the current speaker's own upcoming talk. In lines 1-3, A is seen to formulate previous speaker L's talk, 'notionalizing' it in the noun phrase 'huge damage on the individuals and also the families' within his expression of agreement with L.

A's first self-formulation of his upcoming talk appears in lines 5-6 ('I want to explain more... damages on society'). Note the parallel between his formulation of the previous speaker's talk and that of his own upcoming talk – both involving notionalization. In making explicit the rhetorical structure of his turn through the formulations, A highlights how he has understood and responded to the previous speaker's contribution, and that he is about to add his own contribution on another aspect to 'complete the picture' for the discussion on the consequences of domestic conflicts.

In lines 13-14, A produces another prefatory formulation 'I would like to elaborate more on the family's influence' (line 13), indicating that the ensuing talk is a shift from consequences of such conflicts on the society back to those on individual families. Particularly interesting is the sheer explicitness (and perhaps oddness) with the choice of the verb 'elaborate' in A's self-characterization of his upcoming talk,

compared to, for example, ‘I want to say something more about...’ or ‘I want to add something...’. To draw on Stokoe’s (2013) argument about the parallel situation of police officer trainees in the role-played suspect interview, A’s formulation in its particular design and word choice reflects his orientation to his conversational actions being assessed, and that the ability to develop or ‘elaborate on’ ideas is positively evaluated by the teacher-rater. Stokoe (2013) uses a driving test analogy to account for the police officer trainees’ interactional conduct in her data:

An everyday comparison might be with taking a driving test and showing the examiner that “I am looking in the rear-view mirror” by gesturing one’s head unambiguously toward it.’ (p.182)

This analogy is also particularly apt in describing how students’ formulate their own upcoming conversational actions of ‘adding a point’ or ‘elaborating on’ an idea, especially a previous speaker’s idea.

Insofar as we conceptualize the group interaction assessment task as a simulation of some real-life group interaction, then the students’ interactional behavior of formulating their own upcoming conversational actions mirrors what police officer trainees do in the role-played interviews. As what Stokoe (2013) remarked on her data, actions accomplished in the real and simulated interactions were mostly the same, but in simulations the actions were often ‘unpacked more elaborately, exaggeratedly, or explicitly’, and ‘made interactionally visible’ (p.183).

From the above examples, we once again see how students in the SBA group interactions construct their response turns as contingent on previous speaker contribution (see Section 5.1.3) by highlighting the structure of their turns as responding to previous speakers’ talk before delivering their own ideas. Sometimes, as shown above, this is accomplished through formulating the previous speaker’s talk followed by formulating the imminent delivery of the current speaker’s own ideas.

5.2.2 Negotiating identities as competent speakers and competent test-takers

We have therefore seen a collection of discourse features in the SBA group interactions that are demonstrably more oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater than to co-participants. We begin to see how the students are doing more than a ‘group interaction’ – interacting not only with members of the group, but also the teacher-rater who is assessing their interaction. This section explores a further complexity in the interactional architecture of the SBA Group Interaction task, that of concurrent and conflicting identities of the participants in the interaction. The label *student-candidates* is perhaps more apt for the student participants because, as we will see in the following analysis of test discourse and stimulated recall, there are two types of identities students orient to and project for themselves: (1) as ‘competent speakers’ engaging in everyday and other contextualized interactions, and (2) as ‘competent test-takers’ participating in the assessed interactions. We will see how student-candidates negotiate between the two identities, and sometimes have to make compromises by discursively foregrounding one identity while downplaying the other.

1. Terms of address: foregrounding institutional identities and suspending personal relationships

One of the most salient manifestations of the conflicting identities students discursively negotiate is in how they address one another within the assessed interaction. Consider the following excerpt:

(5.39) LB05: 45-54

```
1  C:      [Maybe to(h) t(h)o concl(h)ude ((R and L look at C and
2          giggle)), uhm we can find out the main reason behind
3          these conflicts. The first one is misunderstanding and,
4          -> another thing is uhm- \\as- this- (.) ((smiles))
5          ->                               \\((gestures towards S))
6          hh [h=
7  S: ->    [°Candidate°
8  C: ->    =this candidate said uhm (.) uhm maybe we have different
9          altitude (.) attitude (.) uhm: til- towards (.) computer
```

10 or Internet. Uhm I think it's (.) kind of uhm:
11 generation gap maybe.

In this excerpt, C is attempting a summary of the points discussed so far regarding possible reasons for conflicts within a family. As she tries to make an explicit reference to a previous speaker S and the reason for conflicts she has proposed (lines 4-8), C appears to be faced with difficulty in finding an address term to refer to S. This is manifested in her hesitation, cut-offs, and the silent laughter that displays embarrassment (lines 4-6). Given the fact that they are familiar classmates of one another, C's failure to call S by her name is unlikely and curious. A plausible explanation is that C is explicitly avoiding the use of a personal name to refer to S, but resorting to the non-verbal cue of gesturing (line 5) while searching for the appropriate address term. We then see an interesting development of this exchange, as the referred participant, S, comes in to supply the word, 'candidate', for C to use in referring to herself (line 7). This is immediately adopted by C (line 8), as she continues with the production of her ongoing turn.

A similar case of avoiding personal names is seen in another group interaction, where W uses indexical gesture along with the pronoun 'her' to express affiliation with E's stance, once again with hesitation.

(5.40) LB06: 14-25

1 E: Uh yeah I agree that the genre should be uh more
2 different and should be special, but I don't think your
3 idea is really uhm (..) uh really practical because
4 uh

5 ((6 lines omitted))

6 W: -> Mm so uhm \\I agree with (.)
7 -> **\\((gestures to E and looks at her briefly))**
8 -> uh\\m (.) her because uh the (..) **\\((gestures to E again while browsing note card))**
9 -> \\the idea you suggest is not that possible because it's
10 -> \\((turns to look at T))
11 not possible for school (.) to have a uhm brand new
12 principal,
13

Here, following E's agreement-prefaced disagreeing turn (lines 1-5) in which she accounts for the practical difficulties with T's proposal of an 'identity swap' reality TV show, W affiliates with E and adds her contribution to disagreeing with T's proposal. A first interesting point to note is how W's choice of pronouns indicates that her response is primarily addressed to T ('the idea you suggest', line 10), with the speaker of the immediately prior turn, E, being a kind of 'secondary' addressee ('I agree with her', lines 6-8). This in turn brings to our attention the fact that, in formulating this more complex, double-layered address to recipients, W opts for the use of pronouns accompanied by deictic non-verbal cues over the use of her classmates' names, particularly in indirectly addressing or referring to E. Moreover, while the use of pronouns is not inherently problematic, this does not appear entirely spontaneous or effortless to W, as she pauses and hesitates before managing to utter the pronoun 'her' (lines 6-8). Again, a case can be made for a local decision to avoid personal names.

In both examples, in explicitly avoiding the use of personal names while addressing each other impersonally as 'this candidate' or using pronouns, the students display an orientation to a temporary suspension of their identity as friends or classmates of each other, while discursively making relevant and foregrounding the particular institutional identity of being fellow test-takers. Their hesitant and staggered production, however, amounts to displays of the awkwardness in forging a form of interactional conduct that is simultaneously appropriate (for the assessment context) and inappropriate (for interacting with friends). This in turn reflects the conflicting identities and interactional contexts between which students are discursively negotiating.

Of particular significance is that we see how students managed (albeit with slight difficulty) to produce and adapt interactional behavior that displays sensitivity to the assessment context and the entailed local identities. Nonetheless, this runs contrary to the very principle underlying the introduction of the School-based Assessment initiative, which seeks to improve validity and reliability of the assessment through providing candidates with an interactional context where they can carry out a talk exchange with peers they are familiar with in low-stress conditions. This has been advocated in validation research and official publications

(e.g. Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; HKEAA, 2009) and reiterated in the subject Examination Report in 2013:

The purpose of the school-based assessment is to provide a familiar and relaxed environment so that students will feel less stress and anxiety and thus have an opportunity to demonstrate their best possible oral language use.
(HKEAA, 2013b, p.183)

Notably, however, students' discourse in the present data suggests that the students, although indeed interacting with familiar faces, do not orient to such familiarity in the talk exchange. On the contrary, they seem to be under the pressure of suspending such personal relationships while enacting their institutional identity as fellow test-takers. Students' modified interactional behavior that orients to a test-taker identity is also seen in the following two aspects of turn construction.

2. Explain or exemplify: orientation to particular discursive structures

In the data, it is not difficult to notice that students typically take extended, multi-TCU turns. Moreover, very often their speaking turns assume the <IDEA + ACCOUNT> or <IDEA + EXAMPLE> discursive structure, giving an explanation or example following (or as part of) the delivery of each content idea. A case in point is the excerpt below, which shows a longer extract of the turn that W has taken in the last example, with three tokens of 'because' produced within the same turn (lines 1, 2, and 7):

(5.41) LB06: 22-32

1 W: -> Mm so uhm I agree with (.) uhm her because uh the (..)
2 -> the idea you suggest is not that possible because it's
3 not possible for school (.) to have a uhm brand new
4 principal, who don't know how to (.) just carry out the
5 (.) things that principals should do. So uhm I'm
6 suggesting:: (.) why- should- why not we are going to (.)
7 -> have a reality show about some challenge because (.) the
8 reality show we found on TV are about some challenge
9 like some Project Runway or America's Next Top Model,
10 and, in Hong Kong I (.) I've got an idea to suggest that
11 (..) why don't we have a rea- reality show about saving
12 money.

Here, the first instance of ‘because’ prefaces W’s account for affiliating with the previous speaker E while disaffiliating with T (lines 1-2). On offering this account for disagreement with T’s proposal in terms of its infeasibility, she gives a further account for the reasons why the identity swap show T has proposed is infeasible (lines 2-5). The third instance of ‘because’ is found in line 7, which again projects the forthcoming talk as an explanation for what the immediately preceding talk proposes. However, note how what follows ‘because’ in line 7 is ambiguous as an actual account explaining the reason for her suggestion of having a reality TV show with a challenge. What W does (in line 7-9) is refer to examples of such reality TV shows in western countries, and therefore alludes to, but does not directly formulate, a supporting argument that a similar show in Hong Kong would be popular as well. W’s recurrent use of ‘because’, appropriately or otherwise, somehow reflects her orientation to constructing her talk in this particular discursive structure of IDEA + ACCOUNT. The next example shows a similar orientation to this structure by a participant as well as the speaker that follows.

(5.42) PB06: 139-145

1 D: Mm: but HOW about launching a: exhibition
2 -> uh in the shopping \\malls;=Uh \\it's because:
3 -> \\((Y nods slightly)) \\((both D and
4 Y look down at their note cards))
5 (.) uh people can have a \\try on our computers during
6 \\((Y looks up at D))
7 the exhibition.=Uhm I think it's a good promotional
8 strategies.
9 Y: Oh! It's a good idea[r]. I think shopping mall is highly
10 accessible.

In lines 1-2, D proposes the idea of launching an exhibition to promote their tablet computer product, notably in the interrogative form ‘how about...’. However, neither the current speaker D nor the next speaker Y orients to the end of this question-like TCU as turn completion and transition-relevant. D ends this interrogative TCU with a continuing (rather than sharp rising) intonation, and immediately produces another TCU (lines 2-7) that accounts for his proposal being ‘a good promotional strategy’ (line 8). Specifically, latching the hesitation token ‘uh’

in the new TCU (line 2) onto the last TCU allows him to project his turn as incomplete and more talk as forthcoming. This is also interactionally ratified by the next speaker, Y, who only provides a non-verbal response in the form of a slight nod at the end of D's question-like TCU (lines 2-3). In doing so, Y is seen to orient to D's proposal in the interrogative form as an FPP, to which she gives a (preliminary) non-verbal affiliative SPP. Meanwhile, by not taking over the floor, Y also orients to D's projected continuation of his turn. In collaboratively managing D's turn completion and speaker transition, the two speakers seem to be both orienting to and co-constructing the IDEA + ACCOUNT structure.

We now turn to two examples of the IDEA + EXAMPLE structure together with the same students' stimulated recall data, from which their use of such a discursive structure as a manifestation of their negotiation between conflicting identities will become apparent.

(5.43) LB00: 4-8

1 A: Well I think the- common conflicts in: family uh
 2 is bas:ed on: uhm different expectation that uhm between
 3 -> the parents and the children.=For examples, uh parents
 4 al- always expect that their kids are hardworking and
 5 care about their uhm academic performance.

(5.44) LB00: 30-37

1 Y: But I agree with uh candidate one, because, uhm
 2 the expec- the difference between the (.) parents' and
 3 the:: (.) s- children's expectations really uh makes
 4 cause conflict. And I want to make some- uh addition to
 5 that because uh they have di- they share different point
 6 -> of view.=For example, uhm for Facebook, parents just
 7 think that the Facebook is a media to (.) uh make
 8 friends and play but, for (.) uh teenagers,

The excerpts above demonstrate a general discourse pattern observed in the data, whereby students do not typically end their turn immediately after delivering a content idea, but follow up with an example. This is very often explicitly marked with the preface 'for example', and moreover, in some cases (such as the two above), the preface 'for example' is latched onto the previous TCU in which the idea is

delivered. The projection of the turn as incomplete and the explicit marking of an example as forthcoming at this juncture together suggest that students orient to providing an example as a crucial component following the delivery of an idea. Such an orientation to the rigid structure of IDEA + EXAMPLE is particularly salient when we also consider possible alternatives such as less overt marking with ‘like’, giving the example first and then formulating its gist, or making a contribution by simply giving the example.

Perhaps strikingly, nonetheless, the same students’ (A and Y) meta-discursive commentary in the stimulated recall revealed that this ran contrary to what they considered normative behavior in everyday interaction.

(5.45) LB00 Student Interview

- 1 Res: Do you think the SBA group discussion is similar to your everyday, casual,
2 informal conversation?
3 A: ((smiling)) Not similar.
4 Res: In what ways is it not similar?
5 A:And in SBA, because you want to score high in content, you need to
6 deliver a lot of ideas, a lot of examples. **But in everyday conversation, you**
7 **wouldn’t pay attention to ‘oh, do I need to give examples or elaboration?’,**
8 things like that.
9
10 Res: So what kind of interaction do you think SBA is similar to?
11 Y: I think it’s like talking to my grandparents. Because the [generation] gap
12 between us is too big, so in order for them to understand what I’m saying, I
13 need to let them know that ‘I understand what you’re saying’, and then this
14 is what I want to say. What I say has to be easy to follow, giving a lot of
15 examples..... **In everyday conversations** between us ((points to himself and
16 A)), **many things remain implicit, and we understand each other without**
17 **spelling out everything.** But we need to be explicit about everything when
18 talking to grandparents, and that is similar to SBA.

When asked in what respects their talk in the SBA group interaction is different from everyday conversation, student A cited having to give a lot of examples as one of the differences. His response clearly reflected that his interactional conduct of providing a lot of examples in his talk was assessment-oriented (‘because you want to score high in content’, line 5). Furthermore, his characterization of his opposite conduct in everyday conversation (lines 6-8) implied that he would plan and design his talk in the SBA group interaction such that ideas would come with examples or elaboration. This is consistent with and corroborates the data extract shown above, in which he latches the preface ‘for example’ onto the preceding TCU that delivers the

main idea. In Y's response, he likened their talk in the SBA group interaction to speaking to grandparents, which requires giving examples (lines 14-15) as a discursive strategy and a higher degree of explicitness (lines 15-18) than in everyday talk with their peers.

From the stimulated recall data, it is evident that the students display a sound knowledge of normative interactional conduct as competent speakers in everyday interactions. However, the students' test discourse and their meta-discursive comments together yield evidence that they project different sets of norms and expectations in the group speaking assessment context and everyday interactions, and adapt their interactional conduct accordingly. Y's characterization of his everyday talk with A (lines 15-17) alludes to the fact that although they are interacting *with* friends in the SBA group interaction, they are not so much interacting with one another *as* friends. Once again, we see that the students are discursively enacting themselves as competent test-takers while downplaying their other identity as competent speakers in everyday interactions.

3. Agreeing with or without an account: conflicting preferences revisited

Students are also faced with the choice of whether to provide an account for agreeing with a previous speaker or not, with the two options conforming to different sets of interactional norms governing the turn design of an agreeing response. This has been explored in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.2.3 – 4.2.5) in terms of concurrent and conflicting preferences.

One set of preferences is the *structural* 'preference for agreement' (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987) in everyday conversation. This applies to the SPP of a range of actions such as making a request or offer, expressing an opinion, or proposing a course of action etc., and there is an organizational preference for the SPP response to agree with the trajectory of the FPP action (Liddicoat, 2007), manifested in the typical turn shape of the SPP. Thus, agreeing responses, such as granting a request or converging with the previous speaker's assessment, are preferred responses that are usually immediately given, brief, and come without an explanation for agreeing. In contrast, a disagreeing response typically takes a dispreferred turn shape: delayed, often mitigated, and with an account for the disagreement.

However, in the test discourse data, students' agreeing responses quite often include an account for agreement. This has been discussed in terms of another set of preferences in operation, which I have termed *assessment-related preferences*. We have seen how this set of preferences often overrides the structural preference (Section 4.2.3), evidenced by teacher-raters' different evaluation of students' agreeing responses with and without an account, as well as how some students themselves orient to agreeing without explaining why as an inadequate or incomplete response.

The present discussion returns to such concurrent and conflicting preferences, with another perspective – how the choice of producing an agreeing response with or without explaining amounts to student participants positioning themselves as competent speakers, orienting to the interactional norms of everyday talk; or as competent test-takers, orienting to the norms of this specific assessment context and the overhearing teacher-rater as a ratified, unaddressed recipient of their talk. Let us come back to an example from LB00 along with the teacher-rater's comments on the episode in the stimulated recall (discussed in Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

(5.46) LB00: 92-109

1 L: =Yeah, I think you two are both right actually. Because,
 2 these two situations is appeared in: (.) the society (.)
 3 o- of both of you. So I think (.) uhm:: (.) these two:
 4 these two::: these two issues actually: well- influence
 5 too much- influence so much on (.) uh not only in the
 6 family but also the- the:: the gro- the growth of the
 7 children
 8 ((4 lines omitted))
 9 and, they will badly influence the psycholo-
 10 psychological °quality of the children (.)
 11 so, ((turns to A)) [()°
 12 A: [Yeah I agree that uhm this kind of
 13 problem will cause a huge damage uhm on the individuals
 14 and also the families.
 15 L: Mm=
 16 A: =And, I agree that, and I want to: explain more that (.)
 17 there are some damages on society.=For examples, uhm (.)
 18 some (.)

After an extended debate between T and Y, L comes in here saying he agrees with both (line 1). In validating the contribution of both previous speakers, L provides an account that justifies the relevance of both speakers' ideas (lines 1-2). It is only after this that L moves on to deliver his own ideas about the influence of conflicts in the family on children's growth (lines 3-10). On L's turn completion, A takes over. He starts his turn by saying he agrees that these problems in the family will have a negative impact on the individuals and the family (lines 13-14), thus formulating previous speakers' contributions by 'notionalizing' them (see Section 5.2.1.2). He uses this as a springboard to shift the topic to the impact on the society, offering his own contribution (lines 16-18).

A's turn is designed and hearable as building on all three previous speakers' contributions, making a relevant contribution that develops the topic of negative consequences resulting from conflicts in the family. This is in part evident in his own characterization of his forthcoming talk 'and I want to explain more...' (line 16). However, the teacher-rater viewed the quality of responses by L and A differently in terms of interactional contingency:

(5.47) LB00 Teacher Interview

On student L:

He's weaker, but gives you a positive impression. You see that he's struggling, but **making an effort to summarize previous contribution before moving on.**

On student A:

He's more fluent than L, but he says **agree with both without directly responding, and goes on to talk about his own ideas.**

From the above (and similar teacher-rater comments on other students' agreeing responses), we can see that an agreeing response with an account is positively evaluated by the teacher-rater as a more contingent response to the previous speaker's talk. On the contrary, agreeing without providing an account, though natural in terms of structural preference in everyday interactions, is considered perfunctory and inadequate as a response in the assessment context, lacking linkage to the previous speaker's talk. The evolution of this local interactional norm in the group speaking assessment context in Hong Kong has been explored in Section 4.2.5. As discussed, this has probably stemmed from Hong Kong students' overuse of agreement tokens and stock phrases, reported both in a previous

study (Luk, 2010) and in the Examination Report for the speaking exam (HKEAA, 2013b).

Owing to such a development, students who are capable of relating their own talk to previous speakers' contributions are faced with a choice: they could either position themselves as competent test-takers in the SBA group interactions, displaying an ability of expressing agreement and explaining why they agree; or position themselves as competent speakers in everyday interactions, where agreeing responses treat the prior turn as unproblematic and unaccountable, and the shift to a new topic or idea is relevant. Nevertheless, the students' choice displayed in their interactional conduct and its corresponding identity positioning has direct and differential consequences on the teacher-rater's perception of their interactional competence, as we have seen in the above teacher interview extract.

5.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we examined the nature of interactional competence as assessed in the SBA group interactions. Specifically, we looked at what is considered interactional competence by the student-candidates and the teacher-raters, the various ways in which interactional competence is discursively co-constructed, and some of the complexities in assessing this competence in interacting with peers in a group.

The chapter began by showing different ways of students 'doing interacting'. Focusing on group interactions in School P, Section 5.1.1 illustrated how students pre-script and act out interactive sequences to, rather paradoxically, contrive the appearance of 'natural' and 'spontaneous' interaction. The discursive construction of 'interacting' was seen in, for example, how students re-distribute (or *pre-distribute*) the conversational work in making a point to more than one participant through recall pre-sequences, and how they 'weave' two participants' delivery of two separate ideas together in a question-and-answer sequence.

In Section 5.1.2, we looked at how students design and act out sequences in which they disagree with one another. The analysis demonstrated how students exploit the dispreferred turn shape of disagreeing responses (typically including an account) to foreground their responses' contingency on previous speaker contribution, and their sequence-expansion-relevant property to extend topic life. The contrived

nature of such disagreement sequences is manifested in some episodes of what the students themselves call ‘banning ideas’, in which participants only reject the *ideas* but do not actually disagree with other *participants* – with the FPP speaker projecting a no-like answer, and the SPP speaker ‘agreeing’ that it is a bad idea. Thus, students are seen to design these episodes to create more exchanges and extend topic life rather than actually challenge each other.

In the course of the data analysis, one component of interactional competence emerged as salient to both student-candidates and teacher-raters: constructing responses which are contingent on previous speaker contribution. Section 5.1.3 presented a more in-depth investigation of this component of interactional competence. Its salience to raters was discussed with reference to interview responses from teacher-raters in this study and examiners’ comments in the published examination reports. The significance of such a response is grounded in the fact that it (also) constitutes discourse evidence of the participant’s engagement in and comprehension of the previous speaker’s talk, and is considered ‘responding to’ or developing previous speaker’s talk rather than focusing on one’s own ideas and ignoring others’ contributions. Several means of highlighting a response’s contingency on previous speaker contribution were then exemplified. These included accounting for agreement/disagreement; making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk; formulating or partially repeating previous speakers’ ideas; or elaborating on those ideas. A notable distributional pattern is that making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk with appositional phrases (e.g. ‘as you mentioned’) almost categorically occurred in interactions without extended preparation time (School L and PB14Mock) and not in the pre-scripted interactions. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, this might have implications for the task’s validity under different task implementation conditions.

In the second part of this chapter, we explored some of the complexities in using the Group Interaction task to assess students’ interactional competence – as the competence of interacting with peers in a group. The analysis in Section 5.2.1 identified several features of talk which seem to be more recipient-designed to the overhearing teacher-rater than to co-participants. These include, first of all, students’ non-verbal displays of engaging the overhearing audience, and some cases of

students' self-repair in which they reformulate their own talk using more complex language.

Another feature that provides evidence of the overhearer orientation of students' talk is their formulations of previous speakers' talk. The analysis revealed that neither the formulating speaker nor the prior speaker whose talk is being formulated orients to the sequential implicativeness of formulations. In other words, they do not treat these formulations as candidate re-presentations of prior talk that sequentially anticipate a confirmation or disconfirmation from the prior speaker. Furthermore, contrary to formulations in other institutional contexts, these formulations also do not seem to engender further topical talk on the same idea, and the speaker typically moves on to deliver a new idea of their own. Taken together, these two sequential characteristics of prior talk formulations constitute compelling evidence of their overhearer orientation.

We then examined a second type of formulation: prefatory formulations of a participant's own upcoming conversational actions, for instance, adding a point to a previous speaker's idea, or elaborating on a previous idea. As the analysis illustrated, both types of formulations seem to be making assessable displays to the teacher-rater that the participant has listened to and understood other group members' talk, and is engaging in the assessment-preferred interactional conduct of responding to the previous speaker's contribution before delivering one's own ideas.

Another, related, complexity in assessing students' interactional competence in the group interactions was explored in Section 5.2.2, in terms of students' concurrent and conflicting identities of being competent speakers in everyday or other contextualized interactions and being competent test-takers in the speaking assessment. Such conflicting identities, and the ways in which *student-candidates* discursively negotiate between them, were manifested and examined in three kinds of interactional conduct. These included students' avoidance of referring to each other using their names while opting to use pronouns and gestures instead; giving an example or explanation for each idea delivered; and accounting for their agreement with a previous speaker. All these show that the students are making compromises by foregrounding their institutional test-taker identity, whilst downplaying their personal relationships with one another and their identity as competent speakers of everyday

interactions. Notwithstanding the context-sensitivity students displayed in adapting their interactional behavior, an indispensable component of interactional competence (Young, 2011), such interactional conduct thus elicited seems to run contrary to the alleged aim and design of the school-based assessment to provide students with the opportunity to interact with familiar peers in a relaxed, low-stress environment.

Thus, the analysis of overhearer-oriented features of students' discourse and the conflicting identities manifested in their interactional conduct raises questions of whether the SBA Group Interaction task is indeed eliciting simply a 'group interaction', and whether it is a valid assessment of the relevant aspects of students' interactional competence. The following commentary from a student interview is a blatant critique of the pretense of the assessment event as a representation of interaction with a familiar peer group, and sums up nicely the issues of conflicting identities and overhearer orientation discussed in this chapter:

(5.48) LB00 Student Interview

- 1 Res: Do you think you are being yourself when participating in the SBA group
2 interaction? Or do you think you have adopted a different persona or a
3 different *speech style*?
4
- 5 Y: I think it's very different. ((A and L laugh)) I mean, I wouldn't say I'm
6 comfortable speaking in English. It's very tough. Also, when **in everyday**
7 **talk, I wouldn't be adhering to such tight organization of first responding**
8 **to others before going on to talk about my own ideas.** [In SBA] we need to
9 be polite and maintain decorum but at the same time critical to each other,
10 it's really odd. In everyday talk, there wouldn't be so much of such pretense.
11 So it's not being myself, it's a different 'me'.
12
- 13 Res: So this different 'you', what's the *style* of this different 'you' like?
14
- 15 Y: It's so fake. It's fake. It's very...
16
- 17 Res: In what way is it fake?
18
- 19 Y: Putting up a smile on my face, so it appears that I'm listening to you and
20 then responding, giving something back to you. But in fact, my objective of
21 communication here is not to give you something. In everyday conversation,
22 we intend to communicate some message to the addressee ((points to A)),
23 to the communication partner, but that's not my intention here [in SBA].
24 **When I'm talking in SBA, it's not for him ((points to A again)), it's for the**
25 **teacher to hear ((points to the space in front of him)).** So I think when I'm
26 talking in SBA, to a large extent I'm thinking about what the teacher would
27 like to hear ((L nods and says 'yes indeed')), like, how to speak in a more

28 polite way, but at the same time the teacher would think ‘yes, this *point* is
29 right on target!’. So, it’s a very fake version of me.

Earlier in the interview (shown in 5.2.2), Y likened his interactional behavior in the SBA group interaction to talking with his grandparents – being more explicit than necessary in everyday talk with his friends. Here, his first response connects his modified interactional conduct (lines 6-9) – adapted to the context and preferences of the assessment – to a different self (line 11), an identity oriented to and performed in the assessed interaction that is ‘fake’ (line 15) and ‘very different’ from ‘himself’ in everyday talk. When prompted to explain in what way it is ‘fake’, Y’s response exposes the pretense of student participants being ostensibly engaged in communicating *meaning* to one another (lines 19-23), whereas the essence of the group interaction as an assessment event is in fact communicating *competence* to the teacher-rater (lines 26-29). His characterization of the SBA Group Interaction in lines 24-25 (note also his accompanying non-verbal illustration) offers a vivid depiction of the complex, double-layered participation framework of the interactional event (discussed in Section 5.2.1), and echoes the fine-grained analysis of the discourse features recipient-designed to the teacher-rater presented earlier in this chapter.

With this, I conclude the discussion in this chapter. In Chapter 6, more validity issues in terms of task implementation and engagement and its effects on the discourse elicited will be explored. We will also revisit the nature of interactional competence in a group speaking assessment, and the complexities in assessing it with the group interaction task.

CHAPTER 6

Assessing interactional competence: Task implementation, authenticity, and validity

In the last chapter, we looked at how interactional competence is co-constructed and what counts as part of interactional competence in the SBA Group Interaction task. We also explored some of the complexities in using the task to assess aspects of the competence pertaining to interacting with peers in a group. Such complexities arise out of the participation framework, identities, and interactional norms that students orient to when performing in the task, as manifested in their production of talk.

Section 6.1 in this chapter examines a further issue – implementing the task with extended preparation time, and its effect on students’ discourse and authenticity of engagement, and therefore also the validity of the task. This begins with a recap of the differences between group interactions with and without extended preparation time as identified in Chapters 4 and 5, and a few more examples revealing features of pre-scripted interactions. It will then look in close detail at the pre-task planning activities students engage in during preparation time, and how these activities in turn affect students’ engagement in the assessed interaction. Through examining the discourse of students in School P put under the reduced (10-minute) preparation time condition in the mock assessment, it further explores how extended preparation time might influence the task’s capacity in discriminating between different levels of interactional competence.

The rest of the chapter brings together the discussions on interactional competence, task implementation, and validity. Section 6.2 summarizes the features of IC salient to both student-candidates and teacher-raters, and relates the theoretical formulation and empirical evidence of IC as context-sensitive to the complexities in extrapolating from students’ assessed performance their performance in non-testing

contexts. Section 6.3 relates the findings in this study to previous SBA validation research and other studies of paired/group speaking assessments, and discusses the various validity issues that may arise from implementing the Group Interaction task with extended preparation time.

6.1 Task implementation, task engagement, and talk elicited

6.1.1 Influence of task implementation and task engagement on discourse in assessed performance

In Chapter 4, I discussed some differences in the interactional organization of group interactions in School P and School L in terms of several turn-taking phenomena such as gaps, overlaps, and latching; as well as turn-taking devices used by the current speaker to select the next speaker, and those used by the next speaker in taking over the floor. Such differences in turn-taking phenomena and devices used in speaker transition provide evidence for two different types of turn-taking organization. The first is a pre-determined turn-taking order that characterizes all group interactions (except PB14Mock) in School P, which are preceded by three to four hours of preparation time and overwhelmingly pre-scripted. The second is a more spontaneous, locally managed turn-taking mechanism that characterizes group interactions in School L, with only 10 minutes of preparation time beforehand. The fact that PB14Mock (with only 10 minutes of preparation time) is the only group interaction in School P which exhibits features of a locally managed turn-taking mechanism offers further evidence for an association between the turn-taking organization of the assessed interaction and the amount of preparation time as a task implementation condition (Skehan, 1998). The following recaps some of the differences in the patterns of discourse and interactional organization between group interactions with extended preparation time (pre-scripted) and those without (non-pre-scripted).

Features of discourse and interactional organization in group interactions with and without extended preparation time

One of the marked differences is in overlaps and competition for the floor (see Section 4.1.3). Being a reliable marker of a locally managed turn-taking mechanism, overlaps are mostly found in group interactions in School L and in PB14Mock, and competition for the floor is found in LA07 and LB00. In contrast, overlaps (competitive or not) are scarce in the pre-scripted interactions in School P. Instead of starting in overlap with the last speakers' talk, next speakers very often begin their turns with the acknowledgement token *mm*, following full completion of the last speakers' turns (Section 4.1.5). A likely explanation for the lack of competitive overlaps is that the pre-ordering and pre-allocation of turns to group members obviates the need for competition for the floor. This could pose problems for the assessment task in terms of both construct validity and washback, as students in pre-scripted interactions can evade handling such conversational phenomena which are otherwise integral to everyday conversation as well as many forms of institutional talk.

Another major difference is in the turn-taking devices used in speaker transition (Sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5). Among pre-scripted interactions (School P), next speaker selection is overwhelmingly accomplished through non-verbal signals, where the current speaker or a co-participant makes eye contact with the 'expected' next speaker. Where this does not result in the next speaker beginning their turn, a minimal vocalization *mm*, occasionally coupled with a nod, is issued. These devices are therefore demonstrably 'reminder' signals for a pre-allocated next speaker to take up their turn. Non-verbal means of speaker selection are also used in the non-pre-scripted interaction, but they have been shown to remain tentative and locally contingent as to whether the cued participant takes on speakership. Turn-final 'generic' opinion-seeking questions (e.g. 'what do you think?'), which sequentially 'compel' speaker change to take place, are also observed to be occurring more in non-pre-scripted interactions than in pre-scripted ones. Thus, differences regarding speaker transition in pre-scripted and non-pre-scripted interactions are seen in terms of both the range of turn-taking devices elicited in the talk exchange as well as their interactional import.

A third significant aspect in which the interactions with and without extended preparation time are qualitatively different is in terms of collaborative turn construction. At mid-turn or mid-TCU positions where a current speaker is heard as having problems with word search, recalling ideas, or formulating the talk, co-participants in pre-scripted interactions almost categorically stay silent and do not come in to help scaffold the turn construction in progress. This is manifested in sizeable intra-turn gaps (e.g. PB11: 34-40; PB14: 11), and can be accounted for as a collective effort in maintaining the pre-determined turn-taking order and minimizing disruptions to it. In contrast, instances of a co-participant coming in to help by supplying a vocabulary item (e.g. LB05: 45-54) or completing an unfinished TCU (e.g. LA06: 49-57) are attested in the non-pre-scripted interactions in School L. Participants' orientation to 'stick to the script' when there is a script, therefore, is seen to prevent them from engaging in this form of collaborative interactional conduct, and deprive them of the opportunities to display the relevant interactional competence.

Apart from the above differences discussed in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 revealed some further differences in students' discourse between the pre-scripted and non-pre-scripted interactions. In Section 5.1.3, we examined various means of foregrounding a response's contingency on previous speaker contribution, a component of interactional competence to which both student-candidates and teacher-raters accord much importance. One particular device used to achieve this is appositional phrases which make explicit reference to a previous speaker's talk (e.g. 'as you have mentioned', 'just like you suggested', 'just similar to what T has said'). Such a device packages the forthcoming talk by the current speaker as picking up on a previous speaker's contribution in a preceding turn, amounting to an overt display to the co-participants (as well as the overhearing teacher-rater) that the current speaker has listened to and understood the prior talk. Of significance, then, is the observed pattern that this device almost categorically occurs in the non-pre-scripted interactions in School L and in PB14Mock. The only possible exception is in the formulation 'what you have mentioned (now) is...' by student B in PA13, which appears in a pre-scripted group interaction.

(6.1) PA13: 11-21

1 B: Mm. Yes I totally agree with you. (.) Y- uh: from the
2 movie, even Anna answer the questions correctly, but she
3 still got fail. Mm:, in fact, uh: Mr Bates, uh her
4 siste- her teen- teachers, (...) have bias against her:.
5 And: (...) also, he's not fair, as he didn (.) uh grade
6 Anna according to her performance.
7 K: -> Yes. (...) Yeah. You hav- What you have mentioned (now)
8 -> is (.) the misunderstanding on Anna's uh: ca- academic
9 -> performance. Uh: the next misunderstanding is that (.)
10 Anna's roc- Anna's (.) rock music is not wor:th(.)while:
11 (.) to appreciate by her mother.

Note that, however, it is in a different format – a subject noun phrase, whilst all other occurrences are appositional phrases – and therefore arguably not an instance of the device. Overall, we can still make the observation that this prefatory device which explicitly attributes the forthcoming idea to the previous speaker is by and large only used in non-pre-scripted interactions among student groups without extended preparation time.

This contrasts with how students with extended preparation time foreground the contingency of their responses on previous speaker contribution through scripting disagreement episodes into their interaction (Section 5.1.2). While providing an account for disagreeing ostensibly suggests the participant's engagement in the previous speaker's talk, such a pre-scripted response does not in fact depend on listening to and understanding the *in situ* production of the previous speaker's talk in real time. This undermines the validity of assessing the relevant component of students' interactional competence based on the construction of contingent responses in real time (see Section 6.3 below).

Pre-scripted interactions illustrated

In the following, I examine three more segments which illustrate the pre-scripted nature of the group interactions in School P. First, we come back to the segment I presented at the very beginning of this thesis, where a student's error in content remained unnoticed and uncorrected by co-participants, yielding evidence

that participants of pre-scripted interactions are not listening attentively to each other's talk.

(6.2) PB11: 41-56

1 S: So, let's move on to discuss the: price. Mm:: I think:
2 one hundred and ten is the most suitable price for (.)
3 our lotion.
4 Y: Mm:: (.) but I think that uh:: the customer will be:
5 affected by the illusion that one hundred and nine
6 dollars is a lot cheaper than one thousand and ten
7 dollars. Maybe: we can sell it at (.) uh one thousand
8 and nine dollars.
9 (1.5) ((S nods while turning away from Y))
10 S: \\Mm! It is an (..) best choice for our pri\\ce,
11 \\((K nods firmly several times)) \\((Y nods))
12 because this illusion has been proved by our past
13 experience.
14 K: Mm.
15 (1.6)
16 K: So:: uh we can:: (.) we: have decided that (.) uh our
17 product is a lotion which is: (.) uhm the passion fruit
18 flavor, and we have set the price at (.) one thousand
19 and nine- dollars. Uh: after discussing these two
20 elements, shall we move on to (.) di:scu:ss uh our main
21 focus, our promotion?

In this segment, students are negotiating the price for their body lotion product. In disagreeing with the price initially suggested by S (\$110, line 2), Y makes a mistake in the price as she provides an account that warrants her upcoming alternative (lines 4-7), ending up with a nonsensical statement that \$109 gives the 'illusion' of being 'a lot cheaper' than \$1010 (lines 5-6). The error persists as Y proffers the alternative in lines 7-8, saying that they could set the price at \$1009 (instead of \$110).

Rather strikingly, no non-verbal displays orienting to Y's talk as problematic such as frowning or looking around are noted of any of the three co-participants as Y's turn progresses (lines 6-8). On the other hand, in lines 10-13, both S and K display unproblematic receipt as well as affiliation with Y's suggestion, evidenced

by the emphatic acknowledgement token ‘Mm!’, the assessment as ‘best choice’ and the account in terms of past experience by S; as well as the simultaneous emphatic nod by K. Equally remarkable is that, in the following turn where K closes the sequence on ‘price’ by formulating what the group has agreed on (lines 15-18), she follows suit and uses the erroneous price \$1009 rather than \$109. In other words, no participant has initiated correction of Y’s error in the following turns, nor is there laughter or any other signs of participants having detected the error.

While the lack of immediate verbal response by the next speaker S (indicated by the 1.5-second pause in line 9) might have indicated her orientation to the problematic price that Y suggested, the stimulated recall revealed that S, and in fact the whole group, was not aware of the error at all. The whole group was astounded when I, the researcher, asked them about this error just prior to playing the relevant segment of the video-recording. The following extract shows the students’ commentary as they watched the clip:

(6.3) PB11 Student Interview

Y: Oh, it was me [who made the mistake]... ((turns to S)) I have totally forgotten having said this.

Res: So it’s simply...

Y,S,K: ((choral response)) Slip of the tongue!

((video plays))

Y: ((points to Y)) You also said one thousand and nine!

R: She picked it up from you.

K: ((laughs and covers her mouth)) Oh yes I did!

The students’ own commentary, therefore, confirms that the whole group was oblivious to the error that Y had made during the assessed interaction. This evidence suggests that the participants were not attentively listening to each other’s talk, which could reasonably be attributed to the pre-scripted nature of the interaction – the content of each turn was predictable from the script. In the interview with another group (PA09), the students similarly admitted not paying attention to each other’s talk while busy trying to recall what to say in the next pre-scripted turn.

Next, we come back to an example discussed in Section 5.1.1. We will see a form of non-verbal behavior by a non-speaking participant that gives away the pre-

scripted nature of an episode, which, at first glance, appears to be an instance of authentic interaction.

(6.4) PA11: 48-60

1 W: Do you remember there is a scene showing that the door
2 of Anna's- (..) bedroom had been removed by Mrs Coleman;
3 **((R nods and turns her head to N just before N begins her turn))**
4 N: Yeah. I can even \\remember the phrase on her room's
5 **\\((R looks briefly at W))**
6 door. Parental advisory, uh keep out of my room. So::,
7 what you're trying to say i::s
8 W: >What I'm trying to< say is privacy. **((R turns to D))**
9 D: I see what you mean. I think: (.) privacy is::- should
10 be: (.) important to anyone. Uhm just like me, if my
11 right (.) if my right to play computer game is being
12 >exploited by my mom<, I think I will get mad on her.=So,
13 I think: lack of (.) privacy is the main cause.

In Section 5.1.1, we considered how, through a pre-sequence involving a recall question, the group was able to collaboratively and sequentially 'scaffold' the argument of privacy as a main cause of misunderstanding between the two movie characters, Anna and Mrs. Coleman. However, close examination of the non-verbal conduct of R, a non-speaking participant here, generates evidence that this episode of ostensibly authentic interaction was pre-scripted.

In lines 2-3, towards the end of W's question, R nods and turns her head to N just before N commences her turn. Meanwhile, despite generally being the most active participant in the interaction, R does not even offer a minimal verbal response such as 'mm' or 'yes' here. As N begins answering W's question, R glances at W again (line 5) instead of focusing her gaze on and displaying reciprocity to N, the current speaker. Furthermore, in line 8, R turns to D right at the end of W's turn and just before D's, as if she has already known that D would be the next speaker.

Thus, the two instances of R shifting her target of reciprocity display just before the next speaker begins to speak, together with her other marked forms of interactional conduct, suggest that the participants' turns have been pre-allocated and

the sequence of turns pre-ordered. Indeed, students confirmed in the stimulated recall that this episode (and the whole interaction) was pre-scripted.

I shall now discuss one final example of pre-scripted interaction which underlines the importance of investigating aspects of task implementation and engagement (Section 6.1.2 below). The group is discussing possible problems Anna and Mrs. Coleman would face if they had to stay in each other's bodies forever after the exchange.

(6.5) PA08: 67-89

1 R: Mm:. Uh from the viewpoint of Mrs Coleman, uh: Mrs
2 Coleman[s] may- (.) lose- her job because Anna (.) lacks
3 uh the communi- cating: (.) know-how,=so: uh as- (.)
4 Mrs Coleman's job is psychologist,=uh (.) Anna may: (.)
5 not know how to: (.) communicate or comfort (.) uh her
6 clients because Anna is- (.) quite impatient. Uh
7 therefore (.) mm:: Mrs Coleman's job (.) may be: (.)
8 °lost° .
9 S: Mm. So, therefore AND- (.) \\Anna:: (.) stay in Mrs
10 \\((J turns to S))
11 Coleman's body, she have to tackle the problem:
12 \\(.) uh she face. I think: uh (.) Anna[s] can use Mrs
13 \\((J looks at S briefly))
14 Coleman's body: to (.) continue: (.) her (.) music
15 talent, and play electronic guitars on the stage. I
16 think it will be a breakthrough
17 for a (.)\\fifty years old (.) woman (.)
18 \\((J turns to S))
19 uh to perform electronic guitar on
20 the sta\\ge. ↓So, uh- (.) uh:: on one hand,
21 \\((J turns to S))
22 uh: Anna can continues her (...) music (.)
23 tale\\nt.
24 \\((J jerks his head sharply to look at S))
25 (...)
26 J: \\Mm!=
27 -> \\((nods firmly and looks down at note card))
28 -> =I see \\the: difficultie::s (.) faced by Anna.
29 \\((looks up))

30 -> And I: think the solution is (.) e:fficient to solve the:
31 problem. For::: Mrs Coleman, she::: maybe isolated (.)
32 by:: (.) her schoolmates. Because (.) they don't have
33 common topics to talk about, and:: (.) Mrs Coleman[s] (.)
34 may:: (.) not know what they- what she should do with
35 her classmates.

The focus here is J's response turn in lines 26-35. This takes the turn structure of commenting on previous speakers' ideas before delivering one's own, thereby constructing the response as contingent on previous speaker contribution. In lines 26-28, J begins his turn by acknowledging the ideas mentioned in previous turns by R and S, namely, the difficulties faced by Anna residing in Mrs. Coleman's body (lines 1-12). He then gives an affiliative assessment of S's suggestion (lines 30-31), and in doing so, claiming the epistemic status of having understood the preceding two turns.

This part of J's turn 'doing responding' to previous speakers might, at first glance, appear to be a spontaneously produced contingent response. However, this is reminiscent of a student's pre-scripted third-turn response in Spence-Brown's (2001) study (see Chapter 2), which ostensibly suggested the student's comprehension of the interlocutor's answer to his question. It was only in the stimulated recall that the student revealed that he did not actually understand the interlocutor's answer.

Here, while the first part of J's turn (lines 28-31) appears to be contingent on the previous speakers' contributions, his non-verbal conduct gives evidence that it has been produced without actually attending to the prior talk. First, J stares in the air and never looks at R while she is talking (lines 1-8). He does occasionally look at S (whose turn his own would follow) as she is talking (lines 9-24), and displays increased reciprocity during the last two TCUs of S's turn (lines 18, 21), just before he takes over the floor. More remarkable is how J jerks his head sharply and looks at S just as she completes her turn (lines 23-24), and glances at his note card simultaneously as he utters the acknowledgement token 'mm' (lines 26-27). J's lack of reciprocity display towards R and his selective reciprocity displays at particular positions during S's turn suggest that he is more oriented to the imminent transition of speakership than the content of the prior turns. His response could well be a

scripted one that is not in fact contingent upon engaging in and comprehending the content of the previous speakers' talk.

The take-home message of this example is the importance of examining how a speaking assessment task is implemented and how it is engaged by test-takers in conjunction with the discourse elicited in the assessed performance. As we have seen from the above example and the one in Spence-Brown (2001), there are cases where the candidates' discourse ostensibly suggests authentic interaction and language use, yet close inspection of their task engagement during the preparation time can yield contesting evidence.

The next section presents findings about task implementation and students' task engagement in School P gathered from the mock assessments and post-assessment interviews. Through a more in-depth examination of the pre-task planning activities and unraveling what pre-scripting does to the elicited talk in the assessed interaction, I problematize the validity of the task in assessing students' interactional competence when pre-scripting is enabled in its implementation.

6.1.2 Pre-task planning activities: insights from mock assessments and student interviews

Students' own accounts of the kinds of pre-task planning activities they engaged in during the preparation time were first solicited in the stimulated recall interviews. To complement students' self-reported data, further insights into their pre-task planning activities were gained through close examination of the video-recorded preparation time for the two mock assessments (approximately one hour for PB11Mock; approximately 10 minutes for PB14Mock). Students participating in the mock assessments were also asked in the post-mock assessment interview about any differences in the kinds of pre-task planning activities they engaged in for the mock and the actual assessments.

An overview of pre-task planning activities

Figure 6.1 below is a schematic representation of the pre-task planning activities carried out during the preparation time, synthesizing data from the video-

recording of PB11Mock and interview reports from students of all groups in School P. The first three stages (represented in solid lines) are planning activities students in PB11Mock engaged in during the one-hour preparation time before the mock assessment. The bracketed time is the approximate amount of time students in PB11Mock devoted to each stage of the preparation. The additional fourth stage (represented in dotted lines) is what students in PB11Mock and PB14Mock reported having done before the actual assessment but did not have enough time to do before the mock assessment.

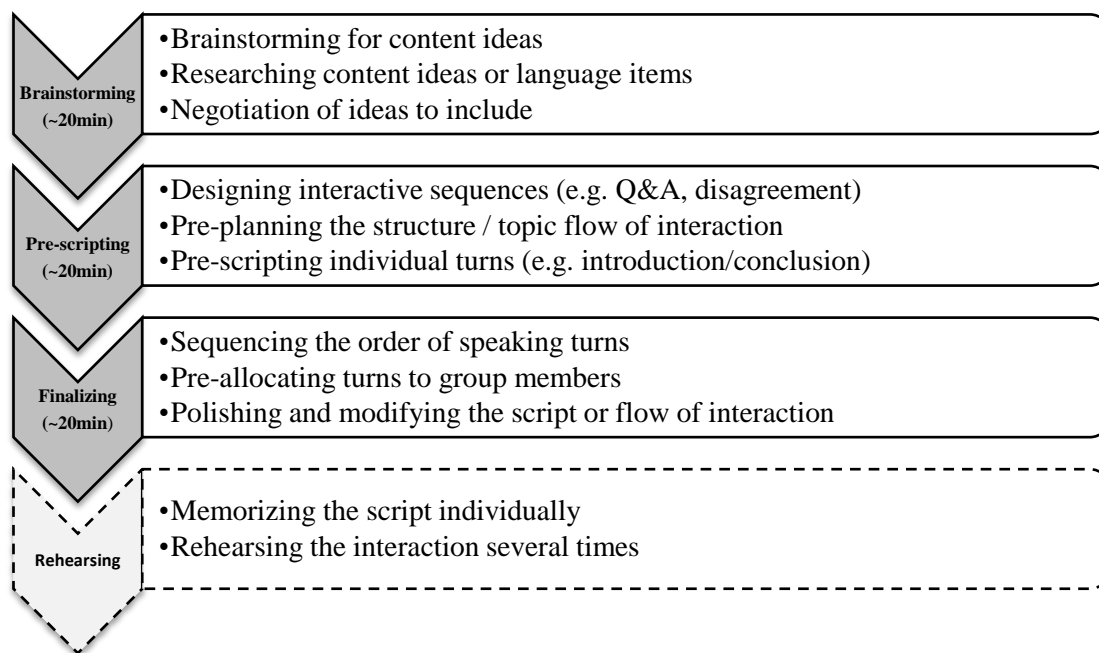


Figure 6.1 Students' pre-task planning activities before the assessed interaction

As shown in Figure 6.1, the first stage of pre-task planning involves students brainstorming for ideas about the discussion topic, researching information and relevant vocabulary items with their smartphones, and negotiating what ideas to include and exclude in the assessed interaction. In the second stage, students negotiate and create an initial plan on the structure or topic flow of the interaction. They also design interactive sequences such as question-and-answer or disagreement, and pre-script particular speaking turns such as the opening and concluding turns. In the third stage, students fix the sequence of speaking turns and assign each turn to a group member. For students in the mock assessment with one-hour preparation time

(PB11Mock), any final touch-ups to the script or flow of interaction are also done at this time.

It should be noted that these activities are not actually carried out in a strictly linear sequence, and are only presented in an approximate order. For instance, form-focused planning activities such as looking up vocabulary items and English translation of brand names, or checking them with group members, are recurrent and interspersed throughout the preparation time. Moreover, in designing some of the interactive sequences (e.g. Q&A) in Stage 2, students may do a preliminary allocation of each turn in the sequence to individual members (e.g. who asks the question and who answers it), subject to modification at a later stage.

In the post-interviews with the two groups participating in the mock assessment, further information about students' pre-task planning activities was solicited, particularly what they did before the actual assessment and, correspondingly, what they did not manage to do during the preparation time for the mock assessment. Students reported not having sufficient time for pre-scripting the interaction *verbatim* before the mock assessment. They also reported an additional stage before the actual assessment (Stage 4, in dotted lines) that involved memorizing the script individually and rehearsing the interaction (referred to as 「試演」 'trial acting') several times.

In addition to what students reported in the interviews, a piece of corroborating (and perhaps more compelling) evidence of students pre-scripting and rehearsing for the actual assessment is found in an episode of their pre-task discussion for the mock assessment, where the students recounted and invoked their experience preparing for the actual assessment in their strategic planning for the remaining preparation time:

(6.6) PB11MockPrep 31:05

- 1 Y: Actually, do we need to write out a script?
- 2 K: No.
- 3 S: We are not gonna? ((surprised))
- 4 R: I'm planning to write a 'route map'. ((to S)) We can't [write a script]. There's
- 5 not enough time.
- 6 K: Not enough time. Just write down the *points*.
- 7 Y: I can't talk [handle the discussion] that way though!
- 8 K: Just write down your own *points*. I mean in the order [of our turns and ideas].
- 9 S: But we still have 20 minutes, no?
- 10 K: We won't manage to write a script. Look how long it took us to write a script
- 11 last time?

- 12 R: ((to S)) It's gonna be fine. Why write [a script]? Isn't it better to be more
13 natural?
14 K: And to write it down line by line, how long do you think it will take!
15 S: And that time we had to memorize [the script] as well!

This episode in the group's pre-task planning discussion for the mock assessment provides a candid, dynamic depiction of the kinds of planning activities students engage in, their views towards the activities, as well as their negotiation of what to do and what can be done within different time constraints. Here, S and Y are notably inclined towards *verbatim* pre-scripting. This is first displayed through S being surprised (line 3) when K answers 'no' to her question about writing a script head-on (line 2). Also, in line 7, Y displays her concern towards not having a script, expressing her inability to handle the discussion without pre-scripting.

R and K, on the other hand, bid for a reduced, point-form version of a 'script' (what R refers to as a 'route map' of the interaction), with turns pre-ordered and pre-allocated to individual members (lines 4-5; 8). K justifies her suggestion by appealing to the time constraint they are working with (lines 10-11; 14), and R's justification (lines 12-13) reveals the student participants' own view that without pre-scripting, the group interaction would be more natural. From the students' recounting of their pre-task planning activities for the actual assessment, we can also confirm that they pre-scripted the interaction 'line by line' (line 10-11; 14) and 'memorized' the script (line 15).

Pre-task planning activities which undermine authentic language use

In the following, we take a closer look at three types of pre-task planning activities, and the ways in which they pose threats to the authenticity of the assessed interaction.

1. Pre-determining consensus and final decisions

First, students were observed to pre-negotiate the pros and cons of certain ideas at the brainstorming stage, with differences of opinion dealt with and consensus reached. Consider the following extract of students' pre-task planning discussion:

(6.7) PB11MockPrep 24:00

((Previously, someone has suggested hiring three spokespersons for their three target age groups of customers))

- 1 Y: d-> But have you guys considered the cost? It's very expensive, if we get three
2 spokespersons.
3 K: r-> Well, so maybe we can *ban* the idea of three spokespersons. *Ban* three
4 spokespersons.
5 R: No. We should first have someone say let's get one spokesperson, then
6 someone else *ban* the idea, and say we actually have three *target* groups,
7 so why don't we have one spokesperson for each *target* group.
8 S: d-> But it's mainly adults who would buy [vitamin pills] after all. Isn't one
9 spokesperson enough?
10 Y: r-> Wait. Let's get a 'mum'. Getting a 'mum' [as the spokesperson] will work!
11 K: We can say it's usually housewives who buy [vitamins for the whole family].
12 It's not the children who would buy them.

Here, the interactional project underway at this stage of pre-task discussion seems to be making decisions on what exact ideas should come up in the assessed interaction, with a discernable orientation towards reaching consensus prior to the assessed interaction. Such an orientation is manifested in the turns where resolutions (lines 3-4 by K; line 10 by Y) on what to 'do' (i.e. what ideas to 'ban', what ideas to approve) in the assessed interaction are proposed.

Notice, then, how these resolutions are proffered sequentially following other group members disagreeing with a previously proposed idea: the resolution of 'banning' the idea of hiring three spokesperson (lines 3-4) follows from Y challenging the idea on the grounds of high cost; and the resolution of getting just one spokesperson – a 'mum' figure (line 10) – comes after S's account that it is adults who would actually make purchases of their vitamin product. Importantly, the turns by Y (lines 1-2) and S (lines 8-9) convey *genuine disagreement* with previously proposed ideas. Also of interest here is how their turn shapes differ from the typical disagreeing responses in the assessed interactions (see Section 4.2): these responses counter the previous speaker's contribution by immediately offering an account, prefaced with 'but', yet remain unmitigated and do not include an explicit disagreement component such as 'I'm sorry but I can't agree with you'. This gives us a window on how the students actually 'do disagreements' with each other in everyday talk, although, notably, this is in their L1.

Presumably, the ability to *spontaneously* counter a previous speaker's idea and provide an explanation is one of the things that the Group Interaction task is intended to assess. Nonetheless, instead of having it as a point for debate in the assessed interaction, the group pre-determined their final decision of having only one spokesperson, and pre-planned how they would work their way through the different proposals to reach such consensus in the assessed interaction. The extract below (discussed in Section 5.1.2) follows shortly after the above extract, in which the consensus of having one spokesperson only has evidently been reached, and the group pre-plans the trajectory of their talk exchange that works towards this decision in the assessed interaction through designing a disagreement sequence.

(6.8) PB11MockPrep 26:48

- 1 K: Shall we do this silly old (「無聊」) thing again, *ban* something for a little bit?
2 S: Again we need to *ban* something? Are we going to talk about Mimi Chu again
3 [a proposal for spokesperson to be rejected]?
4 R: Huh? So we only consider one person and that's it [for the spokesperson
5 topic]? So we only get one *spokesperson*?
6 S: Yes
7 K: ((points to R)) You say let's have three [spokespeople].
8 Y: ((points to S)) No. Let's have one of you suggest three [spokespeople], but
9 then another disagree, saying the *cost* is too high this way. If all three are
10 *artists*, the cost will be very high.
11 S: ((writing down)) So that means we first *ban* [the idea of] three
12 [spokespeople], then suggest having one only. And then who are we gonna
13 get? Let's go with *Jacky Chan*.

As seen in the extract, this pre-determined consensus of hiring only one spokesperson is 'signed and sealed' in the side sequence of confirmation request by R and confirmation by S (lines 4-6). Although the participants' own disaffiliative stance towards contriving disagreement is displayed by both K and S in lines 1-2, the project of writing a 'banning ideas' sequence into the assessed interaction continues in lines 7-13. Here, K and Y offer tentative proposals on the sequence of turns in which the initial idea of three spokespeople are 'suggested', 'disagreed with', and then accounted for (lines 7-10). These in turn are confirmed and endorsed by S (lines 11-13), adding the action of suggesting the alternative: having one spokesperson only (line 12).

The ramifications of such pre-task discussion should now be apparent enough: it minimizes or eliminates altogether the information and opinion gaps that could

otherwise create a genuine need for communication and negotiation in the group interaction task proper. Putting it another way, the negotiation of ideas and opinions leading to consensus in the assessed interaction (on which students' relevant competencies are evaluated) is not based on a *genuine* difference of opinion that exists among the students *at the time of the assessed interaction*, but at best what the students have packaged and *re-present* as a difference of opinion.

2. Pre-planning interactive sequences and pre-allocating turns to group members

Related activities which further undermine the authenticity of students' interaction in the assessed task performance, as we have glimpsed in the above extracts, include pre-planning interactive episodes, pre-sequencing the turns, and assigning them to individual participants. The following is another example at a later stage of the preparation time.

(6.9) PB11MockPrep 55:45

- 1 S: ((points to Y)) She will introduce [the topic of] *spokesperson*
2 K: OK. So I'll then suggest three. ((writing on note card simultaneously)) I'll say
3 since we have three *target groups*, why don't we get three *spokespersons*.
4 R: ((points to K)) You say that, you'll suggest that, right? So you suggest having
5 three spokespersons. And then who's gonna *ban* the idea? You *ban* it, S.
6 S: Sure, I'll *ban* it. I'll *ban* it.
7 R: And after *banning* it I'll lead to [the topic of] '*place*'. Alright, let's do it like
8 this.
9 S: ((writing simultaneously)) I'll do the *banning*. The cost is too high.
10 R: ((writing simultaneously)) '*Three spokespersons*' is by K, and then S *bans* the
11 idea, because the cost is too high. And then I'll agree with her, and
12 afterwards I'll introduce [the topic of] '*place*'.

As the allocated preparation time is nearing the end, the students here are finalizing the interactive sequence of exchange on how many spokespeople to hire, which they have developed from the planning earlier (see the two extracts above). Evident in the extract is a fixed sequence of actions and a precise turn-by-turn procedure of how the exchange of opinions and decision-making will unfold: starting with an initial proposal of hiring three spokespersons (lines 2-3), followed by someone challenging ('banning') the idea (lines 5-6), and finally agreeing on the alternative of having one only (line 11), and shifting to another topic (lines 7-8; 12)

The students also assign each turn/action to individual members, such that K will make the initial suggestion that is to be challenged (lines 2-3), S will 'ban' the idea (lines 4-6), and R will agree with the alternative and initiate a topic shift (lines 11-12). The sequence of assigned speaking turns, and the order of proposing, disagreeing, and finally reaching consensus on an idea, were eventually all written down on their note cards as what the students themselves called the 'route map' (「路圖」) of the assessed interaction. Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3 below show an example of such a 'route map' written by R.

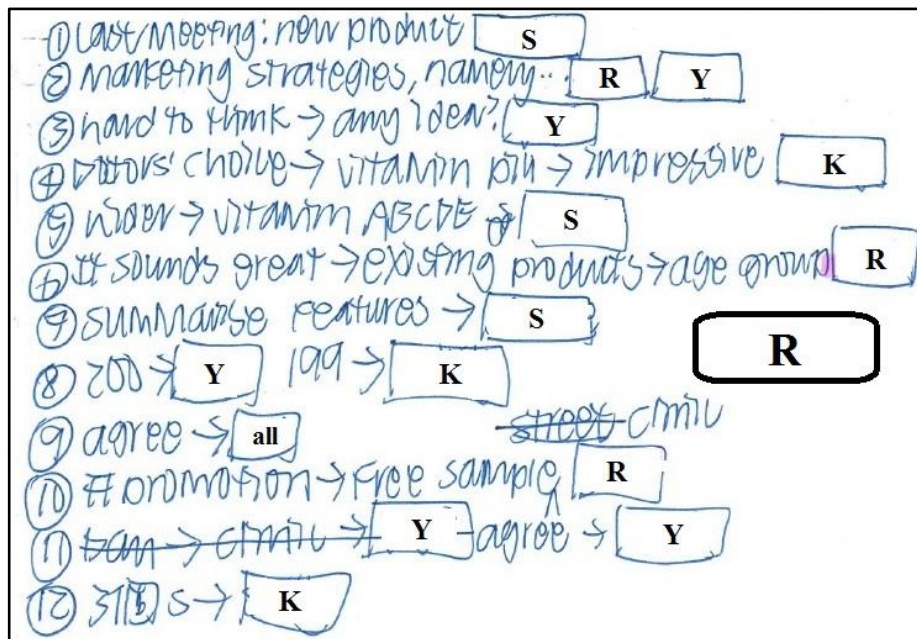


Figure 6.2 Student R's note card for PB11Mock (p.1)

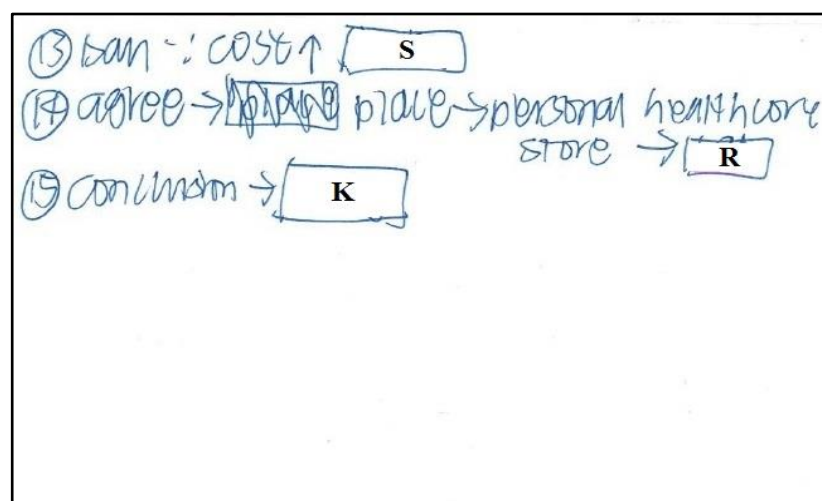


Figure 6.3 Student R's note card for PB11Mock (p.2)

As shown on the note card, each turn in the interaction is numbered according to the pre-determined order; with the main idea (e.g. turn 1), interactional action (e.g. turn 9), or even set phrases (e.g. turn 3, turn 6) written down; and the pre-allocated speaker labelled. The outcome of pre-planning the sequence in which the proposal for hiring three spokespeople will be 'banned' (shown above) is also 'laminated' on this 'route map' of the assessed interaction (turns 12-14).

Although three of the four students did not manage to (or decided not to) pre-script the entire assessed interaction *verbatim*,²⁵ such pre-planning of interactive exchange sequences and pre-allocation of speaking turns effectively remove the spontaneity and contingencies that would otherwise characterize an unfolding interaction, and which form an integral part of the basis on which students' interactional competence is assessed.

3. Helping weaker participants pre-script their turns

Finally, there was an instance of a student (K) helping a less capable group member (Y) pre-script her turns.

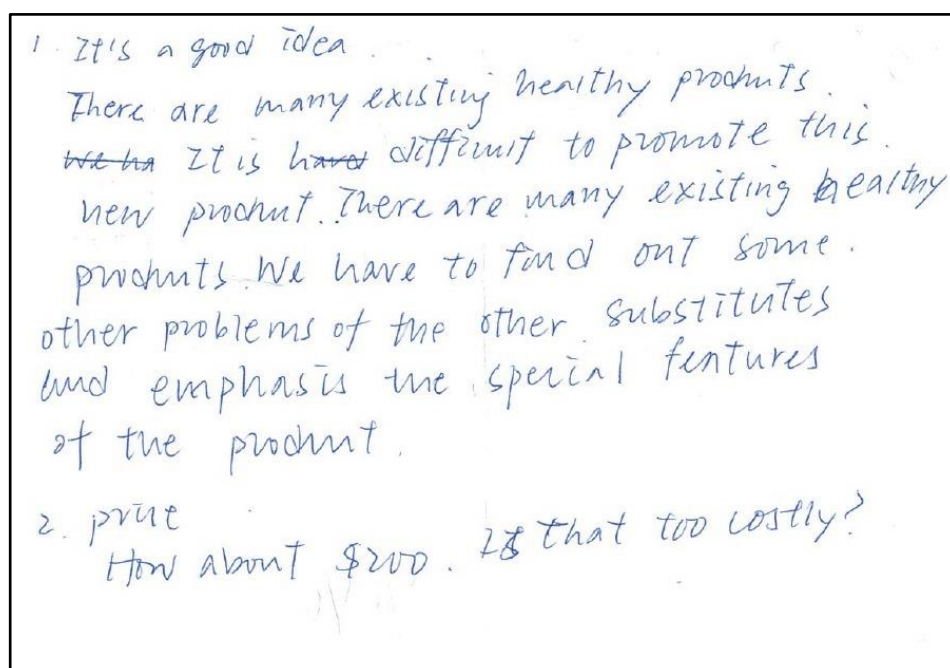


Figure 6.4. Student Y's note card for PB14Mock (p.1)

²⁵ K, S, and R wrote a 'route map' of the interaction onto their note cards, while Y her speech for each of the three turns pre-allocated to her *verbatim*.

(6.10) PB11MockPrep 41:40

1 K: Oh so you can also mention this. You say 'let's start with "product", but I
2 can't think of promotional ideas because it's difficult when there're so many
3 competitors, so what ideas do you guys have?' And then we'll respond to her.

(6.11) PB11Mock: 12-19

1 Y: \\It's a good idea.
2 \\((gaze shifts from R to note card))
3 Uhm maybe we'll begin with the product. Uhm:: but I
4 think it is difficult to promote this new product. Uh
5 there are many existing: uh healthy products nowadays.
6 Uh: maybe we have to find out some problem of the other
7 substitutes, and ano- another thing- analysis{analyze}
8 the special features of our new product. Do you think so?

As we can see from Y's note card onto which she pre-scripted her speaking turns *verbatim*, and the relevant transcript extract of the mock assessed interaction, Y evidently adopted K's suggestion in constructing part of her first speaking turn (in terms of the sequence and rhetorical structure of ideas). As such, what Y eventually said in that turn during the assessed interaction was not even entirely her 'original work', let alone a spontaneously produced contribution.

On scrutinizing students' pre-task planning activities, we now have good evidence that what might appear as authentic talk exchange in the assessed interaction can in fact have been contrived. As a result of the aforementioned pre-negotiation of ideas and the subsequent pre-planning or pre-scripting of the relevant discussion, what the students perform and are evaluated on during the assessed interaction is, at best, a *re*-presentation of their pre-task interaction conducted in L1. It is not an authentic and spontaneous interaction conducted in L2 spoken English, the target of the assessment. The implications of this for the validity of the assessment task will be discussed in greater detail in Section 6.3.

6.1.3 Case study: PB14Mock with 10 minutes preparation time

Earlier in this section, we saw some of the aspects in which students' discourse in the assessed interaction is affected by how the task is implemented. Specifically, we looked at how students, when given extended preparation time (e.g. a few hours in School P), tend to engage in pre-planning or even pre-scripting the interaction. Their subsequent talk exchange in the assessed interaction exhibits features of pre-determined rather than locally managed turn-taking order, with no collaborative turn construction, and problems and errors are unattended to. As a closer examination of the video-recorded preparation time for one of the mock assessments revealed, students engage in certain pre-task planning activities which remove the information and opinion gaps that necessitate interaction, and eliminate the spontaneity and contingencies inherent in interaction. Such activities therefore undermine the authenticity of interaction during the assessed task performance, and the validity of such performance as evidence of students' interactional competence.

In the following, to further illustrate how the amount of preparation time has an influence on students' assessed performance and how well the task discriminates between students with different levels of interactional competence, I examine a case where students who previously had extended preparation time were put under a different task condition: being given only 10 minutes of preparation time. Recall from Chapter 3 that two groups in School P were invited to participate in a mock assessment, carried out during the second phase of data collection following the administration of Part B of the actual School-based Assessment. The group PB11Mock (discussed above) was given approximately one hour of preparation time, while the group PB14Mock was given approximately 10 minutes to prepare. In the extracts below from PB14Mock, we will see evidence of different levels of interactional competence among the group of students being manifested in their discourse.

(6.12) PB14Mock: 91-112

1 S: \\You guy got a- (you) got a good poi:nt.
2 \\((glances across the group))
3 And I think uh:: we can- or- \\>just similar to< what
4 \\((gestures to T))

but only found among the group interactions in School L. Its deployment by S in the mock assessment with only 10 minutes preparation time, therefore, is remarkable. Topicalization of T's 'free gifts' idea is seen in the ensuing talk where S elaborates on how to operationalize the promotion – measuring students' BMI (Body Mass Index) (line 9), and outlines another purpose or advantage of this promotional strategy – to enhance students' health (lines 10-11).

As L takes up speakership in line 13, she engages in further topical talk about the 'free gifts' idea. In giving an extended account for agreement with T's proposal, L refers to the company's social responsibility to raise awareness about obesity among teenagers (lines 17-23). She also incorporates in her talk the idea of BMI (lines 27-29) that S has mentioned in the preceding turn. Thus, we see how both S and L build their own contribution on that of previous speakers by picking out and topicalizing elements of talk in the prior turns ('distributing free gifts', 'BMI'). In so doing, they manage to sustain and develop a topic and display understanding of previous speakers' talk, while also adding their own contribution to the talk exchange.

Of significance is how the two participants have demonstrably managed such interactional achievements more or less spontaneously rather than relying on prepared material. L only browses her note card on two occasions as she mentions the idea of giving out 'free gifts' in schools (lines 13-17; 24-25). In the rest of the turn, she makes no reference to her note card and maintains eye contact with other group members at all times. Similarly, S looks at co-participants rather than browse her note card during her turn (lines 1-11). Although there are quite a few language errors in L's turn (lines 16-19), this precisely reveals her attempt (and her ability) to spontaneously construct a response that links to and builds upon prior speaker contribution. The students' note cards collected at the end of the assessed interaction offer further corroborating evidence:

BMI respectively. Similarly, the ideas of measuring students' BMI and enhancing their health do not appear on S's note card.

Compared to L and S, T is observably weaker in producing responses that are contingent on previous speaker contribution in this interaction. The following extract shows the two turns by K and T prior to S and L's turns in the above extract.

(6.13) PB14Mock: 76-90

1 K: Yeah[r], besides websites, we might also think some
2 other ways to promote our products, like uhm we may set
3 up some big banners (.) everywhere like uhm the buses,
4 the MTR stations, both uhm places are: uh the teenagers
5 always will uhm go to, or: uhm >they may notice it<, so,
6 they will (.) realize that our products' uhm benefits,
7 and then (.) uhm they may have uh interest on them.
8 °What do you think?°
9 (...)) ((T turns to L and the two exchange looks))
10 T: °Uhm:::° (.) ((looks down at note card)) I think sell:::
11 our product to school by free gift is (to me) is a good
12 idea also. .hh Because can let students to try our
13 products, and::: (.) and::: understand more: (.) our::: (.)
14 our: fo- our features of our products. ((turns from note
15 card to K)) °What do you think?°

Of interest here is T's turn (lines 11-15) following that of K. T's talk exhibits little contingency on K's contribution in the preceding turn: even though it is on the same prescribed topic of 'promotional strategies', it does not make reference to or topicalize any elements in K's prior talk about print advertisements in public areas (lines 4-9). Rather, it goes straight into a new suggestion of distributing 'free gifts' in schools. T's response, therefore, can be considered a *relevant* but not a *contingent* response to the previous speaker's talk.

T's reliance on prepared ideas in making her contribution to the talk exchange is attested to by the fact that she is browsing her note card most of the time during her turn until she issues the speaker-change-initiating question 'what do you think' (lines 14-15). Her lack of readiness to spontaneously produce a contingent response, or indeed simply to take a turn to speak, is also displayed in the silence in line 9, where she exchanges looks with L before taking up speakership, as well as in the

delay and hesitation in beginning her turn (line 10). A similar example is found at an earlier stage of the interaction, the only other turn that T has taken in this assessed interaction.

(6.14) PB14Mock: 26-34

1 T: ((looks at note card)) Ye::s, to compare to: the::
2 products nowadays showed in the market, they are involve
3 some chemical ((looks up at K briefly)) ingredients,
4 that we don't know. But our products involve some: uh
5 just Chinese traditional medicine, .h and which is (.)
6 healthy to our:: (.) to bo- t- healthy our bodies, so::
7 K: huh [heh heh
8 ((everyone smiles and tries to hold their laughter))
9 T: [it w(h)ill not affect our h(h)ealth. And::

T's gaze mostly stays on the note card during this turn. This suggests that her response is based on a pre-planned idea, even though the idea appears to be contingent on the previous speaker's talk – contrasting the use of natural ingredients in their product (mentioned by K in the preceding turn) with the use of chemical ingredients in other products on the market.

Overall, then, in neither of the substantial turns T has taken in this interaction has T managed to spontaneously construct a response based mainly on the unfolding talk in the preceding turn(s). In other words, T's discourse shows little evidence of understanding previous speakers' contributions produced *in situ* (as opposed to pre-negotiated and pre-planned ideas); and correspondingly, little evidence of being able to formulate responses that are contingent on previous speakers' locally produced talk. Remarkably, T's performance in this mock assessment presents a stark contrast with her performance in the actual assessment (PB14), where she has taken five substantial, multi-TCU turns, compared to two here in PB14Mock. One of her response turns in PB14, where she contests the previous speaker's idea of Chinese medicine being a desirable feature of their product, has also yielded ostensible evidence of her ability to produce contingent responses to co-participants' talk (see discussion in Section 5.1.2). However, T's performance in the mock assessment examined above suggests the contrary.

In Chapter 5, it was argued that the ability to construct responses that are contingent on previous speaker contribution is a core component of interactional competence being assessed in the SBA Group Interaction task. This is oriented to both by student-candidates in their discursive construction of interactional competence, and by teacher-raters in their evaluation of students' performance. It is significant, then, that the case of PB14Mock gives us some preliminary evidence that this component of interactional competence manifests itself differently in assessed performance under different conditions of task implementation (i.e. whether pre-planning and pre-scripting is enabled/disabled during preparation time).

As seen in PB14Mock above, there is evidence of stronger students (S and L) being able to *spontaneously* construct responses that are contingent on previous speakers' *locally produced* contributions. On the other hand, in pre-scripted interactions (e.g. PB14), while students also display evidence of a similar ability in discourse and teacher-raters have been shown to evaluate students' interactional competence on this basis (see Section 5.1.3), the distinction between the spontaneous performance of such competence in real-time interaction and the use of such competence in preparing and animating scripted responses is largely masked. In PB14Mock, we have also seen evidence of a weaker student's (T's) reliance on pre-planned ideas and speech, as well as only managing peripheral participation (e.g. taking two turns rather than five) when speaking turns are locally distributed/secured rather than pre-allocated. However, these aspects could again be obscured in interactions where all participants' responses to each other are pre-scripted, pre-ordered and pre-allocated.

From this analysis, therefore, a tentative conclusion can be drawn: the SBA Group Interaction task implemented under the condition of 10 minutes preparation time has a higher capacity to discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates in terms of spontaneous, *in situ* production of responses contingent on the previous speakers' talk. Of course, we must acknowledge that there are a number of other psycholinguistic and individual difference factors, such as memory, anxiety, confidence, and extrovert/introvert personality, which might be in simultaneous operation with the amount of preparation time to yield the observed performance in the group interactions. Further empirical verification is needed in future research.

6.2 Interactional competence revisited

6.2.1 Interactional competence: Features salient in the SBA Group Interaction task

In Chapter 5 (Section 5.1), we examined how ‘interaction’ and ‘interactional competence’ are co-constructed in students’ discourse, along with features that are oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters as pertinent to this competence. The most salient feature constituting the ability to interact with and respond to others, as emerging from the analysis, is the production of responses which are *contingent on previous speaker contribution*.

Among interview responses from teacher-raters in this study and examiners’ comments in the Examination Report, a recurrent theme in evaluating performance is whether a student-candidate has ‘responded to’ or talked about the previous speaker’s ideas before delivering his or her own. As with raters in May’s (2011) study, this is also taken as evidence of listening to and comprehending of a co-participant’s talk in the prior turn, another feature emphasized by teacher-raters and in the Examination Report. In other words, the two features of interactional competence salient to raters, namely (1) listening to and understanding the talk by previous speaker(s), and (2) production of talk contingent on previous speaker contribution, are often evaluated together, with (2) serving as evidence of (1). In contrast, acknowledgement tokens (e.g. ‘mm’), agreement tokens (e.g. ‘yeah’), and formulaic responses (e.g. ‘I agree with you’), when followed immediately by the delivery of the current speaker’s own ideas, are treated as insufficient evidence of attention to and comprehension of the previous speaker’s talk, as well as an inadequate response to the prior talk. Similar views towards such response tokens and formulaic expressions used alone in a response turn have also been reported in previous studies (e.g. Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010; Luk, 2010). Besides indicating attention to prior talk, the production of responses which are contingent on previous speaker contribution is also perceived as constitutive of a ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ discussion by teacher-raters, echoing the raters’ views in May (2011). This is evident

in the comments given by the two teacher-raters in School P, even in the knowledge that the assessed interactions have in fact been pre-scripted.

Orientation to producing talk that is contingent on previous speaker contribution is also salient in students' co-construction of interactional competence. This is attested in various aspects of students' discourse discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. For instance, some students, both when agreeing and disagreeing with the previous speaker, provide an account that refers back to elements of talk in the prior turn. Some even orient to an agreeing response that consists of only agreement tokens and/or formulaic expressions as incomplete, aligning with teacher-raters' views discussed above. We have also seen how some students in School P write disagreement sequences into the script, exploiting the fact that disagreeing responses, often being dispreferred actions, typically project an account. Overall, the analysis has identified four different means of foregrounding the contingency of one's response on previous speaker contribution:

- (1) Accounting for agreement/disagreement with the previous speaker
- (2) Making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk
- (3) Formulating or partially repeating the previous speaker's idea(s)
- (4) Elaborating on the previous speaker's idea(s)

Besides constructing individual response turns that are contingent on the prior speaker's talk, students who pre-script the assessed interaction also design interactive sequences that link individual turns and contributions together as contingent on one another. This is seen, for example, in a case where students deliver two otherwise separate ideas through a question-and-answer sequence, with one speaker explicitly soliciting another idea from the next speaker. In another pre-scripted episode, students do the work of making a point through the use of a recall pre-sequence, such that the delivery of an opinion, which could have been the work of a single participant, becomes a 'joint enterprise' interactionally accomplished by three participants (Section 5.1.1).

Overall, we can see that interactional competence, as co-constructed and assessed in the SBA Group Interaction task, concerns mainly the following features: production of responses contingent on previous speaker contribution, attention to and comprehension of the previous speaker's talk, and also to some extent, how 'natural' or 'authentic' the interaction is. These features are inextricably related, in that the

first feature of contingent responses is often taken as evidence of the second and the third feature – comprehension of prior talk and authentic interaction. Throughout the analysis, it can be seen that the production of responses contingent on previous speaker contribution is oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters as the most salient feature of what it means to be able to interact within the assessment context, echoing the importance accorded to it in various paired/group speaking assessments as reported in previous studies (e.g. Gan, 2010, He & Dai, 2006; Luk, 2010; May, 2009, 2011; Nakatsuhara, 2011).

Another important aspect that has emerged from analysis is how students are seen to adapt their talk and interactional conduct to the assessment context (Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), attesting to the context-specific nature of interactional competence posited in Young's theory. The complexities this brings to the assessment of interactional competence, particularly in the extrapolation of test performance to the target non-testing contexts, is discussed in the following section.

6.2.2 Complexities in assessing interactional competence: Context, participant framework, interactional norms

In Chapter 2, we saw how interactional competence (IC) as posited in Young's (2000, 2008, 2011) theory is co-constructed and context-specific in nature. Young (2008) offers the following definition of interactional competence:

Interactional competence is a relationship between participants' employment of linguistic and interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed [...]. (p.100)

On acknowledging IC's context-sensitive, situation-specific nature, Young (2000) suggests that test validation work should compare the configuration of interactional resources ('interactional architecture') in the testing context with that in the corresponding real-life contexts, to order to establish an argument for the extrapolation of test-takers' performance in the target non-testing contexts from their test performance, hence for the construct validity of the test. As is evident in the above definition, the context-sensitive nature lies at the heart of IC, but it seems to become problematic and paradoxical within a validity argument that aims to apply inferences from performance in the testing context to performance in the target real-life contexts.

In Chapter 5, we began to see some of these complexities. There is evidence that the interactional architecture of the SBA Group Interaction task is demonstrably oriented to by participants as being different from that of the corresponding real-life interactional contexts, namely, small group interaction among peers (classmates/friends). The findings of the present study therefore pose challenges to the assessment of interactional competence at two levels. At one level, the findings contest the construct validity of the GI task itself, when its ostensible aim is to elicit and assess authentic language use in a context ‘closely approximating real-life and low-stress conditions’ (HKEAA, 2009, p.3). At another level, the findings pose challenges to the assessment of IC in general. Evidence from the present data suggests that the interactional architecture of speaking assessments, in terms of participation framework and identity configuration, is possibly unique – involving an assessor who, whether verbally participating in the assessment task or not, is oriented to by the candidates as a ratified participant (‘ratified overhearer’ or ‘unaddressed recipient’). The question, then, is to what extent such an interactional architecture in the testing context is generalizable to non-testing contexts.

In this study, evidence from both discourse in assessed interactions and meta-discursive comments in stimulated recall points to students’ orientation to the SBA Group Interaction task as a unique interactional context (or ‘discursive practice’ in Young’s (2008) terms), with its own participant configuration and interactional norms that is manifested in students’ production of talk (each discussed in more detail below). This echoes Luk’s (2010) argument that students in the SBA group interactions are co-constructing a new ‘test discourse’ genre, and He and Dai’s (2006) argument that candidates in the CET-SET frame the group discussion as an assessment event rather than a meaningful communicative exchange.

In Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.1), we looked at features of recipient design that demonstrated students’ orientation to a participation framework where the teacher-rater was positioned as the ‘ratified overhearer’ or ‘unaddressed recipient’. Most notably, the analysis revealed that students’ formulations of previous speakers’ talk were not oriented to co-participants. These formulations, unlike those in other everyday or institutional contexts, did not typically generate a confirmation SPP from the previous speaker. Nor did these formulations engender topicalization of the

relevant ideas in the previous speaker's talk, but were typically followed by a change of topic or the delivery of a new idea in the same turn. These formulations, as I argued, were designed to make it 'visible' and assessable that the current speaker's talk is contingent on previous speaker contribution, and were therefore oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater.

This kind of participation framework and the corresponding overhearer-oriented talk is reminiscent of a dialogue that actors perform with one another, or an interview between a television show host and the guest, with a live or home audience. Goffman (1981) contrasts actors with conversation participants, 'the former having audiences, the latter fellow conversationalists' (p.139). Crucially, he notes that stage actors perform dialogues to one another in character, 'all *arranged so they can be listened in on* by those who are off the stage' (p.138, my emphasis). Thus, in these interactional contexts of a stage play or broadcast interview, the overhearing audience are in some ways the 'privileged' recipients of the talk over the immediate co-participants (fellow actors, interviewer/interviewee), and the design of their talk reflects such a participation framework. Correspondingly, insofar as the student-candidates orient to the double-layered participation framework of the SBA Group Interaction task (an interaction among themselves as a group, which is assessed by the teacher-rater), they will take into account in the design of their talk that the 'privileged' recipient of the talk is the teacher-rater, not their fellow student participants.

Such a participation framework that involves, and perhaps privileges, the rater as an overhearer has been either overtly mentioned or implicit in the work by a number of authors in the testing literature (He & Dai, 2006; Luk, 2010; Nakatsuhara, 2011; Simpson, 2006). For example, Luk (2010) discusses students' collusive interactional behavior in terms of impression management for assessment by their teacher. Similarly, Nakatsuhara (2011) accounts for the unnatural turn-taking patterns in her study of a group oral test by reference to the test-takers' awareness that displaying their language abilities is the overarching interactional (and institutional) purpose in oral testing, and that 'their ultimate target audience is the examiners rather than the other candidates in the group' (p.502).

One of the reasons that the paired/group formats have been welcomed by language testers relates to their advantages over the Oral Proficiency Interview (see Section 2.1). Interaction in these formats is ‘controlled to a larger extent by the candidate’ (Galaczi, 2008, p.91) rather than ‘orchestrated by the assessor’ (Skehan, 2001, p.169), and therefore enables a broader range of language functions to be assessed (*ibid.*). However, the question remains whether the mere presence of the assessor could alter the nature and patterns of the interaction. Evidence of students’ talk being recipient-designed to the overhearing teacher-rater in this study, along with recognition of the overhearer-orientation of candidates’ talk in the existing literature, highlights the need for us to reconsider the prevailing assumption underlying the use and validity claim of the paired/group formats in assessing speaking – that peer candidates are essentially interacting with each other and each other *only*, not unlike the once held assumption that the Oral Proficiency Interview *is* conversation.

The analysis in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 also yielded evidence of students orienting to the SBA Group Interaction task as a unique interactional context with its own particular interactional norms different from those in everyday conversation. In Section 5.2.2, we first saw how students foregrounded their test-taker identity and downplayed their everyday identity as friends/classmates, indexed through the norms of how to address each other made relevant in the assessed interactions. Specifically, they avoided addressing co-participants on a first-name basis, and instead used labels such as ‘Candidate X’ or by gesturing to them. The students’ negotiation through the conflicting identities, and the sheer awkwardness of not being supposed to call their friends/classmates by their first names, were manifested in their production difficulty in finding the appropriate means of addressing each other.

Another interactional norm that emerged in the analysis was having to give an example (or a supporting account) after delivering each idea. Students’ orientation to this norm was displayed through overtly prefacing the example with ‘for example’, with the phrase sometimes latched onto the previous TCU. However, students meta-discursively commented in the stimulated recall that this deviates from their conduct in everyday interactions with each other. Such conflicting identities and interactional norms also became visible in students’ interview responses in Luk (2010), where

they noted the sociolinguistic and pragmatic inappropriateness of saying ‘sorry’ in disagreeing with others and being overly polite to one’s own friends. The regularity with which the students do what they claim to detest doing seems to imply that such ‘unnatural’ interactional behavior is nonetheless normative in the SBA group interactions.

Finally, the interactional norm of having to provide an account in both agreeing and disagreeing responses was discussed in Section 4.2.3 in terms of conflicting structural preferences and assessment-related preferences. The emergence of this set of assessment-related preferences in group speaking assessments in Hong Kong perhaps stemmed from students’ overuse of agreement tokens and formulaic expressions (see Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5). In Section 5.2.2, we looked at how this relates to students’ projection of different identities for themselves: Stronger students who are capable of agreeing either with or without also providing an account could either position themselves as competent test-takers in the SBA group interactions, displaying an ability to express agreement and provide an explanation for it; or position themselves as competent speakers of everyday interactions, where agreeing responses orient to the prior turn as unproblematic and unaccountable, and moving on to a new topic or idea is conversationally normal. However, as we have seen, such a choice on the part of the students has direct and different consequences for the teacher-rater’s perception of their interactional competence, hence for the rating outcomes.

This somewhat parallels the case of answering an interviewer’s yes/no question in an OPI reported in Ross (2007), cited in Okada (2010). Ross (2007) discussed an example where the candidate’s answer ‘yes’ to the interviewer’s closed question was treated as inadequate by the interviewer, who waited a second and asked a related open question following the gap of silence. While a brief ‘yes’ is a perfectly natural preferred response to a yes/no question in everyday conversation, Ross (2007) contended that the candidate would be rated as incompetent, having failed to understand the interviewer’s question within the assessment context and its institutional purpose of collecting the candidate’s speech samples, and failed to provide longer speech samples accordingly. Concurring with Ross (2007), Okada (2010) argued that this answer reflects the candidate’s (lack of) interactional

competence in understanding the projection of a next action by the examiner's question *within the particular interactional context* of an OPI. Thus, in both the cases of agreeing with/without an account in the SBA Group Interaction task and answering a yes/no question with/without elaboration in the OPI, there is evidence that the identities candidates (need to) project for themselves within the interaction, their interactional conduct conforming to respective norms, and the interactional competence thus displayed, all bear discernable differences from those in everyday conversation and are sensitive to the particular assessment context.

Herein lies the paradox. Where there is evidence of learners' orientation to the interactional event as an assessment, of the rater as a ratified overhearer, and of learners' production of talk accordingly being recipient-designed and conforming to particular norms, the learners are demonstrating context-sensitive adaptation of their interactional behavior – employing the relevant linguistic and interactional resources specific and appropriate to the context of a speaking assessment task. This is precisely one of the key characteristics of interactional competence in Young's theory. Paradoxically, however, the validity claim of a paired/group speaking assessment task often lies in the elicitation of learners' linguistic and interactional behavior as if they were interacting in a context where a 'privileged overhearer' (with participants' talk recipient-designed to the overhearer) has no part to play. For instance, the ostensible aim of the SBA Group Interaction task has been to assess friends/classmates interacting among themselves in a group under low-stress conditions (HKEAA, 2009).

Is the assessed performance in such simulated interactional contexts generalizable to the target non-testing contexts? This remains an ongoing issue for research and debate. In the remainder of this section, I discuss the opinions of two authors representing the two sides of the argument, namely Okada (2010) and Stokoe (2013). Their studies both examined performance assessments involving a role-play task, a kind of simulated interaction that mirrors some real-life interaction.

The thrust of Okada's (2010) argument is *different configurations, same competencies*. Aligning with previous research on OPI, Okada (2010) acknowledges that structural differences exist between the OPI (both the interview phase and the role-play phase) and everyday conversation, and made clear that his claim 'is not that

ordinary conversation and role-play are [*sic*] same genres of talks' (p.1665). However, he argues that the interactional competencies demanded of and displayed by candidates in the OPI are very similar to those in real-life interaction:

[W]hat candidates can do in and for a role-play activity is highly similar to what s/he [*sic*] does in an ordinary conversation: s/he must understand what his/her interlocutors have said and display his/her understandings in their next turn.

(Okada, 2010, p.1666)

More specifically, drawing on Kasper's (2006) CA-based definition of IC, Okada (2010) maintains that the interactional competences, such as timely turn-taking, turn design for specific actions, understanding co-participants' projected actions, and initiating and executing repair, are 'fundamental conditions for every interaction' (p.1665). Thus, insofar as such competencies are elicited in the role-play or other parts of the OPI, a validity argument for extrapolating the test performance to the target non-testing contexts can be established.

Stokoe (2013) contests this assumption about same basic competencies underlying the validity claim of a role-played assessment task. She argues that the simulated interaction in a training/assessment task might elicit the same actions as the real-life task, but they are packaged or formatted differently. In the suspect interview simulations for police officer trainees, Stokoe's (2013) analysis revealed that actions were 'unpacked more elaborately, exaggeratedly, or explicitly' (p.183), in order to make them 'interactionally visible' and 'assessable' (p.165). For example, the trainee's action of soliciting the suspect's consent to address each other on a first-name basis was, in one case, additionally prefaced with a formulation of prior talk 'as we've already discussed', re-invoking prior rapport-building work before the recording began. In another case, such rapport-building action was dislocated in the initial sequences compared to what happened in the real suspect interviews. Based on the findings, Stokoe (2013) questions the authenticity of simulated interactions and their previously uncontested validity in evaluating a person's communication skills in the actual workplace interactions:

If simulations contain actions that are *not present* in actual encounters, or if actions are *formatted differently* in them, then, a person may receive a high score for, say, the presence of rapport-building features in training when such features may not appear in their actual workplace interactions. (p.183)

A similar case can be made about SBA group interactions. Actions such as accounting for one's agreement with the previous speaker or formulating their talk – as overt (sometimes exaggerated) displays of the students' IC regarding comprehension of prior talk and ability to produce responses contingent on previous speaker contribution – are oriented to as important by parties at both ends of the assessment. These actions are performed in such ways as to make them interactionally visible and assessable by the overhearing teacher-raters, who have been shown to take these features into account in their rating decisions. However, the performance of the respective components of IC in non-testing contexts might not necessitate or involve such overt displays. Thus, while the relevant components of interactional competence might be the same, the assessment would seem to fall short of validity if, for example, students are encouraged to formulate the previous speaker's talk just to display that they have listened and can link their responses to the prior speaker's talk, not to check and confirm the current speaker's understanding of the prior talk or to topicalize specific elements in the prior talk as in real-life interactions.

This brings us to a consideration of the validity issues surrounding the SBA Group Interaction task investigated in this study, to be discussed in this next section.

6.3 Validity of the SBA Group Interaction task for assessing interactional competence

Authenticity and validity

One of the main objectives of this study has been to investigate the validity of the SBA Group Interaction task for assessing interactional competence. The test developers' validity claim for the GI task has been based on the premise that the task elicits students' 'natural and authentic spoken language' (HKEAA, 2009, p.7), and that it 'should provide a richer picture of what learners can do (with oral language) than the external examination [...] by more closely approximating real-life and low stress conditions' (p.3). An important question is: what kind of *authenticity* is at issue and forms the basis of the validity argument?

The language teaching and language testing literature includes at least two different notions of authenticity. Authenticity in one sense refers to tasks or materials

that engage language use in the ‘real world’. In language testing, this translates to the practice ‘in the performance testing era [that] language users were expected to perform tasks taken from “real life” contexts’ (Shohamy, 2008, p.xiv). Bachman (1990) states that the preoccupation with this kind of authenticity in language testing shows ‘a sincere concern to somehow capture or recreate in language tests the essence of language use’ in the target domain (p.300). However, as authors such as Spolsky (1985) and Stevenson (1985) have cautioned, while language tests base part of their validity argument on being *like* real-world language behavior, one can never expect test behavior to be identical to (or an entirely authentic reflection of) non-test behavior. Some authors (e.g. Widdowson, 1979; van Lier, 1996) restrict ‘authentic’ to processes of engagement, and instead use ‘genuine’ to describe the pedagogical use of texts produced by native speakers in everyday communication. This second sense of authenticity is what Spence-Brown (2001) calls *authenticity of engagement* in evaluating the validity of assessment tasks. May’s (2011) rater study of a paired speaking assessment provides empirical support for the relevance of this kind of authenticity. Authenticity was found to be a salient feature for raters, who deemed authentic interaction a flowing discussion where partners are cooperative and inclusive of each other’s contributions in talk, and inauthentic interaction a stilted discussion where candidates deliver lengthy ‘monologues’ of their own ideas rather than respond to the partner’s prior talk.

For authenticity in the first sense, previous validation studies of the SBA Group Interaction task have yielded mixed results and drawn different conclusions. Gan, Davison, and Hamp-Lyons (2008) argued in favor of the authenticity and validity of the task based on similar patterns of topic negotiation and development shared between the assessed interaction and everyday conversation. Luk (2010), in contrast, questioned the authenticity of the GI task based on phenomena such as orderly turn-taking and ritualized opening and closing, features characteristic of ‘institutionalized and ritualized talk rather than those of ordinary conversation’ (p.47). In the present study, analysis of the SBA group interactions has found further evidence of student talk oriented to the teacher-rater as a ‘privileged overhearer’, and interactional norms different from those in everyday conversation, as discussed in Chapter 5 and summarized above. If the intended aim of the SBA GI task and the

underlying assumption is similarity to real-life everyday conversation among peers, it would seem that the SBA GI task can only claim limited validity.

Authenticity of engagement and task implementation

For the second sense of authenticity – whether students engage in real communication and exchange of information and opinion during the assessed interaction – evidence from the present study suggests that it depends on how the task is implemented and how it is engaged in by students.

In Chapter 2, I have postulated that the inconsistent results among the three validation studies of the SBA GI task can be attributed to the differences in how the assessment task was implemented. However, perhaps due to the fact that students in each of the studies formed a homogeneous group (subjected to the same task implementation conditions), the specific task implementation conditions and the pre-task planning activities students engaged in were neither examined in detail nor used to explain the observed interactional patterns in any of the studies. In the present study, group interactions with extended preparation time (all except one group in School P) and those without extended preparation time (all groups in School L, and PB14Mock) exhibit several differences in patterns of discourse and interaction.

As discussed in Sections 4.1 and 6.1.1, although group interactions under both conditions exhibit a ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking pattern to some extent, echoing the findings in Luk (2010) and in Nakatsuhara (2011) for groups of four candidates, there are several differences in the turn-taking-related phenomena of gaps, overlaps, and latching. For example, overlaps, an indicator of a spontaneously and locally managed turn-taking organization, are found predominantly in groups without extended preparation time, and are rare in pre-scripted interactions with extended preparation time. Not surprisingly, competition for the floor occurs exclusively in some of the groups without extended preparation time, but not in any group interactions in School P with extended preparation time.

The groups under the two different task implementation conditions also show differences in terms of collaborative turn construction, where students complete each other’s utterances particularly when one is having difficulties in word search or formulating an idea. Brooks (2009) found instances of this in the paired format but

not in the individual (examiner-candidate) format, and Nakatsuhara (2011) found that such collaborative attempts were inclusive of all members in groups of three but not in groups of four. Helping each other in constructing their turn gives evidence of spontaneous interaction and participants' engagement in each other's talk. It is therefore remarkable that, while Gan (2010) identified instances of collaborative turn construction even in the interaction among a lower-scoring group, the same phenomenon has only been identified in this study among group interactions without extended preparation time (School L), but not in those with extended preparation time (School P). In School P, the lack of such attempts has often ended up in lengthy intra-turn gaps when a member is having difficulty in word search or formulation of ideas; and in sizeable inter-turn gaps when a member has forgotten to take a next turn following the pre-scripted order.

There is also a substantive difference in the means of foregrounding a response's contingency on previous speaker contribution (see Section 5.1.3). Specifically, making explicit references to previous speakers and their talk (e.g. 'as you have mentioned') is by and large only found among groups without extended preparation time (in School L, and remarkably, in PB14Mock), but not in the pre-scripted interactions (School P). This seems to suggest limited authenticity of engagement by students in groups with extended preparation time, and corroborates Luk's (2010) findings from the teacher interview that students were focused on delivering their own prepared speech or ideas and concerned with reading their own notes while others were talking, making little effort to genuinely listen and then respond. Such different degrees of engagement in co-participants' talk was also found in Nitta and Nakatsuhara (2014), although it was the difference between student pairs with 3-minute pre-task planning time and those without any.

A noteworthy point is that some group interactions in School P with extended preparation time ostensibly involve students' authentic engagement in interacting with each other. Indicators include modifying one's response to align with the previous speaker's projected trajectory of talk (see Section 5.1.1), and doing disagreeing in natural, non-formulaic ways (see Section 5.1.2). Nevertheless, stimulated recall and video-recording of preparation time before the mock assessment has revealed the contrived nature of these interactive episodes.

Further validity issues with extended preparation time

After looking at the ways in which extended preparation time may limit the SBA Group Interaction task's validity in terms of authenticity of engagement, I wish to discuss three further aspects in which such a task implementation condition may pose threats to the task's validity, particularly in relation to assessing the construct of interactional competence.

Students' IC is no longer spontaneously executed

As the close examination of students' pre-task planning activities in the mock assessment (Section 6.1.2) has shown, student groups given extended preparation time tend to pre-plan the sequence of speaking turns, pre-allocate each turn to a particular group member, or even pre-script the turns verbatim. Thus, what the subsequent assessed interactions show is, in essence, a staged performance of a composed dialogue based on students' knowledge and perceptions of what interactional competence is, rather than a manifestation of students' spontaneous execution of the competence, which otherwise involves moment-by-moment monitoring of and contingent reaction to each other's talk.

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.4), it was established that the spontaneous execution of interactional competence in real-time communicative exchange is a constitutive feature of the competence. Several authors have included this element in defining competence in interaction (see, for example, the definitions given by Hall and Pekarek Doehler (2011) and Barraja-Rohen (2011)). Also worth pointing out is that Spence-Brown (2001) questioned the validity of the taped interview assessment task in her study based on its failure to elicit learners' "'on-line" linguistic competence' (p.471). Similarly, what can be observed in the SBA assessed interactions with extended preparation time is often not the students' *in situ* execution of interactional competence in L2, but a 'canned' product of their execution of the competence *prior to* the assessed interaction *in L1* during pre-task planning. Assessing students' interactional competence this way risks 'construct-under-representation' (Messick, 1996), and may be counter-productive to achieving one of the aims and objectives of introducing the SBA component – to '[improve] the validity of oral language

assessment in particular by including aspects that cannot be assessed in public exam settings' (HKEAA, 2009, p.2).

The nature of interaction is altered

Kramersch (1986), in proposing a focus on interactional competence in language teaching, describes real-life interaction as relative and unpredictable in nature, adding that it is on this premise that talk exchange takes place, with the objective of reducing uncertainty of 'intentions, perceptions, and expectations' (p.367) (see Section 2.2.4). However, in Section 6.1.2, we have seen evidence of pre-task planning activities reducing the information and opinion gaps or removing them altogether, obviating the necessity for genuine interaction. For instance, we have seen how students, during the preparation time, evaluated different members' proposals (e.g. telling each other the pros and cons of having one or three spokespersons for their product) and then pre-determined the group's final consensus, as well as pre-planning how they would work their way through the different proposals to reach consensus in the assessed interaction. In so doing, aspects of uncertainty and unpredictability regarding what information each student had or what opinion each student held towards a particular proposal, which should be the matters to deal with in the assessed interaction, were minimized or eliminated altogether. This again hampers the task's capacity to assess students' ability to handle differences of opinion and produce the corresponding appropriate agreeing/disagreeing responses in real time.

Discrimination between stronger and weaker students' ability to construct contingent responses is weakened

Furthermore, I have noted in Chapter 2 that the lack of contingent responses to co-participants' prior talk was reported in both Gan's (2010) and Luk's (2010) studies. This has raised the question whether this is evidence indicative of lower levels of interactional competence, a consequence of extensive pre-task planning, or both. Crucially, we need to investigate whether extensive pre-task planning might obscure differences between students who are able to spontaneously produce contingent responses to previous speakers' talk and those unable to do so.

The analysis in Section 6.1.3 generated some preliminary evidence that attests to such a risk, as we examined students' discourse in the mock assessment PB14Mock, where the same four students who had previously engaged in a pre-scripted assessed interaction were put under a different task condition – being given only 10 minutes of preparation time. The analysis showed that the stronger students were able to spontaneously produce contingent responses which developed on co-participants' immediately prior talk, with minimal reference to their own note cards. The weaker student (T) not only participated peripherally and took fewer turns than in the pre-scripted interaction, but also produced responses either making no reference to the previous speaker's idea or based on a pre-planned idea that happened to fit into the preceding speaker's talk. In contrast, in the assessed interaction PB14 with extended preparation time, T's natural, non-formulaic disagreeing response yielded ostensible evidence of her ability to produce responses contingent on previous speaker contribution, and was commended by the teacher-rater in the stimulated recall (see Section 5.1.2). However, this contingent response produced by T, as with all those produced by other group members, was pre-scripted in PB14. Thus, where all students in a group under the extended preparation time condition decide to pre-plan or pre-script the entire assessed interaction, the distinction between candidates who can spontaneously produce contingent responses in an unfolding interaction and candidates whose ability is limited to preparing and animating scripted responses remains largely obscure.

Based on the current analysis, this study preliminarily suggests that extended preparation time may impede the Group Interaction task's capacity to discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates' differential ability to produce contingent responses to co-participants' prior talk. One, of course, needs to acknowledge that a number of factors either related or unrelated to the amount of preparation time might also contribute to the observed performance. These include, for example, students' levels of anxiety and confidence in engaging in spontaneous L2 interaction, their own preferences towards having preparation time (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014), and their strategy use during preparation time (Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010). In future research, experimentally conditioned studies with larger samples of participants would be helpful in generating more robust data, to confirm this finding by

examining the effect of preparation time in connection with other factors related to psycholinguistic processing and individual differences.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have first presented an analysis of the various ways in which extended preparation time as a task implementation condition might influence the talk and interaction elicited by the Group Interaction task, drawing on findings from Chapters 4 and 5, as well as data from the two mock assessments, including the video-recording of students' pre-task planning activities.

The next section then revisited the construct of interactional competence. I have outlined the features of interactional competence that are salient as the focus of assessment in the SBA Group Interaction task. Specifically, producing talk in a current turn with content that is contingent on previous speaker contribution is oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters as a crucial component of the ability to interact, and is taken as evidence of engagement in and comprehension of the previous speaker's talk as well as authentic interaction. I have also discussed how the context-specific nature of interactional competence as posited in theory and the empirical evidence from the present study both present complexities for assessing this competence, particularly in establishing a validity argument that extrapolates the candidates' performance in the target non-testing contexts from their test performance.

Moving the focus onto the validity issues surrounding the SBA Group Interaction task, I have related the findings of the present study to those in previous studies on paired/group speaking assessments. I have highlighted how extended preparation time (a task implementation condition largely unaddressed in previous validation research on SBA) may alter the nature and undermine the authenticity of the elicited interaction, bring about the risk of construct-under-representation, and impede the task's capacity in discriminating different levels of interactional competence.

The next and final chapter summarizes this thesis and states the contributions of this study. It also discusses some limitations of this study and proposes directions for future research.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

This thesis examined the assessment of interactional competence in the Group Interaction task which forms part of the School-based Assessment component of the HKDSE. It considered what constitutes interactional competence, how it is co-constructed in discourse, what complexities there are in assessing this competence, and how task implementation might influence its assessment. In this final chapter, I first provide a summary of the findings in relation to the three research questions set out in Chapter 1. I then discuss the contributions of this study to knowledge and research on group speaking assessments and interactional competence, as well as more specifically to the validation research on the SBA Group Interaction task. On noting the limitations of this study, I propose some avenues for future research.

7.1 Summary of findings

(1) *What patterns of discourse organization and interactional organization characterize the SBA group interactions?*

In Chapter 4, I examined patterns of interactional organization among the SBA group interactions in terms of turn-taking organization, and patterns of discourse organization among the SBA group interactions in terms of preference organization of agreeing/disagreeing responses.

Turn-taking organization

For turn-taking organization, it was found that the group interactions in School L and School P share similarities in two aspects. Student participants in both schools generally orient to a ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking order, and relatedly, display an overall

orientation to even distribution of speaking opportunities among group members. However, there are also marked differences in features related to turn-taking and speaker transition between the group interactions in School L and School P, and between the assessed interactions in School P and the group interaction in the mock assessment (PB14Mock).

Group interactions in School L (with 10 minutes preparation time) generally exhibit features of a more spontaneously and locally managed turn-taking mechanism, such as overlaps, latching, and competition for the floor. There are also instances of collaborative turn construction: when a current speaker is having difficulties midway through the turn, a co-participant comes in to help by supplying a word or completing the rest of the turn. There is also a more common use of turn-final ‘generic’ questions (e.g. ‘what do you think?’) as a device to hand over the floor (cf. the use of more subtle non-verbal cues). All these features are relatively rare among group interactions in School P with extended preparation time. Remarkably, however, one group interaction in the mock assessment (PB14Mock) with only 10 minutes preparation time exhibits features more similar to interactions in School L than to other interactions in School P, with overlaps and more use of turn-final questions.

Other groups in School P, including group PB14 in their actual assessed interaction, overwhelmingly display features of a pre-determined turn-taking order with pre-allocated speakers’ turns. Sizeable intra-turn gaps are common, which correspond to a lack of collaborative turn construction, with co-participants not coming in to help when a speaker staggers in the production of their turn. An effort is seen in minimizing disruptions to the pre-determined turn-taking order. Moreover, speaker change is characterized by a next speaker making transient eye contact with the previous speaker nearing completion of the previous turn, which is quickly withdrawn as the next speaker takes over and begins their turn. There are also instances where a co-participant shifts the target of their reciprocity display (gaze) from the current speaker to the next speaker even before the next speaker begins to talk, amounting to a further giveaway of the pre-determined turn-taking order in these group interactions with extended preparation time.

Agreeing/disagreeing responses

With reference to the turn design of the most ubiquitous responses among the SBA group interactions – agreeing and disagreeing, patterns identified were common to the group interactions in both School L and School P. Disagreeing responses almost categorically take dispreferred turn shapes. Remarkably, however, agreeing responses display more variability in turn shape, and some appear to also exhibit a feature of dispreferreds – the inclusion of an account. The analysis identified an ‘assessment-related preference’ for constructing a response turn in such a way that foregrounds its contingency on previous speaker contribution. Turn shapes characterizing agreeing and disagreeing responses were shown to be a manifestation of the concurrent operation of both the ‘structural preference’ and the ‘assessment-related preference’, with the latter outranking the former in the construction of agreeing responses with an account.

To further explore how such an ‘assessment-related preference’ might have evolved, the analysis went on to examine ‘I agree with you’ and similar formulaic agreement expressions, and found student-candidates exploiting them as a turn-gaining/holding device or a token response. Consequently, their primary interactional function of displaying a converging stance with the prior speaker is bleached in this assessment context. Drawing on the analysis of students’ discourse, and supplementary data from teacher-raters’ interview comments and from published examination reports, I argued that there is an emerging local interactional norm that prefers agreeing responses accompanied by an explanation, and disprefers the use of the formulaic expression ‘I agree with you’.

- (2) *How is interactional competence co-constructed in the SBA group interactions, and what features are constructed and recognized as components of interactional competence in this assessment context? What complexities are there in assessing interactional competence through the SBA Group Interaction task?*

Co-construction of interactional competence in discourse

In Chapter 5, I examined cases in which students in School P pre-script and engage in staged performances of interactive sequences (e.g. question-and-answer,

disagreement) in order to contrive the appearance of ‘natural’ and ‘spontaneous’ interaction. Specifically, I presented an analysis of how students design pre-sequences involving recall questions in order to interactionally re-distribute (or more precisely, *pre*-distribute) the interactional work of making a point to more than one participant. I also showed how students exploit a question-and-answer sequence such that a next speaker’s delivery of a new idea appears to be solicited by the previous speaker rather than disjointed from the prior talk. Furthermore, I explored students’ strategy of contriving disagreement (‘banning ideas’), through which they are able to topicalize previous speakers’ ideas and extend topic life.

Components of interactional competence

Interactional competence, as co-constructed and assessed in the SBA Group Interaction task, was found to concern mainly the following three features:

1. Production of responses contingent on previous speaker contribution
2. Attention to and comprehension of co-participants’ talk
3. The ‘naturalness’ or ‘authenticity’ of the participants’ interaction

The first feature, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, is oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters as a crucial component of the ability to interact. The significance of such a response is in how it constitutes publicly-displayed evidence of the participant’s engagement in and comprehension of the previous speaker’s talk (the second feature). It is also considered by teacher-raters as having ‘responded to’ the previous speaker rather than focusing on one’s own ideas and ignoring others’ contributions, hence related to the authenticity of the interaction (the third feature).

I then identified some devices that highlight a response’s contingency on previous speaker contribution through topicalizing it in the current turn.

1. Accounting for agreement/disagreement
2. Making explicit reference to the previous speakers and their talk
3. Formulating or partially repeating the previous speakers’ talk
4. Elaborating on the previous speakers’ ideas

I discussed how, once again, the group interactions with and without extended preparation time exhibit different patterns, in that the second device (making explicit

reference to the previous speaker's talk) was found almost categorically in group interactions *without* extended preparation time – School L and PB14Mock.

Complexities in assessing interactional competence

Turning to the complexities in assessing interactional competence – as the competence of interacting in a peer group – through the SBA Group Interaction task, the second section of Chapter 5 presented evidence of a double-layered participation framework that characterizes the SBA group interactions. Such evidence comes from features of student-candidates' talk recipient-designed for the teacher-rater as a 'ratified overhearer' (or, indeed, 'privileged overhearer') more than to co-participants. I first presented a brief discussion on two features: students' non-verbal displays of engaging the overhearing audience, and students' self-repairs in which they reformulate their own talk using more complex language.

I then examined in greater detail two classes of formulations, which are demonstrably more oriented to the overhearing teacher-rater than co-participants. The first type is formulations of previous speaker's talk. The overhearer orientation of these formulations is evident in the fact that the prior speakers whose talk is being formulated do not treat these formulations as candidate understandings of their prior talk that sequentially anticipate their confirmation/disconfirmation. Moreover, the formulations do not engender further topical talk on the same idea, and the formulating speaker typically moves on to deliver a new idea. The second type is prefatory formulations of one's own upcoming conversational actions (e.g. elaborating on a previous speaker's idea). Again, the analysis demonstrated that these formulations serve to make visible, assessable displays to the teacher-rater that the participant is engaging in the assessment-preferred interactional conduct of responding to the previous speaker's contribution before delivering one's own ideas.

The complexities in assessing interactional competence were further explored in terms of the conflicting identities student-candidates have to negotiate in the assessed interactions, namely, being *competent speakers* in everyday or other contextualized interactions, and being *competent test-takers* in the speaking assessment. Student-

candidates' navigation between these sometimes conflicting identities is seen in their attempts to avoid referring to each other on a first-name basis but opt instead for pronouns and gestures. It is also manifested in their different orientations displayed within the assessed interactions and in their meta-discursive commentary with respect to (a) giving an example or explanation for each idea delivered and (b) accounting for agreement with a previous speaker. All this evidence seems to suggest that students are making compromises within the interactional (and institutional) context of a speaking assessment, by discursively foregrounding their institutional test-taker identity while downplaying their personal relationships with one another and the norms they orient to in everyday interactions with peers.

In both the aspects of recipient design and the oriented-to norms and identities displayed in the assessed interactions, students' context-sensitive adaption of their interactional conduct is evident. While context-sensitivity is part and parcel of interactional competence (see Chapter 2), the elicitation of such assessment- and assessor-oriented interactional conduct seems to run contrary to the design of a group interaction task (cf. Oral Proficiency Interview with an examiner), as well as the aim of the SBA initiative to assess students' speaking performance with familiar peers in low-stress conditions. On these grounds, I argued that the assumption of a group interaction task as necessarily eliciting and assessing interaction among peers in a group needs to be problematized; and that these complexities need to be taken into account in extrapolating from students' assessed performance their performance in non-testing contexts.

- (3) *Does the SBA Group Interaction task elicit and assess students' authentic oral language use, and how do aspects of task implementation influence the validity of the task?*

Task implementation and its impact

To address this third research question, I examined in Chapter 6 the impact of extended preparation time as a task implementation condition on students' discourse and their authenticity of engagement. I first synthesized an account of the features characterizing group interactions with extended preparation time, drawing on findings

from Chapters 4 and 5, as well as some additional excerpts. I then provided, in some detail, a description of students' pre-task planning activities during preparation time, and examined particular segments of students' talk exchange during preparation time. Students were seen to pre-plan the sequence of speaking turns, pre-allocate each turn to a particular group member, or even pre-script the turns verbatim. All these seem to undermine students' authentic engagement in the talk exchange during the ensuing assessed interaction. Through analyzing students' performance in the mock assessment under the condition of reduced (10-minute) preparation time in association with their performance under extended preparation time (a few hours), I also explored how extended preparation time might impede the task's capacity in discriminating between different levels of interactional competence.

Validity issues of the SBA Group Interaction task

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the SBA Group Interaction task elicits and assesses students' authentic oral language use to some, but limited, extent. The validity of the GI task can be considered in relation to two senses of authenticity. The task has limited authenticity in terms of similarity to real-life peer group interaction, given the evidence of students' talk oriented to the teacher-rater as a 'privileged overhearer' and interactional norms different from those in everyday conversations. As for authenticity of engagement (in the exchange of information and opinion), it has been shown to depend on how the task is implemented, and I have argued that students display limited authenticity of engagement in the group interactions with extended preparation time.

I have also highlighted three validity issues that may arise from implementing the Group Interaction task with extended preparation time: (1) construct under-representation, (2) altered nature of interaction, and (3) compromised capacity in discriminating between different levels of interactional competence. Firstly, the task implemented as such does not elicit spontaneous performance of interactional competence in real time during the assessed interaction: What is performed and evaluated is a 'canned' product of students' IC executed *prior to* the assessed interaction

in L1 during pre-task planning. The task therefore risks construct under-representation. Secondly, extended preparation time alters the nature of the elicited interaction, as we have seen evidence of pre-task planning activities reducing the information and opinion gaps or removing them altogether, obviating the necessity for genuine communication of ideas. Finally, bearing in mind other potentially relevant factors (e.g. anxiety, confidence, personality type) contributing to student-candidates' performance, there is preliminary evidence that extended preparation time impedes the task's capacity in discriminating between stronger and weaker candidates with different levels of interactional competence: those candidates who can spontaneously produce responses contingent on previous speaker contribution in real time, and those whose ability is limited to preparing and animating scripted responses.

7.2 Contributions of this study

This study contributes to the knowledge and research on assessing speaking in the following aspects.

Construct definition of interactional competence

First, this study contributes to the ongoing research effort in defining the construct of interactional competence. Specifically, it has proposed that *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution* is a component of interactional competence, and has empirically demonstrated that this is oriented to by both student-candidates and teacher-raters as a crucial component of IC.

This feature has been referenced in numerous previous studies of speaking assessments under different terminology or descriptive labels. For studies using the term 'contingency', Young and Milanovic (1992) define a contingent response as one that 'depend[s] in some way on the previous utterance' and that its topic is 'coreferential' with that of the preceding turn (p.404). Gan (2010) describes responding contingently to a co-participant as 'to fit his or her comment closely to the immediately preceding utterance' (p.595). Other studies have also evaluated candidates' performance with a

similar criterion, for instance, to ‘both say something that relates to what has been said before and introduce something new’ (Galaczi, 2008, p.98); ‘incorporating their partner’s ideas into their own speech’ (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014, p.167); and conversely, to have ‘responded minimally to their partner, or responded in a way that seemed irrelevant to the point that had been made’ (May, 2011, p.135).

Nonetheless, what counts as a response that has ‘related to’, ‘incorporated’, or ‘responded to’ a co-participant’s talk has not been explored systematically in these studies. Moreover, the evaluative comments on this feature by teacher-raters interviewed in this study and by oral examiners in the published examination reports have also remained in very general terms as having ‘responded to the previous speaker’ (see Section 5.3). This study has filled this gap by providing a description of the various devices (e.g. accounting for agreement; formulation) used to produce responses which are contingent on previous speaker contribution, and has thus helped unpack what kinds of responses are considered to be having ‘responded to the previous speaker’ by teacher-raters and oral examiners.

Assessing interactional competence in the group format

The second unique contribution of this study is how it problematizes the assumption that a group interaction task is essentially eliciting and assessing candidates’ competence of interacting in a peer group. This study has examined the participation framework of a group interaction task, of which there is little empirical investigation in the existing testing literature. On analyzing aspects of recipient design in students’ talk, I have argued that the interactional configuration of a group speaking assessment task is analogous with that of a dialogue actors perform with one another, or an interview between a television show host and the guest, with a live or home audience. Importantly, the overhearing audiences are in some ways the ‘privileged’ recipients of the talk over the immediate co-participants (fellow actors, interviewer/interviewee).

It has been shown that student-candidates in this study orient to the double-layered participation framework of the SBA GI task – an interaction among themselves as a group, and which, as a whole, is addressed to and assessed by the teacher-rater. This is

discursively manifested in how the students recipient-design their talk to the teacher-rater as the ‘privileged overhearer’, and display forms of interactional conduct divergent from how they would interact with each other in everyday settings. The findings of this study therefore highlight the importance for us to reconsider the prevailing assumption underlying the use and validity claim of the paired/group formats in assessing speaking – that peer candidates are necessarily engaging in interacting with each other *only*.

Task implementation and validity of the SBA Group Interaction task

More specifically to the SBA Group Interaction task, this study contributes to existing validation research by examining the impact of task implementation on the validity of the assessment task. This study has related the somewhat contradictory results of previous validation research to the different task implementation conditions, and has yielded empirical evidence that the SBA Group Interaction task implemented with and without extended preparation time elicits qualitatively different talk exchange among student-candidates. We have seen, for example, how overlaps and collaborative turn construction, features characterizing spontaneous real-time interaction are largely absent in group interactions with extended preparation time. We have also seen how one specific means of producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution – making explicit reference to co-participants’ prior talk (e.g. ‘as you mentioned before’) – is used predominantly in interactions without extended preparation time.

Crucially, this study has also identified some of the specific ways in which extended preparation time may impact on the task’s validity. As noted, these include under-representing the construct of interactional competence, obviating the need for genuine communicative exchange, and compromising the task’s capacity in discriminating between different levels of interactional competence.

Implications for SBA assessment practice and teaching speaking

With reference to SBA assessment practice and the related teaching and learning activities aimed at developing students’ interactional competence, this study has the

following implications for task design, task implementation, and the development of assessment criteria and rating scales.

(1) Task design and developing students' interactional competence

Producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution has been identified in this study to be a crucial component of interactional competence within the context of the SBA Group Interaction task. This might have been emphasized by teachers in speaking classes and teachers' formative feedback on students' SBA practice tasks, although there is only indirect evidence of this from the interviews with teacher-raters – that they consider this to be an important feature in rating students' performances. Quite a number of students in the data seem to have taken this on board, nevertheless to a somewhat counterproductive effect: for example, giving an explanation every time they agree with a previous speaker, or formulating the previous speaker's talk without developing the topic further. Such interactional conduct has resulted in unnatural exchanges among the students in the assessed interactions compared to their everyday peer interactions, as one of the students in School L shrewdly pointed out in the interview (see extract 5.48 in Chapter 5). More work is needed in considering how best to develop students' mastery of this component of interaction competence.

In terms of task design for the SBA group interactions, teachers are recommended to incorporate a wider variety of tasks in both teaching and assessment, for instance, using tasks based on information gaps. Existing SBA tasks, as observed in this study, are predominantly tasks based on opinion gaps (e.g. students' favorite character in a movie, causes and consequences of conflicts in a family) and decision-making tasks, which also mainly involve expressing and negotiating different opinions (e.g. creating a reality TV and deciding on the details, choosing a product to promote and deciding on the promotional strategies). Meanwhile, students in this study are observed to often produce formulaic agreeing/disagreeing responses where such responses are irrelevant, or where other alternative types of responses are available. There is room for teachers to explore the use of information gap tasks (e.g. jigsaw reading, group project) with students having different materials or working on different parts, making actions such as asking

follow-up questions, seeking clarification, and formulating prior talk to display tentative understanding interactionally relevant. This has the potential of eliciting a broader range of interactional actions beyond the narrowly formulaic agreeing/disagreeing responses ubiquitous among the assessed group interactions in this study. Future studies could investigate the effect of different task types on patterns of interaction elicited in the SBA Group Interaction task.

(2) Task implementation

As for task implementation, students can be provided an amount of pre-task planning time just sufficient to brainstorm ideas and research language items (e.g. looking up vocabulary items or brand names in English), but not to pre-script the interaction. The group in the mock assessment PB11Mock was given approximately one hour of preparation time. As the analysis in 6.1.2 showed, this gave the students enough time to exchange ideas on each topic and pre-plan the sequence of speaking turns but not pre-script the interaction verbatim. If the preparation time is further reduced to, say, 30 minutes, the time constraint might encourage students to abandon pre-planning or pre-scripting the interaction, and focus their preparation on content ideas, as the group given 10 minutes in the mock assessment (PB14Mock) did. Another possible measure is to make arrangements such that students in the same group cannot talk to each other during preparation time (as in School L), whatever the length of the preparation time is. This helps maintain an information or opinion gap among the students and create a genuine need for communicative exchange during the assessed interaction, although this would also remove the opportunity for students to provide support to each other prior to the assessment.

Alternatively, aligning with the assessment-*for*-learning initiative, teachers can allow pre-planning and pre-scripting the interaction in practice assessments at early stages of the upper-secondary curriculum (S4), with a goal of gradually moving students towards spontaneous interaction in the formal, graded assessments. Allowing pre-planning and pre-scripting the interaction at early stages works to accommodate weaker students, as well as provide opportunities for students to reflect with one another and

scaffold each other's knowledge of what it means to be interactionally competent. At later stages of the upper-secondary curriculum (S5 and S6), teachers can then get students to progress from pre-scripting the assessed interactions verbatim to pre-planning the sequence of speaking turns without pre-scripting, and eventually to brief planning on content ideas only.

(3) Development of assessment criteria and rating scales

As an alternative to unifying the length of preparation time as in standardized tests, the SBA can maintain its context-sensitive flexibility in task design and implementation by building this variability into rating scales. The score bands for criteria related to interactional competence (i.e. Communication Strategies; Ideas and Organization) can take into account students' differential ability to spontaneously produce contingent responses in real-time interaction. For instance, students choosing 10-15 minutes preparation time can be awarded the top score 6/6 for Communication Strategies and Ideas and Organization, whereas students choosing extended preparation time (one hour or above) can only be awarded 4/6 or 5/6 as the highest score in these criteria. This has already been done for the use of note cards: the extent of note card use during the assessed interaction is built into different score bands (see HKEAA, 2010). However, it should be acknowledged that building this variability in length of preparation time into the rating scales works on one assumption: that students given extended preparation time will pre-plan or even pre-script their assessed interaction, and that the responses they produce to each other's prior talk will not be spontaneous. Further empirical work is necessary to verify this.

7.3 Looking back, and looking ahead

This section of the thesis is usually the place to acknowledge limitations of the study and propose directions for future research. Among the issues raised below, some are rightly considered 'limitations' of this study. One issue concerns revealing an

unresolved paradox and problem that nevertheless bears significance to both theory and practice, and others reflect decisions in consideration of the trade-offs between different methodological approaches. In this closing discussion, I hope to map this study onto the different types of research on assessing speaking that are possible and needed; reiterate the justifications for methodological decisions in relation to the objectives of this study; and outline further research that can build on as well as strengthen the findings of the present study.

Problem for theory and practice

This thesis has identified a paradox in assessing interactional competence: between the context-specific construct of interactional competence and a validity argument that aims to extrapolate from test performance to performance in the target real-life context. Specifically, I have problematized the assumption that a group interaction assessment task is necessarily eliciting interaction among peer candidates only. I have presented evidence of a double-layered participation framework, whereby candidates orient to their peer group interaction as also a collective performance to the assessor – a ‘ratified’ or perhaps even ‘privileged’ overhearing audience. Student-candidates in this study recipient-design their talk accordingly, and orient to norms which differ from how they would interact among themselves in everyday contexts. This reflects student-candidates’ context-sensitive adaptation of their interactional conduct to what is appropriate to the specific context of a group interaction assessment task, and such context-sensitivity is at the heart of interactional competence. Paradoxically, however, the validity claim of the assessment task often lies in the elicitation of learners’ interactional behavior as if they were interacting on their own, where a ‘privileged overhearer’ has no part to play.

This dilemma between gaining understanding in the construct of interactional competence and the challenge this understanding poses to assessing the competence seems unsettling, and I have yet to come up with a solution. On the question of whether such insights are worth having, I share McNamara’s (1997) sentiments in the following remark:

Intellectual understanding can complicate, even paralyze action, but action without understanding is blind and can be destructive. In a cruel world, our dilemma in applied linguistics, poised uneasily between thinking and acting, resembles that of Hamlet, contemplating action but the contemplation making action even more difficult. (p.460)

Methodological issues

A. Generalizability and representativeness

This study examined interactional phenomena and practices in the SBA group interactions within a relatively small sample, and the interactional phenomena and practices were not quantified for statistical analysis to find out how frequent or widespread they are across the student groups. This is a limitation viewed from the perspective of quantitative research paradigms.

I have discussed in Chapter 3 the rationale for not submitting the interactional data in this study to statistical analysis. A prime reason is related to the object of inquiry: the focus of this study was not on how good a match it was between students' performance and their scores, or how different variables relate to students' performance. Rather, the objectives of this study were to describe the interactional organization of the talk exchange as elicited by the task, the nature of interactional competence as oriented to by participants of the assessment, and how the competence is discursively performed. To borrow Psathas's (1995) 'rules of chess' analogy again, this study was aimed at uncovering the rules that make up the game of chess, and the kinds of strategies that players use to try and win the game; but not the probability of winning related to different types of players or the frequency of using different strategies.

I have also noted the caveat of quantitative treatment in two respects. Coding for quantification might result in a reductionist account of the interactional phenomena, one that presupposes the use of particular interactional devices (e.g. accounting for agreement) is 'the more, the merrier' and pays little attention to their sequential or contextual appropriateness. It also risks premature categorization (e.g. coding instances as 'interruptions' which are not actually interruptions), especially when dealing with large quantities of interactional data. To minimize the likelihood of such error, Schegloff (1993) argues that in-depth sequential analysis of the interactional phenomena should

precede quantification. In practice, however, it is infeasible to subject every single instance of an interactional phenomenon in a large corpus to close sequential analysis. With a small data set this is possible, but the result of the statistical analysis would still be of limited generalizability (Galaczi, 2014).

On the related issue of how representative the data from the two schools is, the following two remarks can be made. Firstly, the phenomena of students given extended preparation time and using this time to pre-plan and pre-script the assessed interaction are not ‘outliers’ or ‘exceptional cases’. Similar phenomena were reported in previous studies (Fok, 2012; Luk, 2010). Secondly, interactional patterns similar to those reported in Chapter 4 were found also in the analysis of a sample video clip, published on the HKEAA website as an exemplar of the SBA Group Interaction task (see Appendix F), as well as in previous studies on the SBA Group Interaction task and those on other speaking assessments (see discussion in Chapter 6).

B. Use of stimulated recall data

Another point worth acknowledging again is that this study did not follow a traditional ‘purist’ CA approach, which would not admit participants’ meta-discursive comments from stimulated recall in the analysis of an interactional event. The use of stimulated recall in this study was informed by previous research on speaking assessments (e.g. May, 2009, 2011; Spence-Brown, 2001), but this technique has not been used in validation studies for the SBA Group Interaction task to date.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the justification for admitting stimulated recall data in the analysis is in their capacity to (1) ‘clarify or illuminate aspects of practices that otherwise may have been described more tentatively or conjecturally’, and (2) open up ‘avenues for investigation that otherwise might go unnoticed’ (Pomerantz, 2005, p.93-94). In this study, the first benefit is seen in the stimulated recall data from student-candidates. Students’ own comments on the video playback revealed that certain segments in the assessed interactions which appear to be authentic real-time talk exchanges were in fact pre-scripted. Had stimulated recall interviews not been carried out, students’ pre-scripting practices could still have been inferred from some of their

verbal and non-verbal actions, yet such findings would remain ‘tentative’ or ‘conjectural’. The incorporation of stimulated recall, therefore, served the purpose of data triangulation.

The second benefit of opening up possible avenues for investigation is seen in interviewing teacher-raters using the stimulated recall technique. As shown in this thesis, the teacher-rater, albeit an ‘overhearer’, is oriented to by the students as a ‘privileged’ recipient in the design of their talk. On the other hand, since the teacher-raters do not typically participate verbally in the assessed interactions, their interpretation of students’ talk is not accessible through conversation analysis of the assessed interactions. The teacher-rater’s perspective was therefore gained through retrospective interviews incorporating stimulated recall, as in May’s (2009, 2011) rater studies. The limitation of this study is that, due to the practical constraint of participants’ availability, stimulated recall data from teacher-raters could only be obtained for a small number of the assessed interactions.

Future research can include a larger-scale study that examines teacher-raters’ rating processes and decisions for the SBA GI task. This is especially valuable in light of the fact that, despite a fair amount of SBA studies which involve teachers as participants (Davison, 2007; Fok, 2012; Qian, 2014), the focus has been overwhelmingly on their attitudes towards the SBA initiative and its implementation, while the aspect of how they interpret and evaluate students’ talk in the assessment task has hitherto been under-researched.

C. Mock assessment with a quasi-experimental setup

As mentioned in Chapter 3, constraints on participants’ availability made it possible to conduct the mock assessment with only two student groups. Therefore, the investigations on students’ pre-task planning activities and their impact on the subsequent assessed interaction were exploratory in nature, and the findings would benefit from empirical verification with a larger sample. Nonetheless, the recordings of preparation time proved useful in complementing the data from stimulated recall with the two student groups and the others: they allowed a more detailed inspection of the

preparation process, and the use of this data improved reliability of the claims made about students' pre-task planning activities, compared to relying solely on students' self-reports.

The question of how the amount of preparation time influences the subsequent assessed performance and patterns of the interaction is perhaps one that is most worth conducting larger-scale quantitative studies to answer. The statistical evidence thus generated can also strengthen the preliminary findings of the present study in terms of empirical generalization. Some avenues worth exploring include:

- (1) If/how extended preparation time (negatively) correlates with features of spontaneous real-time interaction (e.g. overlaps, collaborative turn construction, making explicit reference to previous speakers and their talk)
- (2) Whether extended preparation time yields a statistically significant narrower score range for the criteria related to interaction (Communication Strategies; Ideas and Organization), indicating a compromised capacity for the task to discriminate between students with different levels of interactional competence
- (3) How much preparation time would be optimal for adequate preparation without encouraging students to pre-plan or even pre-script the assessed interaction

The caveat for engaging in investigations such as (1), as mentioned, is the possibility of premature categorization when coding large quantities of interactional data. One way to mitigate this problem is to conduct sequential analysis of singular instances and ensure a good understanding of the phenomena before coding the data for statistical treatment (see Galaczi, 2008, 2014). However, the inevitable trade-off between empirical generalization and the depth of analysis should be duly acknowledged.

7.4 Closing remarks

In a seminal paper that calls for attention to the social dimension of language testing, McNamara (1997) writes:

I am arguing that some of the most important research on language is not only technical, that is, research in language testing cannot consist only of a further burnishing of the already shiny chrome-plated quantitative armour of the language

tester with his (too often his) sophisticated statistical tools and impressive *n*-size. Rather, I am arguing for the inclusion of another kind of research on language testing of a more fundamental kind, whose aim is to make us fully aware of the nature and significance of assessment as a social act. (p.460)

This thesis started out by asking the questions whether the abilities to interact with peers in testing and non-testing contexts are the same or different; and what complexities there might be in extrapolating from assessed performance the learners' ability to interact in real-life contexts. As acknowledged in the last section, the findings and conclusions of this study are based on the qualitative analysis of (a small sample of) speaking assessments and participants. Such findings and conclusions cannot (and were not meant to) claim extensive empirical generalization. Nonetheless, it has highlighted the importance in pondering these fundamental questions in language testing and assessment research.

The students' negotiation between different norms of interactional conduct observed in this study also challenges us to consider further questions in defining the construct of interactional competence, such as: What norms and standards should we set, against which students' interactional competence is to be assessed? Are there cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences in interactional competence, or is it even appropriate to draw such boundaries? If the students' performances are hybridized displays of their interactional competence, drawing on resources and norms from both their first and second languages, should these be accepted and valued or should they remain measured against native-speaker norms? These are important questions to be considered from the perspective of *translanguaging*, a concept that has been gaining currency in research on bi-/multi-lingualism and education in recent years.

According to Canagarajah (2011), the notion of translanguaging embodies a set of assumptions, where the languages of multilingual speakers are 'not discrete and separated' but 'form an integrated system', and where 'competence does not consist of separate competencies for each language, but a multicompetence that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one's repertoire' (p.1). In a similar vein, Garcia and Wei (2013) criticize the prevailing ideology of bilingualism as 'parallel monolingualisms' in the field of education (p.51), and instead advocate embracing

‘creativity’ in translanguaging practices, ‘the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behavior, [...] pushing and breaking the boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original and the acceptable and the challenging.’ (p.67). Garcia and Wei also propose that standardized assessments be done in translanguaging ways that would ‘enable students to show what they know using their entire linguistic repertoire’ (p.134), although the authors admit that ‘[a]ccepting translanguaging in assessment would require a change in epistemology that is beyond the limits of what most schools (and teachers) permit and value today’ (p.135). The relevant issues (as outlined in the above questions) in the context of English Language SBA in Hong Kong can, and perhaps should, be addressed in future research.

The value of rigorous research on language assessments and their relationship with teaching and learning, both qualitative and quantitative, is manifest in the closing remark of McNamara’s (1997) paper:

In applied linguistics as a whole, and in language testing in particular, in our efforts to become a science we must remember that our enterprise is irrevocably human. (p.460)

My response to this is unreservedly affiliative: I can’t agree more.

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Appendix A – Samples of SBA Group Interaction tasks

School P – Part A

Group Interaction (non-print fiction)

Discuss both questions:

1. Based on the movie, what is the misunderstanding that exists between Mrs Coleman and Anna?
2. What would happen if they had to stay in each other's bodies for the rest of their lives?

School P – Part B

Group Interaction (Elective module: Workplace Communication)

You are a member of the marketing team of Fabulous International Company. Your company is going to promote an existing / a new food item or drink. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product.

You should include the following:

- the target group(s)
- special features of the product
- strategies to promote the product
- anything else you think is important

School L – Part B

Group Interaction (Elective module: Social Issues)

You have joined a leaflet design competition, held by the local Caritas Community Centre, which aims at promoting better family relationships.

You are meeting with your group members to discuss the common conflicts between parents and their teenage children, and the main reasons for the conflicts. You may talk about how the relationship between parents and their children affects the family, individual and society. You may also wish to discuss what both sides (parents and children) can do to improve their relationship.

Appendix B – Sample of interview questions

PB06 Student Interview

Stimulated recall

1. 1:14-1:21 prolonged silence (~7s) What is happening there?
2. 1:52-2:40 proposal of children as target group → disagreement → consensus
 - (To 1R) Did it make you feel nervous that two group members challenged your proposal? Or was it agreed and planned beforehand?
3. 4:16 I seem to see a pattern that each group member would make at least one suggestion in each of the aspects. Was it planned in the preparation stage?
 - Were rich content and even distribution of ideas main concerns for group members?
4. 5:38 2R proposes limited edition cases as free gift → follow-up question by 1L
 - a bit awkward, delayed response from 1R → was it planned or spontaneous?
5. 7:00-7:08 silence again -- Why that silence? Did something go wrong and not according to plan? (e.g. Someone forgetting their turn?)
6. 7:28 ‘time is running short, let’s discuss the promotional details in the next meeting’
 - Was it an effort to make the discussion sound like a company meeting?
 - Was there anything else you guys did to make it sound like a company meeting? Do you think that would have an effect on your score?
7. To disagree with others, you guys usually say “I’m sorry, I don’t agree with you” or “I’m afraid I don’t agree with you”
 - formal or informal? awkward or not?

General questions

1. When were you given the discussion questions? How much preparation time were you given?
2. What preparation work did you do for the SBA group interaction this time?
 - (If a script was written) Why did you choose to write a script and memorize it?
 - (Standard practice among groups? Feel disadvantaged if not? Feel nervous if everything is spontaneous and on-the-spot)
3. In the planning stage and in the actual assessed interaction, what did you do (or what strategies did you adopt) to try and impress the teacher assessor (or create an image of a good performance)?
4. To what extent do you feel that in SBA group interaction you talk and interact like what they do in casual/informal conversation?

5. Do you think you are being yourselves in the SBA group interaction? Or do you think you are adopting a different personality or speech style?
 - If different, is it related to (1) speaking in a different language, or (2) being in an assessment?
6. Do you like having group interaction in Part A (movie) or Part B (elective module) of SBA more? Why?

LB00 Teacher Interview

Stimulated recall

- Play video clip, pausing at intervals (e.g. end of a topic)
 - T comments on aspects of students' performance as individuals and as a group that she noticed and took into account in rating (show sample of rater stimulated recall)
 - o T can also stop at any point if she'd like to comment on particular moment
 - R asks questions about particular moments in the assessed interaction that has not been picked up in the stimulated recall
1. Would the two speakers (2L and 1L) be considered dominating the discussion? Or digressing from the task agenda?
 2. Eye contact and body orientation of 2L and 1L seem to suggest exclusion of 1R and 2R? What is your view on this?
 3. 2R seems to have only taken 2 turns in the whole interaction → disadvantaged? Enough talk to assess?

General questions

1. Can you briefly tell me about the assessment procedure for SBA Part B this time?

Follow-up:

- Were students notified the general topic for discussion (or scope) some time before the day of assessment?
 - Preparation time
 - o were students allowed to sit together and talk about the assessed interaction during the preparation time? do you think there's any impact on the assessed interaction?
 - o changes from a few days before to 10min before the assessment
 - o instruction from HKEAA
2. What do you think of the quality of interaction among student groups this time? Was there adequate interaction among group members?
 3. Do you think the quality of interaction is related to the discussion task/topic? Do you think Part A or Part B is easier? Have students told you which part they think is easier?

Appendix C – Group Interaction tasks for mock assessment

SBA Part B 2012 (Set 1)

You are a member of the marketing team of Health For Life Company Ltd. Your company is going to promote an existing / a new health product. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product.

You may consider the following aspects:

- special features of the product
- competitors and similar products in the market of health products
- strategies to promote the product
- anything else you think is important

SBA Part B 2012 (Set 2)

You are a member of the marketing team of Slim Easy Ltd. Your company is going to promote a new slimming product / treatment package. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product / treatment package.

You may consider the following aspects:

- special features of the product / treatment package
- competitors and similar products in the market
- strategies to promote the product / treatment package
- anything else you think is important

Appendix D – Chinese-English bilingual informed consent forms for participants

有關香港中學文憑考試英文科校本評核「小組討論」部分的研究

A Study on Group Interaction in School-based Assessment in Hong Kong

簡介

Information Sheet

引言

INTRODUCTION

本人為英國愛丁堡大學語言學及英國語文系博士研究生，現誠邀你參與一項有關香港中學文憑考試英文科校本評核「小組討論」部分的研究。

這項研究的結果可望讓我們對此評核模式有更深入的了解，以作進一步的改善。因此，你的參與非常重要。

I am a PhD student in Linguistics and English Language at the University of Edinburgh. I would like to invite you to take part in a study that examines the Group Interaction sessions in the School-based Assessment for HKDSE English Language.

Your participation is highly important, as the results of this study will contribute to a better understanding and improvement of the assessment.

研究目的

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

此項研究的目的是觀察你和其他同學於校本評核內小組討論部分的溝通模式，以及這與評審老師對你表現的印象和評分的關係。

The purpose of this study is to find out the characteristics of your interaction with fellow students in the SBA group interaction, and how these characteristics relate to your teacher assessor's impression of your performance and the score awarded to you.

你的參與

YOUR PARTICIPATION

是項研究包括以下兩個階段：

There are two stages of the study:

1. 本人將會從評審老師取得你小組討論的錄影光碟。
2. 期末考試完畢後，你和小組內其他同學可能會被邀請出席一次面談。面談期間，你將有機會觀看你的小組討論錄影，並表達你對整個小組討論和自己表現的看法。是次面談將會進行錄音或錄影。
1. The video recording of your group interaction will be obtained from your teacher assessor for analysis.
2. You and your group mates may be invited to attend an interview after you have finished your final examination. At the interview, you will have a chance to look at the video

recording and talk about what you think about the group interaction and your performance. The interview will be audio or video recorded.

報酬

HONORARIUM

參與是項研究的第一階段為自願性質。如果你同意參與第二階段的研究，並獲選出席面談，面談完畢後你將獲得酬金港幣 20 元，以答謝你抽空出席面談。

Participation in Stage 1 of the study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in Stage 2 and are selected to attend the interview, you will be given an honorarium of \$20 after the interview as a token of thanks for your time.

我是否必須參與？

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

你可自行決定是否參與是項研究。你的參與完全屬自願性質，亦不會對你的評核結果有任何影響。你亦可選擇只參與第一階段的研究。

It is up to you whether to take part in this study or not. Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and will NOT have any effect on the result of your assessment. You may also choose to take part in Stage 1 of the study only.

如果你決定參與，你和你的家長／監護人須填寫以下的一份同意書，並將獲發此簡介以作保存。決定參與是項研究以後，你仍有權選擇於任何時間退出。

If you decide to take part, you and your parent/guardian will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. After you have decided to take part in the study, you are still free to withdraw at any time.

資料保密

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

所有於研究期間取得的影音資訊和收集到的資料將嚴格保密。研究報告將不會包含你的名字或任何可識別你身份的資料。所有參與者資料在本研究項目完成後將被銷毀。

All recordings and information collected in the course of the study will be kept strictly confidential. Reports of the study results will not contain your name or any other information that can identify you. All data will be destroyed on completion of this study.

通訊方法

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

如果你對是項研究有任何查詢，可於現在發問或透過以下電郵地址聯絡本人：

If you have any questions concerning this study, you can ask them now or by email later:

Mr. Daniel Lam

Email: M.K.Lam@sms.ed.ac.uk

有關香港中學文憑考試英文科校本評核「小組討論」部分的研究
A Study on Group Interaction in School-based Assessment in Hong Kong

知情同意書
Informed Consent Form

研究期間進行的錄音/錄影及其後的分析均為是項研究的必要程序。當你在此知情同意書簽署後，即表示你批准本人收集你的資料並進行分析。

The collection of audio/video recordings and the subsequent analysis are essential activities in this study. By signing this informed consent form, you authorize data collection and analysis.

甲部 由學生填寫
PART A TO BE FILLED IN BY THE STUDENT

確認同意參與是項研究（請在所有適用的空格內劃上剔號）

CONFIRMATION OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

(Please tick all appropriate boxes)

1. 本人確定已經閱讀並清楚明白上述簡介的內容。本人有發問的機會，並已獲得對本人提出的問題滿意的答覆。 I confirm that I have read and understood the above information sheet. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers to them.
2. 本人同意研究員可取得本人於香港中學文憑考試英文科校本評核小組討論的錄影資訊作第一階段的研究。 I agree that the researcher can obtain the video recording of my group interaction in the School-based Assessment for HKDSE English Language for Stage 1 of the study.
3. 本人同意出席研究第二階段的訪問（如獲選）。本人同意是次訪問可被錄音或錄影。 I agree to attend the interview at Stage 2 of the study (if selected). I agree to be audio/video-recorded in the interview.
4. 本人自願地同意參與這項研究，並明白本人有權在研究進行期間任何時間退出。 I voluntarily give my consent to participate in the study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

簽署
SIGNATURE

日期 Date

學生姓名 Name of student

簽署 Signature

電郵地址 Email:

乙部

由家長／監護人填寫

PART B

TO BE FILLED IN BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

1. 本人同意以上學生參與是項研究 I give my consent for the above student to participate in the study.

簽署

SIGNATURE

日期 Date

家長／監護人姓名
Name of parent/guardian

簽署 Signature

Appendix E – Transcript of a sample group interaction (MF_GI) – video clip published on the HKEAA website

Line	Stu	Dialogue	Non-verbal details and notes
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	A:	Okay. TSK Uhm today we are going to think of some ideas for the <u>drama</u> . To talking:: to talk about some health <u>issues</u> of Hong Kong. And I think sh- swine flu is the hottest topic nowadays. So I think (.) we shou- we should use swine flu as our <u>topic</u> , of our drama. What do you think?	((turns to B))
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29	B:	So I think in the drama, eh: at the beginning, we should include some: uh definition or some background information of swine flu. Because uh: if students do not know wha- what exactly swine flu is, they- the drama is not meaningful. So:: I would like to provide some uh background information of swine flu. Uh::m as I remember, swine flu is a common (..) uh common respiratory <u>virus</u> in <u>pigs</u> . Uh:m in usual cases, it will not affec- <u>infect</u> to humans, so, but the:: symptoms of uh having a swine flu is similar to some (.) epidemic diseases. So it is not obvious to (.) uh differentiate the patient is infected or not.	((Shortly after B begins to speak, A looks down at his note card rather than B. C and D looks at B while B is speaking.)) ((refers to note card)) ((refers to note card)) ((refers to note card again; enunciates 'respiratory virus in pigs')) (A looks at B momentarily))
30 31 32 33 34	C:	Yes and also I think we can include the: some- some- wrong in- eh information about the::: eh [the swine flu	
35	A:	[Wrong, you mean wrong concept	
36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45	C:	Yes- wrong Concept.=eh because a lot of people they dunno they <u>don't</u> know eh the (...) exactly information about the: swine flu. Such as they will think/θɪŋkt/ that eh if they if they eat the <u>pork</u> they will- they will get the (.) swine flu. Something like that I think we can include it in the drama.=	((C refers to his note card minimally throughout his turn, and looks at A and B most of the time))
46 47 48 49 50 51	D:	=I get your point. And I think we need to tell (.) the people <u>h:ow</u> dangerous the (.) swine flu is. And, we need- we need to:: tell people we- (.) need to consider their h- hygiene, to fight against	((looks at note card as he begins to talk)) ((looks at note card from time to time throughout this turn))

52		the:: swine flu. (.) And moreover,	
53		we- can have some extreme po-	
54		extreme case in the drama, for	
55		example, em d- d- the actors can::	
56		(.) cannot take care of their	
57		hygienes, and, they will suffer	
58		from (.) ma- man- many disease and	
59		become ill, so the consequence	
60		will be very serious.	
61		(..)	
62	A:	So you think we should (.) should	
63		we add a scene o::f people being	
64		<u>isolated</u> in a:: hotel or: hospital	
65		(.) for few days. And: they are	
66		very si:ck, [°s- do you mean that°	
67	D:	[Uhm they- uhm (...)	((looks at note card
68		the: the drama should contain some	during the pause))
69		(.) that extreme case an:d te- e-	
70		tell people do not do that things.	
71		Tel- wr- the <u>wrong</u> things.	
72		((A, B, C burst into laughter, and	
73		D joins in as well ~5s))	
74	A:	Uh:: do you have some example?= =Uhm they do not take care of	
75	D:	their hygienes, that, they (.)	
76		have their me- the- the- (.) they	
77		do not wash their hands before the	
78		[meals,	
79			
80	A:	[Oh:[2 ::	
81	C:	[2 hmm: ((nods))	
82	D:	[2 O:r they (.) do not cover	
83		their mouth (.) when they are	
84		cough/kɒtʃ/. Something like that.	
85		(~2.0)	
86	A:	Hmm	((A glances at B, then
87			look down at his own note
88			card))
89	?:	Hmm	
90	B:	Yes, why don't we discuss the- ah	
91		effects on ah: Hong Kong people uh	
92		when the: swine flu uh came to	((turns to A))
93		Hong Kong	
94	A:	Hmm	
95	B:	So- [hah	
96	A:	[hah	
97	B:	So I (h)I(h) think the:: .hh uh::	((refers to note card))
98		effects (.) uh:: on: most of the	((refers to note card))
99		Hong Kong people, is (.) the	((refers to note card))
100		people are too nervous uh to face	
101		the crisis. And- um I haven't seen	
102		ah such a panic uh to the people,	
103		uh perhaps ever. So- I thin:k uh	
104		the people should uh calm down	
105		when they face the crisis. So, I	
106		think it is en- (.) encour- en:::	
107		ad- (advice them) to th- advice to	
108		the (.) to the::	
109	A:	Yes. And [I think=	

110	B:	[drama	
111	A:	=since SARS in 2003, Hong Kong	
112		people has bee:n, very, have been	
113		very: taking ca- take care of	
114		their own hygiene. And::, and, I	
115		remember (one-) after the s- first	
116		case of s:wine flu is (..) spread	
117		in the television, and (.) I- I	
118		saw people going to so::me (.)	
119		so::me (...) wha-	
120	C:	°Mask?°	
121	A:	Yes they go to buy mask. And buy	
122		m(h)any many mask.	
123	C:	Hah [huh huh	
124	A:	[I think there was- they were	
125		just too nervous because (..) it	
126		is v- not very useful for them to	
127		buy s(h)o: many mask.	
128	B:	Yes. U::m um the p- uh:: I	
129		remember in news, uh some peop-	
130		some people think that if they	
131		have a coug- or- cough, or a cold,	
132		they are going to die. So they	
133		seek the doctor's help, and, um	((From this point on, A
134		ask a lot of questions of (.) uh	stops looking at B while B
135		this kin::d, thi- this kind of	is speaking))
136		symptoms. So I think uh this (..)	
137		uh this situation uh: worse the	
138		cases. Because, uh (.) the- (.)	
139		the patient who- (.) who really	
140		need the medical help, uh:: cannot	
141		(.) uh cannot s- uh have a:: (.)	
142		cannot have a doc- doctor's help.	((B turns to A))
143		() you know?= =°Yes. I know.°	
144	A:		((nods))
145		(...)	
146	A:	<And I know that> some people are	
147		afraid to go to the hospital.	
148		Because, they: scared that if they	
149		go to the hospital, and they will	
150		be infected (.) by someone, who is	
151		really infected by the swine flu.	
152		(.) And I- I think this is very	((explicitly turning to B
153		dangerous. >Do you understand?<	as he asks the question))
154	C?:	Ye[s.	
155	B:	[°Yes.°	
156	A:	[Because they- they ca- can if	((turns to C and D))
157		they really have the swine flu and	
158		they just stay at home, and all of	
159		the family members will- being	
160		infected, also.	
161		(~2.0)	
162	?:	Hmm=	
163	D:	=O- some peoples are also isolated	
164		(.) by their- by themself. And	
165		they stay at home for whole days	
166		an:d not prefer to go outside,=to	
167		prevent (.) to- (..) to:: infect	

168		to- o- by other peoples, so I	
169		think they're also too: nervous.	
170	C?:	Hmm	
171		(~11.0)	((At 07:00, A looks at C
172		((D turns to look at C, then A and	and cues him to start
173		B also turn to look at C))	speaking with facial
174			expression and gesture))
175	C:	And a- and also I eh I: (.) have	((C does not refer to his
176		a- have a eh: (.) ex- TSK I have a	note card throughout his
177		interesting example=example of	narration))
178		(my-) our <u>life</u> . Example=	
179	A:	=R(h) eal[ly?	
180	B:	[Ah yeah.	
181	C:	Okay (h) yah(h)	
182		((All laugh))	
183	C:	Heh heh As- eh: somethi- something	
184		who eh: who:: (..) eh- his	
185		temperature was, eh get a: very	
186		high temp[erature.=	
187	A:	[°Yeah°	
188	C:	=Then/t/, eh- he: he friends do	
189		not trust him, eh=	
190	A:	=H[a ((a Cantonese acknowledgement	
191		token))	
192	C:	[he <u>do not</u> get the swine	
193		flu.=Then they <u>isolation</u> (.)	
194		h[im=	
195	D:	[isolate	
196	C:	=so, he t(h)alk to me he's very	
197		very(.) eh eh eh (...)((D laughs))	
198		lonely, I think.	
199	A:	So I think we can add a <u>scene</u> of,	
200		a::: people=of a person, eh: he	
201		has he or she has many friends,	
202		but, once h- he or she was sick,	
203		then, no one (.) dare to talk to	
204		him=	
205	C:	°Hmm°	((nods))
206	A:	=because (.) they were (sicks),	
207		they were scared, and afraid o:f	
208		being infected. °So, do you think	((A seems to be looking
209		it's a good idea.°	and pointing at D))
210	D?:	Ye[s	
211	B:	[I think=	
212	C?:	=[Yes	
213	B:	[uh:m we can adds a scenes before	
214		your scenes.	
215	A:	WHAT	
216		((All laughs))	
217	B:	I think ah we can (.) ah::: include	
218		a- (.) a person uh (.) uh he's- he	
219		saw the news, and he feel very	
220		sca:red a- about the (.)	
221		[swine flu.	
222	A:	[swine flu	
223	B:	Yeah	
224	D:	Uhm (..) But, as you have	((looks down at his note
225		mentioned, the- th- the scenes	card))

226		that told people (.) uh that have	
227		said uhm:: TSK the- the-=	
228	A:	[('swine°)	
229	D:	=[the people have many friends,	
230		an[::d	
231	A:	[Hah hah ((backchannel in	
232		Cantonese))	
233	D:	But finally he was isol[ated	
234	A:	[Hah h[2 ah	
235	D:	[2	
236		But- (.) what- uh what do you	
237		showed	
238		(...)	
239	A:	The wr(h)ong (h)concept.	
240	C:	[(The- yeah)	((raises his hand
241			briefly))
242	A:	[They think if someone is (.)	
243		being sick, then he is- getting a	
244		swine flu. But instead it's- it-	
245		but in fact he's not. He's just	
246		get a common cold. (.) So:: 's	((refers to his note card
247		tell eh: so, the:: (.) the scene	briefly))
248		of telling people, the:: (.)	
249		background information of swine	
250		flu is ve- very important.=So, to	
251		tell them (..) how to identify (.)	
252		people is really getting a swine	
253		flu.	
254		(~2.5) ((D and B nod))	
255	D:	°Okay.° That means the aims of	
256		this scenes is also call people	
257		not to too nervous.	
258	A:	Y[es	
259	B:	[Yes.	
260	C:	[Yes.=	((nods))
261	A:	=And tell them: the some- (.)	
262		knowledge o:f swine flu.	
263		(~17.0)	
264		((A, B, D look at C))	
265		((A looks at C and cues him to	
266		speak))	
267		((B looks at someone behind the	
268		scene))	
269		((Laughter))	
270	D:	Or we can:: (.) mention some of	((looks at A and B while
271		the points on how to preve::nt (.)	speaking))
272		the disease infect to people.	
273		(~1.5)	
274	C:	°Yes.° (.) You means eh for	((D turns to look at C))
275		example wears the mask or	
276		something?	
277	D:	Yes.	
278	A:	Oh! Always wash your hand! ((in a	
279		quoted speech voice quality))	
280		((All laugh))	
281	C:	°Uh° the aims of this eh we- we	((A looks down at his note
282		should we should tell people to	card))
283		take care themself. ((looks at D))	

284		(This is mean)	
285		((D glances at C and giggles))	
286		(~7.0)	
287		((B looks at someone behind the scene and then his watch))	
288			
289		((A points to himself))	
290	A:	So, should we (h)make a conclusion(h)? (..) And:: I thin::k our- ours- our drama (.) aims at telling (.) people the: <u>facts</u> , and the background information of swine flu, and to: give them some (.) correct concept t- to them to:: teach them how to differentiate (.) between the: (.) patient getting swine flu and: the people just with common cold. And, I think, and: we should (.) add a-scene o::f (.) a::	((refers to note card several times))
291			
292			
293			
294			
295			
296			
297			
298			
299			
300			
301			((turns to look at B, and points his hand to B))
302			
303	B:	Um- uh people (..) uh:: .hh see the news an[d=	
304			
305	A:	[s-	
306	B:	=feel sca- [feel scared	
307	A:	[And then, someone is sick, and his friend isolate him, and he feels lonely.=And (h) anymore?(h)	
308			
309			
310			
311		(...)((A looks at C and D))	
312	A:	Yes, yes! The:: the scene of people (.) going to the::: going to the supermarket to buy the ma:sk.	
313			
314			
315			
316	C:	Hmm::	((nods))
317	D:	Hmm::	
318	A:	((looks at C, laughs rather embarrassingly, and mouths 'mo5 laa4', meaning 'nothing more?' in Cantonese))	
319			
320			
321			
322	D:	That's all	
323	C:	That's all ((points to his left wrist although he doesn't actually have a watch))	
324			
325			
326	A:	[Uh.	
327	D:	[That's all	
328		((End of video clip))	

Appendix F – Analysis of the HKEAA sample group interaction

MF Group Interaction Data Analysis

Link to the video clip:

http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/SBA/HKDSE/Eng_DVD/videos/MF_GI.wmv

The following analysis examines the turn-taking organization of a Group Interaction session for the English Language School-based Assessment in a Hong Kong secondary school. Through a close analysis of the mechanisms and features of turn-taking, insights are gained on the nature of such mode of interaction in relation to its purpose of assessing speaking and interactional skills.

The Group Interaction session was conducted among four male upper secondary students in the same school (and likely in the same class), which lasted 11 minutes 58 seconds. The interaction task was to discuss ideas for a drama on some health issues in Hong Kong, and students were asked to negotiate and decide on the theme and the details of the drama in the discussion. Prior to the assessed interaction, students were given reading passages and other information on a range of topics such as swine flu, genetic engineering, and domestic violence as part of the ‘social issues’ elective module for HKDSE English Language assessment.

Scrutiny of the video recording and its transcript reveals the following interrelated features of turn-taking in the interaction:

Participants’ orientation to a ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking mechanism and even distribution of speaking turns

It is observed that participants orient to a more structured, ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking mechanism, particularly in the first few turns of the interaction. The interaction begins with the four students each taking their first turn in a clockwise, ‘round-the-table’ fashion (lines 1-60). Student A ends his initial turn with the question ‘What do you think?’ (line 9). Given its position at the opening of the discussion, any participant in the group is arguably the legitimate addressee of the question. However, A turns to B as he

asks this question, and in doing so selecting B as the next speaker. Indeed, B takes over the floor and begins his turn in line 10. Interestingly, however, he does not answer A's question by expressing agreement or disagreement to his proposal of featuring swine flu in the drama. Rather, swine flu seems to be taken as a 'given', an already agreed theme for the drama, as B goes straight to asserting the importance of including some background information about swine flu in the drama (lines 11-17) and goes on to provide that information himself (lines 17-29), making frequent references to his prepared notes. This effectively downplays the relevance of A's opinion-seeking question and his selection of B as the next speaker, such that B would begin his talk after A and say what he has prepared to say regardless of A's turn-final question. Continuing in the clockwise direction, C and D self-select and take their first turn in lines 30 and 46 respectively as the previous speaker completes his turn. Line 35 may, at first glance, appear to break this order when A cuts in while C is speaking. This, however, is likely an instance of other-repair, with A offering assistance to C as he struggles to search for the right words in lines 31-32, rather than trying to take over the floor. C is able to continue and complete his turn following the repair. The first two and a half minutes of the discussion overall, therefore, assumes a 'round-the-table' turn-taking order where speakership goes around the group in a neat clockwise direction and every participant gets to take an extended initial turn. Similar turn-taking order at the outset of a group discussion in oral assessments in Hong Kong has been found in other studies (e.g. Luk, 2010).

Participants also display orientation to evenly distributed speaking turns. Although the distribution of turns is in effect less than even in this interaction, and student C is noticeably speaking considerably less than the others, the ways in which participants deal with this uneven distribution reflect such an orientation. This is particularly manifest in their non-verbal negotiation of next-speaker selection at prolonged silences. The interaction contains two instances of prolonged silence that last over 10 seconds. In the first instance (lines 171-174), the discussion comes to an 11-second pause after the group has discussed at some length the panic and over-reactions of Hong Kong people towards the outbreak of swine flu. This part of the discussion, however, has mostly involved students A, B, and D, while C has not taken any turn other than backchannelling for more than five minutes since his first turn. In this prolonged

silence, D turns to look at C, followed by A and B doing the same. Towards the end of the silence, A looks at C and cues him to start speaking with the relevant inviting facial expression and hand gesture. C finally begins to talk in line 175 and takes an extended turn to narrate a story related to Hong Kong people's panic about swine flu. A similar pattern of non-verbal cueing is found in the second instance of prolonged silence (lines 263-269), where C has not contributed any substantial ideas and opinions since his extended turn of narration. All three other participants turn to look at C, and A moves his head to signal that he should say something, only this time C does not take up the speakership after the prompt. Regardless of the varying degrees to which these non-verbal prompts are effective, they serve as evidence for the expectation on the part of A, B, and D that C should have the same speaking rights as well as obligations as theirs.

Weaker orientation to spontaneity in turn-taking

There is some evidence for the participants' lack of readiness in this interaction to take up speakership following the turn-taking mechanism of everyday conversation characterized by more contingency and spontaneity. Immediately after the 'opening round' in which every participant has taken an extended initial turn to give their ideas related to the task, A takes the floor again in lines 62-66, where he attempts to build on D's contribution in the immediately prior turn and seeks clarification of his ideas for the drama. In response to A's clarification request (lines 67-71), D takes a pause to look at his note card and recycles his point about including 'extreme cases' in the drama in largely similar wording. Although this may serve the purpose of reiterating his point, the response does not address A's suggestions for the drama. When being asked for some examples (line 74), D again recycles his earlier point (and again in very similar wording) about people not taking care of their hygiene (lines 75-76), before going on to provide concrete examples. The dependence on prepared notes and recycling of earlier points seem suggestive of D's lack of readiness for the interactional contingency of having to take up speakership again soon after he has completed his initial turn. He might be expecting speaker turns to go around the table again, starting from A and B.

Student A apparently shares this expectation. Following the sequence (lines 62-84) where he takes the floor again and attempts to clarify and expand on D's ideas in his initial turn, A seems to be prepared to pass the floor to B, maintaining the 'round-the-

table' pattern in clockwise direction. In lines 86-88, A glances at B, gives a simple paralinguistic cue 'hmm', and then withdraws eye contact and looks down at his own notes. B recognizes these interactional cues and takes the floor in lines 90-93, where he nominates a new topic for discussion. As he delivers the second half of his utterance, however, he turns to A, seemingly projecting A as the next speaker and seeking confirmation on his nominated topic. In line 94, A ratifies B's nominated topic with the acknowledgement token 'hmm', yet does not take over the floor and expand on the topic. This results in some awkward laughter by both A and B (lines 95-96), followed by B applying the 'current speaker continues' rule and going on to expand the topic sequence himself. Notably, B begins his turn (lines 97-108) with much hesitation, yet more awkward laughter (line 97), and constant reference to his note card. Here, then, we see evidence of lack of readiness on the part of both A and B for the interactional contingency and spontaneity in speaker selection that characterizes the turn-taking mechanism of everyday conversation.

Use of non-verbal cues in speaker selection and transition

We have seen examples above which point to the participants' orientation to a more structured turn-taking order in this assessed group interaction. Notably, the nature of this interaction as planned and pre-structured is also manifested in the pervasive use of non-verbal cues in speaker selection and transition, in particular at times where they are used with minimal or no verbal elements, which seem to frame such instances of speaker selection as 'off-the-record', 'behind-the-scenes' actions.

Recall the example in the above section in lines 85-93, after the sequence between A and D comes to completion and silence ensues, A glances at B and elicits a simple 'hmm'. The combination of these two cues, which has triggered B to initiate a new topic in lines 90-93, is reminiscent of the implicit signals that actors in a drama performance would use to remind one another of their upcoming lines, especially if they are not very well-rehearsed. In effect, then, A here seems to be prompting B that it is his turn to speak according to 'the plan'. Extended versions of this occur in the two prolonged silences (lines 171-174; lines 263-269). Interaction during these silences of over ten seconds has by no means come to a halt. Instead, non-verbal, off-the-record actions are taking place as A, B, D cues C to take his turn and talk. These non-verbal

cues, on the one hand, leave the option to take the turn open to C, compared to the case if they prompt C to talk with a question which sequentially obliges him to give an answer. On the other hand, these cues reflect and serve to signal the co-participants' expectation that everyone in the assessed interaction has the rights as well as obligations to take turns to speak.

Another example of the use of non-verbal cues for speaker selection and transition is found just prior to the closing sequence of the interaction. In line 289, after a prolonged silence, A looks at the rest of the group and points his note card to himself, before he verbally seeks agreement from the group to make a conclusion of the discussion. Notably, the nomination of himself to speak and initiate the closing sequence can be done by asking the question alone (lines 290-291). A's choice of prefacing it with non-verbal cues of speaker selection, thereby framing it as an off-the-record action, then, seems indexical of a shared knowledge and consensus that he is the pre-selected speaker to open and conclude the discussion, which only needs to be made relevant at this juncture by implicit signals. This lends support to the nature of the interaction being planned and pre-structured.

Speaker self-selection

In addition to the turn-taking features discussed above, the interaction is also characterized by numerous instances of participants self-selecting as the next speaker. Examples of student A self-selecting as the next speaker include lines 62-66 and lines 199-204, where in both cases he builds on the previous speaker's contribution and relates it to the task agenda of designing scenes for the drama. Interestingly, the otherwise most reticent participant, student C, has self-selected twice in a later part of the interaction, in lines 274-276 and lines 281-284. In the first instance, C volunteers to speak following D's turn and the silence that ensues, where he gives an example and seeks clarification from D about the suggestion he has just made. Shortly after this, in the second instance, C self-selects again and attempts to summarize and further clarify the point made by D. Also noteworthy is the fact that just prior to these two instances of C's self-selection, he has failed to take up speakership notwithstanding the prompt by all three other participants in 263-269. His self-selection in line 274 then, is an indicator of both his recognition of the co-participants' prompt along with their underlying

expectations, and his readiness to take the floor at this point. Student C's readiness here is also evidenced by his relative fluency in this turn, compared to the first time C is being prompted to take a turn after a prolonged silence (lines 175-198), where he begins his turn with several false starts and struggles with finding the right expression for 'a real-life example'.

The example most evident of self-selection is found in lines 206-214, where a speaker self-selects despite another speaker exercising his rights as the current speaker to select the next. Here, A is making a suggestion for a scene in the drama based on C's example mentioned in the previous turn. He is facing C most of the time during this turn, but as he asks if his suggestion is a good idea, he turns to look at D and points his hand briefly at him. This effectively projects D as the selected next speaker, who then responds with the answer 'yes'. Almost simultaneously, however, B self-selects and takes the floor in lines 211-214, offering an addition to the scene A has just proposed. His self-selection is accepted by all the participants, as they attend and react to his proposition of an additional scene.

Discussion and conclusion: Co-constructing optimal performance conditions in interaction-for-assessment

Through a participant-oriented examination of the turn-taking mechanisms and features of this group interaction, it becomes apparent that participants collaborate and endeavor to create optimal performance conditions for displaying their speaking proficiency in this 'interaction-for-assessment'. Several patterns emerge with reference to such conditions:

Firstly, the assessed interaction is likely to have been planned beforehand by the participants, with a more or less pre-determined structure and pre-selected roles. This is exemplified by the participants' orientation to a 'round-the-table' turn-taking mechanism and student A assuming the facilitator role of opening and closing the discussion respectively. Topics are also possibly more or less negotiated prior to the assessed interaction. This is instantiated in the beginning two turns (lines 1-29) where A (appears to) nominate swine flu as the theme of the drama and seeks B's opinion, while B immediately turns to the details of the swine flu drama without explicitly expressing

(dis)agreement, thereby demoting the relevance of negotiation on possible themes for the drama.

Secondly, participants display orientation to equal speaking rights (and obligations) in the assessed interaction, hence equal opportunities to take turns and display their speaking proficiency. The ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking mechanism at the initial stage of this interaction and common among many others in secondary school oral assessments in Hong Kong (Luk, 2010) engenders opportunities for candidates to deliver pre-scripted speech or prepared points. Therefore, it is perhaps no accident that the first half of the interaction is characterized by extended monologue turns which contains elements of expert knowledge (lines 19-26) or narration (lines 97-142). On the other hand, there are a few instances, notably soon after the ‘opening round’ of speaking turns, which seem to reveal participants’ unpreparedness for more spontaneous and contingent turn-taking (lines 67-108). Further, the participants’ awareness of reticent individuals and attempts in cueing them to speak, as well as their tendency to self-select rather than waiting for others to select them as next speakers, offer evidence of such an orientation to equal opportunities for performing and displaying competence.

Finally, participants display sensitivity to each other’s readiness to take up speaking turns. The pervasive use of non-verbal cues for speaker selection, and the concomitant relatively low frequency of current speaker selecting next by explicit verbal cues, can be reasonably inferred as participants attending to their co-participants’ readiness to speak, given whatever that comes out of their mouth has direct consequence on the outcome of the assessment. This concern for ‘readiness to perform’ is also manifest in the various instances of off-the-record non-verbal actions noted above, and is likely to correlate with the apparent preference for a more structured ‘round-the-table’ turn-taking mechanism over a more spontaneous and contingent one.

Thus we see a tension as well as a compromise between different turn-taking mechanisms in this interaction – one characterized by interactional contingency and spontaneity, and characteristic of everyday conversation with which the participants are normally familiar, and another which is more structured and typical of institutional interactions – arising from the shared concern for excelling in an interaction-for-assessment.

Appendix T - Transcripts of some group interactions in School P and School L

T1 - PA05

School P - Part A - Group 5 Transcript

7m 25s [L, K, T, S]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 S: Good afternoon everyone. We have watched a movie called Freaky
3 Friday last week. Did you guys remember?
- 4 T: [Mm! ((nods emphatically))
- 5 K: [Sure! In the movie, there are some misunderstandings between
6 Miss Coleman and her daughter. Let us start (.) by (.) uh
7 discussing °it°.
- 8 S: Yah- ((nods)) (.) Let me start (abou-) ((points to herself))
9 start first. For Miss Colen{Coleman}, uhm she ↑always thinks
10 that Anna uh (.) didn' t work hard in school, so it is the
11 reason that (.) Anna always stay into- the- the- in the
12 detention class.=
- 13 K: =Yes but actually uh Anna did work hard. Uhm but her teacher
14 just had a biased view (.) towards Anna. And this discouraged
15 uh Anna's study, and it is >↓unfair to her<. ((turns to T))
- 16 T: ↑Apart from tha:t, her ↑mom[s] thought that (.) uh (.) Anna::
17 spends too much time on playing guitar instead of studies, uh
18 be↑cause uh Anna: always playing guitar (.) after school, and
19 >↓all the time.<=
- 20 L: =Mm, but in fact, she really want to >develop her interest in
21 playing guitar.< She has potentials (.) to be a guitar player,
22 and it is her sole (.) talent. And she rea:lly want to plays
23 guitar.=
- 24 K: =Mm. For Anna, she al:so has some misunderstanding about her mom.
25 She always think that her mom's had a perfect life and (.) uh
26 her jobs with high salaries, high position, and she had (.) a
27 high: uh education level. So, >she may think that< .h her mom's
28 life is that easy and that ↓perfect.=

29 T: =However, in fact, uh Miss Coleman's marriage was broken down
30 since her husband was passed away (.) few years ago. Therefore,
31 he had- she had to ((smiling)) bear the responsibility to
32 support (.) her: family, so:: uhm: (.) Miss Coleman's life was
33 not uh as- easy as uhm: Anna thought.

34 L: Mm. ((nods)) And in the movie Anna[s] always mention that her
35 mother is ruining her life. And this shows that (.) she: thinks
36 that her mother really doesn't understand her ↑mu↓ch.

37 S: Mm but in ↑fact, Miss Coleman (.) mm want h- want her to focus
38 on her study, and:: just want her to get a great job in future.

39 L: Mm. ((nods)) Mm, in the movie, they had to stay in each other
40 bodies for a period of time, (but) what would you feel that
41 they would feel, if: they: (.) had to stay in each other's body
42 for the rest of ↑li↓fe;

43 K: (h)I(h) th(h)ink they will probably feel sad and (.) desperate
44 for he(h)lp, uhm cos (.) they:: uh just (.) have to uh don't
45 know how to face the future and, they worry about the
46 challenges.

47 L: Mm::! Ye::s. And they have to face several problems too. Uhm::
48 (.) >first they have to< fa:ce the problems in the rel-
49 relationship with their friends. Because they stayed in each
50 other bodies, and:: they: ha:ve different appearance. Uhm, so:,
51 they >will be have< difficulties and, it's so weird to: get
52 along with (.) >the people that they are not familiar with.<

53 S: Yah. I (uh-) I agree with you. Mm:: (.) (like::) (.) they-
54 there will have a: (.) mentally (.) mental a:ge different among
55 (.) Anna and:: her friends >or Miss Colen{Coleman} and Anna
56 friends<, uhm (..) and they may ha- (.) they may have a big
57 difference in their p:oints of views and it may create uh (.)
58 a:: (.) generation gap among them. It's hard for Anna to- and
59 Miss Colen{Coleman} to (.) adapt themself into a new
60 environment and (.) into a new commuty{community}.

61 K: Yes. You are right. I think: the: other problems they may have
62 to face is the working difficulties. Like Anna, she is all: uh
63 only a secondary school student[s]. She may has little life
64 experiences. So, uh she may not (.) uh able to handle: t- her
65 mom's job. And she may not (.) uh give- uh suitable advice for
66 the patients.

67 T: Yes, ((nods)) you are right, uhm:: (.) TSK the::uhm uhm: (..)
68 ((smiles embarrassingly)) yes, you are right, uhm the:: (face)
69 uhm Anna does not know (.) uh how to solve the: problem faced-
70 face[d] by the patient. The ↑patient ↓will lose their uhm (.)
71 confidence uh (.) in: Miss Coleman. Therefore their mental
72 health will be affect.
73 (..) ((K nods))

74 S: °Mm.° I ↑think[t] there ano- there is another problem (.) uh
75 fo[r] (..) ↑other difficulty and problems (.) amo[r]ng Anna[r]
76 and Miss Colen{Coleman} is, their role (.) in: (.) family have
77 change[d]. Becau[r]se they change their body, their
78 responsibility also change[d] to each other. For example,=Miss
79 Colen{Coleman} (.) uh[r] have to- her o↑riginal i- uh[r]
80 responsibility is to: (.) uh sup↑port and take care the family.
81 Bu[r]t uh- this (burden) is shifted to Anna[r]. And Anna may (.)
82 not able (.) to: (.) uh[r]m:: (.)↑bear or take- (.) this- (.)
83 (burden) over.

84 T: Although there are difficulties between Anna and her mom's, but
85 uh they still have to: uhm [s]deal with them::, uhm: (.) deal
86 with them::, (.) ((looks at K)) >let's m[ove on].<

87 K: [°move on°
88 ((nods))

89 Yeah= ((turns to L))

90 L: =Mm. ((nods)).h And, ye↑:::s (.) I: thin:k (.) >to solve the
91 problems in their relationships with their friends<, I think
92 they can tell their friends about the: (.) secret of the magic
93 accidents, so that their friends can: (.) >understand the
94 situations and difficulties<. Uhm::, if their friends- do not
95 believe them, >I think they can< (.) tell the secret (that)
96 only shared among them- (.) themselves, and so that (.) to
97 persuade their friends. And::, I thi:nk, with their friends'
98 support, I'm sure that they can get along ↓this better.

99 S: I think uhm Miss Colen{Coleman} and Anna should help each other
100 in work; Uhm for example,=Anna should tell: (.) or teach (.)
101 Miss uh: Miss Coleman <(in::) some:: school knowledge>, so:
102 that: uhm:: Miss Coleman can handle the work in school. Uh for
103 Miss Colen{Coleman}, she can:: ↑also give some tips or advice

104 for Anna, in (.) in maintaining her work, uh: some knowledge
105 about psychology.

106 K: Yes. I think uh most importantly they have un- (.) to
107 understand each other, and just to consider uh (.) each other's
108 situation, cos they may not (.) to: uh: able to change the fact
109 that (.) they are going to stay in each other body in the whole
110 life. So, they: uh: (.) I think they should uh support each
111 other, and just uh be with each other.

112 T: Uhm:: ↑although there are many difficulties betwee:n uhm: (.)
113 Miss Coleman and her daughter:, but (..) they have to care
114 about each other:: in the:: rest of (.) whole life.

115 K: Yes! It's- it is important to have faith, ((S glances at the
116 timer)) and (.) think positive.

117 ?: Yes
118 (..) ((all turn to look at S))

119 S: °Mm.° (..) °Uhm::° ((smiles))
120 (..)

121 K: °Yes.° ((S smiles, and glances at the timer and at K))
122 (1.5)

123 K: U[hm:
124 S: [Uhm::
125 (1.8) ((S smiles and look at T; T nods slightly))

126 S: Uh: to have ((looks down briefly)) (.) uhm- hh .hhh ((silently
127 laughs and looks at timer)) WE HAVE A GREAT TIME uh::: great
128 time in discussion. But the time is nearly up. Uhm >uh we hope-
129 < I hope that we can have the next chance (.) in:: discussing
130 about movie or other (.) aspect.

131 K: °Yes=° ((all nod))

132 T: =Yes

133 ((End of interaction))

T2 - PA08

School P - Part A - Group 8 Transcript

7m 57s [Y, J, R, S]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 S: Good afternoon everyone? Today we are going to discuss based
3 on the movie called Freaky Friday, (.) in the movie, there
4 was- many: misunderstanding between Mrs Colen{Coleman} and
5 Anna. Shall we pick up some of them and discuss it;
- 6 R: Okay ↓su↑re
- 7 S: So:, uhm:: (.) in the movie, Mrs Colen{Coleman} misunderstand
8 that Anna was a- (.) naughty girl in the school, as she always
9 had to: (.) attend to a detention class, and get a fail: (.)
10 in the exams or even homework; But actually, Mrs.
11 Colen{Coleman} (.) doesn't know that (.) Anna was- being
12 picked on by (.) his- (.) by her English teacher, so: she
13 cannot- get a: pa:ss even in the homework.
14 (...) ((R coughs))
- 15 J: Mm.((nods))=I can't agree more. (..) Anna wants to behave well
16 in:: (.) the school. However, one of: her: classmates (.)
17 always (.) make- (.) tricks on: (.) her. So:: she cannot
18 concentrate on: her schoolwork, and she also receives (.) the
19 unfair treatment: (.) by her: English teacher. S::she's
20 preformance{performance} is not that bad, however, she- her
21 English teacher (.) always gives (..) her a very low mark. So
22 I think it is not Anna's fault.
- 23 R: Mm. I see your poi:nt, uh- (.) uhm maybe Mrs Coolm- Coleman uh
24 may think that Anna perform: badly at school or at- (.) uh at
25 home. And, on the other hand, I think: (.) uhm Mrs Coleman may
26 (.) uh:: think: (.) >A- Anna may think< (.) that Mrs Coleman's
27 jobs or lives are ve- are perfect; (.) But in fact, it's not
28 true in reality.
- 29 Y: ↑Hm↓m:↑ I agree with you.=I think Anna thinks Mrs Coleman (.)
30 just focus on her job and her: (.) husband, and just take care
31 of her younger brother, mm: besides, I think that Anna also:
32 (.) misunderstanding that (.) Mrs Coleman: is strict with her,
33 and, ruining her life, but, actually what (.) Mrs Coleman done
34 is good for her.
35 (...)

36 S: °Mm.° As I remember, in the middle part of the movie, both
37 Mrs Coleman and Anna have eaten the: fortune cookies, and,
38 both of them have exchanged their body. Right?

39 R: Ah:! I remember °it°. Uh: (.) they: finally exchange into
40 each oth- uh into the right bodies at the end. But uh what if
41 they had to: (.) uh stay in: each other's bodies for the rest
42 of their life;=How would they feel?

43 Y: Mm::: I think they will- uh both of them will feel embarrassed
44 because (.) when they >look at the< body, the body (.) uh (.)
45 is (got{not}) belongs to them. >And also I think< Anna will
46 feel upset, and (.) it is becaus:::e (.) uh::: (.) she
47 change[d] from a younger girl- to: a: into a old woman, uh:
48 when: she look at the mirror, she will find that her face is
49 so old.

50 S: Yeah. It is unacceptable for a young girl to change to an old
51 woman at a sudden; And also, uhm <Mrs> Coleman and Anna will
52 face (.) will feel embarrassed as they have to: (.) kiss or
53 hug another man that (.) not their lover. It is quite
54 embarrassed. Right?

55 R: Ye:s. Apart from: feeling embarrassed, uh- .h I think:: they
56 may: (.) uh feel desperate (..) uh as they cannot chan-
57 exchange into the right body f:orever.

58 J: ↓Mm. I see your point. (..) They: it is not easy:: (..) for
59 them to adapt a:: (.) very:: (.) difference{different}
60 lifestyle. For:: Anna, she::: (.) has to:: (.) face a busy
61 life, she has to answer:: (.) a lot of call every day.=For::
62 Mrs Coleman, she has to face the challenges in °the school°.

63 S: Yeah. We have see a lot of feelings that they: felt about.=So,
64 uhm: WHAT problem will they face if: they: exchange their body
65 in the rest of their lives.
66 (..)

67 R: Mm:. Uh from the viewpoint of Mrs Coleman, uh: Mrs Coleman[s]
68 may- (.) lose- her job because Anna (.) lacks uh the communi-
69 cating: (.) know-how,=so: uh as- (..) Mrs Coleman's job is
70 psychologist,=uh (.) Anna may: (.) not know how to: (.)
71 communicate or comfort (.) uh her clients because Anna is- (.)
72 quite impatient. Uh therefore (.) mm:: Mrs Coleman's job (.)
73 may be: (.) °lost°.

74 S: Mm. So, therefore AND- (.) Anna:: (.) stay in Mrs Coleman's
75 body, she have to tackle the problem: (.) uh she face. I think:

76 uh (.) Anna[s] can use Mrs Coleman's body: to (.) continue:
77 (.) her (.) music talent, and play electronic guitars on the
78 stage. I think it will be a breakthrough for a (.) fifty years
79 old (.) woman (.) uh to perform electronic guitar on the stage.
80 ↓So, uh- (.) uh:: on one hand, uh: Anna can continues her (...)
81 music (..) talent.
82 (..)
83 J: Mm! I see the: difficultie::s (.) faced by Anna. And I: think
84 the solution is (.) e:fficient to solve the: problem. For:::
85 Mrs Coleman, she::: maybe isolated (.) by:: (.) her
86 schoolmates. Because (.) they don't have common topics to talk
87 about, and:: (.) Mrs Coleman[s] (.) may:: (.) not know what
88 they- what she should do with her classmates.
89 (..)
90 Y: ↑Mm::, it is a really big ↓probl↑em, mm:: .hh I ↓thi↑nk <Mrs
91 Cole↑ma:n> mm: (.) maybe: (.) should (.) uh find a: methods to
92 solve this problem.=>It is because< uh she needs to stay in
93 Anna's body for the rest of life. I think maybe she can as::k
94 Anna (.) uh what- (.) what she:: talk about with her friends
95 usually, so: she can u- uh find the: common topics_ with Anna
96 friends easily, .hh
97 (...)((Y looks at S and nods; S glances at the timer))
98 S: °Mm.° (.) Yeah. ↑An- ↓and Mrs Coleman can also (.) watch more::
99 TV::: programs or: listen (.) to the radios to (.) absorb more:
100 (.) information about (.) what (.) nowadays the teens are
101 talking about. So that (he){she} can adopt to: (.) her new-
102 new- life. (.) Uhm:: (.) to: summarize, I think: (.) I think
103 uhm both Mrs Coleman and Anna (.) have to face many
104 difficulties, but, if they can (1.8) they can (.) find- they
105 can consult each other for the: (.) for the: problem-tackling
106 techniques such as (.) Anna can: consult Mrs Coleman about (.)
107 what- skills (.) should- she have, when she: (.) have to
108 comfort the: (.) ↓pat↑ients, or (.) Mrs Coleman can talk with
109 Anna more when (.) when:: (.) >so that Mrs Coleman< can get
110 more information about (.) no- what nowadays the teenagers is
111 talking about.=>So, both of them can (.) have a (.) better (.)
112 lifestyle and adopt the (.) other's (..) ↓life. And (.) >get a
113 new start<. (...) Yes.
114 ((End of interaction))

T3 - PA09

School P - Part A - Group 9 Transcript

7m 40s [R, A, E, Y]

- 1 E: Good morning. We are going to discuss the misunderstanding
2 between Misters- Missus Colen{Coleman} (.) and Anna. And the
3 problems they need to face when they stay in (.) each other's
4 body for the rest of they- thei:: l::life. h .h ((smiles
5 embarrassingly)) Base on the movie, I think: in the (sides) on (.)
6 their daily life, they both mis-understanding each other's
7 situation. Mrs Colen{Coleman} think that (.) study is the most
8 important things (.) in high school. And she think that getting a
9 good result is very easy. (.) However, she didn't know why Anna[s]
10 always (.) fail in h:er test, and need to go to s- (.) tutorial
11 class all the time. (.) And Anna think that (.) Mrs Colen{Coleman}
12 only- concentrate (.) on their- work, and put all the effort on
13 it. However, she never consider about her feeling. So, it lead
14 t(h)o- (the(h)m-) misunderstanding between them. ((turns to A))
15 What ah- (.) ((looks down at note card momentarily and back at A
16 again)) hh what do you think?
17 [hh ((exhales in relief and smiles))
18 A: [I see your point ((smiling)). I think: the:: differences of
19 habit (.) is also the: (.) mm misunderstanding between them. The
20 habit of Anna and <Mrs Coleman> is: (.) mm totally differen[s].
21 Ehm:: the habit of An:na, mm: Anna:: interest in playing:: (.)
22 in:: (..) eh: (...) electro-(of) guitar and love to listen rock
23 music. On the other hand, Mrs Cole:man wants a peaceful and a
24 very com:mon: life. She:: thinks that Anna's music are too noisy
25 and loud. It is interfering with her living con- dition. Also
26 she- thinks that: (.) mm:: (..) mm::: (..) she does- doesn't know
27 why Anna gets interest in:: the music, she hopes Anna:: (.) focus
28 on her stu↑dy (.) <instead of playing the::> (.) useless guitar.
29 This generates the misunderstanding between them.
30 Y: Ye:s! I agree with you. These problems will also lead to the
31 misunderstanding on: the: family's aspect. Mrs Colen (.) Coleman
32 (.) don't- doesn't understand why (.) Anna being like that, and,
33 she always bully:: (.) her- (.) brothers. Uhm: (.) she think that
34 Anna is:: (.) in (rebel),=since Anna never listens to her orders.

35 (...) And she also doesn't understand why Anna (.) never talks to
36 her about the secret on her mind. So she thinks Anna is hard to
37 communicate. (...) On the contrary, Anna misunderstand(..)s her-
38 mother is puzzle to her younger brother. She thinks that her
39 mother would (.) never listens to her feeling. That's why they-
40 misunderstand each other.

41 R: Mm. Other than those factor, (.) relationship factors should be
42 considered. ↑First, Mrs Coleman misunderstand that (.) Anna is
43 not willing to (.) ma- make friends with (.) her schoolmates. In
44 fact, Anna is the one bullied and cheated by others. Including
45 her (classmate)? And the: and even her teachers. Besides, Mrs
46 Coleman (.) un- misunderstand the relationship between Anna and
47 Jake. Misters{Mrs} Coleman thinks Anna and Jake- is- just-
48 playing with (th-) each other, and they're not true love. Uh:
49 she- don't know that the love between: Anna and Jake is (.) true::
50 and:: pure and strong. And she try to- even try to break them
51 (off). (...) On the other ↑side, Anna misunderstand her mother.
52 And thinks she: had forgotten he:r husband, and fall in love with
53 an(.)other man. Uh: want to- and want to leave her alone. In fact,
54 her mother is- really (.) fall in love with another man, but, he
55 is- she is trying to give a- complete- (.) family to: (.) Anna
56 and her brother. (.) Uhm ↓o↑kay, let's move on to the second
57 question. If they have to stay in each other's body for the: rest
58 of the life, how would they feel? What problems and difficulties
59 will they face, and h:ow would they tackle them? (...) Mm.

60 A: Mm, if they had to:: stay in each other's body (.) uh for the
61 rest of their life, >I think they would be very sad<.=Becau::se
62 Mrs Coleman will get married with a man. (.) And:: that mean Anna
63 will be a wife of the man, mm if they cannot change back their
64 bodies.=However Anna does- doesn':: love with the man, and:: Mrs
65 Coleman will:::: be: heartbroking becau- heartbroken becau:se (.)
66 she lost her husband. The relationship of the- of them will: (.)
67 mm be in <a state of a chaos>. (.) TSK Mm to tackle: of this
68 problem,=I think Mrs Kay: Coleman Coleman should (.) cancel the
69 wedding, and: (...) should cancel the: wed:ding, and:::: >mm try
70 to explain:< what happened of them.= I think the man will: (.)
71 take (.) account of their condition.
72 (...)

73 Y: Mm.=I agree with you.=I- also think <they will feel> (.)
74 un:bearable, since it' s hard for them to communicate with each
75 other friends, becau::se there is generation gap, and:: they may
76 also: lose their friend easily, since their: (.) their appearance
77 is >changed a lot<. And it's (.) un:acceptable. (...) And to
78 tackle these problems, I think they should use their own status
79 to:: (.) explain with their friends. I:f they are:: wholeheart
80 friends of them, they would not (.) leave (.) Anna and Mrs
81 Coleman.
82 (..)

83 E: ↓Mm. I agree with you. Anna need to go to school, and Mrs
84 Colen{Coleman} need to work. I think if they had to stay in each
85 other's body for their (.) rest of life, they will feel
86 uncomfortable. They could not (.) get with it. Anna cannot
87 lear↓ning. And Mrs Colen{Coleman} cannot take care of her
88 pa↓tient. In order to deal with this pro↓blem (.) I think they
89 should (.) quit the job and drop out the school (.) to: tackle
90 the problem. ((turns to R)) >How about you<?=
91 R: =Mm. I think- if they have to stay in each other's body for the-
92 the their uh for the rest of their life, they will feel very
93 annoying and worried, as they don't know the li:fe, the habit,
94 relationship of each other. They can't- act like each other, and
95 they will feel (s-really) scared when they- when they face the
96 frie::nd, the re- relative of each other. I suggest them to try
97 to get with their life, uh as they: (.) would be:: s:tayed in
98 each other's body forever. TSK Uh in conclu↑sion, there are
99 several aspect (.) which lead to misunderstanding of Anna and her
100 (ma). (...) Such as, daily life, (.) family communication, (.)
101 habit, and relationship. Al↑so, they would feel (.) uncomfortable,
102 annoying, uh:: if- they have to s- stay[ed] in each other's body
103 for the rest of the life. °Mm:: (.) ((looks at E)) >How do you-
104 How do you think?<=(Are there) other things (.) XXX (...)
105 (included)?°
106 (4.5) ((E looks at R and shakes her head))

107 E: And that's all of our discussion.
108 ((End of interaction))

T4 - PA11

School P - Part A - Group 11 Transcript

7m 38s [W, R, N, D]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 R: Uhm good afternoon everyone, I'm sure you've- you must have (.)
3 watched the movie <Flaky{Freaky} (.) Friday>. Uhm:, how do you
4 guys feel about it; I find it very informative, especially the
5 part talking about (.) uhm Anna and >her mother repairing
6 their relationship<. So:, why don't we start with discussing:
7 (.) uhm: (.) what misunderstanding that exist between the two
8 of them; Any ideas;
9 ((looks at W))
- 10 N: Mm. I thi:nk uh the- big- uh the biggest misunderstanding
11 ((R turns to look at N))
12 between two of them is (.) Anna thi::nks that her mother
13 doesn't love her. Uh:: (.) >As we can see<, Mrs Coleman loves
14 her daughter very much. And even sacrifices her marriage (.)
15 uh for her daughter. Uh: (.) that's (.) uh where we can see
16 how great the love is. But, however, uh::: her: (.) uh she:
17 always thinks that uh her m- uh (.) her mother doesn:: uh care
18 much about her, uh:: because of the person: (.) of Brian (.)
19 her mother's fian°cé°.
20 (..)
- 21 W: Can't agree more. Apart from the communi- the lack of
22 communication, there's the generation gap. Generation gap
23 appears (..) because of the age differen.=It is (invaluated)
24 but it is the reason for the existen of (.) misunderstanding.
25 (.) ((R turns to D))
- 26 D: So, there is one point I would like to add (.) over this view.
27 Mm, do you guys remember: (.) after eating the (.) lucky c-
28 cookies, Anna turns (.) into her mom, and the first thing she
29 do is (...) go shopping (..) and (.) have a haircut. I think
30 it is the best (.) proof (.) of the:: (.) ↓theory (.)
31 generation gap. Mm:: Anna (.) doesn- not- doesn understand why
32 her mother dress up like this, and Mrs Coleman don't want to
33 be trendy.
- 34 R: Uhm, that's exactly what I want to point out. Uhm young people
35 always try to be:: (.) fashionable whereas (.) adults always
36 want something simple. Maybe that's- what- you guys call the

37 generation gap, and- thi- that i- this is where: the (.) uhm
38 (.) misunderstanding exist. ↑What I want to t- what I want to
39 add is, maybe the existency{existence} of uh (.) Jake (.) is
40 also one of the causes of: the: (.) misunderstanding that they
41 had had (.) they have had. Uhm: (..) ↑Mrs Coleman (.) doesn'
42 t- (.) >does- uh M- Mrs Coleman think it is immature< of Anna
43 to: (.) uhm- to: be: (.) engaged in the date so early,=whereas
44 (.) Anna think it's okay. Sometimes I think, if they have a
45 chance to- if they've got a chance to talk to each other,
46 there wouldn't <have been any> (.) misunderstanding at all.
47 (1.3) ((R looks at D then at N, and nods))
48 W: Do you remember there is a scene showing that the door of
49 Anna's- (..) bedroom had been removed by Mrs Coleman; ((R nods
50 and turns her head to N just before N begins her turn))
51 N: Yeah. I can even remember the phrase on her room's door.
52 ((R looks briefly at W))
53 Parental advisory, uh keep out of my room. So::, what you're
54 trying to say i::s
55 W: >What I'm trying to< say is privacy. ((R turns to D))
56 D: I see what you mean. I think: (.) privacy is::- should be: (.)
57 important to anyone. Uhm just like me, if my right (.) if my
58 right to play computer game is being >exploited by my mom<, I
59 think I will get mad on her.=So, I think: lack of (.) privacy
60 is the main cause.
61 R: ↑All I can remember is (.) Anna always complains about (.) o-
62 the oth- others' invasion (.) of her privacy. (.) Her li:ne
63 (.) 'You are ruining my life' ! was printed in my mind. >So I
64 guess that' s what you guys are trying to say<.
65 (..) I think it' s time to move on.
66 ((looks at timer))
67 Le:t' s spare some time discussing about (.) uh ↑what will be
68 happen if they <had to st:ay> in each other' s bodies (.) for
69 their rest of life. Any ideas?
70 ((looks at W; W looks towards N
71 without exchanging looks with R))
72 (..)
73 N: So far I can think of is: uh: Anna's hobby, uh: the rock band,
74 ((R turns to N))
75 uh:: (.) as uh:: from the movie we can see that uh Anna really
76 likes uh: the- (.) her ban- >uh- playing bands< with her

77 friends, an::d, uh: she: uh: spend a lot of ti:me on: uh (.)
78 on playing the rock bands. And: maybe she:: (.) will become (.)
79 the: >a rock star< in the: future,=and: (.) it will (.) uh
80 affect her: uh future: uh career. ((turns to D and nods
81 slightly; R also looks at D and nods))

82 D: Yes. I think Mrs Colema{Coleman} work cannot be carried on
83 later. And: it is because as you all (.) know (.) from the
84 movie, mm Anna rui:ns everything. And: (..) uh although it is
85 fun, but I think it is no good for Anna to become a
86 psychologist. Mm: it is because she is not a
87 profession{professional}. Besides, some clients (.) who are
88 greatly in need (.) cannot seek help from Mrs Coleman. So I
89 think there will be some problem.

90 W: If they can't change back, I think it is very horrible to see
91 <Anna marry Ryan>. Because (.) although Ryan is- (..) a good
92 man,=but their age difference is: too big and it cannot be
93 acceptable. Uhm: it is relief that they can change back, or
94 else I: wouldn:: enjoy to see: the ending of the movie.
95 (.)

96 R: In ↑terms of their careers, and their- companion, I think it
97 will be adversely (.) affected. TSK Uhm but I- I concern more
98 about Jake, who- is not sure whether (.) .hh who is not sure
99 whether he like(h)s (.) Anna or her mother. >What I want to
100 try- (.) what I- what I wa- (.) what I want to try to< s- say
101 is (.) I think (.) it is not just the ↑problem between (.)
102 the- (.) between Anna and her mother if they' re not changing
103 back. It' s ↑also about: something like uh- the problem is
104 with their friends or their mates.
105 (..)

106 D: So:, how can we tackle the problem <if they cannot> fix it.

107 W: I think they can try to go to the restaurant to find the woman
108 who give them the: lucky cookie to seek help.

109 R: ↑Uhm: (.) I ↑understand why you say ↓so, but, if you
110 remember, uh- the characters already go to the restaurant to
111 seek help from the woman, but (.) they cannot- they come back
112 in vain. So- ↑maybe- (.) a ↑better solution maybe: (.) is:
113 to try to learn (.) more about each other or to respect more
114 about each other, <as they need (.) self(.)less (.) lo:ve> to
115 change back. So maybe they can (.) say: spend- spending more
116 time with each other (.) by: traveling with each other?

117 D: That's great. Uhm:: they can even::: (..) they can even:: go
118 away, and:: run away from their schoolwork (.) and ↓ workload
119 so that they can rela:x, and:: (.) have their own fun. I think:
120 everything will be go:: (.) ↓ better. Afterward.
121 (.)
122 N: °Mm.° Uh: it is running out of time so: maybe: (.) uh: let me
123 do- a brie:f uh conclusion on what we've just said. For:: uh
124 misunderstanding::: uh for the misunderstanding they have, uh
125 we've discussed that: uh (.) Anna thinks that (.) uh: her mo-
126 uh her mother: (.) thinks uh but- °no-° her mother doesn't
127 care about her, and to solve this problem we th:ink that
128 traveling is a good idea, because uh:: (.) we can::: (.) uh
129 they can know more about each other from (.) uh the traveling.
130 (2.3)
131 R: °Guess° (.) that's the end of the discussion, >thank you very
132 much<.

T5 - PA13

School P - Part A - Group 13 Transcript

7m 45s [D, K, L, B]

- 1 D: Good ↑afternoon everyone. I think all of us must have a ↑
2 great benefit after watching the movie, the Freaky Friday. For
3 no:w, I think we should talk about the misunder↑standing
4 between Mrs Coleman and her daughter Anna.
- 5 L: Mm.=From the viewpoint of Mrs Coleman, uh- she always think
6 that (.)Anna[s] behave bad at school. Before exchanging their
7 bodies, Anna's always (.) got F for:: her: assignment. And
8 even went to detention twice in one day. S'there- therefore,
9 Mrs Coleman think that (.) Anna behaves bad at school and she
10 is ve:ry lazy.
- 11 B: Mm. Yes I totally agree with you. (.) Y- uh: from the movie,
12 even Anna answer the questions correctly, but she still got
13 fail. Mm:, in fact, uh: Mr Bates, uh her siste- her teen-
14 teachers, (...) have bias against her:. And: (..) also, he's
15 not fair, as he didn (.) uh grade Anna according to her
16 performance.
- 17 K: Yes. (..) Yeah. You hav- What you have mentioned (now) is (.)
18 the misunderstanding on Anna's uh: ca- academic performance.
19 Uh: the next misunderstanding is that (.) Anna's roc- Anna's
20 (.) rock music is not wor:th(.)while: (.) to appreciate by her
21 mother. (..) Since her mother thought that (.) mm. (.)
22 ((looking at D throughout the rest of the turn)) it is a waste
23 of time and money, and it is noisy even cause (.) disturbing
24 of her, so:, she:: (.) disagree:: (.) the:: (.) (°X of this
25 rock music°).
- 26 D: Mm.=I understa:nd what you mean.=And: (.) I think playing rock
27 music is Anna' s own interest, and ↑ac↓tually, rock music is
28 a kind OF pop culture among teenagers. And:: (.) I think: uh
29 Anna has the potential to become a famous (.) rock star.=And:
30 (...) just now we have (.) mentioned several uh::
31 misunderstanding is from the viewpoint of Mrs Coleman.=And::
32 (.) uh: maybe we should talk about some misunderstanding from
33 the v:iewpoint of Anna then. And::, I think: that Anna thought
34 that her mother (.) >uh only concern< on: her: job and work
35 and (.) do ↑not ↓care about what Anna' s (.) feel, and (.)
36 her needs.

37 L: Oh. ((jerks her head abruptly as if trying to glance at her
38 notes)) I see your point.
39 However, I think Mrs Coleman only wa:nts her children to have
40 a better life, and want to compensate them ((looks down
41 momentarily)). Since (.) uh: for examples, uh: she provides a
42 space for: (.) Annas and her friend to play music. This
43 implies that (she'll-) try her best to satisfy all hers
44 children's want.

45 B: Mm. I agree with you. As Mrs Coleman want to satisfy Anna's
46 wants. For another misunderstanding between them, Anna thought
47 that Mrs Coleman, uhm: find: (.) has forgotten her father, and
48 find a (.) another man to replace her father.

49 K: Uh ↓yes. I gue::ss Anna didn' t think about the problem XX.
50 Mm (..) since uh (..) Anna' s (.) uh: (.) Anna' s actually: (.)
51 uh is (.) Mrs Colen{Coleman} think that she (.) uh: the new
52 husband was only a new fa- new family members. And (.) Anna' s
53 father' s place uh won't be °replaced°.

54 B: °Mm.° Just now, we have talked about: (.) uh:: (.) several::
55 misunderstanding between Mrs Coleman and Anna. And I think
56 that the: (.) major causes is by: (.) lack o:f (.)
57 communication and:: (.) some:: uh- and: generation gap, would
58 anybody like to add some remarks? (..) ((all shake their heads))
59 If not, let's move on to the:: uh feelings on their (..) on
60 the rest of their life if they: (...) if they: have to stay:
61 >in each other's bodies<.

62 L: Mm. For Mrs Coleman, I think: she may feel delighted since (.)
63 sh- she is so- she have the young- (..) appearance.=But- with-
64 full of (.) knowledge, she can easy overcome the (.) tasks
65 come:: (.) in the rest of her life, such as her school exam
66 and test.

67 K: Mm. I see your point. But I think that Miss: <Mrs Cole°man°>
68 may be depress[ed] and di- disappointed. Since she was going
69 to (.) have a wedding with her lover. But now, it- it totally
70 breaks her heart. Becau:se of: the: changing of: her: their
71 bodies, her dreams never come true.
72 (..)

73 B: Mm. For Anna, she'll be sad, as: she: lost her high school
74 life. Therefore, she will have less time: to (.) explore the
75 world and experience her life.=

76 D: =Mm. I also- uh understand what you mean.=But uh (.) I think
77 that Anna may feel relaxed in another way. Cos you all know
78 Anna can escape from her teachers and (.) her parent's control
79 and do whatever she want. Uh just like the movie show, uh she
80 can buy many accessorie::s (.) and cloth[es]. Therefore I
81 think she might feel relaxed and freed.
82 (..)

83 L: After discussing the feeling, let's talk about the problems it
84 may- (..) arise if: they:: still: (.) uhm ((clears throat))
85 live in: each others' body for the rest of their life. I think
86 this may affect their relationship (.) of uh- Annas and his
87 friend and Mrs Colen{Coleman} and his clients.
88 (.)

89 B: Mm. From Mrs Coleman' s point of view, she can↑ not (.)
90 communicate with: uh Anna' s friends as she' s not: a:
91 teenagers.
92 (1.7)

93 D: Mm.=I think that is not a problem for: Mrs Colenan{Coleman},
94 cos'sh- uh: Mrs Colenan{Coleman} is a psychologist.=Therefore
95 I think (.) she must have uh many experience (.) uh to
96 communicate with other people.=

97 B: =Mm! That's a: good idea. I think that more time should be
98 spent:: on: (.) uh pop culture for: Mrs Cole::man too.

99 L: However, it (has-) (.) uh:: (.) the- there is a problems
100 between (.) Mrs. Coleman and her clients.

101 K: Mm. Of ↑cour↓se. Their client (.) uh Mrs Coleman and (.) her
102 clients' relationship will be worse. (..) Since Anna: (.) do
103 not have any: (.) psychological base knowledge, (..) she won'
104 t give any useful (.) advice to the client. Uhm from the movie
105 we can see that (.) uh: Anna can only a:sk (..) h:ow do you
106 feel about (.) how do you feel. So tha:t (.) uh:: (..) she::
107 (.) doesn't have the (.) knowledge so that she will (.) their
108 (.) relationship will- get worse.
109 (..)

110 D: Mm. I understand your concern.=But uh: (.) ↑maybe I think
111 Anna can be:: (.) uh I- I mean Mrs Coleman (.) uh can be the::
112 uh: (.) partners of Anna uh that she can:: (.) uh: (..) listen
113 to their:: clients' advi- uh needs and maybe she can give
114 some tips to:: Anna to: give advice.
115 (1.7) ((D looks at the timer))

116 D: U[h: do you think o:f other ideas?
117 ?: [°Mm°
118 L: °Mm.° Uh: apart from the: relationship between (.) peoples
119 around them, (they-) uh: (..) if Mrs Coleman can't (.) do:::
120 can't continue her job, uh: it will[t] affect their: (.)
121 income. And[s] (..) uh: they might rely on: (.) the stepfather.
122 (1.8)
123 B: Mm. I think that (.) we must get some benefit from: (.) the
124 good discussion and, (..) a::nd we have- no time now. Let's
125 discuss next time.
126 ((END OF INTERACTION))

T6 - PB06

School P - Part B - Group 06 Transcript

7m 43s [Y, A, R, D]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 D: Good afternoon everyone ((looks towards the camera)). We're
3 here today to discuss about ((looks at Y)) how to promote our
4 existing ((looks at camera)) product[k] (.) uh the tablet
5 computer. Uh why don't we start by talking about the target
6 groups of our product? And I think the young professionals or
7 teenagers can be one of our target groups. Uh it's because I
8 thin:k (.) uh it's common- among the teenagers, and, it's not
9 difficult for us to see the teenagers holding high-tech
10 products in the MTR.
- 11 A: I agree with you.=Teenagers love (.) convenience and 3D-
12 products. ((eye gaze turns from D to Y))
- 13 Y: Mm. I::: also agree with you because teenagers love
14 electro:nic: (.) products. And:: also I think mainland
15 visitors can also be:: our target group.
16 Becau::se in mainland there:: are lots of fake products. (.)
17 ((R turns away from note card and looks at Y from now on))
18 I think they::: deserve >they may deserve to< buy::: (.)
19 genuine products.
- 20 R: Yes. I agree with you.
21 ((turns away from Y and looks slightly downwards in the air))
22 As uh:: mainland (.) people are very rich ((looking down)), uh:
23 they always: (.) come to Hong Kong and buy some new products.
24 Uh especially the new: (.) uh:: the electronics products.
25 (2.0) ((A and D exchange looks))
- 26 A: °Mm°
27 (5.6) ((Both Y and A look at D; D looks at note card briefly))
- 28 A: Mm:: (.) how about uhm <middle-aged> (.) group with high
29 income? They are willing to: consume because they: ha:ve uhm
30 high purchasing power, they: can: I think they have ability to
31 buy the tab- tablet comput- (.) computers.
- 32 D: Mm.=I also think that tablet computer can meet their needs of
33 business use uhm because it can carry to: uh everywhere, very
34 convenient.
35 (1.2) ((D turns to look at R))

36 R: Mm, I suggest that we should include children as our target
37 group. Because uh children love playing computer games, an::d,
38 >right<, they have large incentive to buy the (.) tablet
39 computer as (.) they can (.) when they buy the- tablet
40 computer, they can play computer games: (.) uh everywhere.
41 Y: Uhm: I'm sorry. I don't (.) agree with you, because I think
42 that (.) children might not have purchasing power. I think
43 they (.) cannot afford to buy: anything.
44 A: I think it is not a good idea because (.) tablet computers'
45 main function is not playing games.
46 D: Mm! ((looks down momentarily)) It seems that we have come to
47 an consensus towards our target groups. Uhm- (.) uh why don't
48 we move on ((glances at camera/timer)) to talk about the
49 special features o- of our product.=Does anyone of you have
50 any ideas?
51 R: ((Looks down at note card)) We have special order for our
52 customer, and we- (..) we make (.) t- (metallic) case with X,
53 uh for example a:: rainbow (.) case, >rainbow color case< with
54 (.) apple smell.
55 (1.5)
56 Y: Mm! Apart from: special order, we ha::ve special shape. (.)
57 Uhm such a::s: heart, star, or diamond. It's special.
58 A: Yes.=I think the tablet computer (.) mm have 3D projection
59 function. It can project 3D image, so that we can: watch 3D
60 movies.
61 D: Oh, it's (.) very great. But how about convenience?=I think uh
62 the tablet computer can be carried (.) to: everywhere and it's
63 ((Y looking down at her note card))
64 very convenient.
65 ((Y turns her head up and looks at D))
66 Y: Uhm: I'm sorry I'm afraid I don't agree with you, because most
67 of the tablet computers are convenient. However, I thin:k (.)
68 thin can be one of our: special features, because it is only
69 zero <point three::> M M.
70 (1.4)
71 R: °Mm.° Beside, this- tablet computer is waterproof. Uh: (.) if
72 we- if you (.) overturn a cup of water (.) on the- this (.)
73 tablet computer, it still work. Uh I think it's really
74 important for some careless users.
75 (..)

76 D: Mm:: maybe I thin:k uh the <speech sounds control> system is
77 also one of our special features. Uh for example when you say
78 Facebook to: the: tablet computer, the computer will browse
79 the Facebook for you automatically.

80 A: Mm! ((nods)) It seems that we have (.) mm fully discussed
81 about: t the: special features ab- of mm tablet computers. Let
82 us move: on: to: strategies. ((Y nods slightly)) Mm I think we:
83 should launch advertisements on TV,
84 and leaflet, and poster.
85 ((turns to Y)) ((Y looks down))
86 It's an importan:t (.) medium for people
87 ((Y looks up briefly then down again))
88 to know our products.
89 ((Y looks up))

90 Y: Mm! I totally agree with you, because I think that
91 advertisement can attract a lot of people (.) to know more
92 about our: product. Uhm apart from that, I think we can
93 promote our product through (.) mobile phone. Uhm we can:: t-
94 ((R looks at Y))
95 promote it by calling- (.) customers, or messaging them.

96 R: Mm.
97 ((turns away from Y and looks down at note card))
98 I don't think I agree with you? Phone-calling ((looks down at
99 note card again)) and message is too annoying. People will
100 feel- (.) detest, and, they're not- they will be not willing
101 to buy our: product.
102 (1.5)

103 D: ((glances at R)) Mm, I'm sorry I also don't think that phone-
104 calling is a good idea 'cos uhm: (.) people uh always refuse
105 (.) uh to answer: (.) the unknown call[R]. ((D and Y not
106 looking at each other)) Uhm:: but, uhm: maybe I think: that (.)
107 uh: giving out uh <free:: limited additional{edition}> UH-
108 limited edition cases as free gift is a good idea.

109 Y: °Mm.° ((nods))

110 A: Mm:, how can buyers (.) can get the free gift? °gifts°
111 (1.5)

112 R: °Mm:,° maybe:: first h:undred buyers?

113 Y: Oh: it- I think it's too: (deficit). I think: (.) we should
114 give the: free gifts (.) to the: first one thousand buyers.
115 (..)

116 D: Mm. I also think that the fir:st one thousand buyer (.) is a
117 suitable level for- (.) uh the buyers to get the free
118 gifts.=Uh: it can attract more people to buy our products.
119 (1.9)

120 A: [°Mm°

121 R: [Yes. (Good stuff). How about a Facebook lucky draw event? TSK
122 We can (.) obtain (.) five people by drawing, and (..) uh-
123 each of them can get a: (.) get one tablet computer.
124 (..)

125 Y: Mm! I: totally agree with you, because Facebook is: very
126 popular (.) around the world.

127 A: Mm::: yes. Also, I thin::k uh:: people can <buy three (.) get
128 one free>, becau:se (.) uh:::m they: they can attract more
129 people (.) to buy:: more:: tablet computers.
130 (3.4)

131 ((D looks at R, then Y, and then glances at his note card))

132 D: But I'm afraid I don't agree with you. Uh it's because I think
133 it's too expensive for us to give out a: (.) uh free: (.)
134 computer for such a large amount.
135 (2.0)

136 A: °mm hmm°

137 (7.0) ((D looks down at note card, then the three group
138 members, and then note card again just before the next turn))

139 D: Mm: but HOW about launching a: exhibition
140 uh in the shopping malls?=Uh it's because (.) uh people can
141 ((Y nods slightly))((Y looks down at note card))
142 have a try on our computers during the exhibition.=Uhm I think
143 it's a good promotional strategies.

144 Y: Oh! It's a good idea[r]. I think shopping mall is highly
145 accessible. ((D glances at the timer))
146 (1.9)

147 D: Uhm time is running a bit short, maybe LET us discuss the:
148 promotional details uh in the next meeting.
149 (..)

150 Y: Yes. ((nods))

151 A: °Yes° ((nods at looks at Y))
152 (3.4)

153 ((End of interaction))

T7 - PB10

School P - Part B - Group 10 Transcript

10m 44s [E, H, K, V]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 E: Hi, everyone, it's time to discuss uh:: the: our promotion
3 profits{products}. Uh- the product this time is ou- the cell
4 phone, an:d, yah. Let's begin the discussion;
- 5 K: ↓O↑kay, this time we are promoting to the office (.) workers.
6 As we all know, they have a tight schedules, and they always
7 in a hurry. Then: (..) they: (..) they need something to (..)
8 ve- very efficient to help them to manage their work (.) very
9 much.
- 10 E: M[m.
- 11 H: [Mm:: (.) maybe let's come up with the promotion: strategies.
12 Uhm:: I think the most efficient way is to: advertise, maybe
13 through different kinds of uhm (.) medias, and what do you
14 think? ((turns to V))
- 15 V: Mm: (.) I think: advertisement is great, because the coverage
16 of the advertisements is extensive, as we can see
17 advertisements through: (.) television,=
18 E: Mm. ((nods))
- 19 V: =the Internet, and: in the magazines.
- 20 E: Yeah. I agree. Uhm:: and:: (.) advertisements related to
21 electronic products, such as uh our ce- smart phones can
22 definitely attracts the office workers, because uh (.) they
23 need something special to help them to uh (.) to assist their
24 work, their office work and, uh like (.) we have offered the
25 (..) we can: let them to use the cell phones to make their own
26 schedules, to make alterations on their files and different
27 other things. So it will be very convenient for them to: (.)
28 Yah. To (.) to assist their work. And we c- should include
29 these (.) special features in: the advertisements.
- 30 H: Mm!
- 31 K: Mm. They can also have a break from (...) ↑from (.) uh heavy
32 workloads uh through the games and apps, uh provided by our
33 profi- our smartphones,=
34 E: Mm.

35 K: =↑and they (.) all these should be included in the
36 advertisements. Uhm, apart from advertising through the
37 Internet and the- television,
38 uh wha- where else can we promote from{for} the
39 ((eye gaze sweeps across the whole group))
40 (.) from{for} our: smartphones.
41 H: Uhm: Ah! I've got an idea. Why don't we invite uhm celebrities
42 to help us to promote our smartphones?
43 ((looks towards E))
44 E: °Mm.° ((nods))
45 H: Uhm: maybe:: for example we can invite uhm Andy Lau or Kelly
46 Chen to help introduce our smartphone to the public.
47 E: °Mm.° ((nods))
48 H: An:d I think uhm (.) I'm sure they can help us to draw uh
49 ((looks at V))
50 public attention.
51 V: This is great.
52 ((looks down at the note card briefly))
53 Uhm but, I think we should add something more.
54 E: [°Mm.°
55 V: [Uhm: let's add some free trials (.) during the promotion in:
56 the shopping mall,
57 so that uh the public can experience the functions such as the:
58 ((E takes note card out of her pocket and starts browsing))
59 (.) apps (.) of our smartphones.
60 Then, the pub- uh the:: (.) public will have the chance to (.)
61 ((E looks up towards V))
62 get to u- know our °smartphones°.
63 E: Mm. Uh:: for:: the:: office workers themself, they can try: .h
64 the special features uh: (.) in the shopping mall (.) uh in
65 person, like, uh: they can experience that they can makes own
66 schedule, and send text messages to their colleagues, and any
67 other things. So, they will become more familiar with the
68 functions that provide by our s:martphones to them.
69 K: Mm.=YAH! .h ONCE uh once
70 ((looking at E)) ((glances at note card))
71 the office workers have any p-
72 ((looks at E again))
73 questions, our staff can: h:elp them and (.) answer them
74 spon:taneously.
75 E: Mm hmm=

76 K: =In the meantime, our- uh staff can (.) also promote our
77 smartphones to them, and, I- I think the office workers would
78 consider to buy uh- our smartphone.
79 ((E looks down at note card))
80 (.)
81 E: Mm.=
82 H: =Goo:d! I think it's a good idea but-
83 uh do not think is enough.
84 ((looks briefly at note card))
85 Uh::m maybe we can have further promotion: ((browses note
86 card)) uhm (.) maybe in exhibition:, or:: some: electronic
87 product uhm (.) fairs? As we all know, uh in the- uh famous
88 electronic uh manufacturers always participating in the fairs,
89 and I think they can help to promote their own products, and
90 we can also do the same. Uh::m apart from that,
91 ((glances at note card))
92 I'm sure: w- uhm office worker are interested in getting to
93 know high-tech technology at the same time, in the fairs.
94 ((looking at V)) How- °do you think°?
95 V: I see what you mean[t]. Uhm I think it's a good- way to
96 promote our smartphones.=
97 E: [°Mm.°
98 V: =[Not only can we offer free trials, we can offer discounts.
99 Uhm=
100 E: Mm. ((nods))
101 V: =as- we all know there is: uh (competors{competitors}) to
102 (boost our XX) in the fair.
103 E: Mm. ((nods))
104 V: So I suggest (.) uh selling our smartphones uh twenty percent
105 off (..) to our customers.=
106 E: =Mm mm. Uh:: apart from offering discounts, how about gi- uh
107 providing free gifts to: our: customers, like we can:: offer
108 the: (..) smartphone cases to (following) one hundred and
109 fifty customers, so uh they may be attracted to buy: our
110 smartphones. But, I think we should not rely solely on: these
111 exhibitions and fairs. Because the Trade Development Council
112 they- may not hold many large-scale exhibitions and fairs
113 throughout the year, a::nd, we: cannot solely rely on that. So
114 to further (.) really promote our smartphones, I suggest that
115 we can sponsor our smartphones (.) in TVB dramas.
116 I think this will- can- can attract our customers,

117 ((K looks down at note card)) ((K looks up briefly))
118 especially the office workers.
119 K: Yah! I agree with you.
120 ((looks up)) ((looks down at note card again))
121 I agree that this is a good way to promote
122 ((looks up))
123 our smartphone. And because our smartphone
124 ((looks down at note card))
125 can definitely facilitate (.) uhm the: communication in the
126 office, uh also it can enhances the efficiency in- their work.
127 ((H starts browsing her note card from time to time))
128 Uhm: I think the- uh office- workers will be interested in
129 choosing our smartphone, an- as an useful tool to h- help with
130 their work.
131 (..)
132 H: Mm:, I think both of you got a point.
133 ((orients to K briefly)) ((browses note card))
134 Our smartphones can be exposed to the public frequently in the
135 drama. Uh:m (...) apart from that, I've just come up with
136 ((browses note card))
137 another idea. I think- (.) uh we'll have different colors for:
138 the: smartphone cases for- uhm male or female. I think we
139 should make good use of this uh unique (.)
140 unique features to promote our smart^ophone^o- smartphone.
141 ((looks at V))
142 V: Yeah. I'm thinking of the same things. What I want to say is
143 (.) the: diversified outlook of our smartphones
144 (.) uh can:: present different: personalities,
145 ((browses note card))
146 and our own prefe:rences. And so I believe
147 our customers will love (.) this idea. And: this can add more
148 ((E glances at her note card)) ((glances at note card))
149 colorful elements (.) to their strik- stressful w[ork].
150 E: [Mm. Mm mm.
151 ((nodding))
152 (..) Yeah. Uh: we: h we kno- we are all office workers.=We
153 know .h uh our: (..) ↑life in the office will be very dull and
154 boring.=So, in the past, we have identical cell phones, we
155 have identical desi:gns, and, ↑everything seems very boring.
156 So we should add something different and new to our
157 smartphones, that uhm: our customer they can present their

158 personalities through (.) the use of our smartphones. Uhm::
159 (.) how about displaying: different colors of the smartphones,
160 in our stores, in the exhibitions, and fairs, and, in the
161 shopping malls, >(uh just thinking)< promote (.) the design,
162 the new design of our smartphones. And I think this ↑will be
163 quite attractive to the office workers.
164 ((K glances at note card))
165 K: °Mm.° I appreciate your thought ↑very ↓much. Uhm
166 ((glances at note card))
167 because our target is the office workers, mm:: (.)
168 ((glances at note card))
169 I think we can send our staff to the company, uhm for example,
170 >we can cooperate< with the companies, uhm and give a brief i-
171 talk and introduction to their:=
172 E: Mm. ((nods))
173 K: =workers; Uhm (.) I think it is a good way to let them to know
174 more about the- special features of our- (.) of our
175 ((H looks at K))
176 smartphones.
177 E: Mm ((nods))
178 H: TSK Uhm: I think this can: definitely help promote our
179 ((glances at note card))
180 smartphones. Uhm: but may- not many: companies will accept our
181 ((looks down at note card))
182 invitation since our request may incur extra costs.
183 ((looks up))
184 Uhm:: how about giving our free gifts for them,
185 ((looks down at note card))
186 and: to: (..) for this company directly. And I think uhm (.)
187 we can at the same time promote our smartphones, and I suggest
188 that giving this tria- free trials for two weeks. I'm sure
189 they'll find our smartphones (.) smartphones very user-
190 friendly, and they would consider to buy this afterwards.=
191 E: =Mm! ((nods))
192 ((H turns to V; V glances at note card))
193 V: Yah, giving our free trials directly to: the: company should
194 ((browses note card from time to time))
195 be the mo:- should be more efficient to promote our
196 smartphones. I think certain kinds of companies like
197 commercial corporations, they need to store their a- uh- huge
198 amount of data per day. And, office workers may still: (.)

199 need to check their sch- schedules, an::d (.) meetings,
200 ((timer beeps)) or- and other informations after work. Uhm
201 smartphones are e- essential in helping them out in: that
202 ((looks at E))
203 case.=
204 E: =Mm::! Oh:. I think- I'm really impressed throughout the-
205 discussion because I think (.) we have- (.) so- you- you guys
206 have very great ideas and you have (.) observed in office
207 workers:, the- their life very detail, a::nd, (..) so I think
208 (.) we can: (.) come up the- >the ideas we have uh come up we
209 can< just (.) uh conclude them into a: (.) a: piece of paper,
210 and we can handed this to our boss and, yeah? Thank you very
211 much.
212 V: [Thank you
213 H: [Thank you
214 K: [Thank you

T8 - PB11

School P - Part B - Group 11 Transcript

10m55s [Y, K, S, R]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 S: Hello: my teammates, I have received a: task from our boss
3 ((looking in the camera's direction; head oriented to mic))
4 that we have to create a new beauty care product for our (.)
5 new seasons. And, maybe we can start by discussing how to
6 create it. ((turns her head to Y and then to K))
7 (..)
- 8 K: Mm!
- 9 Y: Mm. I think::: maybe we can:: (.) uh: choose tea trees oil, uh
10 because having pimple is: the main concern of woman{women},
11 and:: it is common for pe- uh woman{women} to use the: tea
12 trees oil. Do you think that it is a good idea?
- 13 K: Uhm: I don't think so, even though:: (.) tea tree oil can
14 treat pimples, uhm but it can only treat the- the symptoms,
15 but not the root case, uhm so I suggest that uh we should
16 create (.) lotion which can moisten our skin, uh one of the
17 function is to prevent (.) pimples caused by dry skin. Uhm::
18 do you think:: >do you agree<? ((turns to S))
- 19 S: Mm. I can't agree more. ((K now turns to R))
- 20 R: Mm.
21 ((turns slightly away from K))
22 It sounds great. Uhm from our: past experience, we apply: (.)
23 uh the marketing four Ps (.) strategy, uh which contain four
24 elements, uh namely product, price, uh place, and
25 promotion.=Uh shall we start by discussing one of the elements,
26 product?
- 27 K: [Mm!]
- 28 Y: [Mm. Yes, of course. Uh as usual, our company's target group
29 is office ladies. Uh: shall we change?
30 ((K turns from Y to S))
- 31 S: No. I think we should not change our target group, because we
32 have established a good will among the office lady. Mm, I
33 think they will keep supporting us, so we should not change it.
- 34 K: Yes! I do think so, uhm:: (.) I think we can: (.) choose uh (.)
35 <passion fruit> to be our flavor of lotion, because a fresh-
36 flavor can always at-tract office lady to support us.

37 (2.4) ((All turn to look at R, and R smiles embarrassingly))

38 K: M[m!

39 R: [Yes. I think it's good idea.

40 (1.9)

41 S: So, let's move on to discuss the: price. Mm:: I think: one

42 hundred and ten is the most suitable price for (.) our lotion.

43 Y: Mm::: (.) but I think that uh:: the customer will be: affected

44 by the illusion that one hundred and nine dollars is a lot

45 cheaper than one thousand and ten dollars. Maybe: we can sell

46 it at (.) uh one thousand and nine dollars.

47 (1.5)

48 S: Mm! It is an (..) best choice for our price, because this

49 illusion has been proved by our past experience. ((Y nods))

50 K: Mm.

51 (1.6)

52 K: So:: uh we can:: (.) we: have decided that (.) uh our product

53 is a lotion which is: (.) uhm the passion fruit flavor, and we

54 have set the price at (.) one thousand and nine- dollars. Uh:

55 after discussing these two elements, shall we move on to (.)

56 di:scu:ss uh our main focus, our promotion?

57 S: Ye[s

58 K: [Mm!

59 Y: Mm. Uh I think that in phrase{phase} one, we can give out some

60 sample in central business district, uh: as there: (.) uh as

61 many office ladies are concentrate in there.

62 Do you think so? h .hh

63 ((turns to K and smiles))

64 ((K withdraws her eye gaze from Y and nods))

65 (..) ((S looks at K))

66 S: Mm. (.)

67 ((K turns to S, almost simultaneously S turns away from K and

68 looks in the air))

69 Besides, we can- maybe- maybe we can: (.) uh: in: (.) impose a

70 policy buy two get one free. Uh as this may attract

71 more consumer to- buy: our product, it is also a kind of

72 ((K looks in S's direction without making eye contact))

73 illusion.

74 ((K turns away from S))

75 K: Mm! When uh: (.) they have we have the promotion that they can

76 buy two: (.) get one free, they will think that the price is a

77 lot (.) uhm belower so they will uh buy more. I think it is

78 the- it is a strategy that uh we have adopted- adapted for a
79 long time and- it still works. So, we can keep on use- it s-
80 ((turns to R))
81 this time, right? ((smiles))
82 S: °Yes.°=
83 R: =°Mm°. And I think that's uh enough for:: phrase{phase} one,
84 and, in phrase two I: suggest that we can promote our product
85 by advertising. Uhm:: I think we can invite a spokespersons to
86 promote our lotion. Uhm:: I think: Mimi Chu is the: right
87 person to promote our- our product as uh she is well-known
88 among >Hong Kong citizens<. ((K moves her lips ready to speak))
89 Don't you think that is (.) quite suitable?
90 ((looks at K))
91 K: Mm:, I'm sorry maybe I can't agree with you. Uh even though::
92 (.) Mimi Chu is uhm:: (.) famous among Hong Kong citizens, but
93 it is- but her main- uh- h- her main focus or her fans (.) are
94 some:: uhm housewife, uhm but uhm we- our: company's target
95 group is office lady, so:: uh I think she's no::t so suitable
96 for us this time, uhm:: but uhm I think there- are- uh
97 fashionable uh well-known models in Hong Kong is a- better
98 choice. Because uh office la:di:es uh will always read some
99 magazines and they will see the- uh Hong Kong models who
100 (dre:ss) a (.) like a- (.) uh- have a very- (.) have a i-
101 ideal (.) shape, and: they have the- very good skin, and::
102 maybe her- some office ladies' idol is some (.) very- (.)
103 famous (.) models in Hong Kong nowadays, so I think we should
104 >choose a model<, right?
105 ((turns to Y))
106 Y: ↑Mm:: (.) OH YE::S! A you(h)ng model call:ed Chrissy Chow is
107 quite famous, and her body shape is good, and her skin is also
108 good. Maybe we can choose her to be our spokes(.)sperson. Do
109 you think so?
110 S: I'm afraid I cannot agree with you.=Because (.) she gave a (.)
111 bad impression for our citizens, as she (.) uh too sexy, and-
112 she- (.) may- (..) yeah. ((turns to R))
113 R: And I think uh- uh (what XX) may not uh: audience may:: not uh
114 (.) as she's unacceptable for our audience, so I think she's
115 not suitable (.) at all-. Uhm AH!=I remem- I remember that a
116 young model called (.) Angela Baby, she has a: (.) uh who has
117 uh: very good skin::, uhm I think she's better than Chrissy
118 Chow as she has less (.) uh bad impression for: (.) our

119 audience.=So:: (.) I think she's the most appropriate person
120 (.) uh to be our: spokesperson. Isn't it?

121 S: Ye[::s!

122 K: [Mm! And:: also: uh: I remember tha:t (.) Angela Baby have
123 some film:, uhm: be: uhm:: (..) selled{sold} to the: uh: (.)
124 some other places (.) apart from Hong Kong, so I think uhm (.)
125 i- from the international: (.) viewpoint, uhm I think uh she's
126 also well-known in (.) uh uhm in others places other than Hong
127 Kong. So I think it may be uhm suitable for- to choose her,
128 because we can also promote our product (.) to uh other places.
129 Uhm:: so it is great right? So::: let's choose Angela Baby.

130 S: °Mm°. (1.5) So, uhm maybe: (.) maybe we can add (.) a point
131 that we can promote a V- VIP: policy for our customers. Uh
132 when they buy a- fixed amount of goods, they may (.) get a VIP
133 membership, so that we can keep this- (.) target group (.)
134 office lady, and to keep on buy our: (.) our products.
135 (2.1) ((Y nods followed by K nodding))

136 K: Mm! Uhm:: I think some office lady will uh: (.) become our
137 fans and always support us uh if we have adopted (.) this uh
138 membership, and they will uh follow up our new:: (.) uh other
139 new products, and to: (.) uh always support (.) our-
140 <()> uh- so uh we can: (.) also:: (..) have a higher
141 ((looks at R))
142 sales.=

143 R: =°Mm.° Shall we s- uh (.) uh set the amount as: uhm:: five
144 ((eye gaze leaves K; looks in the air))
145 hundred dollars because i- it's not so high: and not so low
146 and we can also maximize (.) maximize our profit.

147 S: Mm! That's a great price, suitable price for us. And also
148 maybe we can post our advertisement on the magazine, right?
149 ((looks at Y))

150 Y: ↑Ye:s ((nodding))
151 (..) ((K turns to look at Y))

152 Y: Uhuh huh ((bursts into laughter))

153 R: [Yes. .hh

154 K: [Mm::! Because uh: (.) uhm: manie:s{many} office lady have the
155 habit (.) that to read:: some: (.) fashion: magazines uhm (.)
156 f- uh every week, so: they will: uh: (.) they can:: expose >we
157 can expose< our products to them (.) by: uh: (.) posting our
158 advert- advertisement on some magazines.
159 >Do you agree<?

160 ((turns to Y and smiles))
161 (..)
162 Y: ((nodding)) Ye::s. Uh:: (.) maybe we can mos- move on to the:
163 phase that we can sell the product. Do you think that ma-
164 supermarket is a:: best choice?=I think it is convenient for
165 the: office lady to buy our product.
166 (2.1)
167 K: Mm. Uh::m ((turns to S))
168 S: Mm: I hope I can not agree with you because (.) supermarket
169 are- more f- st- o- housewife is more:: (.) s- often to go to
170 supermarket, but our target group is office lady, and there is
171 a lot of <health and beauty (.) care (.) stores> in Central. I
172 think maybe we can put our products (.) uh: uh- on the:: (.)
173 on there.
174 R: Mm. I think uh health and- uh beauty care center is uh quite
175 suitable, for example, Watson's and, uh: uh these- stores as
176 uh (.) the office ladies always- always go:: (.) uh the: uh-
177 these stores to buy their necessities so:: they can t- uh
178 notice our new products more uh easily.
179 K: Mm. And also I think supermarket give a (.) uh im- an
180 impressions that uhm: it is for: to- for buying some: uh food,
181 and or some daily- (.) uh or some daily: uh necessity,
182 ((timer beeps))
183 but not uhm some (.) skin:care: (.) product. So I- but uhm: (.)
184 some health and beauty store is more suitable, uh as we have
185 some- we have put our: products- there for a long time, and,
186 we have- we have a: (.) quite good result, so I think I-
187 we've- we should kept- keep on that. And: we should not change
188 a lot.
189 S: Mm. I think we have (.) a- con- we can conclude our:: strategy:
190 ((looks in the air))
191 plan now. We will promote our products through advertising:,
192 and (.) magazines, and, we can set the price at one hundred
193 and nine dollars. And our target group is office ladies. So,
194 I'll report this information to our boss ye- tomorrow. Thank
195 you you guys.
196 [That's [2 all of our meeting.
197 K: [Oh! O[2 kay.
198 R: [2 Okay [3 Thank [4you.
199 Y: [3 Thank [4 you.
200 K: [4 Thank you!

T9 - PB11Mock**School P - Part B - Group 11 Mock SBA Transcript**

7m49s [S, Y, R, K]

1 ((Timer beeps))

2 S: Good afternoon everyone, so, now our boss have a new project

3 for us. Uh which is to promote our new vitamin (.) pill. So,

4 let's start by discussing how to promote it.

5 ((S and R exchange looks))

6 R: Mm! ((looks down))

7 Uh shall we: uh still continue using our: marketing strategy?

8 Namely price, product, uh promotion and place;

9 ((R and Y look down))

10 (...) ((R turns to Y; K looks at Y; and Y glances at them and

11 starts talking))

12 Y: It's a good idea.

13 ((eye gaze shifts from R to note card))

14 Uhm maybe we'll begin with the product. Uhm:: but I think it

15 is difficult to promote this new product. Uh there are many

16 existing: uh healthy products nowadays. Uh: maybe we have to

17 find out some problem of the other substitutes, and ano-

18 another thing- analysis{analyze} the special features of our

19 new product. Do you think so?

20 ((both R and Y look at K))

21 K: Mm! That's true.=There are many: uh strong communities-

22 competitors (.) uhm in the market.=Uhm I think you have (.)

23 heard about Doctor Choice, right? Uhm it's a- its selling

24 point is uhm: (.) uhm:: (.) its product is for (.) vitamin C::.

25 But uh I think our features our selling point is that we have

26 (.) uhm a wider range of our function. Uh so I think uhm it's

27 our special (.) feature, so: we should focus on it when: we

28 are advertising it. ((K has been oriented to S while S mostly

29 looks down at note card))

30 S: Yeah. That's right.

31 ((looks up at K briefly and back at note card))

32 And now, our: (.) our vitamin pill have differe:nt (.)

33 vitamins such as uh vitamin A: to: E. And: this is vital for

34 our daily lives.=So, shall we- focus on this special features

35 when we promote this product.=

36 ((looks at K; K nods))

37 R: =Mm! Of course. Uh we should uh emphasize this special: (.)

38 features.=And uh, uh comparing to:: uh nowadays uh existing:

39 (.) products, uh their ag- age group is a bit narrow, so I

40 think we should uh (.) adjust the:: target group to uh: (.)

41 children:, adult, an::d (.) elderly[s]. Yes. (.) What do you

42 think? ((looks at S))

43 (..)

44 K: [°Mm hmm°

45 S: [Yeah. I think it is quite good to separate our (.) our target

46 ((looks down at note card))

47 group to three parts. And, maybe: (.) there are (.)

48 thirty one: pills in one bottle.=So:, I think it is related to

49 ((looks up))

50 our price.=So let's set our price now, right? (.) [°Yah.°

51 Y: [Uh do you

52 think::: uh two hundred for a bottle

53 is that too costly?

54 ((glances briefly at S then turns to K))

55 K: I think so. It's not suitable. Uhm:: but I think uhm we should

56 ((points to Y)) ((gesturing for a no-like answer))

57 (.) our revenue should cover our cost, so I think two hundred

58 is reasonable.=But, uh we have (.) we have a experience that

59 when we set the price at (.) well for example one hundred and

60 ninety ni:ne, or ninety nine, nine point nine something, uhm

61 the- customer will think that (.) it is more cheaper than (.)

62 two hundred because there is a illusion that (.) when you see

63 there's one hundred something, but uhm it's nearly to two

64 hundred. It's had- it's has an illusion. So I think we should

65 uhm continues f- to use that uhm (.) to::: uhm: (.) for

66 example we can set at (.) one hundred and ninety nine to: (.)

67 continues use it. (.) 'kay?

68 Y: °Mm.° ((looks at K))

69 S: °Mm. [I agree.° ((looks at K))

70 R: [°Yes.° (.) Uh shall we move on to: ah: (.) uh

71 ((looks down at note card))

72 promotion?=Uhm: I suggest uh giving free sample in some (.) uh

73 clinics, uh because uh when comparing to: some (.) hospital,

74 subsidized by: governments, uh many- middle- uh middle group

75 (.) mid- middle income group can () uh accessible to these

76 uh clinics.

77 ((looks at Y))

78 Y: Mm. This- that's good. Uhm: and most middle and high-income
79 group (.) uh see the doctor in: clinic also, and they are more
80 affor- affordable than low-income group. But, giving out free
81 sample is not attractive enough.=Maybe:: (.) uhm maybe we have
82 adverti- advertising?

83 (1.6) ((Y turns her head to S and then to K, and S and K nod))

84 Y: Do you think so?

85 ((orients to and looks at K))

86 K: ↑Mm hmm, and then:: we can: (.) I think we should find a
87 spokeperson{spokesperson} to represent (.) our product.=Uhm,
88 it is a:: (.) an effective- (..) uhm method to promote a
89 product, because uhm some:: customer will have their favorite
90 idols when (.) they see that our idols is selling a product
91 then they may buy it.=And, they will have confidence to buy it
92 because (.) uhm their al- their alp- their idols also using it
93 or (.) uhm they:: can: choose some: (.) the suitable fo-
94 product for them. Uhm but I think uhm as we have- three target
95 groups as we mentioned- before, uh we have adults, elderly and:
96 also children so I think we should find three (.) different
97 spokeperson from three different age group. Uhm for example a
98 (.) older and or children that (.) a- (.) a:: (..) singer that
99 the uh children (fan would) like,
100 but, is this too costly to do so?

101 ((S looks at K))

102 S: Yeah.=I think maybe the cost is too high
103 ((turns away from K and looks down at note card))
104 to find three spokeperson{spokesperson} and- that is famous
105 ((looks up at K briefly))
106 or: they are artist. So, maybe we can focusing on (.) finding
107 one spokeperson which is (.)
108 uhm: impressive for e:very age group.=I think Jacky Chan
109 ((K glances at timer))
110 may be a suitable spokesperson for us. As (.) he is the
111 housewife idol, and: mostly our product is bought by housewife.
112 So, and he is a kung-fu star, which is worldwide known. So
113 may- his ↑healthy ↓im↑age may help to
114 ((R looking at S till end of S's turn))
115 promote our product.

116 K: Ye[:s,=
117 R: [Mm.

118 ((turns away from S and looks down; opens her lips))
119 K: =I think: he has a (.) healthy i- uh image.=But I think (.) if
120 we find a superstar:: that is well-known among the world, it
121 is too costly.
122 So, maybe we can: find another one? ((S and K turn to R))
123 ((R turns away from K and looks at S))
124 (...)((R looks down at her note card))
125 R: °Mm.° Uh:: maybe:: Mim(h)i- Ch- ((holding her laughter))
126 ((looks down and point to her note card))
127 ((All laugh quietly))
128 K: °Mimi-?° Mi- I think you mean Mimi Chu? (..) ((R smiles and
129 nods)) Mimi Chu is a:: singer that housewife- like, (..) Ah. I
130 think:: it may be a good idea but (.) as we mention that our
131 product is for (.) middle class, so Mimi Chu maybe (.) a bit
132 for:: (.) some:: with low income.
133 S: Hmhmmhmmhmm ((laughs quietly))
134 ((Y and R join in laughing quietly))
135 K: So maybe we can find a (.) more famous and: (.)
136 and we should be: uh affordable.
137 ((S looks down at note card))
138 S: >But wait a minute<, ((gestures)) I think Mimi Chu is suitable
139 ((looks up towards K))
140 enough as (.) she has an experience to promote an (...)
141 dent(h)ist (..) ((R laughs and coughs)) adver(h)ti(h)sement,
142 ((holding her laughter)) ye(h)ah. (.) I think (.) h(h)er- her
143 ima(h)ge (...) is hea(h)lth(h)y enou(h)gh.
144 ((all laughing quietly and trying to contain themselves))
145 K: I know- I know your point! But, uhm: (.) I do think if we find
146 a more famous and (.) for some middle class, for example, we
147 can find: (.) Shik Ka Yin? I think: she's more suitable
148 because (.) uhm:: also, he is- she's some: (.) uhm children's
149 i(h)d(h)ol. ((all laugh)) So I think uhm ↑it is- it can
150 suitable for the children to ask their ↑mum to buy (.)
151 this ↑product for them also.=So I think it is more suitable.
152 ((R looks down at note card))
153 (1.5)
154 S: ((nodding)) Mm. I-
155 Y: Okay¿ ((smiles))
156 S: O[kay.
157 K: [↑Okay.= ((looks at R, who has been looking at note card))
158 R: =Exactly. Uh shall we move on to the place¿ Uh I think uh

159 ((eyes still on note card)) ((looks up at K briefly))
160 personal- we can t- uh sell our products in personal health
161 store. Uh: for example, Watson's and Mannings. Uh because uh-
162 uh: THESE store (.) accessibility is quite high.=So, uh they
163 can (.) uh s- buy our products in these stores. °Yah.°
164 ((looking at K)) ((turns to S))
165 S: Yeah.=Also this store is focusing on (.) promoting some health:
166 products and: beauty products, so, it is suitable for our
167 product.
168 K: Mm! I think it is convenient too.=And:, if we buy something,
169 we want to be v- convenient too. Uh ↑okay we have finished
170 ou:r discussion about (.) uh the four P,=we have confirmed
171 everything.=So, I think we should draft a- uhm: a complete (.)
172 ((glances at timer))
173 proposal for our boss.=And we should (.) uh write it very
174 clearly and (.) to promote our ideas to our boss (.) uhm next
175 Tuesday, so, okay? We have finished
176 ((Y and R look at K and silently
177 laugh))
178 ((End of interaction))

T10 - PB14

School P - Part B - Group 14 Transcript

9m 13s [S, L, K, T]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 L: .h (.) Good afternoon, have you guys read the newspaper
3 headline yesterday? A Hong Kong University students (.) just
4 committed suicide because of his ↑appea↓rance.
- 5 S: Mm. I've heard the ↑news ↓too. Teenagers nowadays (.) are
6 ↑always focusing on their appearance. Some of them may even
7 spend a large amount of money, on buying (.) uhm pretty cares
8 (k-) products, or pay for some facial treatments. (.) It
9 ↑seems that there's a grea:t commercial opportunity on it!
- 10 L: Mm. Yes, our company has just released (.) our beauty products
11 in- eh- uhm the teenagers. Mm:: (.) mm:: (1.9) uhm: so: are
12 you guys clear about the special features of the product?
- 13 K: °Mm.° I've heard that the new products .h are composed of a
14 traditional Chinese medicine. That is quite special.
15 (..)
- 16 T: Uhm:: but, do you think that the traditional Chinese
17 medicine .h have strong and strange smell? Many people may
18 refuse to use our ↑pro↓duct.
- 19 S: Hey. You've missed out a ↑po↓int. That is our product also
20 includes (.) natural ingredients (.) li:ke lavender (.) which
21 is successfully cover (.) the:: ↑smell brought by the
22 traditional Chinese medicine.
- 23 L: Mm:: (.) It's one of the fo- ma- m- main focus, that uh to
24 promote our product. .h Uhm, it is not smelly even if we have
25 added the traditional Chinese medicine into it. (.) Mm, in
26 present, many beauty care products on the market (.) contained
27 chemical substance. Which would lean{lead} to a series of
28 (.) .h side effects. UH::M (.) it would properly{probably}
29 lower the qualities (.) of the users' skins. Unlike tho:se
30 products, our products contains natural ingredients, .h which
31 would not (.) trigger (.) allergies, and- can- be used by
32 different kinds of s- skins. (.) So, does anyone have any
33 other ideas?
- 34 K: Uhm:: (.) as our target group is teenagers, we can make u:se
35 of the Internet (.) to:: uh promote this to the: (.) uh

36 teenagers. Uhm: as- uh people nowadays cannot live without the
37 Internet, especially teenagers. So, promoting our product
38 through the Internet (.) can let more people know more our
39 products, and, to: uhm: just have a extensive coverage of >our
40 ↓promotion<.

41 T: ↑I suggest use our company's official website, to
42 emphsi{emphasize} our new products .hh (.) mm: (.) and
43 desid{design} a new particular page to:: uhm
44 introsdu{introduce} the detail more information- the detail
45 information of our new products (.) such as the advantages of
46 such kinds of ingredients, et- etcetera. I think it will:
47 further:: it will help to: our further promotion.

48 S: °Mm!° Apart from using[s] our company official website, we
49 can also make use of (.) some: (.) popular:: (.) mm social
50 networking site, like Twitter? And: or Facebook. I think
51 setting up a fan page, on Facebook for our product, .h can h-
52 help us to easy promote it to the: hm- teenagers more
53 ef↑fectively. As Facebooks have become very popular (.) in
54 nowadays um a↑mong teenagers.

55 K: °Mm.° ↑I agree ↓with you. I think we can upload some short
56 videos, uh to demonstrate that using our product, as well as
57 the latest news .hh uhm information or discounts to the
58 customers.

59 L: Wo::w! It seems that you guys can really keep up with the
60 current trend. (.) Mm, besides, do you know that
61 advertisements is actually the most important, and the most
62 commonly used as promotional strategy; So, what do you think
63 of television advertisements.

64 T: I think we can invite some (.) .hh uhm young >celebrities<,
65 who have- (.) a ↑healthy image, to be our promotional
66 ambassadors. .hh uhm, it can:: (..) uh- it can:: (..) ge- it
67 can get the general public attention, and it can- p- hh
68 further: uhm help our promotion.

69 S: Mm. Ye:s. Mm, in television advertisements, uh::m (.) we can
70 also inva- in:↓vite them (.) to sing: a:: (.) ↑theme ↓songs for:
71 our ↑pro↓duct (.) which is ↑easily (.) memorized, and ha:d a:
72 simple lyrics. .hh Mm:: just like ho:w (Vita) companies had
73 ↓done. Mm:: In this ↑way, I think[t] our products can easi↑ly
74 get (.) uh teenagers' attentions. And:: (..) ((in a smiling
75 voice)) >have widened our target group.<

76 K: °Mm.° More↑o↓ver, I think eh- banners on ↑buses (.) uh MTR
77 ↑stations and public areas (.) are also good ways to promote
78 our products. As people can contact with it- a- advertisements
79 frequently in their daily lives, so they can see our products
80 anywhere at every time.

81 L: Mm! We have already talked about ↑how to use advertisements on
82 our promotion. (.) So, do you guys have any other ideas?

83 T: ↑Mm::, I ↑think distributing: (.) uhm free gift (.) .h uh is a
84 good way to promote, since: o:ur ↑target group is teenagers,
85 we can cooperate< with some goods (.) .h some school and
86 distribute our products as a free gifts. .h And: (.) TSK as a
87 free gifts and to:: (.) uhm (.) promote our products.
88 (1.2)

89 S: ↓Mm:: (.) Bu:t if we really distributed our new products to
90 ↓stu↑dent, uh::m ↓free↑ly, .h uh:m it will ↑probably add (.) a
91 large amount of administration cost to our ↑com↓pany. >Isn't
92 it?<
93 (1.3)

94 T: Uhm:: ↑It's good point to concern, but it's the direct way to:
95 (.) promote our product, s- as it's- uhm (1.3) TSK some com-
96 like it can boost our sale. And this can-=it's uh (..) s- just
97 like some companies like P & G is- (.) use this kind of method
98 to promote their products? Uh: and it ↑gains a great success.
99 Mm, (b'side) (.) but actually, I thin:k (.) the: their package
100 size of their products (.) is ↑much smaller than the >original
101 one<.

102 S: °Mm!° I ↑see your ↓point. Do you mea:ns (.) uhm:: we- we can
103 uh: (.) we can:: reduce the ↑size, or the ↑volumes (.) of our
104 package, uhm (..) for those (.) free goods, uh so to reduce
105 the:: administration cost?

106 T: E↑xactly! ((nods, smiles, and in animated voice))
107 (.) ((All turn to look at K))

108 K: Mm. That's a good idea. Uhm we have just talk about the
109 strategies for local promotion. U- Uhm what about the
110 international promotion? Uhm I've seen (there're) many
111 companies nowadays u:se (.) product dis↑place↓ments in films.
112 Why don't we try this; Uhm we can invest in the film, and
113 (then) to promote our products. So when the film is released,
114 uhm millions of audience, and they can see our products in the

115 films. So, our: products can be successfully promoted. Besides,
116 teenagers may <also want to follow their:> (.) idols; and so
117 they may consider to buy and try our products.

118 S: Mm. Yes! Uhm:: (.) I:: I thi- I believe you guys must hur-
119 must have heard (.) a very famous film called Tran^sfor^mers.
120 I know that (.) mm the [↑]main characters (.) in the films had
121 wore: (.) uhm (.) have wore a brand t-[↑]sh[↓]irt. And af- uh-
122 which is: uh:: which was being promoted. And after the movie
123 was [↑]shown, mm the t-shirts have been sold for around (.)
124 fi:ve hun- five hundreds (.) per day!

125 L: Mm! It seems that product displacements really works! Maybe
126 >we can have a[<] [↑]try on it.

127 K: Mm. In the long term, our product should be penetrate to the-
128 international market, so as to gain the worldwide acceptance.
129 (1.7)

130 L: Mm. So, we have four ways to promote our products (.) which is
131 advertisements? (.) mm (.) promote our product through the
132 Internet? (.) mm (.) distributing free gifts, (.) an:d, to
133 have a product dis[↑]place[↓]ments. So, does anyone have any
134 problems?
135 (2.0)

136 L: [↓]Nice. So, if we have any problems, maybe we can discuss the
137 details on our next meeting. Thank you for all of your ideas.
138 ((End of interaction))

T11 - PB14Mock

School P - Part B - Group 14 Mock SBA Transcript

8min 2s [K, T, S, L]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 (3.2) ((S, L, T look briefly at K in turn; K looks at L))
- 3 S: ((Smiling)) Huh .hhh Good afternoon everyone, mm now we're
4 going to::: uh promote a slimmi- slimming product. Uhm:: (.)
5 uhm:: (.) what do you think?=Or we ha- we're are going to
6 promote our product to our target groups, uh:: the:: teenagers,
7 who are overweight. Uhm do you guys have any idea?
- 8 ((looks at K))
- 9 (2.3) ((S, L, T look briefly at K in turn; K looks down))
- 10 L: Uhm I:: agree with your ideas that we should (.) set our
11 target (.) groups as the (.) uh teenagers who are overweighted
12 because (.) .hh there are so many (.) teenagers in Hong Kong
13 they are .h they have the problems of obesities, and .h uh the
14 problem is becoming more and more serious.=And I think (.) it
15 is (.) a high time that we need to (.) uh pay attention to
16 this problem.
- 17 K: Mm. Mm: shall we sh- first talk about the special features of
18 our product?=So, .h uhm I think emphasize that and then to
19 promote uh our product to uhm maybe uhm others or our target
20 groups. .hh And uhm first, maybe uhm we should- we all know
21 that uhm our products' special features are the .hh uhm we::
22 the product uh is made by the Chinese medicine, which is
23 natural, and uhm the: it is suitable for: (.) uhm many of the
24 teenagers. So they wil- this is (.) they will not (provoke)
25 any allergies.
- 26 T: ((looks at note card)) Ye::s, to compare to: the:: products
27 nowadays showed in the market, they are involve some chemical
28 ((looks up at K briefly)) ingredients, that we don't know. But
29 our products involve some: uh just Chinese traditional
30 medicine, .h and which is (.) healthy to our:: (.) to bo- t-
31 healthy our bodies, so::
- 32 K: huh [heh heh
33 ((everyone smiles and tries to hold their laughter))
- 34 T: [it w(h)ill not affect our h(h)ealth. And:: (...) TSK (.)
35 and let's move on to t(h)alk about the:: ways to promote the
36 product.

37 K: [°Mm hmm°

38 T: [Have anyone: (..) (have) ideas?

39 (1.4)

40 ?: (° °)=

41 K: =Uhm:: maybe we should uhm: just try to uhm promote our

42 product in a: very (.) uhm effective way, 'cause uhm we can (.)

43 just put (out) our products, uhm the information of our

44 product on our websites, and then (.) to let the customers and

45 more- people know that .h uhm our- products' special features,

46 and then uhm the:: maybe theuhm: uh significant of our

47 products. (.) So, what do you think?

48 S: Yes I agree with you.=Uhm because nowadays uhm: (.) uhm social

49 network- social networking website like YouTubes or:: (.)

50 Facebook are very popular among teenagers. So if we put our

51 products uh on the website eh: (.) this kind of website, .hh

52 uhm target- our target groups that means uhm teenagers can

53 easily get our information and know more about our product.

54 K: °Mm hmm°

55 L: °Mm hmm° ((looks down at note card briefly))

56 ((looks up)) ↓Mm. Uhm[t] uhm I also agree with your ideas that

57 we should (.) uh set up a (.) a official (.) official (.)

58 website, uhm and, beside we can set up a fan page in Facebook

59 uhm so people can click into it and become friend, and like it,

60 and >therefore they can know more about our products<, like uh

61 ho- how they can use our products, uh what benefits they can

62 get from using our products, >and this is< this he::lp to

63 promote our products, [I- I believe.=

64 K: [°Mm.° =↑Maybe we should also

65 put some vi↑deos, or X some uhm special features that our

66 product have, to uhm in a:: very (.) uh funny way to show uh

67 the public. ((L nods))

68 T?: °Mm:.°

69 (3.4) ((T and L look at each other; T then looks down at note

70 card and smiles; L's eye gaze stays on T))

71 L: Uhm yeah as we all know that because (.) there're million of

72 teenagers are using Internet and like Facebook every day, and,

73 I believe that this will be a:: very: successful way to

74 promote our products.

75 (..)

76 K: Yeah[r], besides websites, we might=

77 ((S and T look at K and laugh silently))

78 K: =also think some other ways to promote our products, like uhm
79 we may set up some big banners (.) everywhere like uhm the
80 buses, the MTR stations, both uhm places are: uh the teenagers
81 always will uhm go to, or: uhm >they may notice it<, so, they
82 will (.) realize that our products' uhm benefits, and then (.)
83 uhm they may have uh interest on them. °What do you think?°
84 (...) ((T turns to L and the two exchange looks))
85 T: °Uhm::° (.)((looks down at note card)) I think sell:: our
86 product to school by free gift is (to me) is a good idea
87 also. .hh Because can let students to try our products, and::
88 (.) and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.) our: fo- our features
89 of our products. ((turns from note card to K)) °What do you
90 think?°
91 S: ((Looks across the group)) You guy got a- (you) got a good
92 poi:nt. And I think uh:: we can- or- >just similar to< what
93 ((gestures to T))
94 XX((name of T)) uh said, uhm we can: give some fr- free goods
95 to schools and cooperate with them, and promote our product
96 to- the student who:: got an: who have obesity p- the problem
97 of (.) obesity. So uh we can take reference for their BMI to
98 promote our products and, .h (on one side) we can help (.) uh
99 better (health){help}, on their health.
100 All °Mm.° ((L and T nod; L and K exchange looks))
101 L: °Uhm:° uhm I agree that we should (.) uh we should promote
102 our product like (.) uh by giving free gift to different
103 schools, .h uhm as being a: respode{responsible} social (.)
104 cores- co-operatio- co-operations{corporation} uh (.) I think
105 our companies should bear the: (.) social responsibility,
106 which is like arisings{raising} the awareness of the .h
107 teenagers uh: to deal with the obesity problems. Uhm by
108 differ- distributing free gifts to schools, .h uhm:: (.) we
109 ca:n (.) apart from promoting our products, we can also (.)
110 help the students to know more: (.) the importance (.) to uhm:
111 to have a: (.) good BM<(h)I(h)> level
112 and index.=[Uh (.)
113 [(K opens her lips and inhales))
114 [Mm. ((nods firmly once))
115 K: [°Mm,° uhm: I: agree with you but I have one concern that will
116 ((straightens her back))
117 it (.) uhm the cost will be really high 'cause uhm disi-
118 distributing free gift to them. So, uhm do you guys have some

119 methods to uhm just eliminate or reduce (.) our cost so (.) .h
120 to let uhm (.) our: promotion methods can be more i- in a-
121 more e- ffective way?

122 S: Mm:: I remember there're (.) some products like: .h uh:m from
123 B&G:: Company. Uh they have also distribute their products to
124 school.=

125 K: [°Mm hmm°

126 S: [=Uhm however uh their administration cost is not that
127 high because (.) they had reduce their size (.) package size,
128 and their [volume=

129 K: [°Mm.°

130 S: =are: much lower than the:: (.) products in the market. So we
131 may take this as a reference. So:: that we can also- uh reduce
132 (.) uhm our administration cost.

133 L: °Mm.° ((nods and exchanges looks with K))

134 K: °Mm.° ((nods))

135 L: °Mm.° ((nods))

136 K: °Mm.° ((nods))

137 L: .hh And, I believe if we distribute free gifts at school, .hh
138 uh if these (can) successfully attract more and more .h uhm::
139 our targets, and therefore this can definitely in the long
140 term (.) bring uh (..) uh much (.) much (..) uh much more
141 benefits to ou- to our company.

142 K: °Mm.° Have you guys heard about product placement? That's mean
143 that place our product in the film, so to uhm raise the awar-
144 the:: (.) the:: our products to let more public know our
145 products?

146 (1.2) ((L and S look at K; T glances at the video camera))

147 K: I think that may be also [a good idea.
148 ((S and T quietly giggle))

149 S: Uhm yes I remember there's a movie call:ed Transformers, and
150 the product pla- placement of the t-shirt has successfully
151 been promoted to the public .hh=

152 K: [°Mm.°

153 S: [=Uhm we can also (.) uh take this for: (.) uhm take this as a
154 reference in our promotion.

155 (1.2) ((K and L nod))

156 L: Mm. Yeah and I think our discussion is:: (.) maybe we can
157 discuss next t(h)ime. ((laughs))
158 ((laughter))

159 T: [OK

160 [((Timer beeps))
161 ((End of interaction))

T12 - LA03

School L - Part A - Group03 Transcript

8min 2s [C, H, W, S]

*** Not a detailed transcription***

- 1 W: Let's start our discussion. Uh I would like to discuss a (..))
2 My Sister Keeper this movie. And this story is about uhm an
3 argument between the family. (Anna was decided)
4 and phones to her dying sister Kate who have cancer. And, at
5 last she need to give her sister a kidney- kidney. And Anna
6 feels unfair that her parents always force her and use her, so
7 she send her parents to court that cannot force her to donate
8 any (things) to her sister. And but at last her sister died in
9 this movie (.) (°in the end°)
10 ((looks at S, then turns her head to the other side of the
11 group, but does not look at a specific group member))
12 C: The mo{most} controversial part is that (the) parents have
13 (the right) to force (her) daughter to donate an organ to
14 another daughter. For me I think that uhm K- Anna do this
15 decision is (right). Because uh in this difficult dis- uh
16 situation it's hard for the parents or the daughter to do the
17 best decision (to make them feel X or something). Uhm in fact
18 in this movie, uh (this-) su- Kate for- instruct her sister to
19 sue her parents, because uh Kate is already very tired (and X).
20 And she'll- she don't want to do any uh treatment (whilst) uh
21 she thought that let it be or (let it) go is the best decision
22 uhm for her, and for her family as well.=
23 H: ((looks down at her note card most of her turn))
24 =Yeah I agree with you. Uh Kate want to give up her life and
25 even uh her parents and family encourage her to face this
26 ((looks at C briefly))
27 disease X she is still have this decision? So that I think to
28 (face) uh (it is) uh to go to (top) court is the only way to
29 uhm the only way to ask her parents to stop using uhm Anna's
30 organs and but (to heal Kate), and because her mother is
31 really you know overprotective to her daughter.
32 ((looks up at C and smiles, and turns back to note card))
33 And uh She'll always be very angry and, you know she's very
34 angry when she know that (uh when) she received the court
35 letter, and also she's very angry about uh Kate's decision,

36 she's so furious and (give up) so it's right
37 to go to the court, yeah.

38 S: Uh as- you mentioned before
39 ((Eye gaze alternates between H and note card, gestures twice
40 towards H))
41 that the mother is angry with her daughter and uh I think Sara
42 uh the mother in this movie is totally get lost in this
43 situation. And sh- she loves her daughter very much and (.)
44 she's not willing (.) her daughter to die, and (..) I think
45 she's too focused on her daughter who's sick, and I think uh
46 send to the court is the only way that to let someone not
47 involved in this uhm this uh uh situation to tell the mother
48 (what) is wrong or right. So I think (°Anna did the right
49 thing too°)

50 C: °XX°= ((H and S turn to C; and C smiles as she drops out))

51 W: ((looking at her own note card towards end of S's turn and as
52 she begins her own turn))
53 =But (.) I think Anna is only want t- her parents to (value)
54 her and not only use her to be a tool, and she has said that
55 I'm important too (X X in the family meeting). And I know
56 she's (not wanting to separate her X family XX) but she (.)
57 she also have X and she don't want her parents only use her
58 and force her to do (°what she don't want to do°) ((both H and
59 W turn to C))
60 (..) ((C looks down and smiles embarrassingly))

61 C: °So°, the most favorite part of this movie is that uh sh:-
62 Sara the mother (she cut) her hair, because her sick daughter
63 (.) uh (..) ((looks up and smiles)) Kate unwilling to go out
64 because she feel shame of (this) (..)
65 ((points both hands to her head))
66 uhm no h(h)air ((laughs and others join in laughing)). So uhm
67 this (scene is a very) touching part because uh her mother uh
68 show her determination that she'll be always together (.) with
69 her sick daughter.
70 (..)

71 S: Yes I think in this scene the mother acts very good and also
72 the (point) that the (.) plot is very touching too. But I
73 think the most uh (really) touching, the most favorite part is
74 the whole family go to the beach, and (.) enjoy their most (.)
75 uhm happy memories °XX°. 'cos (.) because uh the mother notice
76 that when they go to beach, (.) and she is very angry and even

77 shout (at anyone XXX marriage)? But lastly he come to- he- she
78 (came XXX) and (.) know that this is XXX to- to Kate, (she's
79 not- uh) (.) she don't have even have the chance to go out to
80 the beach. But now, thanks to the daughter who help (.) with a
81 helping hand, and I think Kate's dream come true (° °).
82 (...) ((H looks at C, and C looks down and smiles))

83 H: Uh and then, uh so yeah. And that's uh why I like >this movie
84 but< I think the most touching (point) is that (this) the most
85 touching point is that uh uh in the end is the they uh they do
86 they will they accept the death of uhm Kate and they will uh
87 go to her grave every uh every year so (.) I think this (just
88 uh like what they said) that uh her still (it's) just like
89 Kate is still (beside them) and I think this is a very
90 touching (part) and::

91 C: Yes I agree with you. I think that ending part is better than
92 the book version because the book version's (missed) that (.)
93 (showing hopeless) b'cos uh Anna finally died and then she (.)
94 her kidney is donated to:: (.) uh Anna (..) uh to [Kate
95 S: [Kate
96 H: (Kate)
97 ((C, S, and H all smile))

98 C: But uh the movie ending is uh showing the °XXX°. At the end I
99 remember that uhm Kat- ((laughs)) °Kate°

100 H: [Huh heh heh

101 C: [K(h)ate- Anna (said) that she'll (meet eh:: (.) she'll
102 ((all others laugh))
103 meet) her sick sister one day.

104 H: [Mm ((looks down at her notes, then at S as S starts))

105 S: [Yes I- I think the movie (.) movie's message ((air quotes
106 'message')) is clearer than the book. I think the movie want
107 to show that everyone in the family is full of love, and the
108 only thing to make conflict because they have different point
109 of view on (.) uh like donate the kidney to her sister. And I
110 think uh the book one the book ending one (is thoughtful, X
111 one of) argument between the: (Anna's decisions), but I think
112 the movie is to let uh let the audience know (when to let it
113 go or just (.) uhm love °XXXX°)

114 H: ((smiling)) Yeah: I also think that the book version ending is
115 so poor that (.) I cannot imagine why suddenly Anna will die
116 in a car accident and (something like that) and I'm:: just- uh

117 felt unacceptable for me that uh (she's very brave and) I
118 simply (cannot) accept her death
119 W: I think the book version can give me a surprise
120 ((looks down at her note card, then sits up straight looking
121 in the air))
122 but I: I like the movie version (most)
123 ((H turns to W and W looks at her briefly))
124 because I think uhm always the movie will give a good message
125 and: to to the audience and let- let us know that uh the
126 importan of- of uh family and relationship between uh uh love
127 (and X (.) XX)
128 ((timer beeps))
129 ((End of interaction))

T13 - LA06

School L - Part A - Group06 Transcript

8min 2s [O, T, W, K]

- 1 O: So today we are going to: discuss the lo:ng waited third and
2 last installment of the animation trilogy, which is also a
3 worldwide phenomenon and blockbuster (.) Toy Story 3. So then
4 ↑let's talk about the main characters (.) of this movie
5 first.=So the main characters of this movie (.) of course Andy,
6 the owner of the toys, and his toys who include like (.)
7 Bu::zz the:: spa:ce toy, uhm Jessie the cowgirl, and the
8 Potato Heads, >Rex dinosaur, Hamm, Slinky Dog<, and Bullseye,
9 and of course Woody, who is my favorite character. Uh why I
10 love Woody so much is that he is such a great leader. And in
11 the m- movie, uh- in many ways he shows that he is really an
12 outstanding leader.=For example, .h at the beginning of the
13 movie when the toys are so frightened that they will- .h be-
14 (.) given- (.) away or thrown by Andy >and (Andy would)<
15 abandon them, and (.) Woody soothed the toy:, and (.) >(uh-
16 uh- and)< (.) h- and (.) although Woody is s(h)o afr(h)aid (.)
17 himself too.=So, and ↑also he- knows (that- (.) uh) teammates
18 so ↓well. And- (.) when in the great escape, uh: (.) Woody
19 shows that he:: knows (the wel-) teammates well by: uhm (.) he
20 uses (.) the- persona↑lities and the character-istics of his
21 members well to make the great escape more efficiently. .h Uh
22 for example uh .h Mr Potato Head is very grumpy and his (.)
23 arms and legs can move: uh without linking to >his body and
24 Woody use that< uh to (.) make- the- grea- (.) great e- escape
25 a succes- succeeds, so, I really love Woody.
- 26 T: Uhm I agree with you.=I'd- I think apart from (.) Woody's good
27 at decision-making, I think (.) uh he's loyal to his friends
28 and honest. Uh for example uh (.) when he was abandoned by
29 Woody and (they-) forced to (.) go to uh S- uh Sunnyside
30 Daycare, he uh find (.) uh:: (.) all the ways to uh (.) get
31 back to uh Andy uh- uh- (Andy's side) and, and, he- uh he-
32 wanted (to turn to be) a support to Andy, uh for the
33 transition from a children to uh a teenager. Uhm apart from uh
34 his loyalty to uh:: his owners, I think (.) uh: Woody's a eh
35 very (.) uh: good friend, uh XX for example, uh the day in the

36 dump in the daycare, uh: (.) uh Woody didn't abandon anyone of
37 them, and: they: hand-in-hand to face the: hardship (.)
38 [so:
39 W: [(°Yes°)
40 ((turns from looking at T and looks down at note card))
41 Uhm yes I agree with you.=I also think that uh Woody is my
42 favorite (.) uh character in this film. Uh other than (.) uh:
43 loyal, uh he- he's l(h)oyal t(h)o his owner and he's a (.) uhm
44 (.) a- very:: (.) good leader, >I also think that he's very
45 brave.=Uhm because< uh (.) uh:: (.) uh when he know that uh
46 his friends uh may face uh danger in the S- uh Sunnyside
47 Daycare, uhm (.) he:: get back to: the: uh Sunnyside Daycare
48 to save them uhm and escape from Lotso, and at the end of the
49 movie, uhm when Lotso was trapped in the rubbish and (.) maybe:
50 (.) dying uhm: uhm: (.) uhm::
51 ((looks at O then the ceiling))
52 Woody: [(uhm)]
53 ((looks at O again))
54 O: [Yes.] And [Woody=
55 W: [(Woo)
56 O: =helps him and, Lotso is alive at the end of the movie.
57 W: ((turns from O to K)) Yes. ((T and O also turn to K))
58 K: In the movie, I'd like to choo:se (.) Barbie and Ken uh this
59 ciu{cou}- this funny (ciuple{couple}) to be my uh favorite[s]
60 (.) characters. Because uhm: (.) I was at- attracted by them
61 because of the Ke:n's fashion (part). Ken is so funny although
62 I don't think[t] uh he is handsome.
63 [(O and T giggle))
64 K: [Uhm- (.) hh u(h)hm- (.) uh Ken feels so uhm depressed because
65 no one appreciates his >uh clothes and< (.) his uhm fashion:
66 sense. But uh Barbie: (.) love her (.) clothes and him very
67 much. Uhm she asked him to: (.) she asked him- (.) him to:
68 show his clothes. Uhm (.) Ken was happy for her
69 (requires{request}). Then the- when THE:: when Ken's fashion
70 show was starts (.) start, uhm the music and the spotlight
71 (on), Ken wear:s uhm different cloth[ses] with (dark) and (.)
72 with background music and his (.) his cloth[ses] are
73 entertaining. Barbie pretends she:: <enjoys the show>, but-
74 (..) but the truth is she wants to save her friend. He f- she
75 wants (.) she force Ken to say how to make Buzz
76 become (.) to an uhm original mode,

77 ((O looks at K and keeps nodding))
78 and (...) and-
79 ((O glances at timer, looks at K with eyes wide open, nods
80 and smiles))
81 and but, Ken: (..)
82 ((looks up, hands open and out, palms up))
83 Ken:
84 ((turns to look at O))
85 O: Yes! I agree with you=I think Bar- uh I really appreciate
86 Barbie uhm because >she's very brave and she's very clever to
87 trick Ken in order to save her friends<. And, uh ac↑cording to
88 the Ken's fashion show this part, uh I'm really like the
89 background music of this part yes, and I really think the
90 soundtrack contributed to the- (.) to the: movie. Uhm for
91 example in Ken's fashion ↑show, the music is so ↑catchy and so
92 (.) uh so ↑funny and (Ken's move), and it really TSK uh really
93 matches well with Ken's (.) like (.) hilarious ↓moves.=So, Ir:
94 (.) I uh ↑really like the soundtrack of this ↓movie uhm (.)
95 <especially the> f- uh: theme song of this movie >'We Belong
96 Together' it is< ↑catchy and (.) the lyrics of this song
97 really match the: f- the:: uh the film, and, >I think it
98 really< deserve (.) uh the >best original song< of the Academy
99 Awards this year. So what do you think?=
100 T: =Uhm >I think the soundtrack c- contributed a lot to the
101 film<.=Uh: >however I think the special effect< (.) as uhm Toy
102 Story Three: (.) and the series is uhm (.) uh:: animate-
103 animations.=So I think uh: (.) the special effects are:: the
104 most: uh- one of the most important part of the film.=I think
105 (.) uh the actions and uhm- uh of the toys and the: (.) uh
106 characters uh collaborate (.) uh: very- uh well, and, the: uhm:
107 special effects can build up the atsmosphere{atmosphere}
108 (through the light{lighting}). (>And also<) when their (.) the
109 scenes in the dump, uh:: it's very (.) uh:: vivid and- can-
110 show how the- toys uhm (build up) how the toys feel °(their)
111 (.) emotions° ((looks at K towards the end of her turn))
112 K: Uhm Ken's and Barbie's: (.) uh facial expressions make me
113 laugh,
114 O: [°Yes°] ((nods))
115 K: [°And] (then)° uhm:: I'd like to change the (.) part which
116 all the toys included (.) Woody: were donate to Bonnie. (And:)

117 (.) becau:se (.) uhm I think th- toys are very important to
118 Andy, and, there're:: ad- and they are:: (.) Andy's memory.
119 Uhm:: (.) at least uhm:: (.) at least I don't want Woody (.)
120 (were) donate to Bonnie because uhm (.) Andy and Woody are
121 very (..) ((looks towards O)) (long) friends.=

122 O: =Yes. ((nods))

123 K: Uhm although (.) Woody (.)
124 ((O keeps nodding and then glances at the timer))
125 and so I think although Woody saw Woody (.) >(uh s- t-)<
126 although Andy saw Woody was inside the box, I don't think[t]
127 he:: he should uhm put- he should give (..) he should give uhm
128 Woody to °Bonnie°.
129 (...)

130 W: Uh yes I agree with you.=Uhm: .h I also think that ((looks
131 down at note card or question paper)) I uhm if I'm uh go- I-
132 if I'm going to change one part of the movie ((looks at K)), I
133 would change it- (.) this part. Uh because (.) uh if I were:
134 Andy, I would not uh:: give all my toys to:: a girl that I
135 don't know. Uh because uh:: the toys are:: (.) very uh
136 important to me, and, and to Andy. And, I think Andy will miss
137 ((turns to O)) the toys very much=

138 O: =[Ye:s d-

139 W: [so I think uh:: (that uh Andy should) keep all his toy (.) to
140 °the college.°
141 ((O nods several times, glances at timer, opens her mouth
142 prepared to speak))

143 O: Ye:s this- part is my most memorable part of the movie too.
144 And when the music So Long uhm starts playing, and my tears
145 start- welling, and I start ↑crying because (.) I'm facing
146 the situation with Andy cos >I'm growing up and I don't want
147 to lose my childhood behind<. So I think the soundtrack is
148 really great in this part and >this is also my most memorable
149 part in the movie<. ↓So:: (.) uhm: (.) in conclu↑sion, uhm we
150 all enjoyed this movie, and we all think the soundtrack
151 >contributed to the movie< very well. (..)
152 Thank [you. ((looks at TR))
153 [((Timer beeps))
154 ((O opens her mouth and exhales, showing relief))
155 ((K claps her hands and all burst into laughter))
156 ((End of Interaction))

T14 - LA07

School L - Part A - Group07 Transcript

8min 2s [I, J, H, S]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 H: Okay uh (.) now we are going to give a: brief summary of the
3 (.) Avan- Avandar{Avatar} we've- have watched. Uhm, in 2154, a
4 company, RDA corporation, start a project on planet Pandora.
5 Which (.) there were a lot of valuable and rare stones
6 containing (great) energy. However, there are some tenants (.)
7 Na'vi which is- but which have blue s- but which are blue-
8 skinned and: have st- and are X (.) sa- against humans. And
9 (adored) their Go:d of: nature, Eywa, and, (then the company)
10 (.) uh (clash) (.) with the nav- Na'vi. And: (..) do you have
11 any (°uh (.) extra information°?)
- 12 J: I agree: the uhm: the the the story (.) the storyline you have
13 summarized, and uhm: but (to: uhm let's >have a little<) look
14 on the uhm the:: (..) some effEct >(has XX caused) sensations
15 (that's what I mean)<. The (three dimension effect uh has
16 >definitely caused) the sensation< that (.) uhm: (.) uh: (.)
17 is uhm (.) very:: (.) stro- uh because of a- (.) unprecedented
18 (.) uhm:: attempt on these uhm: (very factor). On the other
19 hand that the implication part is also uhm: appealing uh
20 because of an uh: (.) uhm:: anti- globalization or: anti:: uhm
21 colonial- uhm lism: uhm (.) thought.
- 22 ((glances at S, then looks down at note card))
- 23 I: 'kay, (.) however, I think that the 3D (.) effects (.) (add to)
24 the: >cinema was< (.) not- as good as the:: (.) cinema:: (.)
25 company:: (.) mentioned before.=As I watched this (.) mo-
26 movie, I: (.) discovered that (.) the::: (.) the things in the
27 Pandora was (.) not very: (...) was not very good, as you wear
28 the 3D glasses.=And then, uh:: about the:: (.) meaning of the::
29 (.) movie is that (.) uh: (.) it must take the: (.)
30 environment (.) that we:: (.) uh haven't (.) destroyed
31 before.=
- 32 ((J looks down at note card during the entire turn by I))
- 33 J: ((looks in the air and orients to H and S, but never looks at
34 or orients to I))
35 =(uh oh >yes conveying) the message that< we have to strike
36 the: right balance between the environment protection and the

37 uhm: uhm: economic or::erm human develops- the development of
38 man↓kind.=And, aBOUT the: uhm (.) the >f- three dimension
39 effect I think that< uhm maybe it can be still: not uhm very
40 mature, and:: uhm (I would feel some ↑dizzy:) when we' re
41 watching the (3D movie °using the°) 3D glasses or (.) uh
42 watching through the 3D ↑TV, and I think (° privacy.°)

43 S: [°Uhm°

44 H: [Yeah I heard that (.) I heard that uh news uh (uh- uh-) too.
45 ((gesturing to J twice and looks at J))
46 ((S turns away, smiles helplessly, and rubs his forehead))
47 ((turns to look at note card)) Uhm::, actually I think that
48 the:: (.) the me:ssage of the film is (.) uhm i- is need- to
49 be criticized as (), uh: uhm: (..) () the
50 film has uhm taught people uh to o- to (andore{adore}) the: (.)
51 uh the: environment, uhm instead of (.) protect it. And: this
52 uh- they think that this can:: uh replace the (religion) and,
53 this should not be: uh (.) uh (respect). ((gestures to S))

54 S: Uhm: actually I think that (.) the: 3D effect of the: film is
55 the main selling point, yeah. About the:: the theme of the
56 film, uhm: I have ano- I have another idea which is (.) uh the
57 cooperation is important. Despite the (military technology) of
58 the: local people is weaker than the: (.) than the:
59 navy{Na'vi}, HOWEVER, (.) uh the LOCAL people (contact) all::
60 the (clan of XX) and (act) agai:nst (.) the Na'vi. I think it
61 is the: (.) the: successful case of cooperation.=

62 H: =[However= ((gesturing to S))

63 J: [(I would say-)

64 H: =I disagree with (.)°your: opinion° as (.) uh because in the
65 ending, the: Na↑'vi (.) uh relied on the (.) on the help of
66 ((S smiles embarrassingly))
67 the nature. And the- (.) they think that they uh the Ey↑wa
68 sent their (.) send their animals to (.) against the U- uh the
69 US, and then the RDA army X, so, the Na'vi uh got °the
70 success°. Uh I don't think cooperation is that °necessary°.=

71 J: =Another reason is (I think that it's hard to uhm (.) really
72 use that) (.) uhm: >I don't think< that the the the uhm (...)
73 earth (.) army the army of the United States is >(strong or
74 united)< enough, but I think that it is important that to be
75 ((air quotes)) politically correct uh and the the the Pandora
76 army (has to be- (.) it is a main theme to to XXX) uhm and

77 >(environmental protection) is< important, and >(protection of
78 cultures and environment are very important elements)<. Uhm
79 okay so, ((looks at sheet on desk)) how do you think about the
80 actor and actresses' (.) performance in the (in the movie)
81 ((looks towards S and H))
82 H: Actually this film use[d] technology of visual effects, which
83 (.) to capture the facial expressions of the: actors and
84 actresses so to (uhm (.) uhm imitate them uh) into Na'vi's
85 expressions. And in this film I felt s::o amazing that the
86 facial expression of the Na'vi are so real. .hh They are just-
87 animation (I (.) I'm feel amazing).=
88 S: =Uhm:: although although- the film has used lot of (.) lot of
89 computer effect=however I think the: (.) the facial (.) facial
90 of: the:: (.) of the: of the::: actr- actor (and) actress is
91 the most important. >I would (I) I would< (highly) appreciate
92 the: (.) the- the good performance of the actors (.) such as
93 (.) such as the actor of (.) of (.) of Jame{Jake}, (..) uhm:::
94 mm I have I have remembered a scene (.) for the people- bring
95 uh the people bring °the medicine° is (a betray), (he also
96 remember ° [XXXX°)
97 J: [My- my personal opinion (>would be a
98 little bit<) different from your:s. Uhm: I think uh CERTAINly
99 the computer-generated animation is uhm >very commendable and
100 (it) received a lot of< (.) very high (compliment) but (.) on
101 the- on the (>contrary to this view) I think because that is
102 computer-generated<, all: the uhm images are >computer-
103 generated (and) it's very< har:d to (.) to justify .hh h the
104 performance through the:: watching the movie (>because it may
105 be<) adjusted through the computer: (.) technology. And uhm we
106 cannot know it right? Who ↓knows
107 I: Uh: I think that the (.) RDA army (that (.) has very good
108 performance b'cos (.) it displays >a lot of<) the:: (.)
109 special effects. And then (.) it's (.) he act it very: (.) uh
110 good as he:: put in- much effort to: (.) uh fight against the
111 Na'vi.=And then (.) he: (.) used- his last- (.) minute to
112 fight against Na'vi.=And then he (.) used only (his X) to: (.)
113 get the most of the:: (.) uh things (.) from: the: Pandora.
114 H: (Yeah) your point is interesting but (.) don't you think that
115 the R:(.)DA army are:: no:t (justice) at all?=They they
116 invent{invade} others' country. (.) like uh the: (.) like and

117 this (.) actually this film remind me the: (.) the Brit- Sino-
118 British 'cos (.) [Sino-British war. And (.) [THE (.)=
119 J: [Huh huh [huh huh
120 ((laughing in a rather despising manner))
121 H: =because th(h)e hh in the beginning, only a corporation uh
122 invent{invade} China but (.) later the whole country
123 invent{invade} China. And SO, I want to interview with
124 Jack{Jake} (.) which (.) uhm I want to ask (.) uh what if (.)
125 he: uhm imagine the: Pandora would be in (.) in a few years
126 ((I and H look at each other))
127 later because (.) uh the US they (.) they (.) uh unite all the
128 ((J is looking down at his note card))
129 troops to (.) invent{invade} Pandora.
130 J: [(And I- I would XX)= ((keeps looking at his note card))
131 I: [X (I would) ((looks at H and gestures))
132 S: [(uh- uhm:) ((looks up, and then lays his head on his palm
133 showing disappointment))
134 J: =Uhm we see a very immediate (small-scale) trend of (his valu-)
135 ((s t i l l l o o k i n g a t n o t e c a r d))
136 personal (.) uhm attitude to the United States army and the
137 ((looks up and gestures in an explanatory manner))
138 uhm Pandora (.) the people in Pan- uhm Pandora (.) uhm has-
139 betrayed betrayed (his patriotist), it must be a very (.) uhm
140 (.) (bitter) and heavy challenge to him (.) uhm to carry (this
141 pressure) and I'm very interested that (.) how he:: uhm
142 overcome this and and (make his final decision).
143 H: This i[s also the point
144 [((Timer beeps))
145 ((End of interaction))

T15 - LB00

School L - Part B - Group00 Transcript

10m 3s [T, Y, L, A]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 ((T and Y look at A and L grins))
- 3 A: Well first of all let's uhm discuss the common conflicts uhm
4 in:: the family. Well I think the- common conflicts in: family
5 uh is bas:ed on: uhm different expectation that uhm between
6 the parents and the children.=For examples, uh parents al-
7 always expect that their kids are hardworking and care about
8 their uhm academic performance. And, most of the kids will
9 just caring that well, well- (I'm having a problem) >I want to
10 communicate< with my friends. So, as (.) take me as an- uh as
11 an examples, well, the conflict between me and my parents is
12 normally (.) that they want (.) want to stop me using (.) uh
13 from using Facebook. But (.) uh (.) I'm jus:t (.) uhm chatting
14 with my friends and not focusing on the: (.) on the: academic
15 (..) uhm work. So: I think uhm the common conflicts betw- in
16 the family is normally ba- based on the different expectations.
- 17 L: Yeah I agree with your point. Uh- I find this situ- I find
18 this situation especially in:: the- <young parents and the::
19 young:: children>. B'cos (.) uh when these young ch- parents
20 have (.) g- give birth when they are so young, so, they need
21 to, they are not e- not mature enough to raise the family. So
22 they have to pay extra: (.) hardworking on their uh- to earn
23 money >or to raise the family<. So, uh:: they mainly fo- will
24 focus on:: how to earn money and, to work hard but (.) instead
25 they uh they didn't care about the children's feelings or do
26 not understand what they want °or their needs. So[:: yeah°
- 27 Y: [Oh- but I'm
28 I'm afraid I can't agree with you because (.) uh your problem
29 is a very (.) individual case, s- very special case. But I
30 agree with uh candidate one, because, uhm the expec- the
31 difference between the (.) parents' and the:: (.) s-
32 children's expectations really uh makes cause conflict. And I
33 want to make some- uh addition to that because uh they have
34 di- they share different point of view.=For example, uhm for
35 Facebook, parents just think that the Facebook is a media to
36 (.) uh make friends and play but, for (.) uh teenagers,

37 Facebook is a media to (.) uh gain relationship which is very
38 helpful to them uhm when they go in(.)to the society.=So I
39 think (.) the different point of views uh °cause the conflicts
40 between (..) parents and children.°

41 L: [Mm

42 T: [OK let's come back to the question.=The question is about (.)
43 h:ow the conflicts occurs in the family affects the individual:
44 or the family and even the society. From my point of view I
45 think that (..) the conflict between the- parents and their
46 childrens are- (.) critical problem for the family.=First of
47 all, if uhm we always (.) if we argue in our home it will
48 definitely harm the harmon- har- harmony of the family. But
49 most importantly, the teenager- s- children are in a very
50 special uhm period of their life. Uhm they- don't like to
51 obey:: and the- don't like following rules.=If the (.) uhm
52 parents (.) push them to (the) extreme it will cause very (.)
53 uh disastrous consequence.=They will like (.) start smoking,
54 drug abuse, (to less the) pressure. If they cannot find the
55 way:: to make them happy at ho:me, uh XXX, they have to find
56 another way.=So, I think that- (...) uhm the conflicts occurs
57 in the family, definitely, have some (.) have very (.) ba:d
58 influence on the development of the teenager.=

59 Y: =Uh but I think that <you may> go a little bit too fast. 'Cos,
60 and I wan- I want to mention about uh (.) the problem that as
61 many teenagers may be (.) uh disobedient.=But I think uh the
62 ma- the main problem is that (.) uh the children and their p-
63 their parents actually bias against each other. For example
64 the parents thinks their children's very- uh don't want to
65 obey them, and they have: the sa:me (.) rules of acting, and
66 the- children think their parent is outdated, and- (.) have
67 and is- have ignorance of the modern cities. I think this is
68 actually (.) uhm some misunderstanding. Of course there is
69 some case that uh- (..) as you mentioned.=But I think the main
70 problem is that uhm generally, this is uh some
71 misunderstanding between children, and (.) their (.) f- uh
72 parents.=And I think (.) mm (..) prob- uh probably the: roots
73 of this problem is the barriers of the generation because (.)
74 they're they have generation gap so that I think (.) this
75 relate to the misunderstanding, and lead to the bias against
76 each other.

77 T: OK I:: (.) I understand your point and that you're trying to
78 conclude the root problem of the (.) uh conflicts between the
79 parents.=However, I guess the question is about (.) what- what
80 the consequence or results of the (..) conflicts are (XX
81 value). Actually I very agree with you that we (really need to
82 in order to) to sol:ve the problem, we need to understand the
83 root problem so that (.) the generation gap between the
84 parents and the teenager are one of the major causes for the
85 family conflicts. Between- because (..) uhm our parent-
86 parents and uh- we have different background.=We grow up in
87 different ho- uh condition. We have different hobbies.=We
88 don't share common topics! So, we- we (wanna talk about) pop
89 singers and (they'll be) like (.) they don't understand, so
90 that (..) ca- that's- may lead to the (.) conflicts.=

91 L: =Yeah, I think you two are both right actually. Because, these
92 two situations is appeared in: (.) the society (.) o- of both
93 of you. So I think (.) uhm:: (.) these two: these two::: these
94 two issues actually: well- influence too much- influence so
95 much on (.) uh not only in the family but also the- the:: the
96 gro- the growth of the children because (.) uh when: the: when
97 the family have too much conflict between: the children and
98 parents, uh:: the- the- the stress will build (.) inside the-
99 inside the children and .hh they caus- they will cause
100 depre:ssion, or cause uhm (.) and, they will badly influence
101 the psycholo- psychological °quality of the children (.)
102 so, ((turns to A)) [()]°

103 A: [Yeah I agree that uhm this kind of problem
104 will cause a huge damage uhm on the individuals and also the
105 families.

106 L: Mm=

107 A: =And, I agree that, and I want to: explain more that (.) there
108 are some damages on society.=For examples, uhm (.) some (.)
109 conflict between parents and student may develop into (.)
110 violence, which means uh physical damage and, this really uhm
111 (.) uhm cause (.) uhm bad effects on the society b'cos (.) the
112 society:: uh will have to: have more social workers or (.)
113 more planning to (.) uhm solve this kind of problem. And:,
114 also uhm (.) I'll- I would like to uhm elaborate more on uhm:
115 (.) uhm: on the family's influence. Uhm: because (.) as we
116 know family is about relationships. And, I think parents and
117 students are like (.) the moon and the stars in the sky. Uhm

118 (.) so, if our (.) relationship broken, (the dark will be
119 totally dark). And, when: uh- family is about relationships,
120 when there's no relationship, I think (.) families uhm:: we
121 cannot call it a family ('at all').

122 T: Yah, I also agree that uhm (.) family conflicts uh harms the
123 relationship between the families and have ba:d image on the
124 individuals. Uhm actually considering the condition of the
125 parents, ah yes (.) it's har- uh- the- family uh conflicts
126 also harm for them because (.) when your children uhm (.)
127 they don't obey you (what happen) and go against you, you
128 don't have the (.) m- moo:d to wor::k, and it would (.) uhm
129 harm your career development. An:d, for the society, I guess,
130 family is the basic unit of our society. And, it's the
131 strongest bond. If we don't have lo:ve to bound each other in
132 the family we could not have a-, >(how to say the word)<, a
133 very (.) happy society. So I think this problem need to- (.)
134 be solved.

135 Y: Uhm I think uh as all of us has mentioned about the conflict
136 between the f- (.) parents and the children, I think beside
137 conflict, and (.) the (.) difference be- uh (.) of the
138 habitats{habits} uh among them uh (.) actually cause (.) uh
139 the family can't be harmonous{harmonious}. Uh for example ch-
140 nowadays (.) uhm as uhm the commercial activity is >very
141 developed and there's many kind of choices,< uh the teenagers
142 may have many choices and they want to try (.) uh many things
143 uh in modern society.=They have (.) many- uh they want to
144 tried uh many entertainments (.) that the: parents (.) uh
145 don't (.) uh understand that or: don't even talk about it. Uhm
146 some- sometimes uh the teenager want to eat uh drunk{junk}
147 food, but the parents (.) thinks that junk foo- drunk{junk}
148 food is not good. And, sometimes the ch- children want to play
149 computer games but- the parents (.) uh (.) don't want to the-
150 prefer them to read books.=I think this is not actually (.) a
151 conflict because it is too serious.= I think this is just (.)
152 only the difference between habitats{habits} of them.=So I
153 think conflict, uh differences in habitats{habits} (.) uh
154 actually make the: family problems.=

155 T: =I think you mentioned another good point, (and it's the
156 causes) of the teenage problems. (.) It's that- that (.)
157 everyone have their own concerns and have their own worries (.)
158 the- own worries in their daily life so (.) our teenager have

159 our own problems >(they'll probably) worry about their friends
160 and relationship and the parents worry about their works<.
161 That's why:: we cannot understand each other that caused (.)
162 uh family conflicts. And maybe we should go to next step talk
163 about ho:w [could we solve this problems.
164 ((all three others nod))
165 L: [Mm:: yeah yeah I
166 think communication is very important and and significant in:
167 between this, because .hh uh:: (.) we can improve our
168 relationship through:: (.) uh (.) finding common chatting
169 points o:r (.) through::: the relat- thro- through the:: (.)
170 communications between parents and children, and, thus to: (.)
171 to:: have a- more harmonous::{harmonious} relationship. [°yup°
172 Y: [I
173 agree that knowing each other and reduce (.) misunderstanding
174 is of mountain importance.
175 L: [Mm
176 Y: [But I think (.) spending time on each other is the first step
177 towards the::[(problem)
178 TR: [Ok time's up.
179 ((End of interaction))

T16 - LB05

School L - Part B - Group05 Transcript

8min 1s [S, R, L, C]

- 1 S: [Hi everyone,=
2 L: [So:: huh ((smiles))
3 S: =Uh today our job is to promote better family relationship.
4 So::, the main:: uh so the first step we have to XX for the
5 mental problems which is (.) we should uh identify:: conflicts
6 between parents and teens. So for me, the mo- the main
7 conflicts between them is- their different attitudes towards
8 the uh Internet. For teens, they live in the Internet era, but
9 their- the pa:rents (.) they are not. So::, uhm (.) they have
10 different attitudes towards Internet.=So, this is the main
11 reason for them to have (.) uh conflicts frequently. So, what
12 do you think?
13 L: Yes. I agree w- with you very much.
14 ((turns from S to her own note card))
15 An:d (.) I think because (the belief that) uh: Hong Kong is a
16 materialist((slurred)) UHM- society, and (...) parents want
17 their children to become uhm (.) learn more and (.) to:: earn
18 more money (.) uhm in their:: daily life. And so that they put
19 s-too many pressure on them and (.) also too much hope. So I
20 think uhm (...) their children cannot (..) stay with too much
21 s::tretch- s:tress and (.) so that they will have (.) s- f-
22 conflicts frequently.
23 C: Oh I also agree with you that (.) uhm maybe parents are always
24 have too much (.) uh put too much pressure on childrens, like
25 uhm (.) on our school results. Uhm (.) parents used to uh
26 thin:k we are not hardworking enough. Maybe- once we play (.)
27 play the computer, uhm (.) or surf the Internet, they will
28 think uh we are not (.) working on our work, or:: (.) or maybe
29 w(h)e we are just doing s(h)ome research on- on: uhm: some
30 homework, but uhm I think it's in other words, it's kind of (.)
31 uhm misunderstanding. Right.
32 S: Yes.
33 (1.7) ((L and C turn to look at R))
34 R: Ye::s ((smiling embarrassingly)) uhm I think so.
35 ((looks down at note card))

36 Uhm but I think uhm the conflict that happens because (.) the
37 parents need to:: (.) s- uh spend many times to: (.) work
38 outside, and then they have (.) not- uh enough time to talk
39 with their children, and they- don't know- what- (..) the-
40 their kids is uh: (.) doing and what happen in their schools.
41 And so, I think this is (..) (°probably the c- cause°)
42 ((R and L turn to look at S))
43 (1.0)

44 S: So[::

45 C: [Maybe to(h) t(h)o concl(h)ude ((R and L look at C and
46 giggle)), uhm we can find out the main reason behind these
47 conflicts. The first one is misunderstanding and, another
48 thing is uhm- as- this- (.) ((smiles)) hh [h=
49 ((gestures towards S))

50 S: [°Candidate°

51 C: =this candidate said uhm (.) uhm maybe we have different
52 altitude (.) attitude (.) uhm: til- towards (.) computer or
53 Internet. Uhm I think it's (.) kind of uhm: generation gap
54 maybe.

55 L: (Ye[s]::: ((nods and smiles))

56 C: [Don't you think so?=
57 S: =Yes. Because uh we're living and brought up in different
58 environment, we have different backgrounds and history so .h
59 our values towards uh:: maybe- (.) towards the same thing:: uh
60 will be very different. So::, what can we do ((looks at and
61 turns over the note card)) to solve the above problems?
62 ((glances at the others; only L glances back, C and R look
63 down at their note cards)) Uh:: I think uhm: (.) many of us
64 may:: (.) uh:: (.) use this pro- uh use this solutions to (.)
65 uhm (..) to solve the problem is more family gatherings.=But I
66 think .h maybe it's not viable in Hong Kong because we all
67 know both our parents an:d the teens, they do not have enough
68 time.=So .h maybe a: (.) uh: short conversation but with uhm
69 mutual respect is more:: (.) uh: workable: in our Hong Kong
70 society. So maybe (.) is there (any other s-)((slurred)) other
71 solutions? ((tilts her head forward and smiles))
72 (1.2)

73 C: Mm to be more concrete, maybe (.) uhm I would say uh: we have
74 to: express our (own) feelings more (at-) the: dinner time,
75 when we're together, and also we have to uh listen more to
76 each others' (.) uh feelings or opinions (.) uh due to we have

77 uhm different (.) attitude towards many things, uh towards our
78 hobbies or: (.) different things (we touch with). So uhm,
79 ((looks towards L)) is the(h)re anything else?=
80 L: =Yes and s:since I think the:: (.) make{main} conflict f- is-
81 because of uhm the children thich{think}- their parents is
82 intruding their privacy, and I think (.) they can have a
83 sh::ort conversa- conservation[conversation] is good but .h
84 it's more:: it's maybe (..) too:: (..) fast to have a
85 conservation{conversation} because they'll (...) v- very shy
86 to: (.) express their feeling.=So I think writing a letter to
87 each other is more: effective way to (..) to know each other
88 more: and, they can share their own thought, and::, they can::
89 (..) know each other ((looks towards R and S)) more deeply.
90 R: I think writing a- letter to: each other is a quite- good-
91 method. And I think uhm parents can: talk abou- can write
92 something about uhm (.) the: (1.8) nowadays the singers, talk
93 something .h uhm their children maybe is- uh: related, just
94 like (.) uh talking (...) Twins, just like that, yes.
95 C: Uhm I'm sorry for disturbing but, maybe- (.) we- we've missed
96 ((glances at timer))
97 out something.=We said uhm (.) we need to- we also need to
98 discuss uh:: effects on the conflicts? Uhm maybe: (.) first
99 talk about the: (.) family, effects on family. Uhm:: it will
100 cause (.) uhm destroy our h(h)armony (.) on family. And also,
101 uh for individuals, uhm (.) as we can't share our feelings (.)
102 with uhm that conflicts, uh maybe we will have uh: some kind
103 of uh mental disease like depression? Uh:: yes. D- do you have
104 any (..) idea?
105 L: [The-
106 S: [Uh I agree that:: uhm: (.) from the beginning there will be:::
107 we can see uhm inharmonious in the family, but .h once we do
108 not uh: face this problem, it will cause maybe family abuse or
109 fighting between parents or teens. As we can see, uhm:: (.)
110 many news uh:: tell us that there are som- many cases showing
111 that ((sniffs)) uhm (..) there are family abusing or fam(h)ily
112 fi- uh fighting. ((sniffs)) So::, ((sniffs)) uhm:: maybe to
113 individuals not o::nly uhm (..) mental problem, they may cause:
114 uh ((sniffs)) self-destruction or >I don't know< because (.)
115 this is a little XX, but uh we have: to:: face it uh
116 (°clearly°).

117 L: Oh, yes. Uh::: what you say that, uh it remin::d me to: talk
118 about one more way to s:olve their conflict is (.) Government
119 should (.) put more (.) uhm (...) put more effort on: (.)
120 giving them support in the family such as uh introducing the
121 social worker to them, and, or: (...) or::: it- it- and the
122 Government can: (.) share more about this topic on the: mass
123 media.=And, they can:: (.) it's- (.) I think it's better to-
124 avoi:d the family abuse.
125 ((C looks at the timer))
126 (1.4)((S and L glances at the timer))
127 C: Uhm t- maybe to sum up we- we could uhm (.) include the
128 conflicts and main reas(h)ons .hhh (..) behind the conflicts,
129 and also, uh we can include the (XXXX [uh concrete solutions)
130 [(Timer beeps))
131 ((End of interaction))

T17 - LB06

School L - Part B - Group06 Transcript

8min 2s [E, T, C, W]

- 1 ((Timer beeps))
- 2 (2.3)
- 3 T: Today we discuss about uh the details of uh holding the
4 reality TV show. Uh so first of all I think uhm our reality TV
5 show should be attractive and unique. So I think uh (.) uh:::
6 (.) the reality TV show should mm (.) be uhm (.) identity swap
7 so, u(h)h may(h)be u(h)h the (.) uh::: different people from
8 they are doing different career they can have an exchange.=For
9 example, .h a nurse can (.) uh have a: career exchange with a
10 principal.=So, she can uhm (.) uh have (.) to (.) try t- >how
11 to be a principal and the principal can< .h uh work on work in
12 a hospital to know how to treat (.) uh other patients. °Do you
13 have any idea?°
- 14 E: Uh yeah I agree that the genre should be uh more different and
15 should be special, but I don't think your idea is really uhm
16 (..) uh really practical because uh like (.) if uh- the
17 example is the principal °become a nurse and the nurse become
18 a principal°, uh their job is totally different and I don't
19 think that is working because they really have to work (.) uh
20 every day:: and, the show must be uh more attractive to the
21 audience, but I think that is more (individual).
- 22 W: Mm so uhm I agree with (.) ((gesturing to E)) uhm ((gesturing
23 again)) her because uh the (..) the idea you suggest is not
24 that possible because it's not possible for school (.) to have
25 a uhm brand new principal, who don't know how to (.) just
26 carry out the (.) things that principals should do. So uhm I'm
27 suggesting:: (.) why- should- why not we are going to (.) have
28 a reality show about some challenge because (.) the reality
29 show we found on TV are about some challenge like some Project
30 Runway or America's Next Top Model, and, in Hong Kong I (.)
31 I've got an idea to suggest that (..) why don't we have a rea-
32 reality show about saving money. Uhm, it's not about who save
33 money (.) to see the amount you save,=it's about (.) how to
34 use your money wisely.=So we can have some candidate (.) in
35 some groups and then they can (.) uh compete o- on doing
36 something with the least amount of money.

37 C: ((nods)) Uhm I think the uh saving idea for- sa(h)ving money
38 uh- .h as an idea is a very .h good idea but:: (.) uhm: (.)
39 since that Hong Kong is a very capitalist country maybe (.)
40 UH- (.) place, maybe we can .h start- uh we can maybe use our
41 show to promote some:: .h uhm more creative ideas.=For example
42 I've come up with this. .h Uh:: we can (.) uh design a reality
43 challenge which is about (.) uhm:: uh: uh training people to
44 become short film directors.=So, .h we'll provide different
45 topics such as .h uh life, death, or (transform XX script to
46 video) for these directors. And then these cons-testants must
47 create or edit a short movie based on the topic, .h and then,
48 the topic will be featured on TV and the audience can have a
49 chance to (.) .h uh rate the video that the contestants have
50 made.=So, we can (.) uh:: i- in a way we can help the:
51 directors to promote themselves while .h as to promote Hong
52 Kong as a creative city.

53 W: I think the idea is s:o good because (.) everyone is saying
54 that the Hong Kong is (.) a city lack of creativity and (.)
55 said there is (.) so:: little opportunity- opportunities for
56 the (.) new:: creator among XXXX or doing some short films (or
57 even) the movies industry. So I think this is a great idea for
58 just developing the: new talents.
59 ((T glances at W and then at E))

60 T: °Uh° I think uh all of us have some ideas about uh (.) uh:: uh
61 reality TV show.=So, I think uh:: we uh agree on to have a (.)
62 series of challenge (..) uh:: to be theme of our reality show.
63 So I think uhm (.) uh:: we should invite some everyday people
64 (.) >to join our reality TV show.=As we all talk about< (.) we
65 have a saving money show or maybe a (.) short film director so,
66 I think uh maybe: if we invite some (.) uhm professional
67 actors or actress, I think uh- because of their acting skills,
68 uh:: it cannot convince the (.) uh audience that uh it is a-
69 (.) relia- re- reality show.=So I think (.) uh: maybe we
70 should invite some everyday people so (.) uh:: as they are:
71 ordinary and common (.) like that, so, I think it will be more
72 realistic and (..) arise the (.) arise the interest of the
73 audience.=

74 E: =I agree that we:: should invite some everyday uh people, uh
75 also I think that we can invite like one:: uh star guest star
76 or (.) uh two:: everyday people like that because uh:: (.) uh
77 obviously (actually) stars are more attractive to audience

78 because (.) they are more familiar with them. Uh and everyday
79 people can make the audience feel closer as you said, but I
80 don't think uhm: actor or actress are acting every day in
81 their real life.=That's why I don't agree that uh they will
82 like become (.) less realistic °or anything°.

83 W: And also I think, just like you suggested ((points to C)), uh
84 sh- short film director, maybe some artists they are interest
85 in this film but maybe: he or she is a singer so no one (is
86 trying to XXX) talents o- in this film or those X- those
87 professionals. So I think this (.) show if we can invite some
88 celebrities to get in (.) the show and then try to (.) show
89 their talents about (.) directing a short film, it will be
90 attracting to: audience and the audience can (.) know that oh!
91 this celebrity is- know some skills (.)°about (.) this film.°

92 C: Yeah. And I think uh:: I can also invite some directors to be
93 the judges of the show. .hh Uh but talking about your:: idea
94 of reality s- show of saving money maybe .h we can invite some
95 professionals like uh financial consultant to be .h one of
96 the .h uh judges in uh: (.) the competition to increase the
97 uhm (.) reliability of the show. .h And: for: a: uh- uh
98 identity swap ((smiles)) idea that you've mentioned maybe we
99 can .h uh invite a ps:ychologist to the show so we can: like
100 track the (.) uh mental changes of the person who have like
101 (.)°changed their jobs.°
102 (2.7) ((T looks at E; the two smile to each other))

103 T: Uhm (.) so uhm (.) I think uhm (..) uh the ideas of uh (.) how
104 to: uh invite judges is (.) uh also important (.) besides the
105 (.) uh competitors. So I think uhm (.) we should discuss on (.)
106 uh:: the venue, or the time that the show (.) can take place.
107 Uhm I think it's: uhm: (.) our (.) uh:: ideas of the reality
108 show is (.) uhm:: TSK take place in Hong Kong so (.) maybe t-
109 uhm (.) uh have different location in Hong Kong maybe (.) uh
110 in (.) different district so I think (.) uh the audience will
111 feel (.) more famili[ar.

112 W: [I think about the venue is depends on (.)
113 what topic about the reality show, JUST LIKE the short film
114 competing:: (.) uh reality show,=it can have a studio provided
115 for (.) competitors but (..) uhm: for: (.) for the saving
116 money reality show I suggest (.) maybe we can have a depart-
117 have an (.) apartment for- the- the candidates to live in,
118 but the challenge they need to go around Hong Kong to (.) do

119 something that we ask. So, it just depends on what we're
120 °going to do.°
121 (2.2) ((T looks at E; E turns from W to her own note card))
122 E: Uhm:: Ye(h)s heh heh and I also think that uhm actually a
123 place other than Hong Kong can uh:: bring surprise to the
124 audience, and also effectively show that
125 uh candidate (.) uh C- (.) three:
126 ((gesturing and looking at T and C's direction))
127 said that uh abou:t creativity, I think ((tilts her head to
128 look at the timer)) uh different places is important, an:d,
129 >what do you guys think?< ((looks at other group members and
130 smile))
131 ((all look at each other and laugh))
132 T: Uh (...) huh ((laughs))
133 ((Timer beeps))
134 ((all laugh))

-- End of Appendices --