

3 Recycled turn beginnings: A precise repair mechanism in conversation's turn-taking organisation¹

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Not infrequently in naturally occurring, spontaneous conversation, speakers will repeat, re-say, recycle some part of their utterances. Some instances of utterances that have these repeats or these recycles variously placed within them:

'She teaches she teaches a course at City College in needlecrafts.'

'Um, this is a rug– Um, this is a punched rug.'

'Hey, how do ya– how do ya like that picture over there on the wall?'

'They did have to grow a culture for the um for the blood test, didn't they? The mononucleosis kind of test.'

'His speshi– speshi–a–lity as they say . . .'

'I was– I was just thinking today all day riding on the trains that I would go into the ci– I would go into the city, but I don't know.'

'You know this guy has not done anything yet that I understand, and no one no one else in the class understands him either.'

'But I still have one more book to buy. I can't get it so uh, I don't know. The school school book store doesn't carry anything anymore.'

'Yeah, and I didn't know– I didn't know when you were home, or I was going to . . .'

'And there was a hhh– There was a hole in the wall in the back of the building'.

‘And And we got in the elevator, and the elevator, my G— wasn’t even finished, you know. Like it was was— it was sort of padded on the side. It had no emergency door.’

Sometimes a brief, sometimes a longer, repeat or re-saying or recycling of part of the utterance occurs in a conversational turn. Inspection of nearly any detailed and accurate record of natural conversation will yield instances of their occurrence.

An initial observation about them. One place that they regularly occur, and occur with strings of some length being recycled or repeated, and more or less identically repeated, is at *turn beginnings* — that is, the beginnings of the turns in which the speakers who do it are starting their talk. Now turn beginnings, we have reason to believe from considerations about turn-taking organisation (See Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974)² are sequence-structurally important places in conversation. Let me mention two aspects of turn beginnings relevant in this regard.

One important feature of turn construction (that is, constructing the talk in a turn in a conversation) and the units that turn construction employs (e.g. lexical, phrasal, clausal, sentential constructions) is that they project, from their beginnings, aspects of their planned shape and type. As the talk is produced bit by bit, the projected shape may be modified; and, obviously, turns can be re-projected, corrected and changed. But as they emerge bit by bit, or when they are changed and re-projected, the new versions will be projecting some aspects of the revised shape of the turn. A turn which begins with ‘If . . .’ may initially project something like a 4–5 word ‘contingency clause’ and a similarly sized ‘consequence clause’ (the 4–5 word length and the descriptive rubrics are *ad hoc* conveniences, not intended as serious technical accounts). This projection may be revised when the next word is produced; for example, if it is ‘If so, . . .’ the end of the ‘consequence clause’ is projected to be earlier than before, with the open possibility that it itself will be foreshortened as its parts are produced.

Turn beginnings are an important initial place, and an important initial resource, for the projection of the turn-shape or the turn-type of the turn that is being begun at that turn beginning. Such projection is a critical resource for the organisation of the turn-taking system for conversation. It is a critical resource for the organisation of a system that aims to achieve, and massively does achieve, the feature: one speaker speaks at a time in conversation — no more than one, no less than one — in the face of recurrent speaker change, with the ‘one at a time’ being maintained across the transition from one speaker to a next. Achieving ‘one speaker at a time’ with a minimisation of gap and overlap between any two turns suggests a very fine co-ordination involved in the turn-taking system, and clearly a large part of

that builds on the projection of a turn's shape and type; that is, the projection of some sense of where a turn will be being brought to a close, which will allow a possible next speaker to try to gear up to start at just such a point. thereby achieving a transition from one speaker to the next with always one, and never less and never more, across that transition. For a possible next speaker to start at completion of a prior turn precisely involves for them some projection, in the course of that turn's development, of where it will be ending, so as to allow them to project their beginning for that point. So: projection is important to this turn-taking system, and turn beginnings are important to turn-projection. Turn beginnings are, then, in that sense, sequence-structurally important places.

There are other sorts of projection that are, or can be involved from the very beginning of a turn. For example, question projection: obviously enough, starting a turn with a 'wh-word', though it doesn't necessarily entail that 'a question' is going to be constructed, powerfully projects that possibility for the turn's development, with potential consequent constraints on next turn. Or: beginnings can project 'quotation formats'; starting a turn with 'He says' projects the strong possibility of quotation as the type of turn to be developed (See Schegloff, 1984). Or: a beginning like 'I don't think' can project, in certain sequential environments, 'disagreement' as a turn type for its turn. Those are a few projected 'turn types'; there are many others. With a sense of the planned turn type, the developmental course of the turn — its potential shape — can be monitored for imminent completion of a turn of that type. Again: turn beginnings are important because they are an important place for turn projection, and, given the importance of turn projection to turn-taking, they are important structural places in conversation.

Another aspect of the importance of turn beginnings as a special place in conversation: 'turn-initial position', is a central place for a variety of sequential markers in conversation — little objects that do a piece of sequential work. For example, 'interruption markers', of the form 'Wait a minute!' or 'Oh!' can, when used while someone else is talking, operate to announce that an interruption is thereby started (which it is important for interruptors to show they know), and turn-initial position is where such objects are properly placed. Another class of sequential markers that is placed there we call 'misplacement markers' (See Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). A misplacement marker, such as 'By the way', is attached to a turn, typically at its beginning, to indicate that the talk that is going to occupy the turn thereby begun is something which has a proper place in conversation, but is about to be done outside its proper place; or, alternatively, that some turn type ought properly to go next, but the turn that is being started is not of that

type. For example, introductions have a proper place in conversation; they properly occur at or near the beginning. That is, at conversation beginnings, greetings occur, and if introductions, or self-introductions ought to be done, they ought to be done before the greeting, or just after the greeting, or some place in the initial several exchanges. That is their proper place. There are occasions, however, when persons get into conversation somehow, and get well past that point without yet having introduced themselves. Now that does not mean they cannot introduce themselves because they did not do so in the right place, and that is one obvious reason why one would expect to have, in an organised system for conversation, misplace markers, which could allow such sequences outside their proper place. So, anyone who has travelled on trains or aeroplanes may recall having been seated next to someone, a stranger, and having fallen into conversation in any one of a variety of ways, and ten minutes later, having one turn to the other saying, 'By the way, my name is . . . ' — a misplacement marker starting a turn, initiating a type of activity that has a proper place in conversation being done outside the proper place. So: various sequential markers are important objects in conversation, and they go in turn beginning position.

Now the importance of turn beginning position as a structural position in conversation sets certain constraints, problems and vulnerabilities for it. For example, under specifiable circumstances, which need not be elaborated now (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974: 712–13, Sec. 4. 10 and p. 719, Sec. 4. 12), there is a premium, for those who seek next turn in a conversation, on earliest possible start. That is, the earliest starter in the next slot will very likely, though not assuredly, get the next turn. At such places, then, there is a motivation for any potential next speaker, or any potential next speakers, to start as early as they can.

But there is a constraint on earliest start. Potential next speakers might, after all, push an early start too far up, maybe into the end of the prior turn itself. There is a constraint on early starts imposed by the possibility of current speakers adding to their current turn optional post-completion elements after a possible completion point without intending thereby to extend their turn in any major way. They may add, for example, such tags as address terms or etiquette terms, 'if you don't mind', for example — objects that can go after a turn is otherwise possibly complete (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974: 706–708). Should an intending next speaker aim for an earliest possible start at the projected next possible completion point of a current turn-in-progress, trouble may arise if the current speaker adds one of these optional post-completion elements to the turn. For the addition may then overlap that earliest possible start, and the early start could possibly be impaired by the overlap.

We have seen that turn beginnings are important resources; they project a 'shape' for the turn, and they are in that respect potentially critical elements for a speaker's recipients, who, in having to analyse the turn as it develops, may need the turn beginning resources as part of the materials for their analysis. Should the turn's beginning be overlapped, that understanding or analysis may be impaired. There is, then, a constraint on earliest possible start when earliest possible start is in order. It is a constraint imposed by the potentiality of overlap with prior turn, *that* possibly impairing the turn beginning, and *that* possibly impairing the understanding and analysis by recipients of the new turn's talk.

Now one solution can be initially noticed, and with this I end the background. An initial resource that serves as a partial solution to this sort of problem, is the use of the pre-placed appositional³ — that is, an initial-to-the-turn 'well', 'but', 'so', and, 'y' know,' 'yeah', etc. Those can be placed at the beginning of a turn without necessarily reflecting any plan for the turn's construction. As initial items, they allow a start even before a prior turn has been completed, and should they be impaired, not being organically implicated in a plan for the turn's construction, their impairment need not involve the impairment of the understanding of the turn.⁴ Pre-placed appositionals are regularly found in conversation in turn-initial positions; one job they often appear to do is the absorption of overlap with prior turns, without impairing an actual turn's beginning.

To review some of this background: There are repeats and recycles in conversation. Some substantial proportion of them occur in turn beginnings. Turn beginnings are structurally important places, and they are vulnerable to impairment by overlaps. That is oriented to by participants in this conversational system, and there are system resources for dealing with it, such as, for example, the pre-placed appositionals.

Then, an observation: identical repeats of turn beginnings, and identical repeats of rather long strings at turn beginnings, occur regularly when there has been an overlap of the turn beginning with the prior turn.⁵

And another observation: The relationship between the identical recycle and the overlap — that is, the relationship between the identical recycles and the prior turn with which an overlap has occurred — is not at all a haphazard one. The recycle begins at precisely⁶ the point at which the 'new' turn emerges 'into the clear'; that is, as the overlap ends by the 'old' turn coming *to* its 'natural' or projected completion or by being stopped/withdrawn *before* its projected completion.

Consider the following, taken from a dinner conversation between host (D), hostess (K), and their 'old friends' R (husband) and F (wife). R and F

have just come from visiting a mutual friend who has been found to have, instead of cancer, a ‘giant follicular lympho-blastoma’, and the conversation concerns his current condition.

(1) **R:** Well the uhm in fact they must have grown a culture, you know, they must’ve– I mean how long– he’s been in the hospital for a few days, right? Takes a|bout a week to grow a culture

K: I don’ think they grow a I don’ think they grow a culture to do a biopsy.

If we adopt the asterisk as a symbol to mark where in a turn its overlap with another ends — where the other is stopped or naturally concludes — then it ought to be apparent from the preceding points that the asterisk in K’s utterance in (1) is just before the recycle:

K: I don’ think they grow a * I don’ think they grow a culture to do a biopsy.

Turn beginning recycles, repeating a turn part that initially occurs in overlap with a prior turn, regularly display this remarkably precise relationship between the end of a prior turn the emergence of the new turn from the overlap and the beginning of the recycle.

One result of this last discussion seems to be an addition to our understanding of the orientation by participants in conversation (and by the system that organises their turn-taking), to the minimisation of gap and overlap across the transition from one speaker to a next. The precise co-ordination of prior turn ending with the recycling of next turn beginning suggests a second order relevance of the orientation to the minimisation of gap and overlap. The point is: imagine speaker A is talking along, and speaker B is to start up, and they ought to do it in such a way as to bring off a minimisation of gap and overlap between their turns, of which no-gap no-overlap is the ideal outcome. What happens if they fail? They do not simply throw up their hands in despair. Having failed once, and finding themselves in the midst of an overlap, such participants do not give up: having failed to get a next turn’s *first start* to be achieved with no-gap and no-overlap, they try to achieve the *re-start* with no-gap and no-overlap, and regularly they do so successfully. We shall return in a moment to discuss the recycle as a repair technique for the new turn’s beginning; here we are noting that the repair works for the transition itself, quite apart from its component turns, and is a second order organisation for transitions-with-minimised-gap-and overlap.

Repair of the transition itself aside, the recycling of turn beginnings addresses the possible impairment of overlapped talk. Simultaneous talk does not *necessarily* impair the hearing or understanding of any of its

components; indeed, the conduct of the parties producing simultaneous talk in its course shows how detailed their grasp can be. But the precise placement of the recycle at the overlap's end suggests that there is an orientation to the possible impairment of a turn's beginning by virtue of the occurrence of overlap, with repetition as a correction for it. The repetition is, then, done at precisely the point at which the trouble ends, and at the first possible point at which the repair can be undertaken. That is what is involved in the timing relative to the repair of the turn (as compared with repair of the transition discussed above).

Now, that operation of recycling as a way of repairing the possible impairment of a turn component by virtue of its having been in an overlap looks like it is specially relevant for turn beginnings and not for other turn parts (see next paragraph). And if that is the case, then next speakers, or next turn starters, have an advantage in the fight for the floor which an overlap may reflect. If they have this technique for recycling turn beginnings, while prior speakers do not have such a technique for recycling *their* part of the overlap, then clearly new starters have a competitive advantage in such a fight. So it is of some interest to see whether it is, in fact, the case that this technique is specialised to *turn* beginnings as compared to, for example, *sentence* beginnings. Because a great many turn beginnings are built out of sentence beginnings, it may be hard to discriminate whether it is the case that sentence *beginnings* can take this recycling or repeat, but other parts of sentences cannot; or whether it is turn beginnings that can take it, and sentence beginnings, if they are not also turn beginnings, cannot.

It certainly appears that turn beginnings, and not sentence beginnings *per se*, are involved. For instance, in the one piece of data we have so far examined, note that the overlap begins at just about the beginning of a sentence in the prior turn: 'takes about a week to grow a culture'. That sentence is as much implicated in the overlap as 'I don't think they grow a'. But 'I don't think they grow a' is recycled and 'takes about a week to grow a culture' is not recycled. It is a sentence beginning, but it is not a turn beginning. Some additional data on this point (drawn from a telephone conversation between two girls):

(2) A: And Wednesdays I go back in the evening.

((pause))

A: I take the car so I*leave about five o'clock.

B: Oh you come home?*

Again, 'I take the car' is at a sentence beginning, but not at a turn beginning. It is not recycled. It happens that B's turn beginning is not recycled either, for reasons we will have occasion to remark on later (cf. p. 79). But the

interest in the data at this point is in finding turns in which a second or subsequent unit or sentence has its beginning overlapped, to see if sentence beginnings which are not turn beginnings get recycled. Then, consider another:

(3) **B:** Well y'know let's uh— I dunno I'll see hhh.

May ₁be I won't even be here.*

A: ₁'cause if you go into* the city you're gonna haveta walk down to the train anyway.

In the middle of 'maybe', which is a new sentence start but not a new turn beginning, 'cause if you go . . .' is started, and the former does not have its beginning recycled.

I have offered several pieces of data here. I have not yet found a sentence start which is not a turn beginning which is recycled when it is in an overlap with a next turn.⁷

There is evidence, then, that it is indeed for turn beginnings, not sentence beginnings, that this technique of recycling is specialised. There are some good reasons why that should be the case. A 'next speaker' advantage in overlaps (which is what we are saying this is, that being the import of discriminating turn beginnings from sentence beginnings) counterbalances techniques that are available to current speakers for trying to extend their turn size. Again, I have to fill in some background.

The basic operation of the turn-taking system, in giving somebody a turn, allocates the right to produce a single turn-constructural unit — that is to say, a single lexical, phrasal, clausal or sentential construction. Thereafter, a variety of rules for turn transfer comes into play, though, clearly, there are ways in which current speakers can get to produce more than a single one of those units in their turn, and can build up pretty sizeable turns indeed. Among those are some techniques available to current speakers specifically to try to extend their turn as they approach what would otherwise be a possible completion point. We mentioned earlier the addition of optional elements after a turn's possible completion — additions of address terms, courtesy phrases, and the like. Such additions do not start up new turn-constructural units. However, there are also techniques available to current speakers to try to extend their talk past a possible transition point (at which they might lose it), into a whole new unit, which could itself get some considerable extension. In one such technique, a current speaker approaching a possible completion point of a turn-constructural unit (and therefore, a place at which transfer of the turn to a next speaker might be oriented to by parties waiting to talk), speeds up the talk and runs the intonation contour and phrasing across the completion point, getting into a new sentence, (or

other turn-constructural unit) before slowing down or taking a breath, something like this:

- (4) **A:** Maybe if you come down I'll take the car down.
B: Well I'k y'know I- I don't wanna make anything definite because I- y'know I just I just thinking t'day all day riding on the trains heh hh
A: Well there's nothing else t'do = I w's thinking
of taking the car anyway*
B: [that I would go into the ssss::-* I would go into the city but I don't know.

I have tried to indicate by the arrow a sharp speed up in the pacing of the talk, and by the arc that the phrasing is built so as to carry over what would otherwise be a possible completion point. This then is a technique for a speaker to try to get past a unit's completion point and into a next unit, before another can use the first unit's possible completion as the occasion for effecting a turn transfer; it is a device, usable in an *ad hoc* way late in a turn, for unilaterally extending its size, without having planned to do so.

Well, if current speakers have a tool like that unchecked, they might run amuck in the world; they might never let anybody else talk. So it ought not to come as a big surprise that there would be counterbalancing advantages for possible next speakers to deal with that sort of a device, and it appears that the recycle technique supplies one such resource. Once speakers get started, maybe they can win the turn fight by virtue of having as a resource, and using, a recycling of their turn's beginning.

Look again at (4). 'B' is possibly finished in the first of the B turns in the segment, possibly not. Certainly it has not been brought to syntactic completion, but syntactically incomplete sentences *are* used in intendedly complete turns. Let's leave that equivocal for the time being. 'A' then starts, does the initial unit to which she gets rights in getting the turn, and then uses the 'rush through' technique described above. At that point, B 'resumes'. She 'resumes' in a new turn's beginning; that is, she is talking after another has talked, and done a full single unit, which can count as a turn. She (B) does, of course, build the talk in such a way as to make it syntactically a continuation of what she was saying before, and that is how A's intervening talk emerges as, possibly, an 'interruption'. After all B could have talked in that slot in a quite different way, e.g. starting a new sentence; in that case, it might not be at all clear that A had interrupted. But B, by the way in which she talks, lays claim to her right to talk at that point by virtue of just continuing with what she was saying before. Nonetheless, it is a new turn in which she does that; and therefore, it is a turn beginning; and therefore, she can recycle it; and

she does recycle it. So we do have here the use of a recycled turn beginning (by B) as a counterbalance to a current speaker's (A's) ability to use a rush through to extend their turn into another unit.

The examination of this datum allows us to remark on another aspect of the turn beginning recycle phenomenon. In noting earlier the close placement of the beginning of the recycle after the end of the prior turn, we clearly had reference to those occurrences in which the prior turn ended before the new turn did, occurrences in which it was the new turn that emerged into the clear from the overlap. But in some cases, the linear production of the new turn does not last long enough to emerge from the overlap. The new turn is produced and comes to an end, all in overlap with a prior turn, and it is the prior turn which emerges into the clear. Then it should be noted: new turns can be recycled in the same turn slot when they emerge from the overlap before their possible completion. If they come to possible completion while still in overlap, they are not recycled in that turn slot, although there are procedures for repeating them at other points. That is what is involved in (2) cited earlier (p. 76), in which the new turn is not recycled, and later comment was promised; the new turn having been brought to completion without emerging from the overlap, it is not recycled.

Now note about (4) that B's overlapped turn beginning has almost come to a completion point without emerging from the overlap with prior turn. But prior turn is almost ended, and thus B's turn is about to emerge into the clear. Then notice that that is apparently available to B; the initial sound of the potentially last word of her turn is held ('ssss:::-') until prior turn is ended, allowing the new turn to emerge into the clear and allowing it, thereby, to be recycled. On the one hand, the initial sound is extraordinarily stretched; on the other hand, the word is cut off in order to allow the recycling, and to allow it to occur in a no-gap/no-overlap relationship to the prior turn's ending. The integrity of the word is sacrificed to the achievement of the sequential repair.

One further observation about (4): it was remarked earlier that B brings off her 'new turn' as a 'resumption' by her utterance 'that I would go into the ssss:::-* - I would go into the city but I don't know.' It is the 'that' that initially starts the sequential job of projecting this as a continuation, as a resumption of what was being said. It is the 'that' which, in projecting the turn to be a *continuation* of what she was otherwise saying, addresses the issue of her rights to the slot; because if what she is doing is merely continuing an utterance which she had not had a chance to complete, then she has a right to the floor. What speakers get when they get a turn is a right to talk unencumbered to first possible completion; and B can then be seen not

to be interrupting A, but to be taking back her turn from A's interruption of it. The 'that' then — whatever else it may be doing syntactically — is doing something sequentially as well: it is claiming *her* rights to *this* floor space at *this* time. Then notice that when the recycling is begun, the 'that' is dropped. I will return to that observation in a moment, after reviewing the other observations in the context of which it is to be understood.

The point of departure was the possible impairment of turn beginnings by overlap with prior turn; pre-placed appositionals were a type of system resource that could deal with the possible impairment of turn beginnings; and recycles of turn beginnings were a system resource for dealing with the possible impairment of turn beginnings by overlap. Now they both should be seen as just two instances of what can more generally be called 'overlap absorption techniques'. But then: if a pre-placed overlap absorber is used, e.g. a pre-placed appositional,⁸ and it is insufficient (that is, the overlap outlasts it), and a recycle is used to absorb the rest of the overlap that the appositional did not absorb, then we should expect that, when the recycle occurs, the pre-placed appositional should not be included in it, should be repeated. The reason ought to be fairly clear. The appositional was placed there in the first place to absorb overlap. The recycle is not done until the overlap is finished. That is, the recycle is going to occur in the clear, and if the appositional is there to absorb overlap, and there is no more overlap, then the recycle should not repeat the appositional. A few pieces of data show what this looks like.

- (5) A: Why dontchu (I mean _____)*
 B: You know I wo-* I wonder if
 Donna went back to school 's I w's curious (to know)

In (5), B's turn starts with a pre-placed overlap absorber. 'You know', 'yeah', and similar objects are quite regularly used in turn-initial position as pre-placed overlap absorbers. In (5), it does not quite catch all the overlap; 'I wo-' is overlapped too. As we saw earlier in regard to (4), the integrity of words is sacrificed to the second order minimisation of gap and overlap, and 'I wo-' is self-interrupted here in the middle of the word when the prior turn ends, in favour of a close beginning of the recycle. But the turn beginning is not recycled as 'You know I wonder if Donna went back to school'. The 'you know' having done its work as an overlap absorber, and the recycle being begun at just such a place as does not require the work of overlap absorption, the 'you know' part is not recycled. Or:

- (6) A: Yeah my mother asked me. I says I dunno. I haven't heard from her. I didn't know what days you had _____ classes or anything.*
 Yeah an I didn' know*

B: I didn' know when you were home or– I
was gonna.

First, notice that the 'I didn' know' in B's turn is, once again, recycled at just the point at which the overlap is emerged from. Notice also that the 'Yeah', which is another of those turn initial objects that regularly is used to absorb overlap, is not in the recycle; the recycle being already in the clear, it is not repeated.

That is a nice kind of next result to have: that the objects we ought to be led to believe would drop out of the repeats do drop out of the repeats. And that result suggests that indeed there is repair of the impaired part of the turn going on here in addition to the repaired transition.

An extension of this line. Some pre-placed objects, as I suggested before, though they may absorb overlap, are employed in the first instance to do other sequential jobs. For example, the misplacement markers and the interruption markers discussed earlier occur in turn initial position, and may absorb some overlap even as they do other sequential jobs. If an utterance starts with such an object, which gets its overlap absorption work done and gets its sequential job done as well, we ought to expect, its work having been done, that if the turn's beginning is recycled, it too should disappear and should not be repeated. (7) bears on this point, and on several other themes of the discussion hitherto as well. (A bit of background is in order on this excerpt from the earlier cited dinner conversation. K, the hostess, is a weaver, and the guests R and F, have noticed a blanket she is making, and have complimented her highly on it. In her response, she has done something one is not supposed to do; she has complimented herself on it (Pomerantz, 1978). She tries to neutralise the self-compliment, by saying, 'It wove itself once it was set up', about which she is shortly thereafter asked by the visiting male, R, 'what does that mean "it wove itself once it was set up?"' She offers an explanation. The excerpt that follows begins at the end of the explanation.)

- (7) 1 **K:** The weft has exactly that.
 2 **F:** Yah
 3 **R:** Oh. So it's square,* in o₁ther words.*
 4 **K:** Ya see?* It's * perfectly
 5 square yah. So once I'd set up the warp,
 6 't was very simple to jus keep– just to weave
 7 it.
 8 ((pause))

- 9 **K:** You know ()
 10 **D:** (But but listen tuh how long)*
 11 **R:** In other words you gotta string up thē*
 12 **R:** you gotta string up thē colors, is that it =
 13 **K:** Right*
 14 **R:** in the* in the warp*
 15 **K:** Right* right.

(transcript slightly simplified)

Before turning to the part of this segment for which it is introduced here (cf. below, p. 83, it is worth taking note of a series of precisely placed recycles which occur in it (though seeing them is a poor substitute for hearing them). At lines 10–11, ‘D’ and ‘R’ start simultaneously, both overlapping ‘K’s’ line 9. D produces a turn’s beginning and then withdraws; at the precise point of his ending, R begins his recycle of ‘you gotta string up the’. Then K’s line 13 and R’s line 14 are begun simultaneously. K’s is possibly complete and does not get recycled in this turn slot; R’s is not brought to possible completion within the overlap and can be recycled. It is recycled, starting at just the point at which the overlap with K ends. But R’s recycling is itself overlapped by K’s line 15, the last word of R’s 14 and the first of K’s 15 being in overlap; K’s 15, although possibly complete, does not find its competitor in the overlap outlasting it, and can be directly recycled; it is recycled, at just the point at which the prior turn with which it has been in overlap has ended. We have in this segment a flurry of those precisely placed recycles which were the object of our initial observations.

The data of (7) were, however, introduced for their bearing on a different matter, namely, that if a pre-placed object not only absorbs overlap but has some other sequential job as well, and that job has been done, the pre-placed object should be expected not to be included in the recycle, if a recycle is done. Consider lines 10–12 in this regard. ‘In other words’ (line 1) is a special sort of object. It lays claim to the floor on R’s behalf because in conversation — and now I will just have to assert this in passing — problems of understanding, and addressing problems of understanding, have priority (See Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 720). If an intending speaker can reveal at a turn’s beginning that the turn is addressed to problems of understanding, there are special rights to the floor for the speaker to engage in that. ‘In other words’ is a standard marker that does that. With it a speaker can claim to be planning to show an understanding of what a prior speaker said, so as to see if it was understood correctly. ‘In other words’, then, is a sequential marker being used in a floor fight here, and laying claim, on its user’s behalf, to rights to the turn that another is contesting. That is what is going on in ‘in other words’, and the one who uses it in fact wins. ‘In other words’ also absorbs

part of the overlap. But ‘in other words’ does not absorb all of the overlap. ‘You’ve got to string up the’ is also overlapped, and it can be recycled. But since it is recycled only after the turn has already been won, that is, after the overlap has ended, then if ‘in other words’ is in the business of getting its speaker the turn, there is no need for it to be recycled. And it isn’t.

Now we may recall the discussion of (4), where it was noted that B’s ‘that’, which brought off her turn as a resumption of her own prior turn’s talk and thus served as a sequential marker claiming her rights to the floor for the turn thereby begun, was dropped from the recycle that followed. Although the ‘that’ of (4) and ‘in other words’ of (7) are in very many respects quite different objects, in their respective uses in these data they both operate as turn-initial sequential markers, warranting claims to the turn. Recycles being begun only when the turn has definitively been won, the sequential markers that claim it are dropped.

But ‘in other words’ has another job as well, besides displaying the speaker who uses it in his turn beginning to have special claims to the floor by virtue of the fact that he’s addressing a problem of understanding. It works as a confirmation request. It asks the speaker of the turn of which an understanding is being proposed for confirmation of the adequacy of that understanding. How about *that* job? R may have gotten the floor already, and does not need his ‘in other words’ to get him the floor anymore. But he is also asking for a confirmation, and ‘in other words’ was doing that, and in dropping it, does he not lose that work?

Such a question can lead us to notice another technique for dealing with overlapped beginnings. There is a collection of sequential jobs which get done in various positions in conversation. Sometimes they can be done only at turn beginnings, and sometimes only at turn ends, and some of them can be done either at the beginning or at the end of a turn. And there are resources that can do these jobs only at the beginning, and some only at the end of a turn, and sometimes ones that can do the job either place. ‘In other words’ is a marker that can do a confirmation request either at the beginning or at the end of a turn. In (7) line 3 it is being used at the end, and it is taken up: ‘It’s perfectly square yah’ (the ‘yah’ in particular) shows that it was heard even though it was overlapped. In (7) at line 11, however, it was being used to do that job, among others, at the turn’s beginning. It having been overlapped there, however, and having been dropped in the recycle (no longer being needed to get the turn), is there some other way in which that overlapped, possibly impaired part can have its work recouped? There is. If a turn beginning is overlapped, a way of dealing with its possible impairment is to get its work done not in a second try at the turn beginning (as the

recycles do it), but at the turn end — the end of the same turn. ‘Is that it?’ (line 12) is a confirmation request also. The confirmation request having been overlapped, and therefore possibly impaired, when it was done at the turn’s beginning, its work is retrieved at the turn’s end.

Another occurrence of this turn-end repair of a turn-beginning overlap may be useful.

- (8) F: Did you weave that ₁yourself*
 K: I wo*ve this myself.

‘Did you weave that’ is a possibly complete utterance, and K’s turn’s beginning was properly projected to occur on prior turn’s completion, though, as it happened, F added ‘yourself’ to what would have been a complete utterance. What is done about the overlapping of ‘yourself’ and of ‘I wove’ (or most of it)? Notice that K uses as the format for her answer a duplication of the format of the question she is answering. In adding the ‘myself’ at the end of *her* turn, she shows that she heard the ‘yourself’ at the end of the prior turn, though it was overlapped and thus subject to possible impairment. Further, in doing the ‘myself’ at the end, she displays the ‘I’ at the beginning; the reflexiveness of the construction allows the ‘myself’ to retrieve the ‘I’, even though it was overlapped as well.

I have discussed three different devices addressed to possible impairment of turn beginning by overlaps with prior turns, a problem with a systematic basis in the organisation of a turn-taking system which aims for close co-ordination of turn transition, and can structurally motivate earliest possible start of next turns. In fact, there are many more resources addressed to this problem which have somewhat different organisations.

At the same time, however, we have discriminated a subset of what looked like an unordered collection of partial repetitions of parts of utterances. About this aspect of our discussion, two points are worth making. First, such partial repetitions or recycles are frequently treated as sloppiness, as inarticulateness, as not having thought about what one was going to say, as evidence of the disorderliness of single occurrences in passing conversation. I hope it can now be seen that almost precisely the opposite of each of these is the case. We should thereby be encouraged to investigate other apparently unorganised ‘sloppy’ materials in the natural world.

Secondly: at the beginning of this discussion I presented a long list of examples of the ‘sort of thing I had in mind’, repeats and recycles done at various points in the turns in which they occurred. I presented them as instances of a same phenomenon. That was a foil. One of the imports of this discussion should be seen to be that it is incorrect to count all instances of

repeats or recycles as instances of a same class of phenomena by virtue of the fact that they all re-do some bit of verbal production. They occur differentially placed by reference to the structural organisation of conversation, and their placement is as much a part of their character, as constitutive of them as phenomena, as the fact that some words get repeated. 'Recycles or repeats at, and of, turn beginnings' is a technical object. Repeats and recycles otherwise located, by reference to a turn's organisation or by reference to other orders of sequential organisation, are not necessarily related in any way to this technical object. Quite different machineries may be involved in their production, and they may well be *improperly* thought of as turn-terminal or turn-medial. But at least the orderliness and extraordinary precision of the ones we have examined can encourage the investigation of others.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. A public lecture at the 1973 Linguistic Institute, held at the University of Michigan. Edited by the author, with the assistance of Jennifer Mandelbaum, from a tape recording made at the time.
2. As this paper had not yet been published at the time, some of its points are re-covered here as background.
3. The choice of the term 'appositional' was not felicitous, but because it has already been used in the turn-taking paper (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), it is retained here for consistency.
4. By 'not organically implicated' I mean that nothing is syntactically or semantically contingent on it. Strictly speaking, the text should refer to 'turn constructional units' rather than turns (cf. Sacks *et al.*, 1974: 719), but the loose usage seemed appropriate to the introductory character of the talk.
5. Although usage of the terms 'overlap' and 'interruption' has varied, it is simplest to use 'overlap' to refer generically to any case of more than one party speaking at a time; 'interruption' is then reserved (roughly) for starts by a second speaker while another is speaking and is not near possible completion.
6. As with the relationship of 'next turn starts' to 'prior turn ends' in general, not all of them are so precise, although a great many are.
7. I have since found instances of this, but they do not seem to affect the point being made in the text.
8. Note, however, that some pre-placed appositionals are clearly designed not for overlap absorption but for other sequential uses. For example, in some sequential environments, turn-initial 'well' projects incipient disagreement (cf. Sacks, this volume, Chapter 2); in such cases, it regularly occurs after a gap of silence, which makes any overlap absorption quite beside the point. The relationship of pre-placed overlap absorbers and pre-placed appositionals is, therefore, best thought of not as a set/sub-set relationship, but as intersecting sets.