

# Chapter 11

## Story Appreciation in Conversations-For-Learning: Stories and Gestalt-Contextures



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**Abstract** This chapter recommends a gestalt-contexture approach to stories in conversation. The gestalt-contexture approach advocates for a more holistic view of context, through analyses that account for both sequential and membership categorisation aspects of stories in interactions. This approach is sensitive to aspects of storytelling sequences (e.g. story prefaces, story appreciations, story completions, second stories) according to the contexts of their production, such as conversation-for-learning, in which participants' interactional competence is more variable. The chapter examines longitudinal conversation data between two adolescent Korean boys and an American graduate student who was meeting them to help them practise their English. The open-ended nature of the conversation-for-learning made finding and launching a mutually orientable topic a constant and mandatory task for the participants. Whilst preliminary analyses identified "crazy things we did as a kid" as a prevalent theme in stories, the relevance of stories to this theme is not always self-evident but takes interactional work to establish. The study demonstrates (1) orientation to membership categorisation is sequentially operative in generating topics in conversation; (2) story appreciation points are collaboratively produced by tellers and recipients; (3) story appreciations are ongoing, permeable, and not limited to story completion.

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## 11.1 Introduction

This chapter examines storytelling practices by two secondary school aged boys, who recently moved to the United States of America (USA) with their family. The data for the current study are drawn from conversations-for-learning (Kasper & Kim, 2015) arranged between two Korean teenage boys (Chungho and Jinho) and an American graduate student (Tom) who was meeting them to help them practise their English. The two boys, who are brothers (13–15 years old, respectively) moved to America with their family 1 month before the data collection started. Whilst the meeting was arranged to provide them with opportunities to use and practise their English, no instruction other than “just talk and hang out” was provided. They met approximately every 2 weeks, and these meetings lasted 9 months.

In examining stories told and received by the two adolescent boys, we attend to what kinds of things they talk about and how they talk about them (Sacks, 1995). First, we note how membership categorisation is oriented to at the sequential level both in topic generation as well as in the local turn-by-turn design of story packaging. This draws on our understanding that topics in conversation are collaboratively launched, and membership categories are oriented to generating and organising topics in conversation. Second, in regard to how the boys talk about those topics, we found one emerging theme that holds across several topics, i.e. “crazy things we did as kids” which they seemed to enjoy most to talk about. We pay analytic attention to how they achieve stories “relevant” to themes by building up what we call “story appreciation points,” an ongoing collaborative monitoring of a story both by recipients and teller in the rounds of storytelling (Lerner, 1992).

In demonstrating the aforementioned two points, we find “gestalt-contexture” analysis useful. Gestalt-contexture analysis is gaining a higher profile within ethnomethodology, to characterise identifying details of stories. Treating stories as gestalt-contextures allows the analysis to enclose salient aspects of an interaction such as the context of its occurrence, the identities of its participants and the sequential and categorical environments of its production. We provide a more detailed description of gestalt-contexture in the following section.

## 11.2 Gestalt-Contextures

The ethnomethodological interest in gestalt-contextures is with the study of language as it is *used by participants* (Wieder, 1974) and for the phenomenon of enquiry: to what extent can an analysis of a phenomenon cohere with members’ methods for the production of that phenomenon, such as telling a story in conversation? Originally mentioned in Gurwitsch (1964), gestalt-contexture was a phenomenological notion introduced to ethnomethodology by Garfinkel (1996) in his later work to replace the “Documentary Method of Interpretation.” Whilst the latter had been a defining concept for ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), Garfinkel was concerned that it

might become used as a general method for analysis rather than address specifically identifiable phenomena in individual cases. He regarded “gestalt-contexture” as more sensitive to the phenomenon of inquiry.

In taking gestalt-contexture as our approach to examining storytelling sequences, the analytical concern is extended to both sequential organisation of utterances and categorical expressions of identity terms within these utterances. The separation between the two is apparent in the literature but not warranted by conversational data. Addressing gestalt-contextures re-establishes the reflexive tie between categorical and sequential organisation (Watson, 1997). For example in the data discussed in this chapter, we observe that participants’ categorical and sequential orientations overlap in selecting and maintaining topics of talk. In the literature on topic talk, topics are often addressed as sequentially implicative aspects of conversation, for example, in topic initiation, pivoting, etc. (Button & Casey, 1988–89; Holt & Drew, 2005). What is apparent in our data is that topics are selected and maintained on categorical lines also. For example, Tom’s topic-initiating moves in the very first session reflected his own categorisation of the two boys as newcomers to the city, and in later sessions expressed category-predicates of supposedly common interests of male teenage boys (videogames and cars). As we shall show in Sect. 11.5.1, within sequential moves for topic generation, an orientation to membership categories was procedurally observable (cf. Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984).

The value of approaching stories as gestalt-contextures is that analysis preserves extended turns or a block of turns as a story of a particular kind, rather than emphasising single features of stories in isolation from other features. Approaching stories as gestalt-contextures has an additional benefit of accounting for details that may produce the context of a story as, for instance, conversation-for-learning, but which are not necessarily preserved in a recording. So, for example, the second language learner status of a participant may be adduced as a possible reason for the omission of, say, a story preface, or a story assessment, or as we shall see, for initiating repair on the meaning of a particular word after laughing together at the punchline. Practitioners and language learners themselves realise that there is a delicate balance between displaying competence and displaying lack of competence within teacher–student interactions (Lieberman, 2013), which is “a form of organisation not bestowed upon, but exhibited by, experience” (Gurwitsch, 1964, p. 29). In this way, a more holistic view of context can be appreciated analytically than that given by a purely sequential approach. Consideration of stories as gestalt-contextures avoids the reification of story-able objects as necessary conditions of their production, e.g. that a story can only be a story if a story preface is present and that it occurs prior to the story telling. This is an attendant risk if stories are presented as models or ideal types for the purpose of knowledge transfer. The analytic mentality of CA is not to provide practitioners with models; rather, it is to highlight patterns “grounded in and constructed from the data under inspection” (Jefferson & Lee, 1992, p. 524).

## 11.3 Storytelling and Conversation Analysis (CA)

### 11.3.1 *Appreciation of Stories as Interactional Achievements*

The interactive nature of storytelling in conversation has been documented in CA's early iterations (Jefferson, 1978; Sacks, 1974) and is one of CA's distinctive contributions to narrative research (Mandelbaum, 2003). Recipients play a significant role in how and whether the story is launched in a particular sequential position and what the story comes to be about (Busch et al., current volume; Mandelbaum, 1989). Prior research also shows that in the environment of story completion, there is a normative constraint (or preference) for the recipient to provide his or her understanding of the story or an assessment. The recipient's display of his/her understanding of the story forms an important sequential position as it is one of the sites of collaborative work between teller and recipient where the implication of the story is negotiated and worked out (Jefferson, 1978).

The recipient's assessment of the story may or may not correspond with what the teller has conveyed via the story preface and the arrangement of details throughout the course of the telling, whilst the upshot that corresponds to what the teller seems to convey, one can say, is a preferred response. Working out the upshot of the story is inextricably tied to the sequential relevance of the story as stories do not occur randomly in conversation. They are carefully placed.

One way for the recipient to display her understanding of the story is to offer second stories (Ryave, 1978; Sacks, 1995; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015). Second stories are designed to be recognisably like the first story (Sacks, 1995). By producing a second story, the teller displays his/her understanding of the first story not only in terms of its thematic/topical relevance but also, at a more fine-tuned level, as to how the characters are mapped in the storyline. On the other hand, as with the sequential implicativeness of the story, the relevance of the second stories is interactionally negotiated, and the appreciation point of the second or third stories does not remain the same throughout the course of the round of telling. Whilst second stories are a response to the first story, it provides a context for the next one, generating a round of stories. This reminds us of Heritage's (1984) notion of talk as context shaped and context renewing, which corresponds to the notion of gestalt-contextures (Gurwitsch, 1964). In the course of producing a second story, recipient appreciation can be slightly adjusted and shifted throughout (Jefferson, 1978; Sacks, 1974; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015). The recipient might come up with a "wrong" assessment by picking up on something different from what the teller had intended. This study builds on this literature by showing the permeability of story assessment within English as a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) speakers' interaction.

### 11.3.2 *Multilingual Storytelling Practices*

Telling a story can be a challenging task for L2 speakers because it involves taking an extended bloc of turns (Lee & Hellermann, 2020). There has been a growing body

of research that investigates multilingual storytelling practices from a conversation analytic perspective (see for example, Watanabe, 2022; Wong, current volume; the collection in Wong & Waring, 2021). Some of these studies are informed by a developmental perspective (Hellermann, 2008; Kim, 2016; Lee & Hellermann, 2014; Watanabe, 2022) and describe the nature of the challenges L2 storytellers face in managing various aspects of storytelling (Lee & Hellermann, 2020), whilst others highlight multilingual speakers' competence in storytelling (Greer, 2022; Wong, 2021a, current volume) and interactional dynamics (Greer & Ogawa, 2021). From a developmental perspective, the structural regularities identified in CA research for storytelling practices are deployed to discuss the development of L2 speaker's storytelling practices through, for example the presence of story prefaces. Amongst longitudinal studies that adopt a developmental perspective, Pekarek Doehler and Berger (2018) document how a German speaker of L2 French showed more context-sensitive conduct over time in handling story-opening sequences. Barraja-Rohan's (2015) study demonstrates how a Japanese L2 speaker of English produces increasingly more complex narratives over the space of 5 months. Watanabe (2022) tracks a young learner's telling in response to a teacher's invitation through her routine question *How was your weekend?* over three points in time across three years. She shows how both the learner's storytelling in second position and the teacher's practises in helping the learner to elaborate the stories change.

CA's concerns with storytelling as an interactional achievement brought story reciprocity to the forefront of research attention as well. Ishida's (2011) study on the development of story reciprocity by an L1 English speaker of L2 Japanese and Kim's (2016) study on the development of interactional competence by a Korean adolescent speaker of L2 English provide good examples of reciprocity. Taking a slightly different perspective, Wong's (2021a, b, current volume) studies take us to the relational dimension of multilingual speakers' storytelling. Whilst effectively showcasing that L2 interactional competence is a variable phenomenon, Wong's (2021a; b, current volume) studies highlight how multilingual speakers' interactional competence in storytelling and responding can have consequences on relationships in their everyday lives.

Although adolescent groups are identified as a distinctive focus of investigation in broader discourse-analytic traditions (Goodwin, 1990a, b; Eckert, 1990; Rampton, 1995), storytelling practices amongst them are rarely treated as discrete foci of research attention in CA studies. Goodwin's 1990a, b study is a notable exception. Goodwin (1990b) shows how storytelling is used to accomplish and restructure social organisation within a group of adolescent boys and girls. Eder (1998) demonstrates how collaborative storytelling contributes to developing adolescent peer culture. Finally, Sandlund (2022) examines the properties of storytelling in a test situation for adolescents aged 15–16. She finds that the test context creates a situation where narratives are resisted or treated as inappropriate. Building on this work, the current study examines storytelling practices of two L2 English-speaking adolescent boys in the context of conversation for learning.

## 11.4 Data and Method

The data for the current study consist of roughly 14 h of audio-recorded conversation between two adolescent brothers with the pseudonyms, *Chungho* and *Jinho*, who were 13–15 years old, respectively, at start of data collection, and one American graduate student (with the pseudonym, *Tom*) who was meeting with the boys for the purpose of providing them with an opportunity to practise their English. They met with each other every 2 weeks and “hung out” in various places such as fast-food restaurants, an ice-cream shop or someone’s residence. The first author of the chapter (*Yumi*) controlled the recordings and was present during the first 5 months of the meetings, helping with translations when needed but mostly remaining a peripheral participant. Gradually, the meetings became less formal as the two boys and the tutor enjoyed each other’s company socially.

### 11.4.1 Data Corpus

The meetings lasted 9 months in total, starting 1 month after the two boys had moved to the U.S. with their family. The two boys were attending junior high and a high school, respectively, in the neighbourhood. Table 11.1 presents detailed information about their meetings and the data collection.

Longitudinal conversation data (Carlin & Kim, 2021) are transcribed using an orthographic system devised by Jefferson (2004). For ease of reference, those utterances in focus of analysis are marked in boldface within the transcripts.

**Table 11.1** Data collection log

	Date	Place	Participants	Length of recording
1	09/19/04	Bubby’s	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	32:57
3	10/17/04	Volcano Joe	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	60:19
4	11/07/04	Zippy’s	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	56:50
5	11/21/04	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	62:30
6	12/05/04	Zippy’s	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	14:44
7	01/16/05	Volcano Joe	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	64:55
8	01/30/05	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho	54:03
9	02/13/05	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho	67:48
10	02/27/05	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho	57:30
11	03/13/05	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho	64:52
12	04/03/05	Auto Show	Tom, Chungho, Yumi	167:13
13	04/17/05	Indoor	Tom, Chungho, Jinho,	59:19
14	05/08/05	T.G.I. Fridays	Tom, Chungho, Jinho, Yumi	80:55

## 11.4.2 *Research Ethics*

The study reported here conforms to research ethics and data protocols, as suggested by institutional review boards and discipline-specific guidelines. Consent for recording the participants' conversations was obtained from all of the three participants as well as the parents of the two brothers. All identifying details of participants have been changed to protect their identities.

## 11.5 *Analysis*

Whilst the meetings were arranged for the pedagogical purpose of providing the boys with an opportunity to speak English, no guideline was provided other than "just talk and hang out." As our analysis will show, we see that this open-endedness caused interactional problems as the three participants were ongoingly engaged in the search for something to talk about. In other words, generating and launching topics became an important interactional task in its own right, as also reported by Button and Casey (1984). Extending previous considerations from a developmental perspective (Kim, 2017) and drawing on a gestalt-contexture approach, in this section, we discuss topic organisation as both a sequential and a categorical matter.

### 11.5.1 *Topic Organisation and Membership Categorisation*

In the early sessions, Tom played an active role in generating topics either by nominating a topic (Button & Casey, 1985) (e.g. "how was your trip to the Big Island?": the third meeting on Oct 17, 2004) or eliciting topics from the two boys (Button & Casey, 1984) (e.g. "so, how are things? life's good?": the fifth meeting on Dec 5, 2004). Whilst consideration of space would preclude citation of data in the form of full transcripts, we present below several examples of typical topic-initiating actions which subsequently resulted in stories.

**Extract 1:** Honolulu: Sept 19 [137–147].

137 (4.0)  
 138 T:→ **let's see.** (1.9) **how do you like Honolulu?**  
 139 (0.9)  
 140 C: good  
 141 T: you like it here?

**Extract 2:** Favourite American food: Sept 19 [584–597].

586 (1.6)  
 587 T:→ so (0.5) uh: 'ts **see. do you have some American foods**  
 588 **thet you like to eat?**  
 589 (1.3)  
 590 T: [**favourite American food?**]

**Extract 3:** Fast and (the) Furious: Sept 19 [221–233].

221 T: do you like u:hm (0.5) (tongue click) the  
 222 ca:r racing movies, like (.) fast en the furious? (0.8)  
 223 C: yes, [b:ut

**Extract 4:** Halo 2: Oct 17 [608–614].

608 T: my roommate, (0.3) u:h has Halo two?  
 609 (2.6)  
 610 T: do you know, do you know that game?

**Extract 5:** Nintendo: Nov 21 [1118–1137].

1121→ T: did you see the ne:w uh:m (0.7) hand held (0.8) gaming,  
 1122 (0.3) I think for Nintendo, (0.4) 't came out, has two  
 1123 screens?

**Extract 6:** Honda NSX: Mar 13 [319–328].

319 (2.0)  
 320 T: I saw u:h (0.6) en ar ex. (1.2) uh: Honda. (1.1) uh et  
 321 (0.3) [gas station, en with the, [the racing version=?

To gloss a temporal change regarding things to talk about, earlier topics can be characterised by an orientation to the two boys as newcomers (Extract (1)) and linguistic differences between the two boys and Tom (Mori, 2003) (Extract (2)); for example by comparing education systems or McDonalds' restaurants in Korea and America (data not presented for space constraints). However, in later sessions, they seemed to have found an “ultra-rich” (Sacks, 1995) topic for talk, namely cars. Cars were an “ultra-rich” topic not only in the sense that they talked more about cars than other things but also in the sense that it provided a gateway to other favoured topics, such as car-racing movies, (Extract 3), computer games (Extract 4) and pranks (first driving experiences (Extract 10) and driving-related pranks). Tom's orientation to membership, in categorising the two L2 learners as male teenagers, was clearly visible in his topic-initiating queries and topic announcements. He used common interests in computer games (Extract 4 and Extract 5) and cars (Extract 6), and playing up at school (Extract 11 and Extract 13) as category-predicates of male teenagers, which were used as common sense resources in formulating topic-initiating queries (Extract 5) and announcements (Extract 6). Even when they were talking about something else, for example a trip to Los Angeles, the topic ramified into talk about cars; as in high-end cars, the two boys had seen there.

This orientation to membership categorisation was not unilateral. Membership categorisation was also operative in the two teenage boys' responding and initiating actions.



**Extract 7:** New Ford Mustang: Jan 16 [673–685].

673 C:→ [sh- uh u- you know the (0.8) new:: eh- **have you ever**  
 674 **seen the new ford mustang?**  
 675 (. )  
 676 T: m hm  
 677 C:→ two thousand five [ih- i-  
 678 T: [ >my friend has one.<=

**Extract 8:** Italian V12: Mar 13 [265–286].

270 (2.5)  
 271 C:→ so **I finally** (0.4) **heard** (1.9) **Italian vee twelve** sounds  
 272 (2.4)

This highlighted to us that in our data membership categories are operative in topic selection, which underscores a reflexive tie between sequence organisation and membership categorisation.

In his discussion about “ultra-rich” topics, Sacks (1995) noted that it is not so much the fact that the teenagers in his group therapy session data talked more about cars, but *how* they talked about them that made cars an ultra-rich topic. In other words, cars were talked about in terms of the level of shared knowledge required to participate in the talk, which served to construct their talk as members’ talk (Sacks, 1979). In our data, whilst cars, computer games, and pranks at school were identified as their favourite topics to talk about, one common orientation emerged that would characterise their way of talking about those things, i.e. “crazy things we did at school.” Stories related to this topic easily generated second, third and nth stories, forming a continuous round of stories (Ryave, 1978), whilst some initiated topics failed to be launched or were more effortful at best.

In the following sections of our analysis, we examine stories where this implicit theme “crazy things we did at school” is mutually oriented to and collaboratively achieved, as the upshot of stories told by Tom and Chungho is not always clear to their recipients. Our analytic attention is therefore focussed on the sequential loci where story appreciation is achieved and negotiated. This will enable us to examine how the participants engage in interactional work to clarify to each other how stories fit the “themes” and thus constitute “relevant” stories in terms of what they are doing via storytelling in interaction at the moment.

### 11.5.2 *Building Up Story Appreciation Point*

In this section, we present several instances that showcase how story appreciation is achieved by the teller adding details upon the completion of a story or through the recipient’s scaffolding inquiries and comments. As the sequential implicativeness of a story is established via constant interactional work, the teller’s or the recipient’s status as a second language user might add a slight variation to the existing sequential practices of storytelling. These variations might indicate a developing competence in language learning.

### 11.5.2.1 Eliciting Recipient Response: Adding Further Details to Stories

In Extract 9, Chunggho's story is produced in response to Tom's question. Prior to the episode in this extract, Chunggho told them he had inadvertently memorised all the weights of the cars in a computer game as a result of excessive playing. Tom's question about whether the two boys have had the experience of playing a computer game so much that they dream about it (804–805) is a question that is aligned to this immediately preceding story told by Chunggho.

**Extract 9:** Sounds like addiction: Jan 16 [804–833].

804 T: =ha- have you guys ever played (.) a game so much  
 805 that you had a dream about it? (0.7) that night?  
 806 (0.3)  
 807 C: y(h)eah(hh)  
 808 T: m hm heh heh hhh hhh  
 809 C: in (.) uh when I was (0.7) uh (0.4) middle school  
 810 student.  
 811 (3.9)  
 812 C: u:h one day, I tried (0.3) to (0.3) get a perfect  
 813 score, (.) in (0.7) in that (branchis wilbee),  
 814 (0.5) so (0.6) was a (.) rally and (0.8) the,  
 815 car was subaru impreza, (0.5) in the (0.7) muddy  
 816 way, (0.4) so, lots of rocks and, (0.4) the  
 817 controller, was vibrating, (0.4) and (1.3) I  
 818 played more than (1.3) thirty or (0.4) fifty:,  
 819 (1.0) fifty same forces with same car, [(0.4)=  
 820 T: [yeah  
 821 C: =and (1.2) finally got asleep (0.8) after  
 822 two hours, (0.6) of (1.0) (doing this)  
 823 (3.0)  
 824 C: in the:, (.) not in a bed, uh (0.5) but in a (.)  
 825 same chair, (2.8) **I didnt (.) even (0.4) drink**  
 826 **water, [(0.4) and go to [restroom**  
 827 T: [eh hhe heh [so(h)u(h)nds like  
 828 **addiction [heh heh heh**  
 829 P: [hah hah hah hah hah  
 830 (1.0)  
 831 C: its a true stor(h)y  
 832 (0.3)  
 833 T: wow

Tom's question elicits immediate laughter (lines 807 and 808). Prefaced with a "yeah" response (line 807), Chunggho volunteers a story that aligns with Tom's question beginning with the temporal background of the story (line 809). The punchline of this story seems to lie not so much in the plot as in the details describing the scene. The adverb "finally" (820) indicates that the story is reaching its climax, and indeed, the end of line 822 might have been a possible completion point. However, with the recipient response not readily forthcoming, as indicated by the long gap (line 823), Chunggho adds a few more details such as "in the:, not in a bed, but in a same chair." When he adds the next detail, *I didn't even drink water*, Tom, the recipient immediately bursts into laughter (827) which is followed by a comment "sounds like addiction" (827–828). This in turn elicits laughter from another recipient present,

Yumi (829), and occasions the teller's own comment that it is a true story (831). Following the recipients' assessments, "sounds like addiction" (827–828) delivered with laughter, turn-by-turn talk is resumed.

Regardless of whether the sizable pause developed in line 823 could be attributed to the teller's L2 speaker status (disfluency) or the sequential organisation of the telling (potential story completion point), being faced with the lack of response, Chungcho continues and provides a few more details to describe the scene, which serve to portray the behaviour as excessive and thus worthy of telling. This successfully elicits the recipient's response, "sounds like addiction" (827–828), which matches the sequential implication of the story and the upshot the speaker is trying to build.

Whilst Extract 9 presents a case where the recipient's assessment is obtained in a relatively straightforward manner, sometimes, as can be seen in Extract 10, it takes a few inquiries or solicits from the recipient to carve out the point of the story.

### 11.5.2.2 Recipient Scaffolding: Formulating Gist

**Extract 10:** Without your parents' permission: Feb 27 [591–633].

591 T: °right°  
 592 ( )  
 593 T: hm  
 594 C: °so° ( ) when I was elementary school student,  
 595 uh fi- fifth gra- grader or sixth grader, ( )  
 596 .hh ah: my fathers car is no- now st- still  
 597 now ( ) uh my fathers car is diesel power es  
 598 you bee ([ ) and ( ) becuz it ( ) has=  
 599 T: [okay  
 600 C: =uh ( ) whe- it weighs too much, so it is ( )  
 601 uh ( ) I don't kno(hh)w it in- in English ( )  
 602 so just not very fast but a little bit slow  
 603 T: becuz of the weight?  
 604 C: weight an' it had only ninety five horses ( )  
 605 about uh en the car weighed uh one point eight  
 606 tons, one point seven tons and ( )  
 607 T: ninety five horse power eh heh heh heh  
 608 C: but you know the diesel cars talk to:lk  
 609 i[s really good, so ( ) it was just not bad=  
 610 T: [right  
 611 C: =°so° but the (.) problem was I tried to  
 612 dri(hh)ve it when I was an elementary school  
 613 student, so ( ) in my (.)  
**614 T: without your parents permission?**  
 615 C: without my parents permission and ( ) .hhh in  
 616 my grand parents front yard  
**617 T: ah hah hah hah hah hah I can jus[t imagine**  
 618 C: [just just out  
 619 of the fence [en  
**620 T: [oh my go:d**  
 621 ( )  
**622 T: could you even reach the pedals?**  
 623 C: yeah  
 624 J: hhh  
 625 T: m[a:n

- 626 C: [just uh a l- li(hh)ttle bi(hh)t not fully  
 627 .hhh so. I was caught by my father, but  
 628 J: ((clicking his tongue))  
 629 C: =my father said it was okay but the problem was  
 630 my .hhh grandfather ah he is my mothers father.  
 631 ( ) eh never do it aga:(h)in  
 632 T: yeah. did your parents ever let you steer?  
 633 while they drove, while they worked pedals?

Prior to Extract 2, Chunggo has just told a story about not being able to stop a buggy cart when he first drove it. After the story has been received with much laughter and appreciation “it’s like a movie, chasing after a golf cart” (not included in the transcript), Chunggo launches another story about driving (line 594)—his first driving experience. The story starts with a background description on how old he was at the time of the event (594–595) and what type of car it was that he drove (596–598). After providing some more technical information on the weight and horsepower of the car and diesel car in general, Chunggo formulates the gist of the story in one sentence (“but the problem was I tried to drive it when I was an elementary school student”) (611–613). This formulation of the gist does not elicit critical appreciation from the recipient (613). Instead, whilst Chunggo is trying to add information on where this happened, “in my” (line 613), Tom asks an ancillary question, “without your parents’ permission?” (614). In Chunggo’s previous turn (611–613), it was implied that the boy did it without his parents’ permission, but this was not made explicit. Tom’s question formulates this point explicitly, and thus builds the appreciation point of the story. Chunggo confirms this via repetition (615) and resumes his previously aborted turn, adding another detail “in my grandparents’ front yard.” This elicits immediate laughter and an empathetic comment from the recipient, “I can just imagine” (line 617). Chunggo provides one more detail “just out of the fence” (618–619), which elicits a strong appreciation in the form of exclamation “oh my go:d” (620). Tom’s subsequent question “could you even reach the pedals?” (622) brings into light the detail that could serve to sharpen the appreciation point (a *naughty* 10-year-old boy who could not even reach the pedals fully dared to drive his father’s car without his parents’ permission), thus aligning with the teller’s intended relevance for reciprocity. The story is concluded with a description of consequences of his behaviour (being caught and scolded (lines 627, 629–631)) and the differential attitudes from his father and grandfather (lines 629–631). After acknowledging Chunggo’s description of the resolution with “yeah” (632), Tom asks another question which moves the sequence forward by prompting a new story (632–633).

In Extract 10, Tom’s scaffolding questions served to bring out the appreciation point of Chunggo’s story more clearly. The two questions serve to expose the naughty (and dangerous) nature of the behaviour and thus render the story a better fit for the ongoing theme of the overall conversation, “crazy things we did when young.” By asking these questions, Tom collaborates in establishing the relevance of the story to the ongoing thread of the conversation.

Extract 10 also shows that story appreciations provided by the recipient may occur not only on completion of a story, but may take a series of turns and can occur within an extended bloc of talk. Appreciating the story may take a series of turns and can occur within an extended bloc of talk. The following section shows a related, data-evidenced practice; namely, establishing the relevance of a story, vis-à-vis a series of stories, is a collaborative achievement by participants.

### 11.5.2.3 Negotiating Topical Relevance

As we noted in Sect. 11.5.1, whilst cars, computer games and playing up at school constituted favoured topics, these topics were talked about the theme of “crazy things we did at school/when young.” However, note that we identified this theme through analysis, but the parties to the talk in the data did not specify any topic or theme beforehand. As the theme contingently emerged from the conversation, there was interactional work to negotiate a fine line of story appreciation regarding the broad theme of “crazy things we did.” Extract 11 showcases this. Prior to the extract, Chungho and Tom were talking about fancy watches. The extract starts with Chungho’s comment in the format of reported speech (Holt & Clift, 2007) that fancy watches can be distracting.

#### Extract 11: Did the teacher: Jan 30 [736–773].

734 C: and (1.2[0.8][one of my friend said me: that (0.5) .hh=  
 735 J: [hhh [((clears the throat))  
 736 C: =sometimes (0.5) watch (0.4) disturb when we study  
 737 (0.8)  
 738 T: oh yes, >seriously< my- my friends did it  
 739 on purpose actually. .hh my friend had a really  
 740 expensive wa:tch, that’s also, you can use it  
 741 (.) to: uh (.) as like a remote control for a  
 742 tee vee (.) and it can memorise the: signal so,  
 743 he took it to class, and had it so that it’d  
 744 memorise the signal for the tee vee, the teacher  
 745 uses. so that he could turn tee vee off and on while  
 746 the teachers doing the teaching. [tha(h)t=  
 747 C/J: [hhehh heh  
 748 T: =so(h) during classes push zhoo push zhoo heh heh  
 749 heh **that was awesome**  
 750 J: hehe heh  
 751 C: so um did teacher fa- found  
 752 T: theres no way she could know (0.4) cuz its just  
 753 such uh y’know such a small of thing you can just  
 754 (0.9) oh I dont know whats go(h)ing on  
 755 [xxx heh heh change it change the channel=  
 756 C: [hah hah hah  
 757 J: [heh heh hehh  
 758 T: =turn it off  
 759 (0.8)

760 C:→ yeah um (1.0) one of my friend had a cell phone  
 761 (0.7) the remote controlling cell phone  
 762 T: um,  
 763 C: so (1.4) you know um my middle school was really  
 764 strict (.) for the (.) electronic devices so (2.9)  
 765 he i:sed (.) the teachers couldnt find out whats  
 766 going on for two days and after that, (.3) uh (1.7)  
 767 so:me (.) other friends, (0.9) shouted that he was  
 768 using the (.) cell phone  
 769 (1.8)  
 770 T: u:m  
 771 (1.8)  
 772 T: .hh yeah °it sucks.°  
 773 (1.0)

Tom responds to Chunggho's comment that fancy watches can disturb studying (736) with an upgraded agreement ("oh yes, seriously" line 738), and follows it up with a story where his friend disrupted a lesson by randomly turning on and off the TV using his watch as a remote control (738–746). Tom wraps up the story with an assessment "it was awesome" (line 749), and the story is received with laughter from the two boys (lines 747, 750). After the immediate receipt with laughter (747, 750), Chunggho asks an ancillary question on whether he was caught by the teacher (751). Tom does not answer this directly but uses this opportunity to highlight the triumphant tenor he was building up through the story: he enacts the scene again with direct reported speech (754). This part is received with much laughter (756–757), and Chunggho launches a second story which describes one of his friends having done a similar trick using a cell phone (lines 760–761, 763–768). Whilst Tom's story was focussed on the excitement of disrupting the lesson without getting caught by the teacher, Chunggho's story, whilst addressing a very similar experience (how teachers were unable to find out what was going on), involves an elaboration that one of the students had to shout to the teacher regarding the source of the problem (767–768). There is a sizable pause at the end of the story (769), where either the recipient could have provided an assessment or as occurred in Extract 9, the teller could have expanded the story in the face of the lack of recipient response. Neither happens and after a short acknowledgement token (770), Tom provides a brief assessment of the story "yeah it sucks" in a soft voice (772).

Since Chunggho's story is hearable as focussing on how the teachers could not discover the source of disruption and how another one of the students had to tell on what was happening to the teacher, the appreciation point of the story is shifted from "it was awesome" (a strong positive stance on the described event, i.e. the little naughty thing we did) to "it sucks" (a mildly negative comment on what was reported to have happened, i.e. another student denouncing or "grassing them up" to the teacher). The two long pauses (769–771) and "um" (770) along with the soft volume with which the assessment are delivered make it hearable that the recipient might have had a difficulty in what to make of the story.

Immediately following this, Tom commences another related story where one of his school friends brought a doorbell to school and put it on his desk/chair. This is presented in Extract 12 below.

**Extract 12:** Doorbell: Jan 30 [772–790].

772 T: .hh yeah °it sucks°  
 773 (1.0)  
 774 J: hhhh  
 775 T: he did- another kid earlier, when I was younger,  
 776 brought a doorbell, ( ) to school y'know it wz  
 777 kind of doorbell you ca:n, it's got some  
 778 sticky side to it, so you c'n put it on your  
 779 hou[se,(.) but he just brought it (.) before=  
 780 C/J: [°hh heh heh°  
 781 =putting it anywhere, and he hid it in the  
 782 room [(0.5) and so he's sitting at (.) the=  
 783 C/J: [heh heh heh heh heh heh he  
 784 T: =desk, ding dong heh [heh heh like this all heh=  
 785 C/J: [heh heh heh heh  
 786 T: =heh when the teacher found it, she was so angry  
 787 that she just broke it. like she just took it and  
 788 broke it on the ground  
 789 (3.0)  
 790 T: [°some bad kids° eh heh heh  
 791 UI: [eh heh heh heh  
 792 C: so in that day,

Tom's story in this series already elicits laughter (780, 783) when the teller delivers the main action of the story, "and he hid it in the room" (781–782). Tom describes and enacts the scene onomatopoeically: "and so he's sitting at the desk, ding dong, heh heh heh" (782, 784). Whilst this achieves the first climax as it is received with an immediate burst of laughter (785), Tom adds an additional twist to the story in elaborating on what happened when the teacher found the source (786–788). Note that he does this without being prompted by the recipient's question, as in Extract 11. Chungho's question in the first story ("did the teacher find it out?") and the way Chungho's second story were organised may have influenced the way Tom packaged this story by adding the teacher's reaction. Previous research has shown how a recipient's input/inquiry contributes to shaping the storytelling in conversation (Goodwin, 1984; Mandelbaum, 1989; Monzoni & Drew, 2009) but mostly in the vicinity of an immediately surrounding sequential environment within a single story. What we see in Extract 12 is the teller taking into account what he could surmise the recipient would be interested in knowing based on sequential evidence displayed in the prior stories. Tom's story appreciation balances orientation to the recipient's perspective by adding a teacher's reaction—a victim of such pranks—yet maintains the original stance as he formulates the upshot of the story "some bad kids," spoken in a mock serious tone followed by his own laughter.

The teller's place in the story (e.g. whether the teller was a witness of the accident or the victim of the described event) is key for the story recipient in selecting a second story (Sacks, 1995). The relevance of Sacks' observation to our analysis concerns the "tellability" of stories in a round of stories whether the teller is telling the story from the teacher's point of view or the student's point of view has quite an important consequence for working out the sequential implication of the story. Tom's

assessment shows the work to preserve the coherence of story that holds through the stories offered thus far, whilst at the same time, his assessment straddles the fine line between condoning and condemning the two positions, i.e. through the assessment he seemingly adopts the teacher's point of view "some bad kids" though it is clearly hearable also as setting up a joke. With Tom's assessment (790) and Chungho's question that follows it (792), the storytelling sequence is brought to a completion and regular turn-taking resumes.

Extract 11 contains two stories. The first story concludes with "it was awe:some," but the second story is assessed as "yeah it sucks." These polar assessments of adjacently positioned stories seem to be disjunctive. In Sacks' terms, these stories "preserve" the students' point of view yet there is a "transformation" in upshot of the second story by shifting to the teacher's perspective. This introduces a dilemma according to sequential context for the ensuing talk. Extract 11 and 12 demonstrate how what to make of the story is subject to interactional negotiation. One possibility, though not necessarily shown in these data, is that Chungho's limited English proficiency might have played a part in what his second story amounted to. In his story, the details of what his friend did are compressed into a short, unclear phrase "he i:sed" rather than being elaborated, and the teller soon moves to the next part where the focus is placed on the teacher who could not find out what was going on. Here, we are reaching the limits of transcript analysis, as we are making claims that are conjectural rather than supported by the data. However, not all details that are salient to the context are available to recording technologies (Watson, 2018), which obtains in situations of L2 learning a fortiori (Lieberman, 2013) (we shall say more about this in the conclusion).

#### 11.5.2.4 Repair Initiation and Negotiation of Appreciation Points

Extract 13 shows explicit formulation of the topic under discussion (line 03) as a "self-explicating colloquy" (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1986, p. 186). Again, this bridges the topics of "crazy things" and "cars," as Tom's story (from line 09) clarifies:

#### Extract 13: Senior prank: Feb 27 [739–793].

01 C: it's fu(h)nny  
 02 (1.2)  
 03 T: °man° we did a lot of crazy things in high school.  
 04 C: °y(h)eah .hh heh heh heh [heh heh°  
 05 T: [on the final day of (0.7) m  
 06 the graduation from my high school, (1.2) uhm (0.6) there's  
 07 usually something like uh senior prank, (0.8) so they just,  
 08 (0.6) you just do: something crazy, on the final day.  
 09 (0.3) en I had a jeep, uh- y'know big tough jeep so, (0.3)  
 10 instead of driving out, (.) on street, (0.3) I just dro:ve,  
 11 across, the front [lawn of, (0.4) of m(h)y=  
 12 C: [eh heh heh heh heh



13 T: =hi(h)gh schoo(h)l heh and out, and off the road.  
 14 UI: heh heh  
 15 T: just drove over [everything. en everyone was (.)=  
 16 J: [heh heh  
 17 T: =cheer(h) [i(h)ng eh[heh heh heh  
 18 C: [heh heh heh  
 19 J: [heh heh hh  
 20 (3.0)  
 21 ((the sound of ice in the drink jingling))  
 22 C: **um- you mean everyone liked it?**  
 23 (0.5)  
 24 T: **hm? >yeah everyone liked it.< (1.1) cu- their cars couldn't**  
 25 **do(h) [i(h)t en they thought that was [cool**  
 26 C: [hh hhe  
 27 J: [.hh  
 28 (4.0)  
 29 C: is it (.) like uh Wrangler?  
 \*UI: unidentified

Prior to Extract 13, Tom and Chungho were exchanging funny stories about driving-related pranks. Immediately before Extract 13, Tom has told a story about how he and his friends used to pull a prank on another one of his friends during his high school days by moving his car to somewhere else from where it had originally been parked. The story was well received with laughter and an assessment (line 01). Chungho's assessment triggers another commentary by the teller (line 03), which in turn launches another similar story (lines 05–11). As soon as the punchline of the story becomes available (lines 10–11 “instead of driving out on street, I just drove across the front [lawn of my high school],” the two boys burst into laughter (line 12 and 14). The story reaches its conclusion as Tom describes the event with an “extreme case formulation” (Pomerantz, 1986), “just drove over everything,” which occasions further laughter (line 16). Note that the last utterance of the story “en everyone was cheering” was interspersed with and followed by the speaker's own laugh tokens (line 17), which invite and successfully elicit laughter from the two recipients as well (lines 18, 19). With the three of them laughing together, the story seems to have properly reached a completion (Glenn, 2003). At a point where a resumption of turn-by-turn talk is relevant, the recipient Chungho initiates repair, “you mean everyone liked it?” (line 22). This is initially responded to with an open-class repair initiator (Drew, 1997) “hm?” (24), but immediately followed by a confirmation “yeah everyone liked it,” which is, in turn, followed by an account of why everyone liked it (“cuz their cars couldn't do it and they thought it was cool”).

Responses to stories display understanding or misunderstanding. The story recipient is presented with a task to come up with an understanding of the story. Laughter is one way of displaying one's understanding when appropriate and has a priority claim on the completion of funny stories (Sacks, 1974). Whilst laughter as a response to a story does not guarantee that it has been understood (see Filipi, 1998, on laughter that masks lack of understanding in a high stakes language testing context), “laugh first and talk later” does not go against the orderly property that informs intelligibility of the sequential organisation of conversation; indeed, it seems to observe a “preference organisation for sequence-initiating actions” (Robinson & Bolden, 2010).

Nevertheless, it seems a slightly odd thing to initiate repair after one exhibited an understanding through laughter.

It is interesting to note how the recipient's repair initiation is treated. Initially responded to with an open-class repair initiator, "hm?" (24), it not only elicits confirmation on the meaning of the raised trouble source, "yeah everyone liked it" but also occasions an account of why everyone liked it (24–25). In a sense, this adds redundancy to the current story. Storytellers routinely withhold explicitly stating why the told story is funny, sad or tellable. Rather, it needs to be realised through the packaging and delivery of the story. After the added account, talk resumes its turn-by-turn organisation as Chungho asks an ancillary question regarding the episode (29).

Our interest in analysing this extract is that the repair initiation occasions an account for why everyone liked it, which in turn adds an additional component to the overall sequential organisation of storytelling.

## 11.6 Discussion

We presented a range of instances that showcase how story appreciation is achieved and negotiated. Analysis identified that story appreciation can be positioned on completion of a story or may take a series of turns positioned within an extended bloc of talk. It might also take a few of the recipient's scaffolding inquiries or be reworked during a series of stories being told. This empirical observation made us realise the usefulness of approaching storytelling sequences as a family of reticulated practices. Storytelling practices whereby the two teenage boys participated in delivering and bringing off the theme of "crazy things we did as a kid" showed a variation of structures. Their skills in the L2 may have prevented them, sometimes, from delivering a punch line (Extract 11) or caused a variation in managing post punchline sequences (Kjærbeck & Asmuß, 2005) (Extract 13). Still, however, these stories remain within the family of storytelling practices, showcasing interactional achievement as a key element. It is in this sense that a gestalt-contextures approach is useful as it allows us to incorporate contextual background of the talk and structural variation of the storytelling sequences.

We noted that gestalt-contextures require analysts to look at context in a holistic manner through the analysis of a stretch of talk and that it facilitates accounting for the reflexivity of sequential and categorical aspects of the interaction in question (Watson, 1997). One area where this reflexivity of sequential and categorical aspects was particularly salient in our data was topic generating moves found in topic-bounding sequential environments (Button & Casey, 1988–1989), both in terms of topic selection and topic formulation. As demonstrated in Sect. 11.5.1, whilst topic-initiating queries found in the very first session reflected Tom's categorisation of the two boys as newcomers to the city, queries found in later sessions showed his categorisation of the two boys as male adolescents by tapping into common sense knowledge of supposedly common interests of male teenage boys, e.g. cars and

gaming. These inquiries would lead to a round of stories offered and shared in the unfolding conversation.

Our data support and elaborate Sacks' observations on stories that suggest these are occasioned as stories of a particular kind. For example stories are designed to fit within a series that share a similar profile, such as topic, place of the teller, e.g. reporting first-person or second-hand events or having a congruent moral upshot. Series of stories are told within a pattern that is established, maintained, and transformed by "parties to the conversation" (Sacks et al., 1978, pp. 22–23). In this chapter, we have presented data showing that the upshot of stories—what a story was "really about"—is a permeable matter, contingent upon the interactional production of the story and how it is treated by recipients within a story's duration or upon its completion.

## 11.7 Conclusion and Recommendations

Producing a story can be a challenging task for L2 speakers as they need to work on both micro-level utterance construction as well as tracking sequential implicativeness of the story. L2 speakers might easily lose sight of the sequential implicativeness of the story as they are struggling with managing language issues in storytelling (Lee & Hellermann, 2020) or vice versa. One of our analytic foci in this study concerned the sequential implicativeness of story appreciation. Teachers can help L2 storytellers by drawing their attention to the significance of the sequential implicativeness of a story. Language teachers can instruct L2 learners to pay attention to story prefaces or instructions for hearing the story and to ask themselves if their story assessments cohere with a teller's instructions for hearing provided in the story preface. A disjuncture between a story's upshot and the recipient's understanding of it can be an accountable matter.

We presented instances where participants are engaged in telling a series of second stories. Telling second stories is an indicator of sophistication. Ryave (1978) notes how second stories are those which are fitted to previous stories, in procedurally "refined" ways, e.g. by taking the gist of a prior story as the basis for a second or by telling stories with a similar moral upshot or on the same topic. These aspects for second stories were displayed in the extracts analysed. Sacks' (1995) term for this phenomenon was "tellability" or whether a second story can be seen to be relevant to its prior story (for Sacks, along topical, characterological, or moral lines). The "achieved relatedness" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, pp. 295–296) of second stories to prior stories indicates participants' interactional competence as it displays that the recipient has understood the significance of a story well enough to provide a second that is seen as relevant by parties to the conversation. Therefore, we argue that telling of second stories "fitted to" prior stories is an accountable feature of progress in the development of interactional competence.

As evidenced through the data analysis, stories are interactional achievements. Stories are collaborative—the burden is not shouldered solely by the teller. This can

lead to a significant pedagogical implication. In our data, Tom's contribution as a story recipient can provide a good example for how one can support the students in telling stories, i.e. by providing continuers, story assessments and prompts, which were on topic and encouraging the teller to take the topic forward and asking questions that help build story appreciation points (see also Theobald, 2019). In this chapter, we have named such turns "recipient scaffolding." Whether in L1 or L2, delivering a fitted story and eliciting recipient response require a specific interactional competence beyond merely knowing the language. Both students and teachers can benefit from learning about sequential organisation and the interactive nature of storytelling in conversation. Having this knowledge will help students understand the nature of the task (storytelling) better, whilst teachers can get an insight on how to design classroom activities related to storytelling and how they can support students in performing those activities. Appreciating the interactional nature of storytelling sequences allows practitioners to understand learners' storytelling performance as a variable and context-specific one, thus placing more emphasis on the teacher's scaffolding roles.

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