

**Please cite as:**

Enfield, N. J. (2007). Repair sequences in interaction. In A. Majid (Ed.), *Field Manual Volume 10* (pp. 100-103). Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.  
doi:[10.17617/2.468724](https://doi.org/10.17617/2.468724).

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**Background**

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## REPAIR SEQUENCES IN INTERACTION<sup>14</sup>

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<b>Project:</b>	Multimodal Interaction
<b>Task:</b>	Relying on video recordings of spontaneous, naturally-occurring interaction, isolate sequences involving problems of speaking, hearing or understanding for analysis.
<b>Goal of task:</b>	To investigate the range of practices that a language uses to address problems of speaking, hearing and understanding in conversation.
<b>Prerequisite</b>	You must have consulted “Building a corpus of multimodal interaction in your field site” .

### Background

This sub-project is concerned with analysis and cross-linguistic comparison of the mechanisms of signaling and redressing ‘trouble’ during conversation. Speakers and listeners constantly face difficulties with many different aspects of speech production and comprehension during conversation. A speaker may mispronounce a word, or may be unable to find a word, or be unable to formulate in words an idea he or she has in mind. A listener may have troubling hearing (part of) what was said, may not know who a speaker is referring to, may not be sure of the current relevance of what is being said. There may be problems in the organization of turns at talk, for instance, two speakers’ speech may be in overlap.

When trouble is apparent (it is not always noticed), interactants have a range of ways of signaling/locating it, and redressing it. We are interested in the structural properties of these techniques, in the nature of the troubles that demand repair during conversation, and in the socio-cultural motivations and consequences of speakers’ employment of the technologies of repair. These issues are of interest to a number of research fields relating to interaction. In sociology and conversation analysis, where most of the work on repair in conversation has been done, the phenomenon has two major points of interest. It is firstly of intrinsic interest as a site of a particular kind of interactionally achieved structural organization. Secondly, it is a tool for the achievement of mutual understanding, or intersubjectivity, and ongoing clarification of stance and other aspects of ongoing social relationships. In psycholinguistics, interest in repair has been mainly restricted to self-repair and its implications for models of self-monitoring during speech production (Levelt 1983, 1989). Linguistics has traditionally bracketed out these perturbations of the linguistic code, regarding them as performance errors arising from the exigencies of usage. But recent traditions (e.g. Fox et al. 1996) are recognizing that conversation-oriented mechanisms are structures worthy of description in their own right, and that mechanisms of repair can interact in interesting ways with language-specific morphosyntax.

‘Trouble’ in conversation comes in many forms, often differing with regard to who it is troublesome *for*.

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<sup>14</sup> Previous versions of this entry appeared in the 2003 and 2004 field manuals.

Speaker-centered trouble	Hearer-centered trouble	Dyad-centered trouble
mispronunciation; inappropriate word selection; can't remember name, etc.	problem hearing what was said; not sure if an inference was intended; can't identify a person referred to, etc.	speech is in overlap; speech is out of sequence; unsure who is intended address, etc.

Table 1. Some examples of kinds of trouble for speaker/self and hearer/other, and for the dyad.

There is a distinction between *initiation* of repair and the *repair* itself. These may each be done either by speaker/self or by hearer/other:

### Initiation

	Self	Other
<b>Repair</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Other</b>
	<b>Other</b>	<b>Other</b>

Table 2. Some possibilities for initiation and repair, by self, and by other. (The repair is double-underlined, and initiation, if distinct from the repair itself, is single-underlined)

The signals involved in initiation and repair can be of various types, and can appear in various locations with respect to the trouble source. Here are some invented examples:

Example	Type of initiation/repair	Location
<i>Turn <u>lef-</u> no, <u>right</u></i>	word cutoff, lexical form 'no'	at trouble source
<i>Turn <u>leffffff-</u> <u>I mean right</u></i>	word stretch, lexical form 'I mean'	at trouble source
<i>Turn left, <u>er</u>, <u>right</u></i>	editing expression <i>er</i>	immediately after trouble source
John: <i>Turn left</i> Bill: <i>OK, let me change lanes</i> John: <i><u>Oh no, I meant right</u></i>	lexical forms 'Oh no' plus 'I meant'	second turn after trouble source
John: <i>Turn left</i> Bill: <i>((gives quizzical look))</i> John: <i><u>I mean turn right</u></i>	initiation by facial expression, repair by lexical form 'I mean'	initiation at next turn after trouble, repair at second turn after trouble

Table 3. Some types and locations of initiation and repair

Some features of repair are done non-linguistically, and it is important to look out for this in your video recordings. In the last example in the above table, Bill's puzzled look functions to initiate repair of John's troublesome utterance *Turn left*.

A point of interest is the frequency, both absolute and relative, of these patterns. Analysis of English and some other languages reveals that self-repair is more common in those languages. It is yet to be tested whether this is true cross-linguistically.

NOTE: Many cases of repair are more subtle than the simple examples given above suggest. In some cases, the source of trouble relates to interpretation, rather than some problem with pronunciation or word selection. For example:

Turn 1 A: It's quite cool in here.  
Turn 2 B: OK, I'll close the window.  
Turn 3 A: No I like it like this.

Here, A's Turn 1 was meant as a comment on the room temperature, but it was taken by B to be an indirect request, as revealed by B's response in Turn 2. Turn 1 is not apparent as a trouble source until B 'transforms it into one', by displaying that s/he has interpreted it in a way that was not intended by the speaker who produced it. So, what's being repaired in Turn 3 is *an inference* derivable from Turn 1, and an interpretation of the type of speech act it is supposed to be. Here is a similar example from an American English conversation, in which H is talking about his fear of crossing bridges (example from Schegloff 1992):

Turn 1 H: Whaddiyuh afraid of.  
Turn 2 C: I dun'know, see uh  
Turn 3 H: Well I mean waitam'n. What kind of fear izzit.

H's Turn 1 turns out to be problematic when C reveals his interpretation of it at Turn 2. Turn 1 was meant as an information question 'What is the cause of your fear?', but C apparently takes it to be questioning the idea that there is anything to be afraid of. C's utterance in Turn 2 displays this interpretation, causing H to repair in Turn 3. The repair is achieved by H's disambiguation in Turn 3 of the utterance in Turn 1.

### Research questions

- 1) What are the practices used to initiate repair?
- 2) What are the practices used to do repair?
- 3) Is there evidence that one type of repair or one practice is preferred over others?
- 4) Are there constraints on the contexts in which particular types of repair are performed?

### Task

1) Relying on video tapes of maximally informal speech events (See 'Building a corpus of multimodal interaction in your field site', above), researchers are asked to first survey their language for the range of practices or ways that speakers and hearers initiate and do repair in conversation. Data should consist of at least 3 different interactions, with different speakers involved.

2) Make a collection of examples of repair, identifying every case of repair (broadly construed) in your corpus. Ideally, your corpus will already be fully transcribed, and locating examples can be done by reading carefully through the transcriptions, and looking carefully at the media files. Also, while you are transcribing new material, you can be noting examples for later reference. It is also possible (but more difficult and less reliable) to view the pre-transcribed material and note the location of examples of repair, in order to

later transcribe just the points of interest. This is an option if you don't have time to do full transcriptions, but is not recommended.

NOTE: Remember to pay close attention to the contribution of visually available information.

### **Analysis**

The data for this sub-project are the collected examples (i.e., the transcriptions and the corresponding media segments in which the repair sequence occurs). Any number of examples will be useful, but each researcher preferably should have over a hundred examples, ideally several hundred.

Step 1: Individual researchers make a draft categorization of the full set of examples. This means examining all the examples, and sorting them into classes based on their functional and structural properties.

Some parameters which could guide your analysis are:

- What is the trouble source and what is its nature?
- Who is initiating repair, i.e., who is drawing attention to the trouble, beginning a repair sequence?
- Where/when is the initiation being done in relation to the trouble?
- How is initiation being signaled?
- Who is doing the repair, i.e., who is explicitly redressing the problem in the trouble source?
- Where/when is the repair being done in relation to the trouble?
- By what mechanism is the repair achieved?

Step 2: A series of MMI meeting slots will be reserved for presentation of these analyses to colleagues. The categories should be presented, with multiple examples of each (also as media files), and with full support of the analysis using appropriate evidence. As these meetings continue, members of the subproject may sharpen their analyses, and together some generalizations may emerge from comparison of repair across languages.

### **Outcomes**

(1) Researchers will have an analysis of how repair (or some practice for doing repair) is organised in their language/culture. Thus, they should end up with at least one publishable article based on this analysis likely in the domain of the ways repair can be initiated/performed, which type of repair is structurally preferred, and whether there are normative constraints on the types of repair that are used in the community. A particular interest is other-initiated repair.

(2) The Multimodal Interaction project is interested in collecting results for a major article that compares the practices of doing repair cross-linguistically.

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