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Transforming Participation Frameworks in Multi-Party Mandarin Conversation: The Use of Discourse Particles and Body Behavior

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Within the framework of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), this paper investigates how Mandarin speakers negotiate their participatory roles in multi-party conversation through the use of linguistic and non-linguistic resources. Specifically, the present paper focuses on two sequential contexts: (1) parties who have otherwise been playing a marginal role try to make themselves focal, and (2) others incorporate a previously not actively participating party.

Close examination of video- and audio-recorded naturally occurring ordinary conversation reveals that one of the linguistic resources recurrently employed in these two contexts is a turn-initial discourse particle plus an additional turn component. The data also show that different particle-plus-other component structures are regularly accompanied by different body movements, which seem to embody the speaker's orientation to the degree of disjunctiveness of what is going to be projected in the particle-prefaced turn and how it relates to the current organization of interaction and its topic.

INTRODUCTION

The organization of turn-taking is one of the most fundamental practices in conversation. Although the phenomenon of turn-taking is obvious, the distribution of turns to participants is by no means random or free. From a conversation-analytic perspective, the recurrent orderly transition from one speaker to another has been described as organized by a set of rules or practices with ordered options that operate on a turn-by-turn basis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).

Despite the practices that organize turn-taking, previous studies have shown that parties in conversation may not always have equal access to the domain of discourse. This is especially obvious in multi-party conversation where participants commonly display different levels of competence, expertise, and knowledge of the talk in progress through different use of gestures, intonation, word selection, and characterization of events (Goodwin, 1986; Schegloff, 1992). Nonetheless, as these studies have also shown, participation status and structure are not pre-determined; coparticipants in conversation may use available resources to actively negotiate and establish their standing vis-à-vis each other and help re-shape the structure of the talk.

Based on ten hours of video- and audio-recorded naturally occurring multi-party Mandarin conversation, the present project investigates how Mandarin speak-

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ers negotiate their participatory roles through the use of linguistic and non-linguistic resources. More specifically, the present paper focuses on two sequential contexts: (1) parties who have otherwise been playing a marginal role try to make themselves focal, and (2) others incorporate a previously not actively participating party. These two contexts are similar in that in both contexts, coparticipants in conversation attempt to transform the participation framework in a way that a previously marginally involved party is able to move to a state of full engagement in the on-going talk.

In the following, I will first show one specific linguistic construction, i.e., a turn-initial discourse particle plus an additional turn component, and explicate how this construction can be exploited by parties in conversation to achieve the interactional goal of incorporating a marginally involved participant in the previously described sequential environments. I will then show different patternings of body movements regularly associated with different discourse particle-plus-other component structures, and demonstrate how such association seems to embody the speaker's orientation to and analysis of what he/she attempts to project subsequently vis-à-vis the current organization of interaction and its topic.

INTERACTIONAL USES OF DISCOURSE PARTICLES: THE TARGET LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTIONS

In Mandarin Chinese, there are a variety of particles, which may stand alone or occur before or after some kind of morphosyntactic units[1]. These particles have been traditionally labeled as *zhu ci* "helping words", *yuqi ci* "mood words" (Li, 1955; Lü & Zhu, 1953; Wang, 1955), "sentence-final particles" (Li & Thompson, 1981), or "affective particles" (Hsu, 1996). As most of these terms suggest, these particles are essentially discourse-dependent: they often do not have a definite denotative or referential meaning, but are mainly used, among other things, to convey speaker's attitude, feeling, stance, and/or disposition in a discourse context.

Previous research into Mandarin particles has focused primarily on their semantic and/or pragmatic meanings (e.g. Chao, 1968; Li & Thompson, 1981; Alleton, 1981; Chu, 1984; King, 1986; Shi & Zhang, 1995). Yet, in the course of a larger study investigating the import and functions of various Mandarin discourse particles (Wu, 1997a, 1997b), it is found that these particles have interactional uses as well, and among other actions, are frequently exploited by parties in conversation to transform the participation framework for the on-going talk. This specific use of discourse particles typically takes the form of a particle-plus-other component structure, with the particle in the turn-initial position, as illustrated by the arrowed turns in the following two examples.

(i) (Tea Time A057)
11W: jiao wo jiao- [%sunny% huo jiao %shiny%
call me call sunny or call shiny
W: ***call me- [%Sunny% or call me %Shiny%.***

12H: → **[ei,** jinniuzuo de ren, shi bu shi, dongzuo bijiao man
PRT Taurus ASSC person be N be movement relatively slow
H: ***[ei, Is it true that people born under Taurus usually do things***
[[slower?

13W: [(two coughs)

(ii) (CS Party 057A)
12 (1.0)

13H: → **a?** ni yao mai lai hui.
PRT you ASP buy round:trip
a? You'll buy a round-trip (ticket)?

14L: dui a. na %eventually% ni hai shi hui yong dao a.
right PRT that eventually you still be ASP use RES PRT
(That's) right. You'll still %eventually% need that.

As I will show in the following discussion, although the use of this type of turn design can figure in the integration of marginally involved participants in multi-party conversation, this action is regularly accomplished differently in *ei*-prefaced and *a*-prefaced turns. In the former, the particle *ei*, which is an "interruption marker" (Wu, 1997b), usually prefaces an utterance that launches a "unilateral topic shift" (Heritage, forthcoming) and projects recipient commitment to further talk by reference to the proposed new topical point. In the latter, the particle, a^2, is used in the speaker's attempt to further pursue or question what has been brought up in the earlier talk (Wu, ibid.); it regularly prefaces a question which prompts further on-topic talk with reference to the proposed question/problem.

INCORPORATING A PREVIOUSLY MARGINALLY INVOLVED PARTY

Fragments (1) and (2) exemplify cases in which a particle-prefaced turn is used to involve a previously inactive participant. These two excerpts are taken from a six-party conversation among a group of friends/colleagues[3], recorded in Taiwan. In this conversation, one of the participants, R, who was tape-recording this occasion, appeared to limit her participation from time to time by maintaining the role of an observer/overhearer. Such peripheral participation from R, when it lasted too long, would normally be noted and be attended to by the other coparticipants. During those moments, one of the practices that the other coparticipants recurrently deployed to re-engage her in the talk is the use of an *ei*-

or *a*-prefaced turn.

In fragment (1) below, the coparticipants are clarifying the identities of three of their colleagues they criticized in the immediately preceding sequence for S, using the first name of each of these colleagues (i.e. "Pei", "Pei", "Ling")[4] to hint at whom they are referring to.

(1) (Tea Time: sb240))

1W: pei- pei- ling- ma. you liang ge pei le ma. [a duo jia yi ge ling ma
Pei Pei Ling PRT have two M Pei CRS PRT PRT more add one M Ling PRT
"Pei"-"Pei" "Ling". There are already two people named "Pei". [And (you) just add one more person whose first name is "Ling".

2L: [zai jia yi ge ling ma
more add one M Ling PRT
[Just add one more person whose first name is "Ling".

3S: ou. ou.
PRT PRT
Oh. Oh.

4W: shenme shenme ling ma. aiyou
what what Ling PRT (exclamation)
(Her name was) something something "Ling". Aiyou.

5F: henghenghengheng
(laugh)
henghenghengheng

6S: dui la. mei cuo la.
right PRT N wrong PRT
Right. That's right.

7W: heng, ni shi Xinxin de haishi wo shi Xinxin [de a.
PRT you be Xinxin ASSC or I be Xinxin ASSC PRT
Hey! Are you working in the Xinxin (Middle School)[5] or [me?

8L: [ei, ni bu yao hui,
PRT you N ASP return

qu yanjiu jieguo women dou ting dao women zai piping renjia.
DIR research consequently we all hear RES we ASP criticize others
→ ***[ei, (I hope) when you go back to study (the data), you won't just find us criticizing others.***

9R: hhhh
(laugh)
hhhhhh

10L: zhe:xie ren yuanlai jianghua [(.....)
these people turn:out speak
So these people all speak [(.....

11H [(cough)

12S ha! (zhe zhong ren. [..)
PRT this type people
Ha! (These people [..)

13H: [keshi ta yiding hui- zuihou yao gaosu
but she definitely ASP finally have:to tell

14 women ta yao yanjiu shenme. yao:bu:ran women juedui [bu neng- fang
we she ASP research what otherwise we definitely N can release

ta hui qu.
she return DIR

[But she definitely will- In the end she has to tell us what she wants to research on. Otherwise, we definitely will not [let her go.

15R [hhhhh
(laugh)
[hhhhhh

16 (people laugh)

Note that throughout the clarifying sequence (lines 1-6) (and the immediately previous one), R has not participated in the talk. In line 8, one of the coparticipants, L, disengages herself from the on-going conversational cluster and attempts to incorporate R in the conversation through an *ei*-prefaced turn. Note also that this *ei*-prefaced utterance not only receives a response from the recipient (line 9) but also transforms the topic of the talk in progress (lines 10-16).

In addition to the particle *ei*, another particle, *a*, is also frequently employed to incorporate a peripheral conversational coparticipant. Example (2) is a case in point. This example occurs at the end of a story-telling sequence, in which one of the coparticipants, W, is describing her culture shock experiences in the US.

(2) (Tea Time: sb085)
1W: chi wan- ba dian duo de feiji ye.
eat RES eight o'clock over ASSC airplane PRT
When they finished (the dinner), (they went off) on an eight-something flight!

2W: ba dian sishi de feiji ye. jiu dengyu shuo chi wan fan
eight o'clock forty ASSC airplane PRT then equal say eat RES meal

jiu zou ren.
then leave person
Eight-forty flight! That is to say, they took off right after the meal.

3W: ranhou duibuqi, duibuqi. yao zou le.
then sorry sorry ASP leave CRS
And then "Sorry, sorry, we gotta go."

4L: hhhh
(laugh)
hhhh

5H: **a** rujen lei. nimen- zai nabian dou gen: (0.8) nimen nabian zhongguo
PRT Rujen PRT you at there all with you there Chinese

6H: ren hen duo ma.
people very many Q
→ ***a How about Rujen? You- with whom over there (0.8) Are there a lot of Chinese people?***

7R: taiwan ren duo.
Taiwan people many
A lot of people from Taiwan.

8 (further talk about R's life in the US)

The *a*-prefaced turn in line 5 is deployed by another coparticipant, H, to invite R to join in the conversation after R's long lack of involvement in this sequence and succeeds in projecting further talk from R by reference to the proposed question.

As examples (1) and (2) show, both the *ei*-prefaced utterance and the *a*-prefaced utterance can be used to incorporate a marginally involved party, however, this is also typically made possible by different actions accomplished in both of these particle-prefaced turns. On the one hand, the *a*-prefaced utterance attempts to provide an opportunity for the marginally involved participant to generate further on-topic talk (i.e., the talk about life in the US). On the other, the *ei*-prefaced utterance is topically more disjunctive; it does not *continue* the talk on the general topic of the immediately preceding sequence, i.e., critical of fellow teachers, but rather initiates a topic shift by talking *about* that topic, i.e., making relevant the import/consequence of their criticizing fellow teachers in the prior sequence.

Note also that the different degrees of abruptness involved in the initiation of the turns prefaced with *a* and *ei* are also reflected in the ways in which they are launched relative to the turn currently in progress: While the *a*-prefaced utterance is produced at a turn-transition relevance space and after the completion of the telling, the *ei*-prefaced utterance is initiated in overlap with the prior utterance, while the other coparticipants are still engaged in the prior talk.

The differences between the turns prefaced with *a* and *ei*, as illustrated in examples (1) and (2), are by no means idiosyncratic. These differences also hold true when peripheral coparticipants try to make themselves focal through the use of a particle-prefaced turn, as will be discussed in the next section.

PERIPHERAL COPARTICIPANTS MAKING THEMSELVES FOCAL

Examples (3) and (4) below demonstrate another context where the *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns are used to integrate marginally involved participants. In these two examples, the particle-prefaced turns are used by marginally involved participants to make themselves focal in the current organization of interaction.

Example (3) is taken from the same multi-party conversation as examples(1) and (2). The targeted particle-prefaced turn is found in line 12. Immediately preceding this excerpt are two on-going conversational clusters, where H, L, S were involved in one conversation and W, R and F were involved in another. Without going into much detail about that schisming sequence, suffice it to note that after the schisming resolves in line 8, W starts to tell a story about how she got her English name, "Gloria". In line 10, she quickly directs her eye gaze to L when she introduces her astrological sign (i.e. *I am a Taurus*); she then returns her eye gaze to the previous interlocutor, F, when she follows up with an account of how her astrological sign is relevant to her selection of the English name (i.e. *so my name has to mean something shiny.*)

(3) (Tea Time)

	3W: wode mingzi jiao %gloria%. my name call Gloria ***My English name is %Gloria%.***
(1.5)	
	4 a tamen jiu wen wo shuo (ei?) PRT they then ask I say PRT ***And then they asked me,***
(H turns to L; L then directs eye gaze to H and smiles) [_____] 5 H: (.....)	5 weishenme nide mingzi jiao %gloria.% why your name call Gloria ***"Why are you called %"Gloria?%""***
6 ***(*L redirects eye gaze to W; H puts her hand under her jaw.)***	6 wo shuo yinwei zhe ge *hou, I say because this M PRT ***I said this is (because...)***
7 ***(*H directs eye gaze to W)***	7 wo jiu gen tamen *jiang yi ge gushi.= I then with them speak one M story ***Then I told them a story.***

(W does some gesturing then looks at F)
[_____

8W: =wo shuo yinwei you yi tian wo qu fan na ge- (.) na ge xingzuo de
I say because have one day I go turn that M that M astrology ASSC

shu. hou
book PRT
=I said because one day I went to read an- (.) an astrology book, you know,

9F: hen.
PRT
hen.

(W turns gaze to L) (W turns gaze to F)
[_____] [_____
10W: wo shi jinniuzuo. suoyi wode mingzi yao hen shanliang de.
I be Taurus so my name need very shining NOM
I am a Taurus. So my name has to mean something shiny.

Up to this point, another coparticipant, H, who had actively participated in the immediately preceding sequence did not receive any direct attention from the current speaker. In line 12 below, she launches an *ei*-prefaced turn (i.e. *ei, Is it true that Taurus usually do things slower?*), which is produced in overlap with, and disrupts, W's telling in line 11 (i.e. *I said they should call me Sunny or Shiny.*).

11W: wo shuo tamen yao jiao wo jiao- [sunny huo jiao shiny
I say they should call me call sunny or call shiny
I said they should call me- [Sunny or call me Shiny.

(W turns gaze to H)
(H puts down her right hand, and raises her left hand to point at W, and then rests her chin on her left hand)
[____[
12H: [**ei**, jinniuzuo de ren, shi bu shi,
PRT Taurus ASSC person be N be

13H: dongzuo bijiao [[man.
movement relatively slow
→ ***[ei, Is it true that people born under Taurus=***
H: ***=usually do things [[slower?***

14W: [[(2 coughs)

(H puts her hand over her eyes and buries her head in her arms)
[_____}
15 (0.8)

16F?: [zhende ma. hhh
really Q
[Really? hhhh

(W still stares at H)
[_____
17W: [wo bu zhidao ei.
I N know PRT
[I don't know.

(W lowers her head ; H raises her head, smiling)
[_____]
18 (0.3)

(Lateral head shakes from W; W starts to write)
[_____
19W: wo bu zhidao.
I N know
I don't know.

20R: jinniu shi ji yue de.
Taurus be which month NOM
Which month is Taurus?

21?: heng?
heng
Heng?

22W: siyue
April
April

(Slight lateral head shakes from H)
[_____
23H: bu shi sikao man nei.
N be thinking slower PRT
(I don't mean they) think slower.

24?: hai shi wuyue]
or be May] ***(W raises head)***
Or May?]
]
25? siyue.]
April
April

(Slight lateral head shakes from H; W looks at L) (H turns gaze to L) (W tilts head)
[_____ [__ [_____
26L: na ni gen- chen shi yiyang de (....%kuang:: ga ei ha -hamang%
then you with Chen be same ASSC look will irritating
Then you have the same sign as Chen's (..) who %looks so::: ir- irritating.%

(W nods, lowers her head, and then starts to write)
[___
27W: tch!
tch
tch!

28 (.)

(S turns gaze to L; L turns gaze to S)
[_____
29S: tongyang you gexing.
same have character
(Both) are quite strong-willed.

30W: zhende.
true
True.

Note that even though H buries her head in her arms after she finishes her question (i.e. line 15), the use of this *ei*-prefaced question *does* generate responses from W in lines 17 and 19 (i.e. *I don't know.*) It also succeeds in transforming the topic of the on-going talk, shifting the topic away from how W got her English name to subsequent discussions about this astrological sign (lines 20-25) and the disposition of people born under it (lines 26-30).

Example (4) demonstrates how an *a*-prefaced turn can also be used to serve the same interactional function. This fragment is taken from a seven-party conversation among a group of friends, recorded in the US. The *a*-prefaced turn (line 13) occurs at the possible completion of an argument sequence (lines 1-11), which is shown below.

(4) (CS Party 057A)
1X: jushuo hua hang hen pianyi a.
I:heard China Airlines very cheap PRT
(I heard) that China Airlines is very cheap.

2 (.)
3C: [(tamen geng) pianyi.
they more cheap
[(They are) cheaper.

4W: [bu hui ba. hua hang hai shi hen gui a.
N ASP PRT China Airlines still be very expensive PRT
[Not likely. China Airlines is still very expensive.

5X: jushuo xianzai yijing bijiao pianyi le a.
I:heard now already relatively cheap CRS PRT
I heard (it's) cheaper now.

6 (1.5)

7X: [keshi yao renshou shenming- renshou shenming de weixian.
but need tolerate life tolerate life ASSC risk
[But (you) need to tolerate the danger to your life.

(Directing eye gaze to L)
[_____
8W: [keneng yao liu bai duo ba. (...) dan cheng (...)
probably need six hundred more PRT one:way
[(It'll) probably cost more than six hundred. (...) one way (...)

9L: wo yao mai- lai hui de a.
I ASP buy round:trip NOM PRT
I'll buy- a round trip ticket.

10W: ou.
PRT
Oh.

11L: lai hui bijiao pianyi a.
round:trip relatively cheap PRT
Round-trip tickets are cheaper.

In this sequence, three coparticipants (i.e. W, C, and X) are involved in an argument about the fares to Taiwan. In line 8, W starts to disengage himself from that argument by gazing towards another coparticipant, L, and doing an informing for him. This informing nonetheless displays a problematic understanding of L's intention, who plans to purchase a round-trip ticket rather than a one-way ticket even though he will be moving back to Taiwan permanently. In line 9, L first makes a clarification that he will buy a round-trip ticket. He then volunteers an account for it in line 11 (i.e. *Round-trip tickets are cheaper.*).

It needs to be pointed out that throughout this sequence, one of the coparticipants, H, has been focusing on the food only, without even having any eye contact with the other parties. Yet, after the (1.0) second of gap (line 12), he looks up towards the prior speaker, L, and launches an *a*-prefaced turn (*a? You'll buy a round-trip ticket?*).

(H pulls out his right hand to pick up some food)
[____
12 (1.0)

(H looks up towards L and then freezes his posture)
[____
13H: → a? ni yao mai lai hui.
PRT you ASP buy round:trip
a? You'll buy a round-trip (ticket)?

(L gazes at H) (H drops eye gaze and starts to get some food)
[__ [_____
14L: dui a. na eventually ni hai shi hui yong dao a.
right PRT that eventually you still be ASP use RES PRT
(That's) right. You'll still eventually need that.

15H: danshi ta na ge bu shi hui expire ma. shuo ji ge- duojiu mei yong jiu
but it that M N be ASP expire Q say several M how:long N use then

16H: [hui expire.=
ASP expire

17X: [dui a.=
right PRT

H: ***But isn't that it will expire? (If you) don't use it in several- for some time, it***
H ***[will then expire.=***
X: ***[(That's) right.=***

18L: =[[dui a.
right PRT
=***[[(That's) right.***

Like the *ei*-prefaced turn in example (3), this *a*-prefaced question obtains the recipient's eye gaze and responses (i.e., *That's right. You'll still eventually need that.*) and helps establish the recipient, H, as a focal, 'official' interlocutor in the conversation.

Despite the common job the *ei*-prefaced and the *a*-prefaced turns perform in examples (3) and (4) (i.e. making a peripheral participant focal), the movement from peripheral to central involvement is accomplished by these two particle-prefaced turns in many different ways.

First, the *a*-prefaced turn (line 13) in example (4), like the one in example (2) (i.e., *a How about Rujen?*) is related topically to the prior sequence. In fact, a closer look at this excerpt shows that this *a*-prefaced turn contains a repeat of the prior speaker's utterance in line 9 (i.e. *I'll buy a round-trip ticket.*), which was used to address another interlocutor, W. In this regard, this *a*-prefaced turn, which is skillfully designed to retrieve an utterance previously directed to someone else to further pursue it, is exploited as a resource by an *overhearer* in the conversation to launch a turn[7].

On the other hand, the *ei*-prefaced turn (line 12) in fragment (3), like that in fragment (1), is used to initiate a unilateral topic shift. Namely, the speaker of the *ei*-prefaced utterance manages a topic shift by taking up a bit of information contained in what the prior speaker has said in the prior turn (i.e., the astrological sign of Taurus), which was nonetheless *not* the focus of that talk; this speaker then topicalizes this information through a question, shifting the topic away from how W got her English name, which is related to her astrological sign, to a discussion of the properties associated with this sign.

Like those in fragments (1) and (2), the *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns in fragments (3) and (4) also differ in the ways in which they are launched relative to the turn currently in progress. While the *ei*-prefaced question is produced before the story was brought to a possible completion, the *a*-prefaced question is

duced after the immediately preceding sequence comes to a possible completion point.

DIFFERENT PATTERNINGS OF BODY MOVEMENTS ACCOMPANYING TURNS PREFACED WITH *A* AND *EI*

In addition to the differences in how they relate to the current organization of interaction and its topic, the *ei*-prefaced and the *a*-prefaced turns are also associated with differences in the accompanying body movements. In the data corpus, overwhelmingly, the speaker of an *ei*-prefaced turn directs eye gaze towards the intended recipient *and* deploys some pointing/selecting gestures at the selected party; on the other hand, the speaker of an *a*-prefaced turn directs eye gaze to the intended recipient but does not display any types of gestures. These differences in the body movements can be illustrated by the four frame grabs of the particle-prefaced turns in examples (1)-(4)[8] (see end of this article).

It is important to discuss a number of issues implicated in the use of turn-initial particles and the different body movements regularly associated with them.

First, people frequently note that hand gestures can be used to secure eye gaze from anyone within the visual range, including the targeted recipient. Along this line, one might think that the use of hand gestures in an *ei*-prefaced turn is motivated by the speaker's attempt to draw the attention of other coparticipant(s) and thereby incorporate himself/herself in the conversation. This, however, does not seem to give a satisfactory account of what has been demonstrated above.

Recall that both *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns are used successfully to incorporate a marginally involved participant and that both *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns successfully help a marginally involved participant to become more involved. In other words, some *ei*-prefaced turns are by speakers who are not marginal and require no special attention getting help, and some *a*-prefaced turns are by speakers who *are* marginal. Clearly the choice between *a* and *ei* and the decision to use a hand gesture or not cannot be fully explained by the speaker's motivation to attract attention and to join in the conversation since both particles are used successfully to accomplish such actions. This is further supported by the evidence that the pointing gestures in examples (1) and (3) both occur fairly late in the turn[9]. In addition, the video data also shows that in example (3) the targeted recipient starts to attend to the speaker even before she has a chance to see the pointing gesture.

In so far as the hand gesture is regularly associated only with the turns which are topically and turn-takingly more disjunctive (i.e. the *ei*-prefaced turns), the data suggest that the use and non-use of hand gestures seem to embody the speaker's analysis of what he/she is about to project vis-à-vis the on-going talk, i.e., the degree of disjunctiveness of a particle-prefaced turn in relation to the topic and interaction of the on-going talk.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this paper demonstrates how the Mandarin discourse particles can be exploited as interactional resources in multi-party conversation. It also demonstrates how these particles are frequently used in conjunction with other non-vocal resources, such as eye gaze and hand gestures, in the speaker's attempt to transform the organization of interaction and its current topic. To recapitulate some of the important points in the present paper:

1. Turn-initial particles are found to be exploited as important interactional resources by Mandarin speakers to reshape the participation framework for a multi-party conversation. Turns prefaced with these particles are frequently used to move a party (i.e. either another coparticipant or the speaker himself/herself) from a state of marginal engagement to full engagement.
2. Both *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns are used successfully to incorporate a marginally involved party (i.e., examples (1) & (2)); both *a*-prefaced and *ei*-prefaced turns are used successfully by the marginally involved party to incorporate himself/herself (i.e., examples (3) & (4)).
3. Turns prefaced with *a* and *ei* differ in the ways in which they are occasioned topically and turn-takingly, with those prefaced with *ei* usually being more disjunctive.
4. Turns prefaced with *a* and *ei* are also accompanied by different patternings of body movements, with *ei*-prefaced turns typically used in conjunction with a pointing/selecting gesture. The different body movements seem to embody the speaker's analysis of the degree of disjunctiveness of what is going to be projected in the particle-prefaced turn and how it relates to the on-going talk.

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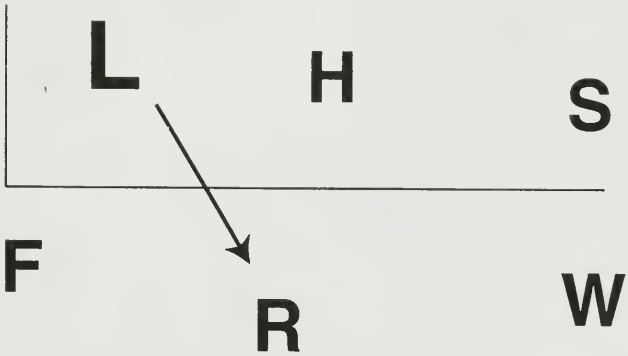
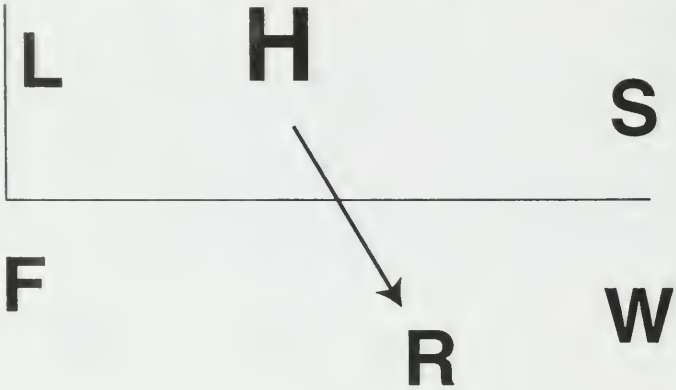
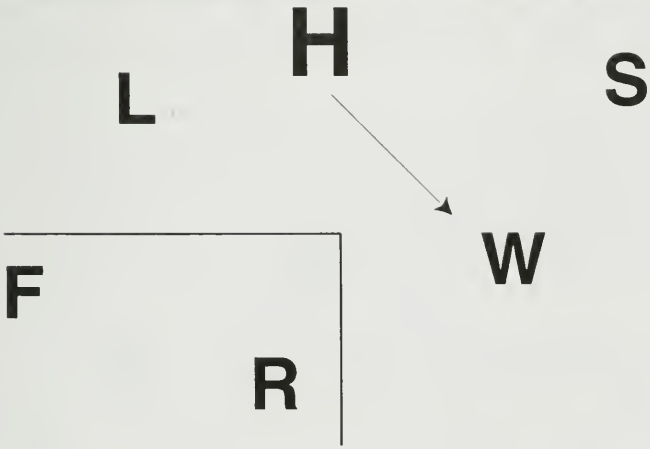
Example (1): Incorporating a marginal party
"ei, I hope when you go back to study the data you won't just find us criticizing others."



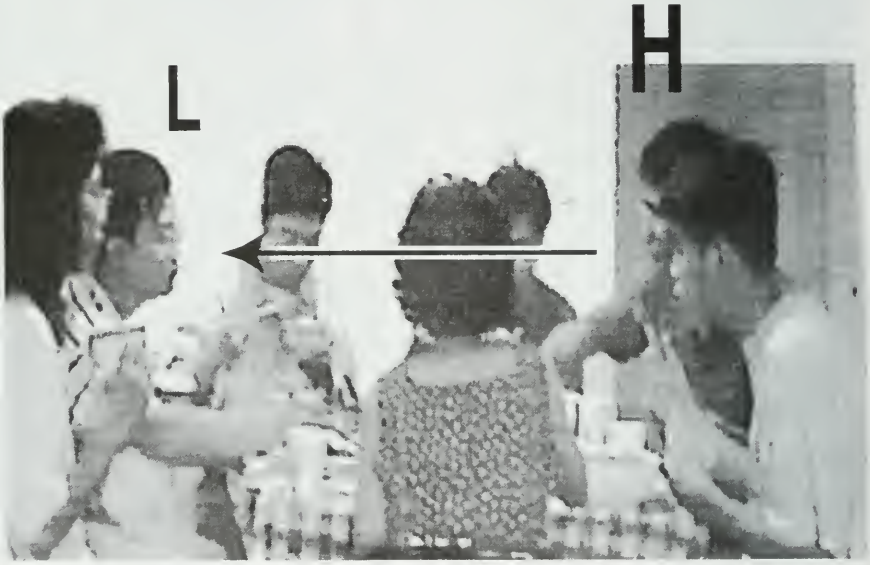
Example (2): Incorporating a marginal party
"a How about Ruijen?"

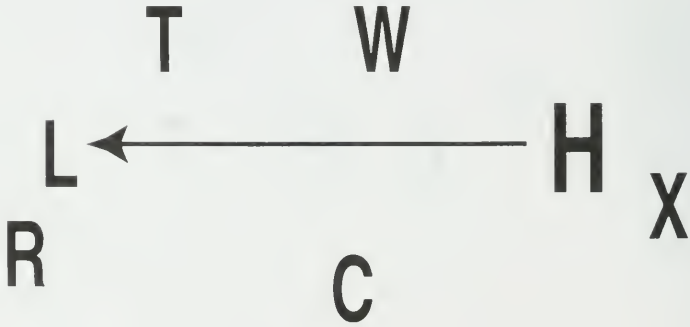


Example (3): Peripheral party making herself focal
"ei, is it true that Taurus usually do things slower?"



Example (4): Peripheral party making himself focal
"a? You'll buy a round-trip ticket?"





APPENDICES

1. Transcription Conventions

The following conventions are used in the transcripts appearing in the present paper. These conventions are following Jefferson (1984), with slight modifications.

Overlapping talk

[A left bracket indicates the point at which a current speaker's utterance is over lapped by the talk of another, which appears on the next line attributed to another speaker. If there is more than one left bracket in an utterance, then the second indicates where a second overlaps begins. Both the utterance which is overlapped and the utterance which overlaps are indicated by this symbol.

[[In cases where confusion may arise due to high frequency of overla among conversation coparticipants, a double left bracket will be used to resolve the pos sible confusion. In addition to the use of a left bracket or a double left bracket, the first lines (i.e. the romanization) for each of the overlapping utterances are aligned with each other.

Silence

(0.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a "micropause".

Code-switching

%ni m zai ou% utterance which is produced in languages other than Mandarin Chinese, such as English or Taiwanese.

Various aspects of speech delivery

:: Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just pre ceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching.

__ Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis.

__: Combinations of underlining and colons are used to indicate intonation contours.

- A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption.

°hhh Hearable aspiration.

< To mark the onset where a stretch of talk is markedly rushed or compressed.

> To mark the onset where a stretch of talk is markedly slowed.

= Equal signs are used to mark that (1) there is no interval between adjacent utter ances by different speakers, the second being latched immediately to the first, and (2) different parts of a single speaker's utterance constitute a continuous flow of speech although they have been carried over to another line, by transcript design, to accommodate an intervening interruption.

± To mark rising and falling shifts in intonation.

° ° To indicate a passage of talk which is quieter than the surrounding talk

() To show the transcriptionist's doubt on some hearing

—> To specify the target of focus in the transcription

—>> To specify THE target of focus in cases where an arrow sign has already been deployed to direct readers' attention to some turn structure in facilitating inter preting some overall sequential contexts.

(( )) To capture various non-verbal activities in interaction

2. Glossing Conventions

ASSC	Associative (*-de*)
ASP	Aspectual marker
AUX	Auxiliary
CRS	Currently relevant state (*le*)
CSC	Complex stative construction
DIR	Directional complement
M	Measure word
N	Negator
NOM	Nominalizer (*de*)
PRT	Sentential Particle
PREP	Preposition]
PRV	Perfective (*-le*)
POSS	Possession
Q	Question marker
RES	Resultative complement

NOTES

[1]Such morphosyntactic units may range from a lexical item, such as *lai a* "come *a*", *wo a* "I *a*" (Chao, 1968, 803), a phrase, such as *ta de hua a* "his words *a*" (Chao, ibid., 806), to a sentence, such as *wo bing mei zuo cuo a*. "I didn't do anything wrong *a*." (Chao, ibid., 805).
Chao (ibid.) distinguishes particles from interjections, suggesting that while particles are always unstressed and are attached to the phrases and sentences which precede them, interjections are usually stressed, delivered with a variety of intonational patterns, and always stand on their own (ibid. 795, 815). He nonetheless points out that although most interjections are not particles, and vice versa, there are a few cases of class overlap.
The present study will not distinguish particles and interjections, and will use "discourse particles" or "particles" to refer to this class of words.
[2]A separate study (Wu, 1997b) shows that there are two types of prosodically different turn-initial *a* found in the data corpus, with each of them used in different contexts. The *a* with a separate intonation contour is commonly used in the service of the speaker's attempt to respond to a perceived problem in the prior talk; the *a* which is done in the same intonation contour with the following utterance is often used when a speaker is trying to bring up/resume some earlier topic after a digression or after a lull in conversation.
[3]When the data was collected, S, L, F, H were teaching at a high school in Taiwan; W and R, their former colleagues, were on a short vacation home from the US, where they were studying.
[4]Several changes have been made to the person and the place reference in the data in order to protect the participants' anonymity.
[5] This is the name of the school where S, L, F, H were teaching.
[6]*Ni* ('you') here is used in a specific way and is used to refer to the speaker himself. (Biq, 1991; Wu, 1994)
[7]I am indebted to Emanuel Schegloff for drawing my attention to this.
[8] I thank Charles Goodwin and Anna Guthrie for their help with these frame grabs

[9] In example (1), the speaker of the *ei*-prefaced turn displays a pointing gesture when she produces *yanjiu* ('research'/'study'), as demonstrated below:

8L: [ei, ni bu yao hui,
PRT you N ASP return

(Displaying a pointing gesture)

[_____
qu yanjiu jieguo women dou ting dao women zai piping renjia.
DIR research consequently we all hear RES we ASP criticize others
[ei, (I hope) when you go back to study (the data), you won't just find us criticizing others.

In example (3), the speaker launches a series of body movements in producing the *ei*-prefaced turn. The pointing gesture occurs when the speaker produces the syllable of *zuo* in *jinniuzuo* ('Taurus'):

(H raises her left hand to point at W)
(W turns gaze to H)
(H puts down her right hand)
[____[___[
12H: [ei, jinniuzuo de ren, shi bu shi, dongzuo
PRT Taurus ASSC person be N be movement

13H: bijiao [[man.
relatively slow

[ei, Is it true that people born under Taurus=
H: ***=usually do things [[slower?***

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