NEGOTIATING STORIES:
STRATEGIC REPAIR IN ITALIAN MULTI-PARTY TALK*

Renata Testa

1. Introduction

Conversational storytelling presents an interesting
environment for empirical observation of repair phenomena
which serve specific interactional purposes. A regular
occurrence of self-repair in storytelling has been
described by Polanyi (1978) as an "unconsciuos narrative
device" ("true start", cf. Polanyi 1978:628) which is
deployed by the narrator in order to introduce a section of
background information. The following provides an example
of such occurrence in Italian conversation:

(1) (TRS2, 1985: TV programmes. Speaker A is telling about
      a concert broadcasted by the R.A.I., the Italian
      Broadcasting Corporation.)

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1 -> A;  e la rai (0.2) per il - (0.6) era l'anno santo
         'and the rai (0.2) for the - (0.6) it was the jubilee year'
2        (1.0)
3    A; ┌ 'na robba di  ┐ questo gene- ma:: tipo dieci anni fa =
        | 'something like| tha- I mean sort of ten years ago' =
4    L; └ hh uh uh       ┘
5    L; = mhm

6 -> A; = e la rai fece (0.3) pagata dal vaticano (0.3)
         'and the rai broadcasted (0.3) supported by the vatican (0.3)'
7        alle due di notte (0.2) un concerto   ... ((continua))
         'at two in the night (0.2) a  concert'... ((story continues))
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In the fragments above the narrator has just introduced the story. Before moving to the climax section, he self-interrupts in the middle of his ongoing turn (l. 1), provides some relevant background information (l. 1-2) and then resumes the main storyline by coming back to the sentence previously broken off (l. 6-7).

Occurrences of typical markers of self-repair in storytelling, such as re-starts, phrasal breaks and speech perturbations have also been noticed by Goodwin (1984: 233-234) and described as means for soliticing the recipient's gaze.
Jefferson (1978: 246) located the systematic occurrence of various forms of speech perturbations (i.e. markers of self-repair) in story-entry sequences as signals of junctures between conversational activities.
Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977: 380) point out that a typically dispreferred repair technique, namely other-correction, may be purposefully exploited by conversationalists in storytelling as a particular "sequence-type environment". In such contexts, a story recipient, by correcting the ongoing teller can have the opportunity of getting his turn, thus aligning him/herself as a co-teller.

Rather than being random or casual phenomena, the repair techniques mentioned above may be seen as accomplishing a strategic function. Such occurrences of strategic repair have typically been detected in the "telling sequence" (rather than the "preface sequence") and been treated as related to the **management of speaking turns produced during the actual narration of the story.** In particular, the repair phomema noticed by Goodwin (1984: 234) and Schegloff et al. (1977: 380) are concerned with storytelling in multiparty conversations, where some recipients are already informed and others are not, as often happens in naturally occurring storytelling.

Following such research interests, the present work focuses on descriptions of a repair strategy that, while being relevant to multiparty settings, emerges at the very beginning of stories in conversation, in what has been defined as the **story telling negotiation phase,** and draws the attention to the interactional work carried out by both the teller and recipients of the story when managing

problems of story acceptance.

In earlier work, Sacks (Fall lecture, 1971) analized the sequential development of stories in conversation and located the occurrence of an adjacency pair following the preface sequence: he noticed that the first part was produced as a request of the type "What ?" (as a question following the preface) and the story was actually delivered as a second part of the pair, that is, as an answer to that question. The analysis proposed in the present paper may be regarded as a further characterization of such conversational conduct: empirical observation of storytelling in Italian conversation [1] reveals the occurrence of an **other-initiated repair technique** emerging as an expected product of a trouble source, produced by the would-be teller in story prefaces or story characterization (cfr. Sacks, 1974:340). It is claimed that **ambiguous or implicit** mention of **story referential descriptions** may be produced by the narrator as a strategic device to prompt co-participants' intervention. Thus, the elicitation of an other-repair initiator occurs as a solicited signal warranting a legitimation for telling the story. Such occurrence of repair may be regarded as a particularly effective **story-entry procedure**, exploited by prospective tellers in order to avoid or solve problems of overt story rejections in multiparty conversations.

2. Storytelling as an object of negotiation and common consent

Telling a story in conversation involves delicate preliminary work through which conversationalists negotiate how the story will be produced and a successfull accomplishment of their narrative purpose. Within the CA approach, many studies have been concerned with 1) description of the sequential organization of the story (Sacks, 1972; 1974); 2) the relations between participants interactional organization and story structure as displayed through vocal and non vocal behaviour (Goodwin, 1984); 3) the techniques through which the story is locally occasioned and established as topically coherent with the preceding discourse content (Jefferson, 1978: 220); 4) the actual modalities exploited by the teller in getting in and out of the story ("entrance/exit talk", cf.

Jefferson, 1978).

The entry-stage (which is for our purposes the main concern) may be performed according to an economic modality (i.e. "single-turn entry device", Jefferson, 1978: 224), where story telling does not involve an explicit recipient's acceptance [2].

Other modalities require the would-be teller and his addresses exchange at least a minimal pair (i.e."two-turn sequences", cfr. Sacks, 1974: 340), thus featuring storytelling as an activity engendered out of a common interactional work and a by-product of a negotiated process [3]. Such a minimal exchange involves a first turn conveying a story-announcement and an offer/request for telling containing an initial characterization of the story, on the grounds of its newsworthy status or the surprising character of the event (cf. Sacks, 1974: 353; see also ex. 2, in this paper).

Delivery of a story-preface or pre-sequence thus implies both a checking procedure on story newsworthiness and a next turn in which co-participants display recognition and acceptance (or rejection) of the teller's narrative purpose, thus aligning themselves as story recipients or rejectors of the story.

In comparison to dyadic conversation, in multi-party talk such preliminary stage may present features of higher elaborate interactional work, in as much as issues such as getting the floor and allowance of turn-taking suspension implies for the prospective teller a process of negotiation aiming at the acquisition of a much larger consent. A variable particularly at issue is the likelihood that storytelling might be frustrated by a co-participant who already knows the story, thereby causing a failure of previous speaker's intended activity [4] (see ex. 3, 4). In such settings problems concerning the different distribution of information among co-participants requires greater conversational skills and makes the teller's task a much more delicate activity (cf. Goodwin, 1981a, chap. 5). If story-prefaces perform a checking operation on recipients' knowledge state, providing at the same time for the possible constitution of teller/recipients as distinctive conversational roles, they may also provide for

a deletion of the whole telling sequence, in the case the story happens to be shared by a co-participant (cf. Levinson, 1987: 82). As a consequence, the problem of **story legitimation** may be faced and managed by prospective tellers according to different interactional modalities.

In order to examine the procedure through which speakers handle and solve problems emerging from their interaction, the analysis will focus on a description of two fragments (ex. 3, 4), each displaying an attempt to introduce a story, by means of a story-preface. In both extracts the story is initially rejected on the grounds of its non-informative status and subsequently re-introduced following the production of an <u>other-initiation of repair</u>. Descriptions of apparently smooth story-entry talk reveals the exploitation of the same <u>self-induced-other repair</u> technique both in presence and omission of a story-preface (respectively ex. 2, 5 and 8).

3. Soliciting the request for repair

3.1.   <u>Pre-sequences and referential activity</u>

As mentioned earlier, story pre-sequences perform a distinctive referential activity through which the speaker establishes the story as a new referent of the conversation and signals its likely newsworthy status. If the story is pre-announced as new, and on such a basis offered as socially and interactionally relevant, acceptance or rejection of storytelling will be likely to occur on the same grounds (cf. ex. 3, l. 12; ex. 4, l. 7-8).

The difference between other sequential occurrences of referential activities in conversation [5] is that non-recognition of the story as a referential item leads to a successful accomplishment of the next intended action, by virtue of its newsworthy status, which legitimates narration. In other respects, prospective tellers employ the typical techniques used for referential work, requiring from their recipients a collaborative effort, where speaker's and recipients' distinctive referential technique may be clearly detectable (cf. Auer, 1984).

By establishing a referential activity in a pre-sequence, the speaker overtly signals to his recipient that referent recognition may be problematic ("explicit referential technique", cf. Auer, 1984: 632); on the same lines, a story-presequence performs the distictive function of **explicitly marking** the story as a problematic referent, soliciting an overt recipient's response on his/her ability to recognize it.

In the following excerpt (ex. 2) participants are talking about customs retrictions in different countries. At line 6, the speaker produces a typical format of story-pre-sequence, through which an event is introduced in order to emphasize the previous speaker's assertion (1.1-2). As displayed in C's turn , in the pre-sequence the prospective teller provides a cue for the story recognition, that being a reference to the main character (il fatto di quella ragazza là/ 'the story of that girl'):

(2)   (drawn from Duranti, A. 1984: 283)


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1      A;  e infatti alla frontiera - alla dogana a noi c'hanno
           'and as a matter of fact at the border - at the customs we were'
2          chiesto se portavamo animali
           'asked if we had any animals'
3          (1.5)
4      B;  mh
           'mh'
5          (1.5)
6  ->  C;  embe' non te ricordi il fatto di quella ragazza là ?
           'well don't you remember the story of that girl ?'
7          (1.0)
8      A;  stanno  facendo tutta quanta una  campagna  contro  la rabbia
           'they are doing a whole campaign against rabies'
9          che  ⌐ stanno facendo no,
           'that |  they are doing aren't they,'
10 ->  B;       |  quale ragazza ?
               ⌊  'which girl ?'
11     C;  una ragazza italiana (1.5) è andata in vacanza in
           'an Italian girl (1.5) she went on vacation in'
12         America s'è portata il gatto ...
           'the States she brought her cat ...'
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Note that although turn 6 may be seen as an offer to

narrate, so featuring the event as new for his recipient, the prospective teller characterizes the story as if it were shared by her addresse, as it is also highlighted by the presequence format (<u>non te ricordi</u>/'don't you remember'). She also issues a recognitional, namely an implicit or definite description (cf. Duranti, 1984: 282), marking it indexically with a demonstrative, <u>quella</u>/'that', which reveals that the speaker is establishing the introduced referent as a recognizable object [6].
At the same time, the exploitation of the pre-sequence question format makes relevant the absence of a recipient's response. As a first part of an adjacency pair, it projects the occurrence of an other-initiation of repair, should the story come out as new (cf.Terasaki, 1976). In so doing, she subjects the explicit/indefinite referential description (<u>una ragazza italiana</u>/ 'an Italian girl', 1.11) to a request of repair overtly produced by her addresse (1.10).

Such a referential technique features storytelling as an activity specifically prompted by another party and engendered as a product of the other-initiated repair.
It is worth noting that the other-initiation of repair not only engenders the storytelling, but also it shapes C's turn as a pre-sequence. Should recognition have occurred, the preface would have simply been ascribed the status of an utterance issued to confirm the assertions previously made by A (see A's continuation of his previous turn, after C's). Therefore, the occurrence of a request for clarification embodies a recognition of C's narrative purpose by B, an acceptance of the storytelling and carries the potential status of storypreface of the utterance into effect: the telling sequence is in fact started only after the production of referential repair, which gives priority for the floor to C even if the other-initiator is started as an interruption of the prior speaker (1.10).

Although at first sight such an example of successfull story introduction may be seen as an obvious and natural course of action, the occurrence of an interactively performed repair sequence features storytelling as an achieved accomplishment, emerging out of a tacit choice among different possible alternatives. In this regard, Schegloff (1982) points out:

"Once it has happened that 'a speaker continues' (for
example 'a teller continues his story'), that appears
entirely 'natural'; we lose sight of what were contingent
alternatives; they do not become 'ex-alternatives' or
alternatives-not-taken'; they simply disappear and leave
the achieved outcome in the splendid isolation of seeming
inescapability. For analysts this is a great loss. Great
analysis retains a lively sense of the actual as an
achievement from among possibilities; it retains a lively
sense of the contigency of real things" (p.89).

Conversational excerpts displaying unsuccessful attempts to
develop a story provide evidence of the strategic character
of such occurrences of repair. In the following, a similar
technique is in fact overtly pursued by the would be teller
in order to solve a problem of story rejection (ex. 3a, l.
11-12):

   (3a) (Evening conversation; 4 participants, talking about
          video-recorders)

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1     C;   Eh. = e invece io senza telecamera non me  riesce  a
            'yeah. = and on the contrary I without the camera it can't'
2          convince' = ma perché un  pochettino  ce  tengo  di
            'convince me = well cos I don't care'
3          meno n- a conserva' queste cose perché non (0.5)
            'much for keeping this sort of things cos I don't'(0.5)
4          non seguo né cinema né i concerti
            'I don't go to either movies or concerts'
5          (0.3)

6     C; ┌ (.................)    ┐
7     A; │ ma come ? co' un frate │llo (0.3) co'  un  fratello
         └ 'what ?  with  a  broth┘er  (0.3) with a brother'
8          il tuo ? Marce'. =
            'like yours ? Marce'. =
9     C;   mbè . =
            'yeah' . =
10 -> A;   tremendo = tu la sai questa storia di Antonio che:
            'terrific  = do you know this story about Antonio who:'
11         (0.6)  praticamente  collezio┌na  perché  lui ^  ┐
            (0.6)     'sort   of    colle│cts cos he'^       │
12    B;                                 │sì lo so           │
                                         └'Yes I know'       ┘
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13              (0.5)
14  -> A;     colleziona i titoli delle cose no ?
              'he collects titles of the things doesn't he ?'
15              (0.2)
16  -> B;     de che ?
              'of what ?'
17              (0.6)
18     A;     delle: (0.3) i titoli dei film
              'of the: (0.3) titles of films'
19              (1.0)
20     A;    ┌ colleziona ^        ┐
             │ 'he collects' ^     │
21  -> D;    │ come  i             │  titoli ?
             └ 'what do you mean ┘  titles ?'
22     A;     heh eh    ((ride))
              'heh eh' ((laughs));
23     C;     non la sai questa = no.   ((storia))
              'You don't know this one = you don't.' ((story begins))
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Here, as in example 2, the speaker issues a story pre-
sequence mentioning the main character as a cue for its
recognition (1.10). However, a detailed analysis of the
pre-sequence shows that the prospective teller modifies the
emerging structure of the sentence in the course of its
production:

    a) she initially builds her turn in form of a
       presequence, thereby projecting the occurrence of a
       direct question (explicit technique).

    b) she also marks indexically the story with a
       demonstrative (questa/'this'), which signals a story
       non-recognitional reading (see Sacks, Lecture 5,
       Fall, 1971);

    c) she then changes the interrogative construction of
       the ongoing turn by replacing the rising intonation
       of the projected question with try-markers (see
       vowel lenghtening and pause, che: (0.6), 1.10-11).

    d) finally issues another turn-unit in positive form,
       adding further descriptive data.

In this regard, Auer (1984) points out that marking the
referential item by means of both a demonstrative and
hesitational signal represents an intermediate referential
technique through which the speaker signals the possible
problematic status of the referential item, but differently

from the explicit technique (pre-sequence question format,
see ex. 1), this leaves his recipient the option of
displaying implicitly (withholding of repair) or explicitly
(initiation   of repair)   the identification   or   non-
identification of the referent. Such a technique takes on a
distinctive relevance, considering that the current speaker
introduces the story by relying on an inferential process
which allows him only a rough estimation of the recipients'
knowledge (cf. Auer, 1984: 629).

In exctract 3, the prospective teller, by changing the
format of the ongoing turn (l. 10-11), is attempting an
immediate and economic transition from story announcement
to storytelling. She thus avoids eliciting an explicit
recipient's response on his ability to recognize the story
as a referential item. Through such procedure the current
speaker exploits an intermediate referential technique
which, in case of new information, allows his recipients to
signal the newsworthy status of the story implicitly, by
simply withholding the repair-initiator and avoiding turn
transfer. Several clues, in fact, reveal that the would be
teller has already assessed the story is new for her
addresse:
   a)   the   exploitation of the intermediate   technique
        (demonstratives + hesitational signals, l. 10-11)
        shows that she is introducing the story as a likely
        problematic item (non-recognizable). Moreover, the
        story is marked by a demonstrative signalling a non-
        recognitional reading [7];
   b)   the production of a pause in a non   terminal
        syntactic position (l.11) [8] signals the speaker's
        intention   to   continue her turn; it   also
        provides   a   recipients'   response-space,   which
        projects, as an expected response [9], a likely
        withholding   of repair rather than a   repair-
        initiator.   The non-occurrence of recognition is
        then considered a go-ahead for the current speaker,
        without involving turn-exchange, as happens at line
        11.

Such a referential technique is particularly effective
since it allows a minimum interactional effort in case the
story is not shared by other conversationalists (i.e.
avoidance   of turn transfer as teller's referential
technique and withholding of repair, namely silence, as

specific recipient's technique). Moreover, it   answers
conversational   demands   tending to   minimize   the
interactional work, when such opportunities may be met
(informal conversations, where common background knowledge
and mutual acquaintance allow the speaker to forecast
knowledge states, competence and information acquired by
co-participants previously and independently from the
current exchange).

The problem emerges as soon as the occurrence of a
recognition in anticipatory position (cf. Testa 1988: 293)
brings about a self-interruption of current speaker's turn,
thereby producing a rejection of the proposed storytelling
(l. 11-12).
At this point the rejected teller does not simply recycle
the interrupted segment (l.14), but she does it in such a
way as to produce a trouble source: she avoids mentioning
the object of collection (dei film/'of films', cf. l. 18),
which is the story characterization item, and replaces it
with a generic term (delle cose/'of the things', l. 14);
then issues a tag-question specifically prompting a repair
initiation by the speaker who had previously recognized the
story (l.16); that eventually demonstrates that the story
is not shared. Note also that even after B's request for
repair, the teller hesitates before repairing the trouble
source, leaving her recipient another opportunity of
completing the ongoing turn (delle: (0.3) / 'of the:
(0.3)', l.18):

    (3b)
14 -> A; colleziona i titoli delle cose no ?
            'he collects titles of the things doesn't he ?'
15   (0.2)
16 -> B; de che ?
            'of what ?'
17   (0.6)
18   A; delle: (0.3) i titoli dei film
            'of the: (0.3) titles of films'
19   (1.0)
20   A; ┌ colleziona ^   ┐
           │ 'he collects' ^   │
21   D; │ come i   │ titoli ?
           └ 'what do you mean ┘ titles ?'
22   A; heh eh ((ride))
            'heh eh' ((laughs))

23   C; <u>non la sai questa = no.</u> ((storia))
          'You don't know this one = you don't.' ((story begins))

The outcome of the repair sequence (<u>i titoli dei film</u>/
'titles of films', l. 18) gives evidence for the newsworthy
status of the event and demonstrates that B's recognition
was based on an inferential mistake.

Thus, whereas the speaker, by means of the referential
technique used in the pre-sequence (l. 10) allows an
omission of the initiation of repair, by producing a
trouble source (<u>delle cose</u>), she explicitly creates the
conditions for its occurrence. Again, the presence of
specific clues mark such phenomenon as strategic and not
casual: although the nature of the trouble source, i.e. the
use of a generic term (l.14), may lead to interpret it as a
casual production of lexical search, the absence of
specific indicators (hesitational signals) and the
exploitation of a tag-question provides evidence for its
nonrandom occurrence [10].
However, although the repair sequence has been
satisfactorily completed (l.18), the prospective teller
does not initiate the telling sequence, but awaits a
successive intervention of the speakers (l. 21; see also
the relevant pause and the turn recycled for the second
time, l.19 and 20 respectively). It is this occurrence of
repair which eventually legitimizes the story and
authorizes its telling as overtly elicited by
conversationalists. Then, both occurrences of other -
initiated repair may be seen as induced by the prospective
teller, but the purpose of the first repair sequence (l.14-
18) is addressed to solve a problem of story rejection
emerging in the presequence, whereas the second one is
expected (see the laughs, l. 22, as signals of
satisfaction) and interactively performed as a **story
authorizing strategy** [11]. The story telling will be so
delivered as a completion of the second repair sequence.

    The extract below (ex. 4) shows the same repair
technique exploited again as a solution to a story
rejection, though in the following the trouble source does
not involve a referential problem:

(4)   (Context: dinner conversation, 5 participants. A has
      just introduced her father as a referent of the
      conversation. Then, she reports an argument occurred
      between him and his daughter, Paola)

```
1     A;  Oggi s'è acchiappato co' Paola = Paola s'è messa =
          'Today he had a fight with Paola = Paola burst'
2         a piagne'.
          'into tears.'
3         (0.5)
4     B;  aa:h per quella┌ storia.      ┐
          'aa:h for that  | story'      |
5     A;              | la storia  | della  direttrice.
                       └ 'the   story┘ about the headmistress'
6         = senti che   storia. (1.0) Paola s'è ┌ (sentita male) =
          = 'listen what a story. (1.0)  Paola | (felt ill)'=
7     C;                                        | ma ^
                                                └ 'but' ^

8     C;  ma ancora quella storia ? =
          'but what ? that story again ?'=
9     A;  ancora.
          'again.'
10        (0.5)
11 -> A;  alla fine j'ha detto tu sei fesso =
          'in the end  she said you are daft' =
12    B;  heh   ((ride))
          'heh' ((laughs))
13        (0.3)
14 -> D;  ma perché :: ?
          'but why::: ?'
15        (0.3)
16    A;  perché sta a fa' 'sto tirocinio =
          'because she's doing this training course' =
17        e in effetti le amiche sue (0.4) hanno trovato (0.3)
          'and actually her friends (0.4) have found' (0.3)
18        n'altro direttore che (0.2) ja messo 'na firma =
          'a different headmaster who (0.2) puts his signature'=
19        e je farà fa: pochi giorni =
          'and allows them to attend the course only for: a few days'=
20        un mese così =
          'a month' =
21    D;  mhm =
22    B;  mhm mm
23        (0.2)
24    A;  a lei mo' ... ((continua))
      A;  'now she'...   ((story continues))
```

This extract clearly shows how narration emerges through a
process of interaction. B's intervention (l. 4) not only
provides a recognition of the story, but also prompts an
elicitation of its telling. Here, the actual story pre-
sequence format (l.5) is not by chance specifically
designed as a listening invitation, instead of a request
for telling, since the occasion for the story has already
been established (l. 4).
Although C's objection does not seem to discourage the
teller, she actually does not attend the projected
organizational development of the story and goes directly
to its resolution (l.11) by skipping some structurally
important parts (i.e. backgroung information, gradual
development of the climax). Note that after the request for
repair (l.14), she goes back to the initial background
information section and starts telling the story from its
very beginning (l. 16).

3.2. Omission of story-preface

In the previous section, occurrences of a solicited other-
initiation of repair have been analyzed both as remedial
devices following rejections of a proposed storytelling
(ex. 3, 4) and as a means for eliciting its ratification
(ex. 2). I will now focus on an extract displaying the
exploitation of a referential problem as a story-entry
procedure in the absence of an explicit story announcement.
It is worth noting, that since a pre-sequence overtly
signals the occasion for the story, it may engender an
acceptance as well as an explicit rejection of the
telling. On the contrary, the omission of a pre-sequence
does not commit the speaker to overtly express his
narrative purpose and at the same time does not compel his
recipients to overtly display acceptance of the story; thus
the possibility of an explicit rejection may be avoided.

In the next fragment, the occasion for the story is not
explicitly announced by means of a pre-sequence, but is
directly introduced by an utterance (l. 6) that will take
the shape of an abstract of the story only following the
development of the subsequent turns:

(5)   (Context: 5 participants; dinner   conversation: they
      are talking about role differences between   elementary
      teachers and their headmaster. The current speaker, A,
      is   now comparing the relationship   between   secondary
      school teachers and their head).


```
1     A;   da noi non esiste anche  come  problema  'nsomma:: (0.5)
           'at us  not exist  also  as a  problem   well::'
           'at our place we don't even have this well::' (0.5)
2          dice ma (.....) ma f- finiscila tu non hai capito
           'says but (.....) but sh- shut  up you've never understood'
           'he says but (.....) but sh- shut up you've never understood'
3          niente nella vita (0.2) questo glielo di:ce (0.2)
           'nothing in the life (0.2) this her/him says'(0.2)
           'anything you haven't (0.2) he says tha:t'(0.2)
4          tranquillamente poi
           'perfectly calm too'
5          (7.9)
6  -> A;   l'altra volta   je      volevano    mena'
           'last    time  her/him  wanted-they  to beat'
           'last time they were about to beat'm up'
7          (1.6)
8  -> B;   a:   alla     preside      tua ?
           'to:  to the  headmistress  your ?'
           'your: your headmistress ?'
9          (0.4)
10 -> B;  ⌐al      pre ⌐side ? =
          │ 'to the head│master ?' =
          │ 'the      head│master ?'
11    A;  │ mhm          │
          └ 'mhm'        ┘
12    C;   a ⌐lla .              ⌐
           'to│ the.' ((feminine)) │
           'th│e headmistress.'    │
13    A;      │alla               │ preside (0.3) perché ora =
          └'the                ┘ headmistress (0.3) cos now'=
14         tra  l'altro s'è  messa:: (0.3)  fino  a  settembre
           'among other things she is:: (0.3) till September'
15         in vacanza (0.8)    perché ... ((storia))
           'on holiday (0.8)   because'... ((story continues))
```

As in extraxt 2, the speaker refers to what will be the
main character of the story implicitly, by using a clitic
pronoun [12] (je l. 6), although it has only been

established for the first time in the discourse context.
Note that in his previous turns (l. 1-4), A does not
specify either of the two new referents (the headmistress
and the teacher); he simply signals that he is now making
reference to role relationships in secondary schools, by
using a membership categorization device (cf. Sacks, 1972;
henceforth MCD), da noi/at our place, and relying on
conversationalists' knowledge of his being a secondary
school teacher.
Duranti (1984: 289) points out that in Italian
conversational storytelling main characters may be referred
to by third person subject pronouns when first mentioned
if their identification is implied by the fact that they
belong to a set previuosly identified. However the
informative reading conveyed by MCDs as minimal
referential descriptions (cf. Levinson, 1987:85) applies
when the use of a pronoun raises no ambiguity.
In our case the speaker not only employs a clitic
pronoun, usually referred to objects that have already been
established as referents of the conversation (cf. also
Duranti and Ochs, 1979), but it is also produced in the
language variety spoken in Rome, which makes it difficult
for his recipients to identify the referent's gender, as in
such variety je may refer to both masculine and feminine
gender [13].
The production of such an ambiguity is made evident by the
other-initiation of repair (1.8, 10), which again is
induced and handled by the prospective teller as a sort of
go-ahead or ratification for his telling (1.13-15). As a
result, in this case too, narration is delivered as a
completion of the repair-initiated sequence.

By comparison with ex. 2, 3 and 4, this example presents
different features in that the speaker does not explicitly
announce the story through a pre-sequence. By producing an
implicit referential description and thus avoiding
signaling a possible referential problem by means of a pre-
sequence, the teller makes a repair of specific recipients'
option, leaving them the opportunity of asking for the
story.
Furthermore in the absence of repair, the projected story
may simply be abandoned or not engendered, avoiding an
explicit rejection: it may simply retain the character of a
newsworthy item which is not being developed into
storytelling [14].

Apart from the specific trouble types dealt with by such
repair technique (word-replacement, ex. 3, person reference
ex. 2, 5, omission of story sections, ex. 4), all the
examples previously described share a common feature: after
the production of the first sequence, containing the
trouble source, the prospective teller does not provide
additional information. That is, s/he does not develop the
story, but awaits the emission of the other-initiation of
repair, as displayed by the pauses occurring after the
trouble source turn (ex. 2, l. 7; ex. 3, l. 19; ex. 4, l.
13; ex. 5, l. 7). This should confirm and display the
strategic character of such phenomenon of repair and marks
its occurrence as a solicited and expected object.

4. Soliciting the request for repair: a cross-cultural perspective.

Descriptions of interactional practices in Anglo-American
ordinary   conversation   have   often   raised   questions
concerning possible variations of conduct in different
socio-cultural and linguistic contexts. Although such
questions were not central to the original purpose of this
paper, the description of a repair technique deployed in
storytelling in a South Pacific community allows to look at
the repair strategies examined above from a comparative
perspective.
Instances of self-induced-other initiations of repair have
been found and described in Tuvali, a Polynesian society,
(cf. Besnier, 1989) as typical features of that linguistic
community. It is claimed that in such cultural context they
occur as conversational devices used by the current teller
to draw the attention and increase involvement of
recipients in his/her telling. Besnier identifies two
different formats of other-initiated repair invitations.
The first type shares the same features found in the
Italian extracts: the current speaker solicits an other-
initiation of repair by withholding essential information
or producing an ambiguous or problematic reference either
at topic boundaries or in the middle of a narrative,
without attempting at repairing the trouble source (cf. ex.
6):

(6) (drawn from Besnier, 1989:325)

```
1    K; A   koo vau  o   fakatootoo mo   tena tautai       i   aso nei. =
        'and Inc come Cmp Cst+fall   with his  fishing-lore  in day this
2 -> F; A   ai ? =
        'Cnt who?'
3    K; = Manono.
          'Manono'
```

Translation

```
1    K; An' (he) comes along an' starts to pontificate  about
2       how much he knows about fishing. =
3    F; = Who ? =
4    K; = Manono.
```

As Besnier notes, in this case the invitation of the other-
initiated repair occurs at the beginning of a gossip
narration, after a long pause signaling the introduction of
a new topic. Such features make the example particularly
suited for a comparison with extract 5 in my Italian corpus
(cf. par.3.2).

The second format type found in Tuvaluan gossip narration
differs from the former (and from all the Italian extracts
examined so far) since the teller does signal the
occurrence of a problematic item by locating the trouble
source with typical markers of repair (i.e. glottal stops,
self-interruptions, vowel/consonant stretches):

(7)   (drawn, from Besnier, 1989:328)

```
1    K; ((whisper)) Ae (muimui)  hoki  naa   a   te- te::-
                    'and complain also  there Cnt the- the'
  ->                       ((chuckle))
                            ⌈            ⌉
2 -> F; ((whisper, smiling)) ⌊ A   ai ? ⌋
                            'Foc who'?
3       (.)
4    K; ((high pitch)) Aalisi mo  Faalogo!
                       'Aalisi and Faalogo'
```

Translation

```
1    K; And there was a complaint from  the- the::-
2    F; Who ?
3    K; Aalisi and Faalogo!
```

The three-turns repair sequence here contains a first turn
with a self-initiation of the trouble source, a recipient's
invitation to repair the problem (other-initiation of
repair) in the following turn and a self-completion of the
trouble yielding a solution of the repair sequence in the
last turn. But see the following Italian extract where, as
in Tuvaluan conversational storytelling (ex.7) [15], an
other-initiation of repair (1.8) is being issued following
the prospective teller's production of a trouble source,
which is self-located as a problem of lexical search (ex.
8, 1. 5):

   (8) (Context: dinner conversation, 7 participants. They
       are engaged in typical dinner activities, serving,
       making room for dishes on the table)

```
1     MP; so che Carlo va spesso da Mariani (0.2) a - a =
          'I know that Carlo often goes round to Mariani to - to'=
2         fasse ┌ (............).                    ┐
                │ '(..............).'               │
3     M;        │ sennò mettiamolo (..........|.......)
                └ 'otherwise let's put it (....┘.......)'
4         (0.2)
5 ->  G;  Carlo c'ha invece un:  ¦ N; no come ? aspetta  no.Io volevo fa: =
          'Carlo he's got a:     ¦     no what ? wait no. I wanted to:'=
6                                ¦ MR; = la zuppa
                                       = 'soak'
          (0.3)
8 ->  MP; che c'ha ?
          'What's he got ?'
9         (0.3)
10    MP; c'ha una donna favolosa ?
          'Has he got a fabulous woman ?'
11        (0.4)
12    G ; a parte che c'ha sempre le donne favolose =
          'apart from the fact that he's always got fabulous women'=
```

```
13              ┌ quello lì ┐
                │ 'that one'│
14      MP;     │ lo so     │ = ┌ l'ho sentito di'      ┐
                └ 'I know'  ┘   │ 'I've heard about it'│ =
15      MR;                     │ Carlo ?              │
                                └ 'Carlo ?'            ┘
16      G  ;    l'altra volta è venuto a 'na festa  con  una   (0.8)
                'last time he came to a party with a' (0.8)
17              con una: negra: ((storia))
                'with a: black woman:' ((story continues))
```

The only difference that may be noticed by comparing the
Tuvaluan and the Italian examples (respectively ex. 7,
ex.8) is the sequential occurrence of the solicitation of
repair, which in the Italian extract occurs as a story-
entry device.
Apart from that, the interactional conduct displayed by
such a repair strategy in this and other Italian extracts
seems to be similar to that described as a typical
vernacular practice of the South Pacific community. A
deeper observation of our own vernacular practices may then
be sometimes revealing not only of cultural differences,
but also of similarities that the obviousness surrounding
our ordinary interactional behaviour leaves still
unexplored and not yet analized.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The different sequential positions from which repair can be
initiated in conversation show that trouble sources,
commonly occurring in unplanned, ordinary talk, are
overwhelmingly located and solved by the current speaker in
his/her ongoing turn (cf. Schegloff et al. 1977).
Repairs initiated by recipients, though regularly
occurring, may have a significant interactional import and
be analyzed in relation to particular sequential contexts
and activities (cf. pre-disagreement, Schegloff et. al.
1977: 380).

A typical conduct for introducing stories (as well as news) in conversation is to elicit a pre-announcement sequence engendering a request for telling by a co-participant (cf. par.1). Such requests are usually shaped as other-repair initiators; then, the initiation of repair in such contexts is a relevant and expected response, whose occurrence both signals the newsworthy status of the event and explicitly displays co-participants' acceptance of prospective tellers' communicative purpose.

However, in multiparty talk several variables, such as the number of participants, the struggle for the floor or the possibility that the story is already shared, may undermine the successful development of the telling.

The conversational fragments reported above show that a repair initiator, methodically delivered as a request for telling, may be strategically triggered by would-be tellers by producing a trouble source both in story-presequences (see ex. 2) and in the absence of explicit story-announcements (es. 4, 8). Extract 3 and 5 also display how such initiations of repair may be invoked by the teller following a rejection of his/her projected activity; thus, the occurrence of a trouble source prompting an other repair-initiator acts as a remedying device which re-establish the conditions for developing the story. The observable consequences that such repair practices have on the ongoing activity reveal that, though dealing with an understanding problem, they manage and solve questions of interactional concern.

Cross-cultural studies on storytelling [16] have shown that narrators' discourse choices do not only depend on basic cognitive processes and observance of common norms of conversational cooperation, but also they can be subjected to the different narrative strategies that speakers may deploy to accomplish specific tasks.

Thus, the use of ambiguous referential forms in story introductions, far from being random deviations from conversational norms of relevance, may highlight the occurrence of significant activities.

In particular, they disclose an interactional conduct serving communicative purposes which are only indirectly pursued. Conversationalists have been shown to rely on sequential cues for dealing with the emergence of ambiguities in conversation (cf. Schegloff, 1984); such practices also display <u>how</u> sources of ambiguity, inexplicitness or non-accuracy may be exploited as

interactional   resources   for   carrying   out   tactics   of
indirect solicitation.
Their   interactional   significance   could   be   better
appreciated   by   taking into account a   context   of   action
where   the teller's performance cannot   neglect   contingent
issues   such   as the members' consent,   their   legitimation
and   the   possible   consequences   that   a   failure   of   the
prospected   action may have on   his/her   self-presentation.
The   solicitation of a recipients' request for   repair   may
then   be   characterized   as a protective   tactic   for   both
tellers   and recipients: it allows the current   speaker   to
avoid   eliciting   a   straightforward   acceptance   and/or
rejection   of the storytelling, providing at the same   time
his/her partners with the opportunity of either   proffering
or simply withholding a request for telling. In this   sense
it   may be regarded as a strategy satisfying principles   of
non-commitment   typical   of   a   communicative   behaviour
orientated to indirectness.

NOTES

1.   The extracts have been drawn from a group of naturally
occurring conversations, dinner or evening conversations,
among   adult   native   speakers   of   Italian.   The   repair
techniques have been produced by different speakers   within
different conversational groups.
2.   In such a case the story may be occasioned as a
confirmation   of   some previous   speaker's   assertion   (cf.
Jefferson, 1978:224).
3.   See Jefferson (1978) for a description of story-entry
techniques involving longer stretches of speech between the
would-be teller and co-participants.
4.   It is sufficient that one participant is already
informed   to frustrate the narration (cf. also Levinson,
1987: 80-84).   It is also worth noting that   rejection   of
storytelling   and   failure of the speaker's   communicative
activity   involves problems concerned with issues   such   as
self-representation and 'loss of face' in Goffman's terms.
5.   Successful   referential   activities   in   conversation
typically   involve recipients' recognition of the   referent
being   introduced,   upon   current speaker's   delivery   of
recipient-designed   reference   forms,   i.e.   recognitionals
(cf. Schegloff and Sacks, 1979).
6.   In this case, the deictic term,   **quella/that**,   signals
his   recipient   to search for   additional   information   for
referent   recognition beyond the verbal expression, in   the
discourse   context   and in their memory.   See   also   Sacks,
(Lecture   5,   p.13,   Fall,   1971)   for   such   recognitional
reading of **that** in English.
7.   The   exploitation   of the   textual   deixis   **questa/this**
monitors her recipient to refer to the following sequential
context   to   fill in the contextual meaning of   the   verbal
expression.   See   also the use of **questa/this** at   line   23,
when   the   the   newsworthy status of   the   story   has   been
confirmed.
8.   The would-be teller issues a pause just   following   the
beginning   of   a clause dependent, thereby   monitoring   his
intention   to continue the projected turn.
9.   A presequence question format would have   provided   an
other-initiation   of repair as the expected   response   type
(ex.1).   An alternative type of expected response   in   this
case might have been a guessing attempt or a next speaker's
completion of previous speaker's utterance.

10. Lexical search trouble types involve both a self-initiated monitoring of a trouble source through different types of indicators and a self-initiated attempt to repair the trouble as a first sequential opportunity. On the contrary, the use of a tag-question, whose primary function is to solicit a recipient's response, specifically entrust next speaker with the opportunity of either asking or completing repair.

11. The prospective teller proposes the story as tellable by virtue of the surprise involved in the event. The repair sequence works accordingly as an acknowledgement of such a peculiarity and ratifies its telling on the same grounds.

12. Clitic pronouns are atonic forms of personal pronouns. They differ from tonic pronouns since they have a fixed position with respect to the verb and no independent stress (cf. Duranti and Ochs, 1979).

13. In the English translation, the ambiguity conveyed by use of the clitic pronoun has been rendered by means of a contracted form which might refer to a 3rd person object pronoun, singular or plural (beat'm up, l. 6); however in Italian the ambiguity has to do with gender agreement and not number.

14. Such a course of action may be found in A's previous turns (l. 2-3), where although the prospective teller avoids any explicit mention of the two referents involved in his reported speech, included the use of subject pronouns, no signal soliciting the storytelling is produced by co-participants.

15. A distinctive feature of repair practices in American conversation is a next speaker supplying a candidate last word, completing the previous speaker's turn. This alternative conduct is also provided by the guessing format following the trouble source in the Italian extract, ex. 8, l. 10. The absence of such a practice in Tuvaluan conversation may be, on a macro-level of analysis, related to a culturally specific view (cf. Schegloff, 1987).

16. See the collection of papers "The Pear stories: cognitive, cultural and linguistics aspects of narrative production" in Chafe (1980).

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