Recipient questions as a strategy to launch second stories

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Abstract

This article reports a study of launching second stories in Chinese conversation. It particularly examines how recipients ask questions about something related to but not explicitly mentioned in the first story. We show that such questions are strategically placed in that they prefigure upcoming stories. The design of the questions may also cast a new light on the first story so that the second story, when told, can be recognised as subsequent to the first in particular ways. We discuss the interactional nature of such questions in relation to Schegloff’s (2007) idea that ‘pre-ness’ is a more general property in action sequences.

KEYWORDS: STORYTELLING; RECIPIENT QUESTIONS; SECOND STORIES; PRE-NESS; CHINESE CONVERSATION

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1. Introduction

Storytelling is prevalent in talk-in-interaction across languages and cultures. Previous studies have shown that conversational storytelling is jointly achieved by both teller and recipient (C. Goodwin, 1984, 1986, 2015; M. Goodwin, 1997; Jefferson, 1978; Kuo, 2002; Lerner, 1992; Mandelbaum, 1987, 1989, 2013; Monzoni & Drew, 2009; Niemelä, 2010; Norrick, 2000). Recipients’ responses during the telling of a story are an integral part in the co-construction of stories. Two kinds of the recipient contributions to storytelling which are relevant to this article are questions (Koike, 2009; Mandelbaum, 1989; Monzoni & Drew, 2009) and second stories (Arminen, 2004; C. Goodwin, 2015; Ryave, 1978; Sacks, 1995a, 1995b; Schegloff, 1992, 1999; Selting, 2012; Siromaa, 2012; Yu, 2012).

Story recipients may ask questions during various phases of the story. In her study of recipients’ questions in Japanese conversation, Koike (2009) finds that, during the telling sequence, story recipients may ask what she calls “retrocessive”, “processive” and “side expansion” questions, which have different consequences for the course of the telling. A recipient question may influence the course of telling in different trajectories, e.g., moving backward to repair a preceding utterance (retrocessive), moving forward to the next part of the story (processive), or moving sideways to elaborate a part of the story-so-far (side expansion). Koike (2009) also finds that, upon story completion, recipients may ask questions resulting in the story being expanded or extended. As Mandelbaum (2013, p. 501) explains, “Some recipient responses (such as questions) are first-pair parts that make relevant particular kinds of responses from tellers, and may thus serve to divert or redirect an ongoing storytelling”. A case in point is the analysis of a story by Mandelbaum (1989). One recipient of the story she analysed was able to rescue another recipient from being the butt of the story by asking questions on something in the event being reported but not mentioned in the story so far, thus shifting the teller’s focus and diverting the trajectory of the telling. Monzoni and Drew (2009, p. 208) argue that this is what some recipient questions actually do: while they appear to be repairing or clarifying a preceding utterance, “they are used to concurrently implement different actions which are specific to the more general activity of story-telling”. In their study of Italian conversation, Monzoni and Drew (2009) examine a case where, during a narrative, a recipient’s question asking for a detail not explicitly mentioned was closely related to the very activity (complaining) the narrative was implementing, as well as to the recipient’s own action expected to follow the complaint. They also find that the recipient of second stories (often the teller of the previous story) may ask intervening questions about particular details in the ongoing second story which would connect it with the previous one, as either a similar or contrasting story. In these cases, it is the
recipient of a second story who makes a move through questions to establish the connection/relevance of the two stories. In the cases to be examined in this article, by contrast, it is the recipient of the first story who uses questions to establish connections with and relevance to their intended subsequent story to be told shortly.

As has been shown in CA literature, second stories are a recipient practice for displaying understanding of what the previous one was about. Sacks's early study of second stories observes that second stories may involve “finely picking up at least one sense of the point of the first”, thus yielding “an analysis” of the first (Sacks, 1995a, pp. 765–771). As Schegloff (1999, p. 414) puts it: “One generally relevant practice for showing understanding is the telling of another story – a second story”. These stories often display similarities with the first story, e.g., similar in characters, topics, events, story significance, and actions implemented through the two stories (Ryave, 1978; Sacks, 1995b; Schegloff, 1992). Sacks notes that such similarity is achieved, and achieving similarity rests with the second story (Sacks, 1995b). Ryave (1978) describes a “same-significance procedure” through which the teller of the second story can propose a significance of the first story and construct the next story as having the same significance.

While tellers of initial stories may preface the telling by initiating a story-preface sequence in which they propose a tellable, negotiate recipiency and seek turn space for the forthcoming story (Sacks, 1974, 1995a, 1995b), tellers of second stories seem to be oriented rather more to establishing relevance with the prior story so that the forthcoming story is told, and can be heard, as a coherent part in storytelling sequences. Tellers of second stories are found to use a range of linguistic and interactional strategies to construct their story by reference to the prior story. They may preface the second story with “I know what you mean”, which claims an explicit relationship with the first (Sacks, 1995b, p. 252) or show its source in the first by remarks such as “it reminds me of ...” (Schegloff, 1992, p. 209). Tellers can project a similar or contrasting second story by saying “it was exactly the same for me” or “that was even worse in our place” (Selting, 2012, pp. 400, 394). Tellables in second stories can be introduced by specific entry devices such as systematic reference to the prior story (Arminen, 2004). Recycling lexicosyntactic, structural, prosodic and semantic elements of the first story also provides means for the second story to be tied back to the first through parallelism (Siromaa, 2012). Non-linguistic resources such as gesture can also set up the relevance of the second story to the first one (C. Goodwin, 2015; Selting, 2012).

In this article, we report a practice for managing a sequence in which a second story can be told, namely, questions from recipients in the course of a current telling. As will be shown, such questions prefigure the recipient’s/asker’s own
intended telling through first creating connection or relevance to the current one. To the extent that these questions prepare for an incipient telling, they seem to be comparable to pre-announcement (Maynard, 2003; Sacks, 1974, 1995a, 1995b; Schegloff, 2007, pp. 37–57; Terasaki, 2004). But they are also clearly not the same as pre-announcement. In the case of pre-announcement, the recipient’s response is consequential to whether and how the intended/projected news or story gets told. Typically, the intended story/news follows a ‘go-ahead’, but not a ‘blocking’ type of response from the recipient. In contrast, whether the intended teller goes ahead with his/her telling in the sequences examined in this article does not seem to be constrained by the response to the question in the same way as those in the pre-announcement sequence. Nevertheless, we argue that these questions in our data reveal one more function of recipient questions: they can be designed as a kind of ‘pre’ in a broader sense. In the following, we will first present our analysis of three cases and then discuss the idea that ‘pre-ness’ is a more general property (Schegloff, 2007).

2. Data

The data used for this study were taken from seven hours of video- and audio-recorded, two- to three-party Mandarin Chinese conversations between friends, colleagues, and fellow graduate students. Recordings were transcribed following conventions developed by Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) and analysed from a conversation analysis perspective (Atkinson & Heritage, 2006; Sacks, 1995a, 1995b; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 2007; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). Over 140 story-telling sequences were identified. The length of these sequences varied, from a rather short story containing two turn-constructional units (Sacks et al., 1974), to a much longer one that lasts more than ten minutes. The focus of analysis in this article is on those cases where questions from the first story’s recipients are designed to pave the way for telling their own subsequent stories.

3. Recipient questions and the launch of second stories

The first case to be examined is taken from a conversation between three close friends, Amy, Max, and Leo, at a Chinese New Year reunion. While they were chatting, Amy noticed that Max was shaking his legs as he was sitting there and remarked that Max had been like this since high school. Max admitted that he just could not sit still and always had to look for something to play in his hands which he would break/ruin in the end. Max then starts a story about himself when he was a little child at line 1 of Extract (1-a).
Max reports that his mother once bought him a dozen or so ducklings, and after a while they all died (lines 1–4). At this point, one of the story recipients, Amy, comes in to ask why the ducklings died (line 5). Max’s reply to the question literally says he played them to death (line 6), confessing that he was responsible for the ducklings’ death. While Amy responds to Max’s reply with a little laugh (line 7), Max himself gives a big laugh (line 6), both taking a ‘non-serious’ stance to the reported incident.

By now it can be seen that Max’s story about the death of the ducklings serves as a concrete example which instantiates what he said about himself earlier, that he would ruin things he played with. However, before Amy’s question in line 3, where Max has mentioned the death of the ducklings, it was not entirely clear what the point of the story was. There was also no explicit indication of the rel-
Deviance of telling the story right after Max’s self-portrait as someone who would ruin things. But Amy’s question directs Max’s telling towards giving the cause of the ducklings’ death (line 6); through giving the cause, the relevance of Max’s story to his own prior talk is made clear. As there is no further question or other response from Amy and the other recipient Leo (as evidenced in the gap at line 8), Max continues his telling by adding a detail describing how he mistreated the ducklings – grabbing and releasing them (lines 9, 11). As he continues the telling, Leo makes an attempt to speak, and what he says projects a question (you-meiyou ‘did you’ at line 10) which he finally delivers at lines 12–13. We now turn to Leo’s question.

(1-b): Duckling (SR-M11-3653)

12 Leo: -> [youmeiyou< ba nage ya- yazi [zuiba] gen pigu
              have.not.have BA that.CL duck duck mouth and butt
13    -> nali (. ) zha- zhage paozhu- paozhang jinqu.
              there stuff.CL firecracker firecracker inside

‘Did you stuff a firecracker into the mouth and butt of the duckling?’

14
15 Amy: Huh huh [ huh ]
16 Max:  [ jiu ni ] zuo >zhexie< exin de shiqing.
          only you do these disgusting PRT thing

‘Only you did such disgusting things.’

17 Leo:  huh huh [ huh o: huh huh
18 Max:  [ jiu ni xiang zhe (xx)
          only you think ASP

‘Only you think about (xx)’

19
20 Leo: ->> >wo xiaoshihou<,(.)youshihou yiqian, .hh wang: niufen
          I young sometimes before toward cattle.dung
21 limian (. ) fang yige paozhang, ranhou pian ren
          inside put one.CL firecracker then trick person
22 guoqu, pa yisheng jiu(h)::=
          go.over ONO one.CL then

‘When I was a little child,(.) at that time sometimes, .hh I put a firecracker into the cattle dung, and then tricked people to go over, = it went bang and then::’

23 Max: =buyao zhemexin hao{buhao.
          do.not this disgusting good.not.good

‘Don’t be so disgusting, ok.’

24 Amy:  [ ni nabian na you
          you there where have
Overlapping with Max’s telling, Leo finally asks the question, “Did you stuff a firecracker into the mouth and butt of the duckling” at lines 12–13, which appears to be in response to Max’s telling about the ducklings. Although it asks about something that has not been mentioned in Max’s recounting, the question appears not to be totally irrelevant given Max’s confession of his rough treatment of the ducklings. Leo seems to be making things more dramatic by this unusual question: out of all the possible bad things Max might have done to the ducklings, the question asks if he had done a specific one. Formatted as a polar question, it requests Max to give an affirmative or negative reply. But Max resists producing a type-conforming response (Heritage & Raymond, 2012; Raymond, 2003), first by not giving an immediate reply (see silence at line 14), then by refuting the presupposition of the question (lines 16, 18), treating it as a reflection of what Leo himself is capable of doing (“only you did such disgusting things, only you think about (xx”) ). Although Leo’s question is met with resistance from Max, Leo does not seem particularly bothered as he does not push Max for an answer or in any way deal with the non-conforming response. He even laughs (line 17) at Max’s remark (line 16). He then begins to tell his own story in line 21 and goes on to reveal that he once put a firecracker in cattle dung and tricked people to come near and scared them with a loud bang.

By now we can appreciate Leo’s question as a kind of ‘pre’ which prefigures his intended telling and makes his story fit to Max’s story. Saying something to the effect of ‘did you do X to A?’ creates a link for him to tell a story of ‘I did X to B’. When Leo starts his story of ‘I did X to B’, it retrospectively becomes clear that his earlier question ‘did you do X to A?’ was produced for the purpose of launching his own story. Whether Max has done X, i.e., whether Max’s answer is yes or no, does not really matter as far as enabling Leo to tell what is recognisable as a second story, as it would be hearable as either similar or contrasting to Max’s story.

Next, let us consider why Leo makes use of such a question to lead to the second story. Note that both stories start with the same time reference – xiaoshihou ‘when I was a little child’ (line 1, by Max) and wo xiaoshihou ‘when I was a little child’ (line 20, by Leo). Why does Leo not make use of this similarity (which could also make his story recognisable as a second) to launch his own story? Why ask a question first? While using the same time reference to one’s childhood could make Leo’s story fit to Max’s story by a similar timeframe, or even a similar action (i.e., ‘you told a story about your childhood, and I’ll tell one about mine’),
these turn out not to be how Leo wants his story to be connected to Max’s story. Earlier we saw that Max’s story follows a self-portrait about himself as a mischievous child (his remarks not included in the extract). Sequenced in this order, the story can be heard as a concrete instantiation in support of that self-portrait. Leo’s question, then, shifts the significance of Max’s story from instantiating a general statement to a story of misconduct which triggers another story of misconduct. Through his question, Leo proposes ‘misconduct’ as being the common thread, as having the same significance in both stories. In this regard, Leo’s question is not an innocent one. It is designed for the upcoming story to be recognised as a second to the one just told in a particular way. It is notable that the key event in Leo’s story is embedded in the question.

The next case is from the same conversation between Amy, Max, and Leo. They are talking now about the personality of Amy’s boyfriend. Amy has told them that both she and her boyfriend have very strong personalities. This makes Max wonder how two people like them can still stay together. At lines 1–2 of (2-a), Amy reports that she often quarrels with her boyfriend and they even had a fight. Her ensuing telling is then driven by a series of questions from Max.

(2-a) Feel of the hand (SR-M11-4940)

01 Amy: women liang jingchang chaojia, we two often quarrel
02 >women liang< hai daguo °yi° jia. we two even fight.PFV one fight

‘We often quarrel with each other, and we even had a fight.’

03 (0.6)
04 Max: -> shui da ying le. who fight win PRT

‘Who won the fight.’

05 (0.5)
06 Amy: mei, jiushi kending bu hui shi zheyang da:, no that.is definitely NEG would be this.way fight
07 pia:: de yi erguang shan guoqu, {{hands over Leo}}ONO PRT one slap slap over
08 .hh ta jiu ba wo zheyang hmm hmm. {{choking Leo}}

‘No, it’s just, of course we didn’t fight like this, pia::, the slap went over,.hh and he then did it to me like this.’

09 Max: -> ta *ye* qia ren ye huh.= he also choke people also

‘He’d choke people too huh.=’

10 Amy: =en[huh}
Upon hearing about Amy's fight with her boyfriend, Max responds by asking “who won” (line 4), apparently showing an interest in knowing the outcome of the fight and driving Amy’s telling into that particular direction. However, Amy is not giving a straightforward response by beginning her answering turn with a negation (line 6), and then she turns to describe the fight she had with her boyfriend. She first dismissed the pushing-and-shoving kind of fight and revealed a fiercer one in which she slapped him hard and he fought back by squeezing his hands around her neck. Although Amy does not say who won the fight, her response provides a telling, with details, about a big fight with her boyfriend, which serves as a concrete example of the nature of their relationship. Max then follows up with two confirmation checks (lines 9, 11): whether Amy’s boyfriend would choke people and whether Amy slapped him. When Amy confirms both, Max goes on with the next question at line 17 asking Amy to tell them something (shuo- shuoxia- ‘tell- tell us-’). We now turn to examine this question from Max for the relevance it creates for him to tell his story.

(2-b) Feel of the hand (SR-M11-4940)
Max asks Amy how her hand felt when she slapped her boyfriend (lines 17, 19). Again, just as Leo’s question in (1-b), Max’s question here is also about something not mentioned in the telling, although it is not entirely irrelevant. While Leo, the non-selected next speaker, is quick to show a strong mocking response (lines 20–21) as soon as Max mentions the word shougan ‘feel of the hand’, there is no immediate response from Amy. The question seems to have posed some difficulties for her, as evidenced in the hitches at the beginning of her answering turn (line 22): cut-offs, brief pause, and recycling. Max then quickly (i.e. in overlap) asks the next question (line 23), specifically asking whether the feel of the hand was great. The sequential implicativeness of the question is not taken up when Amy’s turn resumes in the clear. In her response to Max’s earlier question about the feel of the hand, Amy explains that her boyfriend was the first person she ever slapped, perhaps implying that she is unable to comment on the hand feel due to lack of such experience. But Max does not give up. He pursues by asking the question again (2-c line 25).

(2-c) Feel of the hand (SR-M11-L1-4940)
Again, there is no immediate response from Amy, and Max is quick to follow up with an alternative question (line 27, *feichang shuang hai shi shenme de*. ‘very great or what’). As Max has just started the alternative question with the first word, Amy finally gives an affirmative answer to the ‘hand feel’ question Max has insisted on asking (line 28, *ting shuang de*. ‘pretty great’). The adjective she uses (*shuang* ‘great’) is the same as that used by Max in his question earlier at line 23 and here at line 27. Then Max asks the last question in his pursuit of Amy’s feeling about the slapping: if she wants to do slapping again (lines 35, 39), and Amy clearly says no (line 40). It is now that Max begins relating a story from a friend of his who slapped her boyfriend (2-d line 42)
Max's friend told him that she once slapped her boyfriend in front of many people in a KTV hall, and that slap made her feel 'really great.' We can see that the climax of the story is the girl's feeling about the slap (lines 49–50). It becomes clear in retrospect that Max's early questions about Amy's feeling of her slap were strategically placed and designed. Although both stories are about girlfriends slapping boyfriends, and although Amy's first telling could have indeed triggered Max's story from his friend, Max seems to have a particular point to highlight in his 'slapping' story, one which is absent in Amy's story. By asking Amy about the 'hand feel' of her slap, Max is guiding the course of Amy's telling towards the subjective feeling of the slap. By using a particular adjective in his question out of other possible candidate adjectives which could also be used to describe feelings of slapping, he is supplying the word for Amy to use – which can be considered co-construction in action. When Amy confirms that her hand felt great after the slapping, the link to the key point of his story is established, and so he
can go ahead with his telling. As Amy had not been able to give him the ‘targeted’ response when he first asked the question, Max reacted by repeating the question. His project was laid bare through his pursuit of Amy’s response, in order to produce the necessary narrative link to his story. Recall that Amy’s story was first produced to instantiate her own claim about the relationship with her boyfriend. Now, through Max’s question and Amy’s response to it, the two stories can be seen as connected and recognisable as stories in a series, hinging on the common element of the ‘great feeling about slapping’.

In both extracts above, what turned out to be a loaded question from the recipient displays, initially, an interest in and seeking elaboration of the teller’s current story. In the next case, the recipient appears more actively involved when she sees the difficulty the teller is having starting a story. The two speakers, Zihua and Yuwei, are fellow graduate students in a university in Hong Kong. Just prior to the extract, Zihua was talking about an undergraduate course she had taken in a mainland university. She said she lacked confidence because she felt she must read every page of the book *The Analects* in preparing for the exam. However, as she read on, she found an amusing side to the book (3-a lines 1, 2, and 4). Yuwei responds with a quick succession of responsive tokens showing her enthusiastic agreement (line 5). By enthusiastically agreeing with Zihua, Yuwei displays herself as knowledgeable about the book’s content and is taking the same stance as Zihua about the amusing side of the book.

(3-a) Sleeping in the daytime (ES-M04-1131(V1009))

01 Zihua:  
    ergie: zuihou kan shu- kan nage kongzi de shihou  
    and finally read book read that Confucius PRT time

02 faxian "bushi" .h kan lunyu de shi[hou] hh =  
    find no read The.Analects PRT time

‘And when reading- reading Confucius I found, “no” .hh when reading  
*The Analects* hh=’

03 Yuwei:  
    =<faxian> hendo duo xai hai shi hen gaoxiao de=  
    =I <found> much of the stuff was actually quite funny=’

04 Zihua:  
    =en en en en=  

05 Yuwei:  
    =ranhou [nage:: shenme .hh shui laizhe  
then that what who PRT

‘And that: what .hh who was it?’

06 Zihua:  

07 Yuwei:  
    [huh "en*

08 (0.3)

09 Yuwei:  
    shui ya.  
    who Q

‘Who?’
10  (0.9)
11 Zihua:  wo: wang le "shi ta nage nage- (. ) dizi laizhe"
    I forget PRT be he which which disciple PRT
12 .hh ranhou- (0.3) e: (. ) ta- (0.4)
    then uh he

    ‘I: forgot “which which- (. ) of his disciples this one was” .hh then- (0.3)
     uh: (. ) he- (0.4)”

13 Yuwei:  ->  baitian shuijiao?
    daytime sleep

    ‘slept in the daytime?’

14 Zihua:  dui you yi ge baitian shuijiao de, ranhou [shi
    right have one.CL daytime sleep PRT then be

    ‘Yes there’s one who slept in the daytime, and then’

Following Yuwei’s aligning response in line 5, Zihua appears to begin to continue with her narrative into a story, though she has difficulty remembering the name of the central character of the story – the disciple of Confucius (line 11) – she had embarked upon (line 6). She proceeds with the kind of speech perturbations and hesitancies associated with word searches (Schegloff et al., 1977) and refers to the disciple by the pronoun ta ‘he’, running into trouble again as she cuts off on the pronoun and is unable to continue (line 12). Attempting to start a story right after her ‘announcement’ of having discovered an amusing side of *The Analects*, Zihua can be heard as instantiating her statement by telling an amusing episode from the book, but having trouble doing so. It is at this point that Yuwei asks, through her try-marked upward intonation (line 13), if that episode involves a disciple who slept in the daytime (line 13). Yuwei simultaneously also displays herself as having some knowledge about the episode involving a disciple sleeping in the daytime, and that it might be regarded as amusing and therefore is likely to be the one to which Zihua was referring. Like Leo’s question in (1-b), out of the possibly amusing episodes in the book, Yuwei particularly proposes this one. However, as line 14 shows, ‘sleeping in the daytime’ is not Zihua’s intended story. Had Yuwei been correct, Zihua would have said something like dui jiushi zhege ‘yes that’s the one’. But by saying dui you yige baitian shuijiao de (‘yes there’s one who slept in the daytime’), she indicates that she knows the episode but that was not the one about which she was attempting to tell. The turn-initial dui ‘yes’, though, shows her agreement with Yuwei that this one is also an example of amusing stories in the book. As Zihua continues with ranhou shi (‘and then’, see end of line 14), she quickly withdraws from an overlap, so that it is not clear whether or not she is going back to her intended story. However, Yuwei now takes over and becomes the teller of an amusing sleeping-in-the-daytime story (3-b line 15).
As Zihua acknowledges that there was a disciple of Confucius who slept in the daytime (line 14), Yuwei joins in to say that the Master reacted with what she terms dirty words (lines 15–17). Perhaps this is what both Yuwei and Zihua take to be amusing about the Master who would use harsh words to reprimand his disciples. Zihua agrees right away and cites another example from the book where the Master even whacked a disciple on the leg with a stick (lines 18–19), displaying herself as joining in as a co-teller (Lerner, 1992). Both participants display to each other that they are knowledgeable about stories in the Analects. They are not telling fragments of these stories to each other as unknowing recipients (C. Goodwin, 1979) but showing affiliation with each other on their shared stance that there is amusing material in the Analects. Their laughter in lines 19–20 further displays their shared stance. While Zihua’s attempted but abandoned story was to back up her opinion about the book (lines 1, 2, and 4), Yuwei’s taking over of the telling turns out to be harbinger of a different project, as shown in (3-c).
'I- I the other day that is .h that is (0.3) got up in the morning and felt ='

Zihua: [...]

Yuwei: =hunshenwuli ma. ranhou “jiu” da baitian tang na’er exhausted PRT then just broad daylight lie there

ranhou (. ) ranhou >tang (na) tang (na) ranhou< then then lie there lie there then

then >lying there lying then< suddenly I thought about this episode and I said to myself aren’t I so degenerate huh’

I say I now isn’t that very degenerate

Zihua: [...]

At line 20, Yuwei starts her telling with 'I- I the other day …' which leads to a story about herself lying in bed in the daytime thinking about the slept-in-the-daytime episode in the Analects (lines 20–26). This time the story seems to have a serious side – she was lying in bed in the daytime (lines 23–24), judging her own conduct critically in light of thinking about the episode in question (lines 25–26). However, this whole event is nevertheless told and received as something amusing, and both of them laugh together upon completion of the story (lines 27–28).

It becomes clear, in retrospect, that Yuwei’s first mention of ‘slept in the daytime’ in her question back at 3-a line 13 is also a loaded one, similar to those in (1-b), (2-b), and (2-c) above. The question goes beyond supplying a possible candidate episode as Zihua’s attempted amusing story. It prefigures Yuwei’s projected telling which turns out to be an amusing story about herself, the core of which is the slept-in-the-daytime episode in the Analects.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In Section 3, we examined a practice by recipients of first stories whereby they launch a subsequent story of their own. They do so by asking a question about something related to but not mentioned in the first story. As Mandelbaum (1989) and Monzoni and Drew (2009) have shown, recipient questions focusing on a preceding utterance, or some aspect in the telling, may simultaneously implement other projected actions. Our study provides supporting evidence to these earlier findings. In the cases examined here, the action implemented by recipient questions is to create the relevance or same significance (Ryave, 1978) for a projected
upcoming story which, when told, can be heard as a second story sharing characteristics or themes with the first in a particular way. Leo’s question in (1-b) “Did you stuff a firecracker into the mouth and butt of the duckling”, which apparently displayed an interest in the duckling story, turned out to be creating an appropriate ‘preceding utterance’ as the ‘trigger’ of telling a story of himself stuffing firecrackers in cattle dung, only that this time the preceding utterance was produced by Leo himself. Likewise, in (2-b) and (2-c), Max’s apparent interest in the girlfriend-slapping-boyfriend story was reflected in a series of questions – “how’s the feel of the hand”, “felt great, didn’t it” and “very great or what” – which created an appropriate sequential environment for him to tell another girlfriend-slapping-boyfriend story, in which the principal character also reported feeling great about slapping her boyfriend. In (3-a), Yuwei’s question-intoned “slept in the daytime?” tentatively supplied a candidate item when Zihua was having trouble starting a story and displayed herself as an interested recipient. However, as it turned out, the try-marked “slept in the daytime?” directed the telling to this particular episode in the Analects, which established an environment for Yuwei to tell a story about herself lying in bed contemplating this same episode. Previous studies have documented practices whereby tellers of second stories establish or construct a similarity between their stories and the prior (‘first’) stories, by making use of materials mentioned or linguistic formats used in those first stories (Arminen, 2004; C. Goodwin, 2015; Sacks, 1995b; Schegloff, 1992; Selting, 2012; Siromaa, 2012). Here, we have added to this body of findings one more practice for launching second stories. In the cases examined here, first stories serve to instantiate a point or statement made by the teller in the utterances prior to the story. However, some particular aspect of the ‘first’ story triggers a subsequent or ‘next’ story which does not serve the same interactional end. Recipients’ specific questions, then, serve to connect their upcoming story to the first story. In this sense, the recipient questions examined above serve as a kind of ‘pre’ which prefigures their next action – their project to tell a next, similar or connected, story.

As we pointed out earlier, such questions are not the same as the questions found in the first pair part of pre-announcement sequences or story-preface sequences, but they nevertheless can be understood as a kind of ‘pre’ in a broader sense. In his discussion of pre-sequences, Schegloff (2007) points out that, while there are sequences which are preliminary to other sequences, pre-ness is a more general property of utterances which can occur in contexts other than adjacency pairs. He specifically says that “‘pre-ness’ extends to situations in which something was done not as an action/move in its own right […] but for its relevance to and bearing on some action/utterance projected to occur” (Schegloff, 2007, p. 28). In this sense, the perspective-display sequences in Maynard (1989) can also been viewed in light of the general property of pre-ness, where some actions prefigure
(or are loaded with intensions for) other actions to come. Maynard’s (1989) study explicates a sequence where a speaker first solicits the opinion of another speaker before giving one’s own. In such cases, the speaker’s opinion-soliciting questions also display the property of pre-ness in that the questions prefigure the asker’s own upcoming action of giving an opinion. Speakers use such strategies in an “inherently cautious way” (Maynard, 1989, p. 109) in certain specific situations. The recipient questions examined in this study are also clear examples of utterances produced with pre-ness for the relevance of incipient projects or actions of telling a subsequent story which fits to the previous one in a way implied in the question. In more general terms, mentioning X turns out to have been done in the service of leading into one’s own story but packaged as participation in the current telling by another. Furthermore, questions with pre-ness are not limited to getting a second story told. They can prefigure a first story, e.g:

(4) Is your college fun (SR-M11-2320)

Max: Nimen daxue hao bu hai wan.
      your college fun not fun.

‘Is your college fun.

Amy: En hai keyi.
      still fine

‘En: it’s ok.’

Max: Women xue xiao yige laoshi hai gao xiao.
      our college one.CL teacher very funny

‘A teacher in our college is very funny

{{story}}

There are also cases in our data where the utterance with pre-ness is not necessarily a question but, due to limited space, examples cannot be shown here. We hope that the analysis and discussion presented above contributes to (1) further exploration of pre-ness as a general property in a wider range of action sequences in addition to the well-researched pre-sequences, and (2) further exploration of sequential organisation of larger activities in talk-in-interaction.

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References


**Appendix: Abbreviations used in the glosses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Aspect marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Marker for pre-posed object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTJ</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Negative marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONO</td>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
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<td>PFV</td>
<td>Perfective particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question particle</td>
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