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Don't turn a deaf ear: A case for assessing interactive listening

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Abstract

The reciprocal nature of spoken interaction means that participants constantly alternate between speaker and listener roles. However, listener or recipient actions – also known as interactive listening (IL) – are somewhat underrepresented in language tests. In conventional listening tests, they are not directly assessed. In speaking tests, they have often been overshadowed by an emphasis on production features or subsumed under broader constructs such as interactional competence. This paper is an effort to represent the rich IL phenomena that can be found in peer interactive speaking assessments, where the candidate-candidate format and discussion task offer opportunities to elicit and assess IL. Taking a close look at candidate discourse and non-verbal actions through a conversation analytic approach, the analysis focuses on three IL features: *1) listenership display*, *2) contingent response*, and *3) collaborative completion*, and unpacks their relative strength in evidencing listener understanding. This paper concludes by making a case for revisiting the role of interactive listening, calling for more explicit inclusion of IL in L2 assessment as well as pedagogy.

Introduction

In spoken interaction, participants constantly alternate between the roles of speaker and listener (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). The mere willingness or desire to become the next speaker obliges a participant to listen (ibid.), as does the orientation to make their next actions meaningful and consequential to the interaction (Roever & Kasper, 2018). A fundamental aspect of spoken interaction is achieving shared understanding with one another, which in turn is integral to 'mutual communication, joint action and social co-existence' (Mondada, 2011, p.542). This intersubjective understanding is developed and managed locally, manifested through how a next turn displays (non-)comprehension[i] of the prior turn (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) – a basic tenet in Conversation Analysis. The moment-by-moment coordination between understanding and progressivity of the talk is also exemplified by how a listener can either display understanding and encourage the speaker to go on through continuers (e.g. 'uh huh', nodding), or to initiate repair addressing any issues with hearing or comprehension before progressing further (Schegloff, 1982). If listening and understanding are indispensable to real-life spoken interaction, to what extent are these commensurately represented in assessments of second language ability?

Listening tests to date, whether presenting monologic or dialogic speech, typically involve test-takers providing selected or constructed responses to comprehension questions. These tests primarily tap into receptive listening, while interactive listening (IL) remains underrepresented in conventional listening tests (Field, 2018). IL is perhaps more relevantly elicited and assessed in interactive speaking tests (Field, 2019). However, many well-established operational speaking tests involve no interaction (e.g. read-aloud and sentence-repetition in automated speaking tests) or one-off elicitation-response interaction (e.g. semi-direct computer-/Internet-based speaking tests), or they elicit a limited range of interactional functions (e.g. oral proficiency interviews) – see Plough, Banerjee, & Iwashita (2018). These speaking test formats are favorable choices in large-scale standardized testing where practicality and reliability are of paramount importance. However, a sobering reality not to overlook is that interactional skills, while not explicitly assessed in these speaking tests, are nonetheless 'commonly and incorrectly assumed by users to be inferable from scores' (Roever & Kasper, 2018, p.348). Paired/group formats involving interactive tasks (e.g. discussion, role-play) have been suggested as alternatives providing

unique opportunities to assess test-takers' interactional competence (IC), including interactive listening. However, rating scales typically place heavy weighting on production features (e.g. pronunciation, fluency, grammar). Whereas aspects of IL are captured in some IC-related descriptors, they have not been warranted a distinct rating criterion[ii] nor given more weighting. Last but not least, some candidates in interactive speaking tests (Galaczi, 2008; Luk, 2010) have been found to also exhibit an individual performance orientation that prioritizes production of ratable speech samples (Roever & Kasper, 2018) over interactional skills. This paper argues for increased attention to interactive listening in L2 assessments by different stakeholders, providing a thick description of IL phenomena in a paired speaking test as a point of departure.

Assessing interactive listening as part of interactional competence

Interactional competence (IC) has enjoyed a burgeoning interest and accorded importance in the fields of L2 learning and assessment in recent years, see, for example, dedicated special issues in the journals *Language Testing* and *Classroom Discourse* in 2018. In a state-of-the-art article on assessing IC, Galaczi and Taylor (2018) define IC as 'the ability to co-construct interaction in a purposeful and meaningful way, taking into account sociocultural and pragmatic dimensions of the speech situation and event' (p.226). While IC is mostly operationalized in the 'speaking' component of L2 assessments, it is important to recognize that participants also engage in a range of what would be typified as 'recipient' (in the CA literature) or 'listener' behaviors (in the assessment literature). Galaczi and Taylor (2018) rightly remind us that spoken interaction is 'reciprocal[,] and those involved are [...] simultaneously deconstructing messages as listeners and constructing their own message as speakers' (p.219). *Interactive listening* sits as one of the five domains of IC delimited by Galaczi and Taylor, alongside *topic management*, *turn management*, *breakdown repair*, and *non-verbal or visual behaviors*. Hall and Pekarek Doehler (2011), in their oft-cited work on interactional competence, also detail recipient behaviors that participants exhibit as follows:

> [W]e monitor ours and each other's moment-to-moment involvement in the interactions. At each interactional moment we attend to each other's actions, build interpretations as to what these actions are about and where they are heading, and formulate our own contributions based on our interpretations that move the interaction along, either toward or away from [...] each preceding move.
>
> (p.2)

More recently, Pekarek Doehler and Berger (2018) argued that one of four manifestations of L2 IC development involves 'an increased capacity to monitor the linguistic details of co-participants' prior turns and actions' (p.557). It would seem pertinent, therefore, for researchers, assessors, teachers and learners alike to explore (or revisit) the role of interactive listening in L2 learning and assessment.

There are different facets to listener conduct in spoken interaction. Two notable ones are showing that you are paying attention to (and perhaps taking an interest in) what others have to say – i.e. displaying engagement (Goodwin 1981); and showing that you understand what others are saying/doing in talk – i.e. displaying understanding (Mondada, 2011). Within the speaking assessment literature, there are also different perspectives on what constitutes interactive listening – it could be about listener support, (Galaczi, 2014; Ross, 2018); understanding of prior speaker's talk (Lam, 2018; May, 2011); or listener etiquette – giving enough space for co-participants to talk (Nakatsuhara et al., 2018). The distinction and interaction between listener engagement and understanding is particularly relevant and consequential

in assessment contexts, as participants can display themselves as engaged in listening and claim to understand others' talk without actually being/doing so (Ducasse, 2010), while there are IL features that offer more unequivocal evidence of understanding, and by extension, engagement. Among a host of listener/recipient behaviors[iii] documented in the CA, L2 development and L2 assessment literature, three have been well-attested means through which participants display listener understanding and engagement, and will be examined in this paper.

Listenership displays

There is a range of verbal/vocal and non-verbal (embodied[iv]) resources that can be deployed to show one's engagement in listening to the talk-in-progress. Verbal/vocal resources include minimal responses such as 'mm', 'yeah' (Gardner, 2001), continuers 'uh huh' (Schegloff, 1982), and assessments such as 'good', 'exactly' (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987). Non-verbal resources showing attention to co-participants could include nodding, body posture, and gaze (Goodwin, 1981). Gaze, in particular, has been argued to bear special importance in displaying recipient's attentiveness to the speaker, partly demonstrated through speakers requesting recipients' gaze through restarts and pauses (ibid.). These verbal and embodied listenership displays have been shown in the CA literature as both recipiency displays (showing 'attentiveness' or 'engagement') and understanding displays (e.g. Mondada, 2011). However, as we will see, different IL features vary in strength in evidencing comprehension.

Contingent responses

Contingent responses are a class of linguistically more substantial next-turn responses that are topically coherent (Jefferson, 1984) with a co-participant's preceding turn, 'linking up whatever is being introduced to what has just been talked about' (Sacks, lecture 5, spring 1972, cited in Jefferson, 1984, p.198). As their contents are contingent on or co-referential with the talk in the preceding turn (Lam, 2018), they make available the recipient's tentative understanding of the prior talk to co-participants and any ratified overhearers (e.g. news audience, speaking examiners). One such response is formulating, whereby a recipient *re*-presents the preceding turn in their own words, transforming or paraphrasing what the prior speaker has said (Heritage & Watson, 1979). Formulations have been argued as public, 'unequivocal displays of understanding' (ibid., p.129), as displays of active listenership in counselling (Hutchby, 2005), and are used for topicalizing parts of prior talk in news interviews (Heritage, 1984). Extending, whereby a recipient provides additional information or examples relevant to the prior speaker's talk, also has the capacity to demonstrate understanding of the prior talk (Dings, 2014; Waring, 2002). Lam (2018) adds 'accounting', whereby participants provide reasons for agreeing/disagreeing with one another. While this class of next-turn responses serve very different interactional ends in different contexts, they share a common capacity of demonstrating understanding – Waring (2002) calls them 'substantive recipiency' practices that are 'less minimal in nature' and display understanding 'in a relatively more precise and engaged fashion' (p.455); and Dings (2014) identifies them, among others, as 'alignment activities' which 'index shared understanding along with the ability to adopt the other's point of view' (p.744).

Collaborative completions

Collaborative completions, whereby a recipient completes an ongoing utterance by the current speaker, have been argued to display active listenership and provide evidence of the recipient's understanding. CA research, most notably by Lerner (1987, 2004), has identified several characteristics of collaborative completions that attest to their nature as a listener/recipient behavior. In turn-taking terms, a collaborative completion occupies the unique position of the original speaker's turn space, before the transition relevance place (TRP). It is a bid for conditional access to the ongoing turn but not for next speakership, and does not take over the floor (Lerner, 2004). Regarding sequence organization,

collaborative completions are not conditionally relevant (vs. a second pair part), but optional and produced voluntarily (ibid.). They provide evidence of (non-)understanding by virtue of being a rendition of 'what the other was going to say', which the original speaker can accept/reject (Lerner, 2004, p.229). Sert (2019), in his longitudinal study of collaborative completions in multi-party discussions among L2 learners, identified three types: subordinate clause completion, offers of candidate lexical items, and turn-initial conjunctions (p.159). His study, together with Dings (2014) and Taguchi (2014), empirically demonstrated collaborative completions as indicative of L2 IC development. Within language assessment, however, there has been little empirical investigation of this IL feature (Galaczi & Taylor, 2018), not surprisingly, as most speaking test formats other than paired/group tasks tend not to elicit this IL phenomenon.

Relative strength in evidencing understanding

While all three IL features above arguably display a participant's attention to or engagement in a co-participant's talk, they seem to differ in their strength as evidence of understanding a prior speaker's talk. An important distinction was made between *claiming* and *demonstrating understanding*, by Sacks (1992, II, p.141), and elaborated more recently by Mondada (2011) and Sert (2019). Listenership displays such as minimal responses, assessments and nods are parsimonious in linguistic form, and thus generally do not provide unambiguous evidence of understanding. As Schegloff (1982) puts it, minimal responses may at best 'claim attention and/or understanding rather than showing it or evidencing it' (p.78). This bears important implications for language assessment, in that, while interactive listening has been operationalized in assessment research (Galaczi, 2014; Ross, 2018) mainly in terms of response tokens and formulaic responses (e.g. 'exactly'), they are dubious as evidence of listener comprehension. Indeed, several speaking assessment studies (Ducasse, 2010; Galaczi, 2008; Lam, 2018; Luk, 2010) have documented how minimal and formulaic responses provide equivocal evidence of (feigned) understanding, revealed, for example, through stimulated recall interviews with assessors or candidates.

The study

Building on previous research on L2 IC development and assessment, this paper aims to provide a fine-grained analysis of three IL features within the context of a paired speaking test. The exploration of their roles in evidencing understanding of co-participants' prior talk could inform subsequent empirical work that develops rating scale descriptors for IL in interactive speaking tests. It addresses the following research questions:

> *What roles do the interactive listening features 'listenership display', 'contingent response', and 'collaborative completion' play in evidencing understanding of co-participants' talk? What is the relative strength of each feature as evidence of understanding?*

Assessment context and task

This study examines candidate discourse in Part 3: Collaborative Task of Cambridge Assessment English's *B2 First* speaking examination. Candidates in pairs engage in a discussion (e.g. about ways of attracting tourists to a town) evaluating six ideas provided (e.g. building holiday flats, having more shops, providing parks). They then need to come to a joint decision choosing one or two of the ideas. See Online Supplement for the task prompts.

Data and participants

The data in this paper comes from two research projects on the *B2 First* speaking examination (Nakatsuhara et al., 2018; Lam, 2019), consisting of video-recordings of 12 paired interactions (24 candidates). The data extracts presented in this paper are from seven videos, five of which are publicly available (see Online Supplement). Among the candidates in the seven videos, five are high-scoring (Bands 4-5)[v], six are mid-scoring (Band 3), and three are low-scoring (Bands 1-2) on the *Interactive Communication* criterion of the *B2 First* speaking scale[vi]. The score bands for tests across different levels in *Cambridge English Qualifications* are placed on 'a continuous, overlapping scale' (Galaczi, ffrench, Hubbard, & Green, 2011, p.224), such that Band 5 in *B2 First* shares the same score descriptor with Band 3 in *C1 Advanced*, and Band 1 in *B2 First* with Band 3 in *B1 Preliminary*. As such, the 14 candidates in the seven videos roughly represent mid B1 to mid C1 levels in the CEFR in terms of IC. See Nakatsuhara et al. (2018) for further details of the candidates' background profiles.

Methods for Analysis

The candidate discourse was transcribed following Jefferson's (2004) conventions (see Online Supplement) and analyzed following a conversation analytic (CA) approach (ten Have, 2007; Liddicoat, 2011). The analysis began with *identifying phenomena*. Guided by the broad aim of identifying listener/recipient behaviors, this stage included repeated reviewing of the transcripts in conjunction with the videos, noticing for each turn *what* (interactional actions) participants are doing and *how* they do it (with what features of turn design). Observations and preliminary analytic accounts were noted in the transcript margins, for example, about the position of the listener behaviors (during a co-participant's turn or in the next turn), their format (linguistically minimal or more substantial), and whether they claim or demonstrate understanding of co-participant's talk.

The next stage involved *building a collection* of data extracts pertaining to each of the three IL features *listenership displays*, *contingent responses*, and *collaborative completions*, purposefully incorporating instances of each feature that display variation (e.g. 'yeah' within co-participant's turn or past its completion) to improve the robustness of the analytic descriptions. As part of the analysis, additional transcription was also carried out for non-verbal/embodied actions relevant to the IL phenomena. Such transcription was necessarily selective (ten Have, 2007) and balanced with transcript readability. Particular attention was paid to the listener's non-verbal actions within a current speaker's turn. The procedure began with more crude representations of non-verbal actions as transcriber's comments ((action)), noting displays of recipiency (e.g. gaze, nodding, smiling). They were then aligned with the concurrent stretch of talk, using \\ to indicate the onset of the non-verbal action and +++ for its duration. As the analysis developed, listener gaze was represented in more nuanced ways following Goodwin (1981), depicting when the gaze begins ...____ and is withdrawn ____,,, , as well as shifts in the object of the gaze +picture____+ (see Online Supplement).

The third stage involved *making comparisons and refining the analytic description*: noting and accounting for variations among instances (e.g. collaborative completions accepted vs. not accepted by the original speaker) in order to arrive at an analytic generalization (ten Have, 2007) that accounts for the range of possibilities among instances of each feature. The analysis below presents illustrative examples which reflect such variation of possibilities.

Analysis

1. Listenership display

We begin by looking at a range of resources that display listenership. We will see how participants show that they are paying attention while the other is talking, and some who offer no such evidence. For those who do display engagement in the co-participant's talk, we will explore the extent to which understanding of the co-participant's talk is evidenced. In Extract 1 below, the candidate pair D and S are talking through the six ideas on the task prompt for a social event among new residents. Here, S deploys and coordinates a range of listenership displays during D's extended turn developing the idea of organizing a barbeque.

Extract 1 P04 (01:21)

```
1.   D:    So and, maybe \\the barbeque?
2.                        \\((D points to picture; S leans in to look))
3.         I think the barbeque would be an \\interesting: (.) ↓YEah=
4.                                           \\((S turns from pic to look at D))
5.   S:    =°m[m.°
6.   D:       [an \\interesting task or,=
7.               \\((S nods))+++++++++++
8.   S:    =°yeah°= ((smiles))
9.   D:    =interesting thing to do because,
10.        people can bring \\(.) their meat, or \\meal with them,=
11.                         \\((S turns to look at D; D then makes eye contact))
12.                                             \\((S nods))
13.        =>and then you can< (.)
14.  S:    °ye[ah° ((smiles))
15.  D:       [barbeque,
16.        and you can talk together to each other,
17.        \\and it's a familiar situation [I think.
18.        \\((S nods))++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
19.  S:                                    [yeah food are always k-
20.        people to get together.
21.  D:    Yes. °Of course.°
```

First, S is noted to employ a range of embodied resources to display recipiency. At lines 1-2, as D initiates the topic of 'barbeque' and points to the relevant picture, S leans in to look. As D proffers his view on hosting a barbeque (lines 3-4), S shifts her gaze from the picture towards D. At lines 10-11, where D begins to offer reasons for his positive view, S again turns her gaze towards D, this time at the point of D's speech perturbation after 'can bring', and shortly after, D's gaze joins hers as he utters 'their meat'. Whether D's speech perturbation (line 10) is a speaker's request for recipient's gaze (Goodwin, 1981) is not entirely clear, but the coordination of gaze between S and D reflects the preference organization expounded by Goodwin (1981), whereby the recipient's gaze generally reaches the speaker before the speaker begins to gaze at the recipient. Here, through her gaze and body orientation, S displays her attentiveness to D's talk, as well as interest in what he has to say.

S also receipts D's talk at various points over his extended turn through both vocal and embodied resources. Well-coordinated with D's talk, these resources simultaneously display S's understanding and an orientation to D's continuation as current speaker. At lines 3-6, D can be seen to have slight trouble

formulating his talk. S gives him the space for self-repair (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977), and between D's projection of a forthcoming self-repair (↓YEah) and his attempt (line 6), S produces the acknowledgement token 'mm' (line 5) with downward intonation. Furnished before D's TCU [vii] completion, S displays unproblematic understanding of D's talk-in-progress (his positive view on the barbeque idea), while the diminished volume displays support for D's continuation of his turn (cf. Schegloff, 1982). At lines 7-8, as D performs his self-repair ('an interesting task'), S receipts it with a nod, followed by an affiliative 'yeah' with a smile. Her verbal response in minimal form 'yeah' and diminished volume continues to exhibit an orientation to current speaker continuation, congruent with D's 'or' with a continuing intonation. As D's extended turn continues, at lines 10-15, S displays her engagement with and understanding of D's talk in a similar mechanism, until she verbalizes her affiliation with D's view at lines 19-20.

Notice how, throughout D's extended turn (lines 1-17), S has signaled to D through minimal responses and non-verbal actions her claimed understanding of his talk and her orientation to its progressivity. However, it is not until her next-turn full response (lines 19-20), which formulates (Heritage & Watson, 1979) the gist of D's tri-part reasoning in favor of the barbeque activity, when evidence of her understanding becomes unequivocal and publicly available (see section below); and for the demonstrated understanding to be confirmed by the original speaker (line 21). In Extract 2 below, we will see how recipient's understanding of speaker's talk is claimed through listenership displays but not demonstrated.

In Extract 2, K and P discuss different gift ideas for a friend who has moved to live in a house with a big garden. K expresses her view that 'chairs and table' is a better idea than 'barbeque' suggested by P just preceding the extract, and P claims understanding with verbal and embodied listenership displays. P's gaze behavior during K's turns is represented on the lines above K's talk, following Goodwin's (1981) conventions.

Extract 2a – P10

```
1.    K:           [Yeah- I agree with you but (..) mm::: (.)
2.          I think chairs and table i- mm are better,
3.                 ...._____
4.          because:: (.) .hh mm they're very useful
5.          _____,,,,
6.          mm:: (.) mm:: (...) mm he likes garden mm very much,
7.          so [he'll=
8.    P:       [°Ye:s°
9.                                ....... _____
10.   K:     =spend most time in the\\garden.
11.                                    \\((P nods))
```

P displays recipiency – his attentiveness to K's talk – mainly through the embodied resources of gaze and nods. At lines 3-6, as K begins to give reasons for her view (line 4), P turns and starts to look at K at her speech perturbations (because:: (.)). His gaze reaches K at her in-breath, and is maintained through 'they're very useful' and K's prolonged hesitation that follows (line 6). As K continues with her account for why 'chairs and table' is a better gift idea (lines 10-19), P is seen to sustain his gaze on K until the end of her turn, and nod at various points to receipt K's talk – claiming understanding and signaling for K to continue.

Extract 2b – P10

```
12.   K:    _____
13.         So- mm chair is the place that \\h- he can maybe re- uh-
14.                                        \\((P nods))++++++++++++++++++
15.         _____
16.         re- relax? (..) or maybe in- mm: \\drink some tea or (.)
17.                                          \\((P nods))+++++++++++++++++
18.         _____
19.         do (.) wha-
20.         (..)  ((P nods))
21.   P:    Yes good idea but (.)
22.         \\uh I think barbeque uh because (.) \\I:: like to party
23.         \\((points to picture))              \\((smiles and looks at K))
24.         huhuhuh
```

Apart from nodding, P claims understanding of K's talk twice through verbal resources. He utters a 'yes' (line 8), though notably a bit further away from the TRP after 'very much'. The 'yes' that is slightly prolonged but in reduced volume is hearable as affiliating with K while orienting to her continuation. Following K's abrupt turn termination and a silence (lines 19-20), P begins his turn with a pro-forma agreement (Schegloff, 2007) 'Yes good idea but' (line 21). While by furnishing assessments such as 'good idea', one claims epistemic access to the prior talk being assessed (Lindstrom & Sorjonen, 2013), P's next-turn response presents equivocal evidence of his understanding of K's explication of her view in the preceding turn. The account for recycling his barbeque idea 'I like to party' is self-attentive (Jefferson, 1984) and makes no reference to K's prior talk. P's smile that accompanies his account, and the subsequent self-ridiculing laughter (line 24), displays his own orientation towards the inadequacy of the account, and perhaps the response as a whole.

Extract 3 shows a candidate pair (L and Y) with the least listenership displays (cf. Extracts 1-2), where the two discuss different ways to spend the money given to their friend before he goes on holiday.

Extract 3a - P11

```
1.    L:    \\Mm- (.) if- if he wants to go to another place to:: for
2.          \\((both L and Y look at the pictures on the test booklet))
3.          her: for: his holiday, maybe he need to buy uh one package
4.          (.) uh
5.          \\(..)                        maybe \\a middle bag is okay,
6.          \\((L's hand moves and lands on one picture))
7.                                        \\((Y tilts his head and focuses his
8.          gaze on the picture where L's hand is))
9.          because I think (.) uh a short holiday, he don:: he doesn't
10.         need t- take any more clothes,
11.         so I think middle bag is okay °huhuhuhuh°
```

At lines 1-3, L initiates the idea of buying a 'package' (suitcase). He asserts that 'a middle bag' would suffice (line 5), and develops his turn further by giving reasons (lines 9-10). Notably, throughout L's extended turn, Y does not look at or orients to L, apart from directing his gaze towards the picture L

points to (lines 5-8). Without any gaze directed to L, nods or minimal responses throughout L's turn, there is little evidence of Y's engagement with L's talk, his view, and his explanation of the reasons.

Extract 3b - P11

```
11.          so I think middle bag is okay °huhuhuhuh°
12.    Y:    \\Yeah. You'll need a:: (.) sunglass. ((turns to gaze at L))
13.             \\((gaze stays on the booklet; hand points to one picture))
14.    L:    Yeah. ((glances at Y)) Because (.) i- if he wants to go to the
15.          beach, uh the sunshine is so: strong,
16.          so I think he needs to buy a (.) glasses.=
17.          =But, don't p- don't buy a: exam: ex- expensive (.) (stuffs)
18.          because (.) I think his parent:: (..) maybe: (..) don't-
19.          doesn't gives- (.) much money to him.
20.             (..) ((L looks at the examiner briefly then turns to Y))
21.             ((Y nods slightly and starts pointing his finger to another picture))
22.    Y:    Yeah and then you needa take (.) uh sun (.) sun sun
23.          cream-
```

On completion of L's turn, Y begins his with 'yeah' and initiates another idea 'sunglass' (line 12). It is only at the end of his own TCU does Y turns to gaze at L. L responds also with 'yeah', but continues with talk that is topically coherent (Jefferson, 1984) with Y's prior turn – accounting for his agreement (lines 14-16, see also section below) and cautioning against buying an expensive pair (lines 17-19). Y nods slightly during the gap, before beginning his next turn again with 'yeah' and initiating yet another topic 'sun cream'.

What is most noteworthy about Y's 'yeah' here is its sequential placement. In both instances, it is placed after L's turn completion, at the beginning of the next turn (lines 12 and 22). When placed within the turn space of the prior speaker (cf. Extract 1), 'yeah' as a minimal response provides a verbal display of receipting talk, and possibly affiliation when accompanied by embodied resources such as smiles and nods. In contrast, when 'yeah' is placed after a TRP, with a change of speakership, it would seem to serve as little more than a turn-taking device signaling incipient speakership (cf. Luk, 2010). Here, without much (if any) co-occurring evidence of affiliation, 'yeah' is dubious as an acknowledgement or agreement token. Both instances are also followed by a topic shift, where Y initiates a new topic by referring to a different picture on the task prompt (see Galaczi, 2008, for the operationalization of 'topic' in *B2 First* – formerly FCE – paired interactions). As such, it is difficult to ascertain whether Y has claimed, let alone demonstrate, his understanding of L's prior talk.

2. Contingent response

Next, we examine how participants demonstrate in their next-turn response their attention to and understanding of the co-participant's preceding turn. In Extract 4, M and F are discussing different ways to attract tourists to a town. F demonstrates understanding of M's talk through asking a relevant follow-up question and providing a contingent response that extends M's prior contribution.

Extract 4 – P01 (07:00)

```
1.  M:    Mm:: well, I agree with you, but, maybe, providing parks is
2.        much better?
3.  F: →  Mm why do you think that, actually?
4.  M:    Mm >because I think< to spend time in parks are good,
5.        with the family
6.  F: →  Mm. Yeah I think you have- >can have a lot of fun< in parks
7.        though. Do something like picnics with- picnic with your
8.        friends or stuff? >Yeah that would be nice.<
9.        (.)
10.       But uhm more shops (..) yeah that- I think it would be nice
11.       cos I think......
```

Just prior to the extract, F has initiated the idea of 'holiday flats' and explained her reasons. At lines 1-2, M offers a 'pro forma agreement' (Schegloff, 2007) in the 'yes, but...' format, and proposes the alternative idea of 'providing parks'. At line 3, F does not immediately furnish a second assessment agreeing/disagreeing with M, but instead asks a follow-up question (line 3), prompting M to explain her view. This takes the shape of a pre-second insert expansion, whereby F's response (second pair part) at line 6 to M's first assessment 'providing parks is much better' (first pair part) would be contingent on M's answer to F's follow-up question. After M has provided an account for her view (lines 4-5), F offers her response to M's first assessment, affiliating with M's view (lines 6-8). Prefacing with 'mm.', F's ensuing turn components build on M's idea of spending time with family in the park, and *extend* the idea with further elements of what to do ('picnic') and who with ('friends') (lines 6-8). Her affiliative assessments ('you can... have a lot of fun in parks', 'Yeah that'd be nice') envelop her extension of M's idea, and advance the joint view that providing parks will attract tourists to the town.

Of significance here is how F goes beyond *claiming* understanding of M's prior talk through minimal responses (mm, yeah) and affiliative second assessment 'that would be nice', but *demonstrates* understanding through her on-topic talk (Jefferson, 1984) that offers additional information in harmony with previous speaker's contribution (Dings, 2014) at lines 6-8. Similarly, F's question at line 3, in its particular sequential placement as a pre-second insert, demonstrates her understanding of M's prior turn – (1) that she holds the opinion that 'providing parks' is a better idea than 'holiday flats', and (2) an account for this opinion is relevant but yet to be proffered. Effectively, then, F has provided two contingent responses to M's talk in this sequence, and the two have managed to develop the topic of 'providing parks' over four turns.

Extract 5 below shows how participants demonstrate their understanding of co-participants' preceding talk by formulating it in their own words. The extract is from the beginning of the discussion between D and S (Extract 1).

Extract 5 – P04

```
1.  D:    So uhm yeah what do you think about this picture here to
2.        invite people for maybe a sport game like volleyball or
3.        football
4.  S:    Yeah I- I think it's a good idea because mm they- they
5.        spend their time together to enjoy the same sport? And,
6.        also they- also it's a good time to get to know each other
7.        but, I think it's- it's- it's if you don't know how to play
8.        the sport, it could be a \\pro[blem
9.                                    \\((turns to look at D))
10. D: →                               [Yeah if you don't- uh know the
11.       rules. And also uh for these people who're not playing
12.       actually in the moment they're [just (              )
13. S: →                                  [Yeah they're just watch-
14. D:    and, yeah, what are they doing,
15.       so, could be a difficulty there.
```

At lines 1-3, D initiates the topic of hosting a sports game to help new residents get to know each other. He does so by asking what S thinks about the idea. S provides an elaborate response, with a positive assessment followed by offering two reasons (lines 4-6). Note, however, that she then 'changes course' and presents her reservation about the idea, considering how such an event might exclude residents unfamiliar with the particular sport. Of interest here is D's affiliative response that follows (lines 10-15), where he *formulates* – paraphrases – S's talk ('if you don't know how to play the sport') in his own words ('if you don't uh know the rules'). It proceeds with a component where D continues with on-topic talk that extends the latter part of S's prior turn (downside of the sports game) by referring to the spectators (lines 11-12). Both his formulating and extending components invoke the same underlying argument as S's – some residents may be excluded, made more explicit at lines 14-15.

Through both components, D makes publicly available his understanding of S's prior talk, by offering his candidate understanding of the point S has just made and by extending her topic, to the overall effect of advancing a joint reserved view towards the 'sports game' idea. Halfway through D's turn, S also affiliates with D (line 13) by furnishing a formulation of his immediately prior talk 'people who're not playing actually in the moment...', albeit a short-lived one as she drops out of the overlap with D's continuation. It nevertheless offers evidence of her understanding of D's ongoing talk.

Extract 6 shows a discussion on how to help students learn about life in another country. Among the two full-turn responses by O, one constitutes a contingent response (*accounting* for disagreement), the other does not.

Extract 6a – P02 (01:02)

```
1.   H:      Yeah. And I think that's very useful to go in (.) this kind
2.           of markets, 'cos that's very typical and that shows theuhm
3.           (.) like, typical things that we have in the (..) in the
4.           country?
5.   O: →   But don't you think it's like (.) they don't get contact to
6.           (.) inhabitants of that country >so they don't< know how
7.           they [live?
8.   H:          [Yeah. So that's not the most useful thing to do.
9.           (.)
```

After collaboratively establishing what activity ('visiting a local market') is represented in the picture (prior to the extract), H expresses her positive view towards the activity, and proffers the reason that it enables the students to see 'typical things... in the country' (lines 1-4). O contests H's view in her *but*-prefaced response at lines 5-7. Notably, her disaffiliation is not conveyed through a formulaic 'sorry I don't agree', but constructed through an account that enacts an alternative criterion more directly responding to the task demand – whether the activity provides opportunities for contact with local inhabitants and learning about 'how they live' (line 7). Thus, O demonstrates her understanding of H's prior talk in two ways. First, in ways that formulaic expressions do not, O provides a response whose substantive content is contingent (Lam, 2018) on H's preceding turn, sustaining the co-participant's topic by accounting for her disagreement. Secondly, O demonstrates her monitoring of H's prior turn by re-orienting the trajectory of the view ('typical things' [objects]) that H has been advancing to an alternative focus on how the local people live.

Extract 6b – P02

```
10.  H:      Uhm I think it is very nice to go in a host family, (.)
11.          'cos that's- uhm (.) the best way you learn (.)
12.          how the people live in the country, like you,
13.          their customs and (.) all the things they do
14.  O:      °Mm hmm°
15.  H:      Mm[::
16.  O: →      [But I think also visiting, like, the museums sows you
17.          (.) shows you the history and how (.) [and why
```

O's response at lines 14-17, in contrast, does little to evidence her understanding of H's immediately prior talk. After conceding her position (line 8), H proposes a new idea 'go in a host family' (lines 10-13), and develops the idea by offering an explanation ('how people live', 'their customs'). O's minimal acknowledgement 'mm hmm' (line 14) – a delay and withholding of affiliation – adumbrates disaffiliation as forthcoming. Shortly after, however, in overlap with H's incipient continuation 'mm::', O produces a fuller response that is not overtly disaffiliative but disaligning (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011): 'but I think...' (lines 16-17) in effect initiates a marked topic shift (Sacks, 1992), introducing another idea 'visiting the museums' from the task prompt.

This response of O, therefore, does not make publicly available any evidence that demonstrates her understanding of the co-participant's preceding talk – it does not refer to H's positive view on 'host family' or her reasons, but rather curtails her topic. While O may well have listened to and understood H's talk, there is no 'visible', assessable evidence in her response here that suggests either way.

3. Collaborative completion

Finally, we look at a listener/recipient behavior that potently demonstrates engagement in and understanding of the co-participant's talk as it develops. We will also see how different aspects of the exchange indicate whether the recipient's completion of the speaker's talk is supportive or intrusive. In Extract 7 below, C and J are tasked with choosing two ways they consider the most important in helping people enjoy life in a city. Here, C produces a collaborative completion to J's developing TCU that names her second choice.

Extract 7 – P03 (02:51)

```
1.  C:     What do you think is important
2.         (..)
3.  J:     I: think \\important is (.) time with your dog,
4.                     \\((points to one picture))
5.         just alone, spend some time alone,
6.  C:     Yeah,
7.  J:     An:::d, spend \\some time (.)
8.                            \\((points to another picture and turns to C))
9.  C:  → \\at the café,
10.        \\((turns from picture to J, and the two make eye contact))
11. J:                     [\\at the café, [with (your) friends
12.                         \\((nods))
13. C:                     [yeah.          [I like that one too.=
```

Following a pause after C's question (which is a re-worked question first pair part) at lines 1-2, J provides her answer (lines 3-7) aligning with the task instructions – choosing two most important things. After stating her first choice (lines 3-5), which C receipts with the continuer 'yeah,' J goes on to proffer her second choice (line 7). Here, as J utters 'spend some time', she simultaneously points to the picture of the cafe and orients herself to C. Registering J's embodied invitation to co-participation (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986) within her turn space, C comes in following J's short pause (line 7), completing J's developing TCU with 'at the cafe' (line 9). Her candidate completion is accepted by J (lines 11-12), the original speaker, evidenced by J's nods and incorporation into her own completion (cf. Lerner, 2004).

C's contribution (line 9) demonstrates several characteristics of a collaborative completion: It occurs within the original speaker's turn space (Lerner, 2004), where J's TCU is both notionally incomplete (spend some time where/how?) and pragmatically incomplete (naming the idea represented by the picture prompt, thereby answering C's question). C's candidate completion 'at the cafe', as a prepositional phrase adjunct, ties in with the syntactic format (Sert, 2019) of J's developing TCU, and more importantly, completes the linguistic description of the picture and the action underway (answering the question). In furnishing this collaborative completion, C demonstrates her monitoring and understanding of her co-participant's developing talk at multiple levels: 1) at the action level – that J is proffering her second choice, and the specific idea J is trying to name, indexed through J's embodied resources (pointing to a picture); 2) at the linguistic level – the syntactic format of J's developing utterance, and its current status as notionally and intonationally incomplete; and 3) at the turn-taking level – that this is J's turn space, and yet J is establishing the relevance of an other-completion, thereby ratifying C's co-participation, through embodied resources (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986).

Extract 8 below illustrates a collaborative completion involving a word search activity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986), which can also be classified as a self-initiated other repair (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson, 1977). Prior to the extract[s] has been the topic sequence on 'gardening', which has been developing for a few turns, with both pros and cons discussed.

Extract 8a – P04 (02:42)

```
1. D:     Yeah! So I think, this one is better than °the- the music
2.        and the- [the sport.°
3. S:              [yeah because they have chance to: \\(.) talking
4.                                             \\ H1      H2
5.        about \\the (.) [talking or-
6.               \\((looks up in the air momentarily, then back at booklet))
7. D: →                  [the plants, [and, yeah.
8. S:                                 [yeah
9.        \\Plants ye[ah.
10.       \\((S nods; and both S and D withdraw gaze and turn to booklet))
11.D:              [Exactly.
12.       (.)
13.D:     And (.) maybe the- the journey? ......
```

At lines 1-2, after affiliating with S with an emphatic 'Yeah!', D is seen to work towards closing the topic sequence by a *so*-prefaced summary assessment (Jefferson, 1984) uttered in decrescendo – progressively lower volume – and falling intonation, projecting imminent completion of the TCU and the topic sequence. The *so* preface frames his summary assessment within the evaluation criterion the two have jointly established – whether the activity can get new residents talking to each other. Here, S comes in rather enthusiastically (line 3), affiliating (and in overlap) with D through an account 'yeah because they have chance to talking about...'. S's contribution (lines 3-5), in fact, takes the shape of a subordinate clause collaborative completion (Sert, 2019), continuing D's TCU in the form of 'X is better than Y and Z because....', although it also takes the shape of a next-turn affiliative response, prefaced with the agreement token 'yeah'.

Extract 8b – P04
A more detailed version of Extract 8a (lines 3-7) with S's gaze and gestures transcribed

```
                              +booklet_____+ ....+D___
  3. S:              [yeah because they have chance to: \\(.)    talking
  4.                                                   \\ H1       H2
             _____+  +air+ +booklet+
  5.         about   the (.) [talking or-
  6. D: →                    [the plants, [and, yeah.
                                          ...+D_____
  7. S:                                   [yeah
  8.         \\Plants ye[ah.
  9.         \\((S nods; and both S and D withdraw gaze and turn to booklet))
 10. D:                 [Exactly.
 11.         (.)
 12. D:      And (.) maybe the- the journey? ......
```

Despite her enthusiasm displayed through the reduced transition space (lines 2-3), the linguistic production of S's response develops with difficulty (see her mid-TCU speech perturbations at line 3). As S resumes her talk with 'talking about', she turns her gaze away from the test booklet and towards D. At her pause and resumption of the talk, S also gestures twice (H1 and H2). All these display to D her staggering attempt to formulate her talk. At line 5, as she utters 'the', her gaze is withdrawn from D, as S looks momentarily into the air and then at the booklet in her second pause. Gaze withdrawal from the co-participant, as noted by Goodwin and Goodwin (1986), often indicates 'adjustments to the cognitive demands that a word search imposes (for example, ways of eliminating distracting visual information)' (p.58). After S's second mid-TCU pause, D supplies the words 'the plants' (line 6) as a candidate completion, in overlap with S's attempt at self-repair 'talking or', but which S accepts with 'yeah' while gazing towards D. After a second overlap (where D attempts to continue with 'and' but then abandons with 'yeah' in falling intonation), S further confirms her acceptance by repeating D's supplied word 'plants' and producing another 'yeah'. This ratifies D's candidate completion as an accurate projection of what she was going to say (Lerner, 2004). D's collaborative completion, therefore, constitutes evidence of his effective monitoring and understanding of his co-participant's ongoing talk.

One might wonder if D's other-completion here is truly collaborative, or rather symptomatic of turn competition. Evidence would suggest more of the former. Goodwin and Goodwin (1986) maintain that the appropriateness of contribution in word search sequences is interactionally negotiated – whether the recipient's co-participation is invited (e.g. through gaze), and whether the original speaker is given opportunities to attempt self-repair (cf. preference for self-correction, Schegloff et al., 1977). Here, D's entrance into S's turn space is not a case of 'trespassing', but ratified by her – S's speech perturbations together with her embodied actions signal that she is having difficulties and is seeking D's assistance. Moreover, D offers his candidate completion after two attempts by S herself at formulating the utterance; and the candidate completion is accepted by S. Although it is D who eventually takes the next full turn to initiate a new topic (line 11), this is done only after a satisfactory closing of the current topic coordinated by both participants – through withdrawing gaze from each other and turning to the test booklet (line 9), D's sequence-closing third 'Exactly' (line 10) and a pause (line 11).

Extract 9 shows two instances of more intrusive other-completions, where C ostensibly comes in to help L describe one of the task prompt pictures.

Extract 9a – P05 (01:25)
Lines 1-5 with L's gaze transcribed

```
                       +picture_____
1.  L:    \\Uhm: (.) then this picture- (.) is uh::m >a situation:< (.)
2.        \\((points finger to a new picture))
3.  C: →  in [a school       probably
          _____+
4.  L:        [>is it in a-< \\in a school, in a classroom,=
5.                             \\((orients to C slightly))
6.  C:    =yeah.=
```

At line 1, L initiates a new topic by focusing on a picture not yet discussed. Her first attempt involves a very general description 'this picture is a situation...', and L exhibits difficulty in putting her idea in words, as evidenced by the hesitation 'uh::m', the sound stretch in 'situation:', and the pause that follows. C comes in at line 2, supplying a candidate completion '[a situation]...in a school'. Note how this is in overlap with L's own continuation (line 4), a rushed-through insert '>is it in a-<' hearable as possibly a question to herself, a musing. On registering C's supply 'in a school', L abandons her insert question and repeats C's candidate's completion, followed by a more specific description 'in a classroom', which C accepts with 'yeah' (line 6).

Several observations suggest this as a more intrusive and less collaborative instance of other-completion (cf. Extract 8). Firstly, while L's speech perturbations indicate difficulty in formulating her talk, there is little evidence in her embodied conduct to suggest that L is, at this point, seeking C's assistance – L's gaze remains on the picture, and only following C's candidate completion does L orient to C slightly as she repeats 'in a school'. Secondly, C's candidate completion comes in overlap with L's own first attempt to formulate the idea, through which L displays an orientation for self-repair (Schegloff et al., 1977). Notice how even as L utters the insert question '>is it in a-<', neither her gaze or body orientation has turned to C. Finally, L, the original speaker, incorporates C's candidate completion into her continuing TCU, but immediately follows with a repair, which perhaps indexes a more ambivalent acceptance of C's completion.

Extract 9b – P05

```
7.  L:    =Uhm:: this is a teacher, and,
8.        she's- trying to \\help (.)
9.                          \\((points to picture then opens up her palm))
10.       \\the:: [the young girl,    the student,    ]
11.       \\((points to picture again))
12. C: →          [the student, yeah, the young girl.] >And I think<
13.       it is very (.) important=
14. L:    =yeah ((nods))
15. C:    to help young people=
16. L:    =yes ((nods))
17. C:    young children=
18. L:    =yeah ((nods))
19. C:    just simply to- to do their homeworks.
```

Immediately after this, L continues to attempt a description of the picture (lines 7-8), not without difficulty, as evidenced by her mid-TCU pause after 'help' (line 8), the sound stretch in 'the::' (line 10), and the embodied action of opening up her palm (line 9). C comes in to supply a candidate completion '[she's trying to help the]...the student' at line 12, again in overlap with L, just as L attempts a

completion 'the young girl' herself (line 10). They accept each other's candidate description of the individual through repetition (lines 10, 12).

In both instances, C demonstrates that she has been listening to L's talk – monitoring any opportunities to contribute closely. By supplying candidate completions that are (partially) accepted by the original speaker, she also demonstrates understanding of the co-participant's ongoing talk and an ability to project her forthcoming talk. However, C's interactional conduct here is seen to be less collaborative and more interruptive: She supplies her candidate completion without allowing opportunities for self-repair (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986), or, as speaking examiners in May (2011) & Nakatsuhara et al. (2018) noted – not giving co-participants enough space to talk. Importantly, also, C takes over the floor immediately following the collaborative completion in this instance. Beginning with a rushed through '>And I think<...' (line 12), she proffers her own evaluation of whether the people in the picture need help, while L, the initiator of the topic, is 'relegated' to a recipient role, supporting C's talk with backchannels 'yeah' and nodding (lines 12-19).

Discussion and Conclusion

Through a microanalytic lens, this paper has explored three classes of interactive listening features in a paired speaking test: *1) listenership displays*, *2) contingent responses*, and *3) collaborative completions*. The analysis contributed to refining the IL construct by elaborating on how the different IL features evidence understanding and engagement. Listenership displays signal a recipient's engagement (attention or interest) in a co-participant's ongoing talk. However, these displays are generally limited to claiming but not demonstrating understanding (Schegloff, 1982), and may indeed be used to conceal non-comprehension. This was the case in an L2 Spanish classroom assessment context, where Ducasse (2010) found that the minimal response *sí* occurred even in paired interactions among beginners, while candidates confessed using it to disguise non-understanding and move the interaction along. Other IL features can evidence both understanding and engagement. Contingent responses are linguistically more substantial, and therefore present assessable, verifiable evidence of (non-)understanding of a co-participant's prior contribution. Such demonstration of understanding arguably also evidences listener engagement – it is unlikely that a participant can (or would endeavor to) substantively demonstrate understanding if they have not even been engaged in listening. Collaborative completions demonstrate understanding as well as moment-by-moment monitoring of co-participant's talk at multiple levels, including action, linguistic details, and turn-taking. Given the likely higher cognitive demand associated with their precision-timing and production, collaborative completions may be a compelling form of evidence for interactive listening, although, as illustrated, they can be supportive or interruptive.

The elaboration of IL phenomena related to evidencing understanding and engagement in this paper bears important implications for L2 assessments, and invites us to revisit the dichotomous (di)vision of speaking and listening based on a 'four-skills' model of L2 proficiency. Firstly, L2 listening tests to date mainly tap into receptive listening. As we have seen, however, understanding in interactive listening is not a purely cognitive phenomenon that operates within an individual's mind. It is also fundamentally social – publicly displayed to co-participants, and interactionally coordinated and negotiated. As such, IL is needs to be assessed outside the boundaries of (receptive) listening tests. This in turn has important implications for what we conventionally label as 'speaking tests'. The issue is particularly pertinent if inferences about spoken interactional ability are indeed often drawn by test users from what are nominally 'speaking tests' (Roever & Kasper, 2018). Testing speaking without listening would be like a

driving test that assess the learner driver on only the mechanical aspects of driving as opposed to how they coordinate with other vehicles, cyclists, or pedestrians.

Where a test aims to generate score-based inferences about learners' IL, or more generally, IC, it is imperative to include tasks that directly elicit and assess interaction. Monologic or one-off elicitation-response tasks may elicit some aspects of IC, but they cannot elicit listenership displays and collaborative completions, and any contingent responses generated this way would not engender further topic development. Similarly, these IL features cannot be readily assessed through integrated listening-into-speaking tasks. While the field of large-scale language assessment is moving towards online 'at-home' testing both proactively and reactively (Isbell & Kremmel, 2020), it is worth exploiting the affordances of technology (e.g. video-conferencing) to assess spoken interaction (rather than spoken production only) in consideration of construct representation.

Where interaction is elicited in test tasks, there is then a strong case for incorporating IL as part of the assessment criteria, and giving it prominence alongside other productive and interactional features. This paper has demonstrated how recipient actions execute both listening and speaking – and rather seamlessly, thereby evidencing both skills. If they are not scored or reported commensurately, we miss out on the opportunity to represent an important part of learners' L2 ability. Based on this study, I argue that it is important to assess whether learners, as proficiency level progresses, are able to a) deploy a diversifying range of IL features to claim *and* to demonstrate understanding, with b) an increasing ability to use them appropriately, fitting the here-and-now of the interactional context (cf. Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2018; Sert, 2019). An important, practical question to address is whether raters are able to notice and evaluate IL features. Some previous studies have yielded encouraging results. In Nakatsuhara et al. (2018), raters noted instances of the three IL features and commented on how they evidenced the candidates' listener engagement and understanding (or lack thereof). The features were identified notwithstanding IL being a non-criterion feature absent on the operational rating scale. This corroborates Ducasse's (2010) study, where raters were found to orient to IL (again, a non-criterion feature) as contributing to successful interaction. These findings attest to IL features as sufficiently salient to raters, indicating their potential to be applied in operational rating. Of course, a sensible measure in operationalizing the IL criterion would involve the provision of further rater training to sensitize raters to the features and their differential strength in evidencing understanding and engagement, especially for those more attuned to criteria on spoken production such as fluency (Field, 2019). Another challenge to address would be the potential variation in raters' interpretations of collaborative completions – deeming them supportive or interruptive.

The implications of IL phenomena and the need to revisit the binary view of speaking and listening based on a 'four-skills' model also extend to L2 pedagogy. There may have been a tendency among language teachers to assume that interactive listening is easier than other forms of listening (Field, 2019). Accordingly, language classrooms may have emphasized training learners' receptive listening skills. The fact that some learners focus overwhelmingly on producing language samples even in interactive speaking tasks (see review earlier) perhaps partly reflected the teaching or test training they have received. Based on the current study, teachers and learners preparing for interactive speaking tests are encouraged to re-orient themselves, recognizing that, even if it is nominally a 'speaking test', it is not just about 'speaking'. Learners can, for example, be encouraged to direct more attention to listening and responding to co-participants' contributions rather than getting through all the topics on the task prompt (e.g. Extracts 3 and 6b). There may also be quite immediate positive washback from incorporating an explicit IL criterion in classroom-based assessments, considering how learners often ask their teachers if they would gain/lose marks doing so and so in the exam. However, a challenge would

be to ensure learner/test-taker engagement to go beyond paying lip service to the criterion without considering the local interactional appropriateness of the IL features. In the wider context, as the field of applied linguistics evolves with renewed understandings of different forms of 'listening' and 'speaking' and the differential cognitive and interactional demands they have on the learner, such understandings should instigate corresponding changes in curriculum design and teaching methodology, e.g. for listening-related classroom learning activities to go beyond listening to recorded clips followed by comprehension questions.

A caveat about this study must be noted. This study took a 'specimen' approach (Liddicoat, 2011, p.68) to allow for fine-grained analysis of the IL features, and may well invite questions about generalizability – whether the specimens are rare occurrences in the universe of *B2 First* interactions, and whether candidates are primed to display evidence of interactive listening. While it is beyond this study's focus to examine frequencies, other studies which have identified similar IL features in L2 assessment (Galaczi, 2014; Lam, 2018) and learning contexts (Dings, 2014; Sert, 2019) would lend support to the salience of IL phenomena. Moreover, as IL is not yet a criterion feature in the *B2 First* speaking examination, it was unlikely that candidates were primed to display IL features. In future research, it may be worth exploring synergies between qualitative and quantitative analyses (cf. Galaczi, 2014) to tease out the manifestations and frequency patterning of IL features at different proficiency levels. Another avenue to explore is whether the IC subscale of the *B2 First* speaking test (or others) explains variance that cannot be accounted for by other rating criteria in the speaking (and listening) test. This can provide insights into whether IC is a non-redundant aspect of L2 proficiency from a psychometric perspective, further informing decisions on speaking test criteria.

I hope to have shown in this paper that such rich phenomena of listener conduct – overshadowed by an overt focus on assessing 'speaking' to date – are something not to 'turn a deaf ear' to. Interactive listening, as part of the wider construct of interactional competence, warrants more attention by test providers in task design and rating scale development. Considering that spoken interaction, much like driving, does not involve the individual operating in isolation, its operationalization in assessments is justifiable on the grounds of construct representation and potential positive washback. Correspondingly, L2 pedagogical practices, as well as curriculum and materials design, can benefit from transformations driven by renewed understandings of language use that go beyond a binary vision of listening vs. speaking. In our current troubled world, it is perhaps more relevant than ever to remind ourselves the importance of listening to one another.

Notes:

[i] 'Understanding' and 'comprehension' are used synonymously in this paper.

[ii] An exception is Trinity ISE.

[iii] Others include, as a reviewer suggested, precision-timing in turn-taking, clarification requests or understanding checks, and the formatting of second-pair-part actions.

[iv] 'Embodied actions' is a term commonly used in CA while 'non-verbal actions' is more commonly used in the assessment literature. The two terms are used synonymously in this paper.

[v] Averaged across six examiners. To protect candidates' privacy, the funder requested that individual candidates' averaged scores remain undisclosed.

[vi] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/168619-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-b2.pdf

[vii] Turn constructional unit

Acknowledgements

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