

## Constructing social identities and discourse through repair activities

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Traditionally, repairs have been defined as the traces of metalinguistic activities present in oral exchanges that reveal that the speaker(s) are trying to solve language problems which might affect the normal flow of communication (Duranti 1977, Griggs 1997, Levelt 1983, van Lier 1988). However, while most of these studies have highlighted the importance of repairs as tools to gain, expand or reinforce knowledge about the target language, they have not reflected how social identities determine its nature and shape the learners' discourse. We will examine conversational interactions between pairs of adult learners of Spanish as a second language engaged in a role-play activity, acted out for the class. Such activities require learners to determine who they will be, where they will be and who they will be talking to from the perspective of the role-play, but at the same time they must continue to deal with who they are, where they are and who their audience is in the real world. We use conversational analysis and interactional sociolinguistics to analyse their repairs in these two simultaneous conversational contexts.

### Introduction

It is generally accepted that the role of interaction is vital in the process of SLA. Several research studies (Long 1989, Pica 1992, 1994) have suggested that cooperative peer interaction promotes learning because it enables learners to (a) obtain comprehensible input, (b) to produce comprehensible output and (c) to receive feedback. Other studies (Long and Crookes 1992, Swain 1995, Skehan 1996) have also argued that pair-work tasks favour the development of learners' communicative competence and proficiency because they promote the use of a great variety of language functions, the need to negotiate meaning, and the execution of repair activity.

Our study is based on the presupposition that learning takes place through the course of interaction, not only because learners generate language input and output, but also because the fact of using a language code they have not yet mastered forces them to reflect upon language form and use to maintain the flow of their conversation. One of the traces of metalinguistic reflection is the use of side-sequences in solving interactional problems. When we analyse oral data we can only observe whether learning is taking place if the language forms that cause communication problems are repaired and re-incorporated in the learners' discourse. The nature of the task we analyse here, producing and rehearsing a relatively short dialogue which will be later acted out, gives learners the opportunity to produce a first version of a dialogue which will be modified several times. This first version is inserted in the conversation students are engaged in because it is being constructed as they work through the task. As a consequence, the resulting 'text' contains many hesitations, partially formulated words and other instances of repair activity.<sup>1</sup> When students produce the text again (because they want to memorise it), they either incorporate the negotiated repair forms into the new version or ignore them. In the first case, we could claim learning has taken place, whereas in the second case, we could not state they have benefited from the repair activity.

Levelt (1983), van Lier (1988) and Masats (1999), among others, agree that repair activities are related to the form of the target language, to meaning or to the resolution of the task they are carrying out. Here we would like to argue that when learners interact with a peer, form repairs enable them to construct a more accurate discourse, meaning repairs favour fluency and task repairs help them to come to grips with the activity they are carrying out. In addition, there is a fourth type of repair, namely pragmatic repair, which accounts for the complexity of the discourse learners produce when they are engaged in role-plays. Unlike other types of pair-work tasks, role-plays are particularly interesting because they allow learners to put themselves in a context comparable to one of real language use, which forces them to negotiate the language forms they use from a conversational perspective rather than from a grammatical one. This can be observed by analysing the different overlapping identities learners adopt when they interact with a peer. These distinct roles are socially built (Fairclough 1989) while students are engaged in a realistic task, and are relevant for our study because they can explain the presence of what we have referred to as pragmatic repairs.

In this paper we present part of a larger research project analysing peer-interaction to determine which pair-work tasks generate a more favourable

acquisitional context. The data for the project are the oral productions of children, adolescents and adult learners of French, English or Spanish as a foreign language. All of them were asked to carry out, as part of their regular classroom activities, three types of classic pair-work tasks: sharing information, reaching a consensus and creating, rehearsing and acting out a role-play. It is the last of these tasks which forms the focus of the current paper. We will examine in detail the conversational interactions of three randomly selected pairs of adult learners of Spanish (all in their early twenties) while they were engaged in the role-play activity. These learners were international university students who were following the same language course in Barcelona. Since their competence in Spanish and their previous exposure to the language varied, English was the language most of them used to communicate with one another outside the class. In the role-play task, learners shared the common goal of having to create a dialogue between a shop assistant and a customer by following two distinct sets of restrictive instructions concerning the content of the contributions of each character to the conversation (see Appendix 1). These instructions, which aimed at helping students structure their "scripts", took a prominent role while the learners were "sketching" their dialogue but were less relevant after they had created a first proposal of text.

### Discourse construction: from the "instructions" to the first text

In example 1, we have distinguished three different identities: the learner, the student and the actor. When the two members of a dyad adopt the role of learner, there exists an asymmetric relationship between them: one is the expert learner and the other is the non-expert (turns 4–6). (The numbering of turns is consecutive throughout the database; hence the lack of consecutive numbering in these selected examples.) The learner identity is revealed when speakers<sup>2</sup> need to solve a language problem, in this case, Ju- does not understand the instructions he is reading (turn 4) and Sa- has to help him (turn 5). Here, the meaning repair (the paraphrase) is successful because Ju- solves his problem (turn 6) and both of them can start building their dialogue. In doing so, they are like actors improvising a play (turns 7 and 8). However, the construction of their text is interrupted again (turn 8) when Ju- adopts the student identity and is worried because they are not carrying out the task properly, that is, Ju- becomes aware of the need to negotiate who will assume the roles of customer and shop assistant, since that determines who will greet first (the instructions having

indicated that the customer must start the conversation). This interruption, a task repair, opens a side sequence to negotiate the distribution of roles (turns 8–12). When this problem is solved, they restart their conversation by repeating what they said before the interruption (turn 12), that is, the dialogue proceeds when both speakers become actors again (turn 13).

#### Example 1.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4. Ju- in_ ingredients\  ingre_ ingre_ qué es?! ingredientes\  [reads] saluda\ | 4. Ju- in_ ingredients\  ingre_ ingre_ what is it?! <i>ingredientes</i> \  [reads] greet\ |
| 5. Sa- quiere decir hola [waves her hand] \<0>                                 | 5. Sa- it means hello [waves her hand] \<0>   |
| 6. Ju- ah sí\  | 6. Ju- oh yes\  |
| 7. Sa- hola o buenos días \<0>   | 7. Sa- hello or good morning \<0>   |
| 8. Ju- hola bue_ yo soy el com_ compra_  | 8. Ju- hello goo_ I am the cust_ custom_  |
| 9. Sa- sí\  soy vendedora\   | 9. Sa- yes\  I'm a shop assistant\  |
| 10. Ju- sí\  primero yo\   | 10. Ju- yes\  I'm first\  |
| 11. Sa- sí\  porque yo [reads] responde al saludo\                             | 11. Sa- yes\  because I [reads] greet back\   |
| 12. Ju- ah sí vale\  hola\  buenos días\                                       | 12. Ju- oh yes ok\  hello\  good morning\   |
| 13. Sa- buenos días\   | 13. Sa- good morning\   |

At this point, it is important to make a distinction between form repairs and pragmatic repairs. Form repairs are usually instances of self- or other-corrections, that is, speakers adopt the learner role and adjust certain features of their production to fit the formal rules they possess about the target language, as shown in example 2.

#### Example 2.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 58. Io- {(F)buenos días\ }  | 58. Io- {(F)good morning\ }   |
| 59. St- buenos días señorita\  ¿qué tal?  | 59. St- good morning, miss\  how are you doing?   |
| 60. Io- {@ muy bien\} muy bien\  {(changing the quality of her voice) yo quiero pacer un pastel\ [laughter] | 60. Io- {@ very well\} very well\  {(changing the quality of her voice) I want to pake a cake\ [laughter] |
| 61. St- [laughter]  | 61. St- [laughter]  |
| 62. Io- hacer {@ un pastel\}\<0>  | 62. Io- make {@ a cake\}\<0>  |
| 63. St- vale vale\  y qué necesitas?!\  | 63. St- ols, ok\  and what do you need?!\   |

In example 2, both Io- and St- have adopted the actor role and create a dialogue. In turn 60, the laughter indicates that the speaker has perceived a problem (she has mispronounced a word); at this point, she becomes a learner

who will correct herself (turn 62) before taking on the actor role again. We should here testify that our data also reveal that, as Schegloff (1979) pointed out, speakers tend to prefer self-correction to other-correction. It is important, though to clarify that the terms 'correction' and 'repair' are not being used as synonyms, since self- and other-corrections are specific examples of a much broader domain which embraces the dichotomy between self- and other-repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977).

Parallel to this, the analysis of pragmatic repairs is particularly interesting because such repairs seem to have two unique traits: (1) they cannot be analysed as mere corrections since speakers operate with two different correct language forms and substitute one for the other to fit the patterns they possess about how language is used in a real context, and (2) they very often seem to invalidate the distinction between self- and other-repair because learning takes place while speakers construct their knowledge of each other's proposals, which makes it hard to distinguish who makes the proposal which will be repaired and who repairs it (see example 3):

#### Example 3.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 68. Ju- voy a hacer un pastel \  {(P) sí \} ah_1  | 68. Ju- I'm going to make a cake\  {(P) yes\} ah_1  |
| 69. Sa- quiero_ quiero hacer un pastel \  ah\  qué se celebra?!   | 69. Sa- I want to make_ make a cake \  ah\  what is it being celebrated?!   |
| 70. Ju- sí\  sí sí \  | 70. Ju- yes\  yes yes \   |
| 71. Sa- {(P) qué celebra?} [writing it down] tú ce_ tú ce_ ce_  | 71. Sa- {(P) what celebrate?} [writing it down] you ce_ you ce_ ce_   |
| 72. Ju- qué qué? tú \ \  tú_  | 72. Ju- what you? you \ \  you_   |
| 73. Sa- qué tú -  | 73. Sa- what do you -   |
| 74. Ju- te \ \  qué cele =bra=  | 74. Ju- to you \ \  what do you cele =bra=  |
| 75. Sa- =cele=bra\  celebras/!  | 75. Sa- =cele=brated\  celebrate/!  |
| 76. Ju- celebras \ \  sí \ \  | 76. Ju- celebrate \ \  yes \ \  |
| 77. Sa- sí \ \  [writing it down]{(P) qué celebras?   | 77. Sa- yes \ \  [writing it down]{(P) what do you celebrate?   |
| 78. Ju- so: \ \  yo después hago que te pregunto\  vale/! so: \ \  yo qui_ eh_1 digo que_ qué? ah_1 eh_1 tengo cumpleaños \ \ | 78. Ju- so: \ \  then I pretend to ask you\  ok/! so: \ \  I wa_ eh_1 I say what_ what? Ah_1 eh_1 I have birthday \ \ |

In turn 68 Ju- is an actor who is producing his dialogue. In the next turn, Sa- is also an actor when she follows the conversation (second part of the turn) but first she becomes an expert learner who suggests another alternative to the partner's proposal. The discourse marker "ah" constitutes a border between

these two identities. The correction Sa- makes is interpreted here as a pragmatic (other-) repair because both alternatives are formally correct but, to her view, the second one is closer to what a real customer would say. In turn 71 Sa- is a student who decides to write down the dialogue they are creating in order to do the task better. While she is writing her proposal down, she feels there is something wrong with it. In turns 71–74 Ju- and Sa- will be two learners working in joint collaboration to find the most suitable phrase to use in a real situation in the area of Spain in which they are studying.<sup>3</sup> Again, the construction of the dialogue proceeds once this problem has been solved. It is interesting to observe, though, how the different identities intertwine; in turn 78, for instance, Ju- is both a student (he describes what he is doing) and an actor (he creates part of the dialogue).

#### Discourse construction: from the first “draft” to the final text

The first version of the texts the three dyads produce is both pedagogically and linguistically correct. That is, the text satisfies the requirements of the task set because it contains all the pre-established exchanges (greeting, setting the context, buying, paying, farewell) and it is formally close enough to the target language. However, instead of simply rehearsing the dialogue produced, they all feel the need to reelaborate it in order to adapt it, on the one hand, to the social context in which it is supposed to occur (purchasing food in Barcelona) and, on the other hand, to the context of the group-class (Nussbaum and Unamuno 2000). Example 4 illustrates how one of the pairs moves through different versions of their created dialogue in an attempt to incorporate the knowledge they possess about what people in Barcelona do and say when they buy and sell. This undoubtedly contributes to making the final text different from the dialogues produced by other pairs, and consequently makes it more interesting.

#### Example 4.

##### First proposal

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 51. La- [reading] dile cuánto cuesta lo que ha comprado \ [answering] dos mil pesetas \ | 51. La- [reading] tell him how much what he bought is \ [answering] two thousand pesetas \ |
| 52. El- {(F) dos mil/!} es mucho \ [laughter] ah sí \ aquí \ [laughter]                 | 52. El- {(F) two thousand/!} that's a lot \ [laughter] oh yes \ here \ [laughter]          |

##### Second proposal

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 62. El- =sí/=! y yo pago aquí \ dos- dos =mil pesetas =  | 62. El- =yes/=! and I pay here \ two- two =thousand pesetas =  |
| 63. La- =mil pesetas=  | 63. La- =thousand pesetas=   |
| 64. El- em—   gracias \ {(F) no \} sólo tengo- no \ cuánto cuesta?! sólo tengo cinco mil pesetas \ | 64. El- em—   thanks \ {(F) no \} I only have- no \ how much is it?! I only have five thousand pesetas \ |
| 65. La- ah sí :!mucho-   | 65. La- ah yes :!a lot-  |
| 66. El- y tú tienes que—   cómo?! eh—  | 66. El- and you have to—   how?! eh—   |
| 67. La- tres mil pesetas/!   | 67. La- three thousand pesetas/!   |
| 68. El- sí \ sí \ vuelta \ sí \ sí \ gracias \   | 68. El- yes \ yes \ change \ yes \ yes \ thanks \  |
| 69. La- gracias \  | 69. La- thanks \   |

##### Third proposal

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 138. El- pero bueno \ sí \ ah—   ah sí \ cuánto cuesta ?! =todo junto=                          | 138. El- but well \ yes \ oh—   oh yes \ how much is it?! =all together=                                      |
| 139. La- =a:h—= dos mil pesetas \   | 139. La- =o:h—= two thousand pesetas \  |
| 140. El- {(F)(A) dos mil /!}  | 140. El- {(F)(A) two thousand /!}   |
| 141. La- sí:\<0>  | 141. La- yes:\<0>   |
| 142. El- es mucho \   | 142. El- it's a lot \   |
| 143. La- muy caro/!   | 143. La- very expensive/!   |
| 144. El- sí muy caro \ pero—   bueno \ aquí- eh—   cinco mil pesetas \ sólo =tengo cinco mil \= | 144. El- yes very expensive \ but—   well \ here- eh—   five thousand pesetas \ I only =have five thousand \= |

cont...

## Fourth proposal

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 149. La- hasta luego \l                             | 149. La- see you later \l                              |
| 150. El- hasta luego \<1>                           | 150. El- see you later \<1>                            |
| 151. La- {@(P) muy caro \l}                         | 151. La- {@(P)} very expensive \l                      |
| 152. El- eh—  sí \l {(P) todo es muy muy \l }       | 152. El- eh—  yes \l {(P) everything is very very \l } |
| 153. La- ah— mi: supermercado está muy clacaro \<0> | 153. La- ah— my: supermarket is very expensive \<0>    |
| 154. El- sí pero especial \l                        | 154. El- yes but especial \l                           |
| 155. La- pecial \l                                  | 155. La- pecial \l                                     |
| 156. El- muy muy buenos cosas buenas cosas \<1>     | 156. El- very very goods thi- good things \<1>         |
| 157. La- sí::\<10>                                  | 157. La- yes::\<10>                                    |

## Performance

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 286. El- ah—  cuánto cuesta ?!                        | 286. El- ah—  how much is it ?!                             |
| 287. La- dos mil pesetas \l                           | 287. La- two thousand pesetas \l                            |
| 288. El- {(F)(A) dos mil /l}                          | 288. El- {(F)(A) two thousand /l}                           |
| 289. La- sí::\<0>                                     | 289. La- yes::\<0>  |
| 290. El- es mucho \l es muy caro \l                   | 290. El- that's a lot \l it's very expensive \l             |
| 291. La- pero: muy especial \l [laughter]             | 291. La- but: very especial \l [laughter]                   |
| 292. El- vale \l así \l ten-tenga \l ah— cinco mil \l | 292. El- ok \l then \l here you are \l oh— five thousand \l |
| 293. La- ah— tres mil \l                              | 293. La- oh— three thousand \l                              |
| 294. El- vale \l gracias \l                           | 294. El- ok \l thanks \l                                    |

In example 4, we can also see how speakers adopt different intertwined identities to carry out the task set. In turn 51, for instance, La- is a student when she reads the instructions of the task and an actor when she responds to them producing part of the dialogue which will be later performed. The laughter after the word *mucho* gives certain prominence to the word (turn 52) and probably triggers the subsequent expansion of this part of the dialogue (see third proposal). Here, though, the first pragmatic repair occurs when El- stops being a mere actor who translates instructions into words and becomes a “real transactor”. This new identity results in the occurrence of a side-sequence which is opened after the completion of the paying exchange, after the word *gracias* (turn 64), and ends with the repetition of this word which indicates that the dialogue will go on from the point in which the communication broke down (turn 68). In this second stage, a repair is analysed in the broad sense of Johnson and Johnson (1998), who suggest it is simply “a feature of spoken discourse in which a speaker retrospectively changes some preceding item”. What we want to add is that the changes in the speakers’ discourse are closely related to changes in the identities they assume in the course of a conversation.

Example 4 is also interesting because it illustrates that misunderstandings emerge not only when two speakers do not share the same knowledge of the code they are using, but also when a change in a speaker’s identity is not signalled and cannot be interpreted as such by the other participant. In the third proposal, the two speakers are actors rehearsing their dialogue, when one of them expands the turn of the other (turn 143). In this case, the pragmatic repair occurs because she adopts the identity of the character it represents, and assumes that in a real transactional context, her character, the seller, would be expected to respond to the customer’s complaint at this point (“muy caro” with rising intonation would mean something like: “Oh! Do you really think this is expensive?”). The other speaker accepts this new proposal and she also expands it (turn 144). In so doing, she speaks as if she were the seller when she is in fact the customer (“pero bueno” is an explanation for why the supermarket is expensive, but this explanation should be given by the shop assistant, not by the customer who is complaining about the price of the goods). The speaker who represents the role of the seller does not understand how this new text fits in their dialogue, which causes a new repair in the fourth proposal (turns 151–157). When the seller understands that her classmate is helping her build her role (turn 157), she is ready to incorporate the repair in her discourse (turn 291).

In this fourth example, we have seen that the adoption of the actor and transactor identities activate linguistic and social knowledge respectively, which is incorporated in the content of the dialogue being produced. The application of speakers’ linguistic knowledge is an automatic process very clearly illustrated in turn 51. The application of social knowledge, that is knowledge related to language use in a given social context, results in the expansion of a neutral dialogue and can be traced thanks to the opening of a side-sequence to deal with the new information. We suggest that it should be analysed as a pragmatic repair because speakers are not reflecting about the language code but about its use in a socially and culturally bound context. In this example we can see, for instance, that speakers know that people do not usually have the exact amount of money to pay for what they purchase. In addition, living in Barcelona has made them familiar with the currency used in Spain: if the customer needs change for something which costs 2,000 *pesetas* she must only have a 5,000 or a 10,000 note- (first pragmatic repair; second proposal). Moreover, they know that people always find what they buy too expensive, but that the grocers in Barcelona never negotiate prices because they claim to sell only high quality products (third and fourth proposals).

The culturally bound pragmatic repairs are occasionally associated both with the purchaser and learner identities, mainly because learners feel the need to obtain feedback from their teacher to check whether their hypotheses about language use are correct. In example 5, one of the speakers is uncertain about whether to use the polite verb form of address or the neutral one and asks his teacher (turn 158). The latter provides the rule of language usage (turns 161 and 163) and challenges the learner to come to a conclusion by himself with regards to the rules of language use (turns 163–168).

Finally, apart from operating within a virtual context (the buying and selling transaction), speakers also take into account the tangible context in which they find themselves (the classroom). The fact that the other learners in

#### Example 5.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 158. Ju- sí \l ah—l qué más? [silence. Length:1'] [to the Teacher] ah—l cuándo das algo es tenga?!   | 158. Ju- yes \l ah—l what else? [silence. Length:1'] [to the Teacher] ah—l when you give something is take (tenga)?!   |
| 159. T- tenga /l   | 159. T- tenga /l   |
| 160. Ju- tenga \<0>  | 160. Ju- tenga \<0>  |
| 161. T- tenga si le hablas de usted\l  | 161. T- tenga if you use the polite form of address\l  |
| 162. Ju- sí sí\l ah—l  | 162. Ju- yes yes\l ah—l  |
| 163. T- y si le hablas de tú —l le dices ten \l pero normalmente cuando compras qué dices?! cuándo vendes qué dices?! cuándo compras?! ten o tenga/l     | 163. T- and if you use the informal form —l you say to him “ten” \l but generally speaking when you buy, what do you say?! when you sell what do you say?! ten o tenga/l |
| 164. Ju- ten_ tenga \l   | 164. Ju- ten_ tenga \l   |
| 165. T- por qué?! qué dices?! qué crees?!  | 165. T- why?! what do you say?! what do you believe?!  |
| 166. Ju- ah—l ten \l   | 166. Ju- ah—l ten \l   |
| 167. T- ten \l por qué?!   | 167. T- ten \l why?!   |
| 168. Ju- porque: no es tan oficial \l si_ si normalmente los_ eh—l los vendedores aquí son gente_ son que puedo decir ten \l no es tan oficial \l pero—l | 168. Ju- because it is not so official\l yes_ yes normally the_ eh—l the shop-assistants here are people_ are that I can say ten \l it is not so official \l but—l       |
| 169. T- también depende de la edad \<0>  | 169. T- it also depends on the age \<0>  |
| 170. Ju- sí sí la edad \l  | 170. Ju- yes, yes, the age \l  |
| 171. T- lo que vosotros queráis \l   | 171. T- it's up to you two \l  |
| 172. Ju- so:—l [ to his pair] ten// yo doy el dinero y_ y digo ten \l  | 172. Ju- so:—l [ to his pair] ten// I give the money and_ and say ten \l   |

the group will see their performance encourages them to judge their dialogue from another perspective; in this case, they are artists creating something to entertain and please a particular public. Here the pragmatic repairs aim at making the dialogue/performance as enjoyable as possible. Sometimes, they do it by substituting colloquial phrases for their more neutral first proposals (e.g. *buenos días* versus *qué pasa*). At other times, if the two members of a pair are close friends, they introduce elements to cause laughter, as in example 6.

#### Example 6.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 70. Io- azúcar\l gracias\l [laughter] cuánto cuesta? [laughter]                                      | 70. Io- sugar\l thanks\l [laughter] how much is it? [laughter]                                       |
| 71. St- quinientas pesetas por favor\l   | 71. St- five hundred pesetas please\l  |
| 72. Io- [laughter]   | 72. Io- [laughter]   |
| 73. St- gracias\l  | 73. St- thanks\l   |
| 74. Io- {@ gracias\l hasta luego\l}  | 74. Io- {@ thank you\l see you\l}  |
| 75. St- y buen provecho\l  | 75. St- and bon appetite\l   |
| 76. Io- [laughter] gracias gracias\l {@ this is so bad\l}  | 76. Io- [laughter] thanks thanks\l {@ this is so bad\l}  |
| 77. St- yeah\l   | 77. St- yeah\l   |
| 78. Io- and here—l I [laughter]  | 78. Io- and here —l I [laughter]   |
| 79. St- XXX  | 79. St- XXX  |
| 80. Io- you know [laughter] Steve Steve here\l cuánto cuesta?! {(P)can I pay in nature\l you know\l} | 80. Io- you know [laughter] Steve Steve here\l cuánto cuesta?! {(P)can I pay in nature\l you know\l} |
| 81. St- yes\l  | 81. St- yes\l  |
| 82. Io- {(emphatically) o:h\l} I left all my money home\l [laughter]                                 | 82. Io- {(emphatically) o:h\l} I left all my money home\l [laughter]                                 |
| 83. St- o:h —l   | 83. St- o:h —l   |
| 84. Io- [laughter] and then then I go_ [laughter]  | 84. Io- [laughter] and then then I go_ [laughter]  |
| 85. St- [laughter] cuesta_ cuestan {(?) in nature\l}   | 85. St- [laughter] costs_ cost {(?) in nature\l}   |
| 86. Io- and then I'm going to kiss you up \l [laughter]  | 86. Io- and then I'm going to kiss you up \l [laughter]  |

Here, one of the speakers is not satisfied with the dialogue they have just produced and says so to her interlocutor (turn 76). The latter agrees (turn 77) and that makes her suggest an alternative “spicy” end for their dialogue by reformulating the paying exchange (turns 70–71 versus turns 80–86).

## Summary and Conclusions

Repairs have generally been divided into three broad groups: form, meaning and task. Form repairs are used by non-native speakers to make their discourse formally closer to the target language; meaning repairs help them maintain the conversation, and task repairs occur when discourse results from the troublesome execution of a pedagogical task. However, in our study we have observed that if the task is a role-play, their discourse becomes more complex and a fourth type of repair activity, namely pragmatic repair, emerges. Pragmatic repairs lead learners to activate their knowledge or verify their hypothesis about the use of the target language, which, in turn, leads them to adjust their discourse to a specific social context, which can be either virtual (that represented in the role-play task) or tangible (the classroom).

The occurrence of a given type of repair is closely linked to the identities speakers adopt when they interact, and varies according to the goals they associate with each developmental stage of the task. In an initial phase, speakers are like *actors* who convert two sets of instructions into a coherent dialogue, whereas in subsequent stages, these actors simply rehearse the text they have produced. During the creative process, the actor identity is abandoned when speakers approach the ongoing fictional dialogue from different perspectives to solve the linguistic and non-linguistic problems they encounter. Broadly speaking, they tend to be *learners* trying either to clarify the words in the instructions they do not understand (if so, they engage in meaning repairs) or to find out about the exact realisation of a word (then they produce form repairs) or *students* negotiating what they have to do (this is when task repairs occur). During the rehearsal phases, speakers move away from the task instructions and they only abandon the *actor* identity to assume the personality of the characters they represent, here the *purchaser* identity, or to take into account their audience: the *artist* identity. In either case, the change of identity is observable because the speakers embark on a pragmatic repair which modifies a previous version of the fictional dialogue with the aim of making it either closer to a real interactional exchange or of amusing an audience (the classmates and the teacher). It is important to make it clear that although all four types of repairs can occur at any point in the discourse construction, our data reveals that in role-play tasks, form, meaning and task repairs mainly occur in the initial stage of the task when speakers operate simultaneously with the instructions and the fictional dialogue they are constructing. On the other hand,

pragmatic repairs are more likely to arise when speakers operate with a version of the dialogue they have already created.

Our study may interest foreign language teachers because it provides a new insight into what occurs when students are engaged in meaningful and realistic pedagogical tasks. The investigation of repairs proves that peer-interaction enables non-expert language users to construct complex, fluent and relatively accurate oral texts. Analysis of the identities they adopt during the execution of a role-play task serves as a tool to explore the puzzling process of learning a foreign language. When learners adopt what we have referred to as the student identity, they somehow make their perception of the learning task explicit. When they are actors, they automatically use all they know (or believe they know) about the target language; whereas when they adopt the learner role, they become aware of what they still do not know or are not sure of. To a certain extent, the purchaser role establishes a link between the roles of actor and learner since it is in this role that speakers verify the hypotheses they have about the use of the target language in a given social context. Finally, the artist role is related to the learners' individual characteristics; that is, to how they feel in the learning situation and to how they wish others to see them.

## Notes

1. A thorough analysis of verbal and non-verbal features such as pauses, hesitations, false starts, partial formulations, etc. is beyond the scope of this paper, but is part of the ongoing research.
2. From this point, onwards, the word "speaker" will replace the word "learner" in its neutral sense and, consequently, it will be used to refer to any member of the dyad. We do so to avoid any misunderstanding or ambiguity which could arise due to the fact that one of the identities we have distinguished is that of the learner.
3. In a face-to-face conversation, shop assistants in Barcelona use the colloquial singular second person pronoun to address their customers, unlike what occurs, for example, in Paris, where they use the more polite third person pronoun.

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## Appendix 1: Role-play Instructions

### Customer

You wish to make a cake and go to a shop to buy the ingredients you need. Use the following guidelines to prepare a dialogue with the shop assistant:

1. Greet the shop assistant.
2. Say you want to make a cake.
3. Answer his/her questions.
4. Ask for the products you need and say how much you need of each of them.
5. Ask for the price of what you bought.
6. Pay.
7. Say good-bye.

### Shop assistant

You work as a shop assistant at the grocer's. Use the following guidelines to prepare a dialogue with a customer:

1. Greet back.
2. Ask your customer what he/she is celebrating.
3. Ask him/her what he/she wants to buy.
4. Give him/her all ingredients except one, which you ran out of.
5. Tell him/her what he/she bought costs.
6. Charge him/her for what he/she bought.
7. Say good-bye.

## Appendix 2: Key to the Transcription Symbols

1. Questions:  
Yes/No: /  
Wh+?: ?
2. Other intonation types:  
affirmative: \  
suspension: —
3. Pauses:  
short: |  
quite long: ||  
longer than a second: <n°>
4. Overlapping:  
=text of speaker A=  
=text of speaker B=
5. Interruptions (unfinished sentence):  
text\_
6. Lengthening of a sound:  
text :
7. Intensity:  
loud (forte): {(F) text}  
soft (piano): {(P) text}
8. High Tone:  
{(A) text}
9. Language shift:  
text



10. Comments from the transcriber:  
[text]

11. Other symbols

- a. Incomprehensible: XXX
- b. Uncertain: {(?) text}
- c. Words & Laughter: {@ text}