

Preliminary notes on abdicated other-correction

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Abstract

Occasionally we can find the following sort of thing happening: A recipient of an erroneous statement, who has the resources to see that an error has been made, ‘passes’ the statement with, e.g., an acknowledgement token, i.e., accepts the statement as is. The prior speaker then produces a self-correction, whereupon the recipient, now in response to the corrected statement, produces the same response as that with which he accepted the erroneous statement. By so doing, the recipient may be minimizing the import of the error in the first place, and thus, perhaps, the import of his having accepted the erroneous statement. © 2006 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Scheduled to open the International Conference on Conversation Analysis (ICCA) in 2002, I was going to do so with a talk on something called the ‘post self-correction repeat’, an occasionally recurring phenomenon. Most roughly: After a speaker has made a mistake and then self-corrected, his recipient repeats the correct item, i.e., produces a ‘post-self-correction repeat’. With this device a recipient can show that although he did not offer a correction, he was aware that a mistake had been made, knew the correct item, and was doing ‘corrective monitoring’ of the speakers’ progress from error to self-correction, i.e., was allowing the speaker to spot the error and correct it himself. That was my announced topic, an abstract of which was already lodged in the ICCA 2002 program.

As sometimes happens, as I worked up my consideration of the ‘post-self-correction repeat’, I came across an interesting tangential phenomenon and began to explore it, perhaps to be included as a minor insert. But it got to the point where I had two potential talks, and now had to decide which one to proceed with.

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Partly because I'm always preaching that people should follow wherever the data leads them rather than push through on whatever project they think they're engaged in, and partly because this new thing showed up as I was preparing for the ICCA 2002 conference, I made it the focus of the talk I delivered there. It was not in any kind of shape, but it was a beginning, and thus seemed to me an appropriate way to start off the conference. And to preserve the 'biography' of the phenomenon, I began the talk as it had been intended to go, and then followed the tangent off at the point that it had opened up; a format I've preserved here.

2. Remarks on the post-self-correction repeat

Every once in a while I've come across materials in which a speaker makes a mistake and then self corrects, whereupon his recipient repeats the correct item. I'm calling that the 'post-self-correction repeat'. It struck me that by doing so, a recipient can be showing that: Although he did not offer a correction, he was aware that a mistake had been made, knew the correct item, and was allowing the speaker to spot the error and to correct it himself (call that 'corrective monitoring').

Here is a clear – if not downright blatant – case I caught in passing years ago. My mother and I had taken her mother out shopping, and now we were on our way home; my mother driving, Grandma Clara sitting next to her, with me sitting in the back seat.

(1) [GJ:FN]((face-to-face, multi-party, notes in passing))

Clara: I thought you weren't going to stop at that green light.
(pause)

Clara: I mean red light.

Bess: Red light. Tha::t's right,

I think that my mother never got over having been a nursery-school teacher. Talk about full-frontal pedagogy! It seems to me that in this case Bess is transparently presenting herself as having engaged in 'corrective monitoring' of Clara's talk. (Whether that is what she was actually doing during her post-error silence is another matter; she may have been silently fuming at Clara's critique of her driving. But given that in the course of her critique Clara erred and then self-corrected, Bess's silence can now be – and with her post-self-correction repeat is – accounted for as having allowed the old lady to spot her error and correct it herself.)

I'll be focusing on less teacherly events, which, although perhaps less transparent, I take to be candidate cases of 'corrective monitoring', but first let me note what might constitute its boundarying alternatives.

I'll propose as two, perhaps boundarying, alternatives to 'corrective monitoring'; on the one hand 'immediate other-correction' and on the other hand 'abdicated other-correction'.

Here is one simple case of 'immediate other-correction'.

(2) [Schegloff: PosPar: 25] ((face-to-face, multi-party, simplified transcript))

((Ann is talking about a hard-of-hearing friend of hers and her husband Dick's))

Ann: And so she had a sign on the- on the door, when we came ovuh,
once- every once'n a while tuh bring huhr milk er something,
(0.4)

Ann: → Please, bang, on, the door.

Dick: → Knock hard.¹
 Ann: Knock ha::rd.
 (0.5)
 Ann: Othuhwise she can't hear'r doorbell.

And at the other extreme is what I'm calling 'abdicated other-correction'; specifically where we can see that a recipient has the knowledge, and perhaps the responsibility to (i.e., can, and perhaps should), correct a non-self-correcting speaker. This, in contrast to an 'innocent' recipient; one who had no access to the fact that an error occurred.

3. Abdicated other-correction

In a collection of 'self-repairs in next turn' that Paul Drew had put together for our shared summer session in Odense, June 2001, were two fragments which I initially took to be nice, simple cases involving an 'innocent' recipient, i.e., one who had no access to the fact that an error had occurred. I decided to include them in my ICCA 2002 presentation, as a sort of footnote to the topic at hand. What happened was one of those wonderful moments of "Hang on, what's *this*?" as a range of features began emerging.

Crucially, at a quick glance I hadn't noticed that these recipients certainly did have access to the fact that an error had occurred, or at least that they had the information which could give them such access. In fact, in each of those two cases it happens that a speaker makes a mistaken reference to circumstances not merely known to the coparticipant, but which are in the first place the coparticipant's business, a circumstance that might entail some obligation on the coparticipant's part to initiate repair.

With that belated understanding of what was going on in those fragments, a new direction opened up, and I began to track the phenomenon of 'abdicated other-correction' (perhaps more finely, 'abdicated other-initiation of correction') which forms the body of this report.

Here are the two fragments I took from Paul Drew's collection – initially as cases involving an 'innocent' recipient – and eventually noticed for what they actually are, i.e., cases of abdicated other-correction.

In fragment 3, a telephone call, the speaker mis-names one of the days on which her coparticipant has to (go to or teach) a class (lines 9–10) "...Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Friday", the correct last item on the list being Thursday (line 12).

- (3) [SBL:3:2:R:2] ((Plans for the regular Friday bridge game have gone awry))
- 1 Claire: En ↑Jenny spoke up 'n said she couldn:' ↑play on F[r i :]dee
 2 Sara: [That's]ri:ght,
 3 Sara: That's right becuz of uh:[m
 4 Claire: [the ba: :l↓ga[: : m e: : .]
 5 Sara: [the bahlga]me, [yah,]
 6 Claire: [En I]:
 7 said no 'n I g-uh so I s'd well we'll make it ↑We: dnesdee so
 8 when I: come home 'n found I hadda go t'↑Lo:dge well I called

¹ Conceivably, with the (0.4) silence before she produces her version of the sign on the door, Ann may be making a place for her husband to provide the exact wording on the sign, and then, in the absence of his doing so, she produces something. Whereupon he produces the wording she'd invited him to provide in the first place, but now as a correction.

Several interesting features can be found in each of these fragments. First of all, the coparticipant, who has the resources to see that an error has been made, ‘passes’ it (with an acknowledgment token “Mm hm” in fragment 3, line 11, and by starting a response, “Well we...” in fragment 4, line 16). Secondly, the prior speaker breaks in with a self-correction (fragment 3, line 12 and fragment 4, line 17). And thirdly, the ‘knowledgeable’ coparticipant recycles his initial response (“Mm hm” in fragment 3, line 13, and “Well we[+’ve]” in fragment 4, line 18—and let me just note that it is unusual for someone to recycle such a sequencing term as “Well”):

(3)

9 Claire: en .hhhh you hadjer ↑clɑ:s s o:n Tue:sdee:s an:
 10 We:dnesdees ’n ↑Fri:↓da: [y::]
 11 Sara: → [Mm[h m ,]
 12 Claire: → [<aa Th]urs:↓day.
 13 Sara: → Mm hm,

(4)

13 Helen: =But* (0.4) u_h::m:: (0.9) uh-:: i-i- (.) i_f:: .h.h uhw he w_on’t do
 14 whatchu want* him tih d_o: t- .h twice a week with you ’n twice
 15 a we:k with me.
 16 Edgar: → We:ll we[: w [e-
 17 Helen: → °[Uh°[twice a:, a month.
 18 Edgar: → Well we’ve g_ot to we’ve gotta t_alk to him about it.

In a paper written over 20 years ago, on ‘post-response pursuit of response’ (Jefferson, 1981), I dealt with a similar sort of work by recipients in a very different sort of situation. There, a speaker makes some ‘pointed’ statement, which gets only an acknowledgment token by the recipient, whereupon the speaker pursues response with, e.g., “Right?” and routinely gets from the recipient nothing more than a repeat of the original acknowledgment token.

Here is one such case.

(5) [BCII:R:144, a radio call-in show]

1 Caller: It was a good thing, it was a very great thing. it w- in fact the
 2 greatest thing the world has ever known, at its time.
 3 BC: Mm hm?
 4 Caller: Right?
 5 BC: Mm hm

Most roughly, what I saw going on was that, with the ‘post-response pursuit of response’, the prior speaker was trying to get his recipient to acknowledge that a point has been made, and failing. That is, the repeated response proposes that the initial response was perfectly adequate, that the utterance it responded to had been (and remains) inadequate to a different order of response.

I wonder if something similar is not happening in these recyclings of a response initially given to an erroneous statement, on the occurrence of the error’s correction. It could be showing the correction to have been inadequate to a different order of response from that given to the

erroneous statement. Such a device might be used to minimize the import of the error, and thus perhaps, the import of the abdicated correction.

As to what ‘a different order of response’ would look like, at one point when I was working on an earlier draft of these remarks, I was chatting with my mother (Bess of fragment 1), about Dolores, a fellow-resident at the retirement-housing complex where she was then living. Dolores would have to move out because she’d squandered her money and could no longer afford to live there. Then comes the interchange shown in fragment 6 below.

The error (“her money isn’t finite”) occurs on line 1, the recipient ‘pass’ (“Uh huh”) on line 2, and the self-correction (“I mean infinite”) on line 3.

But thereafter is a radically different order of response from that of the repeated ‘pass’ in fragments 3 and 4, with the recipient acknowledging that something of moment has occurred—perhaps specifically marking a lapse of competence on her part (“Oh right right!”) on line 4, in contrast to the possible minimizing work that the ‘pass’ might be doing.² (And whatever would have followed in any normal conversation gives way to the sort of talk that may be an occupational hazard for students of interaction, i.e., lines 4–6.)

(6) [JG:FN:3-17-02]

- 1 Bess: → ...her money isn’t finite,
 2 Gail: → Uh huh
 3 Bess: → I mean infinite
 4 Gail: → Oh right right! Oh shit!
 5 Bess: What.
 6 Gail: We just did one! ((goes on to describe ‘abdicated correction’))

Now, the two cases of abdicated correction that we’ve looked at so far were, as I mentioned, taken from Paul Drew’s collection of self-repairs in next turn. I started off with those because – once I, myself, realized what I was looking at – the phenomenon was easy to point out. This, in contrast to a fascinating interchange with quite Freudian possibilities that I’d noticed years ago, where the phenomenon is immediately obvious but is not easy to point out; rather, a lot of contexting and explication is necessary. It is messy. Hopefully the regularities so clearly available in those two cases will serve as guideposts here.

In this case, a woman, referring to her coparticipant’s parents, uses her own husband’s name, i.e., refers to them as “Larry’s folks” (line 30) and then self-corrects to “your folks” (line 33).

(7) [TCI(b):16:23-25] ((telephone call))

² Something perhaps similar occurs in the following interchange, in which a lapse of competence (in this case forgetfulness) is acknowledged with “Oh that’s right!”

(i.1) [Frankel:TCI:1:15-16]

((Rae and her boyfriend Toby will be going up to San Francisco during the Christmas vacation. Cheryl has just explained that she and her boyfriend Mike will also be going up there and will be staying at her cousin’s four-bedroom house while her cousin and family are down in Los Angeles.))

- 1 Cheryl: .hhh So if you guys want a place tuh sta:y,
 2 (0.3)
 3 Rae: .t.hhh Oh well thank you but you we ha- yihknow Sherman.
 4 Cheryl: → ↑OH that’s ↑RI:GHT.=
 5 Rae: =That’s why we were going [(we)
 6 Cheryl: [I FER↑GO:T. Completely.

((Alice and Larry and their kids won't be home for Christmas. Their friends Fran and Tom have bought gifts for Alice and Larry's kids, and the question is whether Alice and Larry should take the gifts along so the kids can open them on Christmas morning, or wait and have the kids open them when they return.))

- 1 Alice: ↑I think they'd prob'ly enjoy it more be[fore].
- 2 Fran: [Uh: huh,
- 3 Fran: .hhhhh Well I w'z g'nna say, uh:m. yihknow, whatever Larrry's: got
- 4 (.) ah: if I let Tom know ahhead a' time, .hhhh ah: I don't think wi'l
- 5 have school that week I'm almos' su:re,=
- 6 Alice: =[Yeah.
- 7 Fran: [.hhhh before Christmas, (.) en so: maybe Wednesdee ni:ght.=
- 8 Alice: =Ye:ah.
- 9 Fran: I c'd (.) yihkno:w if I c'n tell 'im not tuh: .hhh book anythi[ng.
- 10 Alice: [Ye:[ah.
- 11 Fran: [.hhhhhh
- 12 Fran: then maybe we c'd get tihgether that night [er something]
- 13 Alice: [Y e a : h .]=
- 14 Fran: =[h h h h h h h h]yihknow,]
- 15 Alice: [°That prob'ly wo]rk out ril]well.°
- 16 Fran: .t.hh °So::° .hhhh=
- 17 Alice: =[°Neat.°
- 18 Fran: [Becuz yih c'NOT TA:KE what I hha(h)a(h)ve fo(h)o(h)r thu(h)m.
- 19 Fran: .hni:::hh [(There's no)]
- 20 Alice: [C'z wha:t?]=
- 21 Fran: =.hhhh I seh what I've go:t for 'um there's no way yer g'nna be able
- 22 if you were(p) takin:g stuff with you yuh wouldn't be able tuh git it
- 23 i[n yer chha:r.=heh-huh-hn .hhe]hhhhh]
- 24 Alice: [Oh I wasn't g u n n u h ta:ke] u h::]:m:::
- 25 (0.6)
- 25 Alice: This I w'z only g'nna take whatever we git 'um,
- 26 Fran: Ye:[ah,
- 27 Alice: [I thin- yihknow c'z .hhhhh uh::m, I think it's more fun if they
- 28 w'd open 'em with you guys.
- 29 Fran: Y[e::ah. [Uh huh,
- 30 Alice: → [et his e[t Larry's, folks you know 'n [()]stuff so:,
- 31 Fran: → [Y e : : a h.]
- 32 Fran: → Yeah.=
- 33 Alice: → =°Larry's folks yer folks,° .hhh
- 34 Fran: → .t.hhhh [°Ye:ah,°
- 35 Alice: [U h :: m,=
- 36 Fran: =°Oh that's a- I know w'tchu mean.° hhhheh-heh-heh

What I want to be noticing here is that Alice starts to refer to the venue of the gift-opening with a pronoun, “at his”, and replaces that with a name, “at Larry's folks” (line 30). And Fran ‘passes’, accepts that reference—twice, actually, with “Yeah”s (lines 31 and 32). Thereafter, Alice self-corrects (line 33). (She does so in a way that I've seen now and then, which, it seems to me, marks

the error as a silly, embarrassing, etc., thing to have said, repeating the error and then producing the correction, “Larry’s folks, your folks”).

It also needs to at least be noticed that the correction isn’t the sort of simple name-replacement that might be expected for such an error, which would give us, in place of “Larry’s folks”, “Tom’s folks”. Instead, there is a shift to “your folks”. So it looks like the error was not a matter of Alice’s having used the wrong name, i.e., that of her own husband (Larry) when she was referring to her coparticipant’s husband’s (Tom’s) parents, but of her having made a wrong reference, i.e., having referred to her husband’s (Larry’s) parents when she should have been referring to her coparticipant’s (Fran’s) parents.

Or maybe the shift to “your folks” is a shift from particular to general, the folks, you guys’ folks, whoever’s they are; thus minimizing the error, i.e., turning something potentially Freudian (how did Alice’s husband’s name get used in a reference to Fran’s family?) into a mere matter of venue.

Whatever the nature of the error or the correction, on the occurrence of the error Fran would have had access to the fact that an error had been made, and knowledge of what would constitute a correction. She has let it go. And, having ‘passed’ the error, whatever its nature, she responds to the correction in the same way that the coparticipants of fragments 3 and 4 do, i.e., she repeats her initial response(s), “Yeah” (line 34).

And as I suggested earlier about those two fragments (see page 5), repeating the initial response might be working to minimize the import of the error—and perhaps more to the point, the import of the abdicated correction (proposing that the correct material is inadequate to a different order of response than that given to the material now shown to have been erroneous).

Again, then, fragment 7, for all its messiness, has run off in parallel with fragments 3 and 4, with the correction followed by a recycle of the response to the erroneous statement.

Thereafter, however, fragment 7 parts company from the prior two. Perhaps what follows has to do with the touchiness of the error, and the fact that Alice, rather than carrying on with her line of talk (cf. fragment 3, line 14 where Claire returns to the matter at hand), produces an “Uh:m,” (line 35).

Thereafter, perhaps in response to Alice’s display of difficulty going on, Fran, having initially treated the error as inconsequential, as ‘inadequate to a different order of response’, reverses field and produces a very different order of response. That is, having initially ‘passed’ the error, she now addresses it (line 36). It looks like she starts to ‘forgive’ Alice with “Oh that’s a[tright]”, but abandons that for what may be the canonical account for an abdicated correction, “I know what you mean”.

And I think there is a standard couplet, where the one who has made an error and has not been corrected, eventually realizes what they’ve done, and asks “Why didn’t you *tell* me?”, the abdicating coparticipant responding with “I knew what you meant”.

I have no fragments to show, not even a ‘caught in passing’ remembered in sufficient detail to present as ‘a case’. The best I can offer is the time when I said that someone reminded me of Prince Andrew, was told days later that indeed there was a striking resemblance, but not to Andrew (who doesn’t really look like anybody), but to Charles (whose mug is truly memorable). Then came that couplet. I said “Why didn’t you *tell* me?” and got in return, “I knew what you meant”.

And if it turns out to be so, that knowing what was meant is the standard abdicating-recipient’s account, note that it’s a plausible account, but also absurd. It’s absurd because corrections are doable and done in the first place by virtue of a recipient knowing what was meant (indeed, corrections are often enough produced in the “You mean X” form).

Whatever the ways that the phenomenon of abdicated correction gets accounted for when and if it becomes visible, we can at least say that there are occasions when a recipient has access to the fact that an error occurred but ‘passes’ it, giving no sign of having noticed it.

Of course, recipients don't always have access to the fact that an error occurred. That is, there are cases where the phenomenon is not one of abdication, but of innocence.

Recall that 'innocence' is what I'd originally taken fragments 3 and 4 to be instances of, before I realized that the recipients did have the crucial information. It turns out that while I initially thought I only had one (complicated and messy) case of abdication and three cases of innocence, what I have is three cases of abdication but only one (complicated and very, very messy) case of innocence.

In the following fragment, two women are chatting on the telephone. One of them, Marge is giving altogether new information to her friend Bea.

(8) [SBL:1:1:12:9-12R:2-3] ((telephone call))

- 1 Marge: → .hh Say Bea: if ↑you: ever:,hhh nee:d en oi:l paintin:g uh yih
 2 kno:w my former lan:'lady the aa- the Axelrods ↑I don' think
 3 you ever met them, didjeh, down at three sixteen West Anapamu?
 4 Bea: Uh I met theh- we met them at the Lobero one night, you
 5 [()]
 6 Marge: [Oh yes! Well I'll tell you something, euh:m uh they live uh right
 7 at- they live on (La Plutch) Lane, and that's a street beyond Rock
 8 Creek Road.
 9 Bea: Yeah,
 10 Marge: where Maybelle lives,
 11 Bea: Yeah,
 12 Marge: .hhhh So I told Maybelle one time I said listen, I know the nicest
 13 person- and the Axelrods are, they're just lovely people.
 14 Bea: Mm hm,
 15 Marge: And uh I said I'd like to have you meet them, so uhm when I was
 16 talking to Maybelle one day this week she said Marge, she said,
 17 uhm I'm going to be home all week, so she says I'd love to meet
 18 this Missiz Axelrod.
 19 Bea: Mm hm,
 20 Marge: So okay we made a date and I went up there and I picked her up,
 21 → and we went to see her Thursday morning, well Mister Axelrod of
 22 course (is retired) [[CONNECTION BREAKS ON OVERHEAR-
 23 ING LINE.]]
 24 .
 25 . ((very long break))
 26 .
 27 Marge: → . . .he is painting pictures.
 28 Bea: For goodness [sakes.
 29 Marge: → [A:n' he's going tih have en exhibition.
 30 (.)
 31 Marge: O[f coure he's always had iz own paintings in iz home en=
 32 Bea: [°Uh huh°
 33 Marge: =they're jus' lovely but (.) no:w .hh he is (.) this is what he's
 34 doin:g they have this(b) ih- their house is beautiful I'll ↑take
 35 Marge: y'up there someti:me [I think you'd enjoy it.
 36 Bea: [Uh huh,

- 37 Marge: and they're n- such nice people well anyway, uhm
 38 (2.0)
- 39 Marge: In comparison to Maybelle's place- Maybelle's place is lovely,
 40 but it is nothing in comparison to the Axelrods'.
- 41 Bea: Mm hm,
 42 Marge: And you know it makes a difference with a man in the house.
 43 Bea: Yes.
 44 Marge: And uhm uhm But|he's going tuh have en exhibition.
 45 (.)
- 46 Marge: an' it's either gunnuh be et De la Terra Plaza they haven'
 47 quite decided where it's going tuh be:: eh- o:r? p'raps in the
 48 Fox Arlington there in th' lobby. .t
- 49 Bea: Ah h[uh,
 50 Marge: → [.hhhhh hhh! An' he's gonna make his ow:n paintin:gs,
 51 (0.2)
- 52 Bea: → °M-hm°=
 53 Marge: → =A:nd or ah mean his own fra:mes.
 54 Bea: → °Yah,°
- 55 Marge: But chee he 'az s'm bee|utiful things.↓
 56 Bea: W'l isn't that ↑ni:ce.
 57 Marge: Oh↑::↓. Really I- I jis' said to: uhm-m: .tch (0.3) Maybelle::
 58 las' night ah s'd yih kno::w? in some other li:fe he was a
 59 ↓genius 'r something <he wa:[s.
 60 Bea [°Mm hm.°
 61 (0.3)
- 62 Marge: Ah mean cuz eez so gifted 'n he's so versatell in [so many ↓wa::ys.
 63 Bea [°Mm hm°
 64 Bea: °M-[hm.°
 65 Marge: [.hhhhh A:nd uhm (.) but he az a snow scene. an' he has en (.)
 66 ↑ocean sce:ne. . .

One of our responsibilities as analysts is to proceed with respect for the people who have produced the materials we work with. Having said that, I have to also say that the teller, Marge, is a World Class Rambler. So much do her tellings ramble that at several points (lines 3–28 and 35–44) we are looking at the original 1964 transcript. That's because when I retranscribed this segment, circa 1980, I couldn't bring myself to deal with another of Marge's perambulations.

For our purposes here, I'll start off by tweezing out the 'storyline': Marge introduces the matter of oil paintings and mentions some people, the Axelrods (lines 1 and 2). Mister Axelrod is retired (lines 21–22) and is "painting pictures" (lines 21–27). He is "going to have an exhibition" (line 44) at a venue yet to be decided (lines 46–48).

Now comes the error and correction (lines 50–55):

- 50 Marge: An' he's gonna make his ow:n paintin:gs,
 51 (0.2)
- 53 Bea: °M-hm°=
 54 Marge: =A:nd or ah mean his own fra:mes.
 55 Bea: °Yah,°

So we've got another one of those cases where a recipient's 'pass' (here, Bea's "Mm hm") is followed by the prior speaker producing a self-repair (Marge's "I mean his own frames").

But whereas in fragments 3, 4 and 7, a recipient follows the self-repair with a repeat of his 'pass' (in fragment 3 "Mm hm" and again "Mm hm", in fragment 4 "Well we", and again "Well we", and in fragment 7 "Yeah" and again "Yeah"), here we get a slight shift, from a quiet little "°M-hm°" (line 24) to a quiet little "°Yah,°" (line 26).

That is, while the general *type* of response to the correction is the same as that accorded the error, there is a shift in *item*; a shift which may, most minimally, acknowledge that something has changed.

It may be relevant that the recipient in this case is innocent rather than abdicating, i.e., is not accountable for having 'passed' an error, and need not defend that lapse by treating the error as altogether insignificant.

But, having described the recipient in this case as innocent, I do need to note that it was possible for Bea to at least wonder if Marge's "And he's going to make his own paintings" is not misspoken, and to at least make her puzzlement available to Marge, with, e.g., "Pardon?" or some such. (It is, after all, part of the Conversation-Analytic dogma that people can and do attend each other's talk at a very fine level of detail.)

That is, Marge has already announced that Mr Axelrod is "painting pictures" (lines 21–27) and that "...he's going to have an exhibition." (line 44). That, with the stressed "And", she now offers the fact that "...he's going to make his own paintings" as something additional (line 50), might conceivably be hearable as odd.

In theory at least, although Bea did not have the sort of knowledge of matters that the recipients in fragments 3, 4 and 7 are equipped with, she did have available at least one feature of her coparticipant's talk which could lead her to see that something was problematic about "And he's going to make his own paintings".

That she does not make use of this information makes her recipientship a bit less a matter of innocence-of-error, and a bit more like abdication.

And that borderline innocence/abdication may be manifest in the way that Bea receives Marge's self-correction. That is, the innocence is to be found in the fact of a shifted response. But while there is certainly a shift, it is a minimal one; and therein may be found a hint of abdication.

Specifically, there are other response-types available, such as 'news receipts', e.g., "Oh really?", or 'response cries' like the "For goodness sakes" with which Bea has received the initial announcement that Mr. Axelrod is "painting pictures" (lines 27–28). Thus, the shift of item from "Mm hm" to "Yah", while marking the *correction* as 'adequate to a change in response', does not do what a shift in response-type would do, i.e., it does not treat the *new information*, which is carried by the correction, as significant.

On thinking about it, there is another way to look at Bea's activities, based on some features of the post-self-correction-repeat phenomenon. Most roughly, it seems that of the not very many cases I've come across, with one exception they might better be described as not merely involving a repeat of the corrective item, but repeat + confirmation.

Again, fragment 1's "Red light. Tha:t's right" is a blatant case. The other confirmations tend to be done with acknowledgment tokens, as in fragments 9, 10 and 11 below (lines 7, 8 and 21, respectively):

(9) [Holt:O88:1:11:1] ((Skip is caller. Initial utterances unrecorded))

1 Skip: → Oh hello Barbara
2 (0.3)

3 Skip: → knh N_o not Ba[rbara what'm I talkin' about(b)
 4 (Leslie): [(No Brenda.) ((in background on Skip's side))
 5 (0.2)
 6 Skip: → Bre[nda.
 7 Brenda: → [Brenda,hh eeYa:hh

(10) [WPC:1:6-7]

1 Val: we haven' (0.2) sorted ou:t the upstai:rs business yet we w_o:n't
 2 star:t that ah don't think til after ar holiday no:w becuz it w_o:n't
 3 be long before we go: (0.7) go dow:n May the ni:nth.
 4 Nora: [Oh May the ni:nth,
 5 Val: Ye:s.
 6 Nora: → iYe:s, .hh Oh↑: that's week after neh- a week on Weh- eh: two
 7 weeks on Wedn[:sday.
 8 Val: → [Two weeks (.)Ye::s.

(11) [HospSite:8-27-92:91]

((An intern, Ivers has been describing a case to his supervising physician, Shay, involving a young woman who experiences acute menstrual pain))

1 Shay: ü-uh::m There's another ↑option- (1.3) if:: this is really:
 2 screwing up her life °each month° (0.5) eh: ↑birth control
 3 pills c'n be [started.
 4 Ivers: [Mhm
 .
 . ((ca 10 lines omitted))
 .
 15 Shay: I mean: there's a decent chance that that °would help [s'm.°
 16 Ivers: [°Mhm°
 17 (2.8)
 18 Shay: .p.hhhh A:nd uhm (1.8) .khhhhhh (.) °gn::° (.) n:No: ughhnn
 19 if she just simply k- she's leading an active life and simply can't
 20 go ou:t, (0.6) oo↓one: (.) month, one day [out of the mo:nth
 21 Ivers: → [O n e d a y. [Yeh

Another feature that shows up routinely in the post-self-correction-repeat materials is that the recipient does not start to respond immediately; this in contrast with the immediate 'pass' responses in the abdicated-other-correction materials of fragments 3 (lines 10–11), 4 (lines 15–16) and 7 (lines 30–31).

In fragment 1, which consists of notes jotted down after the interchange occurred, that absence of immediate response is registered as a "pause". In transcribed materials, that 'pause' is either a timed space of around two or three tenths of a second as in fragment 9 (lines 2 and 5) or is occupied by self-corrective talk by the ongoing speaker as in fragments 10 (lines 6–8) and 11 (lines 20–21). The self-corrective talk occurs in the clear, i.e., does not overlap/is not overlapped by any sort of other-corrective talk by the recipient, which would be the case

had the recipient begun to speak immediately (as do the ‘passing’ recipients of fragments 3, 4 and 7).

Looking again at fragment 8, we find two features routinely present in post-self-correction repeats, i.e., both the absence of immediate response (the (0.2) at line 51), and the item with which post-self-correction repeats are routinely followed, in this case produced as a quiet little “°Yah°” (line 54).

And another set of materials might be brought to bear here; a phenomenon I call the ‘post-confirmation confirmation’, which involves that someone asks a question (not infrequently a touchy one), gets an affirmative answer, and follows that with a “Yeah”. It seems to me that that little “Yeah” conveys something like “Just as I thought”. Here are two of the touchier cases:

(12) [NB:IV:10:R:17]

((Lottie went out to Palm Springs for a visit with her wealthy friend Harriette, and during the visit the two of them swam in the heated pool, in the nude.)

- 1 Lottie: .hh ü[h o h o : G]od ih w'z:] fun.=
 2 Emma: [°I:sn't° she] c u ::: t e]
 3 Emma: → =.hh She still drinkin' er liddle dri:nks?
 4 (0.6)
 5 Lottie: → Ye:ah 'n the[: n]
 6 Emma: → [°Yea]h,°

(13) [JG:II:2:5]

((Jay has phoned Maggie to renew their old relationship. At some point in the conversation, she asks him how he and his wife are doing. He says that they go their separate ways; “Sometimes our paths cross”, and he laughs. Then. . .))

- 1 Jay: Anyway, (.) it's (interesting),
 2 Maggie: → Bidjer all still t' gether.
 3 (0.3)
 4 Jay: → Oh yah.
 5 Maggie: → Yahm.

To back up a bit: In fragment 8, we find both the absence of immediate response (the (0.2) at line 51), and the item with which ‘post-self-correction repeats’ are routinely followed, in this case produced as a quiet little “°Yah°” (line 54). To this might now be added the ‘as I thought’ possibility of the ‘post-confirmation confirmation’ “Yeah”s.

That is, the combination of the silence with which Bea initially receives Marge’s “And he’s going to make his own paintings”, and the “°Yah°” which follows the self-correction “...I mean his own frames”, may be trace evidence of a sort of corrective monitoring on Bea’s part; that, on its occurrence she sees that “...make his own paintings” is not quite right, and that when it gets corrected, she produces an utterance that may be understood as a response to the fact that her suspicion was confirmed. It may be doing that sort of work while at the same time – as recognizably ‘just another acknowledgement token’ in contrast to, e.g., a ‘news receipt’ or ‘response cry’ – accomplishing some degree of the minimizing work done by the identical ‘pass’ tokens produced in fragments 3, 4 and 7.

Which is to say that whatever else might be said about fragment 8, it, like fragments 3, 4 and 7, has the recipient of a self-corrected error treating the event as inconsequential.³ And, like fragments 3, 4 and 7, by proposing that the error was inconsequential, thereby accounting for, if not the sort of abdication present in those materials (in which the recipient had direct access to the fact that an error had occurred), then a failure to remark upon the oddness of the error-bearing utterance.

4. The disengaged recipient

I've been treating post-self-correction repeats and their ilk as a device by which recipients can account for their own failure to initiate repair. I want now to shift focus a bit and notice that this failure may be product and sign of a certain disengagement from what his coparticipant is saying, and, further, that that disengagement may have to do with characterizable features of the talk in progress—most roughly, to propose that what is being treated as inconsequential is in fact inconsequential, irrelevant, etc.

Speaking formally, I would eventually want to be able to argue that in fragments 3, 4, 7 and 8 we are seeing a, or some, characterizable environment(s) for the occurrence of such a phenomenon as abdicated other-correction, where that abdication might be a manifestation of a more general feature of the recipient's relationship to his coparticipant's talk; that of disengagement.⁴

That is, something about the talk in fragments 3, 4, 7 and 8 may discourage close attention and foster an indiscriminating sort of recipientship, where failure to initiate correction might well be but one of a range of features of a recipient's activities associated with his disengagement from what his coparticipant is saying. Where, then, it ought to be possible to locate other features of 'recipient disengagement', and to isolate and describe what, in the ongoing talk, occasions that disengagement.

With reference to locating other features of 'recipient disengagement', we can, for example, notice that in fragment (3) Sara is initially doing active co-participancy:

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | Claire: | En ↑Jenny spoke up 'n said <u>she</u> couldn:' ↑play on F[r i :]deē |
| 2 | Sara: | [<u>That's</u>]ri:ght, |
| 3 | Sara: | <u>That's</u> right <u>becuz</u> of uh:[m |
| 4 | Claire: | [the <u>ba::ll</u>]ga[: m e : : .] |
| 5 | Sara: | [the <u>bahllga</u>]:me, yah, |

³ It strikes me that a recipient treating a speaker's self-corrected error as inconsequential may be analogous to the dismissive "Whatever" sometimes accorded other-corrections: Someone who has made an error and gets corrected responds with "Whatever", thereby proposing that while his coparticipant may consider the error significant and worthy of correction, the speaker does not. (I have not yet done a data-run to locate an instance of the 'whatever'-response to a preferred other-correction, and would be glad of any contributions.)

⁴ Given the possibility of specifiable environments for recipient disengagement, I find myself wondering if my own initially indiscriminating perusal of fragments 3 and 4 (i.e., my failure to notice that the speaker in each case was referring to something about "you", the recipient, and thus the error was not being heard by someone 'innocent' of the facts, but one who should be able to see that an error had occurred) might be otherwise accounted for than as a matter of incompetence. Although my failure to adequately attend the details of the ongoing talk comprised a rather different sort of disengagement than an *in situ* participant's neglecting to take repair-relevant action, the two might have had a common source.

and that as Claire goes on with her narrative about who can or can't play on which days, Sara becomes silent, eventually producing her 'pass' token, "Mm hm":

- 7 Claire: En I: said n 'n I g-uh so I s'd well we'll make it ↑We:dnesdee
 8 so when I: come home 'n found I hadda go t'↑Lo:dge well I
 9 called everbu:ddy en .hhhh you hadjer ↑cla:ss o:n Tue:sdee:s
 10 an:' We:dnesdees 'n ↑Fri:↓da:ly::
 11 Sara: [Mm hm,

In fragment (4), we find Edgar remaining silent through a spate of Helen's talk, eventually producing quiet little acknowledgement tokens:

- 1 Helen: .hh uh he says thet I don't ↓like him. Well that's nonsense.h
 2 .hh Uh: naturly ü- .h uh I felt very bittuh becau:se, (0.4)
 3 eh::m:, hh .h (0.2) i-eh:: (.) he w'z so different*.h .h tih
 4 Coo:mbs,h .h but*,h (0.2) uh: I: (.) ud- ü- I admi:uh:: the way:
 5 he:s: left the gahrd'n so enormously,h .hh uh:: tidy,h
 6 [a:n:d clea:n?
 7 Edgar: [°Yes°
 8 Edgar: °Yuh.°

In fragment (7), it appears that Alice and Fran take it in turns; Fran talking and Alice producing acknowledgement tokens:

- 3 Fran: .hhhhh Well I w'z g'nna say, uh:m. yihknow, whatever: Terry's: got
 4 (.) ah: if I let Tom know ahhead a' time, .hhhh ah: I don't think wi'l
 5 have school that week I'm almos' su:re,=
 6 Alice: → =[Yeah.
 7 Fran: [.hhhh before Christmas, (.) en so: maybe Wednesdee ni:ght.=
 8 Alice: → =Ye:ah.
 9 Fran: I c'd (.) yihkno:w if I c'n tell 'im not tuh: .hhh book anythi[ng.
 10 Alice: → [Ye:[ah.
 11 Fran: [hhhhhh
 12 Fran: then maybe we c'd get tihgether that night [er something]
 13 Alice: → [Y e a : h .]

and then Alice talking and Fran producing acknowledgement tokens:

- 25 Alice: This I w'z only g'nna take whatever we git 'um,
 26 Fran: → Ye:[ah,
 27 Alice: [I thin- yihknow c'z .hhhhh uh::m, I think it's more fun if they
 28 w'd open 'em with you guys.
 29 Fran: → Y[e::ah. [Uh huh,
 30 Alice: [et his e[t Larry's, folks you know 'n [()]stuff so:,
 31 Fran: → [Y e:: a h.]
 32 Fran: → Yeah.

And in fragment (8), great chunks of the conversation consist of Marge talking and Bea producing acknowledgment tokens. That format can be found in the talk preceding and following the segment in which the error and self-correction occur (e.g., lines 6–20 and 57–66), as well as the focal segment:

- 29 Marge: A:n' he's going tuh have en exhibition.
 30 (.)
 31 Marge: O[f coure he's always had iz own paintings in iz home en=
 32 Bea: → [°Uh huh°
 33 Marge: =they're jus' lovely but (.) no:w .hh he is (.) this is what he's
 34 doin:g they have this(b) ih- their house is beautiful I'll ↑take
 35 y'up there someti:me [I think you'd enjoy it.
 36 Bea: → [Uh huh,
 37 Marge: and they're n- such nice people well anyway, uhm
 38 (2.0)
 39 Marge: In comparison to Maybelle's place- Maybelle's place is lovely,
 40 but it is nothing in comparison to the Axelrods'.
 41 Bea: → Mm hm,
 42 Marge: And you know it makes a difference with a man in the house.
 43 Bea: → Yes.
 44 Marge: And uhm uhm But↑he's going tuh have en exhibition.
 45 (.)
 46 Marge: an' it's either gunnuh be et De la Terra Plaza they haven'
 47 quite decided where it's going tuh be::eh- o::r? p'raps in the
 48 Fox Arlington there in th' lobby. t
 49 Bea: → Ah h[uh,
 50 Marge: [.hhhhh hhh! An' he's gonna make his ow:n paintin:gs,
 51 (0.2)
 52 Bea: → °M-hm°

It may be no coincidence that a coparticipant who has failed to initiate other-correction (and subsequently treats the error and its correction as inconsequential) has also been doing acknowledgement-only reciprocity; the latter, by virtue of its inscrutability, fostering the sort of disengagement that can manifest itself in abdicated other-correction.

And with reference to isolating and describing what, in the ongoing talk, occasions that disengagement, it may be sheer coincidence – a fluke of this small collection – or it may be something systematic, that in each fragment the crucial event (the bridge game, the meeting with the gardener, the Christmas get-together, the exhibition of Mr Axelrod's paintings, as well as in the caught-in-passing interchange of fragment (6), a neighbor's forced emigration from the retirement-housing complex) has yet to happen.

This does not ring any intuitional bells, but it is readily falsifiable, i.e., with 'crux-event-not-yet-happened' as a possibly relevant environment for abdicated other-correction, a contrast-environment – one in which we could, then, expect an absence of such reciprocity – presents itself: talk in which an event under discussion has already happened.

The 'crux-event-not-yet-happened' feature might not hold up, but the hope is that there are some such characterizable environments, where, then, features of those environments could be isolated and described as finely as some of the features that comprise an abdicating recipient's

activities upon the occurrence of error and eventual self-correction by an ongoing speaker which have been described here.

Reference

Jefferson, Gail, 1981. The abominable “ne?”: an exploration of post-response pursuit of response. In: Schröder, P. (Ed.), *Sprache der Gegenwart*. Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, Düsseldorf, [Expanded version in *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers*, 1981, no. 6, pp. 1–82], pp. 53–88.

Gail Jefferson since 1965, as a student and then colleague of the late Harvey Sacks, has worked in the field Sacks created, that of Conversation Analysis. She has focussed upon sequential aspects of such phenomena as error and correction, overlapping talk, laughter, storytelling, and talk about ‘troubles’, and has designed a widely used transcription system. Since 1984 she has carried out her research on a freelance basis, living and working in the Netherlands.