Caveat Speaker:
Preliminary Notes on Recipient Topic-Shift Implicature

Notes on a Systematic Deployment of the Acknowledgement Tokens "Yeah" and "Mm hm"

With an appended brief glossary of transcript symbols

juni 1983

820.08.203

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Caveat Speaker: Preliminary Notes on Recipient Topic-Shift Implicature

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June 1983

For some while I have been looking at overlapping talk. Early on I noticed that while people can, and massively do, simply recycle an overlapped utterance (as in Fragment 1.4 below, line 11), they do, now and then produce a minimal acknowledgement of the utterance which overlapped their own, and then produce the recycle. For example:

(0.1) [NB:IV:3:R:3:Standard Orthography]

1 L: You: you walked home how hu? [Oh: [yeah it’s del*ig*ht*flu] =
2 E: → [but a l o t of people ou.t.
3 L: → Did you go down to the dime store?

(0.2) [MDE:60:1-2:2:Standard Orthography]

1 T: What's he gonna do go down and pick it up later? or
2 something like (—) Well that's AW [f*xul.
3 M: → H is friend
4 M: → Yeh his friend Stee—]
5 T: [That really makes me mad,
6 (0.2)
7 M: 'hhh Oh it's disgusting

(0.3) [SBL:3:5:R:11:Standard Orthography]

1 G Uh: (.) kind of keep it in mi:nd for next Wednesday,
2 M: "*Mm: "kh.Hh
3 G: [And uh:
4 (0.7)
5 G: W: e'll see how that y-works out]
6 M: → [I: wouldn't hold you]
7 to it because I: I [never ca:- am sure ei:ther]

And in the following fragment this configuration of 'Minimal Acknowledgement' followed by 'Recycle' has a minimal laugh token as a component.
(0.4) [G:93:AD:35-36:R:Standard Orthography]

1  C: Well now I don't know about on p a v e m e n t bu t o n:
2  G: He said it didn't ha-
3  C: on something l i k e t h i s:
4  G: He said he didn't have to worry about u-hurting his s k i i s
5  because they never touched the ground.
6  G: hh hh
7  M: y e s h h e h h e h h e h h a h - u h h a h - u h - h a h
8  C: [hnh huh
9  G: h h h h e h h e h
10 G: hh huh huh
11 (0.5)
12 G: uhh^=
13 C: I don't know about pavement but now something like this
14 th o s e ( . ) th o s e s n o w m o b i l e s c a n m o v e boy they're "f a s t ."

Such a procedure struck me as a curious combination of taking on the job of responding (a job which is massively not taken on in such a circumstance), and executing that job in the most diminished way possible.

And that diminished, transitory reciprocation stands in sharp contrast to, for example, the affiliative assessment "Oh it's disgusting" in Fragment 0.2, and, for example, the strong 'newsmark/topicalizer' "She is? She's taller than you?" below.

(0.5) [GTS:III:17:Standard Orthography]

1  L: I hate it. Twelve and a half years old and I- seventeen
2  and a half we look the same.
3  (2.0)
4  K: You know, my brother and I have come to one a- mutual
5  → agreement that- that we
6  L: She's taller than I am too.
7  K: She is? She's taller than you?

A feature of this alternative sort of response is that, at least at this point, it abandons whatever the overlapped talk was doing and takes up the overlapping talk.

One thing that can be said about the configuration of 'Minimal Acknowledgement → Recycle' is that it can manage both exhibiting attention to the overlapping utterance (as the straight Recycle does not), and immediately getting back to the overlapped talk (as the various uptakes do not). It is an attention on the way to something else.
1. Minimal Response → Topical Shift

When I began to look at the articulation of topic I was struck by a very similar procedure. Recurrently, a recipient will at some point produce a minimal acknowledgement of a prior utterance, and follow that with a shift in topic. For example:

(1.1) [Rah:1:6:Standard Orthography]

| J:  | It ended with a great big bang eh huh huh I jumped= |
| V:  | Out of the seat I jumped (.) |
| J:  | Shot about three feet in the air I think= |
| V:  | =heh heh hhhh |
| J:  | 'Y es' 'huh Eh im, we didn't go to have our hair done by the way,= |
| J:  | =h No well I gathered not |

(1.2) [NB:IV:1:R:2:Standard Orthography]

| E:  | I think *I thought to go home, |
| (0.2) | |
| E:  | I don't know maybe Bud would like me to stay huh I do(h)n't know |
| L:  | hhh h hh |
| E:  | hhh think he'd like t-me to sta--y |
| E:  | hhm h |
| E:  | BUT FOR ORNERINESS I'm going ho-me, mhh!= |
| L:  | Ye:ah= |
| E:  | =hnh huh, hhh |
| L:  | 'God I see in the paper there's sure a lot of halibut being caught down that coast, (0.3) |
| E:  | Ye:ah. Body well it sure is goo:dl, we had some it was really goo:dl. |

(1.3) [TCI(b):16:11-12:Standard Orthography]

| A:  | My biggest thing is trying to figure out how to cut the neck and around the ears. |
| D:  | Yea= |
| A:  | That's the hard phha(h)a(h)art= |
| D:  | =Yeah= |
| A:  | =m'h hhh without making it look you know 'cause I can take the scissors and cut right around his ears but then you can really tell it. too= |
| D:  | [Yeah.] |
(1.3) (ctd.)

D: Ye sh, ’t’ll hhh that’s (. the part I’ve got to figure out how
D: to do:, hh
D: → Yah how much did you get at your gift and gadget party,
A: .hhh hhh Uh::: u-seventy I think it was

(1.4) [SBL:2:2:3:R:5a:Standard Orthography]

C: Well that’s one reason I don’t want three tables up here
K: because hhh my house is just too small.
C: A:ND uh’t’h if I ha:ve a(y) another wuh In the frontroom
K: and in the dining room’s fi:ne but if I ha:ve one in The
K: Kitchen over he:re.

K: → Yah.
C: ‘hhh hhh well then i’t’s too close, see,
C: → ’Did you neh-’ Did you notice: uh
K: → Claire I think you came over and played. the time I had
K: three tables with these all these other gals,

C: Ye a:h?
K: Weren’t you here,
C: Ye a:h,
K: ‘hhhhhh=
C: ‘One of the times: I was,

Looking over these four fragments we can notice that in each of them
the token which precedes the topical shift is, in the British fragment,
1.1, "Yes", and in the American fragments, 1.2-1.4, "Yeah".

Now, in Fragments 1.1 and 1.2 these pre-shift tokens are different
from the prior exhibits of recipientship; in 1.1 "Oh-huh:::" and a pro-
tracted "Oh::::::::" (lines 2 and 6), and in 1.2, some soft laughter,
"hhhh hhm" and "hm hm" (lines 5 and 8).

In Fragments 1.3 and 1.4, however, the same token is used across the
course of the talk. But we can notice some slight differences in the
tokens themselves. In Fragment 1.3, while the token is the same, its
'shape' is different: "Yeah" at lines 3, 5, 9, and 10, and a "Yah" at
line 13, immediately preceding topical shift.
In Fragment 1.4, while the token is the same, and its 'shape' remains constant, there is a difference in intonation contours, at least as between its first use, "Yah." at line 3, with an up-to-down pitch shift, and its next two appearances, the flat "Yah." at lines 4 and 9.

And I think a case might be made that the two flat tokens constitute a case of a recycled start on a topic shift. That is, the shift is initiated at line 4 with a "Yah.", is abandoned in overlap, and then reinitiated at line 9, again with a "Yah." Following is a rough characterization of the events in this small section of the talk.

With the up-to-down-contoured "Yah.", the recipient may be showing herself to be topically engaged and responsive. And this object is produced at a systematic onset locus, just prior to a projected final component. In this case, specifically as the last component is being projected with a modifier. This phenomenon is addressed, and several instances shown, in the TILL paper, "Notes on Some Orderlinesses of Overlap Onset". Here I will show just two cases which look very much like the case under consideration. First, a detail of Fragment 1.4.

(1.4) [Detail]

2 C: because hhhh my house is just to o: s:\ma:ll
3 K: [Yah.]

(1.4.a) [Rah:B:1:(13):8:R: Standard Orthography]

1 A: Yes exact ly.
2 J: You know I mean (.) whereas we go to Wharton's
3 → and they're always very char:ming and very obl:i:ging=
4 A: → [Ye:s.]
5 J: =in \th*ere.
6 A: Well that's i:t.
7 J: And uh:: so that's it. uh- I mean this- if
8 you're paying money good heavens you want the se:rvice
do:n't you.=
9 A: =Certainly you do Ye:is.
10 J: Mm, So she was a bit upset about it ...
(1.4.b) [NB:II:4:R:7:Standard Orthography]

1  N:  ^AWoh do^gone=
2  N:  =$I [thought] maybe you could.
3  E:  →  'I d ^LIKE TO ^GET ^SOME LITTLE slipper s but uh:
4  N:  →  (0.7)  Y e :^ah.
5  E:  't'hhh *I 'just do:n't think I better walk it's ^just
6  bleeden a t^nny bit and a^nd u-I think I'm gonna stay
7  loff of it It throb:es a little b*tch. You know that's
8  no fun to have a nai:l tak'en *off.
9  N:  ["Y e a h"] r*ight.

It can be noted that in 1.4.a. and 1.4.b. the participant who produces the post-modifier acknowledgement token (which in each case happens to have that up-to-down contour) remains in recipient alignment. What I am proposing about 1.4. is that following such an acknowledgement token, the coparticipant goes on to produce a next one, where that next one is now moving out of recipient alignment; i.e., the flat "Yah." which is positioned just at a point of possible utterance completion (i.e., immediately after "because my house is just too small").

At this point, however, we find a massively recurrent phenomenon: As a next speaker is starting up at a possible completion point, the current speaker is producing a continuation. And in this case the incipient topic shift is abandoned, perhaps to be reissued at a more auspicious place.

While the point at which the next flat token occurs might not appear to be, and turns out not to be, auspicious, it is a recurrent locus of next-speaker onset. Most generically, a mid-utterance 'hitch'. More specifically, the current speaker has produced the first part of an 'if/then' construction and then stopped (lines 6–8). And recurrently an 'if' so strongly projects its 'then' that it need not be, and is not, produced. A glimpse of this phenomenon may be gotten in the following fragment, in which a speaker does not go on with the 'then', but a recipient does. Not only does the speaker not produce it, but the recipient's contribution has the character of 'a mere stating of the obvious'; a redundancy.
(1.4.c) [Valdez:Alt:5]

1 R: It's bad enough when he, when he uhm, (0.3) tells you how
2  much to make but when he tells you what to cook.
3 F: Then it's really bad yeah.

In 4.b. the speaker does go on to produce the 'then' component, and
at a possible completion point therein, the recipient recycles her own
overlap-abandoned utterance. Now, the recycling is perfectly available
for such an utterance as "Did you neh-" "Did you notice...". But that some
"Yah." at point T2 is a recycle of a "Yah." at point T1 is utterly obscure.
These tokens are ubiquitous, and do ranges of tasks. This brief consider-
ation has hopefully provided some basis for treating these particular two
tokens as constituting a recycle, where there has been a change in contour
as between the 'topically engaged' "Ya:h." and the 'pre-shifter' "Yah."
and its proposed subsequent recycle, again "Yah."

The possibility is, then, that in each of the base fragments, 1.1-1.4.,
a participant shifting over from recipientship to speakership, moving from
one topic or topical line to another, can be seen to be producing pre-shift
tokens.

The phenomenon being proposed via these four fragments is that, akin
to the Minimal Response → Recycle of Fragments 0.1.-0.4. whereby someone
whose talk has been overlapped exhibits attention to the overlapping talk
while returning to his own overlap-abandoned talk, a so-far recipient of
some topic or topical line can, with Minimal Response → Shift, be exhibit-
ing attention to that topic or topical line while introducing his own. In
both procedures, the display of recipientship is fleeting – a merest nod to
the other's materials before/while launching one's own.

I will turn now to two other response types: Recipient Assessments
and Recipient Commentaries. Although they can be far more elaborate and
interactionally engaged than the pre-shift token, it seems to me that in
one crucial respect they are equivalent to it. They can be deployed to get from a current speaker’s topic or topical line to a recipient’s. And thus, on the occurrence of one of them, topic transition may, at that point, be underway.

2. **Recipient Assessment → Topical Shift**

   To start off with it can simply be noted that, as with the Acknowledgement Tokens, we find that recipients recurrently follow an Assessment with a Topical Shift. For example:

   \[\text{(2.1) [SBL:3:4:1-2:R:Standard Orthography]}\]

   1. A: and I really felt te:rribly ba:d about the way she (.)
   2. P: treated her. be"fohre." (Ye:ah, (0.2)
   3. A: And she ju-st gr:abbed her by the ha:nd when she got through
   4. with it It was:: \(0.4\) it was rea:j,iIlly \Oh it,\( (\)
   5. P: \{Oh:::t h a t’s : \}
   6. A: one of the most thr:ill:ing. progr:ams I know I've ever (0.6)
   7. P: been to: ()
   8. A: Well it had a ni:ce write up in the paper too [Yeh I
   9. P: noticed, th(h)a(h)t
   10. A: Well that's good 'hhhh Well 'LI:STEN uh-
   11. P: match.' Well that's going that Mother's Club bit again
   12. A: at the \church.

   \[\text{(2.2) [NB:II:3:10:R:Standard Orthography]}\]

   1. E: You haven't got the Hawaiian House rented \then \"huh?\"\)
   2. L: \"kh'hh We:ll \u-no: I (.) u-We k- we ke:pt it open for a
   3. couple weeks 'cause I want the-uh: Doctor Livingston wanted
   4. to come down gee I want to: (.) pay him for you know giving
   5. me that stuff for my arthr*iti:ss and I mean: he won't=
   6. E: \[\text{\(m\)}\]
   7. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   8. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   9. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   10. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   11. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   12. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   13. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   14. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   15. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   16. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   17. L: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   18. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)
   19. E: \(\text{\(m\)}\)

   your arthritis, you still taking sho:ts?
I've characterized the assessments as more interactionally engaged than the acknowledgement tokens, because they at least exhibit a position; i.e., the "that's good" of 2.1 and 2.2, and "Oh good" of 2.3 line 8 and "Oh lovely" of 2.3 line 15, and its elaborated recycle at line 19, "Oh how really lovely."

However, I want to propose that the assessments need be no more topically engaged than the acknowledgement tokens. So, for example, the effusive "Oh how really lovely." is thoroughly misfitted to the utterance it is positioned upon, "...but I don't know yet of course you can't tell, until..." (see lines 17-19). That is, although it is highly interactionally engaged, it is thoroughly disattentive to the current state of the talk. This particular case of an assessment, with its topical misfittedness, may be seen as a rather blatant exposure of a feature of all the assessments; i.e., while they are more interactionally engaged than the acknowledgement tokens, they are every bit as topically disengaged.
I will show one more fragment in which this combination of interac-
tional engagement and topical disengagement is strongly present. The
assessment in question is prolonged and elaborate, and takes a powerfully
affiliative position on the topic in progress: "I agree with you Harmon I
think you've got a very good point there". However, it occurs immediately
after, and appears to be being used to mitigate, a drastic topic shift
(preceded by the version of the proposed pre-shift acknowledgement token
for British talk, "Yes").

(2.4) [Her:IV:2:4:1-2:Standard Orthography]

1  H:  I'm gonna suggest that we: we increase our rese:rvе by
2  another two hundred fi:fty which would mean fi:ve hundred
3  pou:nds.
4  N:  Ye:s yes quite.
5  H:  And we could uh:m (1.0) invest in the uh in the uh
6  National Savings you see fif:ee percent.
7  N:  Mm.
8  H:  (0.4)
9  (N):  ((off phone)) (U h : : m I'd have to check, to see:
10  whether: in fact we're not li:able to tax.
11  N:  Yes.
12  (0.2)
13  H:  Oh, ooh, hhh Edith's just asked me how are the dogs I agree
14  with you Harmon I think you've got a very good point there-
15  'h, hhh E,dith was asking how the dogs were.
16  [Ya:h]

Of course there are many places where assessments occur and there is
no (immediate) topic shift. At least in some of those cases, it is pos-
sible that the current speaker is orienting to the shift implicature of
such an object, and moving to counteract it. Such an orientation and
counteraction may be seen in a recurrent phenomenon, in which it appears
that a speaker is intersecting an assessment in progress.

The first case I will show is a rather long segment which occurs
early on, in what turns out to be a long conversation. The recipient of
the telephone call produces a warrant for curtailing the conversation; her
parents are going out and she wants to talk to them. And she twice
interjects utterances directed to them, the "No come on wait a minute" with which this fragment begins, and another "Wait a minute" a bit later (line 21). For one, then, she is making it strongly available to her coparticipant that the conversation ought to be curtailed. And in the course of the talk, we find her producing again and again, assessments (see arrows).

(2.5) [SBL:3:6:R:3-4:Standard Orthography]

1 M: No come on wait a minute.'hh Uh::, () my folks think they're gonna go down ( ) so I want to talk to them a minute.
2 [Oh
3 A: 'h Well say you better.Oka:y
4 [Yah.
5 M: Better not talk too long.'hh=
6 M: =R,ight
7 A: 'I didn't do that uh you know to talk too long call to
8 talk, (too long, but)
9 M: → [Ye:ah. 'Well i:t.'s real sweet of you,
10 [I just wanted to s- ]hn mggh:mm see
11 whether you had been go:ne. and tell you we're sorry
12 we missed you, ] because , we had a little (Christmas)'
13 M: 'ihYe:ah w-ell- No? I- = I: guess
14 A: =Uh:mm (.) 'tch uh:: (0.4) Christmas Cheer for you. hhu hhu
15 [Oh:
16 M: → [Oh:: well that was sweet. ]Oh:: hhhhh, hhhhh
17 A: [You can't imagine what
18 it i:s it's just a little:: (1.0) you know rememberance is
19 really wh.at it i:s,
20 M: Wait a minute.=
21 A: =uuhhhhh hhh hhu hhu. 'hhh But uh mgghmm uh-huh we've uh 'hh
22 I: went over to: uhmm (1.0) Virginia's a(h)nd uh 'hh I did
23 the same thing for heir,h
24 M: → Oh: well that was thoughtful hh
25 A: → 'Y' h :: ![the day before yesterday and I:
26 didn't get a chance to go to your place too at the same time
27 be.cause (I ran out of) time
28 M: → 'O h :: we 11 t h a:t' was
29 A: hm-mghhm
30 M: Well we'll have Christmas
31 A: [Talked to her too long you know?
32 (0.3)
33 34 M: We'll have Christmas C h e e r a:fter Christ.mas
35 A: [I thought I could do both of them but ]
36 (.).
37 M: 'tehh 'thah hah
38 A: 'uh 'uh' 'uh 'uh

It can parenthetically be noted that the last assessment in this fragment is uncompleted, "Oh:: well that was" (line 29). It is possible that this is starting out to be the sort of utterly misfitted assessment we saw
in Fragment 2.3. Here, an assessment fitted to the string of assessments, "sweet", "thoughtful", would be interactionally ghastly, given the prior utterance, "I didn't get a chance to go to your place too at the same time". And it appears that instead of searching for an assessment term that might fit the prior utterance, the recipient abandons it and produces an alternative object, one which is nicely close-implicative; a problem-resolution, "We'll have Christmas Cheer after Christmas" (lines 31/34).

The phenomenon I want to be focussing on occurs at lines 25-26, where the speaker starts up somewhere in the course of what turns out to be the recipient's assessment:

(2.5) [Detail]

24 A: I did the same thing for he r h
25 M: Oh well that was thought ful hh
26 A: [U h : : ] [the day before yesterday....etc.

I am wondering if that 'somewhere' is specifiable as a point at which a speaker can recognize that a recipient is producing an assessment, and is then specifically counteracting a recognizable move towards closure of the topic or topical line underway. Following are four more cases in which a speaker intersects at more or less that point.

(2.6) [NB:V:4-5:Standard Orthography]

1 P: She's up at uh: Ronny's mom's now, she went up (. ) Sunday
2 "h h h h : h They came down for dinner=
3 E: [M m h m:
4 P: And then uh: she'll I'll go get her tomorrow.
5 E: Oh. Well that's "wonderful."' o
6 P: [And then uh, (.) too- e she has an old
7 frie nd Oh well she's an old friend of uh a:ll of us. You
8 know. 'h h : h But she's eh she:'s uh up in Lodi hh
9 E: [M m h m, hh
10 P: So she's gonna come down . .
11 E: 0 h : : :

(2.7) [Rah:II:3:Standard Orthography]

1 J: And is he any fbe(.):ter. Is it uh
2 I: W00- ih- Ye:s his back has
3 been much better the last two: da:ys?
4 J: aOh: that's good [the:n,
5 I: [It ha: id The pa i:n's go!:ne:=
6 J: =eeYe:s::
(2.8) [TCI(b):16:77-78:R:Standard Orthography]

1  A: That's what really made me mad. =Hu[:ih.
2  D: =huhh And I thought maybe they've got uh some supply:
3  A: and a:nd (.) that uh: m 'tk'h since she was a
dealer then they sold them to her.
4  D: Hm*:::
5  (0.2)
6  A: It I don't know.;
7  D: I don't! know.]
8  (0.3)
9  A: 't hh, hh, hh,
10  D: Well that's up too bad]
11  A: But anyway it really makes me: (.) kind of
disgusted, 'huhh Fay says I'd write them a letter and tell
them just what you think about that kind of
12  D: bu(hi)nes,s 'hhhehh
13  A: bu(hi)nes,s 'hhhehh
14  D: Ye:ah,
15  A: And I said ye:ah,
16  D: I hope I don't have too much trouble,

(2.9) [NB:IV:12:R:2:Standard Orthography]

1  E: So all the kids are STANDING OUT here the maRi,nes get o,ut=he:heh heh.
2  L:
3  E: =of, the CA: R. the st(ha)tion wa:gon 'he:h:hhhh:
4  L: =oheh:ho, oheh:ho, heh heh
5  E: And u- 'hhhh
6  L: Oh: th'a t-.'s w:nder f u I.
7  E: The re's th e (.) two young girls you know
8  that's across the street and every th ing they're a:1, I ik-
9  L: Ye: oh:: ye e h.
10  E: They're gonna take them down to the beach now and wa:lk them
down the beach

The combination of the state of the talk so far plus the utterly
standardized format of assessments may provide for these intersections
to be assimilated to the generic overlap onset category, 'pre-last component',
one specification of which, 'post-modifier', was referred to earlier. In
the case of intersected assessments, the specification most relevant would
be that of 'idiomatics', e.g., "as far as I'm // concerned", "it's like
banging your head against a // brick wall", etc. (The double obliques
indicate the point of overlap onset.)

Before going on to 'Recipient Commentary', I want to briefly consider
a detail of Fragments 2.8 and 2.9. It can be noticed that the speaker is
in some sense 'underway' prior to his intersection of the assessment in progress; in 2.8 with an inbreath "'t''hhhhhh" (line 11), in 2.9 with a conjunction, a little break, and an inbreath, "And y-"huhh" (line 5). It is possible, then, that the 'intersection' here is merely apparent, a coincidence, the speaker producing his materials independently of whatever the recipient happens to be doing; i.e., a more faithful rendering of each of these utterances would be, "'t''hhhhhh (.). But a:nyway..." and "And y-"huhh (.). the:re's the (.). two young girls...".

It is also possible that the speakers are 'hesitating' by reference to the fact that the recipient is saying something, and then starting up again when that something becomes a recognizable assessment in progress. To provide a glimpse of at least the capability for such a procedure, I will show four fragments in which one participant to overlap is producing 'dysfluency' talk, the dysfluency terminating upon or just prior to completion of the overlapping utterance.

(2.10.a) [Rah:B1:(11):1:R:Standard Orthography]

1 J:  'hh because Vera's: eh y-Vera popped round last ni:ght eh
2 A:  Val is there you kno:w,
3 J:  'huhhh
4 A:  → [Oh sh:e ar:ri:ved,
5 J:  → And y- eh]sh:e said to me . . .

In this case we see again the earlier inbreath and then the 'intersecting' talk. Again it is possible that the speaker is working independently of the recipient's onset. And again it is possible that the speaker is moving to counteract a topical shift, preserving a focus on the 'Vera' node, preventing a focus on the 'Val' node.

(2.10.b) [GTS:I:2:52:R:Standard Orthography]

1 R:  I'd:wouldn't I mind getting kidnapped it'd be: fu:n.
2 K:  For inst:ance?
3 L:  I: hate to tell you but you're never gonna=
4 D:  No I mean you w:ou ld n't m:ind if=
5 L:  → come back al:it: [âve.
6 D:  → your: u h]f a t h:er mother got kidnapped
(2.10.c) [SBL:2:2:3:R:53:Standard Orthography]

1  K: Don't we need tallies?
2    (I.8)  
3  K: "(books,)
4        (0.5)
5  C: YEH well 'why don't [I j u s t m a k e u p] Why c-
6  K: Would you [b r i n g] the 'tallies'?
7  C: just make those thin:gs up I made bef:lo:re.
8

(2.10.d) [SCC:DCD:22-23:Standard Orthography]

1  B: I gave what I: thought was an explana:tion which in fact
2     and I: said the degree of friction. I-
3  S: 'it's w e a : r.
4  S: So how could it be wea:r. You tell m e:
5  B: I y- I d uh I d N o : I- I'said I seh I s]aid i'friction actually

These fragments, in which one speaker might be characterized as just
stumbling and bumbling along for awhile, are thoroughly compatible with an
alternative characterization; i.e., that this speaker is tracking and
managing the overlapping talk, 'hesitating' and/or recycling until the
overlap is, or is just about to be, resolved.

Similarly, the speakers in 2.8 and 2.9 may be tracking and managing
the overlapping talk, breaking off by reference to the fact that the recip-
ient is saying something, and then starting up again when that something
becomes a recognizable assessment in progress; i.e., specifically moving to
intersect/counteract an assessment in progress. Thus, across the array
constituted by Fragments 2.5-2.9, we may be seeing a fine-grained orienta-
tion to and management of the shift implicature of a recipient's assessment.

3. **Recipient Commentary → Topical Shift**

Most roughly, Commentary is
even more 'interactionally engaged' than Assessment, and drastically moreso
than Acknowledgement. Rather than providing a relatively 'content free'
"Yeah", or a conventional/idiomatic phrase such as "That's good" or "That's
too bad", the recipient does something which qualifies as 'talking on the
(3.1) [Her:I:3:5-6:Standard Orthography]

1 L: (He) wasn't worried when I broke my thumb twelve months ago.
2 I: = (m. Ye:h. o)
3 L: (0.8)
4 I: °Oh really they aren't they.°
5 L: °Well ye; s.
6 I: °Ye:h, Yeh, ° hhh
7 L: (1.0)
8 I: °Just left the room.°
9 L: ° (0.9)
10 I: Uh: well look 'hh uh ask Joe what sor- uh what time he'll
11 be'cause (see) I want to be here, =
12 L: = "Think he's just gone (missing hold on)."°
13 (1.0)
14 L: °Just left the room.°
15 (0.9)
16 L: ° Right I'll uh: mn, hhh You're going to be busy in
17 the morn?

(3.2) [SBL:2:2:3:R:4-5:Standard Orthography]

1 K: I mean I was: (.) one that was great:1*ly *at f*ault.° 'hhhh
2 And I: don't think Elva appreciates anything like that;
3 (<No it that she said anything bu(.)? you (.) you just don't
4 (.) play Bridge that way Claire. }
5 C: No uh she wasn't saying anything;
6 °too much was *sh*e. 'hhhhhh I was just wondering if we had
7 that other table (0.2) in the dinin: g room°
8 K: (0.2)
9 C: °to: m e.that w.ould°
10 K: ° Yah' I :-: 'Now if I: had been Teres:*s:. I: would have
11 (0.2) I don't know she could shorten her table but . . .

There is a strong convergence between these 'simple commentaries', "Oh really they are casual aren't they", and "No she wasn't saying too much was she", and the 'elaborate assessments', e.g., "I agree with you Harmon I think you've got a very good point there" (Fragment 2.4 lines 14-15). The two categories begin to part company as the commentaries become more elaborate. Following are three blatant instances of elaborate commentary followed by drastic topical shift.
(3.3) [WPC:1:(1):39-40:Standard Orthography]

(J has been talking about a neighbor whose parents are now both dead, issues now being whether she will sell the family home)

1  J: she was talking about it yesterday she said she use to she says if she can't settle it she might.
2  (0.3)
3  M: Ye:s, she mi::ght, ye:h=
4  J: ( )
5  M: ='hh Well you never know do you someti::mes you feel as if=
6  J: (No::).
7  M: =you don't want to stay in the same pla::ce, 'hh that where=
8  J: (pla:ce.) [Ye:s.
9  M: =you've been with your pa:ren.ts: 'hh
10  J: [Ye:s.
11  (.)
12  M: Mm::: 'hh
13  J: But uh:: any::way,
14  (0.3)
15  M: 'mptlk By the wa:y Janet did you get my annive:rsary ca:r::d.
16  J: !Oh
17  ye:s thank you.
18

(3.4) [NB:II:2:R:16-17:Standard Orthography]

1  N: He feels people have to be responsible and he taught this throughout the whole class=
2  E: ooh M mm hm ooh
3  N: so I don't know how in the hell this blond guy ever 4  (0.2)
5  misinterpreted what he said:,'hhhhhhhh Bu::t uh=
6  E: [Mm::
7  E: =MAYBE he DIDN'T WANT TO UNDERSTAND it.
8  N: 'tch 'h:hh 'COULD 'BE::, h<
9  (0.3)
10  N: Who, k n o : w s you know,
11  E: [PUSHED it ou::t of his mi::nd it,didn't:'t appea::l to him=
12  N: [Ya:h]
13  E: ="he had so me uh o Some of that stuff hits you pretty ha::rd=
14  N: [Ye:ah o]
15  E: =and then: "you thin:k we'll do you want to be" 16  (0.7)
17  N: hhhhhhh hh
18  E: [PA:R::T of it.w:What are you D0ing.
19  (0.9)
20  N: What am I do::ing?
21  E: Cleaning?
22  N: =hh'hh I'm ironing would you belie:ve i:ha::t.
23  E: Oh: bless it's i:hea::rt,
24  N: In f a c't I: ire I started ironing and I: 25  d- I:: (. ) some how or an other ironing just kind of lea:ves me:
26  co::ld.
27  E: [Ye'ah,
28  (.)
29  N: You know,
30  E: (" Wanna come do:wn have a bi::te of lu::nch with me?

30
(3.5) [NB:IV:10R:51:Standard Orthography]

1. L: and then coming home I bought:: (. they had tangeri::nes ten
2. E: pounds for a do::llar so I got ten pounds and I got some=
3. L: <M m :: : [M m :: .
4. L: =casa::ba and then I bought (. )uh*: (0.3) *uh Edna back a
5. E: box of da::tes, i::cause
6. L: ["0 h :: ]*::th::at's n::i::c::e, o
7. L: ("h::hh") you know:: w,
8. (. )
9. L:
10. E: ["0 Th::a::k" t's ]n::ice, L::ottie, o
11. L: [She fed' the c a :: : ]; ts and
12. E: That's "0 beau::tiful": o
13. (0.3)
14. E: 'tk' hhhhh Well you u had a ] beau::tiful<Now you feel like a=
15. L: ["0]: [Mkay.]
16. E: =new i::ga::l.'hh, Your !NER::VES've
17. L: (0.4)
18. E: You know there's so many other wonderful people arou::nd you
19. L: uh 'hh' hhh uh it's good to get away from: your family
20. E: sometimes you -i::h can be yours:: E::If. You know what I me:: EA:N?
22. L: Y e::a::h.
23. E: 'hyhh Uh getting back to this Vi::afo:r: foam, Lottie
24. L: is her NA::I A::RIGHT no::w?
25. (1.5)
26. L: Her NAI: [i::]
27. E: A h': [hah?]
29. (0.2)
30. L: It's 'beauti::ful 'hh BUT IT would (. ) !YOU KNO::W IT WOULD
31. E: JUS:T HURT 'hh and he 'took the NAI:L O::F F you know and it=
32. L: *kept 'hhh getting li::ke you::rs.
33. L:

One striking feature of these elaborate commentaries is that the
prior speaker-on-topic now comes into alignment as a recipient (see Frag-
ment 3.3 lines 7, 9, and 11, Fragment 3.4 lines 12 and 14, and Fragment
3.5 lines 17, 22, and 23), while the prior recipient, now speaker-on-topic,
produces a summary; i.e., shows that the topic is completed, resolved, perh-
haps 'exhausted'.

Now the prior three fragments constitute blatant cases of the proposed
phenomenon, in which a recipient first produces a commentary and then
drastically shifts topic. There are also rather more subtle uses of this
device. I will show just one more fragment, which I take to be such a use.
(3.6) [Rah:B:2:(14):11-13:R:Standard Orthography]

1 V: But she said oh I've had them y y two days and I'm praying
2 for them to go:
3 (.)
4 J: Oh:: d e a r  o( )
5 V: [So I said oh: well I'm not the only one
6 then I said I thought it was ME h:GE-
7 J: e h h h e h
8 V: She so she-
9 J: [Yeh it's a shame for Vi:v=
10 J: =be:cause she's got her hands full, doesn't she e really.]
11 V: Y e h i t i s a shame for V i v . ]Re:a:lly,=]
12 V: =Yeh,=
13 J: =when they're naughty like that-
14 V: e e Yeah.
15 (.)
16 J: Yah 'h because you'd have thought they'd have grown out of
17 it by now really.
18 V: [Yes
19 (.)
20 V: [Yes
21 J: Th I mean they're not ba:bies are they.
22 V: They're not no:
23 (.)
24 V: * 'h iY' going you won't be going to the town tomorrow will you.
25 J: [no:
26 J: 'h Well I have to go I'm I've got some: eh: Liz and her
27 husband coming for: (0.7) e s- uh s- Isupper=]
28 J: =I suppose 'hmmm
29 V: [Oh I: see.Yes.]
30 J: =So e-there was not a thing. I: didn't know wah:=
31 V: [So you'll be busy tomorrow]
32 J: =I was just going to have a look round and see: what there
33 was to buy but honestly, 'h there wasn't a thing in Marks:...

In this case the recipient produces a series of commentaries which
become increasingly vacuous. Indeed, her final activity on this topic may
be specifically designed to put the topic into a state of 'attrition'.
That is, following her last commentary, "I mean they're not babies are
they" (line 21) and the prior speaker's agreement, "They're not no" (line
22), and a momentary silence (line 23), she herself concurs with a very
soft "No" (line 25).

A similar configuration can be seen in Fragment 3.3. The recipient
finishes up her commentary, the prior speaker produces an acknowledgement
token, there is a momentary silence, and the recipient herself produces
an acknowledgement token, "Mm". Compare the two segments.

(3.6) [Detail]
21    J:  
22    V:  → They're not ba:bies are they.
23    (.)
24    V:  'h iY'
25    J:  → [No:::...]

I have not rendered the very first part of line 24 into standard orthography, but have preserved the minimal production of a word at that point, where the "Y" would needs be rendered as "You're", which would pose a different set of activities than has actually occurred. The onset of speech in the two utterances here is for all practical purposes simultaneous.

(3.3) [Detail]
10    M:  where you've been with your pa:ren;ts: 'hh
11    J:  → Ye:s.
12    (.)
13    M:  → Mm:

In each case, then, each participant, in turn, 'passes' on doing substantive topical talk. The topic may still be in progress, but at this point it is free of 'content'.

Now, just about anything can happen after such a series, and in a next utterance either participant can produce further on-topic talk. But one often gets a feeling that that talk is a matter of 'keeping the topic going'. For example:

(3.6.a) [SBL:1:1:12:R:8d:Standard Orthography]
1    M:  Everybody that had a dih- took a trick with a deu:ce got a
2    pri:ze (.) I mean and ee you'd ho-
3    (.)
4    M:  ( )-
5    B:  Oh: ye:s rea:1 party:::
7    B:  [trick's u,h?
8    M:  [Uh-hu:h;
9    B:  → Uh-huh,
10    M:  → Uh-iuh.
11    (.)
12    B:  Well that's fu:n.
(3.6.a) (ctd.)

13  
14 M:    "Yah."
15 B:    Uh how big<How many tables.
16 M:    Two:. Just two:=
17 B:    =Oh. Uh huh.
18 M:    = Uh huh,
19 B:    'hh:hh:hh Well that was ni:ce.
20        (0.2)
21 B:    How's u-How's Janet Phipps getting on.
22 M:    Well uh uh jan I was talking to her a couple of nights ago...

In the above fragment, a shift occurs in the vicinity of the second pair of 'passes' (lines 17-21). In other materials the shift occurs immediately after such a series. For example:

(3.6.b) [Rah:A:1:(6):2-3:Standard Orthography]

1  F:      Yes he's go't a key.
2  J:      He's got 'the key with him that's alright=
3  F:      Yeah.
4  J:      Just in case I don't hear him if he knocks::
5        (0.5)
6  F:      Yah. "huhh
7  J:      Yes.
8  F:      O'keydo, ke  Any way
9  J:      Ok a y'well]thank you very much for having them...

Thus, while a range of things may follow a series of 'passes', I think there are grounds for proposing that such a series is topic-shift implicative; that with a second acknowledgement token the topic-in-progress is put into a state of 'attrition'. Where, then, the shift-implicature of such a series may be counteracted, as it is - at least temporarily - in 3.6.a., or carried out, as in 3.6.b.

And in Fragment 3.6. there turns out to be particularly strong concensus on the current relevance of topic shift, perhaps due to the topical-exhaustion work of the series of commentaries. That is, more or less simultaneously with the recipient's move into topic attrition, the speaker herself is making a more definitive move, initiating topical shift.
(3.6) [Detail]
22 V: They're not no;
23 (.)
24 V: 'h iY' going you won't be going to the town tomorrow will you.
25 J: →

Now, in Fragments 3.1.-3.5. the commentaries may be observably 'motivated'; i.e., the recipient thereafter shifts to some pending business of his own. The commentary in 3.6. is not directly available as 'motivated', in part because it is the speaker who initiates a topical shift. But it turns out that the matter which the recipient then raises; i.e., her failed shopping expedition (lines 30ff), is one that she had tried twice before to introduce:

(3.6.c) [Rah:B:2:(14):7:Standard Orthography]
1 J: \[ Well I've been to to:wn but there's oh(h)h= oh
2 V: =A h : : : : I was hoping I'd cat ch: you=
3 J: \[ really there's' nol:ing in to:wn
4 V: =They'd only just go:ne=
5 J: \[ A h : : : w h a t a s h a : m e],
6 V: \[ you know and I wondered if you hh And I thought
7 well if you're out you can call on the way u:p you kno:w,
8 J: 'Mm:..
9 (0,4)
10 J: Well I wasn't sure whether they'd still be lthere or not...

(3.6.d) [Rah:B:2:(14):8-9:Standard Orthography]
1 J: I'm gonna do some spaghetti and d (.) n-eh:mm meatballs for
tea for this lot now,
2 V: Oh lovely.
3 J: 'Cause they didn't have y they only had fish fingers and
5 chips for dinner,
6 V: eeYes."
7 J: \[ But there's no:thing in to:wn.=
8 J: \[ Mar:ks and S pencer's s h e l v es were, c l e a : r,]
9 V: [Well they wouldn't s t a y ] for a meal:
10 V: 'h Actually they were supposed to: when they ra:n g e when
11 Bill said he was taking me out for a meal you know they
12 never mentioned it today but any rate I didn't want one.
13 J: n-No:..
14 V: Well they wouldn't have anything . . .

Given these repeated attempts to introduce her encounter with a town full of empty stores, the commentaries in 3.6. may be seen as 'motivated'; i.e., this story now constituting a bit of 'pending business of her own'
(and in her subsequent talk, not shown in 3.6., she goes on to list the stores that were either empty or shut).

With the Recipient Commentaries, it is becoming clear that some quite extended segments of conversation can be tracked in terms of a recipient working to disengage from a topic in progress in order to introduce some other matters. Several more intricate and extended cases have been considered in G. Jefferson, "On Stepwise Transition from Talk about a Trouble to Inappropriately Next-Positioned Matters", in M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.) Structures of Social Action, C.U.P., in press.

**Conclusion**

I have considered here a series of objects with which a recipient can manage both exhibiting attention to his coparticipant's talk, and shifting to matters of his own. This task can be accomplished with great dispatch, with an Acknowledgement Token preceding a topical shift. It can be made rather more elaborate by employing an Assessment, and yet more elaborate by inserting a Commentary.

Nor does this array exhaust the devices for 'attending while shifting'. Another candidate is beginning to emerge, but I have not yet developed it, and that is an object which would seem to be enormously 'topically engaged': Recipient Inquiry. At least occasionally such items can be seen to be working to disengage from a current topic and arrive at another, by doing something I am calling 'topical stabilization of ancillary matters' ((see "On Stepwise Transition", ibid)).

To provide at least a glimpse of such a capability and use of Recipient Inquiry, I will show one fragment which, although it is not the nicest case, has the virtue of brevity. In contrast to other data, the shift here occurs in close proximity to the inquiry.
E: I'm gonna fix the turkey I'm getting it th:awed 'ou:t, so=
L: =G o o d .
E: I thought I'd just go aHEAD up to that Al mata Market they
deliver and I went up and put my or=I was there a(.)t 'huhh
"huh''uhh''uhh''uhh "a qua hhh" qua:ter of ni:ne. They didn't
→ open 'til ni:ne it was such a (.I) beau-ti:ful morn-ing,
T:th
L:
E: So I: j ust,
L: → This morn-ing?
(.)
E: Oh: Go:d Lottie it was beau-ti:ful down here,
L: *→ I'h: I g- I:t was twar:m? it felt real Well it was rea:1
war,m down at Pa:lm Sprin:ngs .=
E: [M m h m : ,
L: =Gee it was gor''uh .(.) But it, w a s
E: [The wi:nd ble:w didn't it?
(.)
L: Ye::ah. To-da:y. And la:st night it rea:ly blew:
(0.4)
E: "Mm hm:" 0 (.7)
L: And 'ye-ster-day we went down to y-tow:n . . .

Most roughly, what might otherwise remain an im passim mention of the
weather (line 6) is fixed on by the recipient, with an Inquiry (line 9).
She subsequently introduces the weather she experienced on her vacation
trip (lines 12-13), and from there goes on to talk at length about various
adventures (initiated at line 22).

Of course one powerful and exploitable feature of an Inquiry is that
it constitutes a canonical case of what Harvey Sacks talks of as
'adjacency pair first pair-parts'; objects which have the property of
'sequential relevance' such that, most roughly, a second pair-part
properly occurs next, and if it does not, then something is consequenti-
ally amiss (see, e.g., Spring 1967, Lecture 7, pages 1-7). Further,
someone who has produced a 'first pair-part' has what Sacks speaks of as
'a reserved right to talk again' (see, e.g., Spring 1966, Lecture 2, page
9). Thus, an Inquiry is a particularly apt device for 'stabilizing ancil-
lary matters', in that it projects (at least) a three-turn sequence on
those matters.

There is certainly a difference between the various objects I have been considering; especially dramatic as between, say, the Acknowledgement Tokens and the more elaborate Commentaries, not to mention the Inquiries, which specifically ask the teller to produce more. But I take it that the difference is characterizable in terms of something like 'interactional engagement', where, in terms of 'topical engagement' the various objects are being put to virtually identical use. They are, each of them, 'exhibiting attention while shifting'.