



WHO SAYS WHAT'S CORRECT AND HOW DO YOU SAY IT? MULTIMODAL MANAGEMENT OF ORAL PEER-ASSESSMENT IN A GRAMMAR BOARDGAME IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This paper describes how a small group of students in a foreign language classroom manage the interactional task of orally assessing the correctness of verb forms while playing a board game aimed at revising verb conjugation. In their interaction, the students orient to the institutional context of this activity as a language learning exercise by adhering to the rules of the game and by diligently attending to the production of grammatically correct verb forms. One rule of the game states that the students must decide as a group if the verb forms produced are correct or not. As a consequence, there are recurring 'assessment moments' in the game, at which the students are required to make a joint decision over the correctness of the grammatical form. As the data shows, the students manage to achieve this interactional task, taking great care to avoid potential epistemic status incongruences within the group. They do this by exploiting a fine-tuned and economically applied repertoire of multimodal resources, including the ritual of the board game and, crucially, the use of the dice. The latter turns out to be an extremely versatile tool used to complete interactional sequences, manage turn transition, ratify moves in the game and accomplish peer-assessment.

Keywords: assessment, peer-evaluation, multimodality, embodiment, boardgame

Özet: Bu çalışma, bir yabancı dil sınıfında küçük bir grup öğrencinin fiil çekimlerini tekrar etmenin amaçlandığı bir masa oyunu oynarken fiil hallerinin doğruluğunu sözel olarak değerlendirme etkileşimsel görevini nasıl yönettiklerini anlatmaktadır. Etkileşimleri sırasında, öğrenciler oyunun kurallarına bağlı kalarak ve dilbilgisel olarak doğru fiil hallerini özenle üretmeye dikkat ederek bu dil öğrenme aktivitesinin etkileşimsel bağlamına yönelmektedirler. Oyun kurallarına göre öğrencilerin üretilen fiil hallerinin doğru olup olmadığına grup olarak karar vermeleri gerekmektedir. Bunun sonucu olarak, dilbilgisel halin doğruluğu hakkında öğrencilerin ortak bir karar vermeleri gereken yinelenen 'değerlendirme anları' oluşmaktadır. Verinin gösterdiği üzere, öğrenciler gruptaki muhtemel epistemik durum uyumsuzlıklarından kurtulmak için çok çaba sarfederek bu etkileşimsel görevi başarmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Öğrenciler bunu masa oyununun ritüelini ve daha da önemlisi zar kullanımını da içeren detaylı ve ekonomik bir şekilde uygulanan çok kipli kaynakları kullanarak yapmaktadırlar. İkincisinin, etkileşimsel dizileri tamamlamak, söz sırası geçişini yönetmek, oyundaki hareketleri onaylamak ve akran değerlendirmesi yapmak için kullanılan oldukça çok yönlü bir araç olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: değerlendirme, akran değerlendirmesi, çok kiplilik, masa oyunu

1. Introduction

This paper describes how three teenage secondary school students use multimodal means (in particular, gaze and body posture in combination with the manipulation of artefacts such as dice and pawns) to manage the interactional task of oral peer-assessment while playing a board game in their French as a foreign language class. The challenges they face in accomplishing this task are a smooth integration of the assessment activity into the flow of the game and the negotiation between two distinct moral and social orders, namely that of the institution 'school' and that of their peer-group.

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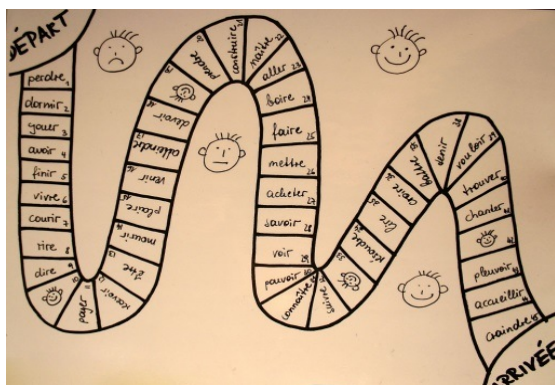


Fig.1: Game board



Fig.2: Thalia, Elisa, Mia (clockwise from left)

The game the students are playing is a very simple race game in which the players take turns to roll the dice, move their pawn along the board (cf. Fig. 1), read the word written on the space they have landed on and linguistically manipulate that word in a particular way, by saying it aloud. The words written on the game board are infinitives of French verbs, and the written instructions the students were given (cf. Fig. 3 below) say they have to form the *imparfait* (i.e. past tense) of those verbs. Each verbal infinitive landed on has to be conjugated in the *imparfait* for a particular grammatical person, which is determined by the number rolled with the dice (NB: the rules require two dice, but the students use only one). For instance, if a ‘one’ is rolled, the player would have to form the first person singular of the verb landed on (e.g. *je jouais*), if ‘two’ is rolled, the second person singular (e.g. *tu jouais*), and so on.

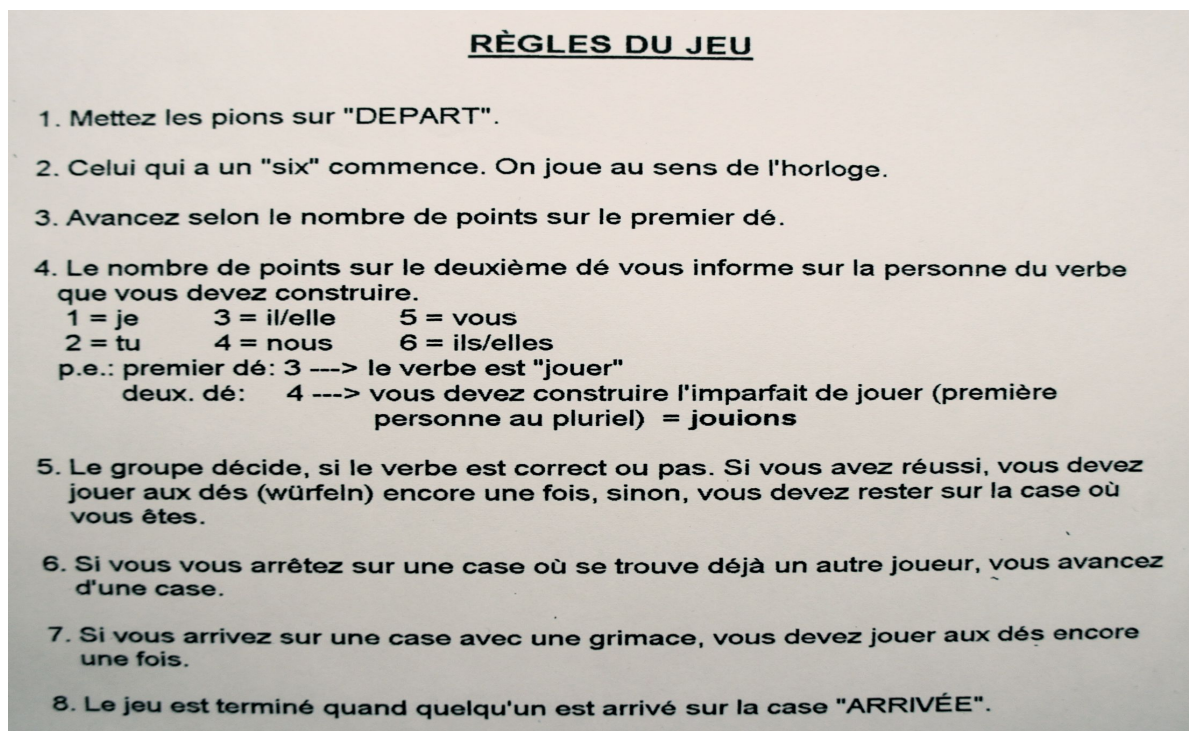


Fig. 3: Instruction sheet with the rules of the game

The rules of the game (rule 5, cf. Fig. 3 above) also state that if somebody produces the *imparfait* conjugation correctly, they can continue rolling the dice. Otherwise, their pawn has to stay where it is and they should pass the dice on to the next person. But, the three students in my data (cf. Fig. 2) do not play the game in this manner. Instead, they always take it in turns, regardless of whether the verb form was produced correctly or not. Played like this, the

course of the game is not actually influenced by whether a verb form is correct or not. So, in theory, the students could just ignore the whole correctness aspect – at least, it would not make any difference for the game’s progression. However, they still pay attention to the correctness of the verb form as an integral part of the game and of each player’s move. They do this even though the teacher is not present – and therefore not checking on them – for most of the time. Despite this absence of supervision, the students only carry on playing once the group has accepted the verb form as correct. In this way, the students demonstrably orient to the pedagogical purpose of the game (i.e. the “task-as-workplan”, cf. Seedhouse, 2005), which is to revise and practise the (correct) conjugation of the *imparfait*.

The aim of this paper is to show how the students use multimodal resources to overcome two very specific challenges in the interactional task they have to accomplish. The data analysis will show that this consists of assessing the correctness of a linguistic form while 1) not interrupting the flow of the game and 2) carefully balancing the epistemic rights and obligations (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011) of their peers. The students meet these challenges by exploiting and employing multimodal (i.e. verbal as well as non-verbal and non-vocal) means that are specific to the situation and readily available. Two of these situated means are the ritual of playing the board game and the artefact “dice”. The manipulation of the dice in particular is an example of how multimodal resources are highly situation-specific and used in a way that only fully makes sense in their local interactional context (Mondada, 2014a: 142). As an integral part of the board game, the dice serves as a resource to advance the course of the game and to determine the topic of the next move (i.e. which verb will have to be conjugated). Within the realms of the game, the dice also serves as a visual signal of turn allocation – the person who throws the dice is the current player (resp. speaker). But, in my data, these game-related functions are locally exploited and extended by the participants to perform other actions, namely to manage and achieve assessment. In this way, this paper contributes to studies of multimodal resources in talk-in-interaction by describing the “complex multimodal Gestalt” (Mondada, 2014a: 139) of oral peer-assessments in a board game activity. It specifically adds to studies of locally adapted uses of artefacts in social interaction (Mondada 2014b; Hazel & Mortensen, 2014) and to studies of embodied interactions during ritual activities such as game playing (Goodwin, 1998).

2. The sequential structure of the game and some core features

In each move in the game, that is, each time an *imparfait* verb form has been produced, the form needs to be evaluated. In other words, the players have to establish whether it is correct or not. The rules of the game, which the students have received on a separate instruction sheet (Fig. 3), explicitly state that “the group decides if [the verb form] is correct or not (= rule 5)”. Since the students have not received an answer, the only material resources available to them for determining the correctness or incorrectness of a verb form are their course books and the notes they have taken on French *imparfait* conjugation in previous lessons. However, they never use these in the game investigated here, but solely rely on what they remember about the subject. It is therefore their individual competence and expertise in French verb conjugation that counts each time an assessment becomes relevant.

These moments in the game, when a verb form has to be evaluated, and when it has to be decided if the player produced it correctly or not, are potentially troublesome because assessing a peer’s academic competence is a socially sensitive action, in particular for teenage students in the classroom. The potential trouble inherent in student peer-evaluation is due to conflicting interests of the individual as a member of the institution ‘school’ and as a member of the peer group ‘school class’. The institutional necessity to assess correctness – determined

and represented here by the rules of the board game – is likely to clash with the social and moral order of the peer group (Cromdal, Tholander, & Aronsson, 2007: 205). Judging from the interactional practices observable in my data, one emergent rule is that epistemic status equality between group members should be maintained. Judgements made about members' academic competence are viewed as challenging this equality of status. Cromdal, Tholander, and Aronsson (2007) report on how teenage students in a Swedish secondary school handle the dilemmatic situation of being forced to assess a peer in the classroom. Most notably, they overtly display reluctance to accomplish the assessment. The evaluations that they do eventually produce are constructed in such a fashion that they index the participants' ostentatious unwillingness to be involved with the evaluative action. In their data, this reluctance and disengagement leads to delays in the assessment task and to some lengthy conversational work.

In my data, overwhelmingly, there is no disruption of the course of the game at moments when an evaluation is due, and the students do not normally treat these moments as problematic. On the contrary, they take great care to demonstrably orient to the required assessment task as a non-issue, by downplaying its importance, and by rarely treating it as the main business of the interaction, even though the assessment of the verb form is an integral part of each move in the game both in terms of the rules of the game and the larger pedagogical context and purpose. Of the 38 moves in the recording, 28 are completely unmarked in terms of their interactional treatment of the peer-evaluation moment. Three moves follow a trajectory different from this norm because the verb form is an exception (as listed on the classroom's blackboard), which means it does not have to be conjugated by the students and can be skipped. Two further moves are interrupted by other activities in the classroom (teacher speaking to the group; teacher announcing homework), which in one case leads to the move never being finished, (i.e. the verb form never gets produced). Only five moves are “marked” in that they involve a more explicit and conversationally intensive treatment of the peer-assessment task.

Each move in the game contains a number of actions, involving the handling and manipulation of objects as well as verbal elements. The basic structure of one move, as deduced from the game's instructions, is as follows:

1. Rolling the dice
2. Moving the pawn
3. Reading out the instruction (i.e. the verbal infinitive written on the board)
4. Producing the conjugated form
5. Ratifying the move
6. Passing on/Taking the dice (or not)

According to this scheme, as suggested by the rules of the game, the ‘assessment moment’ we referred to earlier would most likely be located in step 5, “Ratifying the move”. At least, this is where the “task-as-workplan” (Seedhouse, 2005) would situate it. However, in reality, even if the ‘assessment moment’ is the slot in the board game ritual that is specifically dedicated to doing assessment and therefore makes assessing a relevant action, my analysis reveals that the assessment activity is not limited to that slot; most often, evaluation is a process rather than a single action, prepared long beforehand and co-constructed throughout the whole move, so that at the ‘assessment moment’ no explicit, direct verbal assessment is necessary any more.

Although the attempt to systematize and categorize the prototypical elements of one move in the game is over-simplified, the schematic depiction deduced from the rules of the game can still highlight the core elements of each move. In the actual interaction, however, the constituent elements may appear in very different guises or in a different order, and can even be carried out by different participants within one move (i.e. by the player whose turn it is or by other players) individually or jointly. The data shows that, typically, the actions of one move are produced in a very compressed format, (i.e. all of the steps listed above are packaged into one single turn-at-talk), as observable in the following data extract (excerpt 1):

Excerpt 1: “devoir” (00:07:52.228)

```

1 ELI *achso ((smiley))* **ehHnH      **
    *I see
    *>>--holds dice--* **rolls dice**
2 ELI super
    super
3 MIA *eins*
    *one *
4 ELI *devoi:r * **ä::hm *(.)          *je +devais      +**
    *to have to* **u::hm *(.)          * I +had to      +**
                                     *look->ceiling*
    *moves pawn* **puts dice in front of THA          **
    tha                                     +looks at ELI+
5     +#(1.0)          +#
    tha +picks up dice+
    mia #nods slightly#

```

The example above is one single move in the game. Notice how efficiently the elements of one move are packaged – five stages are all rolled into one: moving the pawn, reading out the infinitive, conjugating the verb, negotiating assessment and passing on the dice to the next person (line 4).

First, Elisa takes the floor from Mia. While she is finishing her verbal response to Mia, she holds the dice in her hand (line 1). Then she rolls it, while still laughing about a banter exchange with Mia preceding this excerpt. During her dice, Elisa’s and Mia’s gaze both start to focus on the dice, while Thalia’s goes between the game board and the dice. There is at this point joint attention of the three players on Elisa’s move in the game, displayed by gaze directed at key objects of the game. This also paves the way for appropriate reciprocity of the verbal parts of Elisa’s move.

In line 2, Elisa sarcastically comments on the low number she is rolled and so (re)focuses her talk on the game, too. In line 3, Mia reads out the number Elisa has rolled, thus making this information accessible to Thalia, as the dice has landed in the far corner of the table, where only Elisa and Mia but not Thalia can see it. In line 4, Elisa reads out the verbal infinitive she has landed on, even before she moves her pawn to that space on the board. In a very short thinking pause filled with a hesitation signal and a quick eye movement towards the ceiling (line 4), Elisa picks up the dice, and while still producing the conjugated verb form, puts the dice in front of Thalia, the next player. Now, after Elisa has finished her turn, comes the slot I call ‘assessment moment’, at which point, according to the rules of the game, the group should decide if the verb form was correctly produced. Two things happen simultaneously at this point (line 5): Thalia, whose turn it is to play, picks up the dice and rolls it. Meanwhile, Mia nods slightly, evidently in response to Elisa’s turn although without looking at her. Her gaze is directed towards the board and then towards Thalia’s dice-throwing, in other words, it is directed at something that is relevant to the activity and the talk at hand (Mortensen, 2009:

497), which is a permitted environment during which the recipient's (Mia's) gaze can be taken away from the speaker (Elisa) and not be seen as disengagement from the talk.

Incidentally, there is no gaze from Elisa towards the others to check if they agree with her conjugation; there is not even any wait time to have her verb form evaluated and her move ratified. Instead, she passes on the dice even before she has finished producing the verb form. In this way, she displays a very strong expectation that her move will be ratified by the others, which in turn implies that she thinks the verb form was correctly produced and that the others will accept it as correct. By demonstrably skipping the assessment part of the move, Elisa is indexing the unproblematic nature of her verb conjugation. Her whole move displays "doing being confident", starting with the straightforward way in which she produces her verbal turn (very short thinking pause, no try-marking, hardly any hesitation) and the way she handles the dice. Turn design and gaze and dice-handling together display and project "non-problematic move". Both of her co-participants affiliate with that projection and fulfil it by responding with very brief, reduced, embodied signals: Thalia immediately rolls the dice right after ELI has finished her turn, while Mia does not object to Thalia's action and nods slightly. Head nods have been shown to display reciprocity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992) as well as affiliation (Stivers, 2008). The nod here is interpretable as acknowledging and ratifying Elisa's solution. Together, the three players are clearly doing being „students with experience in classrooms“ (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010: 26). This example of a basic move in the game shows two central features of an overall tendency of the interactions in this game: the verbally extremely reduced, highly routinized way in which the assessment phase is handled, and the central role of the dice.

As in all embodied interaction, several layers of action are visible in this structure, involving both physically realized actions (e.g. moving pawns and rolling dice) and actions carried out verbally (e.g. reading out and conjugating the verb form). Both types of action are sequentially organized (Schegloff, 2007: 10). Sometimes, the different courses of action interlock with each other, even responding to one another (e.g. ELI rolling the dice in line 1 and Mia's 'one' in line 3), and sometimes, they run parallel with only few or no points where one has consequences for the other (e.g. the laughter and dice throwing in line 1). Much of the physical action has to do with playing the board game as described on the instruction sheet. This is a ritual kind of activity, outlined and prescribed by the rules of the game and involving the same basic actions in each move: throwing the dice, moving the pawn, passing the dice on or taking it. The ritual actions carried out through talk are reading out the infinitive and conjugating the verb in the *imparfait*. But there is also other talk going on alongside the game and doing various other things such as accounting, affiliating, disaffiliating, contesting, expanding, commenting, explaining, justifying, requesting, complaining, assessing, joking, and teasing.

The action under investigation here, namely evaluating the correctness of the grammatical form, can be carried out either by physical means, or through talk or as a combination of both. This variety of ways of constructing the same action is made possible by the fact that evaluation forms a constitutive and explicitly required element of the board game ritual. Diverse elements of this ritual can therefore be employed to convey assessment, most notably the dice. One could say that the board game thus reduces the importance of talk, which might at first sound undesirable for a language classroom, but can actually be a pedagogically interesting device to be exploited in particular when it comes to peer-assessment. The relationship between game playing and talk in my data might best be captured by conceptualizing the game as a "joint project" (Goffman, 1981), where participants work

together in a social activity in which talk typically does not necessarily – or not at all times – have a primary function.

In the next excerpt (excerpt 2), the dice is again used for turn-management purposes, this time not by the current player but by the next player/speaker. The extract also shows how next players, too, can use the dice to make projections about likely outcomes of moves and next speakership/playership.

Excerpt 2: “savoir” (00:12:08.680)

```

1 MIA  eins z-
      one t-
2      #(1.3)#
      #tries to read verb#
3 ELI  savoir\
      to know
4 MIA  sa:voir (0.1) ähm: *tu: +s::: * + s:a**v:ais\
      to know (0.1) uhm: *you +kn::: * + knew
      eli *thinking face*
      tha +grabs dice->ELI+
      eli **picks up dice
5 ELI  thank you
6      *(0.5)*
      *throws dice*
      *nods once*

```

In line 4, Mia is in the middle of her move. She reads out the verbal infinitive and conjugates the verb ‘savoir’ in the *imparfait*. While Mia is still attending to the production of the verb form and Elisa is demonstrating joint attention by displaying a “thinking face” just after Mia has displayed some hesitation, Thalia grabs the dice (which has been lying in front of Mia) and puts it in front of Elisa (line 4). This action serves to allocate the next move in the game to Elisa, who accepts this hetero-selection and acts on it by picking up the dice and throwing it just as Mia has finished her turn (lines 4, 6). Non-verbal actions by co-participants during an ongoing turn can contain floor-claiming potential just as much as verbal actions do. Mortensen (2009), for instance, describes in-breaths and gazes, while Mondada (2007) analyses pointing gestures with a pen as relevant non-verbal actions that index upcoming or planned speakership in a pre-beginning position (e.g. during another speaker’s ongoing turn). Picking up the dice is a relevant next action in the sequential order of the move, and thus interpretable as a floor-claiming, or rather, floor-claim-projecting action. So, by picking up the dice while Mia is still talking, Elisa projects herself as the next player before she has even started her move.

As in the first example, the ratification of the move in the slot where ratification can be expected (i.e. after the verb form has been produced) consists of only one slight head nod and, simultaneously, rolling the dice. And again, the unproblematic nature of the assessment was prepared for earlier in the sequence: This time, the co-participants are the ones who, through their dice-action, project a non-problematic outcome of the move: Thalia picks up the dice and passes it on just as Mia is starting on the conjugation of the verb (after she’s uttered the personal pronoun of the second person singular). And Elisa picks it up, thus affiliating with Thalia’s projection. The dice-rolling is also a device to manage the transition over to the next move: One, it constitutes the first stage of a new move in the game, and two, it thus implies that the previous move is considered finished. It therefore fulfils both a prospective and a retrospective function.

The nonchalant, almost disinterested way in which the three students participate in the game might at first sight give the impression that they do not take the game seriously. Verbal or non-verbal reciprocity is often lacking. However, a less focused form of participation, namely availability (Heath, 1984), is actually explicitly oriented to as necessary for the progression of the game and manifests itself as the joint orientation of at least two co-participants. Herrle (2015) describes three stages of availability in multiparty interaction, namely attendance, attention and addressability. While attendance refers to the physical presence of participants, attention is their bodily and displayed mental orientation towards the joint activity and addressability is the degree to which they are prepared to be spoken to. In the board game data, it seems that attendance and attention are sufficient in order for the game to continue and constitute in this sense an appropriate “engagement framework” (Goodwin, 1981: 125), while addressability is not indispensable. If the engagement framework is not perceived as appropriate, in other words, if neither of the two co-players pay attention, the student whose turn it is either stops and/or requests their availability.

In the following extract (excerpt 3), the participants explicitly orient towards a lack of joint attention. The player whose turn it is, complains when the other two participants are distracted while she conjugates the verb:

Excerpt 3: “construire” (00:08:10.468)

```

1  THA          con-*
                con-*
                >>pos. pawn* *looks at black board-->
    eli                    #yawns-->
2  MIA  °wie spät isses°
    °what time is it°
3  ELI  a:h#
    --># checks watch
4  THA  *[cons-ti-truire (1.1) #ähm:: (0.7)
        *[construct      (1.1) #uhm:: (0.7)
    -->*
    eli                    #looks absently at game board-->
5  ELI  [(xx) nach
        [(xx) past
6  THA  +ähm: (0.8) vous constituez
        +uhm: (0.8) you constitute
    mia  +looks away from group-->
7        *(1.4) *
    tha  *moves dice off board*
8  THA  *mir horcht #koana * (.) mir hat grad +koana zuakorcht
        *noone's listening      (.) noone's listened to me just now
        *pushes dice twrds mia*
    eli                    -->#looks in air
    mia                    -->+
9  MIA  +äh was/+
        +uh what/+
        +looks at tha, wide-eyed+
10 ELI  °du bisch #dran°
        °it's your#turn°
                #taps on table
11 THA  +vous constituez
        +you constitute
    mia  +picks up dice, shakes dice--->
12        (0.9)*

```


tha *looks at mia-->
13 ELI **+ja:**
 +yes
 mia +nods vigorously
14 THA **vous +con*stit-**
 you +con*stit
 -->*
 mia -->+rolls dice
15 THA **TI:ez**
 ute

It is Thalia's turn to play in this extract, and it begins with her reading out the verbal infinitive while she's still positioning her pawn on the board (lines 1, 4). While she starts her move, Elisa yawns and a parallel sequence to Thalia's move unfolds as Mia asks Elisa what time it is (lines 2-3, 5). When Thalia has finished conjugating the verb, there is a 1.4-second gap (line 7) during which she removes the dice from the board. The other two players are absent-minded during this phase (see in transcript: Elisa starts disengaging from the game in line 4, Mia actively turns and looks away from the group from line 6 onwards) and they neither take up the dice nor respond in any other way to Thalia's verb conjugation. Thalia reacts to this as a noticeable absence, treating the inaction by her co-participants as an interactional trouble (Kidwell, 2013: 235): In line 8, she explicitly states that nobody is listening to her. In fact, she repairs her statement within her turn by changing the tense from present into the immediate past, expressing what has just happened. There is an important difference between the first and the second version of her utterance: while the first one is hearable as a simple complaint and functions as a first alert to something problematic, the second one accounts for the complaint just uttered by orienting towards the ritual nature and requirements of the game. This implies that if nobody has listened to the move Thalia has just completed, nobody has heard if her conjugation was correct and thus nobody can confirm if her move is legitimately finished or not. It also displays an orientation to the pedagogical purpose of the game, the revision and practice of verb conjugation, and thus also the institutional ('school') context, which is here tied in with the structure of the game. Thalia reinforces this orientation towards the course of the game by pushing the dice in Mia's direction (line 8), thus displaying publicly, with game-inherent resources, that she has finished her move. Thalia's complaint and account also functions as a response pursuit (Pomerantz, 1984) and is actively seeking this confirmation from her co-participants.

But at first, neither of the other two students shows much concern for Thalia's complaint – there is no topical uptake in the immediate sequential environment. However, the complaint does have the effect of eliciting a reaction from both girls. First, Mia's open class repair initiator (Drew, 1997) together with a direct, wide-eyed gaze towards Thalia (line 9), indexes a genuine failure to pay attention to what has been happening. This creates a potential slot for Thalia to restate her complaint with guaranteed reciprocity. Instead, Elisa takes the floor (line 10) and claims that she knows what has been going on (which may well be the case, since we know that even disengaged participants in interaction tend to monitor the ongoing talk for opportunities to reengage, cf. Goodwin, 1981: 101). Elisa responds to Mia's repair initiation with her own explanation of the situation: 'it's your turn' (line 10). This is an appropriate reaction to Thalia's pushing the dice towards Mia, but it does not pick up on Thalia's complaint regarding evaluation of her move. Mia then picks up the dice and shakes it (line 11), in preparation of rolling it. It seems almost as if Elisa and Mia are about to carry on with the game regardless of Thalia's move, which they did not witness. However, Thalia has not given up on her quest for a ratification of her move and takes the second opportunity to speak, just after Elisa has finished, and overlapping with Mia's dice-action (line 11). She employs

two typical resources for response pursuits (Pomerantz, 1984): first, a repetition of her original initiating action, the conjugation of the verb (line 11), and then, when no response is forthcoming after 0.9 seconds, a direct gaze towards Mia (line 12). Faced with such concerted efforts, Thalia's co-participants finally do respond to her and assess her verb conjugation as correct, both doing so unusually expressively: Elisa with a confirming particle (ja:) and Mia with a vigorous head nod. For them, this constitutes the closure of the move, publicly displayed by Mia's dice-rolling. Meanwhile, Thalia adds something like a postscript to her move, repeating her conjugation once more, articulating carefully and moving her gaze away from the others (lines 14-15), thus indexing that this is self-directed talk that serves her own reflection and no longer requires the others' availability or even reciprocity (Goodwin, 1981: 115).

The extract has shown that the participants in this board game orient strongly towards at least joint attention as a basic, indispensable requirement for the game to function. As long as attention by the co-participants is visibly displayed, participants will assume that their move has been ratified as soon as the next move is started, even if there has been only minimal or no verbal assessment at all, and not even any non-verbal (gesture/mimics/head movement) signals. The transition to the next move may then be legitimately accomplished purely by dice-actions, as we have seen in detail in examples 1 and 2.

The next extract shows that besides joint attention, other elements of the rules of the game are also observably attended to by the participants. In this case, adherence to the formally correct order as prescribed by the instructions is requested. Dice-action is once again a focus of the analysis, because the trouble in the sequential order arises in response to a sanctioned removal of the dice.

Excerpt 4: "aller" (00:11:44.025)

```

1 eli  ((throws dice))
2 ELI  trois\#(0.6)
      three
      tha #grabs dice
3      *#(0.4) #
      eli *lifts arm, waves hand sideways -->
      tha #pulls arm back, hand to chest#
4 ELI  *NA >i muss no SOGN< *#
      NO >I still have to say<
      *waves THA away with hand*
      tha #looks at ELI
5 ELI  äh:m *alle:r *
      *moves pawn*
6 ELI  ähm #il: (.)al*lait*#
      *thinking face*
      *tips into air with index*
      tha #looks at ELI #
7 tha  *((throws dice))
      eli *looks at MIA
8 mia  ((nods and looks at ELI))

```

In line 2, just after Elisa has read out the number she has rolled, Thalia reaches out to grab the dice that is lying in front of Elisa. This is interpreted by Elisa as an illegitimate interruption. The dice-grabbing mobilizes an embodied reaction on her part: she utters a short but accentuated "NA" and literally waves Thalia away with her arm and then hand. She also provides an account for this rejecting response: "I still have to say" (line 4), thus displaying her orientation towards the orderly ritual of the game, which prescribes several stages

(reading out the verb form, conjugating the verb and ratification by the others) before the dice can be passed on. While dice-action (removing dice, shaking it, holding it) during somebody's move has not caused any interactional trouble in the examples we have seen so far, it is clearly different here. Comparing with the rest of the data, it seems that there is a combination of at least three factors causing the trouble in this extract: first, the dice is displaced by the next, rather than current speaker; second, due to the seating arrangement of the players (cf. Fig. 2) and the position of the dice, it is taken from beyond/across the current speaker's arm, which amounts to grabbing or snatching it away. Third, the sequential position of the dice-action is earlier than in the other extracts we have studied. In example 1, the current speaker starts moving the dice at the beginning of her conjugation, after she has read out the infinitive. In example 2, the dice is grabbed by non-current speaker but only at the start of current speaker's utterance of the conjugated verb (after the pronoun). Here, by contrast, the current speaker, Elisa, has not even read out the infinitive yet or moved the pawn on the board, when Thalia intervenes with her dice-grabbing. With her embodied response, Elisa not only expresses her dismay at Thalia's action and publicly reminds her of the rules of the game, but she also explicitly requests Thalia's continuing attention for the duration of her talk.

3. Maintaining epistemic congruence as a way of keeping up status equality between peer group members

Positive assessment of a verb form as correct is overwhelmingly done in a very understated, often implicit way (e.g. as a tacitly understood ratification through rolling the dice). The few explicit positive assessments are humorously exaggerated (involving e.g. smiling and eye-rolling or lexical items ill-fitted in terms of style and register, e.g. "bravoureuse"), whereas explicit negative assessments are strongly hedged or at least try-marked. It seems that one of the identity aspects put forward by this kind of behaviour is doing „not being the teacher“ and locating self as being on the same level with one's peers as far as epistemic status (Heritage, 2013) is concerned. The issue at stake here is epistemic primacy (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011), in particular, authority of knowledge, that is, the question of who can claim better, or more reliable knowledge of the correctness of a verb form than the person who produced it. Interaction studies have shown that there are social norms relating to who is allowed to 'know better' or 'know definitively' and that the adherence to or infringement of these norms has consequences for social relationships and identities beyond individual interactions (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011: 16). Participants in interaction are usually acutely aware of these consequences and act accordingly, and teenagers in classrooms are no exception in this respect (Cromdal, Tholander, & Aronsson, 2007). What we can see in the data is that the three participants try to maintain the overtly demonstrated balance of epistemic authority between the three peers. For instance, when a player prepares for positive assessment (e.g. by confidently producing the verb form, by not waiting for ratification of the move before passing on the dice), the others' subsequent assessment is effectively an agreement with or confirmation of the player's self-assessment, and might therefore be potentially hearable as a second assessment displaying an inferior epistemic position. However, the way the action is formatted usually displays an epistemic stance of confirming some evident knowledge equally accessible to all (mainly non-vocal means such as barely noticeable nods, smiles and eyelid movements, and the grabbing and taking up of the dice).

The one time a direct, unhedged negative assessment is made (only once in the 38 moves in my data), it is treated as incongruent in terms of the epistemic status of the participants (Heritage, 2013) and noticeably attended to as a trouble source. This is observable in the other-correction initiated by Thalia in excerpt 5 below:

Excerpt 5: „dire“ (00:05:20-00:05:43)

1 eli ((rolls dice))
 2 **ELI** **eins**
 one
 3 **THA** ***habts es mi grad ausglassn\=*
 have you just left me out
 eli *moves pawn*
 4 **ELI** **=Dire NA**
 to say NO
 5 **MIA** **na**
 no
 6 ***(1.3) ***
 eli *grabs dice, gives to THA*
 7 **ELI** **dire ähm (0.4) je (0.4) disais**
 to say euhm I said
 8 **#(1.0) +(1.4)#**
 mia +nods
 tha #picks up dice, holds it#
 9 **THA** ****je: ****
 I
 #looks at ELI#
 eli *looks at THA*
 10 **(0.2)**
 11 **ELI** **ja *JE:::***
 yes I
 pushes head forward
 12 **** (0.6) # ***
 eli *mutual gaze and whispering with MIA*
 tha #throws dice#
 13 **THA** **MAAA scheid einser**
 stupid one
 14 **#(0.5) #**
 tha #moves pawn#
 15 **THA** **je (0.5)+*(0.9) + *riRAI:S **je rirais ***
 I laughed I laughed
 mia +lifts pawn+ +nods repeatedly
 eli *looks->board* *looks->THA*
 16 **ELI** **ja**
 yes
 17 **+(0.8) +**
 mia +throws dice, moves pawn+
 18 **THA** **#je:::***
 I
 #gazes at ELI, pushes head towards her
 19 eli pulls face at THA**

In line 7, ELI produces the imparfait of “dire”: “je disais”. There is a short pause afterwards, during which THA picks up the dice but does not throw it yet. Mia gives Elisa a quick nod after 1 second. Thalia holds the dice in her hand, then turns to Eli and initiates a correction of Eli’s pronunciation by repeating the repairable pronoun “je” (line 9) with an elongated and distinctly articulated [ø]-sound (incidentally, [ɛ] would be the correct pronunciation).

While other-initiated other-correction is entirely within the norm in teacher-student classroom communication, it is not preferred in interaction between peers, as indeed it is not in most ordinary conversation (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Thalia’s very overt and exposed

way of inserting this correction-initiation right at the end of the move, while she is suspending the game by holding the dice¹, makes a strong claim about her epistemic status as high enough to show confidence in performing this correction. Moreover, Thalia waits for Elisa to produce the correction while looking directly at her², thus displaying a strong expectation of a response.

Elisa does not entirely grant her that epistemic status of the more knowledgeable one. Although she duly produces a repetition of the correction in line 11, she does so mockingly with an initial short “ja”, which sounds jokingly annoyed at the pickiness of Thalia’s correction, and an exaggerated pronunciation of „je:“ combined with a forward-thrust of her head. Together, the features of Elisa’s embodied turn design contextualise Thalia’s other-correction as a form of teasing or banter and her own epistemic status as one that is on the same level as Thalia. This reduces some of face-threatening effect of the other-initiated correction by a peer. Thalia goes along with this contextualisation, as we can see further on in the extract, when she, after having carried out her own move in the game, comes back to the “je” and refers back to the earlier episode by repeating both Elisa’s exaggerated pronunciation and her head movement.

4. The challenge of peer-assessment in the game and the crucial role of the dice in overcoming them

Any move in the game is closed by establishing whether the answer was correct or not. If it is, the move can be ratified and the next player can continue. In effect, an assessment of the verb form needs to be made in order to ratify the move. Despite the fact that a co-present peer is assessed in my data, and unlike Cromdal et al.’s (2007) findings for more explicit and elaborate assessment phases, the evaluation phases of a move in the game are generally simple and non-problematic.

The situation in my data is in fact similar to what has been described for teenagers playing video games. When playing video games, the participants use a very reduced and sometimes elliptical language to make assessments about each other’s playing (Baldauf-Quilliatre, 2014). Sometimes all they produce is a ‘term of assessment’ (“Bewertungsausdruck” (Baldauf-Quilliatre 2014)), e.g. *very good*, without even mentioning the object of assessment. This is because in the situation, it is clear to both of them what the referent of the assessment is. It is the same in the board game presented here: the evaluations here always refer to the verb form most recently produced. Moreover, evaluation is an integral, even indispensable, part of any move in the game, becoming relevant and expected at a particular point in the interaction. Under these conditions, even the verbal ‘term of assessment’ can be omitted and replaced by a nod or a facial expression or even just by carrying on with the main activity, in other words, by throwing the dice to start the next move.

The social sensitiveness of classroom peer assessments of academic competence means that understatement and minimalism are the preferred modes for carrying out positive assessments (which constitute the majority of cases in my data). The embodied nature of playing a board game makes this easily achievable. In most cases, the assessment of the correctness of a verb form is achieved as in-built into the ratification of a move, and that, in turn, is routinely done through non-vocal, non-verbal means such as head nods, gazes, mimics and, crucially, the handling of the dice.

In fact, the dice in this game prove to be an extremely versatile resource used to perform a number of different interactional functions, often concurrently. Firstly, the dice functions like

a kind of physical turn-taking tool. It is a resource that is used to manage transitions between moves, to temporally coordinate different activities in the interaction, to indicate a desire to claim player- and speakership, to allocate the floor to someone else, but also to perform ratification and even assessment.

Manipulating the dice (in particular, picking it up, holding, rolling and passing it on) as an interactional resource is in many ways similar to what Mondada (2007, 2014a) describes about pointing with or without a pen in a work meeting: Like manipulating a pen, grabbing or picking up the dice can also orient to transition-relevance points, and it can also be a resource for projecting self-selection, which is visible for all participants while talk goes on. That is, the dice can be used in parallel with talk without having to verbally or even vocally interrupt. Generally, it is therefore less disruptive and allows the flow of the game to continue. But, unlike the pen, the dice is an integral part of the game and its manipulation is therefore indexical beyond what the handling of any other object in the same context might signify. For instance, the dice-action has to be in line with the sequential order of a move, otherwise its use gets sanctioned (cf. example 4). Near the end of a move, and again, similar to the use of a pen described by Mondada (2007), the dice can also be used to display an interpretation of the turn currently going on, in particular about its potential end, and in this board game crucially about its level of “problematicity”, in other words, about the need to repair it in some way or not.

Rolling the dice and thus starting the next move in the game is a way of showing one’s interpretation of the previous move as being finished, thus tacitly ratifying a move. As such, rolling the dice instead of a verbal or vocal ratification is a legitimate and economical ‘embodied 3rd turn’, a term used here in analogy with the “embodied 2nd pair part” described by Arminen, Koskela, and Palukka (2014), the first two turns being equivalent to the instruction about which verb to conjugate (i.e. the written instruction on the game board) and the verbal production of the conjugated verb form.

This embodied – rather than verbal or even non-verbal – version of ratification, which is visible (and hearable) for all participants, seems to be the preferred and the most basic way of doing the ratification in the data I studied. It simply implies and subsumes an evaluation of the verb form as correct. Rauniomaa and Keisanen (2012) find the same preference pattern for responses to requests. Interestingly, they also describe that embodied fulfilments of responses often begin while the request turn is still in progress. The same happens here with the dice, which can (more or less) unobtrusively indicate a desire to take over the floor already quite a while before a transition-relevance point.

The way in which the turn containing the conjugation of the verb form is formatted and embodied, including the turn’s location in relation to the activity of dice-rolling projects a certain type of ratification, where a ‘confident production’ projects and most likely engenders an understated ratification while a more hesitating, ‘insecure production’ will more likely lead to more conversational effort in its ratification.

5. Conclusion

What is remarkable in this data is in fact the non-remarkable: the students manage smooth transitions, achieve a fluid game, minimise gaps, and altogether display their “experiencedness” of being students through a number of aspects in the structure and design of the sequential and the sequence order of their moves and talk. Everyone works together in finely co-constructing the „nonchalance“ with which this game is played, despite it being

taken seriously by the players. Playing the game is at least as much about rolling the dice and moving the pawns as it is about talking, so it is a case of embodied talk. The attention of the other participants is presupposed and indexed by the participant who has the floor by reading the infinitive verb form aloud and by the co-participants by not doing something else. There is rarely any mutual gaze between the participants, but there is almost always joint gazing at the rolling dice and at the pawns moved on the board. It is through this joint focus that availability as well as reciprocity are maintained and negotiated. The smoothness of a move begins with the production of the conjugated verb, with a turn design that in most cases projects a non-problematic outcome, and it carries on with economical means of ratification such as nods, mimics and especially dice-action. The potential epistemic status incongruence that comes with evaluations of peers' academic competence is strongly played down by the participants: they take care to level out any epistemic status differences and routinely design assessments as inconspicuously as possible. A crucial multi-functional role is played by the dice in this task; the dice is used to claim incipient player/speakership, to manage the transition between moves in the game and to achieve ratification of moves, thus implicitly assessing the correctness of verb forms.

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Transcription Conventions

(1.3)	pause measured in tenths of a second
(.)	micro-pause
=	latched speech
/	rising intonation
\	falling intonation
MA	increased volume
°je°	soft talk
je:	elongated sound
.h	inbreath
h	outbreath (also laugh particle)
const-	cut-off
>yes<	faster speech
<yes>	slower speech
((coughs))	transcriber's comment or description
(xx)	incomprehensible

¹ Cf. Sikveland & Ogden (2012) who describe gesture „freezes“ or „holds“ that display a problem of understanding and are held while this problem is sorted out.

² According to Rossano (2010), speakers who ask a question are much more likely to look at their interlocutor when they ask non-prototypical questions (e.g. not with an interrogative intonation). And they are most likely to elicit a response when the recipient also looks at the speaker (Rossano, Brown, & Levinson, 2009).